CHAPTER-II

DEVELOPMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN INDIA
2.1 Introduction

Prior to Independence the higher education was restricted to a few beneficiaries in India. This implies that the British rule did not have policy of mass education among the Indian during the period. As soon as the East India Company came to India (1600 AD), all the activities came under their control and they practised the “Down Ward Filtration Theory” in providing education. After independence, the Constitution of India adopted to be a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic, republic and promising all its citizens justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. As a result Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE), free and compulsory primary education has become an integral policy to ensure a democratic welfare state in the country. This was included in Article No.45 under the Directive Principle of State Policy. It says: “The State shall endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for children until they complete the age of fourteen years, which meant that every child whether rich or poor, black or white, caste or creed must get education for making education a birth right for every citizen of India”.1 It has been modified later on. It was the most important policy decision and took over the responsibility of educating each and every citizen, irrespective of his/her caste or creed, social or economic status, motivation or aptitude. This brings a lot of improvements in the education system of India. As a result of it, many educational institutions were established all over the country. It is worth to mention here the number of institutions for higher education before and after independence in India separately for discussing the improvement and development of education after independence. Before independence i.e. upto independence there was only 19 universities and 635 colleges. At present, there are 306 university level institutions in India, including 18 Central Universities.

186 state universities, 5 institutions established under state legislative act, 89 Deemed Universities, 13 institutions of national importance.2

Even though, having many educational institutions for higher education in the independent India, there were some sections of people who could not get education through the formal education due to various reasons. For giving facility to continue their education, Evening and Night Colleges were introduced. Later on came the ideas of Correspondence Course and Distance Education in the form of the democratization of education, to improve the deficiencies. In India distance education has been provided in two levels of education: school level and tertiary level of education. School level distance education is conducted by the National Institute Open Schooling (NIOS) and tertiary level of education has been provided by two categories of institutions i.e. (i) Universities (Conventional Universities) by opening a directorate for distance education emphasizing on correspondence course and (ii) establishing purely distance universities i.e., Open Universities. The study gives main emphasis to the distance education provided by Open Universities for higher education but a brief highlight of the NIOS is also given here.

2.1.1 National Institute of Open School

In India, correspondence education at the school level was started in 1965 when Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) recommended such courses with the objective of improving the academic standards of secondary education of Madhya Pradesh. It was the first state board in India to start correspondence course. The Patrachar Vidyalaya established in 1968 at Delhi was the next correspondence course at school level. Open school, Delhi was started in

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1979 in order to provide Distance Education to school dropouts. In 1989, the open school was upgraded as National Open School (NOS) and latter in the year 2002 it was renamed as National Institute of Open Schooling (N.I.O.S.).

N.I.O.S. is an autonomous organisation set-up by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, to provide education to those who have missed the opportunities to complete the schooling. N.I.O.S. operates through the network of 11 (eleven) Regional Centres. The admission is conducted through the Accredited Institutes (AI) commonly known as study centre. There is no upper age limit for admission. However, the minimum age for enrolment to secondary course is 14 years and senior secondary course is 15 years.

N.I.O.S. offers various types of academic, vocational and life enrichment courses and programmes from primary to pre-degree level. They are as follows:³

a] Open Basic Education (OBE) Programme: It is equivalent to Elementary Education programme of the formal education system. It offers to through the three levels – (i) A levels (equivalent to Class-III, (ii) B levels (equivalent to Class-V) and (iii) C levels (equivalent to Class VIII);

b] Academic Programme: N.I.O.S. offers the secondary and senior secondary level academic courses. Secondary course equivalent to the X standard and senior secondary equivalent to the Class XII standard.

c] Vocation Education courses;

d] Life Enrichment Programme on Paripurna Mahila (Women Empowerment) Yog, Bharatiya culture and Heritage and Jan Swasthya (Community Health).

