Chapter 6
Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion

Distance education, the world over, has been possible due to not only innovations in the field of instructional design or support service including preparation of self instructional print materials, but also due to developments in the use of the non-print electronic media such as audio - video cassettes, radio and television broadcasts, computer assisted learning, teletext, teleconferencing, internet, e-mail assisted learning, and other student support systems.

The new problem facing educationalists is the confusion that, which teaching methods and channels of communication have to be used, in order to achieve a given set of educational objectives. This question does not simply relate to new ways of teaching traditional subjects. It relates to different kinds of learners, different forms of access to education and different study patterns. The use of distance teaching methods is to facilitate home-based part-time study. It brings into consideration all those students who would not, or could not, attend as full time learners. So choice of distance education method is an important job done by any distance education institution. Periodical studies and modifications are necessary in the mode of providing education and support services to the beneficiaries.
6.1 Major findings of the study

The major findings evolved through the study are classified. Socio-demographic profile of learners, Admission procedures of IGNOU and courses studied by the learners, Student support services provided by IGNOU, Opinion of learners about student support services, Some general opinions about IGNOU courses, View of counsellors about student support services, Opinion of regional centre staff about student support services, Opinion of study centre staff about student support services, Observations of study centre co-ordinators and assistant co-ordinators.

Socio-demographic profile of learner respondents.

© The gender analysis showed that majority of the learner respondents (59.17%) were males.
© Majority of the learner respondents (53.33%) were from urban area.
© Religion wise analysis showed that 68.33 percent learners were from Hindu community. Only 1.67 percent learners were from scheduled caste and there were no respondents from scheduled tribes.
© The analysis of the occupational status showed that 67.5 percent learners were employed either in Government or private sector and only 14.58 percent were from unemployed group.
© Majority of the learner respondents were degree holders (63.75%) and the learners from technically qualified group is low (11.67%)

Admission procedures and courses studied by the learners.

• 21.25 Percent of learner respondents had studied more than one course from IGNOU

© Major reasons stated by the learners to join IGNOU courses were to obtain a new job (37.92%) and upgrading the skill (34.58%) According to 19.58 percent learners, the course was useful for their present job.
Majority of the learners remarked (86.25%) that the admission procedures of the IGNOU course were easy. One of the major difficulties expressed by the learners (30.30%) in the admission procedure was the lack of adequate support from the study centre staff to select suitable courses according to their qualifications, need and experience.

Student support services provided by IGNOU.
There are two types of support services provided by IGNOU for their learners.

a) Academic support services:

b) Non - academic support services
Distribution of Study Materials, Letter responses, Voice Mail, Scheduling and Monitoring of counselling, Library Facilities, Telephone enquiry, Classroom facilities, Work Centres, Distance learning facilitator, Special Centre, Electronic equipments like LCD and OHP

Opinion of learners about student support services of IGNOU
The student support service system provided by IGNOU were classified in to three categories - support services through study materials, services and facilities. The study materials provided by IGNOU were again classified in to electronic study materials and print study materials.
Opinion of learners about electronic study materials of IGNOU:

- Majority of the learners could not use the electronics study materials like audio cassettes (74.67%) video cassettes (76.25%) compact disc (77.50%) and computer (66.67%) for their studies.
- Further analysis showed that the learners were not aware of electronic study materials (audio-cassette 17.50 percent, video-cassette 22.50 percent, compact disc 17.50 percent, computer 21.67 percent) at the study centres.
- The electronic study materials were not distributed evenly for all the learners of various IGNOU courses.
- The benefit analysis showed that all the participants who had used the electronic study materials were not benefitted by the same. (audio-cassette 36.76 percent, video-cassette 21.05 percent, compact disc 59.26 percent, computer 10 percent)
- Computer and compact disc were most beneficial electronic study materials. (Computer 90 percent and compact disc 90.74 percent)
- Coursewise comparison of the electronic study materials showed that the quality of these study materials were also not equally good. The ‘F’ test value proved this.

