CHAPTER - I

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- Distance Education

Distance education, simply and somewhat broadly defined, is “education which either does not imply the physical presence of the teacher appointed to dispense it in the place where it is received, or in which the teacher is present only on occasions or for selected tasks”. This French Government definition of the term télé-enseignement (Loi 71.556 du 12 juillet 1971) contains two basic elements: the physical separation of teacher and learner and the changed role of the teacher, who may meet students only for “selected tasks” such as counselling, giving tutorials or seminars, or solving study problems.

Distance education methods can be successfully used for catering to groups who, for geographical, economic, or social reasons, are unable or unwilling to make use of conventional/traditional (e.g. classroom-based) provision. In so doing, they can liberate the student from constraints of space, time, and age.

1. Principal Defining Features

In addition to the key elements of physical presence of teacher and learner as cited above – Holmberg, has identified six main categories of description of term (Holmberg 1981 pp. 11-13);

(a) the use of preproduced courses as the main theme for study;
(b) the existence of organized two-way communication between the student and a educational organization, that is, the university, college, school with its tutors and counsellors;
(c) the planned and explicit catering for independent study;
(d) the cost effectiveness of the education and mass communication methods when large number of students follow the same preplanned courses;
(e) the application of industrial work in (production of learning materials and administration of distance education (Peters 1973)
(f) the notion of distance study as a media of guided didactic conversation.

Concerning the learning materials and the methods which characterize the courses, noted features are:
(a) Flexibility in the curriculum and content of learning materials through for example curricular structures or credit systems.

(b) Conscious and systematic design of learning material for independent study incorporated; for example, clearly formulated learning objectives, self-assessment devices, student activities, and the provision of feedback from students to learning system and vice verses.

(c) Planned use of a wide range of media and other resources selected from those available in the context of the system, and suited to the needs of the students. These media may include specially prepared correspondence texts, books, newspaper supplements, posters, radio and television broadcasts, audio- and video-cassettes, films, computer-assisted learning, kits, local tuition and counselling, student self-help groups, lending-library facilities, and so on.

Finally, the following logistical and economic features are characteristic of distance learning systems:

a) great potential flexibility compared to conventional provision in implementation, in teaching methods, and in student groups covered;

b) centralized, mass production of standardized learning materials (such as texts, broadcasts, kits, and so on) in an almost industrialized manner implying clear division of labour in the creation and production procedures;

c) a systematic search for, and use of, existing infrastructure and facilities as part of the system (e.g., libraries, postal and other distribution services, printers, publishers, broadcasting organizations, equipments, laboratories and other such infrastructure wherever required, human resources for development of courses and course material etc.);

d) Potentially a significantly lower recurrent unit cost per student than that obtainable through conventional (classroom or equivalent) teaching arrangements and also potentially a considerably lower capital cost per student (Kaye and Rumble 1981 pp. 18-19).

The development of distance education methods in the recent past decades owes a great deal to the pioneering work carried out in the field of correspondence education. The print-based materials have remained the main base but have been supplemented by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and personal contact. Thus distance education is often distinguished from correspondence study
(Keegan 1980) by the notion of three-way teaching, combining ... the permanence of
print, the reach of radio, and the intimacy of face-to-face study” (Young et al.. 1980 p.
21). Slightly extending this definition, distance education can be equated with the
combined, systematic, and flexible use of at least three major elements; print-based
communication, ICT, and face-to-face contact, in support of an independent learner.
Distance education methods imply major differences to intramural or classroom-based
provision on three main dimensions: the learning experiences of the students, the
nature of the teaching/learning materials, and the administrative and organizational
structure of the providing institution. These three facets are briefly discussed below
and are broadly relevant to the whole range of distance education provision, be it
small, flexible, and localized, or large scale and highly centralized.

2. Learning at a Distance:

Distance education system highly suits the individual learner studying
independently. High level of motivation amongst the learners is important and is a key
reason why it is aimed primarily at adults. Nevertheless, distance education provision
does exist in some countries for school-age children unable (e.g., for geographical or
health reasons) to attend classes. Examples, dating back for many years, can be found
in Australia (radio plus correspondence tuition and personal contact), and in France,
where the Centre National d' Enseignement par Correspondence was originally
established during the Second World War to provide teaching, at a distance, to
children unable to go to school. Most of its provision nowadays, however, is aimed at
adults. In audio, too National Institute of Open Schooling (NOS) is striving in
pursuance of National Policy on education 1986. It provides a number of vocational,
life enrichment and community oriented courses dealing with General and Academic
Courses at secondary and Sr. secondary school levels.

In general, distance students are adults and tend to form very heterogeneous
groups, compared to those following more traditional educational channels. It is
difficult to characterize the “typical” distance student. In a review of student charac-
teristics at distance teaching universities in 10 different countries, the following
features were highlighted (Kaye and Rumble 1981 pp. 35-38):

(a) an age range of 20-40 years;
(b) majority studying on a part-time basis;
(c) men generally outnumber women;
(d) study is primarily carried out at home;
(e) high levels of motivation;
(f) the majority of students are from less privileged social groups;
(g) Students studying voluntarily (as opposed to those in compulsory in service courses) tend to be from urban areas.

