
UNIT 1 OPEN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM IN INDIA: GENESIS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

History encourages us to learn from our mistakes and to improve ourselves with the passage of time. In other words, studying the historical background of the relevant phenomenon is a necessary prerequisite for a sound and clear understanding of any problem under study. The main focus of the units in this block is the development and functions of the open university system in India. This unit gives you a broad historical perspective to the emergence of non-formal approaches to the development of higher education leading to the launching of the open learning system.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying through this Unit, you should be able to

- analyse the initiatives at the governmental level in the search for alternatives to meet the rising educational needs,
- discuss how correspondence education made a beginning in India,

- describe the growth of correspondence education in India with its accompanying issues and limitations, and
- examine the various efforts that went into the setting up of a National Open University in India.

1.2 HIGHER EDUCATION: THE SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVES

The first educational commission set up in independent India, the University Education Commission (1949), said in its report: "Democracy depends for its very life on a high standard of general, vocational and professional education. The dissemination of learning, the incessant search for new knowledge, an unceasing effort to plumb the meaning of life, the provision for professional education to satisfy the occupational needs of our society are the vital tasks of higher education". This perception of the role of higher education set the directions of educational development in the years that followed India's independence.

Even as the higher education system expanded rapidly during the post-independence period, there were several problems and challenges that higher education in India faced. The prevailing social disparities, the wide gap between the rich and the poor, and the extremely uneven regional development all contributed to education effectively remaining the preserve of the upper strata of society. The enrolment of women, of the economically weak, and also of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes was far too low in relation to their share in the total population. Wider access and equity thus became soon enough the central concerns of a society wedded to democracy and social justice.

The solution to the problem of the continuing inadequacy of educational facilities and inequity in educational opportunities lay not within the framework of the conventional classroom centered educational system, but outside it. In fact, any further expansion required structural changes in the educational system. It was thus necessary that some thought was given to an economically viable alternative channel for providing education on a large scale.

Check Your Progress 1

Two statements are given below:

Indicate in the adjacent boxes provided whether they are 'true' or 'false'.

Note : Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the Unit.

- The University Education Commission was the first educational commission set up in independent India. ☐
- The solution to the inequity in educational opportunities lay not in the classroom centered educational system. ☐

1.2.1 The University Education Commission

The University Education Commission had taken note of the practice of allowing certain categories of students to appear at public examinations without attending lectures at recognised institutions. These categories were generally school teachers, others connected with education and sometimes women. It was urged before the Commission that this practice be extended, as many young men and women at work could, through home-based study, appear at University examinations and acquire higher qualifications. The Commission observed that the rate of failure among private candidates was much higher, and if their number were to increase substantially, it would have some impact on the standards of university examinations. The *via media* that the Commission suggested was establishment of more evening colleges.

The external examination system offered a significant opportunity to mature and motivated students to qualify in university examinations without any disruption in their work or life. The University of London has been offering such a facility to students in the UK and abroad, especially those from the Commonwealth, for a long time. It was only natural that several universities in India also adopted this practice. Its wider adoption, as the Commission feared, had serious consequences for higher education. In the context of the ever increasing social pressure for university degrees, the emphasis shifted from learning to passing the examinations. A large number of sub-standard institutions emerged which specialised in coaching students to pass the examinations. These students also began to depend increasingly on cheap guides and notes that sought to cater to their needs. The external examination system on the whole drifted away from its original purpose of responding to the needs of motivated, mature students to a softer and often cheaper option to acquire a university degree. In some measure, it also influenced the attitude to university education of a large number of students; passing the examination, rather than learning became an objective in itself.

Check your progress 2

- i) Describe the features of the system of external candidates for university examinations.
- ii) Do you think this system in any way helps solve the problem of student numbers in higher education? Answer in about 50 words.

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

ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the Unit.

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1.2.2 Policy initiatives

For all practical purposes, correspondence education did not figure in the Indian education scene till the early sixties. In fact, there was no mention of it in any of the documents, except suggestions that something innovative needed to be done for moving towards solving the problems of higher education.

It was in the Third Five Year Plan (1961-66), that the Planning Commission took a serious note of the need for correspondence education. The experience of the 1950's had clearly established that with the expanding base at the elementary and secondary levels of education, the demand for higher education had been continuously rising. A government wedded to democracy and social justice obviously could not deny to its people the opportunities for higher education to fulfil their aspirations. At the same time, it was also clear that the capacity of the economy to absorb the highly qualified human power gainfully was not keeping pace with the growth in higher education. Large investments in creating the infrastructure for full-time higher education institutions turned out to be a lower priority in the development agenda. An alternative evidently was greater use of the investments already made and optimal utilisation of the resources created in the existing system of higher education. Already, the expansion of higher education in the previous decade had thrown up several challenges. Most of the newer institutions were unable to put together the essential infrastructure to provide worthwhile facilities to the students they had admitted. It was all too clear that the quality of education would suffer grievously if this situation was allowed to continue unchecked.

The Third Five Year Plan therefore proposed two major strategic initiatives: first, to provide for greater diversification of higher education by expanding facilities for professional, technical and vocational education, and second, to increase the opportunities for general higher education by providing facilities for evening, part-time and own-time education.

Thus, it was only in the 1960s that correspondence education was conceived as a development strategy to meet the rising expectations of large numbers of people to pursue higher education. Following the proposal made by the Planning Commission, the Central Advisory Board of Education set up an

Expert Committee to recommend measures for launching correspondence courses. The guiding principles enunciated by the committee were:

- The correspondence method admits of greater flexibility than class-room education, particularly in the combination of subjects leading to a degree, and this is an advantage that should be fully exploited in the interests of sound education.
- For maintaining academic standards, factors such as admission standards, well-prepared instructional materials, easy to understand texts, sample exercises, etc., have to be kept in mind. Top-ranking scholars and teachers should be associated with their preparation. It is also essential that correspondence courses are part of the wider academic framework that is provided by the university.
- The correspondence courses can expand and equalise educational opportunity.
- There should be personal contacts between the teacher and the students for about three weeks in a year, preferably on a tutorial rather than lecture basis.
- Some training and continuing guidance should be provided **to build the teacher into the study materials**, and those involved in course material preparation and student counselling. The success of the entire scheme of correspondence courses will depend upon the competence, resourcefulness and dedication of the staff that runs correspondence courses.

The Committee suggested that correspondence courses in India should be administered only by the universities, and in the first instance by just one university, viz., the University of Delhi, as a pilot project. On the recommendation of a sub-committee which went into the details of its operation, and with the concurrence of the UGC, the University of Delhi established a School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education in 1962. The Government of India agreed to pay grants to the university on a 'cover-the-deficit' basis for running these courses.

Now pause for a minute and do this exercise.

Check Your Progress 3

What were the strategic initiatives taken to meet the demand for more higher education facilities in the context of diminishing resources for their expansion?

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.
ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the Unit.

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1.2.3 Education commission: observations and recommendations

The Education Commission (1964-66) had recommended that opportunities for part-time education through facilities like evening colleges and for continuing education through systems like correspondence courses should be made available as early as possible and that these should also include courses in science and technology (either at the degree or the diploma level). They were expected to help reduce the capital costs of expanding higher education and to cut down even the recurring costs to a substantial extent, especially as enrolments grew.

They were seen as the only means to provide higher education to those who desired to study further but were compelled, for economic reasons, to take up employment at the school-leaving stage. Further, it was argued that there need be no fear that they would lead to a deterioration in the standard of education, especially if due care was taken to maintain personal contact with the students receiving correspondence education by organising academic programmes during vacations and holidays. According to the Commission, it would in fact be correct to say that, by and large, the standards in such education tended to be better because of the high level of motivation among the students.

The Education Commission had further talked about various other means to enrich correspondence education. These are the very aspects that characterised distance education later. For example, personal contact programmes which would include lectures and tutorials, seminars and group discussions, week-end workshops or longer contacts during the vacations for science and technical students; self study groups, students' attachment to colleges, especially for availing themselves of library facilities, etc. The Education Commission also sought to experiment with the application of the methodology of programmed learning in correspondence courses. But this came up in practice only in the mid-1980s, when Indira Gandhi National Open University was established and started writing instructional material based on the principles of programmed learning.

The benefits of the use of electronic media in correspondence education were mentioned by the Education Commission. Although it was aware that 'The University of the Air' would be a difficult proposition at that time, nevertheless, it did recommend the preparation of radio and television programmes which would be of value to those studying through correspondence courses. The Commission in fact suggested that universities and other agencies dealing with correspondence courses should join with the All India Radio and Doordarshan (Indian Television) and prepare educational programmes that could be broadcast over the networks. But though the

technology available at the time was definitely limited, even with the passage of time and the improvements in technology the use of radio and television by the Correspondence Institutes remained very limited in reality.

The Education Commission was also far-sighted enough to realize that correspondence courses should not be confined merely to helping students prepare for university degrees. It strongly advocated skill development programmes through correspondence which should help workers in industries, agriculture and other fields to improve production. The Education Commission recommended a number of courses like architecture, drafting, construction, industrial electronics, auxiliary nursing, hotel management, business administration etc., that would economically help the individual as well as the production processes in the industry. In addition to the courses that have some economic benefit for the individual, subjects that enrich an individual to grow culturally and aesthetically, like languages, art appreciation, literary criticism, etc., were also recommended by the Commission. These subjects, while not directly assisting economic growth, helped to improve intellectual and aesthetic standards and to transform the common outlook on life. Clearly, the Commission had anticipated the emergence of distance education as an effective means of addressing the multiplicity of new learning needs as well as the diversity of the learner groups. The first generation distance education was then to be through correspondence.

1.2.4 National Policy on Education, 1968

A Committee of Members of Parliament looked into the recommendations made by the Education Commission in order to bring out a comprehensive statement of the national policy on education. The Report of the Committee of Members of Parliament on Education (1967), recommended that part-time and continuing education should be developed on a large scale and at every stage and in all sectors and given the same status as full-time education. These facilities would smoothen transition from school to work, reduce the cost of education to the state and provide opportunities to a large a number of persons who desired to educate themselves further but could not afford to do so on a full-time basis. In particular, greater emphasis should be laid on the development of correspondence courses, not only for students, but for secondary school teachers, as well as for agricultural and industrial workers, and the facilities to study privately and appear at the various examinations conducted by the Boards of Education and the Universities should be made available to both men and women.

Finally, when the document on the *National Policy on Education (1968)* was framed on the basis of this report, the same ideas were recommended under the heading "Part-time and Correspondence Education".

1.2.5 Drawing on international experience

Since India did not have the necessary experience in the correspondence system of education, the University Grants Commission sent a delegation to the USSR in March-April 1967, to study the scheme of correspondence education in that country. The report of the delegation was mostly confined to correspondence courses for teacher training as it was practised in the USSR. This enabled hundreds of thousands of volunteers to learn the know-how of adult literacy without disturbing their normal day to day work in schools, offices, factories and farms. It was with the help of these teachers trained through correspondence courses that the USSR was able to wipe out illiteracy in the course of two decades.

The delegation opined that the system of correspondence courses for teacher training could be profitably adopted in India as well, but that it should be restricted in its scope, and should be utilized only for the purpose of clearing the backlog of untrained teachers in actual regular service. This system could also be used to enable trained teachers with varying qualifications, to improve their level of education and to advance to the higher grades in the profession.

Another delegation to the USSR sent in 1971, also made extensive recommendations regarding the need for expansion and diversification. Not only should more and more higher education be provided through correspondence, keeping in mind the numbers and economy of costs, but also diverse courses, (commercial, scientific, technical and professional,) with better job potential, should be offered. It also recommended that the use of radio and television facilities be extended to the correspondence courses, and advocated the use of audio-visual material in addition to the printed text. The provision of extensive library facilities to the correspondence students spread all over the country was deemed essential.

1.2.6 Shift in approach to higher education development

The Planning Commission also took due note of the developments in the basic ideology of non-formal education and proposed an approach that would give due emphasis to the promotion of correspondence education in the Fourth Plan. It was proposed that economies be effected in the field of education by the utilisation of existing facilities to the maximum extent possible, besides streamlining the planning, implementing and evaluating machinery, increasing the use of educational technologies, promoting part-time and correspondence courses, applying modern media of communication in education and optimising the size of institutions to absorb as much of the additional enrolment as possible, while keeping investment to a minimum and without lowering the standard of education. The plan further recommended that of the estimated additional enrollment of about 1.0 million in the Fourth Plan, 0.15 million students could be provided education through correspondence courses, evening colleges and part-time courses.

The Fourth Five Year Plan (1971-76) marked a major shift in the approach to the development of higher education. For the first time, planners and policy makers began to address the issues of unchecked expansion; containment of enrolment, regulation of the establishment of new universities and colleges and consolidation and optimum utilisation of the existing infrastructure of higher education. Dealing with these issues became the core of the new development initiatives

1.3 CORRESPONDENCE EDUCATION: THE DRIFT

With the success of the Pilot Project started by the University of Delhi, and as a follow up measure to the recommendations of the Education Commission and the Planning Commission, the question of extension of Correspondence Courses to other universities began to receive attention. In 1968, Panjabi University, Patiala, became the second university in the country to set up a full-fledged Directorate of Correspondence Courses, offering instruction for the pre-university and B.A. (three year degree course). During the next 10 years, there was a spurt in the growth of correspondence institutes and by 1978 the number increased to 26. (In the next twenty years, this number more than doubled).

Although during the 60s, only undergraduate courses were started as an experimental measure, the 70s saw the introduction of postgraduate and diploma/certificate courses as well. During the last three decades they have been able to provide educational opportunities to many, but their qualitative improvement did not keep pace with this growth. These institutes still suffer from several limitations, one of these being that they are treated as appendages of the conventional universities to which they are attached. Their curriculum and courses are similar to the ones offered by conventional universities; they do not even have enough autonomy to frame their own curriculum. As a result, their courses suffer from the same rigidities as those of the conventional system -rules regarding admissions, age requirements and, qualifications, are as rigid as those for the regular students.

1.3.1 Guidelines for correspondence courses

With a view to maintaining high standards, the University Grants Commission, in 1978-79, prescribed the following guidelines for starting correspondence courses:

- Correspondence courses at the undergraduate level should be introduced by only one university in a state.
- Correspondence Courses should be started only by universities which have well established teaching departments.
- It should be compulsory for every student enrolled in correspondence courses to return a certain number of response sheets.

- Priority should be given to setting up of Study Centres wherever there is a high concentration of students.
- The provision of 'contact programmes' should be an essential feature of the correspondence courses.

As said earlier, most of the courses offered under this system by Indian universities are those which they offer to their regular students. After the 1970s, a few vocational and employment oriented diploma courses (Courses in Information Science, Journalism, Tourism and Hotel Management, Library Science, etc.), were organized by a few universities.

1.3.2 Intent and execution: The divergence

The implementation of the recommendations of the Expert Committee of 1961 was less than satisfactory. The system of correspondence education suffered from the same rigidity that the formal system suffered from. For example, the courses and course combinations offered through correspondence were no different from those of the conventional universities to which these units were attached as departments, directorates or schools.

The Expert Committee had suggested that top ranking teachers and scholars should be associated and involved in the preparation of the texts, but the material that finally did come out of the correspondence schools was more on the lines of simple lecture notes. Also, although it was thought that the correspondence units would flourish in the wider academic framework of the universities to which their attachment was recommended, they in fact turned into appendages of the conventional universities, getting low priority in terms of financial as well as academic inputs and services of experts needed by them. As for Science and Technology courses, there never was any serious attempt to launch them.

The Education Commission also expressed views similar to those of the Expert Committee regarding the introduction of Science and Technology courses, the reduction of capital costs and the maintenance of academic standards. The Commission talked about contact programmes helping to maintain standards as well as the intrinsic motivation of the students themselves. But the fact is that it was not the motivated adults who joined these programmes, but those students who were unable to get admission to regular courses. So, if there was any personal contact programme, it was not really as intensive as it ought to have been. Rather than being treated as a tutorial, it was more often treated as a lecture session and hence its real worth was missed altogether.

The intention behind the launching of correspondence education was very laudable; in practice the system was not able to live up to it. The Education Commission had very clearly and comprehensively pointed to the benefits that could be obtained by means of correspondence education, which if

implemented appropriately at that time, would have heralded an era of educational innovation at least a decade earlier. The Education Commission was convinced that the correspondence method of education was the right method for "taking education to the millions who depend upon their own effort to study whenever they can find the time to do so". The Commission was well aware of the fact that the home study method no doubt lacked the inspiring contact with the teacher that classroom education offered, but, then, there were very few inspiring teachers! The Education Commission went on to emphasize that "in correspondence study the adult has a strong motivation to learn, the method also established a personal and private relationship with the teacher which encourages discussion and understanding through written communication, thereby ensuring relevancy and precision. In fact, there can be no effective education through correspondence without this private and purposeful relationship between the students and teacher".

These observations of the Commission signified two major elements of the developments that were to follow in education: the recognition of adults as potential students of higher education and teacher-student contacts outside the premises of the classroom. Both these were central to the growth of the distance education system. The Commission had obviously presupposed or rather expected in making these observations, that facilities, funds and teachers would be available to carry out such meaningful interaction, but the Institutes and Correspondence Schools (attached to the universities) that came up in the wake of the Education Commission's recommendations sadly lacked the required will, commitment and expertise, and the element of personal communication was rarely, if ever, a strong point in their endeavours.

What actually happened was that none of the imaginative and futuristic recommendations made by the Commission was given any fair and concrete trial. No skill development programme was ever attempted by any correspondence education institute. As more and more correspondence schools came up, they all turned to the softer option of offering the same traditional set of courses that the conventional universities found so difficult to break away from. Nor was correspondence education able to attract people away from the lure of the university degrees by offering them training in marketable skills. Since the main purpose of studying through correspondence was, for most people, ultimately to obtain a university degree, the courses that were offered by the universities were, naturally, the softer options. The objective of the courses offered was entirely different from that envisaged by the Education Commission. The economic and cultural dimensions of education were not the concerns that influenced the courses designed by the correspondence schools.

Nevertheless, the concept of correspondence education did evolve and take root in India. However, the major purpose with which these correspondence institutes were set up, in the light of the Education Commission's recommendations, was not really served. A part of the pressure on the conventional universities may have shifted to correspondence institutions but in

general this diluted innovation could not pay attention to educational standards, nor could it attract financial priority within the concerns of the parent universities. But, the imperatives of an alternate and more effective system of education for the masses were firmly implanted in the minds of the planners and policy makers at the national level.

1.3.3 Weaknesses of the correspondence education and the issue of quality

An examination of the working of the institutions of correspondence education in the country reveals that they are facing several problems and constraints which inhibit their proper and effective functioning and prevent them from making any real impact on society or on the system of education as a whole. Some of these limitations which have contributed to the ineffectiveness of correspondence education in India are:

- There was no initiative in designing and developing programmes and courses which were relevant to the life and work of a large number of people and therefore these programmes did not attract working people and other motivated adult learners.
- Most correspondence courses were the same degree programmes that universities and colleges offered. What attracted people to these programmes was merely the lure of university degrees; passing examinations rather than pursuing serious studies, and developing self-learning habits, turned out to be the main objective of most students.
- No University/Institute tried seriously to develop for its correspondence education programme a management structure which could make any innovative experiments in designing, developing and delivering useful and relevant programmes. The conservatism of the traditional academic and administrative structures of the Universities did not permit any bold initiatives.
- Staff motivation and morale was low. Instructional materials were of an indifferent quality, prepared by individual academics, with no team effort at review, revision and editing.
- Not much attention was paid to assignments most of which were not evaluated, corrected or returned to the students on time. In the absence of 'study centres', or contact points for students, personal contact programmes were not regularly organized.
- Too much reliance was placed on printed material and the latest communication technology was hardly made use of. There was considerable delay in the despatch of lessons to the students.
- It was rarely that laboratory and library facilities were provided, and where they existed, they were not readily accessible to students.

Above all, most of these institutes were and continue to be considered as revenue generating centres instead of being seen as trying to promote a new approach to education. The disposition of the conventional universities to this point of view leaves little scope for experimentation and innovation and acts as a damper to the adoption of modern education technology.

It is not true that the educationists and government are not aware of these drawbacks. In fact, as we shall see in the next section, just in order to avoid these problems, the government had, in 1970, thought of starting an open university, incorporating the flexibilities and innovativeness required for quality part-time education. But for some years to follow, no action materialized.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the Unit.

1. State whether the following statements are 'true' or 'false' in the boxes provided.

- i) The Education Commission did not favour Science and Technology courses being offered through correspondence education ☐
- ii) The recommendations of the Education Commission regarding correspondence education were fully implemented. ☐
- iii) Correspondence courses in terms of content and structure were the same as the formal courses ☐

2. Fill in the blanks provided below.

- i) Use of radio and television in correspondence education continues to be _____.
- ii) The Education Commission wanted correspondence instructional material to be based on _____.
- iv) Education through correspondence should be given _____ as classroom based education.