Opinion of learners about print materials

- All the print study materials of IGNOU were either good or satisfactory. The presentation was good according to 97.92 percent, content was good according to 98.33 percent and clarity was good according to 93.75 percent.
- The self instructional print study materials distributed by IGNOU was good according to majority of the learners. 80.42 percent learners said that they could easily follow the self instructional materials.
- 46.03 percent of the learners emphasised the need for more reference books and multiple copies of text books were needed to be provided to the users through the library.
Opinion of learners about services of IGNOU.

© According to majority of the learners (56.25%) proper pre-entry counselling was not provided by IGNOU for the prospective learners.

® 93.78 percent Learners had expressed good opinion about the induction meeting organised by IGNOU.

@ 94.31 percent of the learners opined that the counselling sessions conducted by IGNOU were good or satisfactory.

® Majority of the counsellors (83.33%) followed lecture method for counselling.

® 76.67 percent counsellors said that the audio visual equipments were not fully used in the counselling sessions.

® 69.58 percent of the learners were not satisfied with the availability of radio broadcasting programmes.

@ 60 percent of the learners were not satisfied with the TV lessons.

@ The telephone enquiry facility of the study centre was also not fully satisfactory due to the incomplete information provided.

® All the doubts raised by the learners in tele-conferencing were not fully clarified by the officials due to lack of time and non availability of information.

® The voice mail system was also not functioning in majority of the study centre.

Opinion of learners about facilities of IGNOU

© 52.50 percent opined that the library facilities at the study centres were poor.

® Absence of trained librarian (30.95%) was one of the major hurdles faced by the study centres and learners.

® There was no book lending facility and majority of the students were not visiting the library regularly.
Lack of adequate reference books (46.03%) in important subjects was another problem faced by the libraries of study centres.

The materials available for preparing the assignments were not sufficient to meet the need of the learners. (50.50%)

The physical facilities were not satisfactory according to 26.19 percent learners. Inadequate classroom facility and small classroom was another problem faced by the study centres. Eventhough there are many classrooms in the host organisations, they did not allow to use the same.

69.31 percent learners opined that the periodicals subscribed were also very few.

General opinion of learners about IGNOU courses

64.58 percent learners opined that the registration formalities of IGNOU courses were easy.

The induction meetings organised by study centres and regional centres were good according to 65 percent of the learners.

59.58 percent learners remarked that the study atmosphere of the study centres was favourable.

67.50 percent believed that the study materials especially print materials distributed by IGNOU were good.

Eventhough the counsellors followed lecture method and did not use audio-visual equipments, the counselling sessions were good according to 56.25 percent learners.

66.67 percent learners were interested to join new courses of IGNOU.

Only 48.75 percent admitted that the teaching - learning process was through new methods.

Only 69.58 percent agreed that they had received the certificates in time.

The staff of the study centres were expected to be more helpful and co-operative.
Views of IGNOU counsellors about student support services

® According to 73.33 percent counsellors the students did not attend the counselling sessions regularly.
® 53.33 percent of counsellors opined that there was no adequate audio-visual equipment for counselling.
® Another problem felt by the counsellors was the non-availability of good reference books (68%).

Views of Regional centre staff about student support services

® 55.56 percent pointed out inadequate funds for administration.
® Majority of the regional centre staff complained that there was lack of co-ordination between study centre, regional centre and headquarters.
® 66.66 percent opined that the inservice training programmes given to the staff were good.
® The information about new courses and the change of rules and regulations were not communicated to the regional centre and study centres in time.

Views of study centre staff about student support services.

® 80 percent of the staff opined that information regarding new courses, change of rules and regulation were not communicated in time from the headquarters and regional centre.
® The problem of non-availability of experienced counsellors was faced by majority of (80%) the study centres.
• 36.67 percent of the study centre staff admitted that the study materials were not distributed in time.
• 41.67 staff remarked that the doubts raised by the students were not fully clarified through tele-conferencing.
• Majority of the staff admitted that there was no sufficient audio-visual equipments in the centre.
66.67% reported that the space for library was also not sufficient.