Concerning reasons for this study, it is evident that the obtaining of examinations, diplomas, and degrees, and the acquisition and/or updating of professional and career-related skills rank very highly amongst a large proportion of students enrolled on distance courses (Holmberg 1981 pp. 21-24).

The skills needed for study at a distance have some features in common with those required in any learning environment. However, certain skills are of particular importance in the distance learning situation. These include:

(a) setting of personal study objectives;
(b) development of personal confidence in the ability to study primarily on one’s own;
(c) planning and organizing study time and study strategies;
(d) developing study skills in learning from the reading and analysis of self-instructional and other print materials, and, where appropriate, from listening to and viewing broadcasts, using audio and video-tape material, participating in group discussions and undertaking practical work alone and/or in a group situation;
(e) Making use of and communicating with a tutor—in writing, by telephone, or at face-to-face meetings. Tutors may play a range of different roles: counsellor, problem solver, provider of feedback, resource person, and assessor.

The skills listed above are of particular importance because the distance learner does not benefit from the same levels and amounts of pacing, structure, and formal and informal contact with peers and teachers as a student in an intramural educational institution. However, distance students do have the advantage of being able to plan their study activities around a personal timetable in a relatively flexible manner, and this is one of the overwhelming reasons cited for enrolling on distance education courses especially when employment and family obligations make other options impractical or inconvenient. Furthermore, it is evident that in well-planned and adequately financed distance education systems, the distance learner need not feel
disadvantaged and may, in fact, be better served than many studying through more traditional channels.

The range of distance education situations and courses is now so diverse that it is impossible to make generalizations about study patterns and strategies adopted by learners. Even different students following the same course in the same institution will adopt and develop different approaches, according to their own tastes and interests. However, it is fair to say that in a large number of cases, the majority of the learner's time is taken up by individual study of specially prepared printed materials (which is the main “information channel” can be considered as analogous to a classroom presentation or lecture in a conventional context). Students provided with sets of learning objectives and related self-assessment questions and exercises, with model answers, against which they can check their understanding and progress is important. Even a much smaller proportion of time may be spent in viewing or listening to broadcasts or recorded audiovisual and audio material is often ideal for presenting real-life situations or case-study or experimental material which cannot be clearly communicated in printed form. From time to time either at the student’s discretion or by certain predetermined dates the students submit written work to a correspondence tutor in response to preset assignments. Assignment modes may consist of multiple-choice tests, short answer questions, essays on set topics or more extensive self-chosen projects or dissertations. The correspondence tutor grades and comments on this work and also meet the student to discuss it at a regular tutorial. In many instances, tutorial sessions at local study centres also exist to enable students to discuss general study problems and clear up difficulties in understanding. For example, the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre, because of difficulties experienced by students in studying at home, set up a network of local study centres where:” “students could come once or twice a week, work in adequate comfort and good light by themselves at their courses and seek help from an ‘elbow tutor’ as they needed it” (Young et al. 1980 p. 71). Other opportunities for inter personal contact also exist in many systems—ranging from informally organized “self-help” groups established by students living in the same neighborhood to week-long residential contact programmes (such as the British Open University’s “summer schools”) which can provide an opportunity for extended personal and group tuition and for example, laboratory practical and field work.
3. Distance Teaching Materials:

Teaching materials designed for use in a classroom or other intramural learning environment are generally not suitable and certainly not sufficient for the distance learning situation. A standard school or college textbook for example is often designed to be used either as a source of reference and/or as a basis for discussion and exposition by a teacher in a classroom situation. And it is assumed that the student will be able to refer to peers, teachers, or other information sources (e.g. a library) when experiencing difficulties in following the material in textbook. Audiovisual material for classroom use is also generally designed for a group situation with teacher’s presence assumed. Some of these material may be suitable for use in group tutorials in a distance education programme but would probably not fit the situation of a distance learner viewing or listening to a broadcast in isolation, at home.

A number of criteria are of key importance in the design of materials for distance learning. Firstly, it is necessary to take a global approach to the range or media and materials that will be available within a given system and decide on clear pedagogical functions and roles for each of them. For example radio is to be used only in a group situation at a local centre, say in the presence of an animateur, then the structure and objectives of the programme will be quite different from one made for individual listening in the home. And an audiotape for individual use will again have different functions to a radio programme for individual listening: a tape can be stopped and replayed or used in association with diagrams or experimental equipment.

Secondly, the organization of the material needs to take into account the resources, capacities, and amenities of both students and tutors. Prerequisite requirements for starting a course (i.e. knowledge and skills assumed by the course planners) needs to be made explicit. Likely areas of difficulty need to be “signposted” to the tutors and perhaps covered by special guidance notes for tutorial and group work.

The scheduling of course work should take into account realistic estimates of how much time a typical student is liable to be able to devote to study each week or month.