Check Your Progress 5

- i) Are the guidelines provided by the UGC being adhered to by the correspondence education institutes? Answer in five lines.
- ii) List some of the weaknesses of traditional correspondence education institutes.

- Notes:** i) Space is given below for your answer.
ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of the Unit.

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1.4 OPEN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: THE CONCEPT OF MASS HIGHER EDUCATION

As you know, it was in 1969 that the move for establishing an open university in the United Kingdom yielded results (the actual functioning of the university began in January 1971). It was appropriate that India, which was constantly endeavouring to meet the increasing pressure for places in higher education, should also consider a similar initiative. The establishment of the U.K. Open University, naturally led to a consideration of the feasibility of starting an open university in India. To this end, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the University Grants Commission, organized a seminar on the open university system in December 1970, to which experts from the U.K. Open University were invited.

1.4.1 Seminar on open university, 1970

The seminar was of the view that the time was ripe for India to venture into an experiment with the open university system. But, as Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao, the then Minister of Education, pointed out in his inaugural address, if the concept of the open university was to have any relevance to the developing nations, it should cover not only the comparatively limited number of university students, but the much larger number of students who drop out from schools at various stages, the neoliterate, and eventually all adults who desire to avail themselves of programmes of continuing education. And the seminar later on recommended that the open university should be directed to meet the needs of highly motivated adults lacking the necessary formal qualifications and/ or the means for joining a university on a full time basis. But at the same time, the open university was to be designed as a quality institution, of which an

outstanding feature was to be its openness to new ideas and schemes of operation. It was also to have the choice of the best in curricula from all the existing universities in the country and abroad. The method employed in the open university was to be an approach including multi-media integration, using postal communications, the radio and television programmes, and individual or group guidance. The setting up of a network of regional offices, with some resources being made available from the existing universities and colleges, was considered an essential feature of the open university. Finally, the seminar recommended that a study group should get down to work out the details of the organization and working of the open university so as to ensure the establishment of an open university at an early date.

1.4.2 Parthasarathy Committee Report, 1975

Subsequently, the Government of India appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Prof. G. Parthasarathy, to look into the feasibility of starting a national Open University. The Committee which submitted its report in 1975-76, stated that the establishment of an open university in India had to be viewed in the context of the situation in higher education in the country. Social and political awakening was rapidly spreading to the rural areas and to the less advanced sections of the society, so the demand for higher education in these areas and from these social groups was increasing at a rapid rate. In response to these demands, more and more institutions of higher education were being established every year.

Surveying the scene of higher education in India, the Committee observed that the resources available for higher education to cope with such a tremendous expansion are comparatively limited, leading to the lowering of standards and other undesirable results. In such a situation, it was natural that the Committee strongly recommended the starting of a National Open University. To put it simply, the Group recommended that an open university should be set up at the earliest possible.

The Group also made several suggestions about the nature, organisation and financial aspects of the university. The Committee was also firmly of the view that it was necessary to start an open university, not only to meet the pressure but also to give quality education. For example, it observed that an outstanding feature of the proposed university should be its readiness to innovate and to experiment. The university should have the freedom to experiment with new types of courses, educational technology and course structures. The courses of the open university would have to be most carefully designed and should conform to the most vigorous professional standards. The proposal for the establishment of a national university was formulated in some detail following these recommendations, but the Government did not proceed with it at the time. It was only in 1983 that the proposal for a national university was revived. Around this time, a committee appointed to enquire into the working

of the central universities, with Dr. Madhuri R. Shah as its Chairperson, also recommended that practical steps be taken towards the launching of a national university of distance education without delay as a step towards encouraging off-campus education and to reduce the pressure on admission to full-time formal institutions.

1.4.3 Other efforts towards establishing a national open university

Professor S. Nurul Hasan, during his tenure as Education Minister, called for a massive programme of general education through the establishment of a national open university. He held that only such an institution could reach the poorest and the most neglected sections of the society. In their conferences and seminars on distance education, the Directors of Correspondence Courses, Institutes and others involved in distance education had recommended a National Council for Correspondence Education or a National Open University to ensure the proper coordination of and systematic expansion of, methods for streamlining distance education in the country.

1.4.4 Establishment of the first open university in India

While the proposal for establishing an Open University in India was being discussed at the national level, the State Government of Andhra Pradesh went ahead and established the first open university in India. The Andhra Pradesh Open University (APOU) which was later renamed Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU), was set up under a State Act and had jurisdiction only over the State of Andhra Pradesh. In many ways, it was a pioneering effort, at least as far as the open learning system in India was concerned. Perhaps it also forced the decision to establish an open university at the national level.

This initiative was soon followed by State Governments like Bihar, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, with the establishment of open universities in their states.

1.5 LET US SUM UP

Higher education in independent India expanded at a very rapid rate. However, the facilities provided could not really keep pace with the increase in student numbers. The University Education Commission did talk about the associated problems and thought that the pressure on the universities could be reduced to some extent through the provision of evening colleges. It was only in 1961 that some serious thought was given to the setting up of correspondence institutes, by an Expert Committee formed for the purpose.

Following this, the University of Delhi became the first university to start such a programme in India.

The Education Commission (1964-66) strongly recommended the establishment of correspondence institutes, which were to be institutes in their own right. But the Commission's recommendations were not really implemented. Although it made several relevant suggestions, their indifferent execution led to correspondence institutes being looked down upon as appendages to the conventional universities, and despite their rapid growth they did not really incorporate any of the virtues of distance education.

It was in the early seventies that some efforts were made to begin distance education in India. But these efforts bore fruit only in the early eighties, when an Open University was established in Andhra Pradesh in August, 1982.

1.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS : POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1. i) true, ii) true.
2. i)
 - They are private candidates not attending regular university classes.
 - These students prepare on their own to appear in the relevant university examination
 - They have to fulfil the prescribed qualifications for taking the University examination.ii) The system of external candidates sitting in university examinations can work only if there are motivated learners who have strong self-study habits and techniques. It cannot be a substitute for fresh out of school youth who need tutorial support to benefit from higher education
3. Diversification of the programmes of higher education by adding new technical, professional and vocational courses, on the one hand, and increasing the facilities for general higher education through the provision of evening, part-time and own time education on the other were the two major initiatives taken by India to meet the twin challenges of growing unemployment among traditional university graduates and the increasing social demand for higher education opportunities.
4. 1. i) false, ii) false, iii) true.
2. i) limited, ii) programmed learning, iii) same status.

- 5) i) Not entirely. Correspondence institutes are seen as revenue generating institutes by most state universities. The advice that only those universities which have well established facilities should start correspondence education and that only one university in a state should do so is disregarded. Establishment of study centres, provision for assignments and contact programmes are also not given due importance.
- ii) a) shortage of competent and motivated staff;
b) indifferent academic standards and poor quality of instructional materials;
c) absence of the use of modern communication technology;
d) lack of flexibility in programme structures and instructional systems.

UNIT 2 EMERGENCE OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM IN INDIA

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Open University System at the National Level : IGNOU
 - 2.2.1 The political context
 - 2.2.2 The IGNOU project report
 - 2.2.3 Objectives and academic programmes of IGNOU
 - 2.2.4 Priorities and the new directions
 - 2.2.5 Open learning system at the national and state levels: an integrated approach
- 2.3 State Open Universities: Origin and Development
 - 2.3.1 BRAOU: The first of its kind
 - 2.3.2 Kota Open University (KOU)
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 - 2.3.4 Pointers for future action
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- 2.5 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers

2.0 INTRODUCTION

“Anyone who studies the history of universities in India since 1857 cannot escape the conclusion that the system of higher education inherited at independence from the British Raj was dangerously weak in three ways: (i) during the British rule we failed to set and maintain the quality of teaching and the standards of achievement essential to a university, (ii) we failed to devise and to persuade Indians to accept a context of higher education suited to India’s social and economic needs, and (iii) we failed to establish patterns of academic government and relations between universities and state which would accord to the universities that degree of autonomy without which they cannot serve society properly..” (Ashby and Anderson, 1966). The contradictions and paradoxes built within its operation and governance needed to be resolved if the Indian University was to serve a genuine socio-educational purpose in an independent democracy. This unit intends to take you through the details of how the idea of establishing open universities in India was mooted and how it took shape. The scope of the unit includes a detailed discussion on national policy perspectives and how they influenced the objectives, roles and functions of the open universities in the country.

The first unit of this block gave you a picture of the events which led to the establishment of the open university system in India. We have already talked about the weaknesses of the Indian educational system, and contradictions within it, which triggered the movement towards a more innovative system with a broader base and a more flexible framework. In this unit we shall go a

little deeper into this point. The first step towards this is to briefly review the chronological sequence of events. As we have mentioned, this unit intends to do just that.

However there comes up another point of debate. As you must have noticed from the layout of the structure of this unit, the establishment of the national university takes precedence here even though in the chronological sequence, a state university, i.e. BRAOU was established first. We have a reason for this placement.

Despite the seemingly descriptive tone, the four units in this block aim to transcend the level of the merely discursive: they really intend to give a critical review of events as well as a case study of a particular institution by way of education. It is but logical in this case to first present the case of the national university. The review of generalities then proceeds with the case of the state open universities. It is for this reason that we give a picture of trends and practices rather than of details regarding specific institutions, and in doing so, we take up the case of only three state open universities – BRAOU, Kota and YCMOU, each of which has a different kind of experience. We do not take up for discussion the other state open universities such as those of Nalanda Open University (1987), Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University (1992), Karnataka State Open University (1995), and three others which have come up only in the last couple of years as none of them has gained significant experience that can be usefully evaluated.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying through this unit, you should be able to

- assess the roles played by the Central and State Governments in launching the open university system in India,
- examine the extent to which national policies shaped the objectives of IGNOU and the directions of its development,
- critically consider the issues and concerns involved in organising and managing an innovative system of education, and
- analyse the typology of the three state open universities discussed in this unit in the light of their experience and to relate this to the significance of strategic planning while establishing new open universities.

2.2. OPEN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL: IGNOU

On November 14, 1964, Smt. Indira Gandhi the then Prime Minister stated: "We must bring education to all parts of our country and all sections of our people, especially the weaker sections and those who have so far been underprivileged". On September 20, 1985 a University (IGNOU) was founded in her name to fulfil her desire to provide education to all those who

for one reason or the other are not in a position to get the benefits of the conventional education system.

Shri Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, while laying the foundation stone of IGNOU in 1985 said:

“Our endeavour is that in India, the poorest, the most backward children receive the best possible education, and we are here to take a step forward in this direction today. The Open University will extend educational opportunities to all corners of the country..”

2.2.1 The political context

On his assumption of Office as Prime Minister of India in January 1985, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, while addressing the nation, announced a review of the education policy primarily with a view to ensuring that programmes of education and training are relevant to the life and work of the people (he mentioned the delinking of degrees from jobs, as a thrust to achieving this objective), and the establishment of a national open university to widen opportunities for education and to provide easy access to it. The political commitment to the proposal for the establishment of a national open university, on which work was initiated in early 1984, was so strong that the university was indeed launched on September 20, 1985 after all the legislative procedures were completed in both the Houses of Parliament.

The National Policy on Education, 1986

It took nearly eighteen months for the document on the National Policy on Education to be finalised after extensive discussions in which there was nation wide participation. The new policy made the following statements on open and distance learning:

- “Life long education is a cherished goal of the educational process. Opportunities will be provided to the youth, housewives, agricultural and industrial workers and professionals to continue the education of their choice at the pace suited to them. The future thrust will be in the direction of open and distance learning”.
- “In view of the present rigid entry requirements to formal courses restricting the access of a large segment of people to technical and managerial education, programmes through a distance learning process including use of the mass media will be offered.”
- “The open university system has been initiated in order to augment opportunity for higher education and as an instrument of democratizing education.”

- “The Indira Gandhi National Open University established in 1985 in fulfillment of these objectives will be strengthened.”

Since its inception, IGNOU is the harbinger of a new system of education in India. It has to serve the purpose of developing a more responsive and relevant system of education through its emphasis on innovation, cost effectiveness, absence of rigidity, and social involvement.

2.2.2 The IGNOU project report

While the national debate on the ideas and ideals of the Open University continued, the Ministry of Education appointed a specialist committee in March 1985 to prepare a project report for the National Open University. The terms of reference of the Committee included an elaboration of the objectives and functions of the university, the identification of its academic programmes, and of the infrastructure required, the estimates of cost and also the preparation of a draft legislation. The committee was headed by Prof. G.Ram Reddy who was the founder Vice-Chancellor of the Andhra Pradesh Open University and consisted of several senior academics, educationists, planners and administrators.

It is important to remember that, as a sound management strategy, the Government thought of preparing such a project report which was later to become an essential prerequisite for establishing open universities by State Governments. Ultimately, it is very significant for the planning and execution of any major initiative, that there is considerable clarity about what to do (objectives), how to do it (strategies) and for what benefit (outcomes).

2.2.3 Objectives and academic programmes of IGNOU

IGNOU was conceived as an instrument of democratising education. This concept could be captured only in the form of a mission statement which permitted a multiplicity of short-term and long-term objectives. It was left to the authorities of the University from time to time to articulate the strategies and approaches to achieve the University's mission in the short-term which allowed for a certain measure of continuity, while adjusting to and incorporating changes in its programmes and activities.

On the basis of the recommendations made by the Project Committee, and the Governments' anxiety to establish and promote the open learning system as an independent, and possibly an alternative channel for providing education to large numbers of people, the IGNOU Act, 1985 passed by Parliament declared the IGNOU's objectives in the following terms:

- to advance and disseminate learning and knowledge by a diversity of means, including communication technology;
- to provide opportunities for higher education to a large segment of the population;

- to promote the educational well being of the community;
- to encourage the Open University and distance education systems in the educational pattern of the country.

The legislation enjoined on the university to strive to fulfil its objectives through diverse means of distance and continuing education, and emphasised, in particular, the following approaches:

- strengthen and diversify the degree, certificate and diploma courses related to the needs of employment;
- provide access to higher education for a large segment of the population, and in particular, the disadvantaged groups such as those living in remote and rural areas including working people, housewives and other adults who wish to upgrade or acquire knowledge through studies in various fields;
- promote acquisition of knowledge in a rapidly developing and changing society and continually offer opportunities for upgrading knowledge, training and skills ;
- provide an innovative system of university level education, flexible and open, in regard to methods and pace of learning, combination of courses, eligibility for enrolment, age of entry, conduct of examination and operation of the programmes with a view to promoting learning and encouraging excellence in new fields of knowledge;
- contribute to the improvement of the educational system in India by providing a non-formal channel complementary to the formal system in India and encouraging transfer of credits and exchange of teaching staff by making wide use of texts and other software developed by the university;
- promote and coordinate open and distance education system in India and maintain standards.

These functions are clearly wide ranging, and the role of a national level apex body vested in the university, is indeed an extraordinarily important one, for which there is no parallel elsewhere in the world. That makes IGNOU a unique institution, an open university that is also a system leader.

Academic Programmes and Course Structure

The project report noted that the national open university will have to cater to the needs of vastly heterogeneous learner groups consisting of people living in rural and urban areas, in the plains and in the hills, the employed and the unemployed, housewives, and also those who have had no formal education.

In order to respond to these diverse needs, the project report suggested the following typology for the university's academic programmes:

- continuing and extension education;
- graduate and undergraduate programmes;
- research.

In the category of continuing education programmes, the university was to develop and deliver programmes for upgrading and updating managerial and technical skills, in different modules, which learners could pursue, according to their own assessment of their needs, on a short or a long-term basis. In the category of extension education, the proposal was to develop short programmes for building awareness and enrichment in the areas of rural development, population education, community health and so on.

It was also envisaged that the University would offer first degree and postgraduate programmes. Though functionally this programme area was very much the same as that of the traditional universities, it was expected that the open university would endeavour to diversify the programmes offered, permit flexibility in the structure and combination of courses and ensure greater relevance of the programmes to the needs of economic development and employment.

As for research, the technology of distance education and its methods and practices were to be the main focus of attention though research programmes in discipline areas were also to be taken up.

In identifying programme areas, the project report suggested need assessment surveys, discussions with representative groups of employers and their organisations, and also advocated reliance on forecasts of emerging technologies and their application.

As for structure, the approach suggested was, that in the first phase preference should be given to courses that can be used in several programmes and that the programmes should be so created as to form several modules. The design of the courses should be based on the credit system to permit accumulation of credits, transfer between programmes and convenient phasing of studies for the students.

2.2.4 Priorities and the new directions

The Programme of Action, 1986

The *Programme of Action 1986* to implement the 1986 *National Policy on Education* provided further guidelines for the development of the Open University and distance education system. It suggested the strengthening of the delivery system of the Open University and the media support to its programmes in cooperation with the national radio and television networks.

Referring to the role of promotion, coordination and setting of standards assigned to IGNOU, the *Programme of Action 1986* proposed the framing of guidelines for the State governments who wished to establish their own open universities or wanted to take advantage of the facilities of IGNOU. It also proposed the development of a network of courses in the Open University system that would offer a wide range of course options to students.

Priorities

Within the broad parameters suggested in the Project Report and the POA 1986, IGNOU outlined its priorities with great circumspection and began work on them with caution. A few points that seemed to be obvious were:

- It may not be advisable to launch the traditional courses that are already available at conventional universities except in cases where the existing demand for such courses is not satisfied by the latter. In such cases, IGNOU may prepare courses in collaboration with other well established institutions and also make them available to the various directorates of distance/correspondence education which should complement them with locally relevant components and then implement them.
- IGNOU shall not attempt to give all its courses through all the Indian languages. However, in the overall scheme of the national network of open universities the courses prepared by IGNOU could be translated into all the regional languages by state open universities or directorates of distance/correspondence education and offered in their respective areas.
- IGNOU may prepare courses for in-service training in various areas such as teacher education, management, paramedical services, engineering and technology, women's education, law and the like. Of these areas higher priority may be given to those which have been ignored at conventional institutions.
- The issue of access being of great significance in the system, IGNOU may have to offer different schemes in terms of fee structure, entry requirements, support services, course offerings, etc. Access to education has to be increased at all costs.
- Low end technical and vocational courses that would not require prior educational qualifications, should find a place in the university's programme profile.

The New Directions

While the initial phase of activities of the IGNOU was guided primarily by the directions indicated in the project report as well as the POA 1986, the university undertook an exercise in redefining priorities for the five year period 1990-95. The document approved by the Planning Board of the University noted that IGNOU, in the past four years, had gained valuable experience in designing, developing and delivering courses and programmes for the open

university system; it had had useful experience in the management of distance education; it had developed a structure and pattern for open university programmes and had established a network of support systems and structures for delivering them.

The document observed that IGNOU would not be able to make a significant impact on the open and distance education system in the country unless it catered to the substantial needs of continuing education through the training and retraining of people at work and also of the large numbers of the disadvantaged people, especially women. The task, according to the document, was too large to be handled by a single institution. The document therefore proposed the following strategies and approaches:

- promote a network of open universities and distance education institutions to extend their reach to cover large numbers of people;
- design, develop and deliver a large number of courses which are relevant, functionally useful and can meet the employment needs of various sectors;
- set up coordination mechanism to prescribe the broad design, structure and pattern for courses and programmes for all open universities and also develop norms and guidelines for organising and managing a variety of student services;
- establish close linkages with industry, trade, commerce and other employing sectors in the design and production of programmes/courses as well as their delivery;
- organise and strengthen a student-friendly management system for distance education programmes.

The new approach called for a decisive break from the traditional menu of knowledge-based programmes to a distinctively job-oriented, employment-related pool of programmes in the new planning cycle. The new development plan prepared by the University on these lines, found favour with the Planning Commission and the Government of India. The main thrust of the plan was the development of a parallel stream of work-oriented, job-related courses at various levels, aimed at satisfying needs in the modern economic sector and also the unorganised sector in the rural and urban areas.

The new programme profile proposed in the plan document envisaged:

- Professional Development Programmes in
 - ◆ engineering and technology (construction management, water resources, maintenance management);
 - ◆ education (curriculum design and development, educational planning and management, training of primary school teachers and upliftment of women);

- ◆ health sciences (community health, nursing, child, development, food and nutrition);
- ◆ computer applications;
- First degree programme incorporating substantial components of application – oriented courses and functionally useful elective courses;
- Master's degree programme to be built around the professional competence of people at work in management, library science, and distance education;
- Research degrees.

2.2.5 Open learning system at the national and state levels: an integrated approach

The Government undertook a review of the National Policy on Education in 1992. The modified policy made the following statements on Open University and Distance Learning:

“ The open learning system has been initiated in order to augment opportunities for higher education, as an instrument of democratising education and to make it a life long process. The flexibility and innovativeness of the open learning system are particularly suited to the diverse requirements of the citizens of our country, including those who had joined the vocational stream.