The responses from regional centre was also poor according to 63.34 percent staff.

70 percent of the study centre staff complained against the inadequate co-ordination between the regional centre and the study centre.

The working condition including salary and allowances of the study centre staff were also not satisfactory.

81.67 percent staff are not satisfied with the salary and allowances.

95 percent staff complained against the lack of job security.

Lack of sufficient staff was another problem stated by the study centre staff, which hindered the learners to carry out their studies effectively.

Views of IGNOU officials about student support services.

The student support service system provided by IGNOU is a unique one.

Multimedia component of teaching-learning process is one of the distinguishing features of IGNOU programmes.

The staff pattern may be increased or redesigned according to the strength of student’s enrolment.

There is delay in answering queries or not answering them at all from.

The problems confronted by the institution in organising student support services.

Eventhough there is an effective monitoring and supervision system in IGNOU, some difficulties in organising student support services have been identified in this study. They are as follows:

Lack of infrastructure facilities

In Kerala the regional centre is functioning in their own building at Kochi. So they do not have much issues related to infrastructure facilities.
like classrooms, seminar halls and space for administrative office etc. But most of the study centres are functioning in the space provided by the host organisations which is not sufficient and congested 26.19 percent learners opined that the libraries in the study centres are functioning in small rooms without a reading room, light and fan facilities. 46.03 learners said there was not enough number of reference books. Even though the host organisations had good library facilities, they did not allow the IGNOU learners to make use of it. 55 percent of study centre staff opined that there was not adequate number of classrooms and 70 percent said that there was no sufficient amenities 76.67% opined that there was not adequate audio-visual equipments for counselling.

Managerial / Administrative problems : 45 percent learners said that there was no sufficient staff in the study centre. 55.55 percent regional centre staff opined that there existed shortage of funds. 95 percent of the study centre staff were not satisfied with their working conditions.

Counselling related issues : 80 percent of the study centre staff said there was non-availability of experienced counsellors. 83.33 percent counsellors followed lecture method for counselling. 53.33 percent counsellors said there was only limited number of audio-visual equipments.

Assignments / Evaluation / Grade card related issues. : The Assignment grade sent to the headquarters were not entered properly and in time. Consequently the publication of results and certification are delayed.

Study material distribution delay : Distribution of study materials and non-availability of other materials at the study centres were another major problem faced by the learners. 30 percent of study centre staff admitted that there was delay in the distribution of study materials.
Letter responses / Communication delay.: 63.34 percent staff complained against the non responses of letters and queries from regional centre and headquarters.

Non-co-operation of host organisations.: The non-co-operation of host organisations affected the functioning of study centres and learning process of the students.

Timely issue of instructions to study centres & regional centre.: 80 percent of the study centre staff opined that the information regarding the new courses was not communicated in time from the regional centre and headquarters.

Certification / credentialling issue: Some statutory universities and employment exchanges have so far not recognised the IGNOU certificates and degrees.

6.2 Suggestions.

Based on the findings of the study the researcher puts forward the following suggestions for the improvement in five areas of student support services of IGNOU.

- Suggestions for improving the functioning of study centre
- Suggestions for improving the counselling programme
- Suggestions for increasing the use of electronic study materials
- Suggestions for improving library facilities

• General suggestions for the improving of student support services.

Suggestions for improving the functioning of study centres:

• Majority of the study centres are functioning in urban area. This may be one of the reasons for low enrolment of learners from rural area.
By utilising the facilities of colleges and NGOs, IGNOU may open new study centres in rural areas.

1. If the staff of the study centres are expected to be more helpful and co-operative, arrange adequate training in the area of pre-entry counselling, administration and public relations.

