CHAPTER V

MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The major findings of the present study have been presented under the following headings:

1. Major findings relating to growth of institutions and enrolment in open and distance education in Mizoram;
2. Major findings relating to profiles of the learners and related issues;
3. Major findings relating to infrastructure and related inputs;
4. Major findings relating to problems of open and distance education.

5.1.0 MAJOR FINDINGS RELATING TO GROWTH OF INSTITUTIONS AND ENROLMENT IN OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN MIZORAM

1. Growth of study centres/accredited institutions under open and distance education in Mizoram

The first open and distance education centre in Mizoram, i.e., Aizawl College Study Centre under IGNOU Shillong Regional Centre was established in 1987 while the first two Accredited Institutions under open school system were opened in 1989. As on 2009, there were 65 open and distance learning centres. Under IGNOU Aizawl Regional Centre, there were 38 Study Centres, 10 partner institutes and 2 community colleges while there were one Study Centre each under
Directorate of Distance Education under Madurai Kamaraj University and International Centre for Distance and Open Learning (ICDEOL), Himachal Pradesh University. There were 13 Accredited Institutions under National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS).

2 District-wise distribution of open and distance learning centres showed that half of the total study centres/accredited institutions in the state, i.e., 33 study centres were located in Aizawl, 7 in Lunglei, 5 in Champhai and another 5 in Lawngtlai, 4 in Serchhip, 3 in Kolasib, 3 in Mamit and another 3 in Saiha.

II Growth of enrolment in open and distance education institutes in Mizoram

1 There was a phenomenal increase in the enrolment in open and distance education during 1988-89 to 2010-2010. Enrolment in open and distance education increased consistently and significantly over the period. In 1988-89 there were only 7 learners enrolled in open and distance education, whereas, in 2010-11, the number rose to 10419 learners, showing approximately 1488 times increase over the period.

2 Both enrolment in IGNOU and NIOS showed a consistent and significant growth. Under IGNOU enrolment grew approximately by 703 times during 1988-89 to 2010-11. There were 7 learners under IGNOU but by 2010-11 the number increased to 4919. Meanwhile, there were only 300 learners in NIOS in
1989-90, the number escalated to 5500 in 2010-11 implying a little more than eighteen-fold increase.

3 Growth of programme-wise enrolment under IGNOU Regional Centre, Aizawl showed that between 2001 and 2010, enrolment in Master degree course had risen almost 18 times while enrolment in Bachelor degree programme grew significantly in absolute terms, but its share declined gradually. Enrolment in diploma and certificate programme showed insignificant in absolute as well as relative terms.

4 Enrolment growth in Madurai Kamraj University (MKU) during 1998-99 to 2007-08 shows an erratic pattern. As on 1998-99, there were 54 learners, the number increased to 185 in 2007 showing a little more than three-fold increase. However, by 2007 enrolment drop to 90 learners only. On the other hand, enrolment under Himachal Pradesh University witnessed inconsistent growth trends during 1998-99 to 2007-08. The number of learners enrolled increased from 223 in 1989-99 to 360 in 1998 showing 42 per cent increase; while enrolment gradually decreased and by 2002-2008, there were only 112 learners.

5 Enrolment in the Accredited Institutions (AIs) under NIOS increased from 350 learners in 1989 to 4451 learners in 2008-09, indicating almost eight-fold increase over the period. Four of the AIs offered secondary level course whereas nine offered both secondary and senior secondary course. Three of the AIs used only English as a medium of instruction while 10 of them offered both English and Hindi as medium of instruction.
III Growth of Enrolment in the Sample Study Centres/ Accredited Institutions

1 The enrolment in the nine sample study centres under IGNOU grew almost 17 times from 216 learners in 2001 to 3670 learners in 2008. Centre-wise, Government Hrangbana College has the highest growth rate. Other study centres show a moderate growth rate during the study period. Under NIOS the sample Accredited Institutions increased though there were some gaps in some years. It grew from 314 learners in 2001 to 826 learners in 2008.

5.2.0 MAJOR FINDINGS RELATING TO PROFILE OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNERS AND RELATED ISSUES

1 Profile of learners

1 Majority of the learners (54.6%) were females. As the level of education increases, female enrolment gradually decreased while male enrolment showed a rising tendency. Most of the learners (73.3%) were unmarried. The percentage of married learners increased with the level of education..

2 The dominant age group of the learners was 21-25 years followed by the age group of 16-20 years. The number of learners above 40 years was negligible. The dominant age group rose as the level of education increases.

3 Nearly 29 per cent of the learners’ fathers were government employees. More than 24 per cent were cultivators. Daily labourers constituted 14.3
per cent. Business group formed 24.5 per cent while teachers accounted for 8.3 per cent. More than 43 per cent of the learners' mothers were unemployed. About 17 per cent were cultivators and 13 per cent were engaged in business while government employees were 9 per cent.