The Indira Gandhi National Open University established in 1985 in fulfilment of these objectives, will be strengthened. It would also provide support to establishment of open universities in the states.”

Following this, the *Programme of Action (POA) 1986* was also reviewed and revised. The revised Programme of Action, 1992 whole heartedly endorsed the university's initiatives in providing its academic programmes with an employment orientation and launching more programmes focusing attention on education and training in areas related to employment and self-employment. The POA 1992 suggested that the open learning system should seek the involvement of industry, commerce and other employer groups in the development of appropriate programmes. The POA also emphasised the urgent need for establishing and developing the open university network with provision for sharing programmes, courses and delivery systems.

This detailed account of the evolution of IGNOU and the open learning system in India in the early stages provides you with the contextual framework for understanding the role of planning and management of distance education in a developing country. You will have also noticed how the distance education systems and institutions are significantly influenced by several political factors. To sum up :

Emergence of the Open University System in India

- It was primarily the initiative of the government that led to the establishment of IGNOU and the launching of the open university system in India.
- It was the policies of the government that decreed how IGNOU should operate, what thrust its programmes should have and what objectives it should seek to achieve.
- The influence of government policies was pronounced even in the areas of programme choice and development.
- Part of the initial success of the IGNOU has to be attributed to the immense patronage received from the government through funding and other support in putting together its infrastructure
- All these also ensured, in a significant measure, a great deal of goodwill for the fledgling institution from the people in general and the academia and professional groups in particular.

An Integrated Approach

Following the establishment of an open university in Andhra Pradesh in 1982, and the announcement by the Centre to establish a national open university in 1985, several state governments started preparations for establishing their own state open universities. These included Bihar, Maharashtra and Rajasthan besides Gujarat, Orissa, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Bihar and Rajasthan established their own open universities in 1987 and Maharashtra in 1989. The remaining state governments put off their proposals for the time being, apparently because the National Policy on Education of 1986 stated that "this powerful instrument (the open university system) will have to be developed with care and extended with caution".

Since several state governments were anxious to establish open universities, it was only natural that the issue came up for consideration at a meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education, on which all the states were represented, in June 1987. Meanwhile, the IGNOU, in pursuance of its own responsibility for the promotion and coordination of the open university system, had also developed certain draft guidelines which were to assist the state governments in their preparatory work for establishing open universities. The CABE while recommending that every major state should have an open university, also considered the draft guidelines and finalised them.

The major provisions in the guidelines were:

- preparation of a detailed project report by a group of experts;
- consideration of the time and investments required for the preparation and production of learning materials; and the possibility of the new state open university using the learning packages of the IGNOU;
- the estimates of cost (physical infrastructure, staff etc);

- establishment of an adequate and efficient delivery system including study centres, automation and mechanisation of operations and application of relevant technologies;
- provision for the appointment of qualified staff consisting of both core staff and guest faculty;
- provision of adequate initial investments by the State Governments.

While these guidelines basically addressed the concerns of bringing a new university into existence, they were also inspired by a long-term vision of establishing an open university network in India.

The guidelines specifically stated that if there were a number of open universities in the country, it would be advantageous to form a network of these institutions, the important characteristics of which would be:

- avoidance of duplication in production of course material;
- pooling the courses offered by all open universities to provide students with a wide range of options in respect of courses and programmes;
- evolving a common pattern and structure for open university programmes throughout the country, to facilitate student mobility;
- sharing of resources for the delivery of various services to the students.

The CABE also recommended that there should be a Coordination Council consisting of representatives of all the open universities chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of IGNOU to administer the network.

This conceptual design of the open learning system which sought to integrate the efforts at the national and state levels through a partnership was a unique and imaginative initiative. In Unit-5 of this block, we shall take a close look at the manner in which this new paradigm took practical shape and the problems and issues that the working of this model had to confront from time to time.

Check Your Progress 1

What are the major concerns that IGNOU seeks to address? Answer in about 50 words.

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

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

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2.3 STATE OPEN UNIVERSITIES: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

The introduction to this unit said that it would focus on the national policy perspectives that influenced the objectives, roles and functions of the open universities at the state and the national levels. We saw in the previous section how they shaped the IGNOU's objectives and roles. We had also mentioned that several State governments were keen to establish open universities. In addition to the four that were established in the 1980s, five more State Open Universities came up in the 1990s. These are:

- i) Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad (Gujarat) - 1992
- ii) Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University, Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) - 1992
- iii) Karnataka State Open University, Mysore (Karnataka) – 1995
- iv) Netaji Subhas Open University, Calcutta (West Bengal) – 1997
- v) UP Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Allahabad (Uttar Pradesh) – 1999

2.3.1 BRAOU: The first of its kind

You will recall that mention was made in Unit 1 of the establishment of the first open university in India. The Andhra Pradesh Open University, now known as Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University was inaugurated on August 26, 1982 and has been hailed as the opening of a new chapter in the educational history of the country (Prasad, 1993). The decision, announced by the State Government to establish the open university, was to provide “access to higher education to the adult population of the state, for upgrading their functional capacities and improving the quality of their life in the context of broader social and political objectives of equalisation of educational opportunities and the emergence of a new concept of life long education”.

The provisions in the university legislation, in simple terms, represent the following three major dimensions of the university's efforts:

- augmentation and equalisation of educational opportunities;
- provision of a flexible educational system that is free from the constraints of prior educational attainments, age and programme structures;
- diversification of programmes especially to suit the needs of working people.

It is worthwhile to note that the first open university in the country, established by a State Government, in fact set the tone and tenor of the development of the

open learning system in the country. It has clearly anticipated the roles, the functions and the directions of development that the open learning system at the national level was to adopt in subsequent years.

The Growth and Development of BRAOU

a) The Student Enrolment

The University started its first academic programme in 1983 with an initial enrolment of a little over 6000 students. Since then the annual enrolment has been steadily increasing. It had gone up to over 50,000 by mid- 1990s and has reached a high of over 87,000 in 1998.

Consistent with its primary objectives, the university widened access to its programmes, especially to students from the non-formal stream. It did not insist on previous academic qualifications for entry into its degree programme. In order to provide opportunities to the students from the backward, rural and tribal areas of the state, the university offered its programmes using the medium of Telugu, the state language (universities in the state provide higher education through English). Eighty percent of the students enrolled have opted Telugu as the medium of instruction. However, some programmes, especially those in professional areas like management are offered only through the medium of English.

b) The Programme Profile

During the initial phase, the university offered Bachelors Degree programmes in Arts, Commerce and Science. These were successful. Efforts were made to add more professional programmes to the pool of the University's academic offerings. Diploma programmes in Public Relations and Public Accounting were launched during this phase.

The second phase saw the University launching more vocational and professional programmes along with conventional postgraduate degrees. The new programmes added during this phase included MBA, PG Diplomas in Marketing Management, Business Finance, Environmental Studies, Writing for Mass Media in Telugu, Masters Degree in Political Science, Public Administration, History, Mathematics and Economics, and also a certificate programme in mushroom cultivation mainly for the farmers.

An important aspect of the programme profile of the university in the second phase was the adoption of some IGNOU programmes, like those in the field of management. The University adopted a large number of courses from IGNOU and also developed some of its own.

The University's plans for the 1997-2002 planning cycle envisage a much larger number of vocational, technical and professional programmes in several

fields. These include certificate programmes in Indian and foreign languages, Computers, Pathological and Clinical Laboratory Techniques, Diploma Programmes in Tourism and Hotel Management, Microbiology, Ground Water Exploration, Instrumentation, Industrial and Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Nursing and Health Care, Farm Management, Rural Development, Watershed Management, Horticultural Development and Agricultural Technology besides degree level programmes in Business Management and Computers.

The BRAOU Experience

It is worthwhile at this stage to reflect on certain significant contributions that BRAOU made to the growth of the open learning system in India. As the first single mode open university in the country, the BRAOU established the credibility of the system and also forced the pace of its growth. The student and programme profiles also indicate what open universities can do in widening access to, and equalising opportunities for, higher education in the country. In specific terms:

- Nearly 80% of the students enrolling in BRAOU opt for the BA/B.Sc/B.Com degree programme. About 70% of them do not have the prior educational attainments required to gain entry into universities and colleges for degree programmes.
- The fact that about 25-30% of the Bachelor's degree enrolment comprises students who could join regular full-time institutions, indicates that open university programmes are gaining acceptability.
- The availability of degree level programmes of education through the regional language has enabled a large number of students (more than 75% students offer Telugu as the medium of instruction) to pursue higher education, thus widening access to, and increasing the opportunities for, large numbers of students to pursue university level programmes.
- The mix of programmes offered by the university is still predominantly conventional. The proportion of technical/vocational/professional programmes, especially those at the lower end of the educational and training spectrum is very limited. Consequently, the university has not been able to reach out to a much larger number of students from the disadvantaged groups, including women and those from rural areas.
- Although BRAOU was the first open university in the country, it has adapted itself to the vision of the national policy, and has made all efforts to promote and develop the open university network in the country.
- The application of technology in teaching-learning transactions as well as in university management is still very limited. The learning packages do not have a large number of video cassettes. However, there is a strong component of radio lessons in all programmes. The Hyderabad station of AIR carries the radio lessons of the university four days a week for a total duration of six hours.

Check Your Progress 2

Briefly describe the trends seen from the functioning of BRAOU.

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

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

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2.3.2 Kota Open University (KOU)

The idea of establishing an open university in Rajasthan goes back to the UGC Committee (under Prof.G.Ram Reddy's chairmanship) for the Institute of Correspondence Studies, Jaipur in 1985. The Committee had expressed the view that there was indeed a case for the creation of an open university in Rajasthan as the state had a fairly developed resource base for distance education. The representatives of the State Government subsequently held a series of meetings with Prof.G.Ram Reddy and other IGNOU authorities for exploring and crystalizing the idea of an open university in Rajasthan. The results of the endeavour culminated in the State Legislature of Rajasthan enacting the Kota Open University Act in 1987. The provisions of the Act cumulatively cater to a philosophy of education which articulates strategies for the democratization of higher education in the State of Rajasthan, especially to benefit the more disadvantaged sections of the society. The Government of Rajasthan transferred the Institute of Correspondence Studies, (Jaipur) and the College of Correspondence Education (Udaipur) to Kota Open University along with their assets with a view to establishing the distance education system firmly in the State of Rajasthan.

The Initial Phase

The experience of the Kota Open University provides several valuable lessons in planning and managing the open university system in a developing country. As mentioned earlier, the university came into existence by merging the Directorates of Correspondence Education of two dual mode universities in Rajasthan. To begin with, the new open university functioned on the strength of the programmes and systems it inherited from its predecessor universities. In its anxiety to break away from this legacy, the university announced three years later that it would launch programmes in teacher education, hotel and

tourism management, journalism, library science, law, management and bachelors degree programmes in arts, commerce and science. However, there were no concerted efforts at developing the logistics for the delivery of the programmes. These logistics would include material development, production, distribution and other student support services. As a result, the new programmes announced by the university could not be launched in time.

During this phase, however, the university was able to put together a substantial infrastructure in terms of buildings and staff, with the resources provided by the State Government. The University also launched its own teacher education programme leading to B.Ed. and management education programme with learning packages acquired from IGNOU. The teacher education programme instantly attracted large enrolments and the university's revenue earnings began to register substantial increases.

The initial enthusiasm began to wear out with the delay in adding new programmes. There were doubts about the teacher education programmes as they did not have the necessary clearance from the professional regulatory body at the national level, and the teacher trainees were not getting jobs. There was also some turmoil in the management of the university and concerns expressed about the viability of an open university in a backward region.

The Second Phase

A categorical statement about its continued support and commitment to the Kota Open University from the Government of Rajasthan, and the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor who had experience in, and commitment to, the open learning system soon revived the fortunes of the university. This experience undergone by the Kota Open University establishes the significance of political support for the growth and development of the distance education system in the context of a developing country.

During the years 1995 and 1996, concerted efforts were made to clear all the backlogs in student services. Materials were produced and distributed to all students on roll; examination results were announced, degrees and certificates were awarded; work was initiated on development of systems and procedures; and the deficiencies in infrastructure were made up. These strategies paid rich dividends; there was now greater confidence among the staff. There was greater capacity development through system orientation, launching of new courses, development of multi-media study materials, upgradation of computing facilities, development of audio/visual production facilities and also computer and communication networking.

The KOU also adopted more programmes from IGNOU in the areas of management and computer education.

Enrolment

Despite the initial success of the teacher education programme, enrolment in the University began to decline considerably in the first half of the 1990s. By January 1995, fresh enrolment in all programmes declined to 6000. With the new confidence-building measures taken in 1995 and 1996, the enrolment went up to about 11000 in January 1997, and was expected to stabilise at an annual additional intake of about 20,000.

The Experience

The lessons in planning and management that the experience of the Kota Open University provides are important. Political support and commitment to the system, which depends entirely on public funding, is crucial to its survival. At the institutional management level also, there are lessons to be drawn:

- It is important that any major experiment, especially one relating to education, is launched with clearly defined objectives, and also with sharply focused strategies to achieve those objectives. It is for this reason that at the national level, emphasis is being placed on the formulation of a project report which outlines the need/justification; mission/goals/objectives; teaching/learning approaches and strategies; management/administration systems; and financial resources for the establishment of new open universities.
- Students of an open university expect programmes, courses and delivery systems that are distinctly different from the correspondence programmes of dual mode universities. In Rajasthan, no other university was permitted to start correspondence education programmes, and yet the enrolment in these programmes transferred to the KOU began to decline.
- The open university's commitment to provide relevant education continues to be its major strength. 'Relevance' in this context has to be understood in terms of the learners' expectation from the University, and its capacity to respond to those expectations in terms of functionally useful programmes that combine knowledge and skills, flexible and convenient methods of study that permit different course combinations, modular studies, unstructured study terms, and multiple entry and exit points. The KOU did not give enough attention to these new approaches in its initial phase.
- In its early phase, the University paid little or no attention to applications of technology. Technology in this case has to be understood in terms of its student – friendly ways of transacting teaching and learning activities. Quick response to student queries, effective communication and the timely availability of guidance, counselling and of the required materials are significant confidence-building measures for any isolated, remote learner.

2.3.3 Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU)

The YCMOU was established in 1989 under an Act of the Maharashtra State legislature. It was also the fifth year since IGNOU became functional. The extensive preparatory work done at the national level in terms of policy initiatives, formulation of guidelines and general strategies and approaches for the establishment of state open universities to which references were made earlier in this unit, has been of considerable significance in the planning and development of the YCMOU.

The Act of the Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University addresses itself unequivocally to the role the University is expected to play. The Act states the following aims and objectives:

- To make higher vocational and technical education available to large sections of the population.
- To give special attention to the needs of the disadvantaged groups, in particular, people in the rural areas and women.
- To relate all courses to the development needs of individuals, institutions and the State.
- To provide an innovative, flexible and open system of education by using distance teaching methodology and by applying modern communications technologies to education.
- To provide continuing adult and extension education, special attention being given to training adults in new skills to enable them to adjust to a changing technological/environment.

Academic Programmes

From the beginning, YCMOU's thrust was on producing and delivering a variety of programmes in different disciplines, which would reach a diverse strata of society. Its degree and diploma programmes provided education to adults who had had to discontinue education early in life and to working people who wished to improve their qualifications. It also launched field-based courses addressed to the needs of farmers in the State.

In the design and development of its courses, the university adopted a modular pattern. All its programmes are structured around the awarding of credits, and every major programme has several smaller and independent components leading to certificates or diplomas. A student can enter the system or leave it on the completion of his/her individual objective in joining a programme. The university has also made efforts to develop procedures for credit transfer and exemption for demonstrable learning experiences.

The university has developed a preparatory programme for those who have not passed the senior secondary school examination, but are desirous of registering for a degree programme. This preparatory programme introduces students to

open learning through courses on learning in an open university, and on developing study skills, communication skills, learning through language etc.

A key area which the university had identified in the early stage itself was extension education. It developed a number of certificate programmes in the cultivation of eleven crops and also entered the technical/vocational education and training programmes in a big way by launching diploma programmes in horticulture, electronics and teacher education. The YCMOU also launched research programmes leading to the award of M.Phil and Ph.D. degrees.

Enrolment

The enrolment in YCMOU has been steadily increasing. In 1990-91, it had less than 10,000 students. By 1993-94 the enrolment rose to 38,269. The enrolment in the University was over 104,000 in 1999.

Technologies

From its inception, the YCMOU gave considerable attention to the development of various technologies for the distance education system. It established an Audio Visual Centre; computerised all its operations and developed Local Area Networks (LAN) for faster communication; improved the communication aspects of its instructional packages, and initiated research and development in evaluation technologies for the assessment of student performance.

Networking

Like the BRAOU and the KOU, the YCMOU joined the open university network from the initial stage itself. It acquired several programmes from the IGNOU, translated them into Marathi, the language of the state, and had also shared its learning package with other open universities.

YCMOU Experience

The YCMOU experience has been very different from that of BRAOU and KOU. The fact that YCMOU was launched only after the open learning system had already acquired some experience in India enabled it to draw upon that experience. More importantly, its efforts at moving away from traditional higher education programmes to more vocational/technical/professional education areas helped the university to provide greater relevance to the courses it offered. The extension education programmes of the university established what the open learning system can do in the area of mass education and how skill development can be integrated into the pedagogy of distance education.

The Nalanda Open University in Bihar, though established in 1987, did not really take off. It has still to become functional even in 1999.

2.3.4 Pointers for future action

The functioning of the Open University system at the state level has had its successes as well as its failures. The experience has provided a few guidelines for further action, leading to improvements in the system. They are:

- necessity for a specific thrust in the academic programmes;
- desirability of structural flexibility in the programmes;
- need to shape academic programmes to suit existing social and economic needs;
- advantages of sharing programmes and courses;
- need to make special efforts to attract students from rural areas and from the weaker sections of society;
- need to make effective integrated study packages;
- significance of organising better student support services;
- importance of effective administration;
- necessity of taking steps towards professionalising the faculty through systematic training.

Check Your Progress 3

What are the major lessons to be drawn from the experience of state level open universities in India?

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

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

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2.4 LET US SUM UP

Giving a detailed picture of the emergence of the open university system in India has been the espoused task of this unit. We have gone about the job by looking at i) the ideas generated by a study of the weaknesses of correspondence education (as seen in unit 1) and the search for an innovative system that would effectively respond to the rising social demand for higher education and ii) the origin, growth and scope of the open university system at the national and state levels. In a nutshell, these two focal points hold the

fabric of this unit together. You will also have noticed how government policies and plans have contributed to the design and development of the system and how the policies and approaches of the central and state governments converge in evolving the open learning system at the national level.

2.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1. IGNOU endeavour to address the following concerns: (i) the function of a university offering academic programmes (ii) continuing and extension education as a special thrust area (iii) use of methodology with emphasis on innovation and application of technology (iv) emphasis on socio-economic and socio-political relevance of courses.
2. Emerging trends are: (i) the regional language is more popular as a medium of instruction (ii) BRAOU is yet to make a dent in attracting large enrolment from the rural population (iii) the enrolment percentage from the disadvantaged groups is relatively low (iv) the proportion of women is also low in terms of enrolment (v) a large number of its students are unemployed raising questions about the relevance of its academic programmes.
3. The experience of the state open universities in India provides valuable lessons for the future growth of open and distance education in India. It establishes the diversity of the learner groups; the variations in their learning needs; the criticality of the opportunities for education as well as the means for accessing them; and the essentiality of political support for the sustenance of the system.

UNIT 3 GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF IGNOU

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 IGNOU: A university with a difference
- 3.3 Governance
 - 3.3.1 Structure of governance
 - 3.3.2 Officers of the university
 - 3.3.3 Finance
- 3.4 Organizational structure: Subsystems
 - 3.4.1 Course design, development and preparation
 - 3.4.2 Student services
 - 3.4.3 Material production and distribution
 - 3.4.4 Management and administrative support
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit primarily addresses issues of organisation and management of distance education with IGNOU as the focus. It would, at this stage, be in order to refresh our memory about the principles and practices of management that we looked at in the previous blocks. Management is the process of getting activities done efficiently and effectively, making decisions on what to do (goal/ objective), how to do it (strategies) and then checking that it is done correctly (monitoring). The functions of management generally fall into four categories: planning, organising, leading and controlling. Planning includes defining goals, establishing strategy, and developing plans to coordinate activities. Organising involves determining the tasks to be done, deciding who does what, how the tasks are grouped, who reports to whom, and where decisions are made. This function has a great deal to do with the design of the structure of an organisation. Leadership is about setting the directions, developing the culture of the organisation, determining its principles and values and motivating the people in the organisation to commit themselves to those principles and values. Controlling generally involves monitoring the activities regularly to ensure that they are done according to the plans made and that corrective measures are taken in time to see that there are no departures from the directions initially set out.