Materials designed for individual study—and in most cases these will be predominantly print materials—are prepared in a “self-instructional” format, namely: written and presented in a stimulating style (maybe a colloquial style in some
cultures) easily “accessible” to the student through the use of aids such as lists of learning objectives, concept maps, indices, glossaries, self-tests, and reviews; attractively designed, making good use of illustrations and of different typographical styles; “student active”, containing opportunities for the student to test and monitor progress through activities, questions, and self-assessment exercises embedded in the text; flexible, with some provision for alternative routes and bypasses through the material, (without necessarily resorting to the complexity of a traditional branching programmed text).

A final important criterion of good quality distance-teaching material concerns the care with which the different media components are integrated with each other. Integration can be considered at two levels. Firstly, materials for tutors, animateurs, and other intermediaries in the system must complement and relate clearly to the materials provided for the students; this implies that items such as notes for tutor needs to be developed in parallel with the students’ course materials. Secondly, when the individual student may be required to use material in several different media (print, radio, and television) then clear decisions need to be made as to how closely the different media are integrated within the segments of the course. Levels of integration may vary from occasional cross-references, to a very tight structure which obliges the student, for example to view a specific television programme before being able to proceed with the next section of text.

An example of an extreme form of integration of broadcast and print material is that developed by Radio ECCA,... in the Canary Islands, and subsequently adapted for use on the Spanish mainland and in distance education projects in several Latin American countries. In the ECCA system ... every lesson is centered upon a “lesson master sheet”. The teacher has a copy of the lesson master sheet in front of him while he broadcasts over the radio, and the student follows his own copy simultaneously in his own home. The student is required to respond to the radio teacher by writing on the lesson master sheet during the course of the broadcast. ... a full set of master sheets comprises a student's text book. Exercises are included on the back of each master sheet ... to be completed after the student has listened to the radio broadcast. (Cepeda 1982 pp. 213-14)

This degree of integration of print and broadcast materials is perhaps unusual in the field of distance education, but experience shows that it can be successful in a range of contexts.
4. Institutional Structures:

A great variety of institutional structures can be found amongst distance education organizations. In many cases, structures are derived from those of conventional teaching institutions such as universities or schools which in themselves vary from country to country. In other cases, broadcasting organizations, commercial correspondence colleges or voluntary organizations, may have provided the original structure on which a distance institution has been built. More recently there has been a growth in the number of projects which have involved collaboration between a number of institutions of different sorts, either on a long-term basis or for short-term campaigns.

However, irrespective of institutional structure, a number of specific services to students need to be provided, organized, and administered:

a) provision (acquisition, development, production), storage and distribution of course materials;

b) provision of educational support services (correspondence tuition, possibly telephone or other electronic communication, tutorial classes, study centres, counselling, etc.);

c) maintenance of administrative and academic records and provision of administrative communication channels (for enrolment, fee payment, assignment data etc.);

d) in some instances, accreditation and the delivery of diplomas, certificates, and degrees evaluation and award of degree, diploma and certificates.

The question of provision of course material deserves particular attention in this context, because it is here that differences are perhaps greatest as compared to conventional educational methods, where economics of scale are most noticeable (when large number of students use the same preproduced course materials). Some distance education projects use materials acquired elsewhere, that is, not produced in-house. However, even in this simplest model, the acquired materials may need adapting, translating and reprinting or reproducing. The majority of projects develop their own teaching materials, both printed and audiovisual either using their own full-time subject matter specialists and/or academic staff and/or through the use of part-time consultants. With professional / technical assistance from within the institution or outsource. Physical production of materials (printing, audiovisual production) may either be in-house, subcontracted or carried out in collaboration with a production
agency such as a publishing house, broadcasting organization or a commercial audiovisual producer. Whatever the origin of the materials, they will require storage and distribution facilities and the greater the variety or range of courses or materials on offer, the greater and more complex will these facilities need to be.

The overriding importance of these aspects of procurement, production, storage, and distribution calls for two comments which illustrate a clear-cut difference between distance and conventional educational provision. Firstly, it implies that distance education is "... an industrialized form of teaching and learning" (Peters 1973 p. 206). Rumble has pointed out that, in institutions such as distance teaching universities which "... have to undertake directly a number of quasi-industrial processes... there is a need for a clear definition of the interrelationships between two broad areas, one of which is more in the nature of a business enterprise ... while the other is more in the nature of traditionally conceived academic areas" (Kaye and Rumble 1981 p. 179). The industrial or quasi-industrial nature of the materials development and production aspects of distance teaching is certainly a reality in many of the large-scale centralized systems. Course development planning may start five or six years before the finished product is "launched"; orders need to be placed with suppliers and subcontractors; deadlines and production schedules drawn up and adhered to; personnel needs estimated; and contracts prepared. The constraints imposed by the production and distribution needs can lead to a situation of potential conflict between production demands and the working methods and values of the developers of the course materials—be they full-time academic staff employed by the institution, or outside consultants and lesson writers. This is related to a second main difference between conventional and distance education institutions: namely the changed role of the teacher in a mediated or distance learning system. Numbers of aspects contribute to this changed role:

(a) the need to develop skills in preparing materials in various media (print, audiovisual etc.) both for individual use and for use by tutors and learners in group situations; these are not necessarily the same skills as those required for a good face-to-face or classroom teacher;

(b) the loss of direct personal control of the teaching/learning process and the lack of direct feedback from students characteristic of the classroom situation;

(c) the need to work with other professionals (designers, producers, editors) in the preparation and production of materials and the resultant requirement to
submit one’s work to scrutiny and comment.