4 Majority (65.6%) of the learners' fathers was matriculates and below. Almost 30 per cent were post secondary degree holders. Majority (79.2%) of the learners' mothers hold below high school degree. Few of the mothers (12.7%) have post secondary degree; 8 per cent were illiterates.

5 More than 35 per cent of the learners came from the low middle income group. About 27 per cent belonged to middle income group and only 16 per cent of the learners represented the high middle income group.

6 More than 44 per cent of the learners were employed. The number of learners employed increased with the increase in the level of education. Most (80.3%) of the learners at the school level were unemployed. Almost 53 per cent were employed at the undergraduate level and 68 per cent in postgraduate learners.

7 Majority (70 per cent) received information on admission from the study centres. More than 12 per cent received information through regional office and 17 per cent through advertisement, friends and internet.

8 More than 46 per cent of the learners joined distance learning to improve their qualification. About 30 per cent of learners opted for ODL due to their
full time employment while another 23.7 per cent due to other reasons like high expenses in formal education, for promotion, enhancing knowledge and inability to get admission on formal stream.

II Utilisation of academic facilities by the learners

A. Self-Learning Materials

1 A large majority of learners found Self-Learning Materials helpful in enhancing their knowledge (97.4%), developing creative thinking (95.5%), gives practical knowledge (92%), feedback (92%), self-study (85%), and self-satisfaction (75%). Majority of the learners found the study centres resourceful to meet their requirements. About 23 per cent of the learners found the audio/video provided as useful for learning.

B. Utilisation of Library, Radio Interactive Programme and Internet by the Learners

1 Majority of learners (63.4%) under IGNOU never visited the library at the Study Centres. Learners who regularly visited the library were 2.8 per cent. Only 13.6 per cent of the learners ‘often’ visited the library while 20 per cent ‘rarely’ visited the library. Radio Interactive Programme (RIP) was regularly listened by about 10 per cent of the learners under IGNOU. As many as 46.1 per cent learners never listened to the radio interactive programme. Most (89.6%) of the learners have never
used the internet at all. Learner viewing the Educational TV Programme has been very poor (3.1%). Nearly 63 per cent of the learners never watched the programme.

C Utilisation of Personal Contact Programme and Assignments

1 About 90 per cent of learners found Personal Contact Programme helpful to them in the teaching-learning process; 60.3 per cent used Personal Contact Programme (PCP) for clarifying their doubts. About 32.1 per cent attended PCP for tutorials. Only 1.2 per cent used PCP for viewing video while 6.3 per cent of learners used it for self-evaluation. About 96 per cent of the learners found the assignment useful.

D Expenditure incurred by open and distance education learners

1 The important components of private cost were fees for admission and examination, stationery items, transport and food. The admission fee was estimated at Rs 1447 per student and examination fees amounted to Rs 299 per student. The cost of stationery was Rs.308 per student per annum. Transport cost accounted was Rs.564 per student per annum. The average cost on food per student was Rs. 343.

2 The average cost estimated for all courses taken together was Rs.2972 per student. The annual average private costs at the school, undergraduate and postgraduate level were Rs.2060, Rs.3004 and Rs.4625 per student respectively. In relative terms, learners spent 67 per cent on admission fee, 4.9 per
cent on examination, 6.9 per cent on stationery, 14.4 per cent on transportation, 6.8 per cent on food items.

III Follow up study of successful learners

1 Majority (80.3%) of successful learners belonged to the age group 21-40 years; learners above 50 years were negligible. Majority (54%) of successful learners was married. More than 34 per cent of successful learners were senior secondary or pre-university degree holder before joining open education while 31 per cent completed their Post Graduate course. Another 27.6 per cent had bachelor degree.

2 The most common programme pursued by successful learners was Bachelor degree course; more than 33 per cent completed these courses. Successful learners who completed professional course (B. Ed) was 25.3 per cent while another 25.3 per cent completed master degree course.

3 The occupational background of successful learners showed that majority (58.6%) were teachers. Nearly 20 per cent were unemployed. Government servants accounted 9.2 per cent while journalist and social workers (NGO) constituted 2.3 per cent and 3.4 per cent respectively.

4 Various factors motivated them to join open and distance education-62 per cent joined for qualification while 20.7 per cent joined due to their full time employment, and 11.5 per cent for enhancement of knowledge.
The benefits derived include pay increment (19.5%), confirmation/promotion in the job (13.8%) and job placement (4.6%). More than 35 per cent obtained higher educational qualification, 11.5 per cent were able to pursue further studies.

