CHAPTER – VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS
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SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter entails summary of the study, conclusions, limitations and the implications of the study. The suggestions and recommendations for future research have also been discussed at the end.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education has revolutionized the concept of higher education through out the world and is considered as an attractive mode to democratize higher education. The distance education system has emerged to be a popular non-formal channel to provide answer to the questions of equity, access, flexibility and cost effectiveness. Moreover globalization, liberalization and market-oriented economy have added new dimensions and as a result the knowledge and skills of learners need to be continuously updated. This is only possible through distance learning because resources by conventional means are inadequate to meet the requirement of lifelong learning process.

Advancement in health care information and knowledge as well as technology in education has a profound impact on nursing education in particular. Nurses are now expected to demonstrate an expanded practice base requiring a higher level of competency. They have a responsibility to patients, a professional responsibility to the organization and an individual responsibility to maintain a high level of current and relevant knowledge and skills (Rath, 1996). In order to keep pace with current and potential health care reforms, nurses have to maintain their competency levels through continuing education. This requirement for seeking continuing education could be for career advancement and/or for progression along the clinical ladder. Empirical evidences for the other reasons of seeking continuing education for professional advancement and current professional information are also well recognised (Thurston, 1992). The purpose
of continuing education is to enhance practice and ultimately to provide quality health care to the public (Waddell, 1991).

Advent of life long learning, geographical mobility and concern for human resource development to empower nurses to function within the context of rapid and continuous change in the characteristics of information society resonates in development of higher education system. High Power Committee (1989) recognized the importance of training and educating all nurses at all levels to enable them to participate in continuing education programmes.

Registered nurses as adult learners, require study programmes that incorporate educational consideration of adult as a learner and also the self directed modes of learning. An open learning programme allows for these specific requirements and accommodates learners' geographical mobility. There is also provision for recognition of learning for which credit is awarded.

There has been significant change in nursing education, which has developed under the growing concern about educational standards, service delivery, recruitment and retention of students. Similarly, there has been change in structure and delivery of health care and health needs of society, which has necessitated the need for nurses to develop appropriate personal and professional profile for delivering nursing care.

Resources for educating this huge work force are inadequate for preparing them at university level due to shortage of colleges of nursing and the low intake in the conventional system. So distance education offers a challenge for professional transformation.

Nurses are particularly appropriate clientele/target group for distance learning because they are living throughout the country in the most remote locations as well as in university centres. Most of them are employed in Hospitals, Community and Primary health centres and to top it, all are shift duty workers.

In response to the growing emphasis on professional development, continuing professional education, need to enhance practice and skills, Indira Gandhi
National Open University developed and launched a three-year degree programme (Post basic BSc. Nursing) in July 1994, through distance mode in 17 programme study centers all over the country. So far 3822 students have been enrolled for the BSc. Nursing Programme of IGNOU upto 2002. (SRE, IGNOU) and programme has been extended to 21 Programme Study Centres/Work Centres.

A periodic review of the developmental effects on higher nursing education through distance education needs to be undertaken in order to find out who are the users of this system, what benefits they have derived and to correct the weakness of the system with a view to improve and enhance its credibility. Therefore, one such programme has been selected and a study has been undertaken to assess the effectiveness of BSc. Nursing programme of Indira Gandhi National Open University. The present study is not only socially relevant but of significance to higher educational needs of professional nurses through distance education at various levels.

Till date no comprehensive study has been conducted related to distance education programme in nursing to throw light upon various issues related to distance education system in nursing such as who are the users, what do they feel about the various aspects of the programme, what problems they face while undergoing the programme and what is the level of their improvement in knowledge and skills after undergoing the programme.

In order to sustain the credibility of this system for higher education of nursing professionals it becomes imperative to assess the impact of this programme. Therefore, a study of distance education program in nursing has been undertaken to evaluate its effectiveness.

6.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A Study of Effectiveness of Distance Education Programme in Nursing
6.2 OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the study was to explore the opinion of the Learners, Counsellors and Programme Incharges of the B.Sc. Nursing Programme of IGNOU regarding the effectiveness of distance education programme in Nursing.

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To study the profile of learners, to identify whether target group is adequately covered.
2. To assess the effectiveness of self-instructional course material by learners, counsellors and programme incharges.
3. To examine the effectiveness of instructional process in relation to:
   - Audio and Video support
   - Counselling sessions and practical contact sessions
   - Counsellors and clinical supervisors
   - Teleconferencing sessions
   - Assignments and Evaluation
4. To assess performance of learners in terms of knowledge and skills as expressed by learners and programme in charges.
5. To identify the problems faced by learners while undergoing the programme.

6.3 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

A descriptive survey approach was used by the researcher to conduct the study on Effectiveness of Distance Education Programme in Nursing.

6.3.1 Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised the following:

The learners enrolled for BSc Nursing programme during the year 1994, 1995 and 1997.
Counsellors appointed by the IGNOU at 17 Programme Study Centers/Study Centres/Work Centres all over the country and,

All the Programme Incharges appointed at 17 Programme Study Centers/Work Centres/Study Centres all over the country.

Sample

The sample subjects included 530 distance learners of IGNOU's B Sc. Nursing Programme across the various parts of the country. 136 Academic Counsellors/Clinical Supervisors teaching various courses at Programme Study Centers/Work Centres/Study Centres across the country and 17 Programme Incharges responsible for implementing the distance-learning programme in various Programme Study Centres. The response was received from 201 distance learners, 85 counsellors and 13 programme incharges of the BSc. Nursing Programme of IGNOU.

6.3.2 Sampling Technique

Three different types of sampling techniques were used to select learners, counsellors and programme incharges of the BSc Nursing Programme of IGNOU.

i) Random sampling technique was adopted to select the learners.

ii) Purposive sampling technique was used to select the counsellors and clinical supervisors.

iii) Total enumeration of the sample was followed to select the programme incharge.

6.3.3 Data Collection Instrument

In order to assess the effectiveness of BSc. Nursing programme, structured questionnaires and rating scales were developed by the researcher to obtain feedback from learners, counsellors/clinical supervisors and programmes incharges regarding self-instructional material and other instructional processes, such as audio-video programme, counselling and contact sessions, counsellors,
teleconferencing, assignments and evaluation. A four point and five point rating scale was constructed by the researcher to assess the performance of learners in terms of knowledge and skills in various areas as expressed by learners and Programme Incharges.

### 6.4 ANALYSIS OF DATA AND INTERPRETATION

Based on the objectives, data was analyzed by using frequency, percentages, arithmetic mean and “T” test. The data were analyzed in two parts, Part I & II. Part I relates to feedback from learners regarding various aspects of effectiveness of the BSc. nursing programme in relation to self instructional course material, audio-video material, counselling and contact sessions, teleconferencing, counsellors, assignments and evaluation and self evaluation of learner’s performance and Part II deals with feedback from counsellors and programme incharges regarding various aspects of the programme such as self instructional course material, audio-video material, counselling and contact sessions, teleconferencing, assignments and evaluation and assessment of performance of learners as expressed by the programme incharges.

The major findings of the study are given in following sub sections

#### 6.4.1 Profile of sample subjects

Frequency and percentage was computed to describe characteristics of learners, Counsellors/Clinical Supervisors and Programme Incharges.

**Learners**

Age wise distribution of the respondents showed that 90% of learners were in the age group of 30 years and above and only 10% were in the age group of 25-30 years.

As regards to the educational status 12.5% of the respondents had obtained high school, 19.9% higher secondary education and 42.3% had obtained senior
also 18.9% and 6.5% of the respondents had done graduation and post graduation respectively.

Professional qualification status highlighted that all the respondents, 100% had qualified diploma in general nursing and midwifery and 16.4% had qualified diploma in nursing education and administration. Also 10.4% had qualified other short-term course in education and administration.

Department (Specialization) wise distribution of the respondents indicated that majority of the respondents, 50% were from medical and surgical department followed by 12.4% and 7.5% who worked in operation theatre and intensive care unit (ICU)/Emergency departments, 5.5% of respondents were from paediatric department, 4.5% from midwifery, 1% from ENT, 5% from community area, 0.5% from orthopedic, 2% each from nursing administration and oncology and 15% of the respondents were from Burns and plastic surgery. It is interesting to note that about 7 (3.5%) out of 201 respondents were working in various training schools.

Professional experience of the respondents, revealed that 18.4% had less than 10 years of experience, 50.3% had 10-20 years and 31.3% had more than 20 years of experience.