These aspects are present regardless of the course creation models adopted in any particular institution - which may vary from that of an author and editor working together, to that of a large-scale course team of academics, editors, educational technologists, producers and designers.

When, in addition to course provision, the other three service areas (educational support, records, and accreditation) are provided by the same institution and the number of students is large, then the need to adopt industrial working methods already referred to becomes even more imperative. For example, computerized systems for organizing dispatch of course materials and for maintenance of tutor and student records may become a necessity; industrial-style management and control methods may need to be introduced to ensure efficient integration of the work in a range of different specialized areas.

However, many distance learning projects and schemes are decentralized and even localized with different organizations being responsible for each of the categories of services listed above. Such projects can maintain a flexibility of operation which is often more difficult to achieve in large-scale and centrally controlled institutions such as the British Open University.

Neil M. W. has presented an institutional analysis of distance learning systems on the basis of the importance and nature of into control of four key areas: finance, examination and accreditation, curriculum and materials and delivery and student support systems (Neil 1981 pp. 140-41). He quotes five models or types of institutions based on this analysis:

(a) the classic centre-periphery model, such as the British Open University, with high levels of control in all four areas;
(b) the associated centre model such as Spain’s Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distance which works with over 50 associated centres each responsible for their own delivery and student support services;
(c) the dispersed centre model (e.g. Coastline Community College, California) which cooperates with a whole range of organizations and bodies in the community but retains a fair measure of central control over accreditation for many courses;
(d) the switchboard organization model, exemplified by Norway's recently created distance education institute (Norskfjenntndervisning) which has essentially
enabling, coordinating, initiating, and approving roles in the further
development of country's existing educational resources for distance students;
(e) the service institution model for example the Deutsches Institut fur
Fernstudien (DIFF) at Tubingen which provides services to a range of
distance teaching organizations (e.g. materials development, consultancy,
evaluation), and has little control over any areas except in the creation and
production of course materials.

• Models of Distance Education:
Distance Education requires the development of programmed learning
materials that can be given to learner in small, logically structured, packages. It is
learner centered and makes use of a great variety of pedagogical forms and delivery
techniques. It largely calls for independent study but group learning is also possible.
The different pathways of distance education have been grouped by Miller (1995)
under different models—the Correspondence Course Model, the Telecourse Model, the
Open University Model, and the Distributed Classroom Model. The following
discussion is based on his review.

The Correspondence Course Model is the oldest and most stable model of
distance education. Through practiced in medieval England and Germany its modern
usages dates back to the 1890’s when Dr. William Rainey Harper of the University of
Chicago adapted it for implementing a continuing higher education programme for
Chautauqua (Froke, 1995). As pointed out by Cantelon (1995) the Chautauqua
movement brought continuing education to millions of Americans long before anyone
used distance education. Dr. Harper may, therefore, be regarded as being the father of
modern distance education and the Chatauqua programme the prototypes of the only a
limited role, for he wrote: “Only those persons are encouraged to study by
correspondence, or, indeed, (be) admitted to such study, who because of age, poverty,
occupation situation or some other good reason cannot avail themselves of oral
instructions. Away, therefore with all baseless and foolish prejudice in this matter.
The correspondence system would not if it could, supplant oral instruction, or be
regarded as its substitute. There is a field for each which the other cannot fill. Let each
do its proper work.” (Harper 1890, quoted by Froke 1995). Unfortunately, Harper’s
perception still finds support, amongst most laypersons and also some educationists,
in many parts of the world, including India. It is accepted as a substitute form of education, for the under privileged and the deprived, but not as an equal alternative to the traditional lecture form.

The printed word has been the dominant medium of delivery in correspondence programmes and will probably continue to so in the foreseeable future (Verduin and Clerk, 1991). In India, fourteen Open Universities and over hundred earlier known as Correspondence Courses Institutes (CCIs) now called Distance Education Institutions (DEIs) from dual mode universities offer distance education almost exclusively through the print mode. The syllabi of the programmes offered by DEIs is the same as that of regular courses offered in classrooms, with the lectures being replaced by written (printed) texts that may incorporate visuals. Interaction between teacher and student is through written answers submitted as a response to test administered periodically. Some DEIs are, however, now making efforts to supplement the printed material with audio and video cassettes. The DEIs offer a wide range of programmes, ranging from undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses to diplomas and certificates in professional areas. The DEI of Annamalai University, for example, offers bachelors and masters degree programmes in Arts, Sciences, Commerce, Management, Education and Law, as also diploma in such diverse areas like construction management, industrial hygiene and sugar and fertilizer technologies (Association of Indian Universities, 1998).