5.3.0 MAJOR FINDINGS RELATING TO INFRASTRUCTURE AND RELATED INPUTS

I Infrastructure under IGNOU Aizawl Regional Centre

1 IGNOU Aizawl Regional Centre had 13 Regular Study Centres, 7 Special Study Centres and 17 Programme Study Centres. Among the Regular Study Centres, Aizawl College Study Centre had been offering as many as 33 programmes/subjects. Ngopa Higher Secondary School, a Special Study Centres, has offered maximum programme with 16 subjects. Among the Programme Study Centres, DIET (Serchhip) and DIET (Lawngtlai), activated as many as 10 programmes of studies.

2 Ten Partner Institutions under the Convergence Scheme and two community colleges have been set up in Mizoram. The Partner Institutions offered both under-graduate courses and may enrol their own students for certificate or diploma programme. Community college was targeted towards providing an alternatives system of education to those who for some reason or other have missed the opportunity of mainstream education. The programmes offered under this...
scheme are primarily in the area of vocational studies and the community need based programmes.

3 The Regional Centre has a small library which contained 911 textbooks and 20 reference materials. Besides national newspapers and magazines, the Regional Centre subscribed reputed journals including Indian Journal Open Learning. Non-reading materials available in the library consist of audio/video cassettes, CDs, etc that could be used for teaching-learning purposes.

II  Academic programmes offered under IGNOU Aizawl Regional Centre

1 The academic programmes offered under IGNOU Regional Centre are Master degree programme, Postgraduate diploma programme, Bachelor degree programme, diploma and certificate courses. Eleven subjects/courses were offered under Master Degree programmes, 10 subjects/courses under bachelor degree programmes, 9 subjects/courses under postgraduate diploma programme, 7 diploma courses and 23 certificate courses under IGNOU Aizawl Regional Centre

2 During 2001 to 2008, majority of the learners (69%) were enrolled in three subjects- Master of Arts in English (MEC), Master of Arts in Political Science (MPS) and Master of Arts in Sociology (MSO). Master of English programme accounted 27.6 per cent of total enrolment, Master of Sociology 20.6 per cent and Master of Political Science 20.4 per cent. During 2001-2008, enrolment in Bachelor Degree Programme was dominated by Bachelor of Arts (B.A) accounting 83.7 per cent of total enrolment. Enrolments in other degree programme were relatively
insignificant compared to Bachelor of Arts. Enrolments in diploma programmes were very small as compared with traditional subjects in Master of Arts and Bachelor of Arts. Enrolment in certificate programme is dominated by Bachelor Preparatory Programme (BPP) which was offered to those learners who do not pass the essential qualification of 10+2 to enter higher degree course under IGNOU. During 2001-2008, the total enrolment in BPP accounted almost 74 percent of total enrolment in the certificate programme while enrolments at the CPE and CIC were 20.8% and 3% respectively.

III Facilities available in the sample study centres/accredited institutions

1 The sample study centres under IGNOU Aizawl Regional Centre were equipped with Television and Library facilities. Eight of the Study Centres were provided with computer facilities while internet facilities were provided to only four Study Centres. Only two Study Centres were provided with photostat machines

2 Accredited Institutions under NIOS were poorly equipped. Only two (2) of the Study Centres have computer, telephone and library facilities while internet and television were available in only one Study Centre. Photostat machines and Video/Audio supports were not available in all the Study Centres. Even the existing library facilities in the Study Centres were ill-equipped.

3 All the Study Centres and Accredited Institutions did not have separate rooms for library but have been provided with separate room for conducting contact
classes and office room for the coordinators and their staff. Toilet, drinking water, chairs and tables were available in these Study Centres and Accredited Institutions.

IV Academic programmes offered in the sample study centres

1 The number of programme offered, enrolment and the number of academic counsellors varied widely between the Study Centres. Aizawl College Study Centre was offering 23 programmes of studies with 1071 learners. Hnahthial College Study Centre offered just three programmes of studies with 103 learners. Hrangbana College Study Centre had the highest enrolment in 2008- 1235 learners with 11 programmes of studies.

2 Subject-wise enrolment in the postgraduate degree level revealed that Master in Sociology (MSO) accounted 23.7 per cent followed by enrolment at Master in History (18.7%).

3 Enrolment in Bachelor degree & diploma programme in sample Study Centres indicated that the highest enrolment was accounted by B.A. representing 88.5 per cent of total enrolment. Enrolment at the B.Com, BSW and BTS were 131 (7%), 52 (2.8%) and 25 (1.3%) learners respectively. However, enrolment at diploma level was not significant.

