CHAPTER-III

EXISTING MARKETING PRACTICES OF STUDY UNITS
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In this chapter an attempt has been made to critically analyse the existing marketing practices adopted by the Distance Education Institutes of Alagappa, Annamalai, Madurai Kamaraj Universities, University of Madras and Tamil Nadu Open University.

3.1 BRIEF PROFILE OF THE STUDY UNITS

Alagappa University, Karaikudi

The Alagappa University, is an affiliating type university established in 1985 by an Act of State Legislature. The university is offering academic programmes both under regular and distance education modes. The Directorate of Distance Education of this university was established in 1992. In 2007-08, it offered 45 academic programmes at UG, PG, PG Diploma and Certificate levels. The cumulative enrolment during the year 2006-07 was 1.2 lakhs. It had 174 Study Centres in India and 6 Centres at abroad during the period of study.

Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar

The Annamalai University, is an unitary type university established in 1929. The university is offering academic programmes both under regular and distance education modes. The Directorate of Distance Education of this university was established in 1979. In 2007-08, it offered 255 academic programmes at UG, PG, PG Diploma, Diploma and Certificate levels. The cumulative enrolment during the year 2006-07 was 2.5 lakhs. It had 76 Study Centres in India during the period of study.
**Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai**

The Madurai Kamaraj University, is an affiliating type university established in 1966 by an Act of State Legislature. The university is offering academic programmes both under regular and distance education modes. The Directorate of Distance Education of this university was established in 1971. In 2007-08, it offered 80 academic programmes at UG, PG, PG Diploma, Diploma and Certificate levels. The cumulative enrolment during the year 2006-07 was 1.4 lakhs. It had 27 Information Centres and 16 Admission Centres in Tamil Nadu, 67 Study Centres in other States and 10 Study Centres at abroad during the period of study.

**University of Madras, Chennai**

The University of Madras, is an affiliating type university established in 1857 by an Act of State Legislature. The university is offering academic programmes both under regular and distance education modes. The Institute of Distance Education of this university was established in 1982. In 2007-08, it offered 61 academic programmes at UG, PG, Diploma and Certificate levels. The cumulative enrolment during the year 2006-07 was 1.2 lakhs. It had 30 Admission Centres in Tamil Nadu, 41 Study Centres in other States and 13 Study Centres at abroad during the period of study.

**Tamil Nadu Open University, Chennai**

The Tamil Nadu Open University, is a single mode university established in 2002 by an Act of State Legislature. The university is offering academic programmes through open and distance education modes. In 2007-08, it offered 68 academic programmes at UG, PG, PG Diploma, Diploma and Certificate levels. The cumulative enrolment during the year 2006-07 was 42,000. It had 123 Study Centres in Tamil Nadu only during the period of study.
The success of any services marketing requires an intelligent blending of seven strategic elements of marketing namely, product, price, place, promotion, physical evidence, process and people. The researcher has examined the extent of adoption of these seven elements by the Study Units in marketing their Distance Education Programmes.

3.2 MARKET SEGMENTATION

The adoption of marketing mix elements presupposes identifying the market segments to evolve suitable marketing strategies to each segment. The market segment of distance education comprises of rural, urban, women, adults, dropouts, self-esteem, employed etc.

For instance, a particular segment which would like to acquire a higher qualification for the purpose of 'status' looks for a programme which they could acquire with less effort. A degree in History is a good example that suits such segment. 'Professionals' is yet another segment of learners who would like to acquire specialised knowledge and skill in their chosen area of interest. In this way, the DEIs have to identify different types of academic programmes suited to different segments of learners.

The fulcrum of the distance education programme is the 'learner' and accordingly all the marketing strategies evolved by the study units should necessarily revolve around the learners. This involves identifying the specific educational needs of the target learners and tailoring and delivery of those educational programmes suited to their satisfaction. Further, the learning materials, the media to be adopted, the face to face teaching, must all be relevant to the needs of the intended target learners. Hence an efficient system of 'learner need assessment' is required for the success of any programme.
In short, the learner-oriented marketing strategy involves identifying the right type of educational programmes, offered at right price, through effective delivery mechanisms, with right promotional tools, appropriate physical evidence, right support services and process. In other words, all activities and strategies of DEIs must ultimately aim at satisfying the learners.

When this aspect was analysed in relation to the study units, it was found that all the study units identify the segments and decide on the academic programmes to be offered. But all the study units do not try to aim at all the segments, but only select those segments which could give them potential enrolment and revenue. Seldom, the study units apply the social obligations in offering their programmes.

One aspect which is conspicuously absent in almost all study units is the learner oriented marketing approach, though the study units claim that they provide required services to the learners, which has been discussed in the separate chapter on Learner’s Opinion on the Study Units.

The researcher has made further analysis of all the seven service mix marketing elements in relation to marketing of the Distance Education Programmes of the Study Units which are presented below:

3.3 PRODUCT MIX

The product mix refers to ‘academic programmes’ offered by the DEIs. The distance education service product mix component comprises of developing academic programmes, which includes identifying the need based/ relevant academic programmes, framing right curriculum and right content of the learning materials.
3.3.1 Academic Programmes

The idea for developing new academic programmes could be generated through internal and external sources. When the question of the sources of identification of new programmes was put to the study units, it was revealed that they got the idea from the following sources:

**Internal Sources:**

1) The internal academic faculty of the DEIs
2) The internal academic faculty of Regular departments

**External Sources:**

1) Opinion from prospective learners
2) Feedback from Study Centres
3) Programmes offered by other DEIs
4) Feedback from the public
5) Professional journals, magazines, websites
6) Specific requirement from industries

An analysis of the various academic programmes offered by the study units reveals the following:

It should be mentioned that the new programmes to be offered should be consistent with the competence of the DEI concerned to deliver them effectively. A specific mention about this has been made since a few programmes were offered without required competency and infrastructure by the DEIs with a sole arm of generating revenue. A close look on the list of academic programmes offered by the study units would substantiate this point. The Tamil Nadu Open University, the Madurai Kamaraj University and the Annamalai University were offering Programmes on Hospitality Management, Fashion Designing, Fine Arts etc. These DEIs did not have required own expertise and infrastructure to offer these
Programmes. However, they tie-up with institutions which offer these programmes. Though, it looks logically right, it is a question of debate whether these DEIs could effectively ensure the quality of these programmes offered by the tied-up institutions, in the absence of their own expertise in the relevant field.

**TABLE-3.1**

**Academic Programmes offered by the Study Units**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the University</th>
<th>No. of Programmes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alagappa University</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annamalai University</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>50.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madurai Kamaraj University</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Madras</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>11.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNOU</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>13.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>494</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Website of Study Units*

From the above table, it was clear that Annamalai University offered the highest number of academic programmes (50.40%); whereas the Alagappa University offered the least number of academic programmes (8.91%) and the remaining three study units offered almost equal number of academic programmes (13 to 15%).

**FIGURE-3.1**

Academic Programmes Offered
The discipline-wise U.G. and P.G. programmes offered by the Study Units were presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Alagappa University</th>
<th>Annamalai University</th>
<th>M.K. University</th>
<th>Univ. of Madras</th>
<th>TNOU</th>
<th>Total Progr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>PG</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>PG</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer &amp; IT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Management</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion Designing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music/ Dance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage to the total).

Source: Records of Study Units

The analysis of the Under Graduate and Post Graduate academic programmes offered by the study units reveals that the highest number of 108 programmes were offered by the Annamalai University, followed by the Madurai Kamaraj University with 46 programmes, while the Alagappa University offered minimum number of 38 programmes. The table further reveals that except the Annamalai University all the remaining four study units offered the academic programmes ranging from 38 to 46.

From the above table, it could be seen that while 35.3 per cent in UG and 34.3 per cent in PG programmes were in Arts discipline, followed by 25.6 per cent in UG and 35.0 per cent in PG programmes were in Management discipline and 15.0 per cent in UG and 16.4 per cent in PG programmes were offered in Science discipline,
whereas it was only 7.5 per cent in UG and 8.6 per cent in PG programmes were offered in Computer and IT discipline. This is quiet understandable because of the quantum of investment required in offering Science and IT programmes were higher when compared to Arts and Management programmes.

The Annamalai University, Madurai Kamaraj University and TNOU offer programme on Hotel Management. Further, the Annamalai University offer programmes in the discipline of Law, Music, Dance and Fashion Designing. It was also observed that the Madurai Kamaraj University offer programme in the discipline of Law and University of Madras in the discipline of Music and Dance.

Only TNOU is now offering B.Ed. Programme in the discipline of Education and the other four study units which were offering B.Ed./M.Ed. programmes till 1996 discontinued the same thereafter for want of approval from the NCTE.

### TABLE-3.3

Certificate/ Diploma/ PG Diploma Programmes offered - Discipline-wise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Alagappa University</th>
<th>Annamalai University</th>
<th>M.K. University</th>
<th>Univ. of Madras</th>
<th>TNOU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer &amp; IT</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Science</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Management</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion Designing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music/ Dance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering/Technology</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Records of Study Units
An analysis of the Certificate/ Diploma and P.G Diploma programmes offered by the study units reveals that the highest number of 141 programmes were offered by the Annamalai University, followed by Madurai Kamaraj University with 29 programmes and 27 programmes by the University of Madras. The least number of programmes was offered by the Alagappa University, which was just 6 only. While Madurai Kamaraj University and Alagappa University offered more number of P.G Diploma programmes when compared to Certificate/ Diploma programmes, TNOU offered more number of Certificate/ Diploma programmes and quite surprisingly University of Madras did not offer any programme at P.G. Diploma level.

The discipline wise analysis reveal that the highest number of 39 Certificate/ Diploma and P.G. Diploma programmes were offered in Arts, followed by 36 programmes in Management. While equal number of 15 programmes were offered in the disciplines of Science and Computer & IT, the least number of programmes were offered in Education and Library Science.

From the table, it could be seen that only the Annamalai University offers 39 programmes in the disciplines of Engineering & Technology, 12 in Agriculture, 17 in Health Sciences, 6 in Law and 9 in Music and Dance. This was probably due to the fact that the Annamalai University has their own Faculty of Engineering, Medicine, Law and Agriculture. Hence they could avail of the academic support from those departments.

From the analysis of the academic programmes offered by the study units, the following inferences were made:

Mathematics, M.L.I.S were offered in all the study units. This might be due to the fact that there is always a sizeable market for conventional programmes.

(2) The analysis of the academic programmes offered by the study units in the last five years had revealed that there was a tremendous diversification in MBA programme with many specialisations.

(3) All the study units except University of Madras and TNOU, offer different specialisations such as Marketing, Human Resource Management, Finance, Systems, Retail Management, Tourism Management, Banking and Finance and International Business in MBA. In addition, while Annamalai University offers MBA programme in Telecom Management, Design Management, the Alagappa University offers MBA in Project Management, Corporate Secretaryship and Education Management. This was only a beginning and not an end. It is relevant to mention here that the Anna University, Coimbatore, which just started its DEI is offering as many as 24 Specialised Programmes in MBA alone. The trend of offering specialisations in MBA programme is of recent origin due to the potential market available for such specialisations and to meet the competition among the DEIs.

(4) Only the Annamalai University offer B.Sc. Electronic Science and B.Sc. Visual Communication which were unique.

