CHAPTER – 5

DISTANCE EDUCATION AND THE ROLE OF IGNOU

5.1 Indira Gandhi National Open University: An Introduction

IGNOU was established by an act of Parliament in 1985. The mission of the university is to open the doors of higher education to all and make learning innovative, flexible and job oriented. The mandate of IGNOU\(^1\) is to:

- “Provide access to higher education to all segments of the society;
- Offer high quality, innovative and need based programmes at different levels, to all those who require them;
- Reach out to the disadvantaged by offering programmes in all parts of the country at affordable costs; and
- Promote, coordinate and regulate the standard of education offered through open and distance learning in the country.”

IGNOU has set up strategic targets to achieve its mission. These targets are:

- Expanding higher education facilities and widening access by diversity of means.
- Providing need based programmes.
- Reaching out to large number of people, especially the disadvantaged.

- Establishing and operationlising a major Open University network.

- Establishing and developing education resource centers.

- Assuring the quality of programmes and services offered.

The significant features of IGNOU are:

- “Relaxed entry rules

- Study according to the students’ own pace and convenience

- Study at the students’ own chosen place

- Flexibility in choosing the combination of courses from a wide range of disciplines and

- Use of modern educational and communication technology

The university functions with the objectives of:

- Providing access to higher education to large segments of population and there of seeking to achieve the educational well being of community.

- Providing access to higher education to the disadvantaged groups and individuals and thereby opening up opportunities to upgrade knowledge and skills.

- Bringing higher education to the doorstep of all those who want it.
- Providing an integrated development of human personality.
- Promoting awareness of national integration and
- Providing high quality education at the University level.”

Formal system of higher education is continuously on pressure because of many factors. The present system has not been able to provide an effective means to equalize educational opportunities. The formal education system is rigid on many aspects. This rigidity results in a mismatch between the contents of most programmes and the needs of the development sectors. IGNOU was established to provide an alternative system of distance education that will be cost effective and provide equal educational opportunities to all. IGNOU is different from the other universities in the country, as it also functions as an apex body for the promotion, maintenance and co-ordination of the open and distance education system.

The jurisdiction of the University extends to whole of India and abroad. The main authorities of the University are the Board of Management, Planning Board, Academic Councill, Board of Recognition, Schools of Studies, Distance Education Council and Finance Committee.

IGNOU has been established with an objective of providing universal higher education by diversity of means. The main target is disadvantaged class of the society with an operational Open University network. According to the provisions of IGNOU act, the University shall: -
I Advance and disseminate learning and knowledge by different means.

II Provide opportunities of higher education to a large segment of the population.

III Promote the educational well being of the community.

IV Encourage the open university and distance education system in the country.

V Coordinate and determine the standards in such systems.

IGNOU offers academic programmes to the requirements of different categories of people. These programmes are intended for self enrichment as well as for professional upgrading. The university offers both short term and long term programmes, leading to certificates, diplomas, bachelor degrees, master degrees and doctoral degrees in various subjects covering conventional as well as innovative and professional programmes. The university develops and produces courses of delivery through open learning and distance education system.

IGNOU start educating the peoples by launching the Community Colleges throughout the country. Community Colleges are an alternative system of education which aims to empower individuals through appropriate skill development leading to gainful employment in collaboration with the local industry and community. They offer the advantage of tailoring programmes to local needs and state-based requirements by using approaches that will be most acceptable to workers in the given community.
IGNOU take a step forward towards the learner’s doorstep to take the examinations as per the convenience of the learners. This innovative venture of On-Demand Examination provides a completely flexible system of examination independent of the traditional fixed time frame. Under the scheme of On-Demand Examinations, IGNOU students can walk into the identified On-Demand Exam Centre of the University on the prescribed days as per their choice and appear for the examination in the course in which they are registered. They may not require to wait for the six monthly term end examination.