The distance learning system depends a great deal on organising and managing, as there is no direct contact between the teacher and the student, as there is in traditional education. This physical separation of the student from the teacher

and the institution demands that facilities and services are put in place so that any distant (and often isolated) learner can access the learning resources materials, media, tutorials/counselling, etc. and administrative services like enrolment, fee payment, examination schedules, etc. Remember, in a university or a college, a notice stuck on the main Notice Board is the means of communication to all students on any matter affecting their academic life; in a distance teaching institution, every piece of information has to be individually communicated to each student as schedules change, new developments take place, and new procedures are evolved.

Against this background, this unit looks in detail at the pattern of governance and organizational structure of IGNOU. The purpose of this exercise is two-fold. You have already studied the organizational structure of several single mode open universities around the world in Unit 2, Block 3. Going back to the theme after looking at the case of an institution representative of its type in India should enable you to form a clear, informed and definitive perspective on the planning and management processes associated with the development of the open university system in India. This Block intends to focus on the open university system in India in general, and on IGNOU as a lead institution in particular. From this point of view, this unit serves as the tool for narrowing down the focus of this Block. In addition, this unit gives you a lot of details regarding the operational aspects of IGNOU which will indirectly hone and improve your understanding of the managerial processes underlying the system.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After having studied this unit, you should be able to

- explain the basic features of IGNOU and what makes it a unique institution,
- examine the pattern of governance, the structure of the organisation and the relationship among the authorities, the officers, and the units of organisation of the university,
- analyse the structure of the major subsystems, how they are organised, and the ways in which they are functioning, and
- provide a model of an organisational structure for a new open university.

3.2 IGNOU: A UNIVERSITY WITH A DIFFERENCE

In the previous unit, we have discussed at some length how the concept behind IGNOU evolved over a period of time, how the policy pronouncements of the Central Government from time to time influenced the shaping of the open university system, and with what objectives and priorities was IGNOU actually established. It is now time for us to take a closer look at IGNOU as an institution with particular focus on its organisation and management.

As an institution, IGNOU's mandate is significantly different from that of any other university in the country, not just a national open university engaged in distance education covering the entire country, but more significantly, by its character as a lead institution functioning as a promoter and standard setter in distance education in India. Perhaps there is no parallel anywhere else in the world of a University performing these dual functions – those of offering programmes and of leading other open universities in their development. In that respect, IGNOU is a unique institution.

All the universities in the country are established under Acts of Parliament or State Legislatures (the only exceptions are institutions deemed to be universities). The pattern of governance of all universities is broadly similar. The Government which finances the universities performs a role which involves giving advice, or even laying down guidelines, with no direct participation in the management. This role is performed through the mechanism of the Visitor in the case of Central Universities and the Chancellor in the case of State Universities. The guiding principle is that universities function with an assured degree of autonomy, with no direct participation by the political government, but their work and contributions should reflect national policies and aspirations and lead to the nation's development.

The management of the universities is based on the models of self-governing corporate structures functioning on democratic principles. Democracy here has to be understood not in terms of political government involving the Establishment and the Opposition, but as a participatory process of management. Universities have two distinct domains of activity. One is its academic functions, determining what to teach and how (prescribing the courses of study, their content and structure, the standards, the methods of teaching and evaluation of student performance, etc) which is performed by the Academic Council, and the second is the management function which involves administration of the personnel, funds and property, which is the responsibility of the Executive Councils (also called Syndicates or Boards of Managements). The details have been discussed in Unit-4 of Block-2.

With this recapitulation of the general pattern of university management in India, we now proceed to consider the details of the management structure of IGNOU.

Check Your Progress 1

What do you understand by the statement 'IGNOU is a Unique Institution'?
Write your answer in 50 words.

Notes : i) Space is given below for your answer

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

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3.3 GOVERNANCE

As in the case of other central universities, the President of India is the Visitor of the IGNOU. In this capacity, he has certain over-arching powers in the governance of the University. He appoints the Vice-Chancellor and nominates a specified number of persons on the statutory authorities like the Board of Management, the Academic Council, and the Planning Board of the University. The Visitor can institute inspections and inquiries and on their outcomes, issue directions to the University; he/she can annul its proceedings if they are not in conformity with the Act or with the relevant Statutes and Ordinances. Generally, he also appoints one person on every Selection Committee for appointment of teachers as well as other senior officers.

3.3.1 Structure of governance

The Universities are corporate bodies. The constituents which are incorporated into the University are the members of various authorities as well as the officers of the University who are appointed to various positions as provided in the Act. We will first take up the authorities for discussion.

The important policy making bodies of the University are known as Authorities: At IGNOU there are:

- i) Board of Management
- ii) Academic Council
- iii) Planning Board
- iv) Schools of Studies
- v) Finance committee.
- vi) Distance Education Council

IGNOU, unlike the other Central Universities, does not have a Court or a Senate. Most of the university bodies perform the functions described in the previous block and therefore we shall not repeat them here. We shall only mention their constitution and indicate their unique features where necessary.

Board of Management

The Board of Management is the principal executive body of the university and in that capacity lays down its broad policies, besides managing its affairs. It is a 15 member body, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, and consisting of 4 members drawn from inside, and 10 from outside. The external members are drawn from several constituencies including the government, commerce, industry, as well as distance education and media/communication fields. This composition ensures that the policies and programmes of the university are decided on the basis of informed views of societal needs and expectations. Generally, all the major decisions relating to organisation of the programmes and activities of the university, namely infrastructure development, establishment of delivery systems, cooperation and collaboration with external agencies, and all matters

relating to the development of the distance education system are taken by the Board of Management.

Academic Council

Another important authority of the university is the *Academic Council* which is the principal academic body of the university. The Academic Council is responsible for the university's academic policies and the maintenance of standards of instruction and evaluation of student performance in the university. A majority of its members are drawn from among the academics at the university; ten external members are coopted by the Academic Council itself. The concept of an 'academic' in the open university has a wider meaning than what usually understood in the context of the conventional universities. The term includes besides teachers, all those media experts, educational technologists, those providing academic support to students in the regions and others, who are associated with the creation, preparation, production and delivery of the academic programmes and courses at the university.

Planning Board

Unlike many of the conventional universities, the National Open University has a Planning Board, which is the principal planning body of the university. Its responsibility is to design and formulate appropriate programmes and activities of the university. It has a right to advise the Board of Management and the Academic Council. It consists of fifteen members who have a three-year term. The Planning Board is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, and has four members selected from the academics at the University, and five members each nominated by the Visitor and the Board of Management from constituencies like technical/vocational education, media, industry commerce, learned professions etc.

The Project Report (1985) on the Indira Gandhi National Open University envisaged the role of the Planning Board as a "Think Tank" for the university. It therefore, consists of outstanding educationists drawn from different disciplines in the country. It has not only to formulate new programmes but also to give general advice and directions to the university. It is also responsible for perspective planning, as well as for the evaluation of the performance of the university.

Schools of Studies

The Schools of Studies perform the core functions of the University, namely prescribing the programmes of study, formulating the courses, determining their content and structure, and developing and producing the learning packages.

The Schools of Studies are the basic units of academic organisation of the University. Each school consists of a number of disciplines assigned to it by the Academic Council. The creation of any School requires an amendment to

the statute for its inclusion in the relevant statutory provision. Every discipline has a number of positions of Professors, Readers and Lecturers. Depending upon the number of disciplines assigned to each, the strength of the faculty varies from School to School.

Every School has a School Board which is responsible for designing courses, determining their content and structure and developing the course material. The Board also approves the syllabus in accordance with the course structure on the advice of Expert Committees. For each programme of study, the Board formulates proposals for the orientation programmes of counsellors, and course writers as well as lays down general guidelines for counselling students. In addition, the School Boards are expected to review the methodologies for material development and preparation, the courses already on offer for necessary revision and also the arrangements for the delivery of programmes. The School Board consists of teachers of the School, a few teachers from other Schools, and five external experts in the disciplines assigned to the School.

The Schools function under the overall supervision of the Academic Council.

Finance Committee

As in other central universities, there is at IGNOU a Finance Committee of not more than 7 members. All these members, other than the Vice-Chancellor, hold office for a term of three years and it meets at least thrice a year. Its important powers and functions are:

- to prepare the annual budgets and fix the limits for the total recurring and non-recurring expenditure. No expenditure shall be incurred by the university in excess of the limits so fixed;
- to examine the proposals relating to revision of grades, upgradation of scales, etc. before they are considered by the Board of Management;
- to consider the annual accounts and financial estimates of the university prepared by the Finance Officer, before they are submitted to the Board of Management;
- to examine the accounts and scrutinise the expenditure.

Distance Education Council

You will recall that in Unit- 2, while discussing the uniqueness of IGNOU, we made a reference to its special role in leading the open university system in the country and its promotional, coordinating and standard setting functions. The operationalisation of this role took some time and effort.

The basic features of this role were provided in the guidelines of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) in June 1987 which we considered in Unit 1. These were:

Governance and Organisational Structure of IGNOU

- development of an Open University Network
- pooling and sharing of programmes and courses
- establishment of a Coordination Council.

It is this Coordination Council which later emerged as a statutory mechanism to perform the functions of promotion, coordination and maintenance of standards in the open and distance education system in India. This mechanism is called the Distance Education Council established in 1992 as a statutory authority under a special statute framed under the IGNOU Act.

The Distance Education Council is chaired by the Vice-chancellor of IGNOU. The Education Secretary, Government of India, and Secretary, UGC are its ex-officio members. The Council has three members nominated by the President of India, two members of the Board of Management of IGNOU nominated by it, two Vice-Chancellors of State Open Universities, two Directors of Distance Education from Dual Mode Universities, a member of the UGC and a distance education teacher.

We mention the DEC here since it is an authority under the IGNOU Act, and we shall discuss its roles and functions as well as its contributions to the growth of the open and distance education system in India in some detail in the last unit of this Block.

Check Your Progress 2

Match the authorities in Column 1 with their characteristics in Column 2.

Note: Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the Unit.

Column 1	Column 2
i) Academic Council	a) Is the principal executive body of the university
ii) Board of Management	b) Gives general advice and directions to the university.
iii) Planning Board	c) Maintains the standards of instruction and evaluation
iv) Finance Committee	d) Looks after financial estimates of the university

3.3.2 Officers of the university

We shall now turn to the officers of the University, who are appointed to various positions provided in the Act. The powers and functions of each of

these officers as well as the method, terms and conditions of their appointment are specified in the Act and the Statutes.

Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor is the chief academic and executive officer of the university, and is appointed by the Visitor from a panel of not less than three persons prepared by a Search Committee. The Vice-Chancellor is the Chairman of the Board of Management, the Academic Council, the Planning Board and the Finance Committee. It is the duty of the Vice-Chancellor to see that the Act, the statutes, the ordinances and the regulations are duly followed in the day to day working of the university.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor

The Project Report for the National Open University suggested that the open university, because of its multi-farious functions should have more Pro-Vice-Chancellors than the conventional universities have. The suggestion was accepted and incorporated in the Act of the university.

According to the provisions in the Act, Pro-Vice-Chancellors are appointed by the Board of Management on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor for a term of three years; however, they demit office when the Vice-Chancellor's term of office ends. The principle enshrined in this provision is that the Vice-chancellor chooses his/her own team of senior management and the whole team goes out of office when the Vice-Chancellor himself/herself leaves. The senior most member of this team, however, stays on till a new Vice-Chancellor is appointed and he/she assumes office. Each Pro-Vice-chancellor is assigned specific areas of work like Schools of Studies, Student Support Services, Technology Applications, etc. At present, Indira Gandhi National Open University has five Pro-Vice-Chancellors

Directors

Directors are a category of senior officers of the University who are drawn from the academic as well as the professional/technical/administrative streams, and ranked next to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor in the hierarchy of the University. All the Schools of Studies are headed by Directors (this position is equivalent to that of Deans in conventional universities). There are besides several other Divisions, each responsible for a functional area (Regional Services, Student Registration and Evaluation, Material Production and Distribution, for example), and each one of them is also headed by a Director.

The Act provides that every Director be appointed by the Board of Management, on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor if the person to be appointed is already a teacher of the University, and in all other cases, on the recommendation of a Selection Committee. These provisions have been further elaborated, and made more explicit over a period of time. Currently, the Director of a School is appointed from among the Professors of that School, on

the basis of rotation among the disciplines assigned to it. A director of a School holds office for a term of 3 years. Directors of various Divisions are generally appointed through the system of open recruitment. Their term of office is 5 years which can be renewed.

The Directors of Schools and Divisions exercise both administrative and financial powers. Their administrative powers are generally supervisory, in respect of the staff working in their respective schools/divisions; they are also responsible for the execution of the functions and tasks assigned to the Schools and Divisions. For the performance of these functions, they are delegated adequate financial powers under the University's Financial Code.

Registrar

According to the IGNOU Act, the Registrar is appointed by the Board of Management on the recommendation of a Selection Committee.

The Registrar is the custodian of the university's records and properties, and provides Secretarial support (issuing notices, convening meetings, preparing agenda and minutes) of all the university bodies. He represents the university in its dealings with all external agencies and organisations. He is also the disciplinary authority for secretarial and ministerial staff.

Finance Officer

The Finance Officer is appointed by the Board of Management on the recommendation of a Selection Committee. The Finance Officer holds and manages the properties and investments of the university, advises the university on its financial policies ensures that the limits fixed by the Finance Committee for recurring and non-recurring expenditure for a year are not exceeded, is responsible for the preparation of the annual budget and keeps a constant watch on the cash and expenditure of the university.

Check Your Progress 3

Here are three incomplete sentences about the functions of the officers of IGNOU. Complete them.

Note: Compare your answer with one given at the end of the Unit.

- i) The Pro-Vice-Chancellor at IGNOU is appointed by the _____.
- ii) The _____ is the custodian of records of the university.
- iii) The Finance Officer advises the university on its _____.

3.3.3 Finance

IGNOU is funded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The amount of grants received directly from the government sources was over 90% of the total revenue in 1987-88, which was the first year of IGNOU's academic operation. The basis on which the Central Government provides finances to the educational institutions established by it is 'cover-the-deficit'. During the initial period, this pattern worked well. However, as the University expanded and its enrolment increased, the university began to earn substantial revenues, and the proportion of government grants in the revenue expenditure came down significantly. Ten years after its establishment, 80% of its annual revenue expenditure was being met by the University from its own fee income while the government grants progressively declined to just about 20 percent or so. All the capital expenditure of the university is fully provided by the Central Government. This includes land and buildings, audio-video production facilities, computing facilities and other equipment, furniture, and so on. Provision for all these facilities is made by the government as development funding which also includes investments on new programmes and courses. Such development funding is provided through Five Year Plans.

3.4 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE: SUB-SYSTEMS

We have mentioned earlier in this unit that the management of IGNOU, as indeed of all universities in India, is modelled on the basis of self-governing corporate structures. These structures, which we considered in the previous section, are the university's corporate bodies and are therefore, referred to as the statutory authorities. What is significant about these structures is that they cannot be modified or refashioned by the university management on its own ; it requires the sanction of the Visitor to make any changes in their composition or functions. However, from the point of view of organisation, the previous discussion would have given you an idea about where decisions are taken and by whom, within the organisational framework of IGNOU.

Organising, as we indicated in the introduction to this unit, involves much more than the structure of governance. It involves, for example, determination of the tasks to be done, decisions about who does what and who reports to whom, and how the tasks are grouped into coherent fields of activity for the purpose of better coordination and improvement in efficiency and effectiveness. In what follows in this section, we shall discuss how IGNOU went about organising its activities.

After studying the organisational structures of open universities in Britain, Pakistan and Thailand, IGNOU decided that it should evolve a structure that would be flexible enough to permit experiments and innovations as the university gained experience while the functional needs of the system were met

adequately. Generally, the open learning system is known to comprise four major sub-systems. These are:

- curriculum design and development as well as preparation of instructional packages;
- provision of student services including tutorials and other local services;
- production and distribution of materials;
- management and administrative support including personnel, funds, infrastructure, etc.

IGNOU's strategy was to design a structure that would, in the initial stages, respond to the functional needs of each of these four sub-systems. It was envisaged that no simple structure could perform all the complex functions that a vast system like IGNOU would be called upon to perform and that it would be advisable to proceed with caution and let the structure evolve in response to functional needs. Accordingly, the initial organisational structure was designed on the following basis:

- the core functions of course design, development and preparation are to be performed by the schools of studies. specialised facilities were organised to assist the schools in developing systems and procedures as well as in designing and developing audio-video material support;
- in the delivery of student services, the university had to rely heavily on the facilities and infrastructure available with other institutions and organisations and appropriate mechanisms were set up to mobilise these resources;
- all print material production was given out on contract to private presses and the university developed central warehousing and distribution facilities;
- the university developed its own administrative support system and modern technologies were inducted in its academic and administrative functions;
- the structure should be reviewed and modified from time to time with a view to improving efficiency, reducing costs and making the system effective.

We will now proceed to consider how the organisational structure of IGNOU evolved over a period of 13 years (1986-99) and how each of the major sub-systems was organised during the period.

The organogram giving the complete structure of IGNOU is given in Fig. 1 and details are presented in the following sub-sections.

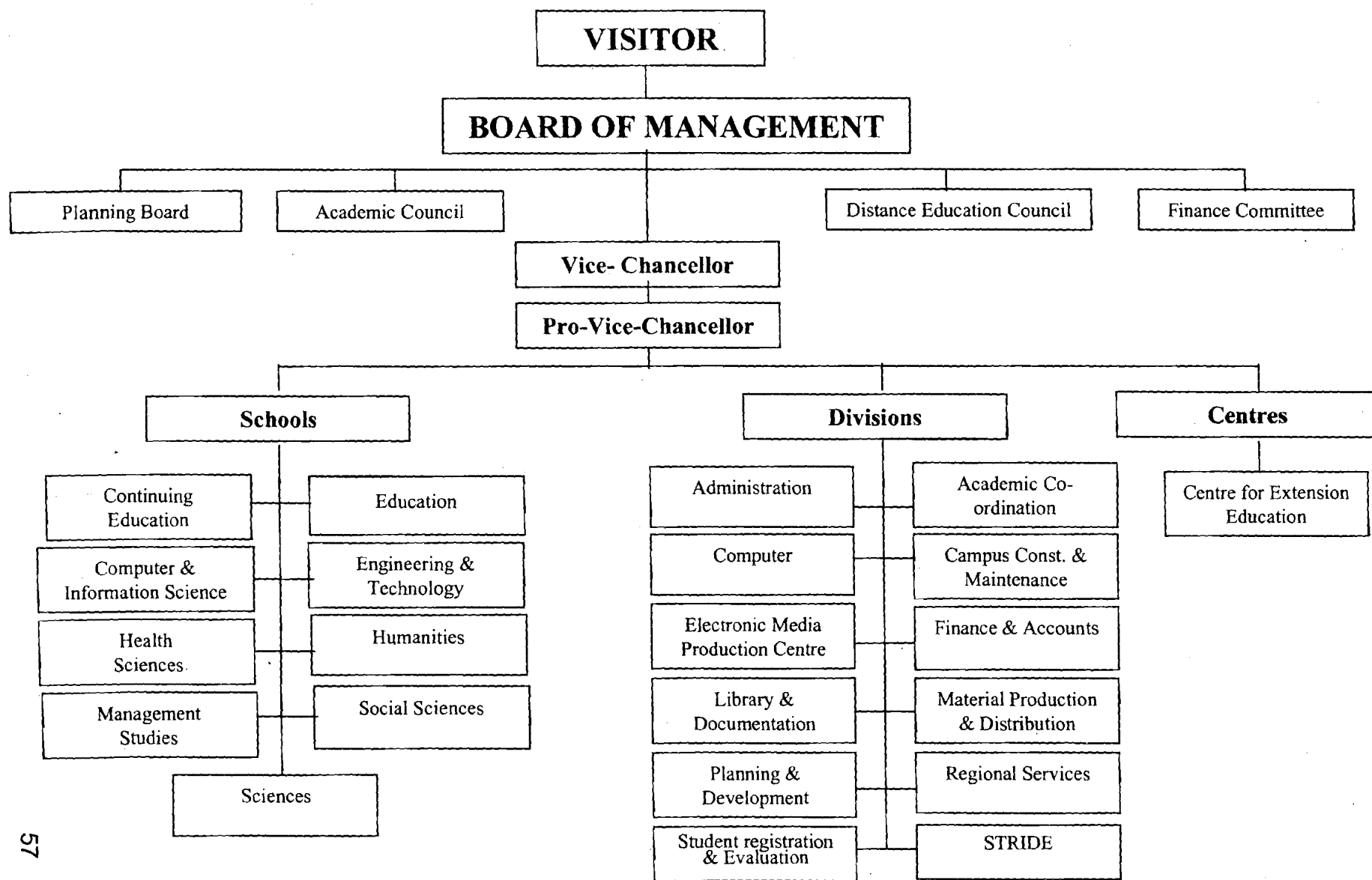


Fig. 1: Organisational Structure of IGNOU

3.4.1 Course design, development and preparation

a) Schools of Studies

While discussing the constitution of the University, we have had occasion to deal with the Schools of Studies which are responsible for the core academic functions of the university. It is not necessary to repeat the details of the composition and functions of the Schools of Studies and their Boards. The University has 9 Schools, namely:

- i) School of Humanities
- ii) School of Sciences
- iii) School of Social Sciences
- iv) School of Education
- v) School of Continuing Education
- vi) School of Management Studies
- vii) School of Engineering and Technology
- viii) School of Computer and Information Sciences
- ix) School of Health Sciences

Every School has a number of disciplines assigned to it. Each discipline has a Coordinator who is designated by the faculty of that discipline from among its members. Every programme of study has a Programme Coordinator and every course has a Course Coordinator. For designing the programmes and courses, the Schools constitute Expert Committees. The preparation of learning packages is done with the help of external course writers. The media packages are developed and produced by the Communication Division (now Electronic Media Production Centre) in collaboration with the Schools.