4 Bachelor Preparatory Programme (BPP) had 74.4 per cent, the highest share of enrolment followed by Certificate in Primary Education (CPE). Enrolment at CPE had a share of 23.5 per cent.
Three of the sample Accredited Institutions were offering Secondary and Senior Secondary courses while one of them offered only secondary course.

V Manpower inputs available in open and distance education in Mizoram

1 IGNOU Aizawl Regional Centre is headed by the Regional Director who is an overall charge of activities of the university within the region. The Regional Director directs and monitors academic operations and coordinates the working of the study centres. The staffing pattern includes one Asst. Regional Director, two consultants, and eleven supporting staff.

2 Manpower inputs in the Study Centre consisted of academic counsellors and some supporting staff. The total number of academic counsellors in the sample study centres was 158 and the supporting staffs 55. The total manpower input per programme was 1.9 and the total student manpower ratio was 17.23.

3 The number of programme offered varied widely between the Study Centres. Government Aizawl College study centre offered 23 programmes while Govt. Lawngtlai College offered only three programmes of studies.

4 Government Mamit College Study Centre has the highest manpower input per programme amongst the sample Study Centres-5 manpower inputs per programme. Govt. Saiha College had the smallest man-power input per programme with only 1.9 manpower inputs per programme. Govt. Hrangbana College had the
highest student manpower ratio (38.6) while Govt Serchhip College had the lowest student manpower ratio of 6.3.

5 Under NIOS, three Accredited Institutions offered Secondary and Senior Secondary Courses while there is only one Study Centre which offered Secondary Courses. while the other three offered both. The number of learners per counsellors varied between 7 and 50 learners per counsellor.

VI Pattern of institutional expenditure at the sample study centres

1 The expenditure on remuneration of study centre staff accounted the highest amount (51.5%), followed by examination expenses (24.8%). Academic expenses accounted 18.2 per cent while administrative expenses 5.5 per cent of the total expenditure. The total unit institutional cost was estimated Rs.931 per student. The unit cost per student varied between different study centres. The unit cost varied between Rs 1,893 per student in Saiha College study centre and Rs 448 per student in Aizawl College study centre.

2 Estimates of item-wise unit cost showed that the unit cost of remuneration of coordinators and other staff was Rs.480 per student. The unit cost of examination was Rs.231 per student while academic expense was Rs 169 per student. Administrative expense was estimated at Rs 41 per student. Unit cost per student on remuneration for coordinators and staff was the highest in Saiha College Study Centre (Rs.1345) and lowest in Hrangbana College Study Centre (Rs 171).
3. Unit cost per student on academic varied between Rs.296 in Kolasib College Study Centre and Rs.63 in Hrangbana College Study Centre. Unit cost per student on examination was the highest in Mamit College Study Centre (Rs.300) and lowest in Hrangbana college study centre (Rs 91). The unit cost on administrative items varied between Rs 97 per student in Saiha College Study Centre and Rs 26 per student in Lawngtlai College Study Centre.

4. The pattern of expenditure in the sample Accredited Institutions under NIOS showed that the share of expenditure for counsellors’ remuneration is the highest (46.4%) followed by examination expenses (39.8%). The estimate of total unit institutional cost in Accredited Institution was Rs 528 per student under NIOS in Mizoram. The unit cost per student varied between different Accredited Institutions. The unit cost varied between Rs 981 per student in Madonna Education Centre AI and Rs 315 in TLR City College AI.

5. Unit cost per student on co-ordinators and staff varied between South Hlimen High School Accredited Institution (Rs 91) and Madonna Education Centre Accredited Institution (Rs 45). Unit cost per student on academic varied between Rs 405 per student in Madonna Education Centre Accredited Institution and Rs 157 per student in TLR City College Accredited Institution. Unit cost per student on examination items varied between Rs 515 per student in Madonna Education Centre Accredited Institution and Rs 100 per student in TLR City College Accredited Institution. The unit cost on administrative item was the highest in Southern Baptist High School Accredited Institution and lowest in TLR City College Accredited
Institution. The unit cost was Rs 22 per student in Southern Baptist High School Accredited Institution and Rs 5 per student in TLR CITY College Accredited Institution.

5.4.0 MAJOR FINDINGS RELATING TO PROBLEMS OF OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

I Problems of learners under open and distance education

A Problems relating to pre-admission and admission

It was found that 23.7 per cent of learners faced problems in getting information of the course they wanted to pursue at the time of admission. Only few of the learners were facing problems on eligibility (13%), choosing study centre (11%), remitting fees (11%) and in filling up admission form (10.2%). Majority of the learners (62%) did not understand the credit system and more than 43 per cent of university learners did not received in time information on induction meeting. Nearly 24 per cent of the learners did not get assistance from the Study Centre at the time of admission. Surprisingly, the figure is very high at the school level (57.9 %) while it was as low as 7.1 per cent at the undergraduate and 9 per cent at the postgraduate level.