(5) All the study units offer only B.Sc./ M.Sc. Mathematics in Science discipline. Only Annamalai University and University of Madras offer M.Sc. in Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology and Psychology programmes. Besides Annamalai University offer unique programmes such as M.Sc. in Geoinformatics, and Electronic Science.
There is a wide spread criticism in offering Science programmes through distance education. When the question relating to this aspect was put to the study units, only Annamalai and Madurai Kamaraj Universities were in favour offering Science programmes at UG/PG levels. However, University of Madras and TNOU did not favour in offering all Science Programmes except Mathematics. When these three units were further probed for not favouring Science programmes through distance education, they replied that these programmes require support of well equipped laboratory for practicals and a long period of face-to-face programme. It would not be possible to provide such facilities in all parts of the country and even the facilities available in their own campuses were far inadequate to meet the requirements of such a large number of learners.

However, it should be mentioned here that it would not be an impossible proposition to offer Science programmes through distance education, with the advancement of educational technology such as, video conferencing, e-learning etc. But it is anybody's guess as to what extent the DEIs were prepared or equipped to undertake such a massive exercise to adopt these advanced technologies to cover the learners spreading across the country. Till the DEIs establish such a strong educational technology component, it would not be desirable to offer such programmes.

(6) It was also found that there was no uniformity among the study units regarding the pattern – either annual or semester in offering the programmes. For instance, while the Alagappa University is offering the MBA and MCA Programmes under Semester Pattern and other Programmes under Annual Pattern, all other study units offer all the Programmes under Annual Pattern
only. Both the patterns have their strengths and weaknesses. The DEIs prefer annual pattern for simple reason that the admissions for distance education programmes could be made for more than six months in a year, for instance, the academic year admissions commences from June and goes up to December. If they adopt Semester pattern, they had to necessarily close the admissions within a short span of three months and they had to shoulder additional administrative load in organizing the examinations twice in a year. Hence their preference for annual pattern. The DEIs following the annual pattern argue that since the duration and the number of subjects offered were same between Semester and Annual pattern, this was not a significant aspect. But it is other way around. In fact it makes a lot of significance on the part of learners because when the programme was offered under semester pattern, the load becomes dispersed and the learners would be able to acquire indepth knowledge of the subject and would be able to have continuous touch with the subject throughout the year, instead of concentrating on too many subjects only at the fake end of the year. Hence it is suggested that the DEIs may positively consider offering the programmes under Semester pattern.

(7) When a question was raised regarding the medium of instruction, it was revealed that all the five study units offer their programmes both in English and Tamil Medium. But only select and popular programmes such as B.Com., B.B.A., B.A. History/ Economics/ Sociology/ Public Administration, M.A. History/ Economics/ Sociology/ Public Administration, M.Com., were offered in Tamil Medium also. While the Alagappa University was the pioneer to offer M.B.A. in Tamil Medium, other universities such as TNOU and Annamalai University followed suit. It is significant to note that none of
the study units offer the programme in any other medium though there is a strong
demand particularly for Hindi Medium. Probably the DEIs in Tamil Nadu were
reluctant to offer in Hindi Medium because of political implications.

(8) It should be appropriate to mention here that each individual must be a
multidisciplinarian in the present day context of knowledge explosion. He may be an
expert in one field but still requires considerable knowledge in related fields also. Though Commerce is a specialised field, the knowledge
on computer operations is also equally necessary and hence combined these
two areas, new programmes such as B.Com (Computer Applications) and
M.Com (Computer Applications) were also launched by different institutions.
Similarly, programmes on E-Commerce, Information Technology Enabled
Services are of great demand now. Hence, there is a great potential for
Information Technology related programmes in every field and the DEIs can
effectively explore by developing appropriate curriculum combining IT with
other disciplines.

The above analysis clearly indicate that practically all the study units were
offering almost same type of programmes, except Annamalai University which offer a
few innovative programmes. This means that every DEI should constantly think and
evolve innovative programmes suited to the requirements of the learners. Further,
most of the study units offer the programmes under annual pattern and popular
programmes were offered both in English and Tamil medium.
3.3.2 Programme Evaluation

It is pertinent to evaluate the programmes that DEIs offer in terms of curriculum design, content organisation, delivery mode, design, development and standardization of the learning materials, student assessment patterns and assignment turnaround time, including mentoring and counseling of students.

The study units were asked a specific question whether they do undertake evaluation of the viability of the programme and subsequent action taken on such evaluation. While Annamalai and Madurai Kamaraj Universities did not undertake programme-wise evaluation and even if the programmes are not economically viable, they do continue the programme for the benefit of small segment of learners. According to them, in academic activities such a strict cost revenue aspect cannot always be looked into. However, the Alagappa University and University of Madras do undertake evaluation of each programme in terms of quantum of enrolment from the year of launching and basing on the response, either they continue or discontinue the programme. For the same question the response from TNOU was that the time was not ripe for undertaking such an evaluation since the university itself was established only recently.

More the number of students take the programme, the lower the average per capita cost of development effort and vice-versa. It is this fact, coupled with the generally low direct costs of student support, that makes distance education an attractive economic proposition. Hence the DEIs should necessarily undertake evaluation of economic viability of each programme periodically and take appropriate action.

It was the usual practice of any DEI not to offer those programmes which were not bringing sizeable revenue to the coffin of the University. They will always look
for those programmes which could attract higher enrolment/ more revenue, less expenditure.

There is now a wide controversy regarding the nature of educational programmes that could be offered through distance education. The protagonists of Distance Education opine that any programme including science programmes such as physical and biological sciences could be offered through Distance Education. For instance, IGNOU offers engineering and para-medical programmes, Annamalai University offers Health Science programmes, Sri Venkateswara University, Dravidian University, offers M.Phil. programmes through distance education.

At the same time, the antagonists argue that offering science/research programmes lead to dilution of the standards/ quality of those programmes. Hence they opine that there must be a total ban to offer science/ research programmes through distance education.

It is to be mentioned here that the State Open University and all the Conventional Universities in Tamil Nadu were directed by the Government of Tamil Nadu not to offer M.Phil. programme through distance education with effect from 2007-08, on the ground that offering research programmes through distance education might lead to dilution of standards. However, DEIs outside Tamil Nadu, and Private Universities in Tamil Nadu continue to offer M.Phil. programmes through distance education.

It is argued that once distance education has been accepted as a mode of education, is it right to stop M.Phil. programme particularly when other State DEIs Private Universities in Tamil Nadu offer this programme. This argument seems to be right. Hence, it would be better if some regulatory mechanism could be in the place to ensure the standard of M.Phil. programmes instead of outright closure.
Hence there is an urgent need that the National Regulatory Body like DEC should clearly prescribe the regulations for offering certain programmes like M.Phil, Hotel Management etc. Earlier it is done, the better.

It should also be mentioned here that few DEIs may argue that such direction from DEC may intrude into academic freedom of the Universities. It is true. In such a situation, it is only the prudent decision of different statutory bodies of those Universities and above all, the academic consciousness of the educational administrators and the self-imposed discipline of DEIs that have to decide on the choice and quality of those programmes.

3.3.3 Curriculum Development

The success of any academic programme largely depends on the appropriateness and quality of the curriculum. Hence utmost care has to be exercised while developing the curriculum. It is a usual practice that the curriculum developed by the academicians has to be placed before the Board of Studies constituted for the purpose. The Board consists of both internal and external subject experts. In some DEIs there are exclusive Board of Studies for distance education programmes and in some DEIs, the Board of Studies of regular programmes frame the curriculum for distance education programmes also.

During the conversation, the academic faculty of DEI, expressed the feeling that the members of the Board of Studies of Regular Programmes prescribe certain regulations which could not be applied for the programmes of distance education. Further, they expressed that the members did not have the orientation in distance education and sometimes have negative opinion about the distance education. They feel this creates a stumbling block for their plans. Hence, they opine that a separate Board of Studies need to be created for Distance Education Programmes.
The investigator was tempted to find out this aspect with the study units. It was revealed that except Annamalai University, all the remaining four study units have separate Board of Studies constituted exclusively for DEIs. In Annamalai University the Board of Studies of regular programmes frame the curriculum for the programmes of their DEI.

It would be better that separate Board of Studies be constituted for distance education programmes. This is not to argue that the members of the Board of Studies of regular programmes did not have the required competence, but a separate Board is advocated with academic experts having experience and exposure in distance education and having orientation towards the requirements of distance education learners.

Another related issue is the composition of the members of the Board of Studies. Traditionally, the Board of Studies consists of only academic experts, but considering the recent advancements in science and technology, the rapid changes in the industrial and economic scenario and the university-industry interaction, the Board of Studies need to have members representing industries, commerce, scientific and technological arena. This would certainly help for framing relevant and need based curriculum that would suit the requirements of the different sectors of the economy.

To a question relating to the composition of the Members of the Board of Studies, it was found that Alagappa University, University of Madras and TNOU have professional experts in the Board, in addition to academic experts; whereas Annamalai and Madurai Kamaraj Universities have only academic experts in their Board of Studies.
The curriculum of the existing programmes need to be revised/modified periodically, depending on the requirement. When a question relating to periodicity of updation of curriculum was asked among the study units, it was reported by Madurai Kamaraj University and University of Madras that they revise the curriculum once in five years, normally. Whereas, Alagappa and Annamalai Universities and TNOU replied that they revise curriculum as and when required. This means that the curriculum of certain conventional programmes such as History, Tamil, English, Political Science, Public Administration, Economics, Commerce, Business Administration, remains the same for quite a long period. However, there are few subjects like Computer & IT programmes, Tax Laws, Corporate Laws etc. where changes happen frequently and hence the curriculum need to be updated depending on the changes.

### 3.3.4. Learning Resources

#### Course Material

The print media – printed booklets containing reading materials prescribed for the course – dominates the other forms of technological mass communication media and constitutes the mainstay in distance education. The reason for its predominance in distance education is due to its easy access without restrictions of any kind place, time etc.

Generally distance education is looked upon from its course material point of view than on anything else. Lord Perry of Walton, the first Vice-Chancellor of the British Open University once said that "the print materials of distance education institutes determine the success or the failure of the system". Print-based system of distance education is not only popular in less developed countries but also advanced countries as well.
(1) A Canadian survey revealed that "print materials are the most common teaching-learning tools in distance education carrying most of the course content including courses for which use of communication technologies are used".¹

(2) The Open University in the Federal Republic of Germany (Fern Universitat) is one of the Institutions which considers print as inherently superior medium. Fern Universitat course materials are expressly print based with no broadcast elements and rare use of audio cassettes or video tapes.²

(3) Charles Shobe noted that in spite of the explosion in the number and variety of technologies available, most distance education is still carried on by correspondence. He went on to state that even where new – or even not so new – technologies are used, they are almost exclusively employed as supplements to the main body of instructional material rather than as the core means of instruction.³

In a developing country like India, with other media aids still not round the corner, distance education leans heavily on the basis of instructional material in the form of printed lessons.

The above views clearly reveal the role that the print materials play in distance education throughout the world and play a crucial role in the success of distance education.

All the research studies point out that the instructional materials supplied to the students are designed mostly in an unscientific way and presented in an essay type manner, thus lacking pedagogy of self-learning (Biswal, Gupta, Saraswati, Dutta,

Mulay etc. Gupta (1982) found that most of the students instruction materials were written in a routine essay type. Further, the teachers working in correspondence institutes mostly lack training in designing material. As far the outsiders, contracted to prepare the material, they may be subject experts but they too have poor perception of distant learner’s motivation. Mulay in her study explains in detail how in some of the subjects, the students find the language difficult.

Since the learners are at a distance and has to depend on himself/ herself for learning, it has been widely recommended that the materials meant for this segment to be prepared on Self-Instructional Method (SIM).