The Telecourse Model was developed in the United States, primarily for the community colleges, when in the late 1960s and 1970s they faced considerable enrollment pressures and it was realized that there was the need to grant access to education to the poor and disadvantaged classes (Miller, op.cit). As implemented than it consisted of a series of video lessons that were supplemented by a text and a study guide. With development of technique and technology the video lessons are now in the form of high quality documentaries broadcast to fit the schedules of general audience. The telecourses have greatly promoted adult and continuing education in the United States. A national service initiated by the Public Broadcasting Service is now available and pointed out by Miller (op.cit) a new dimension has been added to the treatment of subject matter.

In India, the telecourse model has not been utilized for imparting regular higher education courses leading to degrees or diplomas. However, programmes relating to both general themes and specific topics are being telecast on all weekdays.
on the national television network Doordarshan. These are the Countrywide Classroom (CWCR) and the Open Channel of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), the target group being the undergraduate students. Individual programmes are of 18-30 minutes duration. About 80% of the programmes are produced in India and the remaining 20% imported keeping in view their high quality and relevance. For producing programmes of desired quality and content the University Grant Commission (UGC) has established seven Education Media Research Centres (EMRCs), and seven Audio Visual Research Centres (AVRCs). It has also set up a Mass Communication Research Centre (MCRC) and a Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC) for adapting and distributing programmes.

The Open University Model has been designed keeping in view the need to widen access, especially for disadvantaged groups, to quality higher education by providing a flexible and cost-effective system of instruction. It is generally accepted that the open university movement took concrete form with the establishment of the Open University, at Milton Keynes, UK, in 1970. However, the oldest open university is the University of South Africa, which started teaching at a distance in 1946 (Holmberg, Borje 1994), and the idea of a ‘University of the Air’ originated in Japan in the 1960s. It stemmed from a university lecture programme series of the Nippon Hoso Kyokais (NHK) conducted with the cooperation of 16 private universities of Japan. The idea was apparently shared by Mr. Yoshinori Maeda, President of NHK with Mr. Harold Wilson, then Leader of the Opposition in the British parliament, who evidently impressed by the concept, made the starting of such a ‘University of the Air’ a part of the government policy in 1964 (Gokhale, 1986). The nomenclature ‘Open University’ was suggested by the Planning Committee set up for establishing the university in its report of 1969. The use of the adjective ‘open’ is possibly enigmatic, and certainly imprecise. It conveys a liberal attitude and, therefore, by implication flexibility. It conveys a liberal attitude and, therefore, by implication flexibility. In the word of MacKenzie et al.(1975) ‘open’ carries “suggestions of the lessening or removal of restrictions, of exclusions and of privilege; of demolishing or lowering established barriers between subject areas; of enlarging and enriching the areas of activity and experience graded as educational”. Further, it symbolizes “a shift in the relationship between teacher and pupil towards that of student and adviser”. Open universities and open learning, therefore, stand for access and equity, interdisciplinary, versatility, informality and student centerlines.
Unlike in the case of the two models described previously, in the Open University programmes the course curriculum does not replicate the curriculum used for traditional programmes but is specially designed by course teams to meet the requirements of students learning at a distance. The approach toward course development is characteristically interdisciplinary. The delivery is through different delivery media including print, audio and video cassettes, telecasts, interactive TV, tele-conferencing, computer software and E-mail. Extra support is provided to learners through Student Support Services (SSS) like study centers counseling sessions, and evaluation of Students Assignment Responses (SARs). There is formative as also final evaluation.

In the case of open universities in India the presentation of the subject matter is largely through specially developed print material, but also through a limited number of audio and video cassettes, and a few supporting telecasts. The contact between students and tutors is through written correspondence, and face-to-face sessions at study centres. The evaluation is based on SARs and end of session examinations and the grading is on a 5 point scale, except in the case of one university where a 4 point scale is employed.

The Distributed Classroom Model has its genesis in the need to offer popular courses to a large number of students sitting in different classrooms using close circuit television. Initiated in the 1950s, in the United States, as a one-way system the model received impetus in the early 1990s with the introduction of interactive, compressed, video tele-communication systems (Miller, op.cit). It facilitates distance learning for groups at off campus locations in a live situation. However, the time and pace of study is under the control of the educational institution. This model is rarely utilized in India, the problem of large numbers being attended to through the formation of different ‘divisions’- the same course being taught in different classrooms, usually by different teachers.