³N.I.O.S. Prospectus 2005-2006, p. 3.
N.I.O.S. offers its courses mainly in Hindi, English and Urdu medium. Besides these three mediums, it offers courses in Telegu, Gujarati, Malayalam and Marathi at the Secondary level. It operates through the network of 11 (eleven) Regional Centres as stated above and 1,411 study centres in the states and union territories of India. Table 2.1 shows the Regional Centres and the number of Study Centres under their jurisdiction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Name of Regional Centre</th>
<th>No. of Study Centre</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Allahabad</td>
<td>135</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Delhi Zone I</td>
<td>175</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Delhi Zone II</td>
<td>280</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Guwahati</td>
<td>111</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Jaipur</td>
<td>060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Kochi</td>
<td>050</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Kolkata</td>
<td>099</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>094</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Pune</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1411</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The instructional process of N.I.O.S. comprises of studying self-instructional printed materials (which is sent to the students through Accredited Institutions (AI). These printed materials are supported by the audio and video cassettes. N.I.O.S. produces several audio and video programmes of academic, vocational and general nature to supplement the study material. The video programmes are being telecasted nation wide on Doordarshan (DD) every Friday from 05.02 a.m. to 05.25 a.m., and on the Educational Channel, Gyan Darshan.
everyday from 6.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. N.I.O.S. audio programmes are broadcasted on F.M. channel – Gyan Vani at 105.6 MHz every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 8.30 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. and repeat broadcast from 4.30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. Some of the deserving NIOS students are taking up correspondence courses. Personal contact programmes also conduct at the AI, in which face to face contact classes is organised generally on weekends and holidays. Every subject has to conduct at least 30 contact classes. During the course of study the students have to attend the tutor marked assignments.

2.2 Correspondence Courses for Higher Education

In India, the term distance education was unknown till the middle of the twentieth century, although it had existed since the time postal service became popular. In fact, with the beginning of the postal service, people started sending message or advise to his/her children living far away. So there is no doubt to say that it is education from distance place. The letter written by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru to his daughter, Indira Priyadarshini (Indira Gandhi, the First Lady Prime Minister of India) from Naini Jail in 1930 can be cited as the first known example of Distance Education in India through correspondence.

In India, Distance Education started in the form of correspondence courses in the field of higher education. During fifties, the demand for higher education increased rapidly. This increase in demand naturally resulted in the expansion of educational facilities through plan endeavour. In this regard, the Planning Commission spelt out its strategy by stating that “…in addition to the provision in this for expansion of facilities for higher education, proposals for

\footnote{Ibid., p. 11.}
evening colleges, correspondence courses and the award of external degree are at present under consideration.” On the basis of these observations, proposals relating to correspondence courses were placed before the CABE, the highest educational policy making body. The CABE in its 28th meeting held in New Delhi on January 16-17, 1961 accepted the following resolution, “for the correspondence courses, the Board suggested further detailed studies lay a small committee before a firm decision could be taken.” Accordingly, the Ministry of Education appointed an Expert Committee in March 1961 under the Chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari, the then Chairman, UGC along with 10 members from different organizations like UGC, Ministry of Education and Universities of India. The Committee made a number of significant recommendations with regard to nature of courses, scope, instructional processes, course development, use of media, students’ fee etc. They are as below:

1) Correspondence courses leading to a degree or equivalent qualifications should be administered by Universities only.

2) Correspondence courses should be confined to a first University degree.

3) For part of the course, there should be personal contact between the teacher and the taught, “Contact” classes being organized on a tutorial in preference to a lecture basis.

4) To maintain educational standards it is necessary to associate top-ranking scholars and teachers with the preparation of courses and the selection of text books. Some arrangement should be made to organize work in a manner which would ensure continuing improvement in the quality of work.