Marital status of the respondents, showed that, majority of them, 73.1% were married, 25.9% were unmarried and 1% were widows.

Income wise breakup showed that 48.3% of the respondents had an income upto Rs.10,000, followed by 29.4% who had 10,001-20,000 and 9.5% had income of more than 20,000. Also 0.5% of the respondents were working for religious charity. As many as 10.95 did not mention about their income.

Rural and urban distribution of the respondents indicated that majority of them 65.2% belonged to urban category compared to 11.4% who were from rural background. As many as 23.4% belonged to other areas/categories.

In relation to caste category, majority of the respondents, 88% belonged to general category, 9% belonged to ST/SC and 3% were from other category.
Number of children of the respondents showed that 70.5% of the respondents had 1 to 2 children, 10.9% had three or more than three children and 8.5% did not have any child. Almost 10.3% did not respond.

Age wise distribution of the children of respondents revealed that 61.6% had children in the age group of 12 years or above, 53% had the children in the age of 8-12 years and 46.4% had children in the age group of 0-7 years. The age of children varied according to number of children, hence multiple responses are given.

**Counsellors**

Age wise distribution of the respondents showed that majority of them, 93% were in the age group of 30 years and above and 7% were in the age group of 25-30 years.

Educational qualification of the counsellors/clinical supervisors revealed that 12.94% and 37.65% of the respondents had obtained higher secondary and senior secondary education and 31.76% had obtained bachelor's degree. Also 14.12% and 3.53% of respondents had done post graduation and LLB respectively.

Professional qualification status highlighted that majority of the respondents, 64.70% had obtained master's degree in nursing, 30.59% B Sc nursing and 4.70% had completed the PhD. degree.

Specialisation wise distribution of the respondents indicated that 21.18% had specialised in medical surgical nursing, 11.76% community health nursing, 5.88% paediatric nursing, 11.76% MCH/Obstetrics and Gynae and 14.12% of the respondents had specialised in Psychiatric Nursing. This distribution included those with Masters degree as well as those without Masters degree. The other additional areas of specialization included nursing education 3.53%, nursing
administration 3.53% and sociology 5.88%. As many as 1.18% each had specialised in Economics and English also.

Professional experience of the respondents revealed that more than 61% of the respondents had an experience of more than 20 years, 25.88% had 10-20 years and 12.94% had an experience of less than 10 years.

Marital status of the respondents revealed that only 57.6% were married, 11.8% were widows and others did not specify.

Income wise breakup of the respondents showed that 29.41% of the respondents had an income up to Rs 10,000 and 48.23% had an income of 10,001 - 20,000. Only a small number, 3.53% of the respondents had an income of more than 20,000. It is worth noting that 1.18% of the respondents were working for religious charity. As many as 17.65% did not mention about their income.

Number of children of respondents showed that 14% of the respondents had no children, 84% had 1 to 2 children, and only 2% had three or more children.

Age wise distribution of children of respondents showed that only 2% of the respondents had children in the age group 0-1 years, 48% had children in the age group of 2-9 years and 36% of the respondents had the children in the age group of 10 years or more.

More than 50% of the respondents were working as clinical supervisors followed by 49.41% who worked as academic counsellors and 30.59% of the respondents worked as both clinical supervisors as well as academic counsellors.

Programme Incharges

Almost all 13 (100%) of Programme Incharges belonged to the age group of 40 years and above.

General educational qualification showed that two (15.38%) out of 13 of the respondents were postgraduates, five (38.46%) graduate and three each (23.07%) had higher secondary and senior secondary qualification, respectively.
Professional qualification of the respondents showed that majority of them, nine (69.23%) out of 13 had obtained MSc. Nursing, one (7.69%) had M.Phil and three (23.07%) had PhD. Degree. Also two (15.38%) of the respondents had acquired MCH as an additional qualification/degree. Only one (7.69%) had obtained BSc Nursing.

Professional experience of Programme Incharges showed that majority of the respondents, 11 (84.62%) had twenty-five years of experience or more, followed by two (15.38%) who had 20-25 years of experience.

Specialization wise distribution of Programme Incharges revealed that 30.76% each had specialised in Medical Surgical Nursing and Community Health Nursing respectively, followed by 7.69% each who were specialized in Obstetrics and Gynecology/MCH, Paediatric Nursing and Psychiatric Nursing respectively.

6.4.2 Region wise Distribution

Learners

Region wise distribution of Learners showed that large number of learners, 38.32%, were from Delhi followed by Kerala 13.43%, Hyderabad 10.95%, Guwahati 7.46%, Ludhiana 6.47%, Kanpur 5.47%, Indore 3.98%, Ahmedabad 2.99%, Kolkata 2.99%, Tamilnadu 2.99% and Mumbai 1.99%.

It is evident from the findings that more than 50% of the learners were from Delhi, Kerala and Hyderabad.

Counsellors

Region wise distribution of counsellors showed that 11.76% were from Bangalore, Kerala, 11.76% Hyderabad 13.94%, Ahmedabad 13.94%, Calcutta 9.4%, Delhi 8.24%, Belgaum 8.24%, Ludhiana 8.24%, Jaipur 7.06%, Guwahati 5.88% and 3.5% were from Indore.
Findings reveal that large number of response rate of counsellors was from Bangalore, Kerala, Hyderabad and Ahmedabad. The counsellors from Mumbai did not respond due to some operational reasons.

**Programme Incharges**

Region wise distribution of Programme Incharges revealed that there was equal distribution of Programme Incharges i.e. one each from all the 13 programme study centres/Work Centres/Study Centres. There were two respondents from Bangalore. This was due to change of programme in charges, because of tenure based appointment of programme incharges.

**6.4.3 Reasons for Joining the Programme**

Reasons given by learners for joining the BSc. Nursing (Post Basic) Programme included that majority of them, 60.7% joined the programme for improving their knowledge and skills followed by seeking higher qualification 27.4%, getting promotional avenues 17.4%, providing quality care 14.4% and 5.5% of learners had joined the programme for becoming teachers/administrators. The other reasons listed for joining the programme were negligible

It can be interpreted that the majority of the learners were pursuing the programme to update their knowledge and skills, attain higher qualification and promotion.

**6.4.4 Opinion about Self Instructional Material**

**Learners**

More than fifty percent of the respondents did not receive the course material before counselling sessions and the course material was received in one or two despatches. It was reported that some units/lessons were missing in the course materials. More than 60% of the respondents who did not receive course material, received prompt help from the university staff to collect the missing study material.
The main problems faced by the learners due to delay in receipt of course material included that more than 56% of the respondents could not read the study material before and during the counselling sessions, 25% could not complete the assignments in time, 5% did not attend the counselling sessions, 26% could not prepare for Term End Examination, 5% did not appear in the Term End Examination and 1% dropped out from the programme.

Findings related to the quality of course content revealed that details of the course content were found to be of very good quality by 91.5% (mean score 4.07). Content very well explained 94.5%, new concepts explained clearly 91%, good quality of illustrations 91.5%, very good pictures and diagrams 89.5% and 91% of the respondents found the course material highly interactive. Only a negligible number, 1% found the interactiveness of the course material as poor. Majority of the respondents 95.5% and 98% found the objectives and introduction very good in terms of providing good idea of expected learning and content discussion in the unit. Composite mean score also showed good quality of course content.

Language was found to be simple and easily understandable by 97.5% of the respondents, interesting to read 99% and 92.5% of the respondents found the language written in conversational style and very well explained. With respect to the presentation of the language, 98.5% of the respondents found the language presented in logical sequence and 95.5% of the respondents found important points highlighted in the course material. Only 0.5% found the poor quality of language. Mean score of 4.2 revealed that the quality of language in self-instructional material was found to be very good.

Self-assessment questions were found to be helpful to learn the units by more than 63% of the respondents, cover the whole content 39.8%, adequate 38.8%, appropriate 32.8% and 31.3% of the respondents found them thought provoking. Only a negligible number of respondents, 2% found the self-assessment questions difficult to understand. On the whole the self-assessment questions were found to be effective and helpful in learning.
It was expressed by some learners that the content of the programme need to be updated. The learners are getting the study materials in which new developments in the subjects are not included.

Quality of printing was found to be very good by 58.2% of the respondents, good by 30.8%, and satisfactory by 7.5% of the respondents. Majority of the respondents 73.2% reported only a few printing mistakes in the study material. The dissatisfaction listed about the quality of printing is negligible.