**Self-Learning Material (SLM)**

Self Learning Materials (SLMs) are a combination of interactive instructional steps and access devices, which help a learner to easily access and assimilate the contents. Access devices help the learners find their way into the text. ‘Building the teacher into the text’ demands considerable effort in the design of an innovative curriculum and development of quality materials (Sparkes, 1993). The interactive instructional steps perform the task of tutoring by providing subject matter in sections and sub-sections, followed by in-text questions, activities and so on. The forms of SLMs include books, workbooks, worksheets, audio and video, teleconferencing, interactive radio, television, CD-ROMs, computer-mediated learning, www/ internet etc.

The responses of the study units relating to the development and preparation of course materials were recorded below:

For the question, “Who prepares the Course Material?”, all the five study units replied that they engage both internal and external subject experts to prepare their course materials.
Preparation of Course Materials requires creation of a Course Team comprising subject experts, instructional designers, external editors etc. Only TNOU has Course Team for developing course materials and the remaining four study units did not have the concept of Course Team for development and preparation of course materials.

When the question of "Preparing the Course Materials under SIM Format" was asked to the study units, it was found that the TNOU is adopting SIM pattern in developing course materials for all their programmes; while Annamalai University has developed course materials under SIM pattern for 75 Programmes against 249; University of Madras has developed only for MBA programme to start with. But the Madurai Kamaraj University and Alagappa University have not yet gone for preparation of materials in SIM format.

The preparation of course materials under SIM pattern is in fact, a technical writing and hence requires proper orientation for lesson-writers. That is why the STRIDE of IGNOU conducts periodical training on SIM for lesson-writers and the DEC also provides financial support to the DEIs for conduct of Workshops for giving orientation to the lesson-writers. But when compared to the number of lesson-writers required, the number of teachers who underwent training was found to be meager. An enquiry about this aspect with the study units has revealed that the percentage of lesson-writers who had undergone training when compared to the total number of lesson-writers varies from 5 to 10 percent only. It is disturbing to note that even the teachers who underwent training also prepare the materials only in the conventional type, as the DEIs do not guide them to prepare the course materials under SIM pattern nor do they do it on their own. Hence it is essential that every DEI should conduct orientation programmes on SIM to their identified lesson-writers before assigning
them the work of preparing the course materials or has to assign the job only to the
lesson-writers who were trained on SIM pattern. It is equally important that the
lesson-writers must be paid suitable compensation to undertake these assignments.

For the DEIs, which found difficult to prepare the materials on SIM pattern,
the IGNOU has a scheme of sharing their learning resources prepared under SIM with
the DEIs on payment of prescribed price. Another recent development is that some of
the leading publishers prepare the textbooks under SIM pattern/ undertake the job of
developing tailor-made course materials for DEIs. DEIs can either adopt these
materials published by the leading publishers or can get materials prepared through
them for their specific curriculum.

It is to be pointed out here that many DEIs started adopting SIM pattern out of
compulsion since SIM has been made as one of the essential criteria for getting the
approval from the DEC. But the DEIs themselves were not very much enthused to
adopt this format, since there was no strong evidence that learners prefer SIM pattern.
It is not clear whether any serious research study has been conducted so far to find out
the preference of learners on SIM pattern vis-à-vis a conventional mode of course
materials. Hence a full-fledged research study on the perception of learners towards
SIM pattern vis-à-vis Conventional pattern is required.

The survey among the study units has revealed that only TNOU has conducted
Orientation Programme on SIM pattern for Lesson-writers and the remaining study
units have deputed a few of their faculty members to undergo such training conducted
by other institutions.

From the study it was found that all the study units prescribe guidelines such
as minimum number of pages, learning objectives, self-check questions, and
suggestive readings to the lesson-writers for preparation of course materials; while
other guidelines such as illustrations, self-check exercises, presentation style, glossary and summary were not insisted by the study units. Consequently, the study units which claim that they have adopted SIM pattern in preparing the course materials, were not in fact prepared the materials in the real sense of the term. While scrutinizing the sample course materials of the study units prepared under SIM pattern reveals that, this exercise had been undertaken for the sake of claiming that the materials were prepared under SIM and not as per the strict methodology prescribed for preparation of the materials.

Further it was probed among the study units whether they do content, language or format editing of course materials revealed that after receiving the course materials from the lesson-writers, only Annamalai University, University of Madras and TNOU undertake Content editing, Language editing and Format editing of their course materials.

A survey was made among the study units about the periodicity and reasons for revision of the course materials, their reply were presented in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Alagappa Univ.</th>
<th>Annamalai Univ.</th>
<th>M.K. University</th>
<th>Univ. of Madras</th>
<th>TNOU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Periodicity of Updation</td>
<td>Depending on the need</td>
<td>Depending on the need</td>
<td>Once in three years</td>
<td>Depending on need</td>
<td>Once in five years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Change in curriculum</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Inadequate Quality</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Inadequate Quantity/ Content</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Primary data*
With regard to the periodicity of updation of course materials, the above table reveals that the Alagappa, Annamalai and University of Chennai updates the materials depending on the need; while the Madurai Kamaraj University and TNOU updates their materials once in three years and five years respectively. In addition, whenever there was change in curriculum, all the study units go for revision of the course materials. The Alagappa University and University of Madras has revealed that basing on the learners feed back, they go in for revision of that particular course material. At the same time all the study units have unanimously stated that whenever they found inadequate content or quantity, they revise those course materials. It may be argued that why not the inadequate content/ quality be rectified immediately instead of revising the materials after certain period, the problem was that in most cases the materials are received from the lesson-writers during the eleventh hour, even sometimes just a month before the examinations, and in such cases for want of time, the DEIs accept the materials and go for revision only later. But this cannot be an excuse. So what is required is a well thought out planning to get the standard course materials prepared and printed before launching the programme.

But it is advisable to revise the course materials at least once in 5 years, even if there is no change in the curriculum, in order to incorporate the latest changes taking place in the respective field and also to include new illustrations, case studies etc. and make the learners to get update knowledge in their field.

With regard to the problems encountered by the DEIs from the lesson-writers, all the study units uniformly face the problem of not receiving the course material on time from the lesson-writers. According to Alagappa and Madurai Kamaraj Universities, sometimes they face the problem of lack of proper editing of contents by
the lesson-writers; and again Alagappa University and University of Madras notice inadequate content of course materials.

When a question was put to the study units whether they share their course materials with any other DEIs, it was revealed that only Alagappa University has shared its course materials with the DEI of Mother Teresa Women's University once and TNOU has shared its course materials with IGNOU.

In response to the question relating to collection of feedback from learners regarding the quality of course materials, none of the study units has done this exercise so far. If it is done it would help improve the quality of the course materials.

3.3.5 NOMENCLATURE OF DEGREES

Nomenclature of the degrees is also an equally important marketing tool, as it reflects the image of the degree. When learners opt for specialised programmes, they want that the specialisation be reflected in the degrees awarded. For instance, Alagappa University named the degrees as Master of Corporate Secretaryship (MCS), Master of Bank Management (MBM) and Master of Marketing Management (MMM). Similarly, other study units have their own nomenclature. But it should be remembered that too many nomenclatures create confusion in the minds of employers and hence some regulations need to be evolved. It is worth mentioning the UGC has already ceased of this issue and has issued directions to the Universities that the nomenclature of degrees must fall under any one of the nomenclatures specified by them, such as B.A., B.Sc., B.Com., B.B.A., M.A., M.Sc., M.Com., M.B.A. and M.C.A with specialisations mentioned in the degrees. For example, M.Sc.(Physics), M.Sc.(Chemistry), M.A.(History), M.B.A.(Retail Management), M.Com.(Insurance) etc. When the study units were asked about the nomenclature they follow, they have stated that, prior to the direction from UGC they also used to have different type of
nomenclatures, but subsequent to the UGC's direction, all the study units changed their nomenclatures under broad categories as directed by the UGC.

3.3.6 PACKAGING

Packaging refers to the type and design of the container in which the products are marketed to the consumers.

As far as distance education is concerned, packaging refers to the type and design of packaging materials developed and used for distribution of course materials to the learners. During the enquiry with the study units, it was revealed that the Alagappa University provides course material in Paper Bags carrying their name, Madurai Kamaraj University provides their course materials to the learners in Polythene Carry bags with their name; University of Madras too provides their course materials in Plastic Carry bags with the name of the University on one side and list of programmes offered on the other side; whereas Annamalai University and TNOU provides their materials packed in a brown wrapper.

Every DEI should understand that packaging is also one of the powerful marketing tool and hence care has to be exercised while designing the packaging considering the aspects of attraction, protection and convenience. It would be better if the packaging is ecological friendly and re-usable type with the printing of name of the DEI on one side, and list of programmes offered on the other side and this would act as an advertisement medium also.

Similarly, label is an integral part of packaging and DEIs can use attractive pre-printed adhesive labels which could increase the elegance of packaging act as an advertisement tool and can create powerful impact on the minds of the learners.
3.4 PRICE MIX

Pricing decisions for educational service are particularly important, given the intangible nature of the product. The most important of these is that the pricing decision must be consistent with the overall marketing strategy. The pricing decision may be different for different markets, for different types of customers or comparable to competitors' pricing.

The components of pricing in distance education relate to Cost of Application and Prospectus, Course Fee for different programmes and Examination Fee. The factors that determine the fees structure in distance education are:

- Advertisement and other promotional expenses
- Level of the programme
- Course value
- Preparation of study material
- Cost of printing
- Packaging expenses
- Postal expenses
- Expenses relating to audio-video cassettes, if any
- Contact Class expenses
- Laboratory facilities
- Computing facilities
- Library services
- Expenses relating to conduct of examinations
- Examination stationeries
- Examination evaluation expenses
- Salary for Teaching and Administrative Staff
- Administrative overheads
- Cost of physical infrastructure
- Cost of furniture and equipments
- Miscellaneous expenses
The above factors need to be considered while fixing the fees for various academic programmes offered through distance education.

The pricing methods may be cost-oriented, demand-oriented or competitor-oriented. The pricing objectives may be skim the cream pricing, penetration pricing, discriminatory pricing, stability pricing, regulatory pricing or perceptual pricing.

The researcher probed the objectives behind fixing the fees for the academic programmes. The discussion with the Officials revealed that the DEIs basically follow cost-oriented pricing.

When further probed, the study units unanimously stated that, in practice, the programme value and level of the programme were considered as the foremost factor while fixing the fees. For instance, the fee structure for all information technology, management programmes were fixed basing on the demand. Similarly, the programmes that attract good number of learners were fixed higher fee structure.

Another factor considered was the intensity of competition. While fixing the fee structure, the fees charged by other DEIs for similar courses were considered and fixed around their fee structure.

It is worth mentioning that the Alagappa University follows 'ability to pay' pricing for selected segments such as destitute women and prisoners. Likewise, Madurai Kamaraj University provides concessional fee to defence personnel. To motivate the students of regular programmes to acquire additional qualification, considering their paying capacity, the DEIs provide fee concession upto 25 percent to the students of regular programmes. Similarly, to upgrade the knowledge and skill of the staff of the Universities, the study units provide fee concession upto 50 per cent.
There were occasions where the Government prescribed guidelines to the University in fixing the fee structure for certain categories. For instance, for B.Ed. programme, the NCTE offered guidelines for fixing the fee structure. Similarly, the Government recommends for full fee concession for blind candidates. For the upliftment of socially backward students and physically challenged, the Government reimburses their cost of education by providing scholarship.