5. The Extent of Distance Education:

The early developments of distance education can be traced to the mid-1930s when “...a series of projects began in which attempts were made to link the three components of broadcasting, correspondence and face-to-face tuition” (Perratton 1979 p. 14). There were a few isolated earlier examples of broadcasts linked to correspondence tuition (e.g. using radio in New Zealand in 1937 and the programmes
of the Chicago Television College, which started in 1956) but since the 1960s there has been a very significant quantitative and qualitative increase in the number and range of distance programmes throughout the world. Much of this development has built on earlier experiences of correspondence tuition (e.g. the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and the United States) plus face-to-face tuition (e.g. the very extensive programmes in existence in the Soviet Union since the 1920s) and the combined use of broadcasting and study groups (e.g. farm radio forums in Canada, India and number of African countries).

It is not possible to provide a complete coverage of distance education projects worldwide. Firstly, the number and range of projects is so large: in a small country like the United Kingdom alone, over 70 distance education projects have started since 1970—ranging from the rational highly centralized Open University, to decentralized and community-based projects and campaigns. Secondly, developments in communications technology are likely to bring about qualitative and structural changes in the design of distance Education systems in the near future in a number of countries. These developments include applications of satellite communications (e.g. the University of the South Pacific or the Open Learning Institute in British Columbia) computers (e.g. the PI.ATO system in the United States) and of course the increasingly widespread availability of audio- and video-cassette/videodisc equipment. These developments are likely to bring about major changes in the roles of both broadcasting and print-based communication in distance education, at least in the industrially advanced countries.
CHAPTER 1.1

NEED AND RELEVANCE OF STUDY

• Introduction:

The policy for the development of higher education has been mainly governed by the “National Policy of Education” of 1986 and its programme of action in 1992. The policy and Action plan are based on the two reports, namely ‘University Education Commission Report’ of 1948-49. i.e. Radhakrishnan Commission, and ‘Education Commission Report of 1964-66 i.e. Kothari commission.

The Radhakrishnan Commission on University Education had set up goals for development of higher education. While articulation of these goals, the commission put in following words:

“The important and urgent reform needed in education is to transform it, to endeavor to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby make it the powerful instrument of Social, Economic and Cultural transformation necessary for the realization of the national goals. For this purpose, education should be developed so as to increase productivity, achieve social and national integration, accelerate the process of modernization and cultivate social, moral and spiritual Values.”

The National Policy of Higher Education (1986) translated the vision of Radhakrishnan Commission and Kothari commission in five main goals for higher education, as enumerated below, which include Greater Access, Equal Access (equity), Quality and Excellence, Relevance and Value based education.

a) Greater Access requires on enhancement in the education institutional capacity to provide opportunities to all who deserve and desire higher education.

b) Equity involves fair access to the poor and the socially disadvantaged groups.

c) Quality and Excellence involves provision of education by accepted standard so that students receive available knowledge of the highest standard and help them to enhance their human resource capabilities

d) Relevance involves promotion of education so as to develop human resource keeping pace with the changing economic, social and cultural developments.

e) Value based education involves inculcating basic moral values among the youth.
• **The National Policy of Education (NPE-1986)**:

The National Policy was adopted by Parliament in 1986. It was reviewed in 1990. According to the relevant developments in 1992 Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) has recommended the changes. It enunciated a compressive framework to guide the development of education in its entirety. The modified NPE 1992 was put forth in twelve parts. In part III under National System of Education it has recommended the following points.

- The concept of National System of Education implies that upto given level, all students, irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex have access to education of a comparable quality. (3.2)

- To promote equality, it will be necessary to provide for equal opportunity to all, not only in access but also on the conditions success. Besides awareness of inherent equality of all will be created through core-curriculum (3.6)

- In higher education in general and technical education in particular, steps will be taken to facilitate inter-regional mobility by providing equal access to every Indian of requisite merit, regardless of its origin. (3.8)

- Lifelong 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. (3.11)

In part IV and ‘Education for Equality’ it has broadly discussed the inequalities and has recommended measures to remove the inequalities.

- Removal of Disparities and equalise educational opportunity (4.1)
- Education for women’s equality (4.2, 4.3)
- Education of Scheduled Castes (4.4, 4.5)
- Education of Scheduled Tribes (4.6)
- Other educationally backward section and areas (4.7)
- Minorities (4.8)
- Handicapped (4.9)
- Adult Education (4.10, 4.11, 4.13, 4.14)

In part V Reorganization of Education at different stages is discussed, where following recommendations regarding Open Universities and Distance
Learning were made-

- The Open learning system has been initiated in order to augment opportunities for higher education, as an instrument of democratizing education and to make it lifelong process. The flexibility and innovativeness of the open learning system are particularly suited to the diverse requirement of the citizens of our country (5.35) “The National Open University, the state Open Universities and National Open Schools will be supported and strengthened (5.36, 5.37)

The Action Plan of 1992 included schemes and programs which were directed towards expansion of intake capacity in general and that of the disadvantaged groups such as the poor, SC, ST, minorities, girls and the physically challenged person, and those in the educationally backward regions, in particular. The schemes and programme were designed to improve the quality through strengthening academic and physical infrastructure, to promote excellence in those institutions which have exhibited potential for excellence and to develop curriculum to inculcate values among the youth.