During the time of data collection majority of the respondents 74.6% had completed the courses as per academic session compared to 25.4% who could not complete all the courses. The main reason for not completing the course were due to personal problems 29.2%, shortage of time 22.9%, delay in receipt of course material 27.1%, less number of counselling session 18.8%, work pressure 18.8%, incomplete grade card/inaccurate grades/missed assignments 14.8% and 8.3% of the respondents could not complete due to difficulty in understanding the course units.

**Counsellors**

Almost all the respondents, found the course material of very good quality with respect to its relevance to objectives, usefulness, concentration of concepts and details, appropriateness to varying background of learners and adequate and suitable to the educational level of learners. The composite mean score of 3.40 also revealed good quality of course material.

The charts, diagrams and illustrations of course content were found to be of good quality by majority of the respondents with respect to their relevance and adequacy of the details. The composite mean score of 3.32 depicted the good quality of charts, diagrams and illustrations of course content.

More than 90-95% of the respondents found the language of the course material, simple, clear interesting and in conversational style. Only 47% found the poor
conversational style of the language. Composite mean score of 3.73 also revealed good quality of language of course material.

Almost all the respondents found the style of course content as communicative, interactive and thought provoking. The composite mean of the 3.46 also revealed the good style of course content.

Almost all 100% of the respondents found self-check exercises adequate in number and coverage, suitably placed and could be answered on the basis of understanding of the course content.

Format of course content with respect to providing guidance to the learner, specification of objectives and coordination of content with objectives was found to be good by almost all the respondents as depicted by the composite mean score of 3.66.

Concepts, principles, theories, methods and procedures were found to be very good by all most all the respondents as depicted by composite mean score of 3.64.

Clarity of the course content revealed that majority of respondents found the course content unambiguous/clear and the intext questions were found to be correlating with the objectives as revealed by the composite mean score of 3.30.

Concluding section was found to be very good with regard to summary, glossary and answers to check your progress questions by all, 100% of the respondents as revealed by composite mean score of 3.55.

Programme Incharges

Quality of course content was found to be good by almost all, 100% of the respondents with respect to the content adequacy, relevance to the objectives and clarity of language. Also 92.31% of the respondents found the course content moderately good with relevance to work situation, and appropriateness to
background of the learners. The composite mean score of 3.1 also depicted the similar picture.

It is worth noting that 7.69% of the respondents found the poor relevance of course content to the work situation and inappropriate to background of the learners. Also updating of course material was found to be poor by 15.38% of the respondents.

These findings bring out the need for periodical updating of the course material and improving its relevance to work situation of the learner.

Placements of self check exercises and their suitability was found to be good by almost all the programme incharges as depicted by the composite mean score of 3.38.

6.4.5 Audio-Video material

Learners

Only 37.3% of the respondents were aware about existence of audio-video programmes compared to 49.3% who were not aware and 13.4% were doubtful.

Only 28.9% were aware about the availability of audio-video material for listening and viewing at the Programme Study Centre/Work Centre/Study Centre. So far as facilities for audio-video programme, are concerned 43.3% of the respondents were aware about the availability of television followed by 18.9% audio and only 14.4% were aware about the availability of videotapes at the programme study centre/work centre/study centre. Almost 59.20% of the respondents had watched TV Programmes of IGNOU, 34.82% did not view at all and 5.98% of the respondents did not specify. There was no specific time for viewing (the video programmes) at the programme study centre/work centre/study centre as reported by 37.93% of the respondents. However 34.48% (10 out of 29) of the respondents reported that specific time was provided for viewing the programme now and then and 27.5% reported that there was specific time for viewing
regularly. Similarly there was no time for listening to audio programmes as reported by 34.21%. Only 26.31% reported that time for listening was given now and then and 39.47% reported that the specific time was given regularly to view/listen the audio video Programmes.

The learners who could view the audio-video programme, almost 15.5% of them did so along with counsellors, alone 12.06% and 13.79% could view the audio-video programmes when they desired so.

It can be interpreted that at initial stages of launching the programme audio-video material might not be available at Work Centres/Programme Study Centres/Study Centre of BSc. Nursing Programme. However, the respondents attached to IGNOU study centres might have an opportunity to view and listen these programmes.

Perception of the respondents regarding audio-video programmes revealed that more than 60% had favourable opinion about audio-video programmes and these programmes were found to be helpful and useful by 32.33%, improve knowledge 15.04%, help to solve queries related to assignments 22.2%, provide guidance about course material 7.52%, and audio-video programmes were found to be simple and interesting by 3.01% of the respondents. The negative opinion of the respondents about the audio video material included lack of information 11.28%, poor relay 3.01%, poor quality 3.76%, non-availability of phone to ask questions the programme does not include practical aspects 7.52%, only few programmes available 11.28%, programmes out of reach 7.52% and the programme provides no guidance was reported by 2.26% of the respondents.

Only 15.4% of the respondents had listened radio programme. Those who had listened the programme did so very rarely 74.2%, now and then 16.1% and only 9.7% listened the programme frequently.

Only a small percentage of the respondents 16% had received information about telecast/broadcast of the programmes. Out of those respondents who viewed the programmes only 47.8% of them found it very useful.
Above findings reveal that the situation regarding the audio-video programmes was the cause of concern. There is a need to make these programmes available, accessible and ensure their full utilisation by the respondents to enhance the learning and make better use of educational technology.

Counsellors

Audio video material was found to be of average quality by almost all, 100% of the respondents with respect to the style and presentation, interaction and participation of the learners. The composite mean score of 2.33 revealed that these programmes were average in terms of quality and quantity. These findings reveal that the quality of audio-video material needs to be improved, because counsellors are the better judges of the content adequacy and effective presentation of the programme.

Programme Incharges

Only 30.77% of the respondents found audio-video programmes of good quality. The mean score of 1.84 score indicated that the audio-video programmes were not found to be of good quality. Therefore, they need to be improved in terms of content, presentation, and technicality and made available at all the programme study Centres.

6.4.6 Counselling and contact sessions

Learners

Majority of the respondents, 79.6% had received the information about counselling sessions. The information about counselling sessions was received from the study centre by majority of the learners 70.63%, followed by Programme Study Centres 16.88%, Headquarters 8.13% and 4.38% of the respondents had received it from their colleagues.

The respondents who did not receive counselling schedule contacted fellow students 41.46%, Programme Study Centres 31.7%, Counsellors 12.20%, personal visit to headquarters 7.2% and 4.88% of the respondents tried to get it
from the regional centres. Nearly 85% of the respondents had attended all the requisite number of counselling sessions and 2.99% did not attend any counselling session.

The mean score of attendance in counselling sessions revealed that on an average the respondents had attended nearly 16.46 sessions in the first year, 16.45 sessions in the second year and 16.22 sessions in the third year respectively.

More than 88% of the respondents found the counselling sessions useful and 11.28% found them partly useful. Other responses listed were negligible. The mean score of 1.87 also indicated that the counselling sessions were found to be useful by majority of the respondents. The reasons for usefulness of counselling sessions included that the sessions are useful in removing the doubts 99.50%, clarify practical problems 96.41%, help in understanding the course unit 97.44%, create interest 98.98%, facilitate group learning 95.90%, evoke enthusiasm 97.44%, help in completing assignment 94.96% and give an opportunity to participate to some extent 98%. On the whole counselling sessions were found to be useful to a greater extent as depicted by Mean score of 1.52.

The reasons given for not attending the counselling sessions included the personal problems of the respondents, long duty hours, time consuming and costly travelling to study centre, non-receipt of information, far away study centre, inconvenient tutorial time and unpreparedness of counsellors.

Activities of the learners during the counselling sessions revealed that more than 70% of the respondents listened to lectures and discussions only, nearly 74% participated in discussion during counselling sessions followed by 15.38% who merely took notes, 6.15% watched video, 4.10% listened to audiocassettes, 3.59% clarified doubts, and 3.8% of the respondents discussed the cassettes among themselves. The responses listed regarding other activities such as role-play, self study and interaction with counsellors and learners were negligible.
With regard to preparation of learners for attending the counselling sessions, nearly 66% of the respondents studied course material before counselling sessions, 34.36% attempted self-check exercises, 34.87% prepared a list of questions and 27.89% identified practical issues for discussion.