2. Lack of sufficient staff was another problem faced by the study centres. Appoint sufficient number of full-time staff in relation to the strength of the learners. The existing staff are not satisfied with their working conditions. Steps may be taken to improve the working condition of staff by increasing their salary, allowances, and assuring job security.

3. Lack of infrastructure facilities was another problem faced by the study centres. Before starting new study centres, the host organisations must ensure the minimum pre-requisites such as space for administrative office, spacious room for library and reading room with adequate light and fan, place for listening and viewing audio-video materials and sufficient number of classrooms.

4. Independent and full-time co-ordinators must be appointed, which may be helpful for the smooth functioning of the study centres and to keep a good liaison with the state government and other educational institutions in the locality.

5. Trained staff may be assigned to handle the student queries and letter responses.

6. The changes in rules, regulations, and details of new IGNOU programmes should be intimated to the study centres well in advance.

7. Collection of application and verification of original certificates / degrees may be entrusted with the study centres.

8. A certain percentage of the fees collected through courses may be utilized for the development of infrastructure facilities of the study centres.
Arrange educational seminars occasionally in relevant subjects in association with state government or leading educational institutions. This will be helpful to get more publicity. Model study centres with full audio-video equipments should be established in each state to strengthen the study centre activities.

Suggestions for improving counselling programme:

According to some of the learners proper pre-entry counselling was not provided by IGNOU. To overcome this pre-entry counsellors may be appointed in each study centre. Steps may be taken to ensure the participation of all counsellors in the induction meetings. Training should be given to the counsellors on evaluation and how to assess and comment on assignments which motivate the students to continue their studies.

- Training should be given to counsellors in operating audio-visual equipments
- Encourage the counsellors to use audio-visual equipments and electronic study materials for counselling.
- Instead of lecture method conduct more inter-active sessions.

Suggestions for increasing the use of electronic study materials

- The study showed that majority of the participants were neither used to the electronic study material nor aware of its availability.
- Exhibit the course-wise list of electronic study materials available in each study centre. The counsellors have to explain the content of the study materials in counselling sessions.
- Steps may be taken to study the content and quality of available electronic study materials. Modify the same according to the needs of the learners.
- Broadcasting / Telecasting of radio / TV programmes will be more beneficial if it is with the help of local FM transmission centres and through local cable TV. channels.
© The time of interaction between the learners and the officials through tele-conferencing must be increased which will definitely help in the clarifications of doubts

® Procure adequate number of audio-visual equipments and give adequate training to the counsellors to use it.

Suggestion for Improving the library facilities: A good and systematic library should be maintained in all study centres. Placement of trained librarians, collection of reference books in all subjects, multiple copies of important books, systematic cataloguing and functioning of the library in a spacious room are some of the suggestions for improving the libraries. Provisions should be made for the IGNOU students to use other libraries in their locality at concessional rates.

General suggestions for improving the student support services: Steps may be taken to attract the female learners by starting ‘women oriented courses’ in the field of health, tourism, basic computer programmes and banking etc. Fee concessions and scholarships may be provided to the deserving female candidates. Give fee concessions to the scheduled caste and scheduled Tribe candidates. The Study showed that majority of the participants were degree holders. To attract +2 students start job oriented new certificate / diploma courses.

For giving more publicity to the IGNOU programmes, information brochures with full course details and admission procedures may be printed and distributed at the local level. Start more skill development / upgradation courses for professionally / technically qualified persons. Timely distribution of print study materials must be ensured. The induction meeting should be arranged course-wise.
Reciprocal recognition of certificates and degrees between IGNOU and statutory universities and accreditation by Public service commission, employment exchanges and other recruiting agencies must be ensured. Steps may be taken to start career placement units in all study centres with the help of local employment exchanges and university guidance bureau. This will help to attract more learners.