IGNOU has 21 schools of studies as detailed below:

1. School of Humanities
2. School of Social Sciences
3. School of Sciences
4. School of Education
5. School of Continuing Education
6. School of Engineering and Technology
7. School of Management Studies
8. School of Health Sciences
9. School of Computer and Information Sciences
10. School of Agriculture
11. School of Law
12. School of Journalism and New Media Studies
13. School of Gender and Development Studies
14. School of Tourism Hospitality Service Sectoral Management
15. School of Interdisciplinary and Trans-disciplinary Studies
16. School of Social Work
17. School of Vocational Education and Training
18. School of Extension and Development Studies
19. School of Foreign Languages
20. School of Translation Studies and Training
21. School of Performing and Visual Arts

To reach the benefits of its activities to the largest number of students, IGNOU has established and developed a nation wide network of 59 regional centers and over 2300 learner support centers throughout the countries. The study centers are hosted by different institutions, universities, colleges, industrial houses, medical institutions and even prisons.

IGNOU has also contributed significantly to the development of open learning abroad. Its learning packages have attracted international acclaim. The Open University of Hong-Kong has procured IGNOU study material in English and
Management. In recent years, countries in Africa, Gulf regions and the Indian Ocean Island have sought collaboration with IGNOU for launching its academic programmes in universities in these countries. The staff training and research institute in distance education set up in 1993 has provided training to academics from SAARC nations and has developed expertise in the areas of development of self instructional material, format design, editing, assignments, counselling and other distance education related operations. IGNOU has a state of the art electronic media production centre, which has the finest video production facilities in South Asia.

### 5.2 IGNOU PROGRAMMES

IGNOU offers the following types of programmes for study and research:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programmes</th>
<th>Total no.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Doctoral Programmes</td>
<td>- 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Doctoral Programme for International Students</td>
<td>- 03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Post Graduation Programmes</td>
<td>- 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Master degree programmes (Fulltime and On campus)</td>
<td>- 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Bachelor’s Degree Programmes</td>
<td>- 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Post Graduate Diplomas Programme</td>
<td>- 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) Bachelor’s degree programmes (Full time)</td>
<td>- 06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) Advanced Diploma Programmes</td>
<td>- 09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 **MULTI-MEDIA DELIVERY TECHNOLOGY OF IGNOU**

Distance mode of education has revolutionized the higher education system of the world. The instructional methodology of open universities is different from the conventional universities. In distance mode learner is an active participant in the teaching and learning process. Most of the instructions are imparted to the learners from a distance where learner learns without the classroom environment and learner
has very less face to face or we can say classroom teaching for a short time. In this
dynamic age of ICT IGNOU designed its delivery technology in a way where learner
has the opportunity of interaction with the subject expert with the traditional touch as
well. The university follows a Multi-media approach for imparting instructions as
detailed below:

(a) **Self Learning Instructional Material (SLIM)**

SLIM is the most popular medium as it is easy to carry and cheaper. Besides,
the learner has the opportunity to use it as per his convenience and at his own pace.
IGNOU supplies its learners the printed study material (written in self instructional
style) for theory and practical components of the programmes. This material
develops the knowledge of the learners. IGNOU SLIM is prepared by the subject
experts. Some of the foreign universities are using the material. It has also been
observed that so many conventional students use the material for their studies.

(b) **Audio-Visual Materials**

IGNOU’s learning package contains audio and video cassettes for better
clarification and enhancement of understanding and also to supplement the
course/curriculum, contents. These cassettes have been supplied to study centers.
These audio-video cassettes are also the integral part of the IGNOU programmes.
The cassettes can be accessed at the study centres. The concerned programmes
faculty prepares the programmes for the benefits of the learners.
(e) **Gyan Darshan**

The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India and Prasar Bharti launched Gyan Darshan on 26th January 2000, satellite based national educational and development channel. IGNOU is the nodal agency for Gyan Darshan. It uplinks from the earth station of EMPC-IGNOU, New Delhi. It can be accessed from all over the country throughout the year and round the clock without any break. Besides this, IGNOU telecasts TV programmes on National network of Doordarshan. All these efforts are only to tailor the services according to the needs of IGNOU learners.