B Problems relating to Self-Learning Materials

1 Late receipt of reading material was the main problem faced by all learners at different stages. As a whole, 45.2 per cent of the learners reported facing
this problem. More than 31 per cent of the learners experienced delayed in writing assignment due to late receipt of reading materials and 15 per cent of the learners lost time for study due to late receipt of reading materials.

2 Few students (7%) received wrong reading materials while almost 19 per cent did not receive reading materials and 20 per cent learners received incomplete set of the learning materials. It was found that more than 19 per cent of the learners did not understand the contents of the learning materials while almost 41 per cent did not understand the language of the reading materials. As many as 25.6 per cent of the learners did not understand the content and language of the reading materials.

3 While as many as 40 per cent of the learners could not complete the activities provided in the reading materials, most of them found the activities provided in learning materials were helpful in understanding the contents of the learning materials.

4 Only very few (3.2%) of the learners could not understand the reading materials at all while 14.7 per cent of the learners could completely understand the reading materials. As much as 54.4 per cent of the learners could understand the study materials to ‘some extent’. The number of learners who could understand to a ‘large extent’ constituted 27.6 per cent.

5 Only few learners had problem in attending regularly personal contact programme. It was found that almost 18 per cent of the learners experienced
problems during Personal Contact Programme (PCP). The main problems faced by
the learners, in order of magnitude, were: (i) explanations not cleared; (ii) PCP not
related with learners’ problems; (iii) No feedback and (iv) explanations not
interesting.

C. Problems relating to Examination

1 More than 34 per cent of the learners did not received Hall ticket/admit
card in time. Majority of both undergraduate and post graduate learners did not
receive their results and grade card in time from the University as a result of which
they faced difficulty in re-registration. It was also found that 40 per cent of the
learners faced problems due to delayed in result declaration.

D Problems relating to Assignments

1 Several students (37%) did not receive their assignments immediately.
While more than 21 per cent of learners were not clear with their assignments, 33
per cent of the learners faced difficulty in doing assignment. As many as 54.6 per
cent of the learners reported that they did not get adequate guidance for their
assignments.

2 Few (15.3%) learners were unable to submit their assignments due to
late receipt of SLM. More than 21 per cent postgraduate learners, 16 per cent
undergraduate learners and 11 per cent school learners faced the problem.
1 Few students got problems in submitting the assignments. About 2 per cent were unable to submit assignment due to lack of detail information while 12.6 per cent of the learners were unable to submit their assignments due to inadequate time for writing.

2Nearly 45 per cent of the learners did not receive the evaluated assignment in time. And more than 53 per cent of the learners described that no comment was written on their assignment.

3 Only 3 per cent learners revealed that their assignments were not properly checked and returned late. More than 11 per cent of learners stated that their assignments were checked but returned late. About 24 of the learners reported that their assignments were never returned.

II Problems faced by Co-ordinators

A. Co-ordinators under IGNOU Aizawl Regional Centre

1 All the co-ordinators were concerned about receipt of incomplete sets, wrong packets of learning materials and late receipt by the learners as it adversely affect the learner’s motivation to study, delayed in writing assignments and their submission in time.

2 Non-receipt or late receipt of Hall Ticket for Term-End Examination (TEE) by the learners created problem for the co-ordinator. It was supposed to arrive a week before the examination started but arrived late and often do not reach at all even during or after the examination. Undue delay in declaration of results and
incomplete ones received by the learners was another concern of the co-
ordinators.

3 Co-ordinators faced problem due to limited fund allocated for 
organising contact programme.

4 Relating to assignment, the major difficulties faced consist of: (i) late 
arrival of assignment questions for the learners resulting to late submission of 
assignments by the learners, and (ii) exclusion/ omission of assignment marks in 
grade card from the Headquarters.

B Co-ordinators under NIOS

1 The Self-Learning Materials (SLMs) for different subjects reached 
Accredited Institutions (AI) in incomplete set, less number of textbooks in some 
subjects, wrong and late receipts of study materials gives problems to the co-
ordinators.

2 Many of the registered students were often excluded in the final list to 
fill up the examination forms though they paid their fees and had cleared their 
examination fees as well. Also, many of the learners’ admit card from the Regional 
Centre did not reached the Accredited Institutions before the commencement of 
public examination causing inconveniences to the learners.

3 Co-ordinators faced problems in organising personal contact 
programme due to financial constraints. The remuneration received for PCP from the
Regional Office was too meagre to pay the counsellors for their services. Many of the learners from far flung remote areas were prevented from attending contact programme due financial constraints.