**Practical Sessions**

Attendance of learners in practical sessions showed that more than 90% of the respondents had attended the practical contact sessions. More than 55% of the respondents considered the amount of practice as limited, 57% too limited and 6.40% of the respondents considered it too much. As many as 25.14% found the practice all right and only 3.28% found it inadequate. The mean score of 3.16 also revealed that the amount of practice was considered to be limited by the respondents.

With regard to the time and effectiveness of the practical sessions nearly 69% of the respondents considered the practice adequately timed and effective, 27.32% very well timed and effective and 5.46% of the respondents did not consider the practical sessions well timed and effective. A negligible number 1.63% found the practical sessions poorly timed and ineffective. The mean score of 3.19 indicated that the practical sessions were found to be adequately timed and effective.

Although the amount of practice during practical contact sessions was found to be inadequate by majority of the respondents, but these sessions were found to be adequately timed and effective.

With regard to the relevance of practical activities to the work area, more than 60% of the respondents found the practical activities relevant to the work area and 37.3% found them partially relevant and helpful. A negligible number of 0.5% found them of no direct value and 2% of the respondents were doubtful.

With regard to the time allotted to supervised activities nearly 70% of the respondents felt that time allotted to supervised activities is inadequate.
Counsellors

Almost 100% of the respondents had conducted counseling sessions in various courses. Majority of the respondents had conducted the counseling sessions in HS1T1, HS2T1, HS3T1 and HS3T3 and a small percentage of counsellors had conducted counseling sessions in other courses such as HS1T2, HS2T4, HS2T2, HS2T3, HS3T2 and HS3T4. This may be due to the fact that more responses were received from the counsellors of the above mentioned theory courses compared to the other courses which have low responses and also due to the fact that the counseling sessions for HS1T2, HS1T4 and HS2T3 are mostly conducted by counsellors from other institutions.

Majority of the respondents had conducted practical contact sessions in HS1P1, HS2P1 and HS2P2 and only a small percentage of the respondents had conducted practical contact sessions in other courses such as HS1P2, HS3P1, HS3P2, HS3P3 and HS3P4.

Satisfaction of the counsellors with theory counselling sessions revealed that more than 76% of the respondents were partially satisfied with number of counseling sessions allotted to each course, 11.70% were fully satisfied and 11.76% were not satisfied at all with the counseling sessions. More than 23% were fully satisfied, nearly 65% were partially satisfied, and 11.76% were not satisfied with the time allotted to each session.

More than 35% were not satisfied with number of sessions allotted to practicals, nearly 53% were partially satisfied and only 17.16% were fully satisfied with the number of sessions allotted to practical courses.

Nearly 71% of the counsellors/clinical supervisors were partially satisfied with time allotted to practical activities, nearly 18% were fully satisfied and 11.76%, were not satisfied at all with the time allotted to practical contact sessions.

With regard to opinion of counsellors regarding quality of counseling sessions more than 90% of the respondents reported that the quality of sessions was good as depicted by the mean score of 3.15.
Coverage of content in counselling sessions revealed that more than 88% found the coverage of the content in the counselling sessions as average. The mean score of 2.95 depicted the same picture.

Quality of content in counselling sessions revealed that more than 95% found it good as depicted by the mean score of 3.28.

Quality of supervised activities was found to be average by 88% as depicted by the mean score of 2.89.

Participation of learners in theory and practical counselling sessions was found to be average by 74% of the respondents as revealed by mean score of 2.39.

On the whole, quality of counselling sessions with regard to coverage of content, quality of content, quality of supervised activities, and participation of learners in theory and practical counselling sessions was found to be average as revealed by composite mean score of 2.4.

Programme Incharges

The number of counselling sessions and the time allotted to each counselling session was found to be inadequate (poor) by nearly 31% of the respondents. The mean score of 2 and 2.69 also depicted that the number of sessions and time allotted to each sessions was average. However, the counsellors were found to be available in adequate number for conducting counselling sessions for each course.

Majority of programme incharges 53.8% found the theory counselling sessions and 46.15% practical sessions adequate to lesser extent and only 7.69% found the counselling and practical sessions adequate to a greater extent.

6.4.7 Effectiveness of Counsellors and Clinical Supervisors

Opinion of Learners

A vast majority of the respondents 99.48% were benefited from the contact with counsellors. The reasons for the benefit included that the counsellors were
always helpful and available 71.28%, encouraging 70.77%, clarify doubts 63.72%, knowledgeable 67.69%, gave practical guidance 67.18% provided practical advice 58.46%, accessible and approachable 54.36%, available at specified time 52.82%, reassuring 57.3%, provided information in time 48.72% and available at other time and 45.64% of the respondents mentioned that the counsellors were indifferent.

The counselling sessions were found to be relevant and useful by majority of learners. The main reasons for usefulness and relevance of sessions included that they are useful for theory and practical learning as expressed by 52.82% of the respondents, create interest and improve knowledge 12.82%, counsellors are encouraging 3.08%, provided opportunity to interact with subject teachers 7.69%, helped in clarifying doubts and writing notes 14.81%, and 11.28% of the respondents expressed that it is worth to attend and spend time in counselling sessions.

Satisfaction of learners with competence, attitude, ability and willingness to spend time with counsellor showed that more than 87% were fully satisfied with the competence, more than 88% with attitude and more than 83% were fully satisfied with the ability and willingness to spend time with the counsellors. Only 12.31% were partially satisfied with the attitude 10.26% with competence and 15.38% of respondents were partially satisfied with the ability and willingness of the counsellors to spend time with them. Similar picture was depicted by composite mean score of 1.84.

Practical demonstrations discussions and guidance of practical skills by clinical supervisors was found to be excellent by more than 68% of the respondents and average by 8.21%. More than 10% of the respondents stated that the clinical supervisors were helpful, supportive and hard working and a negligible number 1.03% of the respondents reported that they were available at all times.

On the whole contact with counsellors and clinical supervisors benefited the learners to a greater extent and helped them in teaching learning process.
6.4.8 Teleconferencing

Only 2% of the respondents had received the information regarding teleconferencing sessions regularly. More than 59% of the respondents had received the information only some times and 38.8% did not receive the information at all about the teleconferencing sessions. The respondents who had received the information regarding teleconferencing sessions, nearly 32% out of them had received the information from the regional centre followed by programme study centre 28.45%, programme incharges 21.90%, fellow students 13.01% and 6.5% had received the information from the work centers.

More than 28% of the respondents who did not receive the information either missed the sessions or contacted teachers 22.92%, fellow learners 17.95%, send a written request to university 1.28%, saw in the newsletter 6.41%, collected information by phone 6.41%, and 5.13% of the respondents informed the coordinator.

More than 59% of the respondents found the teleconferencing sessions useful, 29.85% found them partially useful and only a negligible number 2.49% of the respondents did not found them useful. Nearly 9% of the respondents did not specify. The mean score of 150 indicated that the teleconferencing sessions were found to be somewhat useful.

The main reasons given by the respondents for usefulness of teleconferencing sessions included that the teleconferencing sessions help in clearing the doubts and increase knowledge as expressed by 40.22% of the respondents, helps in revision of lesson 16.20%, interesting and beneficial 14.53%, provides an opportunity to interact with teachers 7.26%, helps to retain and grasp content 7.26%, helps to share problems with learners 5.03%, gives an overview of the course 3.35%, helps to clear concepts and give detailed explanation 3.35% and a negligible number 1.1% of the respondents mentioned that it is easy to learn the topic with the help of teleconferencing.
On the whole teleconferencing sessions were found to be very good in relation to content presentation and quality of teacher responses as compared to other aspects such as extent of student participation, imaging of camera, clarity of voice, time allotment to each session and opportunity to seek clarification which were found to be good by majority of the respondents.

On the whole content presentation and technical quality were found to be moderately adequate as depicted by mean score of 3.33.

Feeling of the learners during teleconferencing showed that more than 55% of the respondents felt comfortable to participate during the teleconferencing sessions, 43% seek clarification, and 14% of the respondents felt enthusiastic and stated that it added to new learning. Some learners felt that the presentation was less lively and there was less participation between teachers and learners.