Through the TV programmes learners have the benefit just like a classroom and this media gives eye and ear contact to the learners. This mode is an important media it is known that the TV programmes supplement the curriculum and its contents leave direct impression to the human mind. Learners can get the programmes details and schedules from the IGNOU web-site [http://www.ignou.ac.in](http://www.ignou.ac.in) as well as IGNOU publishes schedule that made available at the study centres. The details of Gyan Darshan programmes have also been accessed from [http://www.gyandarsan.ernet.in](http://www.gyandarsan.ernet.in). Finally, it may be said that it enhances the learning process of learners.
INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM IN IGNOU

1. Identify Educational Needs and Target Groups
2. Plan & Design the Curriculum
3. Production of Multi-Media Instructional Materials
4. Delivery System
   - Internet & CD-Rom
   - Printed Material
   - Audio Cassettes
   - Video Cassettes
   - Radio Broadcasting
   - TV Broadcasting
   - Lab Practicals Including face-to-face training
   - Contact & Counselling Sessions
   - Teleconferencing
5. Target Groups
6. Evaluation
7. Award of degree certificate

One or more than one instructional inputs
Gyan Darshan has a unique cooperative venture with the institution as detailed below

- Consortium for Education Communication (CEC)
- Central Institute for Educational Technology (CIET)
- National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)
• Directorate of Adult Education (DAE)

• Vigyan Prasar

• National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC)

• Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA)

• Ministry of Environment

• UNICEF

• National Institute of Public Cooperation in Child Development (NIPCCD)

• Port Training Institute, Chennai

• Centre for Development of Imaging Technology (C-DIT), Thiruvananthapuram

• Entrepreneurship Development Society, Pune

• Institute of Chartered Accountants of India

• Deutshe Welle (TRANSTEL)

• National Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Board

• Ministry of Rural Development

• Maruti Udhyog Ltd.

• Indian Railways

• Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
• All India Management Association
• Ministry of Agriculture
• IIT, Delhi

(d) Gyan Vani

Gyan Vani is an educational FM Radio network, IGNOU is the nodal agency for Gyan Vani, this network of FM Radio channel is dedicated to education and development. It operates as media cooperatives, with day to day programmes contributed by different Educational institutions, NGO’s and National level institutions like NCERT, UGC, IIT, DEC and Open Universities etc.

**FM Radio Gyan Vani Stations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Name of the City</th>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Name of the City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ahmedabad</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Rajkot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Allahabad</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Raipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Aurangabad</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Varanasi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bangalore</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Vishakapatnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bhopal</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Lucknow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Coimbatore</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Shillong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chennai</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Jaipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Panaji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Guwahati</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Indore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(e) **Counselling**

In distance education mode face to face interaction is different from the traditional mode. In distance mode counselling over come the teacher’s absence during the study. But in this system learner is more active. Learner should go through the material and Counsellor is to only remove or clear the doubts of the learners. IGNOU trained its Counsellor through orientation. IGNOU has a huge army of 36000 counsellors from conventional institutions of higher education and professionals from various organizations. The schedule of counselling sessions decided by the concerned study centres. Normally the counselling sessions organized during the non-working hours or weekly holidays so, that the learners in service can attend the same without disturbing their daily routines etc.

(f) **Teleconferencing**

It is a part of IGNOU network. In this system a team of subject experts, professional and teachers are available on TV and the learners can take part through telephone. The member of team clears the doubts and learners can get benefited through teleconferencing. “Live teleconferencing sessions are conducted via satellite
through Gyan Darshan channels well as simulcasted on ‘Edusat’ channel from the university studio at EMPC.”

For distance teaching and learning, the greatest potential seems to be the ability for broadband videoconferencing as indicated by Robyn Smyth:

- “Improve teachers and students access to other teacher and students, thereby reducing the isolation of remote learners by facilitating the development of support networks.

- Enhance the experiences of full time students by providing them with opportunities to interact with peers or experts working professionally in the field.

- Empower students by increasing the flexibility or learning situations so that students can choose to participate in real time, achieved or face to face activities as their needs and finances allow.

- Engage remote students more fully, intellectually and emotionally, in their learning by combining videoconferencing with traditional learning activities and information communication technologies.

  Become more inclusive for students with disabilities or limiting geographical/familial circumstances.”

The programme schedule for these types of programmes intimated to the learners well in advance through study centres and on TV also. IGNOU offers free
interactive facility (through telephone) from more than 80 cities in India. Learners can call up the EMPC studio on toll free no 1-600-1-12345 to interact freely with the experts. No STD/ISD connection is needed. Learners can call from their centres from normal phones.