The University Grant Commission came into existence in 1953 and the UGC Act came into force in 1956 with the objective of promotion and co-ordination of University education of teaching, examination and research in Universities.

As per the mandate UGC has been taking steps, through various schemes, to promote quality education having regard to the concerns of Access, Equity, Quality, Excellence, Relevance and Value based education.

Significant contributions in the field of higher education have also been made by research councils like the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) and the Council of Rural Institutes (CRI). These Research Councils, promote research and creativity in the important areas.

Analysis of the past five years plans indicate that there have been continuous efforts to strengthen the base by developing infrastructure, improving the quality through several programme and schemes, introducing reforms in content and evaluation and encourage generation of knowledge through research.

The focus of the 9th Five Year Plan was on Relevance and Quality of Education, Access and Equity and social change, Management of education and resource mobilization were the thrust areas in the 10th five year plan. It helped to
achieve a profound transformation of Higher Education in order that it becomes an effective promoter of sustainable human development and at the same time, improves its relevance with closer links with the world of work and achieve quality in its teaching, research, business and community extension function including lifelong learning.

The parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development in its 172nd Report has recommended that reorientation higher education system to be vibrant, competitive, meaningful and relevant; it will have to glow both in terms of quantity as well as quality, mainly with the view of converting its vast population as asset rather than liability.

In the present scenario the higher education system as whole is faced with many issues of concern like financing and management, including access, equity, relevance and reorientation of programme by laying emphasis on values, ethics and quality of Higher Education together with the assessment of institutions and their accreditation. These issues are of vital importance for the country, as it is engaged in the use of higher education as a powerful tool to build knowledge based society of the 21st century.

Higher Education to be viewed as long term social investment for the promotion of economic growth, cultural development, social cohesion, equity and justice. Needs and expectations of the society are changing very fast and the quality of Higher Education needs to be sustained at the quality of all its aspects, be it the faculty, staff, students, infrastructure etc.

In March 1992, the Minister for Human Resources Development, in his capacity of Chairman, Central Advisory Committee on Education (CABE) appointed a committee, under the chairmanship of Prof. G Ram Reddy to advice on:

1. Direction of growth and development of the open education system in the country.
2. Re-orientation of correspondence courses to the distance education mode and the measures for achieving this.
3. Role of IGNOU in the promotion of the distance education system in India.

The Committee in its report, submitted in February 1994, noted that at that time there were already six open universities in existence and the number of CCIs has risen to 45. The enrollment in distance education was over 8 lakh which constituted 2.6 percent of total enrollment in higher education. A foundation for open and
distance learning had been developed in the country.

The CABE Committee Report (Government of India 1994) listed major objectives of distance education as:

1. To provide an alternate, cost-effective, non-formal channel for tertiary education.
2. To supplement the conventional university system and to reduce the pressure on it.
3. To provide ‘second chance’ education to those who have had to discontinue their formal education or could not join regular colleges or universities owing to social, economic and other considerations.
4. To democratize higher education by providing access to large segments of the population, in particular the disadvantaged groups such as those living in remote and rural areas, including working people like, women and other adults, who wish to acquire and upgrade their knowledge and /or skills.
5. To strengthen and diversify the degree, certificate and diploma courses related to employment, and necessary for building the economy of the country, on the basis of its natural and human resources.
6. To provide continuing and life-long education to enrich the lives of the people.
7. To provide an innovative system of university level education, which is flexible and open in terms of method and pace of learning, combination of courses, eligibility for enrollment, age at entry, conduct of examination and operation of the programmes with a view to promoting learning and encouraging excellence in new field of knowledge.

- **Agenda of XI\(^{th}\) Plan**
  1. **Expansion by Access**
     - The urgent need for broadening access of higher education by expanding it and by making it affordable.
     - Special focus for improving access and equity in remote regions and geographically disadvantaged places.
     - Special programmes for encouraging students from backward and minority communities.
     - Expanding the overall access to provide higher education.
• To ensure equity through equitable access to the deprived socio-economic strata of the society.
• Enhancing the quality of teaching and learning through use of ICT
• To increase enrollment of women students.
• Provision of more fellowship for women students

2. Research:
• Needs to be linked with teaching.

3. Distance Education:
• Make Open Universities to be more attractive and relevant, efforts be made to ensure quality of study material and its timely dispatch and dedicated teachers, the study centers, provision of necessary infrastructure, use of ICT etc.

4. Quality:
• Quality and excellence are the watchwords in today’s liberalized environment, making higher education more competitive.

5. Faculty Development:
• The condition of services, remuneration and career advancement of the teachers to be linked with their overall performance.
• Professional development of teachers: computer facility, training, refresher courses, sabbatical leave, faculty exchange teaching rating for teaching and non-teaching.