Further, all the study units adopt the ‘stable pricing’ policy and accordingly the fees once fixed was followed for a minimum of 3 to 5 years.

A comparison of the pricing fixed for major/ popular academic programmes by the study units is presented below:

**TABLE-3.5**

**Course Fee of Popular Academic Programmes of the Study Units**

(in Rupees per Year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Programmes</th>
<th>Alagappa Univ</th>
<th>Annamalai University</th>
<th>M.K. University</th>
<th>Univ.of Madras</th>
<th>TNOU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>M.B.A</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>11,500</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>13,230</td>
<td>7,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>M.C.A</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>13,480</td>
<td>12,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>M.Com.</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,050</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>2,080</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>M.A. Tamil/ English/ History</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,150</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>2,080</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>B.Com.</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>3,050</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,780</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>B.A. English/History</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>2,550</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>B.B.A.</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>3,350</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>2,230</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>B.C.A</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>6,900</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>7,380</td>
<td>6,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>34,500</th>
<th>47,050</th>
<th>31,300</th>
<th>43,660</th>
<th>34,500</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>4313</td>
<td>5881</td>
<td>3913</td>
<td>5458</td>
<td>4313</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18.06)</td>
<td>(24.63)</td>
<td>(16.39)</td>
<td>(22.86)</td>
<td>(18.06)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Figure in the parenthesis indicate percentage to the total)

*Source: Primary data*
From the above table, it could be seen that Madurai Kamaraj University collect lowest fees for the above programmes, followed by Alagappa University and TNOU; and Annamalai University charge highest fees.

When compared to Madurai Kamaraj University, the fees of Annamalai University was 8.24 percent higher, and when compared with Alagappa University and TNOU, the fees of Annamalai University was higher by 6.57 percent.

To a question regarding the collection of course fees in instalments among the study units, it was found that Annamalai University and University of Madras have the system of collection of course fees in instalments; whereas the Madurai Kamaraj University allows payment of course fee in instalments only if the fees is higher than Rs.5,000/-. Normally the fee was collected in two instalments. The Alagappa University and TNOU collect course fees in single payment.

The wise policy is that, the fees for distance education programme be fixed to meet the basic objectives of providing life-long, flexible, continuous and cost-effective education to every needy person into consideration. In other words, no willing person should be deprived of the utility of distance education owing to the cost.

3.5 PLACE MIX

Distribution, or the ‘place’ element, of the marketing mix is concerned mainly with two issues, namely accessibility and availability. Accessibility refers to the ease and convenience with which a service could be used. Availability refers to the extent to which a service is obtainable or capable of being used. Services must be both accessible and available to customers and potential customers to achieve successful services marketing.
The location and channels are two key decision areas to supply services to target customers. The importance of location for a service depends upon the type and degree of interaction involved. There could be three types of interaction between the service provider and the customer:

(i) The customer goes to the service provider
(ii) The service provider goes to the customer
(iii) The service provider and customer transact business at arm’s length.

When the customer goes to the service provider, the site location becomes very important. In this type of interaction, service providers seeking growth can consider offering their services at more than one location.

When the service provider goes to the customer, site location becomes much less important, provided it is sufficiently close to the customers for good quality service to be received.

However, when the customer and service organisation transact at arm’s length location may be largely irrelevant.

Channel

The second type of decision relates to who participates in the service delivery in terms of both organisations and people. There are three kinds of participants:

(1) The service provider
(2) Intermediaries
(3) Customers

When applied to distance education, the service provider refers to DEIs, intermediaries refers to Study Centres and customers are the Learners.

3.5.1 Study Centres

The Study Centres are the intermediaries for the OUs/DEIs in dealing with learners. A Study Centre is a part of an overall system of support for learners. It is
pivot around which the entire student support services revolve. Almost all the DEIs have established Study Centres at different places for attracting students and to offer better support services.

The DEIs have different modus operandi in establishing study centres. They may have their Own Study Centres, or recognize the Approved Educational Institutions as Study Centres or grant the right of Franchising to any one Institution or recognize Registered Societies/ Trust as the Study Centres.

The Study Centres perform the functions of advertising and publicity, counselling services, admission related activities, distribution of course materials and conduct PCP classes.

The number and area-wise distribution of Study Centres of the study units were presented below:

**TABLE-3.6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Alagappa University</th>
<th>Annamalai University</th>
<th>M.K. University</th>
<th>Univ. of Madras</th>
<th>TNOU</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Within Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>106 (58.89)</td>
<td>54 (71.05)</td>
<td>27 (25.23)</td>
<td>30 (35.71)</td>
<td>123 (100)</td>
<td>340 (59.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Outside Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>68 (37.78)</td>
<td>22 (28.95)</td>
<td>70 (65.42)</td>
<td>41 (48.81)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>201 (35.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>At Overseas</td>
<td>6 (3.33)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10 (9.35)</td>
<td>13 (15.48)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29 (5.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>180 (31.58)</td>
<td>76 (13.33)</td>
<td>107 (18.77)</td>
<td>84 (14.74)</td>
<td>123 (21.58)</td>
<td>570 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Figure in the parenthesis indicate percentage to the total)

Source: Website of the Study Units

It was revealed from the above table that the Alagappa University had the highest number of 180 (31.58%) Study Centres followed by TNOU which had 123 (21.58%) Study Centres; whereas Annamalai University had the least number of 76 (13.33%) Study Centres. All the study units have Study Centres in Middle-East and
South-East countries, however, each DEI had established 5 to 10 Study Centres in overseas countries.

Among the total number of 570 Study Centres of all the five study units, the highest number of Study Centres 59.65 percent was located in Tamil Nadu; whereas 35.26 percent of Study Centres were located in outside Tamil Nadu and only 5.09 percent of Study Centres were functioning at overseas. This is quite understandable since all the study units were located in Tamil Nadu, the number of Study Centres were also higher within Tamil Nadu.

Further, it was observed that the Madurai Kamaraj University and University of Madras have Admission/ Information Centres within the Tamil Nadu and Study Centres outside Tamil Nadu. Also the functions of these two types of Centres within and outside Tamil Nadu differ widely in the aspect of fees collection, transmission of applications for admission and the conduct of personal contact programmes. While the Personal Contact Programmes for those who were admitted through the Admission/ Information Centres within Tamil Nadu were conducted by the respective DEIs themselves, the responsibility of conduct of PCP were given to the Study Centres functioning outside Tamil Nadu.

As far as Alagappa University and TNOU were concerned, the functions of Study Centres within or outside Tamil Nadu were not different. These study centres have to perform all the functions mentioned above including the conduct the personal contact programmes to the learners. The DEI would conduct the personal contact programmes and provide such other services required by the learners, who have registered directly with the University.
Whereas the Annamalai University, who have established their own Study Centres within and outside State act as counterpart of its DEI and carry out almost all the functions of the DEI. The personal contact programmes for the learners joined through their Study Centres were also arranged at main places according to the strength, by grouping the learners and conducted by the DEI itself with its faculty members throughout the country.

However, it may be pointed out that mere number of study centers will not serve the purpose unless such centers are equipped with new teaching aids and technology. The study centers outside regular jurisdiction of the universities were not making any positive impact, according to the academicians. Therefore, it is suggested that place-mix of distance education be taken care of purely from learners angle.

Further, relating to the remuneration/ share paid for the services rendered by the Admission/ Study Centres, it was found from the study units that the percentage of remuneration/ share paid varies from 10 to 50 percent of course fees. The DEIs pay higher share of service fees to the Study Centres for Computer and Science Programmes as they involve huge investment in providing laboratory facilities.

But at the same time, these Centres were not free from limitations. The common complaints against these Centres were unauthorised fee collection, failure to conduct the PCP classes efficiently and commercial orientation. Consequently, these Centres were subject to severe criticism in the academic circles.

The opinion of the study units about Study Centres were presented below:
TABLE-3.7
Opinion of Study Units on the Operations of Study Centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Alagappa University</th>
<th>Annamalai University</th>
<th>M.K. University</th>
<th>Univ. of Madras</th>
<th>TNOU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>No proper guidance and counselling to learners</td>
<td>Few</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Not properly organising PCPs</td>
<td>Few</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Inadequate classes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Incompetent teachers engaged for classes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Collection of unauthorised fees</td>
<td>Yes (outside TN)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Few</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Primary data*

From the above table, the main problem faced by all the study units except Annamalai University was collection of unauthorised fees by the Study Centres. The Madurai Kamaraj University and University of Madras opined that the study centres were not organising the PCPs effectively, not providing sufficient number of classes and often incompetent teachers were engaged to handle the PCPs. Further, Madurai Kamaraj University and University of Madras opined that the study centers were not providing proper guidance and counselling to the learners; whereas Alagappa University and TNOU slightly vary in their opinion, that only few of their study centres were not providing proper guidance and counselling. Since Annamalai University have their own study centres, they do not face these types of problems.

In order to monitor the Study Centres the study units take special efforts such as making surprise visits, sending observers periodically, preparing performance reports of study centres and also collecting feedback from the learners.
Inspite of these criticisms, it cannot be denied that the Study Centres provide strong support system to the DEIs. But at the same time the functioning of these Study Centres need to be streamlined to offer better service to the learning community and to protect the image of the DEIs.

Understanding the need for streamlining the Study Centres, the DEIs and the Regulatory Bodies like University Grants Commission and Distance Education Council have evolved certain norms/ guidelines to regulate the functioning of the Study Centres.

3.5.2 Service Delivery

Service delivery in distance education provide an effective support and facilitate learning which includes Personal Contact Programmes, Hands-on-training, Assignments and Instructional Electronic media such as audio-video cassettes, teleconferencing and on-line teaching.

Personal Contact Programme (PCP)

The Personal Contact Programme or face-to-face learning is an important component of distance education. During this programme, the learners are provided with necessary counseling and regular face-to-face teaching for varying duration in academic subjects. The duration of the programme vary depending on the level and nature of academic programme. Normally, attendance in PCP is optional, however, for certain programmes, it is made compulsory. For instance, attendance for MBA, Information Technology and Science programmes are made compulsory.

The information provided in this regard by the study units were presented below.
### TABLE-3.8
**Duration of Personal Contact Programmes**

(in hours per year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programmes</th>
<th>Alagappa University</th>
<th>Annamalai University</th>
<th>M.K. University</th>
<th>Univ. of Madras</th>
<th>TNOU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCA/ M.Sc. (IT/ Comp. Sc.)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCA/ B.Sc. (IT/ Comp. Sc)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Programmes (other than Maths)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Programmes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Primary data & Website of the Study Units*

The above table reveals that, the period of duration of PCP conducted for MBA programme varies from 36 to 96 hours among the study units. The Alagappa University conducts PCP for the maximum number of 96 hours per year for MBA programme. With regard to IT programmes both UG and PG, all the study units conducts PCP for a period of 72 to 120 hours. The Annamalai University conducts PCP for a maximum of 120 hours for IT programmes. Among the three study units offering Science Programmes, the Annamalai University conducts PCP for a maximum number of 132 hours per year. The number of days PCP conducted varies from 36 to 60 hours per year for Arts Programmes by all the study units.

From the above analysis, it was found that on an average the study units allot only 66 hours for MBA programmes, 96 hours for IT programmes, 102 hours for Science programmes, 48 hours for Arts programmes.