(g) **Interactive Radio Counselling**

IGNOU broadcasts its Radio Counselling through AIR and FM band in major cities. Besides this through IRC learners can raise their doubts by telephonic message and subject expert remove the doubts or clarify the problem at the spot. “IRC is broadcast from the studio in university as well as from 26 FM radio stations across the country.”

(h) **Practical/Projects**

Some programmes of IGNOU have practical/project components. These are held at designated institution for which schedule is provided by the concerned study centre. Attendance in practical is compulsory. Keeping in view the flexibility the learners can skip the practical in one year but in subsequent year learners have to pay additional fees. In case of project works study centre will follow the university guidelines. The learners will have to manage his/her own resources or expenses for the completion of projects. A comprehensive project guide with study material has also been provided by IGNOU.

(i) **Library Support**
The study centres have the library facilities. The learners can make use of the library resources at the concerned centres. As we all know library plays an important role in pursuing any programme. Now the university has given the opportunity to the learners of surrounding of Delhi that they can use the Central Library of IGNOU. This facility will definitely beneficial for the learners.

(j) Computer facility

This facility is available at the study centres. There learners can get benefited by the computer facility as per the time and schedule of the study centres.

(k) Internet based delivery

As we all know in our country most of the people are below the poverty line. In plain words, we can say that many people can not acquire the computers for their use. Despite these constraints IGNOU has, made a modest beginning in this direction and started the delivery of educational programmes through internet. Learners can download the study material or they can use on-line from http://www.egyankosh.ac.in/eGyanKosh - a National Digital Repository to store, index, preserve, distribute and share the digital learning resources developed by the Open and Distance Learning Institutions in the country. Items in eGyanKosh are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved by IGNOU, unless otherwise indicated. To access the items in repository registration is required. Registration is free.
Besides it, learners can download schedule of Gyan vani, Gyan darshan, datesheet, results etc.

Learners can fill online examination forms. We can say that IGNOU is ahead in this ICT era to facilitate its learners at their doorsteps. However we can not deny the poor individual ownership of computers, internet connectivity and telephone density. But the beginning is appreciable. On the other hand mobile telephone also revolutionised the communication system, in India, now it is popular and people can access internet on it.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Education is life line for socio-economic development of the country. The traditional system of education is failed to equip the personnel with the new developments in all fields. Traditional system is only one time education. But as a matter of fact, education is a life long process and to meet this requirement one has to depend on distance education system. The establishment of IGNOU is a positive symbol. IGNOU has carved a niche for itself among the primer educational institution both within the country and abroad. IGNOU has been recognized as a world leader in the distance education by conferring the centre of excellence award in distance education in 1993 by common wealth of learning. In 1999 again common wealth of learning has awarded the award of excellence for distance education materials to IGNOU.
IGNOU has developed its own academic profile mixed with academic, professional and other IT experts. It is an apex body to promote, coordinate and maintain standards of distance education in the country.

Audio and video programmes form an integral part of universities Multi-media learning packages. Programmes are transmitted through national channels and AIR stations. All university study centers are equipped with VCR, TV and Audio tape recorder cum Radio.

The cassettes are also available for students at a normal price. University Electronic Media Production centre produces audio and video programmes in its sound and TV studios, which has well equipped infrastructure facilities, including post production and duplicating facilities.

Communication technologies play an important role in IGNOU educational methodology. IGNOU Multi-media academic packages encompass a wide spectrum of technologies like print, audio tape, video tapes, radio, TV, CD ROMs, Tele conferencing and the internet. Distance learners unlike the traditional college students are an extremely heterogeneous lot. If some of them learn conventionally through one medium, some others would find another medium more suitable, thus the parallel use of different media is indispensable in distance education. The course design teams take these factors into account while deciding the media fit for a particular course. The print is chosen as master medium and other mediums are in support of print media with the increasing growth of ICT (Information and
Computer Technology), the electronic media, with Multi-media packages, is also taken into account.

Almost all the programmes being offered by IGNOU have an audio component. The audio formats usually employed are

- talks by eminent experts
- discussions regarding controversial problem.
- question answers series containing FAQ’s (Frequently asked Questions) on a given subject.
- audio updates as quick revisions for the printed lessons.
- language learning and features/drama on historical topics.