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v] The correspondence course is susceptible of use in both Science and Humanities. However, in view of organizational difficulties, the courses be started only in the faculties of Arts and Commerce, but Science courses should be incorporated as early as possible.

vi] For a first degree, correspondence courses should normally take longer than a degree at a regular college, say four years instead of the usual three. Outstanding students may however, be able to compress this into a period of three years. Flexibility in all matters relating to the application of the system to varying needs is strongly recommended.

vii] Fees for students applying for these courses should be reasonably high in the first year but should be progressively lowered in the second and third year and perhaps, if this is possible, be eliminated altogether in the fourth year.

viii] Two supplementary aids, viz. (a) refresher courses and (b) use of audio and television are recommended in order to raise the standards in spoken language and to correct a too much of reliance on the written word.

ix] Correspondence courses should be seen in the first instance by one University i.e., the University of Delhi and the subjects to be included in the course as well as the details of administrations should be suggested by the working committee of the University of Delhi.

x] It is important to ensure that the scheme in administered so as to achieve economy. This will be possible by virtue of the fact that many items of expenditure incurred at regular colleges can be eliminated under the correspondence system, and also if an adequate number of students participate in it, it would be possible to reap the benefits of large scale organizations.

2.3 Creation of Correspondence Course at Delhi University

As per suggestions of the working committee, correspondence courses got introduced at the Delhi University in 1962 for the first time in the country as a pilot project and there established the Directorate of Correspondence Courses
(later renamed as School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education). Immediately, the University of Delhi appointed a sub-committee to prepare a programme of action for correspondence courses. On the basis of recommendations made by this working committee, it was decided that the courses should be restricted, in the first instance to English, Modern Indian Languages, Mathematics, Economics, Political Science, History and Commerce. The syllabus was also same with the regular Colleges of Delhi University. Thus, correspondence course is treated as the carbon copy of formal education. It is provided by the conventional Universities and giving emphasis on part time or private study.

2.3.1 Objectives of Correspondence Course

The objectives of Correspondence Course were mentioned while inaugurating these courses by Dr. K.L. Shrimali, the then Union Minister of Education. They were as follows:8

i] To provide an efficient and less expensive method of educational institution at a higher level in the context of national development of India.

ii] To provide facilities to pursue higher education to all qualified and willing persons who had failed to join regular University Courses due to personal and economic reasons or because of their inability get admission to a regular college, and

iii] To provide opportunities of academic pursuits to educational citizens through correspondence institution without disturbing their present employment.

2.4 View of Education Commission (1964-66) and National Education Policy, 1968 on Distance Education

Just after the correspondence courses were instituted, the Delhi University took place a very important role of development in the field of education. The Education Commission popularly known as the Kothari Commission, was appointed by the Government of India in 1964 to advise the Government on a national pattern of education and on general principles and policies for the development of education at all stages in all aspects. The commission submitted its report in 1966 with the recommendation about the reconstruction of education in India. These recommendations became the major basis of the National Policy on Education formulated in 1968 and later on also in 1986.

The Education Commission (1964-66) had supported the idea of correspondence courses. According to this Commission,9 "one solution to this is to keep full-time seats strictly limited on the basis of resources available and to institute correspondence courses, part-time courses, evening courses etc., for those who aspire for a University degree but are not able to get admission to the regular courses. The commission was optimistic about the qualitative and quantitative development of correspondence courses. As per its recommendation the opportunities for part-time education through programmes like evening colleges, and for own-time education through programmes like correspondence courses, should be extended as widely as possible and further that courses – science and technology (either at degree or diploma level) should also be provided for. The Commission saw these as concrete ways to reduce the capital costs to a substantial extent especially as enrolments continued to grow at a fast pace."