The factors influencing the students' attendance in PCP were whether the attendance is compulsory or optional, venue of PCPs, employment positions of learners, their financial stringency, lack of proper facilities for boarding and lodging, lack of prior information to students, etc. according to the study conducted by Sahoo.
For select programmes like MBA, IT and Science programmes, all the study units have made it compulsory in PCP and that the learners should acquire 75 per cent to become eligible to sit in the University examinations, however for other programmes the attendance in PCP was optional.

With regard to the attitude of learners towards the personal contact programme conducted by the study units, 55.2 per cent of learners opine that the PCP timings did not suit them; even though 49.6 per cent of learners feel that the study units/ study centres provide them sufficient lecture hours and 54.2 per cent found no difficulty in reaching the PCP venue. Also 54.2 per cent of learners opine that the venue of PCP has sufficient infrastructure and 66.4 per cent agreed that the classes were conducted by competent teachers, whereas 48.8 per cent of learners feel that teachers do not encourage interaction in PCP classes. Even though the real purpose of PCPs was not achieved to a large extent, 43.6 per cent of the students who attended PCPs expressed positive opinion about the usefulness of PCPs; only a few 23.4 per cent of learners felt that they had not gained appreciably anything from attending PCP. A majority of 58.6 per cent of learners expressed their interest in using multimedia equipments for teaching in PCP, than the regular lecture method of teaching. It is surprising to note that as much as 76.2 per cent of learners wants the teachers to use both English and Tamil languages in the PCP.

Further the learners opine that the benefit of attending the PCP were clarification of doubts, getting inspirations for further studies and better preparation for examination.

From the views of learners towards PCPs it was inferred that, to encourage learners, multimedia equipments to be used for teaching, interaction be allowed in the classes, the teachers should use both English and Tamil languages simultaneously for
better understanding of the learners, sending advance information of PCP to learners, provision of library facilities, and facilities for boarding and lodging of participants etc.

3.5.3 Assignments

Assignments are a self-learning exercise which are in written form submitted by the learner to their DEIs as part of their continuous assessment system. It enables the learners to ensure that they have learnt what they are expected to learn from the course materials.

Generally, there are two types of assignments – (i) Tutor Marked Assignments and (ii) Computer Marked Assignments. Tutor marked assignments are evaluated by the distance teacher/ tutor. These assignments comprise a variety of questions such as essay type, short answer type, problem solving exercises etc. These assignments are generally used to assess the higher order cognitive objectives such as analysis, synthesis, judgement, comprehension, application etc.

Computer marked assignments are evaluated by the computer. These assignments are generally comprised of objective type questions, preferably the multiple choice questions, which are most versatile amongst all the objective type test items.

The learners make an attempt to respond to the assignment after going through the study materials, according to the instructions written on the assignment. Thus, the answer written by the learner with respect to a particular assignment is called assignment response. On these assignment responses, the tutor writes his/her comments. Based on the tutors comments the learners can assess his/her mode of learning and make necessary modifications for better performance. Thus the tutor
comments are a very important tool in distance education as they are both the *content* and *vehicle of communication* which effect learning. The grade or mark/score is awarded to the particular assignment based on the global comments.

Grading are made with different range of scales, say five point, seven point, nine-point etc. The following table illustrates the seven point scale of absolute grading:

**TABLE-3.9**

**Distribution of Range of Scores across Grades**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Scores</th>
<th>Grade Point</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Verbal Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90 – 100%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 – 89%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 – 79%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 – 69%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 59%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 – 49%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 40%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The system of Assignments to Learners and their evaluation pattern followed by the study units reveal that TNOU has the system of assignments for all the programmes offered by them; whereas Annamalai University has the system of assignments only for select programmes such as MBA. The assignment responses carry normally 25 percent marks. But the evaluated assignments were not returned to the learners with any feedback. Whereas the remaining three study units namely, the Alagappa, Madurai Kamaraj Universities and University of Madras did not have the system of assignments for any of the programmes offered by them. Further, a question to these study units whether they had the system of assignments earlier, they replied that they had in previous years, but subsequently discontinued. When further
probed into the causes for discontinuing the system, while Alagappa University stated
that they discontinued because of inordinate delay and irregular submission of
assignments by the learners and low submission rate, the University of Madras faced
the administrative problem of evaluation of lakhs of assignment responses. But the
reasons mentioned above could not be considered as valid considering the benefit it
provides to the learners in enriching their learning, it is strongly recommended that all
DEIs should have the component of assignment responses and the assignments must
be necessarily evaluated, marks/grades awarded and feedback to be sent to the
learners in the form of comments for their better understanding and follow up. This
grade/marks constitute the continuous internal assessment. Though the three study
units had discontinued the system of assignments, there was a sizeable number of
learners who feel that the system of assignments be renewed. Of course, their main
intention was that it would be comparatively easier to score marks in assignments
which form part of total assessment rather than appearing for total marks in term-end
examinations. But whatever may be the reason, it would be advisable for the DEIs to
adopt the system of assignments.

3.5.4 Course Material Distribution

The place mix also encompasses the physical distribution aspect and this has
much relevance to distance education, where the course materials need to be properly
distributed to the learners.

The DEIs necessarily requires an efficient system for the distribution of course
materials. In fact despatching course materials appears to be a quite simple task; but
in reality it is quite difficult and complicated. Each DEI has to adopt a definite
despatch policy and evolve an efficient mechanism to implement.
The existing policies pertaining to despatch, pacing introduced and despatch mechanisms adopted by the study units were surveyed. The following table presents the despatch policies adopted by the study units.

**TABLE-3.10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Alagappa University</th>
<th>Annamalai University</th>
<th>M.K. University</th>
<th>Univ. of Madras</th>
<th>TNOU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turnaround time for despatch of course materials</td>
<td>One month</td>
<td>Spot delivery through Study Centres</td>
<td>Spot delivery through Admission Centres</td>
<td>No definite time frame</td>
<td>One month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodicity of Despatch</td>
<td>In one lot &amp; on arrival from Press</td>
<td>In one lot</td>
<td>In one lot</td>
<td>In one lot &amp; on arrival from Press</td>
<td>In one lot &amp; on arrival from Press</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Primary data*

From the above table it is evident that Annamalai University makes spot delivery of course materials through their own Study Centres, while Madurai Kamaraj University delivers course materials through their Admission Centres and Alagappa University and TNOU despatches course materials through Study Centres, whereas University of Madras despatches course materials direct to the individual learners.

Relating to the question of ‘periodicity of despatch of course materials’ to the study units, Alagappa University, University of Madras and TNOU reported that they send course materials to the learners in a single lot if the materials were available, or immediately on arrival from the Press; whereas Annamalai and Madurai Kamaraj Universities send course materials to the learners in a single lot.

Further, it was inferred that all the study units face the problem of delay in receiving the course materials from the lesson-writers. The Alagappa University and University of Madras reported the problem of delay in delivery of course materials to
the learners due to failure on the part of the Post Office/ Courier Service. Other than these, the common problems faced by all the study units for the delay in supply of course materials to the learners were:

- Launching the academic programmes after commencement of admission session leads to delay in preparation of the course material.
- Problems of identifying the suitable lesson writers.
- Delay in the receipt of print materials from the printing press.

But the DEIs should ensure the timely delivery of the study material to the learners. Somebody has said very rightly, “Even a post card can do wonders if it is posted timely”. A separate despatch cell with a team led by a person of supervisory cadre with required facilities be set up for the effective functioning.

3.5.5 Instructional Media

Distance education has come a long way in India starting with postal correspondence courses as the mode of delivery. Postal correspondence courses are still doing well; however today they are supplemented and enhanced by the inclusion of communication technology. Takwale (1996) points out the communication technologies in distance education are of three types:

i) Mass communication technologies – Radio broadcasts, TV telecasts, audio and video cassettes, audio and video teleconferencing.

ii) Personalised communication technologies – telephones, PC, fax, e-mail and internet.

iii) Knowledge technologies based on expert systems – multi-media (integrated media) learning packages, knowledge packages and teaching machines (virtual teachers).
One-way television and radio communication for distance learning has been improved by the introduction of two-way interactive audio and video communication. Digital connectivity to remote areas is an important element for this and satellite communication provides for it. At present 5 transponders of INSAT system are carrying education programmes, Gyandarshan, TDCC programmes, APNET-MANA TV, ERNET for academic institutions and also met the requirements of EDUSAT pilot projects.

3.5.6 Information Technology in Distance Education

Information technology is revolutionizing educational systems and methodologies – making learning easier, more effective and more enjoyable and highly customized or “learner-centred”.

Technology can be applied to provide opportunities for the learner to:

- Practice a wide variety of skills
- Obtain appropriate knowledge for comprehensive understanding and even mastery of a given subject content
- Access, analyse, synthesize and use data and information
- Develop creative thinking and problem solving skills and
- Communicate effectively.

The system would require fewer number of permanent teaching and administrative staff. Its location can be centralized so that access by both teachers and learners would be easier and possibly at a reduced cost. Most importantly, the course design is usually better because it is prepared by a team of experts in contents, educational technology and in education evaluation.
The system is more flexible as learners can have lessons on individual basis. They can start at various levels and it can be anywhere – in centralized campus, local learning centres, at home or in the office. The system permits easy revision of content and thus can always be kept up to date. Finally, the system can offer unique features like easy access to experts and voluminous mass of information through internet or video conferencing facilities, which cannot be available in traditional university set-up.

The various media used for delivery of educational programmes of DEIs include Audio, Video Cassettes, Compact Discs (CDs), Radio, Television, On-line education.

**Audio Cassettes**

An audiotape provides considerable freedom to the learners who can use it at any time and place of convenience. The learners can replay the tape any number of times and review the taped material over and over again, even using the stop-start method. The audiocassette also permits a degree of privacy and confidentiality which is not possible through radio broadcasts.

To make learning interactive, audio cassettes should incorporate some activities in the programmes. A discussion can be intercepted with activities and questions, which helps the students learn concepts, solve problems and recapitulate important/difficult learning points.

**Compact Discs (CDs)**

The CDs are considered to be more effective medium than the television broadcast since they are more flexible and convenient to use; the students can use according to their pace of learning in terms of their time and place and has the facility to replay.
Radio

The process of media selection is often considered an extremely important part of course design and course development. The selected medium or media should match the course content and lead to the objectives for which the course content has been designed. Media selection also involves choosing the media on the basis of other criteria chiefly concerned with the budget outlay and practical constraints of preferences and skills of learners and sometimes of teachers too.

From its very inception, the radio has been and is being used to serve a variety of purposes: to inform, to educate and to entertain people. The radio is the cheapest and the most easily accessible of the other three electronic media, i.e. audiocassette, television and videocassette. It provides learners with joy of learning, it can develop their command over vocabulary, promote concentration and critical listening and improve fluency and confidence in speech and discussion.

Educational Radio Programme

A number of factors will contribute to the theory and practice of educational radio programme production. There are, however, five domains that need a mention here. The domains appear to be discrete but the practices within each domain are inter-connected and most effective when applied to an input process – output – approach (Fig.1).
All the activities in the respective domains listed out in the above figure have a series of functions to be performed by a set of members of the ‘production team’. In fact each member of the production team has specific tasks to attend to. Key persons in the production team in any educational radio production are producer and teacher. There are other personnel in the production team like production assistant, technician etc., who will also figure in, in the production process.
IGNOU has been offered one FM channel in 40 cities for education and development. IGNOU is the nodal agency for implementing the project. This facility is also shared by TNOU. It was found that only TNOU and Annamalai University provide this facility to their learners.