The university has also started producing blind friendly audio lessons. These are audio transformations of the print material so that the audio is self-sufficient in itself for the independent use of the visually impaired.

Only side, the non broadcast use of audio in the form of taped lessons, Radio broad-casting is equally popular means of serving the distance education students. IGNOU has been using the Radio medium for its educational broadcasts from its select stations of AIR (All India Radio). The radio broadcasts is no doubt useful medium to reach up to the learners, but it’s a one way communication medium. The university has initiated live radio counselling sessions through various stations of AIR.
Video television and other audio visual media have obvious application for open universities because of their ability, to carry both visual and audio messages and to recreate a classroom atmosphere for the distance learners. Educational video tapes are produced for all courses of IGNOU. They deal with particular topics/concepts. They are also used to record renowned authorities and scientists in their respective areas of specialisation. The production of video programmes involves outdoor shooting as well as studio based shooting, followed by detailed post production activities. IGNOU video programmes are telecasted daily from 6.30 to 7.00 a.m. through the primary channel DD-1, channel of doordarsan. The timing on DD 1 channel is not sufficient so to meet the demand of larger duration of telecast IGNOU has launched a new satellite based TV channel named Gyan Darshan in collaboration with doordarsan. Gyan-Darsan is providing the much needed single window through which a whole range of education fame for different sector of society and age group can be received through out the years. IGNOU has started the training and development communication channel with the help of Indian space research organisation (ISRO). This is a one way video and two ways audio teleconferencing system with the teaching end in the EMPC studios and learning ends located at all the regional centers .The teachers from teaching end studio can address student’s groups assembled at learning ends, live through video and audio satellite links. The students can interact with the teaching end through telephone and fax. Training and development communication channel (TDCC) is utilized by the
University for tele-counselling, Tele Lecturing, tele- training of coordinators and counsellors, and special seminars and virtual convocations.

Computers and computer networks have played an important role in the distance learning system. IGNOU use the computers as a surrogate teacher and as a medium in the main stream of the Multi-media academic packages. IGNOU is using CD ROM’s containing an entire year’s course ware, so that the students may use them as an alternative to the printed text. The CD ROM’s are useful and free from storage problem, huge data can be stored on a single CD. Despite the limitation of poor individual ownership of computers, Internet connection and telephone density, IGNOU has made a modest beginning in the direction of using the internet as a delivery medium for its educational programmes. Internet will be used by IGNOU students for following purposes: -

- Downloading/browsing rapidly changing information such as schedules, announcement, assignments or even short samples of course materials.
- E-mail for operational and academic support and communications with fellow students.
- Using FAQ’s to answers the queries both academic and otherwise.
- Using chat to interact with teachers and fellow students.

With the increasing convergence between communication and computer technologies and the spread of communication networks, the present day open
universities are expected to gradually transform themselves as virtual universities. Where almost all functions of the university would take place electronically over digital links and networks. The IGNOU is marching towards the virtual university

- Pre-eminence of print text as the master medium of instruction will gradually transform to Multi-media instruction through CD ROMs and other devices.

- Audio and Video programmes which are now tape based will employ disc based digital storage techniques for deterioration free preservation and on demand retrieval through networks.

- Broad band digital communications through satellite will be used for interactivity between teachers and students.

- Internet will play central role in the university’s functioning like admissions, programme delivery, counselling and evaluation etc.

- The study centers would transform themselves as kiosks offering information and communication terminals to the students.

REFERENCES


3 www.ignou.ac.in, as on 17.11.2009
4. [www.ignou.ac.in](http://www.ignou.ac.in), as on 17.11.2009

5. [http://www.ignou.ac.in/gyandarshan/index.html](http://www.ignou.ac.in/gyandarshan/index.html), as on 30.10.2009

6. [http://www.ignou.ac.in/divisions/empc/index.htm](http://www.ignou.ac.in/divisions/empc/index.htm), as on 30.10.2009

7. IGNOU Profile 2009, New Delhi: IGNOU, 2009, P 7

8. IGNOU Common prospectus, New Delhi: IGNOU, 2008, P 2


10. [www.ignou.ac.in](http://www.ignou.ac.in), as on 17.11.2009