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While visualizing a greater role of correspondence courses in technical education, the Commission mention the experiences of countries like Australia, United States and Russia, in respect of correspondence courses for vocational and technical training programmes like book keeping or accountancy which required no practical workshop training and for which contact periods with a teacher could be arranged during vacations. However, for areas requiring workshops and laboratory training, arrangements could be made for institution being kept open during the week-ends and vacations. The Commission, thus, recommended that an immediate beginning should be made to develop a wide range of vocational and technical education through correspondence courses. It was stressed, however, that before this medium could be adopted extensively, very careful preparation and testing would have to be undertaken.\(^{10}\)

The Education Commission expressed the view that Indian University had to shoulder the responsibility in the social and educational development. It recommended that they should develop the programmes of correspondence courses. For concretizing the correspondence courses, the education commission made the following recommendations:\(^{11}\)

i] Students taking correspondence courses should be provided opportunities to meet the teachers occasionally, they should be given the status of recognized students, and, where possible, they should be attached to some colleges in order to enable them to make use of the library and other facilities.

ii] Correspondence courses should be supported by well-coordinated radio and television programmes.

\(^{10}\) Ibid., pp. 705-706

\(^{11}\) Ibid., pp. 797-800
Correspondence courses should not be confined to preparing students for the University degrees; these should also provide agricultural, industrial and other workers such as special courses of instruction as would help them improve their productivity.

Correspondence courses should also be made available for those who desire to enrich their lives by studying subjects of cultural and aesthetic value.

Correspondence courses should be developed for teachers in schools to keep them abreast with new knowledge as well as with new methods and techniques of teaching.

The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with other Ministries, should establish a National Council of Home Studies for the purpose of accreditation and evaluation of agencies which provide correspondence courses. This council could undertake identification of areas in which different types of correspondence courses would be of benefit as well as the promotion of the creation of such courses through appropriate agencies and also by concluding evaluation and research.

Having discussed the report of the Commission a general consensus emerged on major directions for educational reconstruction. One of the outcomes was that in 1967, four Regional College of Education (RCE) [now renamed as Regional Institute of Education (RIE)] introduced correspondence courses under the NCERT. Thereafter, a very rapid expansion of correspondence courses was witnessed in Indian Universities. A list of Indian Universities is given in Appendix-D where a Directorate of Correspondence Courses was set-up with the year of establishment. The general acceptability of correspondence courses was adequately reflected in the National Policy on Education, 1968 which stated that:12

Part-time education and correspondence course should be developed on a large scale at the University stage such facilities should also be developed for secondary schools students, for teachers and for agricultural, industrial and other workers. Education through part-time and correspondence courses should be given the same status as full-time education. Such facilities will smoothen transition from school to work, promote the cause of education and provide opportunities to the large number of people who have the desire to educate themselves further and cannot do so on full-time basis.

2.5 UGC Guidelines for Introducing Distance Education in India

The UGC was established in 1956 to take all such steps as it may think fit for the promotion and coordination of university education and for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in universities. The UGC serves as a coordinating body between the Union and State Governments and the institution of higher learning. It also acts as an advisory body to these governments and institutions on issues relating to higher education. In 1967 UGC appointed a Committee to streamline the introduction of correspondence course in India. For studying the nature of correspondence education, UGC sent three delegations to Russia. The first delegation was sent in March-April 1967. The delegation consisted of: (1) Shri N.D. Sundaravaidelu, Joint Educational Advisor, (2) Dr. M.S. Patel, Faculty of Education and Psychology, M.S. University of Baroda and (3) Dr. G. Chaurasia, Officer on Special Duty, NCERT. They were sent to study the nature of education to Russia. After this, second and third delegations were also sent to Russia for more detailed study subsequently in the year 1968 and 1971. The second delegation consisted of: (1) M.M. Beg, Principal, School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education, University of Delhi and (2) Dr. S.C. Goel, Education Officer, UGC, New Delhi. The third delegation consisting of two members, (1) Prof. Bakhshish Singh, Director Correspondence Courses, Punjabi University, Patiala and (2) Dr.
M.L. Mishra, Director, Correspondence Courses, Rajasthan University, Jaipur visited to Russia in 1971. On the basis of their observation, UGC made some guidelines for the qualitative improvement of correspondence course in India. But in 1983 the guideline was again modified on the following areas such as the objective of distance education, nature of courses, norms for admission, rules for establishing distance education institution, preparation of reading materials, dispatch of reading materials, students' response sheets, study centre, personal contact programmes, library services, staff management etc. As per guidelines of the UGC, Distance Education Course aims at providing educational opportunities to:

i) Student who had to discontinue their formal education owing to pecuniary and other circumstances;

ii) Students in geographically remote areas;

iii) Students who had to discontinue education because of lack of aptitude and motivation, but who may later on become motivated;

iv) Students who cannot find a seat or do not wish to join a regular college or University department, although they have the necessary qualification to pursue higher education;

v) Individuals who look upon education on a life-time activity and may either like to refresh their knowledge in an existing discipline or acquire knowledge in new areas;

vi) In-service persons.

The UGC encouraged the starting of correspondence courses in many states with a view to maintaining high standards. The UGC prescribed the following guidelines for starting these courses:

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13 University Grants Commission, *Guidelines for Introduction of Distance Education Courses* Recommended by UGC, 1983.

14 IGNOU Study Materials, *Readings in Distance Education*, p.6
i] Ordinarily correspondence courses at the undergraduate level should be introduced by only one University in a state except when a University proposes to introduce correspondence courses in a new faculty at the under-graduate level or when the University already offering correspondence courses reached the Pitrum size of enrolment, namely, 10,000 or for other valid reasons;

ii] Correspondence courses should be started only by the Universities which have well-established teaching departments. The academic responsibility for the contents of the correspondence courses in any given subject and its standards must be assumed by the concerned subject department of the University;

iii] It should be compulsory for every student enrolled in correspondence courses to return a certain number of response sheets, say 20 every year, suitably spread over various subjects;

iv] High priority should be given to the setting-up of study centres in areas where there is a concentration of students;

v] The provision of contact programmes should be an essential feature of correspondence course programmes in order that the students may have an opportunity to have benefits of active contact with teachers through lectures, seminars and other forms of discussion;

vi] Grants from the UGC for correspondence courses should be earmarked for such items as contact programmes, study centres, preparation of lessons. Core staff and library facilities, the ceiling for such grants from the commission being Rupees one lakh per annum per subjects;

vi] Correspondence courses at the post-graduate level should be started only in those Universities which have had the experience of running under graduate courses for at least three years.

The committee considered a proposal for setting up of National Institute of Correspondence Courses (NICC). It was recommended by the UGC at its meeting held on December 6, 1972 and constituted a Planning Committee under the
Chairmanship of Rais Ahmed for working out the necessary details. The Planning Committee's members consist of:

i] Prof. M.V. Mathur, Director, Asian Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi.

ii] Prof. J.N. Kapur, Vice Chancellor, Meerut University.

iii] Prof. Bakhshish Singh, Director, Directorate of Correspondence Courses, Punjabi University, Patiala.

iv] Shri D.V. Urs, Director, Institute of Correspondence Course, University of Mysore.

v] Dr. P.C. Mukherjee, Principal, Presidency College, Calcutta.

The members of the committee met on April 5, 1973 to formulate the aims and objectives of the National Institute of Correspondence Courses. However, no further meeting of the Planning Committee was held thereafter. Besides the idea of setting up the NICC, other ideas relating to correspondence education were also discussed at national level and sometimes in collaboration with international organizations. Now, correspondence course has been made an integral part of distance education.

2.6 Distance Education Provided by the Open Universities

The Ministry of Education and Social Welfare organised a seminar on Open University in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, UGC and the Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO in December 1970. The seminar recommended the establishment of an Open University in India on experimental basis. The Open University was conceived or designed as a quality institution with the object of making higher
education available to those who have the capacity and motivation for it but are unable to avail to the existing facilities for the same. Moreover, the seminar made several recommendations relating to the organization, finances and modes of functioning of the Open University. It also recommended the constitution of a committee to work out the details of the Open University in India.\textsuperscript{15}

After this the Indian University Association for Continuing Education organized a National Seminar on Correspondence Courses in October, 1972 in collaboration with the Mysore University. It also commended the old proposal of the UGC to set-up a National Institute of Correspondence Courses.