Comments on feedback of learners regarding teleconferencing sessions in relation to allotment of time revealed that more than 46% of the respondents found the time inadequate compared to 47.83% who found the time adequate followed by 4.35%, and 14% of the respondents felt that time is average and unequally distributed. The mean score of 3.39 indicated that time allotted was moderately adequate. More than 52% of the respondents mentioned that it provided good opportunity to participate followed by 47.83% who stated that it provided very little opportunity to participate. 46.09% adequate opportunity and 17.39% of the respondents mentioned that it provided an inadequate and poor opportunity to participate in the teleconferencing sessions. Nearly 50% of the respondent found that there was good link, 26.09% inadequate link and 17.39% of the respondents mentioned that there was no link during the teleconferencing sessions at all. The mean score of the 3.39, 3.22 and 3.10 related to the comments of the respondents regarding teleconferencing indicated that there was moderately adequate time, opportunity to participate and clear link during the teleconferencing sessions.
Counsellors

Opinion of counsellors about teleconferencing revealed that the style and presentation of teleconferencing was found to be poor by 10% of the respondents, poor interaction and participation by 43.37%, and 33% of the respondents found it average. The findings indicated that there is a need for improving the quality of style of presentation, coverage of content and interaction and participation of learners in teleconferencing sessions as revealed by average score of 2.35.

Programme Incharges

Opinion of programme incharges regarding teleconferencing revealed that nearly 54% were not satisfied with the teleconferencing and 46.15% were satisfied. Seven (70%) out of ten were partially satisfied with quality and coverage of the content and three (30%) were fully satisfied with the quality and coverage of the content.

Almost 40% (Four out of 10) of the respondents were not satisfied with participation and interaction of learners, 50% (five) were partially satisfied and 10% (one) of the respondents were fully satisfied with participation and interaction of learners in the teleconferencing. Opinion of programme incharges about feedback from learners regarding usefulness of teleconferencing sessions revealed that they were not satisfied with the usefulness of various aspects of teleconferencing.

The findings indicated the need for improving the style and presentation, quality and coverage of content, and interaction and participation of learners during the teleconferencing sessions.

6.4.9 Assignments and Evaluation

Learners

More than 80% of the respondents had received the assignments compared to 20% who did not receive the assignments. Out of those who did not receive the
assignments more than 72% of the respondents tried to collect them from university, 20% borrowed from colleagues, and 7.5% collected them from headquarters.

Only 40% of the learners had received assignments before counselling in time, 13.4% after counseling, 13.9% just before the date of submission, 13.4% after date of submission, 15.4% before Term End Examination and 3% of the respondents received the assignments after the Term End Examination. Only 0.5% did not receive at all. More than 72% of the respondents submitted the assignment in time and 27.36% did not submit in time. The main reasons for not submitting the assignment in time included late receipt of assignments by 56.36% of the respondents, lack of time 32.72%, difficult to understand 7.2%, lack of interest 3.64% and late receipt of study material 1.82%. Also 18.2% of the respondents did not submit the assignments because of work pressure at home and work place. The findings indicate the need for ensuring the timely receipt of assignments by the learners so that they will be able to submit them in time and obtain feedback.

Almost 58.79% of the respondents had studied all the course material completely before writing the assignments. 22.9% studied some material completely, 7% all partly, 4.5% some partly and 0.5% glanced through the study material. Also 6.4% did not study the course material at all before writing the assignments. It is evident that learners need to be motivated and encouraged to study the course material completely before writing the assignments to prevent direct copying of the material from the self instructional modules. Also there is a need to develop creative and thought provoking assignments. More than 81% of the respondents completed the assignments independently. The respondents who did not complete the assignments independently, 37.8% of them took help from the seniors, 35.1% counsellors, 8.1% supervisors, 2.7% peer groups and 2.7% of the respondents referred too many books and materials for completing the assignments. Also 13.5% of the respondents copied them directly from the books. More than 75% of the respondents found the quality of assignments
challenging, 18.5% routine, 7.5% very helpful, 2.5% too difficult and the other responses listed were negligible.

Nearly 52% of the respondents received the evaluated assignments after the examination and only 37.8% received them just before the examination. The respondents who did not receive back the evaluated assignments, about 44% of them contacted programme incharges/counsellors, 10.81% regional centres, 1.08%, Programme Study Centre, 7.02% IGNOU Faculty and 3.24% of the respondents contacted the Student Registration and Evaluation Division of IGNOU. Nearly 33% of the respondents did nothing and waited for the announcement of the results. More than 89.1% of the respondents found the evaluated assignments useful and helpful in preparing for examination and only 4.1% did not found them useful. About 96% of the respondents found the assignments helpful in understanding the course material and preparing for the examination to a great extent as indicated by the composite mean score of 3.62.

Tutor comments were written on the assignments of only 28.6% of the respondents. Out of these, 86% of the respondents found the tutor comments constructive, 83.3% mentioned that they gave encouragement, 66.6% expressed that they gave new dimensions and only 6.66% of the respondents found the tutor comments negative.

With regard to the quality of various aspects of assignments, more than 90% of the respondents found them very good and good in relation to number of questions in the assignments, language, time allotted, instruction easy for preparation of the assignment responses, coverage of the lesson and preparation for examination. The composite mean score of 3.56 also depicted that the assignments were found to be of good quality.

It may be noted that almost 10% of the respondents found the poor quality of assignments; therefore, there is a scope for improvement in preparing, dispatch, timely evaluation and feedback of assignments.
Opinion of learners regarding the assignment grades revealed that 90% of the respondents found the assignments grades to be fair, 7% lenient, 25% harsh and 15% of the respondents found them difficult to understand. A negligible number did not receive the grades at all.

**Term End Examination**

More than 91% of the respondents had appeared in term end examination of 1st year, 90% in 2nd year and more than 53% of the respondents had appeared in 3rd year examination. Only 29.4% of the respondents had completed the entire programme. The reasons for not completing the courses included that marks were not received in time, late receipt of study material, health problem, shortage of time, personal problems, lengthy assignment, practical classes not conducted completely, lack of information about examination, strike, could not get leave and assignment grades not included.

Quality of the question papers of Term End Examination was found to be good by 90% of the respondents as indicated by mean score 3.47.

Only 30 to 55% of the respondents had received complete grades and grade cards in various courses of the whole programme. The reasons for incomplete grades included that the assignment marks were not added in more than 73% of the respondents, assignments not checked/grades missing in the grade card of 15.9% of the respondents, late declaration of results 4%, lack of correspondence 2.5%, incomplete grade cards sent by the university 15% and lack of time due to personal problems was mentioned by 2.5% of the respondents. Almost more than 7% of the respondents did not know the reason for incomplete grades. The other responses listed were negligible.

Only 29.4% of the respondents had completed the programme, majority of them 64.7% wanted to continue the programme by all means and 4% of the respondents did not want to continue the programme and 1% had dropped from the programme due to superannuation. The main reasons given by the
respondents for discontinuing the programme included that the study centres are far away, leave problem, too much work load, late receipt of study material and there is no promotion after qualification.

Counsellors

Opinion of counsellors regarding the quality of assignments revealed that almost all the respondents found assignments of good quality with adequate number and type of assignment questions as well as adequacy of number of assignments per course. The similar picture was depicted by the composite mean score of 3.19.

Programme incharges

With respect to the opinion of programme incharges regarding the quality of assignments almost all 100% of the respondents found the coverage of the content and type and number of questions in the assignments moderately good and more than 92% of the respondents found the assignments of average quality in relation to thought provokingness, type and number of questions and adequacy of number of assignments per course. The mean scores of 3.23 related to coverage of content, 2.92, thought provoking, 2.92 type and number of questions and the mean score of 2.69 regarding the adequacy of number of assignment per course indicated that quality of assignments was found average and good. The composite mean score of 2.94 also reflected the same.

6.4.10 Performance of learners

Feedback from Learners

The self evaluation of learners regarding their performance revealed that there was improvement in clinical knowledge and skills of the respondents after undergoing the programme as reflected by the mean knowledge and skill score of 62.42 compared to the mean knowledge and skills score of 47.76 before undergoing the programme. Similarly there was improvement in the administrative knowledge and skills of respondents after undergoing the distance
learning programme as depicted by mean knowledge and skill score of 57.50 compared to the mean knowledge and skill score of 45.93 before the programme.

The "T" value also revealed significant difference in mean scores at 0.01 level of significance, which indicated the improvement of knowledge and skills of learners in the area of clinical skills as well as administrative skills after undergoing the BSc Nursing programme.

There was very good improvement in teaching and communication skills of learners after undergoing the programme as indicated by the composite mean score of 3.73 and 3.9 in teaching skills and communication skills of the learners respectively.