In the early stages, the manuscripts for printed materials, when finalised, were handed over to the Printing and Publication Division. This practice has since been reviewed and now every School gets its printing work done directly from the press.

b) Electronic Media Production Centre (EMPC)

The significance of education technology in the open university system was acknowledged and recognised from the beginning. In fact, IGNOU Act itself mentions that in the promotion of open learning system, IGNOU will endeavour to use all means of communication technology.

In the early stages, the university set up a Communication Division to prepare the audio/video texts that were to support the printed material.

The Division was headed by a Director who was assisted by three Joint Directors, one each for Radio and Television, Engineering, and Research and Development. Besides producing programmes to supplement the course

material, the main functions of the Division are to organize educational broadcasts through government media for the open university students, to undertake research in communication methods and technology applications for distance learning, and to organize training programmes for the media personnel both within IGNOU and outside it.

During the initial phase, there was only one TV studio and one audio studio, along with the associated facilities. Most of the programmes were produced at the studios. Before the studio set-up became operational, the strategy of producing audio/video programmes was largely through outdoor shootings, followed by post production work. Wherever necessary, outside facilities like an audio studio, additional equipment, etc. were hired from private sources. To cope with the increase in the demand of audio/video production to cater to the number of new academic programmes that the university launched, freelance producers were engaged in addition to the staff producers.

The initial infrastructure of the Communication Division was developed with the support provided by the Governments of Britain (studio facilities) and Japan (post production facilities). During 1994, the Government of Japan provided a generous grant to establish a state-of-the-art media production facility comprising two fully equipped video and two audio studios with all associated facilities. It was with the commissioning of these facilities in 1995 that the erstwhile Communication Division was renamed the Electronic Media Production Centre and its functions were reorganised. Almost simultaneously, the university also launched, with the support provided by the Indian Space Research Organisation, a teleconferencing facility to provide academic counselling to students. The video programmes of the university were already being telecast through the national television network since 1991. The technical and organisational support required for teleconferencing as well as for television diffusion devolved on the EMPC.

The reorganised EMPC consists at present of the following units:

- production unit responsible for the design and development of media packages for the university's academic programmes;
- engineering unit responsible for infrastructure development and maintenance;
- education and training unit which organises programmes of training for media personnel from IGNOU as well as from state open universities. This unit also supports the academic programmes of the university in media studies;
- marketing and customer services unit which is responsible for extending the EMPC facilities to other agencies and organisations to ensure the optimum use of the infrastructure provided.

**c) Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE)
(Previously Division of Distance Education)**

The Distance Education Division was initially set up for providing necessary academic support to the Schools of Studies in preparation of self-learning print material, programme evaluation and staff development. Assistance in the former field i.e. the development of self-learning materials has been well formalized, and is provided on a regular basis.

In addition, the Division launched a Diploma programme in Distance Education with a view to developing the much needed human resources for the existing distance education centres and others which were to come up soon. Later, the Division also launched post-graduate programmes in distance education leading to the Master's Degree to the students in India and other commonwealth countries. Other activities of the Division included the organisation of a number of short-term training programmes and workshops for academics and other professionals in the university, both at the headquarters and at the regional centres, training of trainers in distance education, and preparation of manuals and handbooks for functionaries at various levels.

It is a measure of the critical significance of these efforts that the Distance Education Division was upgraded in 1993 as the Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) with the following functional responsibilities:

- research in distance education system and its methodologies;
- training of distance education personnel;
- a national resource centre for the development of distance education personnel;
- extension of its facilities and expertise to the developing countries in the South Asian Region.

3.4.2 Student services

In a distance teaching system students have to be provided with a wide range of services. In simple terms, these services include access to information about programmes, courses, how to enrol and when, whom to contact for tutorial guidance and advice, where to pay fees, where to sit for examinations, and so on. Unlike the traditional system, in which the students generally have uniform levels of attainment, motivation and commitment, the open learning system usually has a vastly heterogeneous body of students. They are from diverse backgrounds, with varying levels of prior educational attainments, and their objectives are vastly different to fit any single pattern of attitudes and behaviour. The managers of the open learning system have therefore to take all these factors into account while designing and organising the student services sub-system.

In establishing the student services sub-system at IGNOU, there were several concerns which had to be taken into account. These were:

- the vastness of the country and the varying patterns and levels of educational development in different regions;
- establishing the credibility of the distance education system in the context of the none-too-satisfactory experience with correspondence education;
- securing the involvement of the vast educational infrastructure already available in the country in the promotion of distance education;
- providing easy access to information, materials and services to students.

At its very inception, it was felt that IGNOU would have to work through a large number of study centres to reach out to a large numbers of students in all parts of the country, and that it would be necessary to establish a number of Regional Centres to supervise and coordinate the work of a certain number of Study Centres. With these purposes in view, the IGNOU Act itself provided for the establishment of a study centre network spread throughout the country. Also, to coordinate and supervise the work of study centers, provision was made for the establishment of Regional Centres.

Regional Centres are mostly located in the state capitals. At present there are 22 regional centres, each of which is headed by a Regional Director. His/her principal responsibility within the region is to direct, the university's efforts in accordance with established policies and procedures, and to coordinate the working of the study centres in his/her region. An average Regional Centre now has three Assistant Regional Directors (of the level of Lecturers) and an Assistant Registrar, besides some fifteen supporting staff drawn from the administrative stream.

At this stage, it would be useful to reflect on a major issue that is critical to the organisation and management of a vast and complex system like IGNOU. And the issue is that of centralisation versus decentralisation. To begin with, it was felt that most of the student services should be provided centrally to ensure uniformity in their nature and quality. Soon enough, it was realised that excessive centralisation compromises the efficiency of these services and therefore the Regional Centres which so far functioned only as an intermediate node for dissemination should become a more active nodal point for students to access various services. Gradually, several functions began to get decentralised and the Regional Centres assumed the role of more dynamic centres of activity within the IGNOU system. The major functions which are now being performed by the Regional Centres are:

- establishment of the Study Centre network in the region which also includes work centres, programme centres and facilities for practical and experimental work;
- liaison with State Governments, universities and other educational institutions in the region;

Governance and Organisational Structure of IGNOU

- appointment of part-time staff at the Study Centres;
- coordination and supervision of the working of the study centres;
- admission of students to all programmes;
- collection of fees from the students;
- appointment of counsellors/tutors for each study centre;
- evaluation of student assignments and maintenance of assignment records;
- ensuring the efficiency of the delivery system;
- provision of access to teleconferencing.

The facilities available at the Regional Centres include a library containing books relevant to distance education, course materials developed by the university, reference books, and also audio and video tapes.

It is at the Study Centres that the students are provided with important human support in the form of academic counsellors in addition to facilities for listening to and viewing the audio and video tapes. The study centres have been established depending on the number of students and their geographical distribution. In most cases, the study centres are hosted by conventional colleges, and in some cases these are in other institutions which have the necessary infrastructural facility.

Each study centre is headed by a part-time coordinator under the overall supervision of the head of the institution, where the study centre is located. There may also be an assistant coordinator, if the number of students attached to the study centre is large. Besides, there are part-time academic counsellors, who provide assistance to the students in scheduled counselling sessions. The coordinator coordinates the work of the counsellors/tutors, and acts as a link between the university, the Regional Centre and the study centre. The University has at present about 600 study centres, spread all over the country.

Some of the major functions of a study centre are:

- it is the contact point for the students with the university;
- it arranges counselling, guidance, and advice for the students;
- it receives all student assignments and makes arrangements for their evaluation;
- it has a library which stocks all the required study materials for the courses and programmes of the university;
- it provides listening/viewing facilities for the audio/video programmes produced by the university for various courses and programmes.

The management of the Regional Centre Study Centre network throughout the country is the responsibility of the Regional Services Division at the

headquarters of the University. This Division is headed by a senior academic who is assisted by a number of academics and administrative staff.

The Regional Services Division at the headquarters forms through its network of study centres and regional centres, the link between the University and its students. It is the efficiency and effectiveness of this link that determines how the university is able to fulfil its mandate. It is not enough to produce the best academic programmes; they should reach the students who in turn should feel satisfied with the efficiency and quality of the services that go with the delivery of the programmes. The management of the university has to be vigilant about the performance of this sector and its functioning needs to be kept under constant monitoring and review.

The IGNOU has a separate Division for Student Registration and Evaluation. This Division coordinates admission to all programmes of the university and maintains the student registration records. All University examinations, including assignment evaluation, are organised and coordinated by this Division, which works in close cooperation with the Regional Services Division.

3.4.3 Material production and distribution

The material distribution function consists mainly of the despatch of study materials to students. Initially, the university decided that materials to all students would be despatched centrally. For this purpose, a central warehouse was established for storing, sorting, packing and labelling the materials. As soon as admissions were finalised, the address labels of all the students were prepared by the Computer Division and handed over to the Distribution Division. A certain degree of mechanisation was also used in the preparation of packages for despatch.

With the rapid expansion of enrolment, and the multiplicity of programmes and courses, the distribution system became too complex and its efficiency came under severe pressure. Delay in the receipt of materials by students began to increase, as did their complaints. The university responded with several new approaches. For programmes with large enrolments, the university transferred materials in bulk to Regional Centres for local redistribution. These arrangements also posed several new problems. Students did not collect the materials when they reached the Regional Centres which had to make arrangements for storing them. Sometimes, even the bulk carriers failed to reach the destinations on time.

This is an area where no simple solutions exist. Considering the vastness of the country and the ever increasing number of students, the management has to constantly try and evolve new and imaginative approaches to solve the problems of logistics involved in the distribution of materials. Some of the important steps being tried out are:

In the last two years, the university has revived its centralised distribution system. With detailed advance planning and close supervision, the distribution of materials is now completed as per the schedules. The measures taken are:

- improved inventory management and control;
- preparation of detailed despatch schedules for each programme and adherence to those schedules;
- programmewise preparation of address labels as soon as admissions are finalised;
- direct despatch of materials for low enrolment programmes ;
- engagement of bulk mailers and despatchers for high enrolment programmes.

Whereas the printed texts are despatched to the individual students, the audio/video material is despatched only to the study centres and the regional centres. The students have to visit their study centres if they wish to use audio/video material. There are no arrangements for lending, leasing or selling the audio/video tapes directly to the students. The average student attendance at study centres is only around 36%. It follows that a large majority of students do not access the audio/video tapes, either because they need to travel long distances to study centres to do so or because they do not feel that the use of electronic media is essential for their studies.

3.4.4 Management and administrative support

a) Computer Division

In view of the 'large numbers' that the university has to deal with – in admission, in evaluation, in monitoring, and in maintaining records – the use of computers has become a necessity.

The Computer Division initially used to process all data related to the students admission and examinations. The data related to the admission process, recording of continuous assessment, processing of Computer Marked Assignments, recording of examination data (marks etc.) and producing the grade cards. The administration and accounts of the university are also computerized through the efforts of this Division.

The Division also generates profiles of the students on relevant variables, which provide the necessary back-up for policy decisions. For example, the geographical distribution of the students, the age group of the students in a particular programme, etc.

As mentioned earlier, the importance of computerisation of all operations was recognised even at the time of the preparation of the project report. Presently, all teachers have access to personal computers for their day-to-day work. Computing systems have also been developed and put in place in most of the operational areas, such as those of admission, distribution, examination, etc.

With these developments, the university no longer depends on a centralised computing facility and the major functions of the Computer Division at present are:

- software development for applications;
- maintenance of computer hardware;
- training of personnel;
- establishment and maintenance of LAN and WAN;
- maintenance of central data base.

b) Planning and Development Division

The Planning and Development Division performs a key role in the development of the university. It not only evaluates and reports the status of various aspects of the development of the university at a particular point of time, but also provides perspective and strategic plans for the future. The most crucial decisions that the university has to take are in the area of the determination of programmes and courses. The Planning Division of the university shares this responsibility with the Schools and provides the data-base for taking these decisions. It has to constantly monitor information on manpower needs, areas of shortages and emerging occupational scenarios. We shall discuss the role of planning in IGNOU in some detail in the next unit.

c) Administration, Finance and Estate Management

Like any other major organisation, IGNOU also has to administer and manage its personnel, property and finances. Separate organisational units have been set up to deal with each one of these aspects. Personnel administration of the university is the responsibility of two Divisions – an Academic Coordination Division that deals with all administrative matters relating to the academics of the university, while the Registrar's office looks after the administration of all other staff. The Finance and Account Division looks after the administration of finances and accounting while a separate Division consisting of engineering and technical staff looks after campus construction and estate management.

The University has recently established a Centre of Extension Education to initiate extension programmes for the benefit of the larger community. The programmes and activities of the centre are formulated on the advice of an Extension Council set up by the University.

Another new unit set up recently is the International Cell. The major function of this unit is the administration and coordination of all international programmes. The university has recently launched a number of its programmes outside India. This is a growing area of activity and the organisational framework for its operations is yet to be fully developed.

Check Your Progress 4

Compare the organisational structure of IGNOU with that of any conventional university that you have been associated with or have a knowledge of and list 2 or 3 main differences.

Note : i) Space is given below for your answer
ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

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3.5 LET US SUM UP

This unit pertains specifically to the structure of governance and organisation of the IGNOU. It gives you information about the various authorities of the university like the Visitor, Board of Management, Academic Council, Planning Board, and Finance Committee and the Distance Education Council. The officers of the university are the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Directors, Registrars and Finance Officer. The organisational structure of the IGNOU consists of the various Schools of Study and the Divisions that have academic as well as administrative functions. It also discusses IGNOU's role as an apex body performing the functions of coordination and promotion of distance education in the country.

3.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS : POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1. IGNOU's mandate is significantly different from that of any other university in the country. The dual roles assigned to IGNOU are: offering programmes of education and leading other open learning institutions in their development. This is a unique feature which has no parallel in the world.

2.
 - i) - (c)
 - ii) - (a)
 - iii) - (b)
 - iv) - (d)
3.
 - a) Board of Management
 - b) Registrar
 - c) Financial policy
4. The conventional universities have a more or less simple structure. The core functions of teaching and research are performed by the faculties consisting of several departments. The courses prescribed by the faculty are taught in direct interaction with the students. In the IGNOU, the major role of the faculty is to design, develop, and prepare courses; these teachers are not directly involved with students. Unlike the conventional universities, IGNOU has a large system for production and distribution of instructional materials. The media production facilities set up by IGNOU are another major departure in its organisational design.

UNIT 4 PLANNING AND COORDINATION AT IGNOU

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Planning and Development
 - 4.2.1 Strategic planning
 - 4.2.2 The Planning framework
 - 4.2.3 The Planning processes
 - 4.2.4 Programme development and delivery
 - 4.2.5 Infrastructure development
- 4.3 Coordination
 - 4.3.1 Coordination mechanism in IGNOU
 - 4.3.2 The Management information system
 - 4.3.3 Quality control
- 4.4 Planning Outcomes and Performance Indicators
 - 4.4.1 Provision of opportunities
 - 4.4.2 Completion ratios and drop-outs
 - 4.4.3 Quality of output
 - 4.4.4 Cost efficiency and effectiveness
- 4.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.6 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to Unit-3, we had noted that planning consists of deciding what to do (setting out the objectives), how to do (elaborating the strategies for achieving those objectives), ensuring that the directions set for achieving the goals are indeed followed (coordination and monitoring) and assessing the outcome of the efforts in relation to the objectives set out initially (evaluation of performance). This process of planning and coordination is relevant to all organised activities, irrespective of their scale and complexity. In this unit, we shall discuss how this process operates in IGNOU, and how the university goes about fulfilling its objectives.

Although the process of planning is associated with the determination and execution of every task, in this unit we shall limit the scope to discussing the macro-level institutional planning in IGNOU. This discussion will take us through the role and functions of the Planning and Development Division, the processes involved in deciding the programmes and activities of the university, how various activities within the university are coordinated and monitored, what mechanisms are in place for this purpose and how the efficiency and effectiveness of IGNOU are perceived and evaluated.

These questions are taken up for study in this and the following unit by highlighting the operational aspects of IGNOU, a particular though unique institution, as an illustrative case. As was the case with earlier units, the discursive tone of this unit is deceptive. We intend in this unit, to underline and reiterate the managerial processes of planning and coordination (already outlined in Unit-4: Block-3) with reference to a specific institution belonging to the open university system. IGNOU's multiple roles are used here to draw your attention to the complex mechanics of planning and the elements of control and coordination required to make such a huge operation function flawlessly.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying through this unit, you will be able to

- describe and discuss the role and significance of strategic planning in the development of IGNOU,
- explain the processes associated with planning and management at IGNOU, especially in the formulation of programmes and their implementation,
- examine the strategic options available to a new open university in its formative stages in organising programmes and activities,
- analyse the critical role of planning, coordinating and monitoring in the management of an open university,
- explain the significance of management information systems in the operations of open universities, and
- indicate the instrumentalities being developed for assessment of the performance of IGNOU.

4.2 PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

We have dealt with the broad objectives of IGNOU as a national open university in Unit-2. We have also looked at the structure of the organisation and management of the University in Unit-3. In this context, we have mentioned that the University has a Planning and Development Division which is concerned with perspective and strategic plans, and is also involved in the determination of programmes and activities and the monitoring of the progress of the university.

Text books on planning and management of distance education would suggest that from the planners' perspective, it would be essential to elaborate the purpose of the institution in terms of the needs to be satisfied, the learner groups to be addressed, the learning needs to be met, and the type and nature of programmes to be organised, etc. The university therefore commissioned a survey in 1986 to make a quick assessment of the society's expectations from

the university. The survey conducted by a professional agency which covered both organisations and households revealed some very interesting findings. The perceptions about learner groups and learning needs were wide ranging; the nature and type of programmes suggested covered a wide spectrum of professional, technical, vocational and general education at different levels, and both employers and employees felt that education and training of working people should get priority. While the importance of needs assessment as a planning tool is recognised, this survey also established the limitations of such exercises unless they are carried out in a highly focused framework built for the purpose.

4.2.1 Strategic planning

The Project Report had suggested that the university should organise academic programmes leading to the award of Bachelor's and Master's degrees, continuing and extension education programmes as well as research. The undergraduate and post graduate programmes, it was proposed, should aim at greater flexibility and diversity in structure and content, and should ensure good quality. The continuing education programmes should address the needs of various categories of employees in the public, private and self-employment sectors to improve their managerial and technical skills as well as their competence. The research programmes of the university should concentrate on the technology of distance education as well as its methodologies.

To fulfil these aspirations, the university adopted two strategies. First, to immediately initiate select continuing education programmes, and second, to follow them with programmes leading to the Bachelor's degree. It was felt that since there was no significant experience yet available in the running of distance education programmes through self-instructional material in multi-media packages, it would be more fruitful to run a couple of programmes on a pilot basis. Not only would it yield more empirical results, but would also help in testing the effectiveness of a delivery system covering the entire country before programmes on a large scale could be introduced.

As the pilot programmes were being prepared, the Planning Board of the university held a series of meetings. The major strategic decisions taken by the Planning Board in the initial stages were:

- the university should endeavour to design its programmes in modules; this modular structure should permit potential students to enrol at different levels of a programme, namely the certificate, diploma or degree level, according to their preference;
- it would be necessary to seek sponsorship for programmes, especially from the employing sectors, for the education and training of serving personnel;

- initiative should be taken to design and develop special programmes for the improvement of professional knowledge and skills, to enable both employed and unemployed people to enhance their opportunities in the job market;
- programmes addressed to the needs of people living in the rural areas and of women should have high priority;
- the Bachelor's degree programme of the university should be designed on a flexible model that would permit combinations of various courses in different disciplines with specified foundations courses as well as application oriented ones;
- the courses should be designed on the basis of credits which indicate the extent of study time required for their completion. This structure was also necessary to promote credit transfer and student mobility.