After discussing the different view points about the correspondence course, it came to the conclusion that every organization, commission, committee etc. wanted to improve the correspondence courses in the form of National Institute of Correspondence Course, Council of Correspondence Course or an Open University.

2.7 Idea of an Open University and the Parthasarathy Committee

As the recommendation of the Seminar on Open University in 1970, the Government of India appointed a Working Group on Open University in 1974 under the Chairmanship of G. Parthasarathi, the then Vice-Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). The members of the working group consist of:

i] Shri G. Parthasarathy, Vice Chancellor, JNU, New Delhi.
ii] Prof. Satish Chandra, Vice-Chairman, UGC, New Delhi.
iii] Prof. V.P. Dutt, Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Delhi, Delhi.
iv] Prof. Moonis Raza, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

v) Prof. R.C. Malhotra, Vice-Chancellor, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.

vi) Prof. S.V.C. Aiza, Director, NCERT, New Delhi.

vii) Shri P.C. Chatterjee, Director General, All India Radio, New Delhi.

viii) Shri R.L. Chhabra, Secretary, UGC, New Delhi.

ix) Shri R.S. Chitkara, Director, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, New Delhi.

The group had studied the pattern of the UKOU and discussed the possibility of introducing a National Open University (NOU) in India. The Committee strongly favoured the introducing of a NOU and submitted its report in 1976. The group observed that.\(^{16}\)

In a situation of this type, with the expansion of enrolments in higher education and to continue at a terrific pace where available resources in terms of men and money are limited, one obvious solution, if proper standards are to be maintained and the demand for higher education for different section of the people is to be met, is to adopt the Open University system with its provision of higher education on a part-time or own time basis. The group therefore, recommends that the Government of India establish, as early as possible, an Open University, it should have jurisdiction over the entire country so that when it is fully developed, any student, even in the remotest corner of the country can have access to its instruction and degrees.

The committee gave pressure on the existing new education system by mentioning the essential to start an Open University. It not only to met the demand but also to give quality education. So, the Government of India accepted the report submitted by the committee and a draft bill was also prepared.

Under such situation, the Government of West Bengal also announced its intention to start one Open University in 1982. However, the Government of

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Andhra Pradesh has taken the initiative to start Open University earlier than other. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, (BRAOU), the former Andhra Pradesh Open University (APOU), was inaugurated by the former President of India, Gyani Jail Singh on 26th August, 1982 and Prof. G. Ram Reddy was appointed as its Vice-Chancellor on 18th November, 1982 in Hyderabad. It got the credit of the first Open University at state level in India. It was established through an Act of the Legislature in August 1982.

The Government of India realised the importance of DE and its utility in emerging Indian society. As a result of it the government decided to set up an Open University at the national level. Accordingly, the Government of India introduced “The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) Bill” in 1985 and it was passed by both the Houses of Parliament. Thus, IGNOU came into existence on 20th September 1985, in New Delhi at Maidan Garhi under an Act of Parliament. It is the Central University and the lone Central University under the distance education.

Up to now there are 10 (ten) Open Universities in India functioning at the state as well as national level. Nine of them are at state level and only one in functioning at national level. A list of these Open Universities is given below with the year of establishment.17

i] Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad (BRAOU) 1982.


iii] Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi, 1985.

iv] Karnataka State Open University, 1996

17 Association of Indian Universities. *Handbook on Distance Education*, New Delhi, 2004, p. v
vii] Nalanda Open University, 1987
vii] Netaji Subhas Open University, 1997
ix] Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University, 1987
x] Yashwant Rao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, 1989

For studying the nature, organizational structure, course offered etc. of the Open University, the only National Open University in the country i.e., IGNOU is selected. A brief highlight about IGNOU is given here because, now a days, in India, IGNOU is taking a leading role in the field of distance education. Therefore, it spreads successfully right from the very beginning to all the regions of India. A distance education council has been form at IGNOU and this council has been entrusted with the work of determination of the standard of open Universities all over the India. Besides these, it tries to provide new courses according to needs and requirements of the people as well as society itself. Keeping in view the topic, it is essential to study the role of IGNOU in distance education because in the NER, at present distance education courses are dominated by the network of IGNOU. The development of its programme in the NER is discussed in the next chapter. Before this it is essential to understand the role of IGNOU in distance education programmes of India.