**Educational Television**

Television constitute an important medium widely used to disseminate information to its viewers. It has the advantage of the audio as well as the video. Hence it has a greater appeal than the radio and the print media.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, Doordarshan, IGNOU and other organisations in collaboration has started the DD Gyan Darshan, the Education Channel of India. IGNOU has been identified as the coordinating and transmitting agency. Regular transmission of Educational Programmes from the EMPC studios started in January 10, 2000. The channel is providing educational programme on a variety of subjects for 19 hours a day to enhance the learning process. Steps are being taken to relay the Gyan Darshan Channel through different Cable Operators in the country for wider outreach. This facility is shared by TNOU as reported by them. It was found that no other study units provide this facility to their learners.

**3.5.7 On-Line Education**

The internet is emerging as a global mass media with the potential to transform education. Currently, the online learning has emerged as a new paradigm of learning with the advent of internet as the medium of delivery.

One of the most powerful features of the internet is its ability to provide interactivity among geographically-distant people. It has a lot of scope for providing an instructional design that can make the learning much more interesting and easier.
Further, the hypermedia provides immense scope for addressing the individual differences among learners through differentiated instructional design, and offer facilities for the learner to choose the learning method that suits best his/her style. The learner can be provided with customizable learning paths, including the instructional event sequence, for a specific learner based on his/her preference, background, experience, and prior knowledge level.

While formulating an online course there is a need to take into consideration the aims and objectives of the course, the knowledge and skills to be acquired and the learning experience to be provided, the tutorial strategies to be employed and the assessment strategy to be used (Ryan et-al, 2000). It has to be kept in mind that learning essentially involves assimilation of facts, rearranging the facts in a logical sequence to facilitate analysis, and drawing conclusions that are consistent with the existing knowledge reservoir. Apart from providing the knowledge-base the course should include a planned series of activities that can be undertaken individually, in pairs or sometimes in groups.

The online training provides an efficient and cost-effective learning with anytime and any-where flexibility. The 24 hour access to course materials allows the learner to learn on his/her own time and pace. More than the convenience, the online learning provides opportunities to interact with best of the faculty who would otherwise be unavailable. Additionally, it also helps the learner to master the communication skills needed in the cyber world.

Online training is much more learner-centred than conventional classroom training. In online training, the learner can read, listen, observe, interact and practice too. Then, one can interact with other students and tutors to discuss about what he/she is learning.
3.5.8 Teleconferencing

Teleconferencing is an electronic means which can bring together three or four people in two or more locations to discuss or share the use of two-way and one-way video, both full motion and slow scan, electronic blackboards, facsimile, computer graphics, radio satellite and videotext. But, the most essential part of all forms of teleconferencing is a good quality audio system to help immediate interaction among the participants for information exchange.

Educational teleconferencing can be a valuable medium for education. It involves the use of several media and permits interactive group communication by means of a two-way broadcast. Three main types of teleconferencing are audio teleconferencing, video teleconferencing and computer teleconferencing.

Among the factors to be considered in media selection are: (i) availability of adequately developed technology; (ii) accessibility of media to both teaching institution and the learners; (iii) acceptability to both teachers and learners; (iv) validity or appropriateness of the media in achieving the objectives of the learning materials; and (v) cost-effectiveness – the price must be commensurate to its values and quality.

The supplementary learning resources provided by the study units besides print material were: CDs, Radio broadcast, Television broadcast, Video Conferencing and e-Learning. It was found that except Madurai Kamaraj University the remaining study units provide CDs in addition to the printed course material. While TNOU provides CDs for all the programmes, University of Madras provides Audio-Video Cassettes for Music Programmes only. But the Annamalai University, instead of providing CDs to individual learners, kept them in their Library and provide to needy learners.
When further probed whether the CDs contain the same contents of the print materials or in any other form, among the three study units who provide CDs, University of Madras and TNOU stated that the CD contained in the form of actual classroom teaching; whereas Annamalai University stated that a selective portion of the print material is produced as CD.

Annamalai University and TNOU (sharing with IGNOU) broadcast the lectures through Radio. This practice was not found among the remaining three study units.

It was surprising to note that, no one among the study units provide Video-Conferencing facility to their learners, even in the era of advanced technology that emerge in India.

It was interesting to note that only TNOU in collaboration with IGNOU provides television broadcast Gyan Darshan and e-Learning facility to their learners. The remaining four dual mode DEIs are yet to establish these modes of teaching.

Even though printed course materials were supplied to the learners by all the study units, every DEIs should supplement with electronic media of learning resources such as, teaching through CDs, audio-video programmes, radio and television broadcasts, vide-conferencing and e-learning to face the competition and challenges within and outside the country. Earlier these things are implemented, the better.

3.6 PROMOTION MIX

Promotion is the means by which the service organisation communicates with its target markets. Within the communications mix there were a wide variety of
alternative communications and promotions tools which can be used in a communications programme.

Promotion and communication programme in distance education refers to the effective communication between DEIs and its distant learners so that the learners could be provided with necessary information and could be influenced to opt for higher studies and to decide their favour towards the particular DEI which undertakes such a promotional tool.

The following tasks are involved to evolve the right promotion and communication programme for marketing distance education:

❖ **Identification of Target Learners:** At this point a clear specification of the target learners to whom promotional activities are to be directed, should be undertaken.

❖ **Determine Promotion Objectives:** The objective of promotion is to inform, to persuade and to remind the learners. The key to development of an effective and integrated communication programme is to identify the communication objectives that the DEIs seek to achieve.

❖ **Development of the Message:** Development of messages involves a consideration of four issues:

  o Message content – what to say
  o Message structure – how to say it logically
  o Message style – creating a strong presence; and
  o Message source – who should develop it.

❖ **Selection of Communication Tools:** Determination of the appropriate communication tools involve considering personal communications such as, word of mouth and interaction during service delivery about the services
rendered by DEIs and non-personal communication such as advertising, information brochures, banners, posters etc.

The various elements of promotional mix in distance education comprises the following:

- Advertisement
- Sales Promotion
- Personal Selling
- Public Relations
- Word of Mouth
- Direct Mail

The choice of the communications mix for services involves decisions on such issues as whether to advertise, use personal selling or generate publicity through greater public awareness by such means as through editorials, publications and press activity. The choice of medium is determined by decisions on how to create the most favourable awareness amongst the target learners.

When promotional aspect was enquired with the DEIs of the study units, it was reported that they adopt all the elements of promotional mix such as advertisement and publicity, sales promotion method, personal selling, public relations and direct mail.

3.6.1 Advertisement

Advertising is one of the main forms of impersonal communication used by service firms. The role of advertising in services marketing is to build awareness of the service, to add to the customer's knowledge of the service, to help persuade the customer to buy, and to differentiate the service from other service offerings. Relevant and consistent advertising is therefore of great importance to the success of the marketing of the service.
Several issues are of special importance in advertising, including selection of media, the determination of advertising goals and methods of determining the advertising budget. The principal media in distance education include TV, radio, local cable network, newspapers, magazines, direct mail, posters and outdoor advertising and telephone. Selection of appropriate media involves taking into account the characteristics, atmosphere, coverage and comparative costs of the medium. This is essential to obtain the most effective return on advertising expenditure.

A question was put to the study units relating to media of advertisement and it is revealed that, all the study units opine that advertisement in Newspapers, Magazines, Posters and Banners were the most effective media to reach the target learners. Besides, Annamalai University and TNOU advertise through Local Cable Networks. Hoardings and Vehicular advertisements were also undertaken by Annamalai and Madurai Kamaraj Universities to reach the prospective learners even in remote places. Further, the Madurai Kamaraj University advertises through Radio broadcast. It is also noted that Annamalai University use almost all the media of advertisement in order to make wider publicity for their programmes and services to the potential learners. Regarding the question on which dailies the advertisements were published, it was found that all the study units publish their advertisements in English dailies – The Hindu, New Indian Express, Times of India, Hindustan Times – and Tamil dailies – Dinamalar, Dinakaran, Daily Thanthi, Dinamani. It was further noted that Annamalai University publish in Vernacular Newspapers such as Malayala Manorama, Eenadu, Kannada Praba, Navbharat Times; while Alagappa and Madurai Kamaraj Universities and University of Madras publish in Malayala Manorama and Eenadu. In respect of the periodicity of advertisements by the study units in various
media, it was found that there was no definite schedule on periodicity of advertisements. But invariably all study units advertise intensively during the beginning of admission sessions such as May/June and December/January. When the study units were asked to spell out the reason, which newspapers they consider elicit good response from the readers, all the study units ranked the newspapers in the following order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
<th>TAMIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Hindu</td>
<td>1. Daily Thanthi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Times of India</td>
<td>2. Dinamalar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. New Indian Express</td>
<td>3. Dinakaran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Hindustan Times</td>
<td>4. Dinamani</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to advertisement in the above dailies, the study units reported that they do advertise in special supplements released in education and also on the eve of special celebrations of the Universities, Voluntary Agencies etc. This was done more on social obligations rather than anticipating any specific additional response from the aspiring learners.

Apart from newspapers, the study units advertise in special magazines such as Maanavar Malar, AIU magazine, Universal Education, Employment News and Kumudam.

It was observed that none of the study units do avail the services of advertising agencies/ professionals for designing advertisement or developing the message, except using their services to advertise the matter developed by the study units themselves. It was not all the study units advertise through agencies all the time and very often they directly send the advertisements to the newspapers. Even if the advertisements are sent through the agencies, they provide only the minimum support of preparing the advertisement layout with a main aim of economising the space and
the cost. No actual designing is done in the real sense of the term by the agencies or by the study units, since the professional designing involves additional cost. It is here the private educational institutions which offer distance education programme have edge over the study units since they publish the advertisements or information brochure or the handbook in a more professional way to attract the attention of the prospective learners and to influence them.

When, it was further enquired with the study units, which media they think best suited to advertise their programmes, it was reported unanimously by all the units that Newspaper is the most effective media followed by Local Cable Network. The study units, in addition to print and electronic media, resort to Banners/ Posters and erecting Hoardings in prominent places such as Busstand, Railway Stations, Main Bazaars where a large number of people frequently gather.

Further it was probed whether the study units release their advertisement in the newspapers in All India editions or State-wise editions, all the study units except TNOU stated that they go in for All India editions as all of them operate all over the country; whereas TNOU go in for State-wise editions only since they operate within Tamil Nadu. However, during 2007-08 onwards TNOU offer their programmes outside the State also.

To a question relating to the budget allocated for advertisements per year by the study units, it was revealed that Annamalai University spends the highest amount of Rs.2.5 crores approximately for advertisement followed by Madurai Kamaraj University which spent Rs.1.5 crores. The Alagappa University spent more than Rs.50 lakhs; while the University of Madras and TNOU spent around Rs.40 lakhs for advertisement.
To a question relating to other promotional and publicity efforts taken by the study units, they replied as follows:

It is also pertinent to note that besides the study units, except Annamalai University, the Study Centres of other study units also undertake lot of advertisement and publicity programmes. On enquiry from the Study Centres, it was found that they advertise in Newspapers – both in English and Tamil, Magazines, Bit Notices, Posters and Banners, Hoardings and through Local Cable Networks. This aspect has been analysed in detail in Chapter-VI.

An enquiry with the study units reveal that, no unit is undertaking any scientific and systematic method of either evolving promotional objectives, engaging professional agencies for designing the advertisements, choosing the appropriate media and in allocation of advertisement budget. It is quite surprising that most of the study units did not undertake any scientific study of evaluating the effectiveness of their advertisement and promotional campaign.