Type of Programmes

The initial programme profile of the university reflected these strategic options. The Management Programmes of the university have been developed in several modules, each leading to a diploma, and several of them constituting the MBA. The Distance Education diplomas and degree programmes contributed to the human resource development needs of the system. The university was successful in securing sponsorship for certain programmes for the training of people working in such areas as rural development and the upgradation of their competence. Programmes at different levels were developed in Food and Nutrition, Child Care, Education and Creative Writing. The University also launched a Bachelor's Degree Programme in Library and Information Science as a professional programme.

The Bachelor's Degree Programme in Arts, Commerce and Science developed by the university was a major innovation. It comprised certain foundation courses that provided a significant knowledge base to the graduates, constituting about 25% of the total degree programme, in-depth study of chosen disciplines constituting about 50% of the content and application-oriented courses relevant to the main disciplinary area constituting the rest. The IGNOU's Bachelor's degree programme was almost immediately noticed in the academic world.

In 1989, the university prepared its first development plan for the planning cycle 1990-95. The plan envisaged several new initiatives and approaches.

The significant directional changes suggested in the new development plan were:

- If the IGNOU has to fulfil its mandate of reaching out to large numbers of people, especially those belonging to the disadvantaged sections of society, it should seriously consider developing a stream programmes and courses that are work-oriented, and job-related.
- It would no longer be enough if the university developed and delivered the traditional academic programmes, mainly addressed to the needs of school leavers. A vast majority of adult learners would be interested in pursuing functionally useful and economically relevant programmes of education and training.
- The new programme development strategy should take into account the wide variations in learner groups and the still greater diversity of their needs.
- The programmes in the future should be so structured that it is possible for a large number of adult learners to enter at the lower end of the education and training spectrum and work their way up, in accordance with their needs, to higher levels of learning.
- The university should involve employers, professional organisations and practitioners in the field in the design and development of work-oriented and employment related programmes. Such an approach is essential if the curriculum is to be one that is informed about the needs of the employment market.
- IGNOU should simultaneously proceed with the development of traditional academic programmes leading to the award of degrees at the Bachelor's and Master's level. However, these programmes should also be in technical and professional areas and should reflect the needs of the employment sectors.
- It is necessary to develop an integrated approach to course development and delivery. It should be IGNOU's endeavour to secure the involvement of a wide spectrum of employers in the delivery of programmes, especially in imparting education and training at the workplace.
- An important element of this strategy could be the development of programmes of training and retraining of people at work in collaboration with their employers.

These programme development strategies and approaches were pursued with significant success during the 1992-97 planning cycle. A large number of new programmes were designed and launched during this period. These included:

- i) MA in Distance Education
- ii) Master's Degree in Library and Information Sciences
- iii) Master's Degree in Computer Applications
- iv) Bachelor's Degree in Computer Applications
- v) Bachelor's Degree in Nursing
- vi) Bachelor's Degree in Tourism Studies

- vii) PG Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication
- viii) Advanced Diploma in Construction Management
- ix) Advanced Diploma in Water Resources Engineering

Along with these programmes at the higher levels, there were a large number of certificate and diploma programmes as well, especially in areas like computing, education, nutrition and health education, tourism studies and so on.

These strategies apparently paid off. The annual enrolment level which was about 50,000 in 1990 went up to 150,000 by 1995. During this period, the university was also able to secure sponsorship for new programmes from several agencies. The university's willingness and initiative in launching sub-university level programmes addressed to the learning needs of large sections of society, captured the imagination of the government departments as well as of the industry. Some of these new initiatives are:

- Education and Training of elected members of Village Panchayats;
- A programme for the upgradation of the vocational competence of workers in the leather industry;
- A joint project for the training of construction workers.

There are other projects which the university has taken up for the training of women and youth. The important point is that the IGNOU has, as a major strategic initiative, taken up such programmes even though they do not formally qualify to be counted as university level programmes. Through these efforts, IGNOU is seeking to establish the principle that empowerment of the people is an important objective of educational provision and that distance education is an efficient and effective instrument in achieving this objective.

Check Your Progress 1

You have just studied the role of strategic planning in the evolution of the programme profile of IGNOU. How did these strategies help IGNOU achieve its objectives? Answer in about 50 words.

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

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

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4.2.2 The planning framework

We have discussed at some length the role of strategic planning in IGNOU, and its significance in setting the directions for programmes and activities that seek to fulfil the university's goals. We shall now turn to the organisational framework which facilitates strategic planning in IGNOU.

While discussing the organisational structure of IGNOU in Unit 3, you will recall that we have considered the role and functions of the Planning Board which is one of the university authorities. Its primary responsibility is the formulation of the university's programmes and activities. How does it go about performing this function?

Planning is essentially a function of management. It involves taking decisions on what to do, for whom, and how. At the core, these are decisions that any enterprise will be called upon to take, and these days when the market dominates all entrepreneurial decisions, it is no surprise that the market metaphor finds frequent expressions in the discourse on educational endeavours as well. This is increasingly so in the case of distance education which, it is claimed, is a market-driven enterprise. Without getting too involved in these semantics, let us make a few simple propositions here:

- It is necessary to have some ideas about the needs to be satisfied, before the programmes are drawn up. The traditional student groups coming out of schools are a known quantity, but the learner groups for distance education come from the entire social spectrum, and could be working adults, unemployed youth, housewives, the self-employed, those who wish to change jobs, those who are keen to obtain additional or higher qualifications, or those who are only seeking knowledge. To the extent that different learner groups are driven by different motivations, it is important, from the planner's perspective, to have a clearer perception about the needs to be satisfied in order to assess the viability and sustainability of any new initiative.
- Some clarity about the nature and type of programmes to be organised is an important dimension of the planning effort. For instance, it is necessary to identify the programme level (certificate, diploma, degree) and its nature (vocational, technical, professional, extension, etc) at the stage when the proposal gets crystallized.
- Other major inputs required at this stage would be the choice of media, the delivery system, the student assessment procedures, etc. which have implications for resource allocation and determination of priorities.

Having identified these major parameters we now turn to the organisational structures in IGNOU which concern themselves with the planning processes.

- i) **The Planning and Development Division:** The initial organisational structure of the university recognised planning as an important functional area and provided for a Planning Division to deal with the planning of new programmes, expansion of activities, and resource planning. It was also responsible for the management information system necessary for monitoring current activities and planning future ones. The Planning Division also dealt with functions relating to the administration of academic personnel. In practice, however, during the early stages, in the context of the need to evolve personnel policies for the development of the faculty, more attention was focused on that aspect than on planning. It was only in 1995, while restructuring the organisation of IGNOU, that a full-fledged Planning and Development Division was created which was also to assume the responsibilities for quality assurance, programme evaluation, costing, and project control. All these are critical areas for the effective functioning of the university and when these activities get properly organised the university will have developed an adequate planning structure.
- ii) **The Schools of Studies:** The major concern of the university's programmes is its academic offerings. These have to be designed and developed by the Schools of studies. The Planning and Development Division works in cooperation with the Schools in providing them with relevant information, and assisting them in developing their proposals as specific projects for consideration at various levels. We shall discuss the processes involved in preparing the plans in the next section.
- iii) **The Project Control Unit:** A reference was made to project control as part of the Planning and Development Division's responsibility earlier in this section. The major concern of this unit is to put together the relevant information about the flow of various activities to identify bottlenecks and alert the management for taking corrective action where necessary. The Unit works in cooperation with all the Schools of Studies and all the operational areas on a regular basis to ensure the smooth flow of information across all Schools and Divisions and also up to the senior management.
- iv) **Coordination Committee:** The Coordination Committee is a mechanism set up in 1995 under the auspices of the Planning and Development Division to consider new initiatives affecting university policy and also the effective implementation of existing policies and programmes. The Committee functions as an informal mechanism, and consists of the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellors and selected Directors of Schools/Divisions. The main objective of the Committee is to secure the involvement and commitment of all concerned in evolving policies and implementing them.

The Planning and Development Division takes a lead role in evolving policies and providing a broad perspective for framing programmes and activities. These processes involve extensive consultation with all those who are associated with the specific issues and concerns in the university as well as experts invited from outside. When the broad contours of the new policies and perspectives are settled, they are placed before the concerned bodies of the university, namely the Planning Board, the Academic Council and the Board of Management for securing their approval before they are implemented.

4.2.3 The planning processes

IGNOU has to look up to the Government of India for all its development funding. Therefore it has to follow the planning cycle that the government has set, that is, the Five Year Plans.

At least two years before the Government frames a new Five Year Plan, all the central agencies responsible for the development of various sectors are asked to frame their development proposals giving a brief review of the current stage of development, the new activities to be taken up, the targets to be achieved, their contributions to development, the investments to be made and the returns to society from those investments, etc. IGNOU prepares its development proposals on the basis of these parameters. This process involves extensive consultations with all the Schools of Studies and the members of their faculty. The proposals developed by the faculty are put through a preliminary scrutiny to establish their viability and feasibility. The proposals will outline the areas, levels and numbers of programmes, the expected additional enrolment in the plan period, the learning packages to be produced and distributed, the nature and extent of services to be provided to the students, the new infrastructure to be created and the administrative support systems to be established. These, together with the broad indications of the outlays required, would constitute the development proposals submitted to the government. On the basis of these proposals, the government determines the development support to be provided during a Five Year Plan period, and within the ceiling so determined, budgetary allocations are made annually for the University.

With the completion of this macro-level exercise, and with definite information about the development support over a five-year period, a detailed exercise at the micro-level is initiated. The purpose of this exercise is determination of relative priorities among programmes to be launched, allocation of resources and the provision of infrastructure for them. It also involves gearing up the system for assuming the additional responsibilities and performing new tasks that new programmes and expanded activities require.

The approval of individual programmes now goes through a four-stage process. Every school, and every discipline within the school has to initiate these

processes after the overall plan is finalised. The first stage is to prepare a concept paper for the new programme. At this stage the discipline concerned provides a brief outline of the new programme, indicating its objectives, the target groups to whom it is addressed, how it meets the university's objectives, at what level it will be pitched and other such strategic issues. This concept paper is first considered by the Coordination Committee, and if it meets with its approval, it is placed before the Planning Board for its consideration. The second stage follows the Planning Board's clearance. This stage involves the preparation of a design paper which goes into the broad structure of the programme, the specific needs it will address, the estimated size of the target group, the anticipated enrolment over a period of five years, the media choice, the delivery strategies, collaborative arrangements, and so on. This design paper is again considered by the Planning Board. If the preparatory work is done within the schools in advance, both these stages are combined, and approval of the Planning Board is obtained for both the stages together.

This is followed by the commencement of the development work. The development stage includes meetings of expert committees and course writers, the detailed structuring of the curriculum and syllabi, the determination of the learning packages, elaboration of the systems and methods of delivery, the student assessment procedures, and related issues. When all these issues are settled, a detailed project report incorporating all the details of the programme (objectives, justification, target groups and their size, content and structure, learning packages and their media (print, audio, video), the delivery strategies, the assessment procedures, etc.) is prepared and placed before the Academic Council for final approval of the programme.

Alongside these processes, efforts are initiated to organise the delivery system for every programme. These efforts include the establishment of study centres, the setting up of work places/work centres depending upon the needs of the programmes, the selection and appointment of counsellors and their training, the production of learning packages and their despatch, the preparation of programme brochures, guides, application forms, and student assignments, etc. Most of these preparatory efforts is made by the concerned operational area in consultation with the Schools. Since the launch of the programme depends critically on the efficiency with which these systems function, a final clearance for the launch of the programme has been incorporated in the processes. This clearance is given by the Coordination Committee after it is satisfied that all the logistics are settled.

Check Your Progress 2

Please describe the Planning processes in IGNOU relating to launching of new programmes. Answer in about 50 words.

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer
ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

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4.2.4 Programme development and delivery

While discussing the organisational structure of IGNOU in the previous unit, we referred to four major sub-systems that constitute the university's structure. From the point of view of planning and management, we shall now look at the more important among the sub-systems and consider how they function in the implementation of the university's programmes and activities.

- a) **Course Design and Development:** The development of instructional material in IGNOU is a dynamic process. The university has been constantly endeavouring to adopt innovative methods in the development of its learning packages. As a consequence, several models of course design and development are presently followed by different Schools. These models can be broadly classified as follows:
- Some courses are developed entirely within the Schools. In these cases, the course materials are conceived, planned and written by the university teachers. The external input in this effort is limited to editing the content.
 - There are several courses for which the textual material is almost fully contributed by the external experts. The role of the core faculty in such cases is to transform text into self-instructional format.
 - For certain programmes, course development and preparation tasks are assigned to specialist institutions on a project basis. Such collaborative efforts at development of study materials involve the faculty of the concerned schools coordinating the work with project centres in preparing the texts according to the structure and format settled by the university.
 - Other methods attempted by the university include the development of material in workshops and the appointment of a chief editor from outside the university who will directly coordinate the work of a number of course writers and prepare the final text.

The Project Report, 1985, had cautioned that the course team which prepares the course material must be drawn with caution and care. It proposed three

types of experts that should be involved in a course team. The first category consists of subject-matter experts, whose job is to choose the contents and write the course units. The second category consists of educational technologists whose job is to ensure that the subject-matter is properly organized, keeping in view the nature, complexion and requirements of the distance learners. The last category forming a course team would include the media experts, who advise the team about the format of the course material from the point of view of TV/Radio production. Although like the British Open University, the course team at IGNOU also consists of a number of subject experts, an educational technologist, and the media person, the main difference is in the role of the editor. The practice at IGNOU involves a writer-editor team. The editor is responsible for the maintenance of the academic quality of study materials, and is appointed on the basis of his/her expertise in the particular subject/discipline. The editor may either be chosen from the course writers, or may be a senior faculty member of the university, one of the experts from the group, or anybody else considered competent for the purpose.

Here is a diagrammatic representation of the IGNOU approach to course preparation/creation (Fig.1).

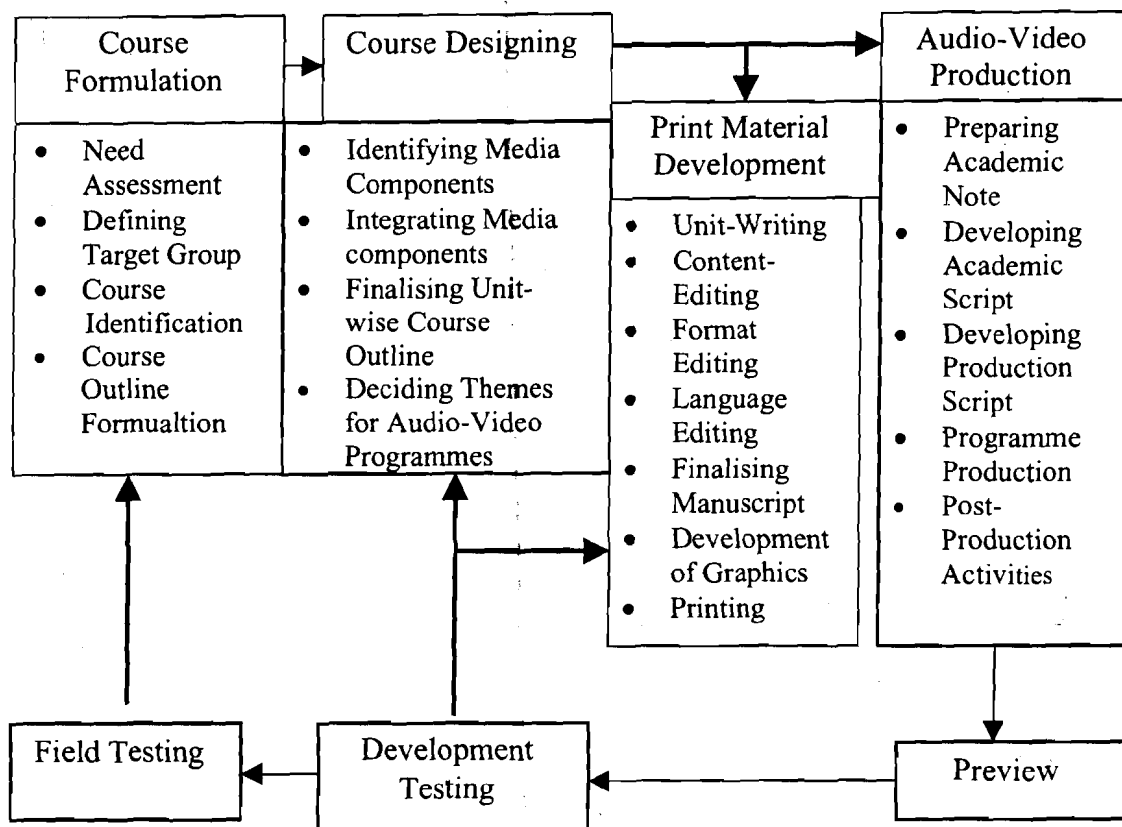


Fig.1 : Course Development Process at IGNOU

Multi-Media Policy

Although the university adopted the policy of using any communication technology to disseminate knowledge, it still has to take a final view of the integration of the electronic media with the printed text in its instructional package.

The Project Report of the IGNOU, 1985, had suggested that the National Open University should adopt an 'integrated' media approach in its instructional design, i.e., the print material, broadcasting and audio-visual aids supported by the tutorial system, contact classes, summer schools and other similar methods should all constitute its teaching-learning transaction. Choosing a particular instructional medium, however, was to be based on the requirements of the learners and the suitability and availability of the media in each of the disciplines to be taught. Thus, considering the stage at which the development of communication technology is in the country, and the problems of access to such technologies, it was felt that print was the most important, and perhaps the only medium that could be used most advantageously in the initial stages. In fact, the printed text continues to constitute the main instructional component of the IGNOU even today. Nevertheless, the planners had also taken into account the emergence of communication technology development in India and went ahead with the development and production of audio and video tapes to supplement the printed text. That is, although all the textual information required is provided in print, making it complete in itself, audios and videos were used for further explanations, examples, and for easier comprehension of the uninitiated learners. In order to ensure easy access to these media packages, the university also set up listening and viewing facilities at all the study centres where students could use them. But as the use of the electronic media was optional, it was developed in such a fashion that missing any of these media materials was not a disadvantage to any student. It does not follow that the policy relating to the use of multi-media packages will not change. Depending on the growth of communication technology applications in the country, and more importantly, its accessibility to larger numbers of people and in all parts of the country, the university will gradually move towards the greater integration of electronic media in its instructional packages. Very recently, some programmes, especially in the area of computer applications, have been developed for delivery through the Internet. Extensive use of E-mail for use of electronic transfer of course materials, preparation of CDs etc. is envisaged in the near future.

b) Student Services

In the discussion of organisational structure, we had reflected on the functions that constitute student services at some length. From its inception, the university's strategy has been that its functions should determine its structure

and not vice-versa. This strategy paid off and structures are still evolving as the university gains experience and functions are being diversified.

In the initial phase, the University established a countrywide network of Study Centres. Their number has gone up to 600. The development of this network was resource-driven. The university had to make substantial investments in infrastructure and also meet the recurring cost of the maintenance of these centres. These commitments were not linked with student enrolment. Several study centres became economically non-viable due to low enrolment, and the university could not force their closure as it would have amounted to the withdrawal of a facility.

It became inevitable that alternative approaches began to be considered. Some of these new approaches include partnerships with various institutions and appointment of distance learning facilitators. Partnership arrangements envisage a stake for the partner institutions which provide their facilities without any contribution from IGNOU, and they share the fee income with IGNOU on a pre-determined proportion. The Distance Learning Facilitator is a kind of volunteer who functions as a single-person study centre, helping a number of students enrolled on different programmes with information, material and access to academic counselling and tutorials. They are also paid a share of the fees collected from the students attached to them. These experiments have just been launched and their performance has to be watched over a period of time to establish their viability.

In the previous section, we considered the role of electronic media in the instructional packages of the University. In the initial stages, these packages were diffused through study centres where playback facilities for audio and video tapes were made available. The use of this technology was relatively inexpensive from the University's point of view. However, a student has to travel all the way to his/her nearest study centre to avail of this facility. This limited access was a disincentive to many students in their use of the electronic media.

The University has been endeavouring, from its inception, to secure appropriate time-slots in the national radio and television networks for the diffusion of its learning packages. The limitation of resources available with these media, and the pressure of competing demands did not permit these national agencies to share their facilities with IGNOU initially. However, by 1991, the University had produced a large number of video tapes and Doordarshan, the national television network, agreed to telecast them three days a week between 6.30 and 7.00 in the morning. By 1997, the telecast of IGNOU programmes was extended to five days a week, Monday through Friday. Although the national television network now covers the entire country, the feedback studies suggest that the proportion of students who regularly watch these telecasts is no more

than 25-30% of the students enrolled. The unsuitability of the timing is reported to be the major reason for the low rate of effective use of this medium.