Feedback from Programme Incharges

Opinion of programme incharges regarding the performance of learners showed that majority of the respondents expressed that there was an improvement in knowledge, skills and attitude of learners after undergoing the programme. The mean score of 3.4 also presented similar picture.

6.4.11 Problems faced by the Learners and Programme Incharges

Learners

The major problems faced by the majority of learners were delay in receipt of course material, delay in information regarding counselling sessions, practical contact sessions and teleconferencing sessions, disorganized counselling sessions, non-receipt of evaluated assignment, problems of boarding and lodging, far away study centres, practical and theory counselling not conducted properly, shortage of time for counselling and contact sessions, inadequate audio-video support, too much written work in practicals, practicals not conducted properly, overlapping of counselling and contact sessions with term end examination of theory and practicals, and inability to revise the course materials due to continuous examination. Problem of traveling official leave, neglect of
children and family problem were some of the additional problems expressed by the respondents.

Programme Incharges

The problems faced by the programme incharges in implementation of the programme included, problem in arranging clinical experience and clinical supervision, accommodation for learners, non-availability of counsellors who are oriented to distance learning methodology, interference from study centre, non-cooperativeness of counsellors, delay in returning of evaluated assignments in time by counsellors, non-supply of course material before counselling, problem in getting approved list of counsellors and problem in getting payment in time from regional centre.

Suggestions given by learners, counsellors and programme incharges

Learners

The suggestions given by learners included;

- Practical field experience/contact sessions should be conducted after theory counselling.
- Facilities should be provided for proper patients, hospitals and equipments for effective learning.
- Close supervision during clinical practice and counselling.
- Theory and practical sessions should be conducted in time.
- Increase in number of theory counselling sessions and practical contact period to improve practical knowledge.
- Provide feedback from time to time.
- More focus on bedside case studies.
- Provision of Lodging and Boarding facilities.
- Completion of practical experience in respective sessions and avoidance of backlog.
Advance orientation regarding practical sessions

- Practical activities should be conducted only after theory counselling and practical examination should be conducted at the end of the year
- Adequate time should be provided for preparation of practical examination
- Provision should be made for extra home visiting and home procedure
- Advance information about TV telecast and teleconferencing sessions
- Practical centres should be located at convenient distances
- Avoid overlapping between Term End Examination, theory, counselling and practical contact sessions
- Avoid repetition of practical activities and assignments and change the pattern of assignments and activities every year
- Provide gap between practical/contact sessions of various courses
- Clinical supervision by faculty with Msc. Nursing only
- Practical contact programme be conducted in time phased manner to avoid overload
- Timely Evaluation, guidance and feedback of self activities
- Practical should not to be conducted in summer
- Additional counselling sessions should be conducted to prepare for examination
- More practical demonstrations audio and video presentations in practical should be given to enhance practical learning
- Reading material should be made available at Programme Study Centre for reference
- Placement of learners in speciality areas during practical contact sessions should be done as per the needs of individual learner

Counsellors

The suggestions given by the Counsellors included that more than 88.24% of the respondents suggested that the programme could be improved by increasing the
number of theory and practical counselling sessions in various courses. 82.35% advance and timely despatch of course material to learners, 88.82% provision of additional reference material/practical tests for clinical and community courses, 82.35% adequate supply of audio and video material, 29.41% regular attendance record, 78.82% advance written information to learners and counsellors for counselling, contact session and teleconferencing, 78.82% preparation of students before counselling, 58.82% counselling at regular and periodic intervals and follow-up counselling sessions before examination, and 35.29% of the respondents suggested that students should be posted in specialty areas during clinical experience according to their needs.

Programme incharges

The suggestions given by programme in charges included the increase in number of theory and practical, counselling and contact sessions 100%, advance despatch of course material to the learners, counsellors and programme incharges 30%, advance information to learners for theory counselling, practical counselling and teleconferencing 30%, more number of practical examiners 38.46%, motivation of students to self study before theory counselling 23.07%, follow-up of learners at regular intervals through out the programme 38.46%, more focus on placement of learners in specialty areas during contact sessions 23.07%, availability of equipments for clinical and community field 23.07%, periodical workshops and orientation programme for counsellors and programme incharges 30%, periodical visits of faculty from headquarters 46.15 and supply of audio-video material was suggested by 60% of the respondents. Programme review/revision proper monitoring of the programme and proper selection of the learners were among the other suggestions given programme incharges.

These findings indicate that there is a need to improve the communication system and ensure that, the learners receive the course material, assignment, counselling schedule and message regarding various learning activities. Although the university is making lot of efforts to improve the quality of the programme yet
sincere efforts need to be made to address the problems and suggestions of the learners.

Suggestions for improving the counselling sessions

The suggestions given by the learners to improve the counselling programme included increasing the duration of counselling and contact sessions, use of workshop method for theory counselling, providing advance written information about the scheduled date and time for theory and practical sessions, conducting counselling sessions in phased manner (more than one contact), using more audio and video material at study centres and counselling sessions should not be conducted during examination time. The other non specific responses included having more understanding about the learners, use of autonomous institutions for practical experience, providing help in getting leave from the duty/hospital authority, etc.

Suggestions of learners for improving practical sessions

Suggestions of learners for making the practical sessions useful and interesting included that there should be increase in number of practical sessions, advance information for conducting practical sessions should be given to arrange the duties and leave in time, learners should be placed in specially practical areas as per their needs, involving only M.Sc. teachers with distance teaching experience for conducting practical sessions, practical field experience should be conducted after theory counselling with more gap, experience should be given in proper hospitals with adequate patients and equipments, practical sessions should be conducted in time as per the schedule, focus should be made on bed side case studies, close clinical supervision should be provided orientation regarding practical contact sessions should be given well in advance, provision should be made for demonstration and return demonstration to involve all the learners, practical examination should be conducted at the end of counselling and practical sessions, adequate time for preparing practical examination should be given, practicals should be conducted in phased manner to avoid overload and
overlapping, repetition of same practical activities should be avoided, guidance should be given for self activities, practical experience should not to be conducted in summer, additional sessions should be given to prepare for the examination, demonstration of practical procedures should be made with the help of audio video aids and video presentation and back face practicals should be avoided.

Suggestions for improving assignments

The main suggestions given by the respondents regarded improving the assignments included that assignments should be sent 6 months before the examination, submission dates should be kept after concluding the counseling sessions, timely checking and discussion on grades and question of assignments, making the reference books available at the programme study centres, writing novel tutor comments to clarify doubts, providing answer keys of short questions to the evaluators, preparing the assignments with more objective type and short answer type questions, making the uniform pattern of assignments every year, improving the course material to avoid referring of extra books, proper checking and grading of objective type questions, the assignments should not be made lengthy, more time should be given for writing the assignment and assignments should be self-explanatory.

Other suggestions included that the assignment, marks and grades to be combined, tutors should be impartial and honest in grading and tutors should be made responsible.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Present study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of IGNOU distance education programme in Nursing.

Following conclusion were drawn from the findings of the study.

The programme provided an opportunity for higher education to diverse profile of respondents in terms of their age, educational and professional qualification.
specialization, income, marital status, number and age of children.

The respondents joined the BSc. nursing programme to acquire higher qualification in their field, improve knowledge and skills and have better career opportunity.

The programme helped the learners to acquire higher qualification in their field, improvement in knowledge and have better career opportunity

6.5.1 Self Instructional Material

The situation related to delivery of course material was of serious concern. There was delay in receipt of course material by the learners and in most cases the course units were missing in the material. The course material was found to be highly effective by learners, counsellors and programme incharges, however the degree of effectiveness varied among all the three categories. This could be due to the fact that the experienced programme incharges and counsellors have the knowledge and understanding of the appropriateness and details of the material so they can be better judges of the quality. There were very few printing mistakes in material as reported by learners.

The findings indicated the scope for further improvement of the course material by updating it periodically and providing supplement material from time to time. Instructional package needs to be designed in more personal manner. The font size of the material needs to be increased and the binding of material to be improved. Main headings need to be highlighted and colour pictures incorporated in the material to make it more attractive.

6.5.2 Audio-Video Programmes

Audio-video sessions were found to be effective in terms of quality of content presentation and helped the learners to revise the lesson. However, audio-video facilities were not accessible to majority of the respondents. Some learners were not even aware about the existence of audio-video material. The findings
pinpointed that the audio-video material needs to be improved and made available at all the programme study centres of B.Sc. nursing Programme. Audio-video programmes need to be made learner friendly, interactive and relevant to work situation and learners encouraged to participate and interact in the sessions.