4 The biggest obstacle faced by Accredited Institutions (AIs) in Mizoram was poor communication infrastructure. Communication facilities such as the telephone, computer, internet and television were not provided to Accredited Institutions making communication between the Regional Office and Accredited Institutions very difficult.

5 All the Accredited Institutions in Mizoram were ill-equipped, they faced difficulty in getting information especially during declaration of results. No provision to access the internet and other facilities at the AI create difficulties in receiving and in giving out the results in time.

6 There was lack of coordination and understanding between the Regional Office, Guwahati and the NIOS Accredited Institutions of Mizoram was. NIOS Regional Centre, Guwahati, showed no cooperation and coordination with AIs’ in Mizoram. The Regional Office never sent any representative to Mizoram to inspect the Accredited Institutions/Study centres or to hear their grievances nor even to assess the internal and external situation faced by the coordinators.
4.5.0 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

I Findings relating to growth of institutions and enrolment in open and distance education in Mizoram

The present study revealed that open and distance learning witnessed tremendous growth in Mizoram during the two decades. Enrolment, number of programmes and number of study centres were increasing rapidly. Of the four ODL institutes operating in the state, IGNOU has the most consistent growth. The present study found that open and distance learning institutes in Mizoram offered a wide range of programme of studies from certificate courses to master degree covering both traditional and professional courses. However, enrolment has been dominated by in traditional courses while only very few learners were interest in need-based and skilled based courses. The growth in enrolment was motivated by enrolment in these traditional subjects. These observations had been corroborated with the findings of Prasad (1987), (Khan 1991), Pandit, (1994), Srivastava, (1995), Pandey, (1996), Garg & Panda, (2002), and Koul, (2006) who also found that bulk of open and distance learners were enrolled in general programme like B.A & B. Com. They also observed that majority of women learners opted for traditional subjects such as Arts, Humanities, Education etc.

It is interesting to note that enrolments in general courses were much higher than innovative, need based courses like certificate and diploma courses. The reason may be that the learners just wanted to become a graduate which is regarded as a stepping stone in entering the world of white collar job. The low
enrolment in need based programmes may also be due to the fact that learners were facing difficulties in understanding the language of the print materials as they were not written in the regional language. The findings have been found to be in consistent as with findings of earlier studies conducted by Prasad (1987), Pandit (1994), Srivastava (1995) and Pandey (1996). The findings may be an indication that open and distance education was merely a diversion of the regular students from the conventional system.

At the school stage, NIOS has the potential of growing and developing as the enrolment pattern has modestly increased. It was able to set up 13 Accredited Institutions within three decades where majority was offering both secondary and senior secondary courses. However, the Accredited Institutions lack proper infrastructure, equipment and facilities for delivery of academic and administrative services which are important for efficient functioning of distance learning.

II Findings on profiles of learners and related issues

The present study highlighted that female enrolment was found to be relatively higher at the school stage but gradually decreased as the level of education increased. The reason may be they were married and had families to look after or jobs. The finding of the present study has the support of Kanchan (1996) and Sharma (2000) who have also found that female enrolments were higher than that of males. Vandse and Poll (1990) also observed that correspondence education was popular more in the urban areas and among the working women. At the same time,
this finding is contrary to that of Prasad (1988), Khan (1991), Kumar (1998), Sharma (1999) and Rubdy and Sen (1999) and Reddy and Manjulikka (1999) who reported that male dominated enrolment in open and distance learning institutes. Srivastava and Ramegowda (2006), who compared women enrolment in distance education and conventional system of education, found that enrolment in distance education was higher than conventional system.

The study further revealed that enrolment in the open and distance education was dominated by 21-25 age groups and between the age group of 16 to 20 years. It is evident that those who pursued open and distance learning were of the same age group as in the formal institution. The finding of the present study reveals majority of the IGNOU learners were in the age group of 21-30 years. The findings had the support of Kumar (1998), Prasad (1988), and Gaba (2007). The distance mode has provided another chance to many young and aspiring learners to realise their educational dreams. However, in Subramaniam (1999) and in Varghese and Pulimood (1999) study the dominant age group was between 20-40 years and 31-51 years.

The study indicated that majority of learners joined open system to improve their educational qualification and due to their full time engagement in their jobs. Enhancing their knowledge, high expenses in formal institutions and a desire to increase their promotional aspects were the additional reasons. Similar findings have been reported by Khan (1992), Pandit (1994), Anand (1979), Pillai & Mohan (1984), and Sahoo (1985).
The present study found employed learners to be much higher than unemployed at the post graduate and under graduate levels which contradicted with the findings of Prasad (1988) and Bala (1999) but conformed at the school level where most of the learners were unemployed.