3.6.2 Sales Promotion

Sales promotion is essentially a direct and immediate inducement that adds an extra value to the product/service and make the consumers to buy the product. The Committee on Definitions of the American Marketing Association defines sales promotion as that, “it includes all those sales activities that supplement both Personal Selling and Advertising and coordinate them and help to make them effective, such as displays, shows and expositions, demonstrations and other non-recurrent selling efforts not in the ordinary routine”. Sales promotion by and large is understood and practised as a catalyst and as a supporting facility to Advertising and Personal Selling and thus sales promotion will come handy to give the occasional spurt required to boost up current sales. The various sales promotional tools and techniques suitable to
market distance education programmes are: Information Brochure, Point of Purchase displays, Fee Concessions, Exhibitions etc.

When enquired about the sales promotion methods adopted by the study units, it was reported that they adopt the following sales promotion methods:

**TABLE-3.12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sales Promotion Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Details</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Brochure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee Concession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point of Purchase Displays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibitions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Primary data*

**Information Brochure**

It was found that all the study units were issuing free information brochures for promotion and publicity. This gives basic information about the Programmes offered, the duration, the cost of application and prospectus and the procedure of getting applying for the programme.

**Fee Concession**

It was found that the Alagappa University give fee concession to the students of regular courses and the permanent staff of the University. Madurai Kamaraj University give fee concession to Defence personnel; whereas Annamalai University, University of Madras and TNOU do not give any fee concession. By providing fee concession, the DEIs motivate the people for their academic development.
**POP/Display**

Point of Purchase Promotion (POP) is one of the most widely used sales promotional tools. The DEIs and Study Centres adopt mobile wobblers, skillfully designed and strategically located display units to attract the potential distance education learners. They also use window displays and counter displays of promotional material, course material to enthuse the visitors to enroll for distance education programmes.

It was reported by the study units that all of them adopt Point of Purchase display method to attract the prospective learners.

**Trade Fairs and Exhibitions**

Trade fairs and exhibitions are extensively used as sales promotion tools. They provide the organisation with the opportunity of introducing and displaying their products. This brings the potential consumers in direct contact with each other. ‘Seeing is believing’ is a concept behind large scale exhibitions.

It was found that among the study units, only Alagappa and Madurai Kamaraj Universities take part in trade fairs and exhibitions to exhibit the various academic programmes offered by them. Through these the essential details and guidance required by the people were provided. Sometimes spot admissions were also made in the exhibitions, if the exhibitions are conducted at the admission period.

### 3.6.3 Personal Selling

Personal selling is a broader concept and involves ‘oral presentation in a conversation with one or more prospective purchasers for the purpose of making sales’. The purpose of personal selling is to bring the right products into contact with the right customers.
To a question put to the study units whether they appoint any exclusive sales personnel to market distance education programmes, they replied that in the University set-up there was no provision for appointing sales personnel or marketing professionals, but the persons who were in the Reception/Enquiry counters normally act as sales personnel as they interact directly with the potential learners and provide them necessary guidance and counselling.

It is worth mentioning that a few private Study Centres of the DEIs appoint exclusive field sales personnel for contacting the potential learners individually at their place of residence and induce them to get enrolled for various programmes. The frequent and intimate contact could provide an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the study centre and the learners.

3.6.4 Public Relations

Public Relations (PR) is defined by the British Institute of Public Relations as “The planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill between an organisation and its publics”. These publics' refer to all the groups of people and organisations who have an interest in the service organisation.

PR is concerned with a number of marketing tasks. These include the following:

- Building or maintaining image
- Supporting the other communication activities
- Handling problems and issues
- Reinforcing positioning
- Influencing specific publics
- Assisting the launch of new services
Normally “public relations” means relation with publics – Internal public (directly connected with the organisation) and external public (people indirectly connected with the organisation). In the case of DEIs, the internal public includes teachers, administrative staff, technical staff and learners. The external public includes teachers who handle personal contact programmes, parents of learners, members of various committees etc. An effective Public Relations Office will help solve most of the problem of public or the learners and thus prevent possible criticism that may be levelled against the organisation for inaction/ inefficient services. Thus, the functioning of PRO office would have lasting impression on the minds of learners and other visiting public.
When a question was asked among the study units whether they have separate PRO office, it was revealed that only University of Madras has separate PRO office to deal with learners problems and to offer counselling services.

3.7 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE MIX

This refers to physical environment where the service is created and where the service provider and customer interact, plus any tangible elements that are used to communicate or support the role of the service.

Physical evidence in distance education refers to physical appearance of the building such as, design, layout, architecture, cabins, reception the physical appearance of print materials such as, appearance of wrapper, font face/ size, paper quality, print quality etc. Similarly the presentation in the pre-recorded audio-video cassettes such as animation, colours, pictures, etc. also constitute the elements of physical evidence.

To verify the physical evidence, the researcher personally visited all the study units, and observed the following:

3.7.1 Building

All the study units except TNOU have separate building for housing the office of DEI. However, TNOU is temporarily housed in a building belonged to Directorate of Technical Education. Even after six years of its establishment, still TNOU has not constructed its own building. But the buildings did not have any appreciable design suited to the distance education activities. Hence a systemic model exclusively suited to the operation of distance education need to be designed by the DEIs with provision for Information and counselling, student enquiry and redressal, administration, admission, despatch, finance, materials, multimedia, library and examination section. Besides the building should have provision for student waiting room, canteen, Bank
extension counters, Post Office, Xerox facilities, telephone facilities, drinking water, toilet facilities for learners, etc.

The researcher visited all the five study units to ascertain the availability of the following facilities and the observations were recorded below:

**TABLE-3.12**

**Physical Infrastructure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Alagappa University</th>
<th>Annamalai University</th>
<th>M.K. University</th>
<th>Univ. of Madras</th>
<th>TNOU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Separate Building</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space Availability</td>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>Spacious</td>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>Spacious</td>
<td>Insufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance of the Building</td>
<td>Elegant</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Elegant</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and Counselling</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student enquiry and redressal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative/Admission/Finance/Materials section</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia section</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library facilities</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination section</td>
<td>Separate</td>
<td>Attached to DEI</td>
<td>Attached to DEI</td>
<td>Separate</td>
<td>Attached to DEI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canteen</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank counter in DEI building</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xerox/Telephone booth in DEI building</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Primary data*
From the above table it was found that all the study units were functioning in a separate building, and the space was found to be sufficient in Alagappa and Madurai Kamaraj Universities, Annamalai University and University of Madras; but the TNOU was housed in a temporary building functioning with inadequate space.

With regard to appearance of the building, the Alagappa, Annamalai and Madurai Kamaraj Universities and University of Madras have smart appearance. It should be mentioned here that the size, design and appearance of the buildings do act as strong physical evidence for the image of the DEI.

Regarding the departmentalization of DEIs, it was found that all the study units have the essential departments/sections such as Information and Counselling, Student Enquiries and Redressal, Administrative/ Admission/ Finance/ Materials Sections. But the organizational structure of each section and space provided varies widely in all the study units. The researcher noticed that though each section has the name boards, there were found no sign boards that help the learners for proceeding to each sections and the researcher herself who was new to the study units experienced the difficulty to locate the particular section. Hence the DEIs should necessarily design their sections with required minimum space and also keep sign boards to properly guide the new visitors to the DEI. This would not only helps the visitors of DEI but also create a positive impact on the minds of the learners.

The modern trend in distance education is to use multimedia for teaching the learners. The adoption of multimedia equipments such as Overhead Projectors, LCD, On-line teaching through Teleconferencing, e-Learning etc. are now recommended for effective teaching-learning process. On examining the study units, it was found that only Annamalai University and TNOU have separate Multimedia Section and produce CDs of course materials and kept in their library for use by the learners.
It was found that except Alagappa University and University of Madras, remaining three study units have library exclusively for DEI. It was also found that in all study units the Examination Section functioning under the control of Regular Examination Section. However, an Additional Controller with a separate Section was functioning in all the universities under the overall supervision and control of the Controller of Examinations.

It would be better if the Examination wing of DEI is located in the DEI building itself so that the learners could get their grievances in admissions as well as examinations redressed through a single window system. Further, this would lead to administrative convenience with regard to change in address, correction in name, clearance of II/III year course fees etc could be sorted out immediately.

It would be better if Banks extension counters were also located in DEIs since all financial transactions in the form of collection of fees, remittance of fees, deposits, payments could all be done through Banks. But it was surprising to note that none of the study units had Bank Extension Counters in their DEI campus; however the banks were located in the main campus to cater to the requirements of the students of both regular and distance modes. Similarly the Post Office was found to be located in the main campus except TNOU. This would facilitate the DEIs to send book parcels and other official communications to their learners with ease.

It was found that only the Annamalai University and University of Madras have provided Xerox and Telephone booth facilities inside the DEI Campus to facilitate the learners.

Besides the physical infrastructure, the other dimensions of physical evidence mix were the physical appearance and quality of Student Identity Cards, Information Brochures, Prospectus, the size of the Course Material, the quality and design of the
wrapper, paper quality, printing quality, font face and size used helps to improve the image of the DEI and help to market their services.

From the survey, it was observed that the laminated Student Identity Cards issued by Alagappa University and TNOU were attractive and handy; whereas the Annamalai, Madurai Kamaraj Universities and University of Madras issue ordinary printed Identity Cards. Likewise, the Information Brochure of Alagappa, Annamalai Universities and TNOU were also attractive when compared to Madurai Kamaraj University and University of Madras.

With regard to the quality and appearance of Prospectus issued by the study units, the Prospectus of Alagappa University and TNOU found to be attractive than the Prospectus of Annamalai University and University of Madras.

Regarding the Course Materials issued by the study units, it was found that:

- the size of the course material was handy either dummy or double crown size in respect of Alagappa and Madurai Kamaraj Universities; the remaining three study units course materials were in A4 size.

- quality and design of wrapper of Alagappa and TNOU was found to be attractive with foreign art board; whereas all the remaining four study units use only cardboard wrapper.

- All the study units use fairly good quality of paper of TNPL 70 GSM Creamwove super print paper for printing their course materials.

- Print quality was found to be good in TNOU, whereas it was considered as fair in Annamalai University and University of Madras, but in Alagappa and Madurai Kamaraj Universities the quality of printing of course materials was not uniform.
• Alagappa and Annamalai Universities use identical type of font faces for all their course materials, while the remaining three units were not particular about using identical type of font faces for their course materials.

• Minimum size of 13pt Times New Roman font was used in the course materials of Alagappa University, and 12pt Arial font was used by Annamalai University and TNOU which are usually visible to all age group of learners to read the materials easily; whereas from the course materials of Madurai Kamaraj University and University of Madras it was found that they were not particular about the font size.

It is evident from the above analysis that physical appearance and quality of Student Identity Cards, Information Brochure, Prospectus and Course Materials have positive impact among the learners and to increase the image of the DEI.

3.8 PEOPLE MIX

The people working in the organisation forms the backbone of the organisation and it is their behaviour, involvement and commitment that decided the success or failure of the system.