6.5.3 Counsellings and Contact Sessions

The main focus was on the need for advance information and orientation regarding conduct of counselling and practical contact sessions. Counselling sessions and practical contact sessions were found to be relevant, useful and effective and helped the learners to acquire skills. The counselling sessions gave the learners an opportunity to interact with counsellors and peer groups and clear their doubts. Practical skills were found to be relevant and applicable to their present working environment. However the long duration of classes at a stretch and practical sessions were considered to be quite tiring. The practical contact and counselling sessions need to be conducted in phased manner to keep the track of learners through out the academic year, prevent overlapping between examination and practical sessions and work overload.

Counselling and practical sessions were found to be too extensive for time allotted to complete clinical/field activities and practice sessions.

The numbers of counselling session and practical contact sessions were found to be inadequate in all speciality areas as reported by learners, counsellors and programme incharges. It was suggested to increase the sessions to make the programme more effective. Feedback given by learners revealed that they needed extra educational support to clarify the content of course material, complete practical activities and assignments. Counsellors and programme incharges were partly satisfied with the participation of learners in counselling sessions, coverage of content during sessions and amount of practice in supervised activities. Learners’ participation in counselling sessions needs to be strengthened and improved.
The learners had favorable attitude towards counsellors and supervisors. They were found helpful, supportive, encouraging, available at all times and patient. Their counselling skills and administrative skills were found to be highly effective.

6.5.4 Teleconferencing Sessions

The situation regarding attendance in teleconferencing needs urgent attention. The teleconferencing sessions were informative, satisfactory, useful and helped the learners to clarify the unit and clear their doubts. However, there is a scope for improving the technical quality, presentation and making the sessions more interactive and accessible.

Feedback on teleconferencing indicated the need for better use of graphics, technical quality, opportunity for providing interaction and limiting the sessions to encourage discussion. There was a felt need for advance information regarding the teleconferencing schedules. Teleconferencing facilities need to be extended to all the programme study centres for adequate utilization and advance information need to be given to all learners, counsellors and programme incharges.

Counsellors and Programme incharges were partially satisfied with the teleconferencing sessions. They expressed the need for improving the style of presentation, participation and interaction by learners.

The information regarding audio-video, counselling sessions, practical contact programme and teleconferencing need to be given well in advance so that learners can plan their duties and make arrangement for their official leave to attend these sessions.

6.5.5 Assignments and Evaluation

Assignments were found to be challenging, thought provoking and effective. They helped the learners to understand the text and prepare for the examination. Tutor comments were positive and constructive. However, they were written only on a
few assignments. The respondents expressed the need for writing tutor comments on all the assignments to promote two way communication between tutor and learner, get feedback, and enhance learning.

There was great delay in receipt of evaluated assignments. Return of evaluated assignment responses needs to be prompt and individual feedback given to the learners. Some of the students stated that they had to wait for many months to receive back the evaluated assignments and/or receive grade cards. Non-receipt of assignments caused delay in preparing and submitting the assignments and prepare for the term end examination. Learners desired more individualized feedback on their assessment and more interesting study guides and readings for reference.

Programme incharges and counsellors felt the need for improving the type and number of questions preparing creative and innovative assignments and increase of the number of assignments per course.

The Term End examination question papers were found to be of good quality. The situation about the incomplete grade cards and delayed results was a cause of serious concern for the learners, counsellors and programme incharges. Most of the learners received incomplete grades related to assignment and Term End examination and there was considerable delay in the receipt of grade cards. The incomplete grades were due to the fact that the grades were not sent to headquarters from programme study centres, delayed announcements of results, operational problems and in many cases assignment grades were not incorporated in grade card.

The findings of study revealed that the BSc. nursing programme helped the learners to improve their knowledge, skills and attitude in clinical skills, administrative skills, teaching skills and communication skills as expressed by learners and programme incharges.
There was a felt need for increasing programme study centres to make the programme accessible to outreach learners and broaden the educational opportunities, eliminate the long travel and enhance the skills.

Although a few learners had raised the question of cost of the programme. Participants gained intangible benefits and there was less disruption to the hospital routines with the distance package.

6.5.6 Problems and Suggestions

The major problems faced by the learners included work overload in short period of counselling and contact session, which was considered to be insufficient to clarify their doubts. The main problems faced by the learners while undergoing the programme were found to be issue of grave concern. There was delay and non-receipt of course material, delayed and non information regarding various operations of the programme, delayed receipt of assignments and Term End Examination grades, result and incomplete grade cards, work pressure from workplace and long duty hours, family and personal problems, far away study centres, traveling problems and boarding and lodging problems.

A few programme incharges faced the problem in arranging clinical experience, problem of payment from the regional centres and cooperation from counsellors.

The major suggestions given by learners, programme incharges and counsellors included that there should be increase of theory and practical counselling sessions, updating of course material, improving and changing pattern of practical activities and preparing creative assignments. There should be close monitoring, review and evaluation of the programme by the faculty, feedback regarding programme from learners, programme incharges, counsellors, coordinators, supervisors and employers.

One of the major thrust areas for attention was devising a strategy for appropriate procedure of selection of learners. It was suggested by the respondents of various categories to design and adopt an appropriate procedure for admission
and selection in terms of strict screening procedures for admission to the programme to avoid any irregularities.

It seems that after one time counselling and contact sessions the learners work on their own and in a sense are isolated, as many of them work in remote areas with no one qualified and supportive enough to discuss their distance course. This led to feeling of isolation by learners.

Apart from the study material, counselling and assignments there is no system where by we could monitor the course and render any other support services.

On the whole results have provided useful material for discussion and exploration with existing students as well as indicating areas where more emphasis might be placed. Learners found themselves engulfed in commitments from different sides, their jobs, distance study and the family commitments.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The various limitations of the study are as follows:

The response rate of the sample subjects was not equally distributed across all the programme study centre/work centres.

Assessment of performance of learners was based on expressed opinion/self evaluation of learners and programme incharges.

Responses from supervisors/employers of learners could not be obtained.

6.7 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results obtained from the study helped the researcher to derive certain implications for policy makers and administrators, programme designers and faculty, counsellors, programme incharges and learners. These implications are highlighted in the following sub-sections.
6.7.1 Policy makers and Administrators

There is need to address the emphasis concerning the methods of new technologies or methodology in nursing education that need to be addressed at the highest policy level. There is a need to address the issues of equity and access. This system may lead to widening the gap between institutions having access to the new method of learning and those who do not have, therefore, calls for judicious provision of access to technologies and media.

Timely communication was a problem of special concern. It is prudent to organize a telephone network/communication network system to coordinate communication between student, faculty, coordinator and programme incharge. There is a need for planning multi site communication channels for coordination of compatible and progressive services for learners at local, regional and central level. Faculty needs to travel to various centres and meet students to discuss their problems. It provides faculty members with an opportunity to add a personal touch to students’ cohorts.

The postal delays resulted in insufficient time for potential candidates to plan course and work schedule. The information regarding the course schedule need to be published in advance and ensure their timely receipt by learners.

Due to delay in receipt of course material, learners could not submit assignments in time. There is a need to devise alternative means to despatch the material and ensure the receipt of complete sets of course material along with the assignments by the learners in time. Extra sets of course material need to be despatched to the study centers/programme study centres for use of learners, counsellors and programme incharges.

There is a need to support increased funding and development of infrastructure conducive to high quality transmission of distance learning courses in nursing supplemented with media technology. Funding is also needed for the faculty
development, student supports and for development of the study investigating quality, cost and efficiency in distance education programmes in nursing.

There is a need for substantial institutional financial investment in equipment infrastructure and faculty development. Therefore, administrators need to commit funds to enable academic staff to pursue their professional development in their area that helps them to deliver equitable course to promote a two-way communication of learners.

The findings related to the distant location of study centers/programme study centers call for the urgent need to establish more programme study centres at closer vicinity to give wider coverage to learners at out reach after mapping of the sites for establishment of the centres. This will help to reduce the travel to a minimum. Also subsidization of transport may be extended to distance learners as provided to conventional system students.

As observed from the profile of learners majority of them were from urban background. In order to achieve the objectives of equity in distance teaching, effort should be made to provide opportunity to rural candidates, which do not have access otherwise.

States/regions having less educational institutions should be considered on a priority basis for establishment of new centers.