III Findings relating to utilisation of academic facilities

The present study revealed that most of the learners perceived the reading materials (SLM) to be enhancing knowledge, useful, practical and motivating. These observations were supported by the study of Dhillon (1978), Kaur (1979,1981) and Kaur (1982) Mishra et al (2001), Dwivedi (2005). On the other hand, the findings revealed that most of the learners did not utilised the library, radio interactive programme, internet and educational television. Rubdy and Sen (1999), Mateswaran (2001) and Sharma (2003) reported that majority of the learners in IGNOU and in Jammu and Kashmir did not utilized properly library facilities and education television. Mani (1981) found the radio timing inconvenient. On the other hand Jayagopal (1998), Shah and Mandal (1993), Goel and Sarangi (1995),Bala (1999), Chaudhary and Bansal (2000), Sukumar (2001), Agrawal and Ganesan (2003) found education television, radio interactive programme, video film and booklet motivating, significant, effective and relevant.

Most of the learners found Personal Contact Programme and assignment were helpful to them in the teaching-learning process. The present study revealed that both the learners at the school and higher levels mostly used personal contact
for clarifying doubts and for lecture and discussion corroborating with the findings of Patil (1997) and Bala (1999). But Sharma (2002) study reported that there was insufficient interaction during the contact programme.

It was found that successful learners received benefits in terms of pay increment, confirmation/promotion in the job and job placement, higher educational qualification, while some were able to pursue further studies. The findings of the present study has the support of Woodley (1995), Gaba (1999, 2007) and Open University of Hongkong (1999) who had also found higher qualification, pay increment, promotion, self-confidence and so on as the benefits. Upreti (1988) also found teachers trained through correspondence education experienced vertical mobility.

IV Findings on infrastructure and related inputs

The study found that Study Centres under IGNOU Regional Centre and Accredited Institutions under NIOS were poorly equipped in terms of library and other facilities like Xerox machines, internet etc. Learners from isolated and distance villages could not obtain their results immediately due to non-availability of internet facilities at the study centres. Absence of library facilities also handicapped the learners in writing their assignments. These findings were corroborated by Mani (1982, 1987), Rathore (1991), Puzhagentti (1991), Naidu (2000) Rao (2008) who found that study centres were very few and ill-equipped, did not fulfill the purpose of supporting the distance learners and their functioning inadequate.
VI Findings regarding problems of open and distance education in Mizoram

The study revealed that majority of learners did not understand credit system. Late receipt of reading materials was another major problem faced by the learners. Other major problem relating to assignments was that learners did not receive evaluated assignments on time. Late receipt and incomplete receipt of SLM also affected student time for writing of assignment and submission of assignment and their further studies. More than half of the learners were getting personal problems in attending personal contact programme. Under open and distance education, self-learning materials, assignments and personal contact programmes are the main teaching-learning process. Delayed receipts of learning materials or any incomplete set or wrong receipts could be very frustrating for the learners. These problems were also highlighted by other studies like Gupta (2000), Kumar (2002), Jaiswal (2002), Sharma (2002), Sharma (2003), and Reddy (2005).

VII Findings on cost of open and distance education

The present study revealed that expenditure on fees, stationery items, transport and food constituted an important component of individual cost while remuneration for study centre staff, examination expenses, academic expenses and administrative expenses were the major items of institutional cost. The expenditure on remuneration of study centre staff accounted the highest amount followed by examination expenses, academic expenses and administrative expenses. The unit
cost per student varied between different study centres. The pattern of expenditure in the sample Accredited Institutions under NIOS showed that the share of expenditure for counsellors’ remuneration is the highest followed by examination expenses.

The investigator could not find any study relating to private cost of open and distance education; however, there were few studies in relation to cost of open and distance education at the institutional level. Mulay et al (1986), Datt (1991), Singh et al (1992) found that a wide variation in cost per student existed at the institutional level which is in agreement with the present study. Further, Pillai and Nadu (1999), Sharma (1999) and Gaba (1999) also identified that the major components of institutional costs were remuneration of academic and non-academic staff, examination and student support services.
5.6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE STATUS OF OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN MIZORAM

I Recommendations relating to growth of institutions and enrolment in open and distance educational institutions

1 Enrolment in open and distance learning institutes were dominated by traditional subjects like B.A and M.A. Effort must be made to attract learners to pursue professional courses whose job prospects are very encouraging. Certificates and diploma programmes under IGNOU should be translated in the local dialect. Besides, need-based programme suited to the local requirement should be also prepared.