2.8 The Role of IGNOU in Distance Education

IGNOU was established in September 1985 by an Act of Parliament as stated above to democratize higher education. The aim was to provide cost effective quality education to a large section of our population including those living in remote and far flung areas. Its organisational network spreads throughout
the country. It has been given the responsibility to promote the Open University and distance education. The objectives of this university as mentioned in the IGNOU Act, 1985 is as follows:\(^{18}\)

The Objectives of the University shall be to advance and disseminate learning and knowledge by a diversity of means, including the use of any communication technology, to provide opportunities for higher education to large segment of the population and to promote the educational well-being of the community generally, to encourage the open university and distance education system in the educational pattern of the country and to coordinate and determine the standard in such system.

The other objectives of this university refer to relating education to the needs of the employment and national building activities, to provide facilities to people, to upgrade their knowledge and skills, to develop non-formal education as complementary to the system to promote national integration and to contribute for the integrated development of human personality through its activities and programmes.\(^{19}\)

An important feature of the IGNOU is its jurisdiction. It covers the entire Union of India – Urban and Rural and Plains and Hilly areas. It organisational network spreads not only throughout the country but also to abroad. The Act provides for the establishment of study centre in different areas of the country. To coordinate and supervise the study centres there has the provision of Regional Centres. It has 48 Regional Centres, 6 sub-Regional Centres, 1200 Study Centres at present.

\(^{18}\) Government of India, Ministry of Education. *IGNOU Act 1985 and Status of the University*. New Delhi, 1985

\(^{19}\) *Ibid.*
Till date IGNOU has offered 101 academic programme and 900 courses. IGNOU develops the self-instructional print materials and it has been supplemented by multi-media approach and shares the same with other open distance learning institutions to ensure standard, teaching and learning. It has the responsibility to act as the University to impart education and perform the role of an apex body in the country to promote, coordinate and maintain the standard of distance education system in the country. The Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) is a resource centre of academic training programmes in India and abroad. Similarly, the electronic media production centre is responsible for media production, education, training and networking and Inter-University Consortium for Technology Enable Education is responsible for inter-active multimedia production, on line learning and training, web-based networking education and training, creation of online repositories and web-based technology.

IGNOU operates through school of studies. Each school is headed by a Director who arranges to plan, supervise, develop and organise its academic programmes. There are nine Schools of Studies. The academic programmes of this University leading to Certificates, Diplomas, Undergraduate Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas, Master’s Degree and Doctoral Degrees.

The University has two admission sessions i.e. in January and July and evaluation is also done twice in a year i.e. in December and June. IGNOU has a three tier system of evaluation: (i) self assessment exercises within each unit of study (ii) continuous evaluation through Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA) and Computer Marked Assignment (CMA) (iii) the Term End Examinations. IGNOU uses the “grading” system for evaluation on a five point scale using letter grade A,
B, C, D, E. The notional correlation of the letter grades are: A = Excellent, B = Very Good, C = Good, D = Average, and E = Unsatisfactory.

There is also provision for the establishment of a distance university in all states of India as per stipulation of POA 1992. The distance education council formed at IGNOU for the determination of standards of distance education programme in India will provide guideline for the establishment of distance universities. But unfortunately not a single distance university has so far been established in the NER of India even though distance education is having great significance for democratization of higher education in the 21st Century using the opportunities provided by the rapidly expanding scope of information and communication technology. However, recently, there is a proposal of establishment of Distance University at Wakha district of Nagaland.