Radio broadcasts of IGNOU tapes are done on a regional basis. There are no central radio transmission of IGNOU lessons. Several Radio stations in the country transmit the university's audio tapes at specified hours during several days of the week. One radio station at Bhopal recently launched a phone-in interactive radio lesson as part of the university's programmes.

The University recognises that interactive programmes are an essential pedagogic tool in its instructional system. Diagrammatic representation of instructional system followed at IGNOU is given at Fig.2. Considering the vastness of the country and the massiveness of student numbers on the one hand, and the diversity of programmes on the other, the University has been endeavouring to reach out to as large a number of students as possible. With the development of satellite communication in the country, the University has been exploring the possibility of using it for its distance education programme. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has responded enthusiastically to this initiative, and set up on the campus of the University, a one-way video and two-way audio communication facility using the Indian National Satellites to reach out to students all over the country. Presently, all the Regional Centres of the University and the State Open Universities which are using IGNOU's learning packages are linked with this network. This network is being used to provide academic counselling through the tele-conferencing mode as well as to disseminate essential information on programmes and courses. The partner institutions of IGNOU have been given the option to hook up with the network and access the facilities and services for the students enrolled with them. The effectiveness of this experiment is being watched, and depending upon the availability of resources, and the easy accessibility of other tools to promote interactivity (telephone, fax, e-mail etc) the spread of the network is proposed to be expanded.

Check Your Progress 3

IGNOU has adopted a flexible approach to course development and preparation as well as to the delivery of services to students. What are these flexibilities and how are they significant to the open learning system? Answer in about 50 words.

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer

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

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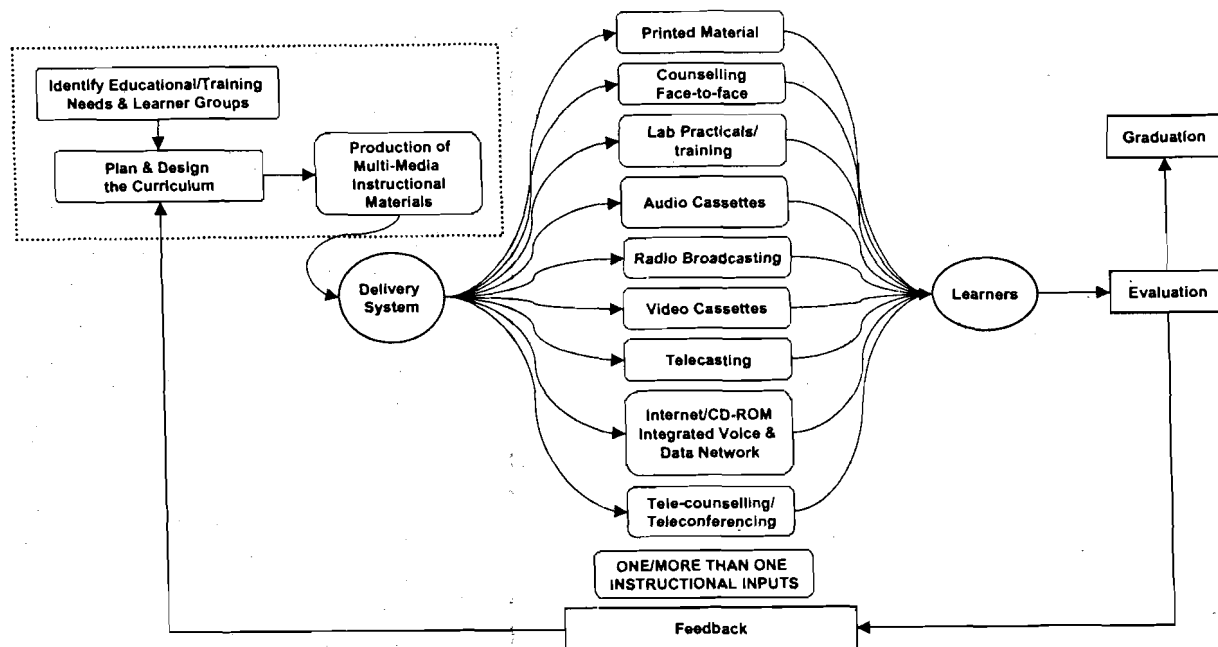


Fig. 2: Instructional System in IGNOU

4.2.5 Infrastructure development

The most important constituent of the infrastructure of the University is its land and buildings. The University acquired, with the support of the government, over 60 hectares of land in Maidan Garhi in New Delhi in the first year of its inception. However, the development of this land, and construction on it, turned out to be a task that did not get started for a long time. The construction project got so entangled in a maze of municipal and construction laws and procedures, that there did not seem to be any headway made, for some time. The University which was functioning from 8 different hired locations in the city decided to put up some temporary structures on its land to meet its immediate needs, and more importantly, to ensure better coordination and efficient functioning on the one hand, and to save on rent and transport on the other. During the last 10 years (1989-98), the University has been functioning from these structures, and, in retrospect, the decision turned out to be extremely wise and far-sighted. These structures could continue to serve the University for several more years.

Meanwhile, the University was able in 1995 to get all the municipal problems sorted out, and land development and construction began soon thereafter. In about three years, several items of work were completed.

4.3 COORDINATION

As an organisation grows, its operations begin to get more and more complex. In the case of a distance education institution, the growth profile generally involves

- more programmes, more courses, and with them more specialised services to students,
- expansion brings more students and with it larger production and distribution systems, more assignments, more counselling staff who need training and orientation, arrangements of local facilities for practicals and experiments, and so on.

Organisations generally attempt to meet these complexities through increased professionalism and specific efficiency improvement measures. In distance education, several operations have to be performed in a sequence, for example, the distribution of materials has to follow the finalisation of admissions and examinations have to be held after the course completion time is over. There are several other operations that proceed simultaneously. For example, course materials can be packed and kept ready for dispatch as soon as the mailing labels are available on completion of admissions, or the preparation of assignments for various programmes need not wait for the finalisation of admissions. Admittedly, a distance education institution has to schedule all its operations and constantly coordinate them to ensure overall efficiency in its functioning.

Functional specialisation and division of labour are established theories and practices in organisations. A major responsibility of the management of organisations is to bring about greater cohesiveness in the activities of the operational areas so that together they can contribute to the achievement of organisational goals. Most organisations set up mechanisms for making this coordinated effort smooth and efficient, and the instrument they use for this purpose is known as the Management Information System (MIS).

4.3.1 Coordination mechanisms in IGNOU

While discussing the organisational frame work for planning and development, we had briefly mentioned the role of three structures, namely the Planning and Development Division, the Coordination Committee and the Project Control Unit. Within IGNOU, these mechanisms, functioning under the aegis of the Planning and Development Division, provide organisational support to the university's efforts at coordination.

In operational terms, it is the Project Control Unit which puts together all the data, provides analytical insights into the input-output flows across the system,

identifies actual and potential slippages and bottlenecks, and generally alerts the management to take corrective action at the right time so that the possible collapse of any significant activity is avoided. The Coordination Committee holds special meetings as and when necessary to review the performance of different operational areas on the basis of these analytical reports and decides on corrective action, including, where necessary, the re-scheduling of specific operations.

4.3.2 The Management information system

The day-to-day management of IGNOU's operations requires constant attention to detail, with the objective of adjusting to the changes in the basic input-output flows in the system. As we have seen in the previous sections, the output of one activity becomes the input for another, and the output from the latter becomes the input for yet another function or activity. It is this conveyor-belt like sequencing of several functions and activities that makes the day-to-day operations a complex process.

The existence of appropriate control systems, to use a business metaphor, is a pre-requisite for the efficient and effective management of IGNOU. Although the distance learning system carries out several operations analogous to the industrial and business systems, the production and distribution functions for example, the fact that they have to be organised in an academic environment, and with the involvement of academics, lends to these operations a sensitivity that industrial or business systems are unfamiliar with. This is a very significant dimension that managers of distance learning systems have to take into account.

Keeping all these in view, IGNOU attempted to develop a Management Information system for its operational areas which include Student Registration, Distribution, Regional Services, and Student Evaluation. The Schools of Studies, to the extent that they are associated with day-to-day operations are also a part of this MIS design. The approach to the development of this system was:

- All functions consist of a number of activities, and each activity has an outcome.
- All activities, all over the university, are either parallel or sequential, and sequential activities mostly depend on the outcome of a preceding activity.
- Each activity must have been completed by a specified date on the University calendar, and a system should be in place to monitor them, so that all activities adhere to the deadlines.

- The system should not overload the top management with too much information. It should give attention only to those details which are important.
- The architecture of the system should be such that at the levels of units and functionaries, similar scheduling can be done so that managers at the unit levels can monitor the progress of every activity and sub-function.

The system in the first phase covers the whole cycle of operations beginning with student registration and ending with the end of term examinations. This phase does not include the stages of course development and preparation.

The existence of a Management Information System does not guarantee that tasks are performed and on time. Several factors intervene to disorient even the most carefully prepared MIS. There is institutional inertia, organisational fatigue and, of course, a variety of external variables that could intervene in the smooth flow of activities across the system. For example, industrial strife could delay the supply of paper which may hold up the production of print materials and their distribution. However, the purpose of MIS is to control and manage changes through the careful monitoring of every activity over which it has control, through system wide coordinated efforts, and to contain the adverse impacts that inordinate delays can cause to the system.

Check Your Progress 4

In what ways does the Management Information System in place at IGNOU help improve efficiency? Answer in about 50 words.

- Note:** i) Space is given below for your answer
ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

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4.3.3 Quality control

There are several dimensions to the issue of quality in a distance education system. If one were to look at the quality issues from the conventional business perspective, these are the issues concerned with the quality of the products, namely the learning packages, the assignments and the project work, and issues concerned with the quality of the processes such as the counselling services, assignment evaluation and feedback, and administrative services like the assignment of students to study centres, the timely supply of materials and arrangements for examinations. There is also an aspect of quality that has to do with the broader ethics and culture of the institution itself, reflected in its concern for the satisfaction of students, commitment of the staff, and the principles and values that render institutions accountable to society.

Generally, distance education institutions tend to concentrate on the quality of learning materials as they are the most visible part of the teaching-learning process. But it has to be remembered that production of the best learning packages does not by itself guarantee learning on the part of students. In order to ensure that learning does take place, the study materials have to be accompanied by a variety of services as well, not the least among them being the interaction among students or between students and the teacher or students and the institution. It is the quality of these services that will ultimately strengthen this interaction and will also be the result of the way people perform in specific situations.

There is no magic that can make this happen. IGNOU seeks to achieve this objective by

- an induction training of all staff at the time of their recruitment. This training is designed to inform newly recruited staff of the goals of the university, its functions, structure and processes;
- orientation and refresher programmes at regular intervals to inform the staff about changes in existing procedures and practices as well as new developments in technology induction and application;
- keeping staff at all levels fully informed about the new decisions taken by various bodies and authorities which have implications for them as well as the ways in which they perform their functions;
- preparation of detailed hand books and manuals for the guidance of major functional areas and for their functionaries;
- organisation of induction programmes for students at the study centres to appraise them of the methods and practices followed by the university;
- newsletters to all students (thrice a year) to inform them of all the details affecting their studies (supply of materials, assignments, counselling schedules, telecast schedules of videos, teleconferencing schedules, examination dates, and so on).

There is however no substitute for personal commitment and willingness to perform. These will depend largely on the principles and values that the institution as a whole stands for. But in real life there will always be some gap between idealism and practice.

4.4. PLANNING OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Planners and managers will certainly be keen to know what their efforts have achieved and whether the outcome of the planning processes was successful or not. What makes for the successful planning outcomes of a distance education system, and what are the pointers to the success of these outcomes? We shall explore some of these issues in some detail.

4.4.1 Provision of opportunities

While discussing the establishment of IGNOU, we had noted that one of its main objectives was to widen access to higher education by augmenting educational opportunities, specially for the disadvantaged sections of society. Has this objective been achieved and how? A critical analysis of the enrolment profile should provide the answer. The IGNOU students are a vastly heterogenous group (age, gender, rural-urban backgrounds, employment status all vary), most of them do not have the kind of educational attainments that would get them into formal institutions of higher education, and many of them cannot, for economic reasons, withdraw from work for the exclusive pursuit of education and training programmes. Many of them, even if they wish to do so, may not be able to live up to the rigours that full-time study demands. For a large number of such persons, IGNOU does provide opportunities which are not otherwise available to them.

Distance education is an extremely flexible method of learning. It can be adapted to meet a variety of needs ranging from pursuing the traditional programmes offered by universities and colleges to tailor-made education and training capsules to meet the needs of working people. This versatility of the distance education system cannot, however, be taken to mean that all those who aspire for education have only to enrol in distance teaching institutions. For some people, distance learning has its drawbacks. Independent learning, home-based study and work-place centred training may not be to everyone's taste and inclination. The designers of teaching-learning processes have to take this factor into account and make adequate provisions for responding to the styles and preferences of various learner groups as well.

The popularity of several programmes offered by IGNOU, and the constantly increasing number of students do suggest that its objective of augmenting opportunities for education is being met very substantially.

4.4.2 Completion ratios and drop-outs

Popularity of programmes and expansion of enrolment do not by themselves guarantee that a distance teaching institution is able to fulfil its objectives. Retention of enrolment is a critical factor in measuring the success of an institution. What proportion of students, after enrolment, continue with the programme and complete it? Alternatively, what is the proportion of students who withdraw soon after enrolment, and do not proceed to the subsequent stages of completing their assignments, sitting for the term-end examinations and registering themselves for the succeeding stages.

In order to make a reliable assessment of these indicators, institutions will have to develop strong databases which store all relevant information, that can be retrieved and collated and regularly analysed. IGNOU has yet to develop a strong database for this purpose, but the current indications are that about 50% students registered on a programme sit for the year-end examinations and about 20-25% of students sitting in the examinations pass in the first attempt. Similarly, the general trend is that about 50% students re-register in the programme on the completion of one year of study. These are still general trends and more detailed studies have to be carried out with reference to enrolment cohorts on each course, and each programme to arrive at more reliable completion ratios and drop-out rates.

4.4.3 Quality of output

Quantitative parameters like completion ratios and drop out rates would not indicate the success or failure of the distance education system in all its aspects. These parameters would be valid only if it is established that every student enrolled in a programme did so with the sole objective of completing it and qualifying for the relevant award. In practice, however that is not the case. The motivation for enrolment varies from learner to learner; some may enrol only for learning a short module of a major programme, some others only for the materials to fill the gaps in their knowledge and still others only to gain knowledge of subjects which they were not able to study in their time. These categories of learners are not drop-outs even if they do not sit in any examinations. The important point is that the system is able to respond to these fragmented demands and satisfy an existing need. In a measure, this capacity of the system speaks for its quality.

It is now well known that the learning materials produced by IGNOU are of a very good quality. The fact that these packages are extensively used by other open universities in India, as well as by some well-known institutions outside India, is evidence enough to establish the quality of IGNOU's study materials. The demand for these materials from students in the formal system, as well as from the general public reinforces this view. The processes for the production

of these materials as well as the participation of teams of experts drawn from a wide spectrum of scholarship and competence, subject specialists, writers, editors, language specialists, graphic artists etc. ensure the high levels of their quality.

The use of good quality materials is not sufficient by itself. The quality of the student's learning is just as important. Here also, available evidence suggests that IGNOU graduates are able to compete successfully with the graduates of the best institutions in the country for higher education and research places in highly prestigious centres in India. It has to be admitted that the quality of learning is as much a function of the quality of students as it is of the quality of the materials and teaching-learning processes. The diversity of the background of IGNOU's students, the differences in their motivation, and the variations in the individual learning objectives all make a difference in their quality of learning.

The quality of graduates can also be assessed on the basis of their employment status. If a large proportion of the graduates of a distance learning system remains unemployed for long periods, questions can legitimately be raised about their employability and the value addition that the system has made to their employment potential. It should be remembered however that education systems cannot accept all the blame for unemployment. All that education can do is to anticipate emerging employment needs, and in consultation with those in the employing sectors, design and develop programmes in the hope that people are equipped with the knowledge and skills that the job markets would need. The unpredictability of economic growth will continue to play a major role in determining the levels of employment. In the case of IGNOU, all that can be said at this stage is that there are no significant reports of unemployment among its graduates. However, it is required to be substantiated with reliable studies of the employment disposition of the University's graduates, through tracer studies etc. which has not been done so far on a systematic basis.

4.4.4 Cost efficiency and effectiveness

Efficiency is rated on the basis of the relationship between input and output. An institution is more cost-efficient if it can produce the same output with less resources than another, or if it can produce more output with the same resources than another. Considered from this perspective, most distance education systems should be cost-efficient as they can take advantage of the economy of scales. The materials developed once can be used by any number of students, and for a longer period of time with no significant addition to the cost. According to some studies carried out by the University, the per capita student cost in IGNOU is less than one-third of the per capita student cost in the conventional system.

Effectiveness on the other hand, is concerned with the quality of the outputs. An organisation is cost-effective if it can meet the needs of its customers at a lower cost than other organisations. The variables in establishing effectiveness are so complex that most studies on costs stop at establishing efficiency.

Check Your Progress 5

Why is quality so important in the open learning system? What are the major parameters against which quality can be assessed?

Note : i) Space is given below for your answer
ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

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4.5 LET US SUM UP

We have taken up for a detailed examination, in the form of a case study, the processes associated with planning and management in IGNOU, in this unit. The central theme is the role of macro-planning at the institutional level, and how the strategies and approaches adopted by IGNOU in the performance of its functions and activities have contributed to the fulfilment of its objectives. We have also dealt, at some length, with various operational aspects, especially, the strategies and approaches in relation to course development and production, and delivery of various services to students. We have also looked at the management information system as a tool for improving efficiency. While talking about efficiency, issues of quality and effectiveness also came up, and we have briefly touched upon these aspects as they are operating in IGNOU at present.

4.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS : POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1. The major strategic initiatives taken by the university for the fulfilment of its mission were the decisions to become an institution of mass higher education offering a wide range of work-oriented, job-related programmes, and to seek co-operation and collaboration with industry

- and other employing sectors in the design, development and delivery of programmes and courses.
2. IGNOU presently follows a four-stage process in launching new programmes. The first stage involves the articulation of a concept of the programme by the faculty of the concerned discipline; the second stage is the preparation of the programme design indicating the broad content and structure, the learner groups, the delivery strategies, networking arrangements, etc. These two stages are cleared by the Planning Board. The development stage then begins which involves preparation of learning packages in print and other media, finalisation of the systems and methods of delivery, the student assessment procedures, etc. The detailed project report incorporating all these details is cleared by the Academic Council. When all logistics for launching the programme are settled, the Coordination Committee decides to launch the programme after satisfying itself that all arrangements for delivery are in place.
 3. Students of the open university constitute a vastly heterogeneous group with a wide variety of learning styles and preferences. There is no single method that can respond to all the varying needs of such a diverse group. The IGNOU's response to this challenge is the design and development of programmes and courses providing for structural flexibilities with regard to levels and duration and also patterns of delivery. The university promotes different models for the preparation and production of its learning packages, to ensure wider participation and better quality. The core of the university's delivery strategy is the networking of physical and intellectual resources available in the society to reduce costs and improve efficiency.
 4. The Management Information System (MIS) in place at IGNOU concerns itself with the operational areas. The purpose of this MIS is to ensure that all activities flow as per pre-determined work and time schedules, and that information about adherence to schedules as well as slippages flows regularly across the system so that corrective action where necessary is taken well in time to avoid any major disruption in the operations. The operation of the MIS has considerably strengthened the university operations.
 5. In the open learning system in which the learner is remote from the provider, learner's satisfaction is an important element in establishing its credibility. This satisfaction depends largely on the quality of the learning materials as well as the quality and efficiency of the services provided. Though judgment of quality is difficult, some of the major parameters used in assessing the quality of distance education are the learning packages, sustenance of student interests, acceptability of the graduates in the employment market etc.

UNIT 5 PROMOTION AND COORDINATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 The Evolution of A New Model
 - 5.2.1 The conceptual design
 - 5.2.2 The Distance Education Council (DEC)
 - 5.2.3 Composition of the DEC
 - 5.2.4 The functions of the DEC
 - 5.2.5 DEC: the operational framework
 - 5.2.6 The early initiatives
 - 5.2.7 DEC and the correspondence education institutes
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5.0 INTRODUCTION

While considering the objectives, organisation and structure of IGNOU in Unit-1, we have drawn attention to a unique feature of the institution which is that it combines the roles of a promoter, coordinator and developer with those of a university offering programmes of education and training. Perhaps this combination of roles has no parallel; at least, there is no known model of an institution that performs all these functions. Why was such a decision taken? What was the conceptual design behind this combination of functions? We shall examine these aspects in some detail in this unit.