2 Accredited institutions under NIOS should be opened in every districts of Mizoram. All the NIOS Accredited Institutions must be permitted to offer both the secondary and senior secondary courses. At the same time, the Accredited Institutions should be inspected or visited every now and then by the Regional Director-his jurisdiction. The medium of instruction for self learning materials under NIOS Accredited Institutions should be written in the mother tongue (Mizo) as this could help the learners to comprehend the reading materials easily. Vocational Accredited Institutions should also be opened for the state of Mizoram for opening more opportunities to the learners.
II Recommendations relating to profile of distance learners and related issues

1 Female learners both at the school and especially at the higher level should be given special drive to enable them to join and complete the course through open and distance learning. Both at the school level and higher level adult learners above 40 years should also be encouraged to come forward; an incentive drives and programmes for such age group should be arranged.

2 Need based and skilled based programmes should be translated in the regional language for effective utilisation of the programme.

3 Data of learners who completed the course should be maintained properly. The success of the programme can be identified from the number of completion and drop-out rates.

III Recommendations relating to infrastructure and related inputs

1 The study centres/ Accredited Institutions should be equipped with the basic minimum requirements for the smooth functioning of the academic and administrative set up. The Study Centres/Accredited Institutions under IGNOU and NIOS should be provided with better facilities like the computer, internet, television and library facilities. The Study Centres/Accredited Institutions must possessed audio/video for supporting learners. Learners should be informed of their availability.
and its utility in the process of learning. At the same time the audio/video should be prepared to provide better/clearer perception and understanding in their learning.

2 All the study centre/ Accredited Institutions should have library which should be accessible to the learners. The library should be equipped to even meet the minimum requirement of the learners.

3 Radio Interactive Programme and educational television programme should be arranged and prepared in such a way that it encouraged the learners to listen and watch the programme. The presentation should be interesting, clear, specific and relevant to the learners.

4 Internet facilities should be installed both in Accredited Institutions/ study centres as it provides good supporting services to the learners. Its easy accessibility would assist in acquiring information and other reading materials for writing the assignments.

5 Personal contact programme between the distance learners and the counsellors should be arranged to provide interaction, guidance, assistance and in clearing doubts for the learners. It should be organized regularly for about 30 days.

6 Counsellors/ tutors under NIOS should be paid for their services during contact classes and for evaluating the assignment. The remuneration paid should not be too low but should be handsome enough to be benefitted.
IV Recommendations for overcoming the challenges/problems of open and distance learning

1 Credit system should be explained clearly to the learners; adequate information should be provided to them during induction meeting, counselling session and during informal briefings by the coordinators.

2 Induction letters were not received by many learners. Date of induction should be fixed immediately and the learners should be informed through mass media.

3 Timely dispatch of SLM to students must be ensured. Head office of institution should develop an effective planning and monitoring mechanism to ensure that stock of surplus learning materials be available with Study Centres for distribution to needy learners. The distribution system of learning materials must be decentralized.

3 Students often complained that their submitted assignments were lost by the Study Centres. Coordinators should properly take care of these as they critical issues for the learners.

4 Assignments should be properly checked with comments as they are the means of interaction/communication between the teacher and the distant learners. Moreover, properly commented assignment provides feedback and
motivation to learners. Evaluated assignments should always be returned well before the second sets of assignments are due for submission.

5 Examinations should be partially decentralized to avoid delay in result declaration; Regional Centre should be assigned the responsibility of evaluation and a list of local evaluators should be available with Regional Centre for follow up of early evaluation of answer books. Adequate care be exercised in filling up data regarding examination and the Hall ticket/admit card should be promptly delivered to the concerned study centres.

6 The university must ensure that results of terms end examinations are declared before the proclamation of the date for the next term end examination. Grade Card complete in all respects may be dispatched to the learners immediately.

7 NIOS has the potential of growing and developing. Government should take initiative in establishing Regional Centre under NIOS in Mizoram.

8 Quantitative expansion of the open and distance education is welcome and it must be encouraged for the benefits of the people who live in far flung villages and remote areas. Both IGNOU and NIOS authority, however, should take initiative to ensure that quantitative expansion should not be encouraged at the cost of qualitative improvement of the open and distance education system.
5.7.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Evaluative study of academic programmes of open and distance learning education in Mizoram.

2. Case study of Study Centres under IGNOU and NIOS;

3. An analysis of socio-economic profile of distance learners under IGNOU and NIOS.

4. Identification of need based programmes under open and distance education

5. Evaluative study of professional courses under open and distance education programmes;

6. Special problems faced by learners coming from far-flung and isolated Locations.

7. Comparative cost analysis of open and distance learning institutes and conventional educational institutions;

8. Programme-wise cost analysis;

9. Institutional and private cost analysis under open and distance education vis-avis conventional system;
District-wise analysis of the status of open and distance education in Mizoram.