All the programme study centres need to be equipped with study material, audio-video, teleconferencing facility to facilitate flexible study.

Regional Management Committee needs to be set up urgently and made functional as per norms. They should meet 2-3 times a year for review and facilitate training to support and encourage quality monitoring.

Encourage research to see who are the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of programme and what progress they have achieved to assess the quality of the programme. Faculty interests and their expertise with various distance methods
should be considered and guidance and support should be provided for those who teach.

The findings related to the admission procedure and the standard of enrolled candidates calls for the need to establish new policy for admission. Therefore the admission in distance education programme in Nursing should be based on the academic competency of individuals and not on age, experience and merit only. There is an urgent need to conduct entrance examination for prospective learners to avoid malpractices in the admission.

There is a need to promote the use of technology, to enhance the quality of nursing education through collaboration among the institutions and sharing professional specifics and expertise.

6.7.2 Programme Developers

There is a need to adopt following strategies for designing and implementing the distance learning programmes by the programme developers.

- Designing and creation of proactive and strategic plans for the development of infrastructure, resource allocation and faculty development for implementation of distance education programmes in nursing.
- Develop and design appropriate and innovative procedures for selection of learners to maintain the standard of distance learning in nursing. Update and revise the self learning course material periodically, develop and provide supplementary materials to include recent developments in the field.
- Make the physical lay out of the modules more attractive and less bulky.
- Counselling, as an effective media of two-way communication needs to be strengthened. Therefore there is a need to plan, design and conduct intensive counselling and practical contact sessions as per need and convenience of the learners.
Orient academic counsellors/clinical supervisors in the innovative counselling techniques such as problem solving, focus group discussions, seminars, brainstorming and mastering learning projects in order to achieve excellence.

Develop and design innovative and practical situation specific audio-video programmes, teleconferencing sessions, and interactive radio counselling sessions to attract interest of the learners and make them available at all programme study centres.

Frame creative assignments and activities, which are thought provoking and use alternative models for practical assessment.

Pattern of supervised activities has to ensure that the design should address the nature, competency and capability of the learner, the educator and the content and fit between content and delivery methods.

Self activities need to be prepared in the form of assignments and case studies and despatched to the learners along with the course material. This will help to facilitate the change of pattern and avoid repetition of these activities year after year.

Ensure that the theory counselling, practical contact sessions and term end examination do not overlap with each other.

Schedule the counselling sessions and practical contact sessions in phased manner to follow up the learners and continue learning process through out the year so that learners may not feel isolated.

Practical examination needs to be rescheduled, as the learners feel over loaded with multiple activities in short duration. There is a felt need for conducting practical sessions after theory counselling and practical examination after the completion of counselling and contact sessions with more gap.
Develop an alternative strategy of evaluation to provide feedback to the learners on continuous basis about their grades and results, because assignment grades, final results and grade cards have been the cause of concern to majority of the learners.

Orient all the counsellors involved in academic counselling/clinical supervision in distance teaching methodology. Organize periodical workshops for counsellors to acquaint them with changing needs and trends of distance learning and needs of distance learners.

Conduct review meetings with counsellors, programme incharges, employers and supervisors to get feedback about the various aspects of the programme to strengthen it.

This will help to enhance the standard of distance learning in nursing and better acceptance by the colleagues in the profession.

Make periodic visits to programme study centres to meet the learners, counsellors and programme incharges to solve their practical problems.

Conduct periodical evaluation of programme by obtaining feedback from programme incharges, counsellors, students, employers and supervisors to assess the quality of performance of learners in their field.

Faculty, administrators and support staff needs to work together in development of distance delivery to establish scholarship criteria related to the development of the nursing educational programmes.

Challenge for faculty is to understand advantages and disadvantages in their system of teaching/learning and assist each learner in reaching their potential goal.

Continuing evaluation of the programme over the time is necessary to identify improvements and responses to change.
6.7.3 Programme Incharges

The implication for programme incharges entail that there is a need to organize brief orientation sessions before clinical and academic counselling of learners and inform them about overall planning, counselling, practical sessions and rotation plans well in advance.

Arrange the timings and placement of the learners in appropriate clinical areas as per their convenience and individual requirement of the course. Balance the workload of learners according to their level.

Give advance and written information to the learners regarding all the operations of a programme such as counselling, teleconferencing, practical sessions, radio counselling sessions and term end examination, because this was a major problem for the learners.

Carry out feedback sessions to overcome practical problems.

Maintain accurate student records and send the reports to headquarters from time to time.

Provide timely feedback to learners about the assignments and their progress.

Ensure the submission of assignment grades of learners in time.

Make arrangements for boarding and lodging facilities of learners.

Prepare a panel of examiners and counsellors for counselling and practical examination.

Conduct review meetings with counsellors clinical supervisors and learners to discuss the problems and solutions.

6.7.4 Counsellors

Interaction is an important element of teaching learning process through distance mode. Distance learners interact with course material and distance teachers in
addition to other media. The counsellors should continue developing innovative strategies to maximize the students' learning by an innovative and creative use of counselling sessions and audio-video material.

The counsellor may help to develop a virtual classroom using different types of media facilities to determine which ones suit best for their particular subject and student learning needs.

There is a need to be innovative in exploring the potential of the medium and ensuring fullest impact of interactive sessions on students during counselling and encouraging effective participation of learners in the counselling sessions.

There is a need to design and use different formats to arouse and sustain interest of the learners during counselling, ensure varied teaching learning and clinical experience to learners and focus on bed side case studies and patient care activities.

Keep updated with distance teaching methodology to deal with diverse profile of distance learners and adopt teaching styles taking into consideration the needs and expectations of multiple, often diverse audiences.

Function effectively as skilled facilitators as well as content providers and help the learner to form study groups.

Identify problem areas of learners and direct the counselling as per their need.

Ensure timely evaluation of assignment and submission of grades and the timely return of evaluated assignments before the Term End Examination.

Ensure that the evaluation of assignments be diagnostic and remedial in nature by writing constructive and positive comments for remedial purposes, thereby strengthening the feedback through assignments, as it is very beneficial for promoting and sustaining effective learning.

6.7.5 Learners

For the learners a big challenge is to engage publicly in academic tasks and strategies as well as critiquing the content, media, audio-video and teleconferencing as a tool for effective learning.
There is a need for self-determination, self-discipline and self-motivation of learners.

Efforts need to be directed towards studying the self-instructional material before counselling and identify weak areas for discussion during counselling.

Identify the practical problems and areas that need special attention.

Be prompt for fulfilling the requirements of the programme:

Read instructional guides thoroughly before starting to study, that will help to clear most of the doubts about the programme and save the time.

Develop good study habits to interact with course material regularly.

Write assignments responses in time to get timely feedback.

Make use of available technology and important information by various means and media.

Keep informed with changes in the system from time to time.

Correlate and apply the learning in day-to-day practice to enhance the skills in patient care.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

There has been no research in India to investigate effectiveness of distance learning programme for nursing professionals. Therefore, further investigations need to be carried out to assess the quality of product and processes. The research of the present study has attempted to emphasise on certain key concerns, which may be recommended for further research.

Some of these recommendations are given below.

The present study should be conducted on a large scale and replicated on a large sample.

A study to identify various factors influencing attitude and practices of distance learners may be conducted.
A correlation study may help to identify the relationship between knowledge skills, practices and attitudes of distance learners after completing the programme.

Studies should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of counselling, teleconferencing, audio and video programmes and practical contact sessions, before, during and after the programme.

Studies should be conducted to develop the evaluation models and techniques to evaluate the programme.

Studies should be conducted to develop performance evaluation criteria in terms of knowledge skills and attitude of learners in work place.

A study should be conducted to identify various skills that are required for academic counsellors to make counselling programmes effective.

A study of problems encountered by faculty, learners, counsellors and programme incharges of distance learning programme should be conducted.

A comparative study of distance Vs traditional system should be conducted to assess their effectiveness.

A study on retention and acquisition of knowledge gained regarding the various courses can be considered.

A follow-up study of learners can be conducted to determine the extent to which the learners continue to use the knowledge and practice in work situation.

Relative effectiveness of all courses needs to be studied.

Further investigations need to be conducted on economics of learning packages.

A study on comparison of nursing practice pattern and perceptions of those who studied through distance with those who completed traditional programmes, needs to be conducted.

An Investigation of attitudes of faculty and students involved in distance education should be conducted.