The powers and functions of the university, elaborated in its Act of incorporation, make the following provision in addition to those which a university normally performs:

“it shall be the duty of the university to take such steps as it may deem fit for the promotion of the open university and distance education system and for the determination of standards of teaching, evaluation and research in such systems, and for the purpose of performing this function, the university shall have such powers, including the power to allocate and disburse grants to colleges -----or any other university or institution of higher learning, ...”

Put in plain language, this provision means the following:

- IGNOU is mandated to promote the open university system in India;
- the university has the responsibility to determine and maintain the standards of teaching, research and evaluation in the open university system;
- in the performance of these functions, the university can provide development funding to other universities and institutions.

In India, it is the University Grants Commission (UGC) established in 1956, under an Act of Parliament, which has the statutory responsibility of performing the above mentioned functions. The provision in IGNOU Act meant that it is not the UGC, but IGNOU which will perform these functions in the case of open universities. This issue came up for consideration when the IGNOU Bill was piloted in Parliament. The then Minister of Education, Mr.K.C.Pant made the following observations on this issue in Parliament:

“We would like the open university to grow at this stage on its own, with full freedom, because it would be better to allow this new plant to grow into the sunlight, as it will. I think at this stage we do not link it too closely with established institutions. Let it evolve its own practices, its own traditions, its own values. That may be better for an open system like this because, after all, every institution gets conditioned by its own experiences and we would like this university to be completely free of the conditioning of all other institutions.. We should let the open university grow on its own and help in the development of the other open universities which will come up as well as the correspondence course which are being run by certain universities...”

Clearly, the vision was that IGNOU would be a different university. It also meant that there were great expectations from the open university system, that it would in substantial measure augment educational opportunities and democratise education. We shall now look at the ways in which IGNOU set out to perform these roles and the programmes and activities it initiated in order to fulfil this mission.

5.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying through this unit, you should be able to

- explain the model of a university performing the multiple roles of an educational provider and an apex body for promotion and coordination of an education system,
- analyse the advantages and disadvantages of such a model, and
- critically examine the feasibility and usefulness of emulating such models for the growth of the open university system.

5.2 THE EVOLUTION OF A NEW MODEL

You will recall that in Unit 2 of this block, which discusses the emergence of the open university system in India, we had drawn attention to several policy statements, and also to the recommendations of the CABE to establish a Coordination Council of Open Universities to promote their coordinated development. The view of the planners and policy makers at that time was that there have to be several open universities because of the multiplicity of languages and also because the numbers to be reached were inconceivably large and that all of them should work as a networked system to avoid duplication of efforts on the one hand, and to ensure optimum utilisation of resources while assuring a high level in the quality of programmes, on the other.

Perhaps this vision was a little too idealistic and did not take into account the practical difficulties involved in translating it into an effective working model. Soon enough, apprehensions began to be expressed about the relationship between IGNOU and other open universities, and the efficacy of one university sitting in judgement over the quality and the standards of the academic programmes of another. The whole concept, it was argued, was contrary to the time-tested principle of university autonomy, and most universities in the country would find it incongruous that they have to be guided and possibly nurtured by another university. The senior management of IGNOU itself began to feel the pressure of this argument, coming as it did from the traditional system, it knew how sensitive these issues were. The only known model for development funding was the UGC model, and over the years, the UGC-university relationship had evolved at best as a patron - client relationship. The perils of one university becoming the patron of other universities were indeed perceptible in the initial stages and hence the approach to the operationalisation of the whole concept was cautious, at times, even hesitant.

5.2.1 The conceptual design

The proposal to establish an open university took concrete shape at a time when there was growing disenchantment with the ways in which the University and Higher Education system had been developing in India. The system of higher education was already very large but its spread had been extremely uneven; the facilities available with individual universities varied widely; the courses offered by most universities had not been revised or renewed to meet the demand of the items, and therefore their relevance and utility were being questioned. The UGC which is responsible for development of universities was not able to do much as funding for higher education was continuously declining. It is against this background that the search for an alternative system for the provision of educational opportunities began and the decision to establish an open university was taken.

The model of a UGC – type organisation was not favoured for the open learning system for several reasons. The most important among them were:

- Organisations like the UGC turn out to be mere funding agencies and therefore their approach becomes bureaucratic. They do not provide academic leadership.
- Overwhelmed with the burden of supporting over 200 universities and 8000 colleges, the UGC could not be expected to do justice in nurturing a fledgling open university system.
- Unlike the traditional universities which confined themselves to class-room teaching, open universities depend more on learning packages and services which are openly accessible. The open universities are not inhibited by considerations of autonomy in respect of matters like curriculum transaction, course combinations, programme design, etc.
- The most important development input for an open university are the learning packages. Since there would be more than one open university in India, it is necessary that these are shared in different forms rather than each university preparing its own packages independently.
- If these considerations were to inform the efforts at promotion and coordination, the most effective instrument for that purpose would be a networked system in which every participant is a partner and a stakeholder
- IGNOU, because of its national character and also its significant resource base, could lead the networked system as the promoter and coordinator.

Check Your Progress 1

Why was IGNOU kept out of the purview of the UGC, and what were the perceived advantages of the new model? Answer in about 50 words.

Note : i) Space is given below for your answer

ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the Unit.

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5.2.2 The Distance Education Council (DEC)

The concretisation of this design took considerable time. There were protracted discussions with the open universities which were already functioning and also with the Government of India and the UGC. The IGNOU itself had to move cautiously, and take into account all the concerned interests. It had to display exceptional administrative awareness and an academic vision to converge diverse interests to focus on a common goal. Eventually, towards the end of 1991, a consensus emerged among all the participating interests, for the establishment of a statutory mechanism under IGNOU Act to perform the functions of promotion and coordination of the open university system in India. This mechanism, it was agreed, would be known as the Distance Education Council (DEC) which would function within the broad framework and the policies laid down by the Board of Management of IGNOU while enjoying a significant measure of autonomy in its operations. A statute was framed for establishing the DEC which became operational in February 1992.

5.2.3 Composition of the DEC

The composition of the DEC ensures its objectivity and detachment from the role of IGNOU as a university while making provision for the representation of all the concerned interests. The DEC consists of the Vice-Chancellor of IGNOU as its Chairman and the Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Education and Secretary, UGC as its ex-officio members, two external members of the Board of Management, two Vice-Chancellors of State Open Universities, two Heads of Institutes of Correspondence Education of conventional universities, three nominees of the Visitor (President of India) and a teacher from the distance education system, all of whom are nominated. Some of these nominees hold office for two years while others have a three year term.

5.2.4 The functions of the DEC

The DEC has been assigned the following powers and functions:

- promotion of the open university/distance education system, its coordinated development, and the determination of its standards;
- development of a network of open universities/distance education institutions in India;
- identification of priority areas in which distance education programmes should be organised, including the specific client groups and the types of programmes, and the provision of support for organising such programmes through a network;
- promotion of training programmes for distance educators;

- initiating and organising measures for joint development of programmes and courses as well as research in distance education technology and practices;
- evolving the pattern and nature of development funding for open universities/distance education institutions;
- establishing and developing arrangements for coordinating and sharing the instructional material prepared by different open universities/distance education institutions as well as student support systems with a view to avoiding any duplication of efforts;
- evolving procedures for sharing courses and programmes and also laying down the terms and conditions for such sharing;
- collection, compilation and dissemination of information about courses and programmes offered by open universities and distance education institutions;
- periodic review of the performance of open universities/distance education institutions participating in the network;
- preparation of guidelines for courses and programmes (content, structure and production) as well as for the delivery of various services to students;
- provision of funding for the development of open universities/distance education institutions and the establishment of mechanisms for determining the extent and scope of such funding.

You will notice that the functions of the DEC are wide ranging and comparable with those of any funding agency in education. The significant difference that runs through DEC's functional domain is the concept of educational networking and the sharing of physical and intellectual resources. It is this concept of partnership and sharing that makes the DEC's approach to development of distance education unique in many ways.

5.2.5 DEC – the operational framework

The broad contours of the role for promotion and coordination of the open university system were already outlined in the development proposals of IGNOU in the Eighth Plan. These proposals envisaged the establishment of a network of all the open universities and other distance education institutions in the country. The development proposals articulated the vision of the network in the following terms:

- it will provide a common pool of academic resources involving courses and programmes prepared and produced by member institutions;
- this common pool of resources will be available for sharing by all the members;

- the main objective of the network will be to eliminate duplication in preparation/production of courses, to ensure a desirable uniformity in the standards of courses, to offer a wide range of choice to students, and to develop a strong delivery system which all the participating institutions support.

In operational terms, it was visualised that the DEC would evolve systems, norms and procedures in respect of the design, structure and pattern of courses, admission, evaluation, transfer of credits, etc. to facilitate the mobility of students within the network, both institutionally and among programmes. It was also expected that the programmes and courses to be pooled in the network would be selected after a rigorous evaluation of their quality and content. In order to encourage other institutions to prepare and produce programmes, the DEC was to provide support for preparation of courses, production of audio/video programmes, translation of learning packages into regional languages, joint development of courses and also promotion of studies and research in distance education technology.

Meanwhile, a Committee appointed by the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), in its report submitted in February 1994, strongly endorsed the principles for operationalising the network.

5.2.6 The early initiatives

During the first five years of its operation, the DEC has taken a series of steps to fulfil its mandate. Some of the major initiatives taken by the DEC are:

- It has developed a data base to provide information about open universities and other distance education institutions, the programmes and courses offered by them, and other relevant data about faculty, students, research output, etc.
- It has prepared norms and standards for the design, development and delivery of programmes and courses through the distance education mode. These guidelines deal exhaustively with all aspects of planning academic programmes, designing the curriculum, developing the instructional design, strategies of programme development, the methods and styles of preparing self-instructional materials, maintenance of programmes, use of electronic media, student support services, evaluation systems, infrastructure needs, networking and sharing of resources, monitoring and performance review, etc.
- A common pool of programmes has been created. To begin with, the pool consists of the programmes developed and produced by IGNOU and three State Open Universities, namely, BRAOU, KOU and YCMOU. These three State Open Universities are already utilising a number of programmes

and courses developed and produced by IGNOU. In many cases, the user universities have adapted the materials by incorporating additional units to provide local relevance to their programmes while retaining the core of the IGNOU packages. There are also instances of state universities using IGNOU packages in translated versions to meet the needs of the local students.

- Guidelines have been framed for using the programmes from the common pool through adoption, adaptation and translation. These guidelines set out the procedures to be followed as well as the duties and responsibilities of the provider and user universities in drawing upon the pool. The core principle underlying the common pool is that both the providers as well as the users accept the significance of sharing academic resources, and acknowledge each other's contribution in making materials available and in ensuring their wider accessibility. The DEC's role in the working of the common pool is essentially one of mediation – providing information and establishing contacts.
- Soon after it was established, the DEC prepared a set of guidelines for providing development support to state open universities. The DEC provided significant development funding to State Open Universities to strengthen their core capacity as distance education institutions. Predictably, the support was to strengthen the education technology components – the media centres, computerisation, communication systems, training of personnel, and also programme development.
- Several new state open universities are being set up by the State Governments. The DEC has been interacting with the concerned state governments in the preliminary work of establishing the new universities. In most cases, the DEC has provided technical inputs in preparing their project reports.

Check Your Progress 2

Establishment of a network of open universities is the primary task of the Distance Education Council. Why is networking so important in the Indian context and what steps were taken by the DEC to establish the network?

Note: i) Space is given below for your answers

ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the Unit.

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5.2.7 DEC and the correspondence education institutes

The responsibility for the development of correspondence education remained with the UGC for the reason that no funding was available with the DEC for the purpose during the period 1992-97. Nevertheless, the UGC and the DEC had jointly taken several initiatives between 1992 and 1995 for the transformation of the correspondence education programmes into mainstream distance education programmes. You will recall that while discussing the growth of correspondence education in Unit 1, we had looked at many of its weaknesses and suggested that we would return to that issue and examine what steps needed to be taken to remedy some of these shortcomings. We now do that.

Ideally, the open universities are perceived as incorporating the full range of the functions and instrumentalities associated with distance education while the Correspondence Course Institutes (CCIs) of the traditional universities are at best designed as approximations to these functions and instrumentalities. Both these versions incorporate the open access principle (requiring no rigid entry qualification for admission to their programmes), and also adopt flexible methodologies of instruction. But the comparison ends there. In what can be regarded as the critical function of the nature of the programmes undertaken, there is a discernible qualitative difference. Open Universities adopt a far more innovative 'menu' in their programme offering, while CCIs adhere almost entirely to offering formal courses and that too often omitting the Science/technology programmes from their menu. Additionally, there is the significant difference in their shying away from adopting the multi-media approach, particularly in their total eschewal of the electronic media like radio and TV in their instruction and delivery. Of course at the root of this non-adherence to the core of the distance education mode lies the fact that many of these correspondence course institutes do not provide even skeletal student support services.

It is therefore of utmost importance that the correspondence programmes are upgraded to distance education patterns, so that together with open universities, the Indian distance education system can be steered to levels that are globally acceptable and credible.

In order to address these issues, the UGC and DEC jointly convened a series of conferences and workshops of the vice-chancellors of dual mode universities and the Directors of their Correspondence Education Programmes. From the results of these consultative conferences and workshops, a reform programme was drawn up by the UGC and made available to the CCIs for implementation. The UGC also provided some funding to them to implement these measures.

5.2.8 Correspondence education reforms

The Reform Package sought to address all the major issues. The specific measures suggested in the package were:

- a) **Institutional Reforms:** The existing Institutes of Correspondence Education should be upgraded to full-fledged Distance Education Institutes which should enjoy considerable autonomy in designing and developing new programmes and courses. This is essential because distance education programmes have to be designed and developed for a completely different audience from the traditional student groups. The conditioning of the conventional academic structures did not easily permit any flexibility in approach or innovations in the teaching-learning strategies. This separation of the CCIs from the conventional academic control should also be accompanied by adequate financial and administrative autonomy. Advisory Committees should be set up for each CCI to provide it with the inputs necessary for reorienting its programmes and providing relevance to them. The funds generated by the CCIs should as a rule, be ploughed back into their own development.
- b) **Academic Reforms:** Immediate steps are called for to improve the learning packages. Course materials should be prepared in the self-instructional format by making a serious attempt to build the teacher into the materials. Material development and preparation should be assigned to teams of experts consisting of subject specialists, instructional designers, language experts and media personnel. Electronic media should be a necessary component of the learning packages. Attempts should be made to utilise media packages from other institutions and to share the arrangements for their diffusion.

More importantly, CCIs should consider the diversification of their programme offerings to include need-based vocational, technical and professional courses.

- c) **Staff Development:** Staff training is of considerable significance to distance education as its methodologies and processes are very different from those of conventional education. The academic and administrative staff of the CCIs should be deputed to participate in training and orientation programmes organised by the Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education of IGNOU. Round Tables and Conferences for senior management should also be organised to expose them to the methods and styles of distance education.
- d) **Student Support Services:** Every CCI should set up study centres, and every study centre should function as a guidance cell providing

information and advice. They should be equipped with course materials and playback facilities for audio-video tapes. The study centres should organise contact programmes. Since interactivity is an essential component of the teaching-learning process, study centres should facilitate interaction between students and the teacher/tutor/counsellor.

Generally, the universities have accepted this reform package and it is being implemented by them. During the Ninth Plan (1997-2002), the DEC is expected to assume the responsibility for developing the correspondence education programmes and their transformation to the distance education mode as proposed in the reform package. This proposal is high on the agenda of the DEC.

Check Your Progress 3

What is the reform package for correspondence education and how are the Correspondence Course Institutes going to strengthen distance education?

- Note:** i) Space is given below for your answers
ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the Unit.

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5.3 ISSUES OF QUALITY

We have addressed some of the issues that concern the quality of distance education while considering IGNOU's planning and management functions in relation to its academic programmes. While those issues should be considered in a specific institutional context, there are similar issues at the macro level of the system itself. Since most of these concerns are also normative, what we have discussed earlier as an initiative of the DEC, i.e., the framing of norms and standards for academic programmes to be offered through the distance mode should be considered a significant step in assuring the quality of programmes. Those norms and standards concern themselves with the processes involved in programme design and development, production and distribution of materials, delivery of services, and evaluation of student performance. It is the expectation of the DEC that if the processes associated

with the development of materials and the delivery of services conform to those norms and standards, it is only reasonable to assume that the quality of the products is assured.

5.3.1 Norms and standards for programmes in different fields

The DEC has proceeded with attempts at laying down norms and standards for programmes to be offered through the distance mode in specified areas of study. The areas so far covered include Management, Computer Applications, Teacher Education and Library and Information Science. In developing these guidelines for programmes at different levels the DEC has drawn upon expertise available not only in IGNOU, but also in other open universities as well as the wider professional fields concerned. These guidelines, made available to all open universities and other distance education institutions will, hopefully, ensure adherence to acceptable norms of quality for the programmes being produced by them.

5.3.2 Assessment of institutional performance

The proposal that the courses and programmes of different universities will be assessed before they are accredited to the common pool was mentioned in the context of the development of the common pool of programmes. While the norms and standards mentioned above would be one aspect of the measure for this assessment, the performance of individual institutions as a whole is also a very relevant and significant factor in this process. Since the larger higher education system in the country, including technical education, is gradually moving towards establishing systems and procedures for assessment and accreditation, the DEC has joined the efforts of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) established by the UGC in evolving systems and procedures for the accreditation of the open universities. The exercise in progress seeks to develop the instruments for a four-stage assessment as given below :

- Identification of broad parameters with reference to which the performance of an open university is to be assessed;
- Development of detailed probes with reference to each parameter to bring out a comprehensive self-study of its performance by each university;
- A peer group validation of the self-study report after detailed discussion with the representatives of the institution concerned;
- Report of the peer group on the performance of the Institution.

5.3.3 Quality assurance panel

The DEC has established a Quality Assurance Panel as a standing committee to advise the Council on all matters relating to maintenance of quality in distance education. The Panel consists of experts in the field and its terms of reference are:

- To recommend a set of measures that open universities should initiate to ensure an acceptable quality for distance education programmes.
- To formulate and recommend guidelines and procedures for programme identification and development, involving identification of learner groups, strategies and methods for course development and preparation, media-mix, delivery mechanisms, student assessment procedures etc.
- To develop and recommend performance indicators for evaluation of ongoing programme of distance education from the point of view of the quality of their processes and study materials.
- To recommend guidelines for the exchange and sharing of instructional materials, including adoption, adaptation and translation and also the student support services.
- To recommend norms, procedures and practices in respect of admission, evaluation, completion of course requirements, and transfer of credits of students admitted to open university programmes.
- To undertake from time to time, studies on the implementation of quality assurance measures by the open universities and their impact on programmes with a view to evolving procedures for validation of programmes and their eventual accreditation.

5.4 LET US SUM UP

This unit gives you an overview of IGNOU's functioning as an apex body at the national level. In this role, the functions performed by IGNOU are promotion and coordination of the open university system in the country and the determination and maintenance of its standards. This unusual combination of functions of a university offering academic programmes as well as leading the development of other open universities makes IGNOU, in some ways, is a player as well as the empire. It might be so, according to conventional models. But IGNOU as a leader of the network of open universities sharing its programmes and facilities, as well as supporting others in their development, is seeking to establish a new model of partnership in development, in place of the patron-client relationship that characterises the traditional funding agencies' approach to the development of universities. The unit explains the instrumentalities developed by IGNOU for performing these functions and how it goes about doing so.

5.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1. While establishing IGNOU, the Government of India decided that the national open university will be outside the purview of the UGC. The major point in favour of this approach was that the new university should not be conditioned by the attitudes and concerns that govern the UGC's funding policy with respect to traditional universities, and that the open university should be able to develop its own practices, traditions and values. It was also envisaged from the very beginning that sharing programmes and facilities should be an important consideration in the growth of open universities as against the traditional approach to development through funding.
2. India is a vast country. It has already 6 million students enrolled in higher education programmes offered by universities and colleges, which accounts for only 6% of the relevant age group. If the open university system has to reach out to a much large number of people, many of whom are educationally, economically and socially disadvantaged, it was felt that no single institution could meet this challenge. Added to this were the problems of having to offer programmes in as many as sixteen well-developed languages. The only solution was a number of open universities, at least one in each major state. Considerations of efficiency and effectiveness demanded that all these universities share the available resources rather than each one reinventing the wheel. The Distance Education Council's efforts in creating a common pool of programmes and standard-setting for those to be newly developed are the major steps taken in this direction.
3. The thrust of the reforms measures proposed for correspondence education programmes is their upgradation into mainstream distance education programmes. The package includes institutional reforms involving greater autonomy for the Directorates in programme determination, academic reforms including the upgradation of the learning packages with self-instructional materials and electronic media components, provision of student support service to strengthen interactivity, and training of staff in the methods and practices of distance education, including the application of technology.

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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