6.3 Suggestions for further research
1. Use and effectiveness of electronic study materials of IGNOU
2. Attitude of counsellors and staff towards IGNOU programmes
3. Functioning and working of study centres and regional centres
4. Effectiveness of Gyanavani and Gyanadarsan programmes
5. Tele-conferencing in distance education programmes - IGNOU experience.
6. Job satisfaction affecting IGNOU counsellors
7. Motivational factors affecting learners of IGNOU courses

6.4 Conclusion.

The establishment of IGNOU was an important milestone in the development of higher education of the country. To provide innovative and high quality education to large number of people was the major aim of this university. During the last twenty years of its functioning the university has had a positive impact on the rest of the educational system in the country. This university has also proved that distance education is a viable and effective alternative to the traditional university system which is being costly and unreachable to many. Quality education for all through open and distance learning mode is the motto of IGNOU and it being popularised all the world over.
Now the university provides innovative and higher quality education related to the needs of employment and nation building activities and provide facilities to the people to upgrade their knowledge and skills. Flexibility is the hallmark of IGNOU and the requisite flexibility has been provided to enable students to study at their own pace and time. This study also showed that the university is flexible with regard to entry regulations, to enable different sections of the community like working people, housewives and other disadvantaged groups. The strength of the university identified include:

Well established systematic intensive counselling throughout the course period using audio-visual equipments. The self instructional materials prepared and distributed by IGNOU are rated highly by learners and counsellors. By using multi-media packages in the teaching - learning process the university created and developed interest among learners. The courses helped to develop skill of self - learning, which is liked by the senior, aged and busy learners. The system is administered and controlled by a limited number of staff which helped to reduce administrative cost. Since the university uses infrastructure facilities of host institutions it didn’t have to spend huge amount of money for maintenance and management. By utilising the services of the experienced and retired persons the university could reduce their administrative expenses and fruitfully utilise the spare time and experience of this group and, The long time frame given to the learners for completing a specific course is an added advantage.

This study also intended to present a realistic picture of the system which is not yet fully responsive to the requirements of the learners. One of the major attractions of IGNOU distance education programme is using of multimedia packages to the teaching - learning process. But to what extent it has been successful is the question. Many students have not had access
to the electronic media study materials and the university failed to distribute it evenly. Some of the drawbacks find out in this study are the following.

It was observed that lecture method instead of counselling was used by the counsellors. Lack of experienced counsellors also was felt in some new courses. Though print study materials prepared by IGNOU were of high quality there was delay in their distribution. Delay in the entry of 'grades' in the grade cards by head quarters created problems in declaring the final results and receipt of certificates. The problem of co-ordination between study centres, regional centre and head quarters caused difficulties to the learners. Limitations of the library facilities and the absence of trained librarian was another drawback. Less enrolment of women, SC and ST and backward classes also is noted.

The major advantage of this open university is that it is cost effective, both to the students and the organisers. Ample opportunities for part-time education was also obtained, which is more flexible and under relaxed conditions. A student can gainfully be employed during the major part of the day and learn according to his convenience. The government is also able to give the benefits of higher education to a large number of people at the same cost. The vast coverage of students by IGNOU makes it a unique system. The IGNOU offers opportunities to provide higher education to those who desire to pursue higher studies but are compelled to take up employment at a very early stage.

Some of the difficulties faced by the university in implementing the programme are also worth mentioning. Much dependence on host institutions for the conduct of study centres has placed several impediments to the organisers and learners. The introduction of local self financing institutions was also a threat to this university. Non-recognition of IGNOU certificates
degrees by some statutory universities was another problem faced by the learners. The medium of instruction being English, there is a wide spread demand for conducting the courses in the local languages also, which involves a major policy change.

One of the most creditable advantage of IGNOU is that it has been able to do a commendable job, by taking education to the doorsteps of the people. The immense and increasing response for IGNOU courses is itself a positive sign of how distance learning has been well accepted and have gained popularity within the country and abroad, with in a short span of time.