6. Infrastructure Development.

7. Curriculum Development.

8. Use of Technology.

9. Data Based Management.

10. Development of intra lingual facilities

11. Special scheme for person with different acridities

After taking the review of higher education in the post independent period, it is observed that, the Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-43), Kothari commission (1964-66), National Policy of higher Education (1986), Action Plan (1992), Various schemes of UGC, contributions of different research councils (ICSSR, ICHR, CRI) and five year plans have given more thrust on development of higher education and efforts were taken to promote quality of higher education.
Six decades after independence it is observed that, the decided goals and objective of higher education have not been achieved. In present scenario of 21st century supplementary parallel non formal education systems came in to existence. Distance education is one of them.

The emergence of the system of open and distance education is an inevitable development in the evolution of education internationally and its growth has been truly phenomenal. While the formal system of education continues to mainstream of education it has its inherent limitations with regard to expansion, provision of access and equity and cost effectiveness. On the other hand, the use of information and communication technologies in transaction of educational curriculum ushered in the distance mode of education, which can cater to demands emerging from provision of lifelong learning and education for all. It is possible to adopt flexible, constructivist, learner friendly and multi perspective approaches to teaching learning, so essentially for nurturing creativity, leadership and integrated development of human personality.

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) established by an Act of Parliament in 1985 promotes Open University and Distance Education system in the country. It has widened the access to higher education by providing opportunities to larger segments of the population by adopting integrated multimedia instruction. Its reach has increased substantially by the use of Gyan Darshan, an educational TV channel and Gyanwani, FM radio channel.

The Open and Distance Learning system (ODL) has emerged as a vibrant and dynamic component of higher education infrastructure in the country. It provides access to quality education to about 25 percent of the total population of learners in Higher Education Sector. The system has demonstrated high level of cost efficiency, flexibility and innovative application of information and communication for the vast multitude of learners left unserved by the formal system. For a vast country like India where accessibility to higher education is quite low Open and Distance Learning have the potential for taking higher education to more and more people irrespective of different barriers. This system caters also for in service persons for whom it is second chance as well as for regular learner.

The Open and Distance system in 11th plan period is expected to cater to about 40 percent of learner population in higher education.

In its existence of forty five years, the Open and Distance Learning system demonstrated an impressive track record of providing quality education and training.
to large learner population. The cost studies at the University show that per student cost at the University is about 42 percent of those incurred by the universities in the conventional stream.

The open and distance learning system has demonstrated a growth rate of 20% during the 10th five year plan and accounted for 25 percent of the total enrollment in the higher education sector. The table summaries the achievements so far under the 10th plan.

**OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING SYSTEM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING SYSTEM</th>
<th>At the end of IX Plan</th>
<th>Achievement during Xth Plan (upto March 2006)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IGNOU</td>
<td>SOUs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of Programmes</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of Courses</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollment</td>
<td>8.04  (Lakhs)</td>
<td>8.09  (Lakhs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Regional Centers</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Study Centers</td>
<td>1081</td>
<td>2986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas Centers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GROWTH OF OUs and CCIs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IXth Plan</th>
<th>During Xth Plan (upto March 2006)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOUs</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCIs/DEIs</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Report of working group on Higher Education, 11th Five Year Plan Chapter 13, Page - 94

The system has also demonstrated the capacity to scale on account of the impressive application of information and communication technologies to create access and opportunity for learners across the length and breath of the country. The
diversity of learner profile in the system, comprising employed and unemployed, aspirants for employment, those seeking to upgrade their knowledge and skills while at work specially in professional careers, the disadvantaged and the marginalized, rural youth and those residing in remote areas brings in to sharp focus the capacity of the system to adopt to and provide for the learning requirements of vast variety of target population.

Over the years, the system has developed a wide delivery network of study centers, regional centers, counselors providing learner support service across the length and breathe of the country, which is augmented by a media infrastructure of 28 F.M. radio stations and six television channels including interactive channels. If the open and distance learning system is to meet the enrollment targets of 40 percent of the total enrollments in higher education, the delivery infrastructure needs to be augmented and expanded. The facility of DTH is to be extended for education in general and GDI and education in particular to all study centers.

In the past few decades, a proliferation in number of ODL institutions and courses / programmes has resulted in exponential growth in student enrollment in the system. The system is poised for further expansion in the coming years as its virtually unlimited potential to impact education to anybody, anywhere and anytime is being recognized by educationists, policy makers and planners. There is however a large number of learners that have yet to be reached and providing access to them while ensuring equity poses definite challenge for the ODL system. The ODL system has the capacity to integrate the technologies with the time tested methodologies. Its issues associated with social, economic, political, academic and technological aspects of the system in the emerging scenario.

The institutional policies, planning, structure, governance, service, culture, philosophy and ideology that determine and sometimes limit, systemic responses need to be analyzed in the light of concrete experiences for effective social interventions. The issues of relevant programme, curriculum and pedagogy are equally important and the initiatives in these directions especially for catering to learners with special need and the marginalized, needs to be shared. The potential of multimedia technologies and the power of World Wide Web open up endless possibilities and their effective utilization is emerging as real challenge for the ODL system. The issues of access and equity should be analyzed for effective Social interventions and National development.