The people factor in distance education services refers to both academic and administrative staff of the DEIs. The perceptions of the learners regarding the quality of service offered by DEIs are directly influenced by the actions/behaviour of both administrative and academic staff of the DEI.
3.8.1 Administrative Staff Development

The administrative staff of DEIs have a significant role to play in making distance education programmes and the institution a success. They undertake a wide range of activities such as course development, course delivery and course/programme implementation, including student support services. The staff include junior assistants, computer operators, assistants, section officers/superintendents, stenographers, assistant registrars, deputy registrar’s etc. They perform their functions in close collaboration with the academics. Without proper awareness and a general understanding of the distance mode of teaching-learning and a degree of sensitivity to the problems of learners, it would not be possible to make distance teaching a meaningful activity. The academics, the administrators and the administrative staff must work in tandem and their focus should always be the learners. There is not a single activity in an open university that can be viewed in isolation, though each category of the personnel may be engaged in different sets of activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Alagappa University</th>
<th>Annamalai University</th>
<th>M.K. University</th>
<th>Univ. of Madras</th>
<th>TNOU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Staff</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Programmes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>11.36</td>
<td>116.06</td>
<td>29.33</td>
<td>28.36</td>
<td>28.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Information Base on Distance Higher Education in India, DEC, New Delhi.

From the above table it is evident that Annamalai University has the highest percentage of 116.06 academic staff with regard to number of programmes offered and the least of 11.36 per cent found in Alagappa University. This could be due to Annamalai University conduct PCP directly under its control; whereas this
responsibility is given to Study Centres by the Alagappa University. In the remaining three study units the percentage of academic staff was found to be around 29 per cent who only acts as coordinators for different programmes.

Similarly, the ratio between administrative staff and enrolment can have impact on the functioning of the DEI.

**TABLE-3.14**  
**Administrative Staff vs Enrolment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Alagappa University</th>
<th>Annamalai University</th>
<th>M.K. University</th>
<th>Univ. of Madras</th>
<th>TNOU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff (permanent)</td>
<td>18 (35.30)</td>
<td>561 (95.41)</td>
<td>183 (62.72)</td>
<td>136 (75.98)</td>
<td>35 (66.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (temporary staff)</td>
<td>33 (64.70)</td>
<td>27 (4.59)</td>
<td>109 (37.28)</td>
<td>43 (24.02)</td>
<td>18 (33.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrolment (in lakhs)</td>
<td>1.2 (0.04)</td>
<td>2.5 (0.22)</td>
<td>1.4 (0.21)</td>
<td>1.2 (0.15)</td>
<td>0.42 (0.12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Figures in the paranthesis shows the percentage)

*Source: Information Base on Distance Higher Education in India, DEC, New Delhi.*

From the above table, it was found that the Alagappa University has major segment of 64.70 per cent of temporary employees and the least percentage of 35.30 per cent of permanent employees; whereas the Annamalai University has the highest of 95.41 per cent of permanent employees and least percentage of 4.59 per cent temporary employees; but the remaining three study units have temporary employees varying from 24 to 37 per cent and 62 to 75 per cent permanent employees. Though utilizing the services of temporary employees was economical to the DEIs, it is not advisable to vest the responsibility with them as they cannot be made accountable. But having the large segment of permanent administrative staff, as in the case of Annamalai University is also not desirable as there is no guarantee that the enrolment will be constant/ increase in future. Therefore a reasonable composition is preferably
one third of regular and two-third temporary administrative staff for the management of distance education system.

Further, from the above table it was found that the ratio between the administrative staff and student enrolment was found to be lowest (0.04 per cent) in Alagappa University; whereas in Annamalai and Madurai Kamaraj Universities the ratio was highest (22 per cent). This only shows that there was no scientific manpower assessment by the study units.

In DEIs, the failure in any activity would bring to halt the gigantic wheel – the distance teaching system. Failure to carry out a minor task would stop major operations leading to demotivation of people involved and also make the institution vulnerable to public criticism. If the top-level administrators were not sensitive to meet the requirements of DEIs and provide the necessary infrastructural facilities, the efforts of the teaching and the non-teaching staff will not be rewarding. Therefore, the administrative staff including top-level administrators should be aware of the nature of their duties and responsibilities and would execute them by keeping the requirements and welfare of the learners utmost in their mind.

The following are the desirable behaviour expected of from the administrative staff of DEIs:

• to possess adequate professional knowledge and skill in the field of distance education
• to keep the records and registers in prompt and systematic manner
• to prepare official notes, circulars, statements on time with neat execution
• to share the work of colleagues at times of need
• to maintain the equipment
• to possess positive attitude towards distance education
• to have thorough understanding of collective and complex nature of work and responsibilities
• to be prompt in attending to work and learners enquiries and grievances
• to be polite and possess the quality of empathy while dealing with learners
• to develop the qualities of self-discipline and sense of responsibility

Hypothesis-1

To find out the significance of attitude of learners towards on the services of the Administrative Staff of the DEIs the following hypothesis was framed:

\[ H_0: \text{There is no significant difference between the attitude of Learners and the services of Administrative Staff of the DEIs.} \]

The Mean scores were computed to find out the significance level of attitude of learners towards the services of Administrative Staff of DEIs, and the results were presented below:

**TABLE-3.15**

**Attitude of the Learners towards the Services of DEI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Alagappa University</th>
<th>Annamalai University</th>
<th>M.K. University</th>
<th>Univ. of Madras</th>
<th>TNOU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td>37.74</td>
<td>39.45</td>
<td>37.33</td>
<td>39.14</td>
<td>38.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the mean scores it was found that the Alagappa and Madurai Kamaraj Universities fall under one group and Annamalai University and University of Madras forms another group; whereas TNOU was different from these two groups which shows a significant difference between the three groups.

Since the average Mean scores of all the study units was only 38.37, which was only at the minimum accepted level, the administrative staff need to be given proper training to acquire desirable behaviour and develop positive attitude in rendering better services to the learners.
3.8.2 Academic Staff Development

The academic staff in distance education comprises of the faculty, the tutors, the counselors, and the course-writers. Broadly, they are responsible for developing and modification of curriculum, preparation of course materials, provide academic counseling, evaluate the assignments, guide the project work, and assess and evaluate the learners in the term-end examinations. Besides, the academic staff, the technical personnel such as web designers, software developers, audio/video script writers and media experts also form part of the course team. Thus the role of academic staff in DEIs is considered to be unique and different when compared to the teachers in the conventional system. But the investigation with the study units has revealed that the faculty who are working in the DEIs were not trained for this purpose. They did not have pre-service training in distance education either. The faculty members were either drawn from conventional system or fresh recruits without any exposure/knowledge on distance education system.

Similarly, most of the academic counsellors and course writers for distance education were also brought from conventional system. But the teachers of distance education require a different style in teaching and writing of course materials. This has already been discussed in detail under the product mix.

The survey among the study units has revealed that only TNOU has conducted Orientation Programme on SIM pattern for Course-writers and all the remaining four study units deputed their faculty members to undergo such training conducted by other institutions. But the percentage of such faculty members deputed varies from 5 to 10 per cent only, which means that majority of 90 percent of the faculty members are yet to be exposed to the techniques of preparation of lessons under SIM pattern.
From the above it is evident that for efficient functioning of distance education system, both academic and administrative staff requires specialized training to perform their respective roles.

### 3.8.3 Need for Staff Training and Development

The training and development is required for the staff for efficient functioning of any system. It helps to acquire knowledge, develop appropriate skills and attitudes and build competence. The staff training and development becomes more relevance for distance education system to provide high quality of self-instructional material; to provide better student support services to the learners; to build relationship among the learners, faculty and the administration; and to suggest suitable strategies to improve the quality of services to learners.

### 3.8.4 Areas of Training

The following are the potential areas of training in distance education system:

i. Basics of distance and open education and relevant knowledge about the distance teaching institution(s).

ii. Curriculum development

iii. Communication technology including on-line teaching

iv. Preparation of Print materials under self-instructional method

v. Audio/video materials (scripting, identifying areas for audio/video programmes)

vi. Assignments/ evaluation (policies and procedures)

vii. Counselling and tutoring

viii. Team work, time management etc.

### 3.8.5 Methods of Training

The training methods relevant to the staff of DEIs are providing relevant literature in the form of handouts/ booklets to the participants for self-study; arranging lectures by eminent experts; conduct of seminars/ workshops, orientation
programmes; arranging brainstorming sessions, role play; and assigning research projects.

The selection of appropriate training methods depends upon the objectives of the training, the nature of the content/subject matter, the types of trainees and the cost involved.

The survey of the five Asian distance teaching institutions undertaken by the ICDE⁴ has identified several problems common to all the institutions under survey. Among these, the following could be cited as relevant to the issues discussed here.

- Recruiting qualified, competent and committed staff.
- Dependence on large number of outside academics as course writers
- Lack of suitable staff to undergo training programme for developing the course materials

From the above, it is clear that staff training and development is a highly critical area for the development of distance education.

3.8.6 Desirable Professional Qualification

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has taken necessary efforts to provide required manpower with necessary professional qualification and skill to DEIs/Open Universities by offering a Post-Graduate Diploma in Distance Education (PGDDE) and M.A. in Distance Education (MADE). It is worth mentioning that the University Grants Commission has also directed the dual mode Universities to ensure that the staff working in the DEIs possess the above P.G. Diploma and M.A. in Distance Education courses of IGNOU.

The people with these qualifications can definitely be better performers than the people without this. Hence it is very much imperative that while recruiting the

⁴ ICDE (1986-87). Developments in Distance Education in Asia – An analysis of five case studies, ICDE/ UNESCO Project undertaken in 1986/87.
academic staff and the administrative staff such as Director, Public Relations Officer, Deputy Registrar, Assistant Registrar etc. the DEIs should make it mandatory that they should possess M.A./ P.G. Diploma in Distance Education as an essential qualification besides their subject specialization. In respect of other administrative staff, possessing P.G. Diploma in Distance Education should be made as “desirable qualification”. The DEIs can also consider sanctioning an additional increment as an incentive to the existing staff who qualifies with M.A/PG Diploma in Distance Education to motivate them to undergo such programmes. So that people with sound knowledge in distance education would occupy these posts and effectively discharge their duties for the development of distance education.

The number of staff in the study units who are qualified with any Diploma/ Degree in Distance Education are given below:

**TABLE-3.16**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>No. of Staff</th>
<th>MADE</th>
<th>PGDDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alagappa University</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annamalai University</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madurai Kamaraj University</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Madras</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNOU</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1298</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Primary data*

From the above table, it could be seen that only 0.31 per cent of the staff of all the five study units, possess the qualification of M.A/ P.G. Diploma in Distance Education which was quite discouraging.
The number of Research Projects undertaken by Academic staff of the study units in Distance Education were given below:

**TABLE-3.17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>No. of Staff</th>
<th>No. of Projects</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alagappa University</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annamalai University</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madurai Kamaraj University</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>68.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Madras</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNOU</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>355</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Primary data*

It is seen from the above table that in Madurai Kamaraj University 68.18 per cent, in TNOU 15 per cent and in Annamalai University 6.92 per cent of academic staff have undertaken research projects. It was surprising to note that the academic staff of Alagappa University and University of Madras has not taken even a single Research Project in Distance Education. Thus it was evident that research activities were very weak in the study units and the DEIs have to motivate their staff to undertake more number of research projects in the field of distance education which would go a long way in improving the functioning of DEIs. It is to be mentioned here that the DEC is encouraging research activities in the ODL institutions by making available sufficient funds for research projects.

**3.9 PROCESS MIX**

The processes by which services are created and delivered to the customer is a major factor within the services marketing mix. All work activity is process. Processes involve the procedures, task schedules, mechanisms, activities and routines by which a product or service is delivered to the customer. It involves policy
decisions about customer involvement and employee discretion. Identification of process management as a separate activity is a prerequisite of service quality improvement. The importance of this element is especially highlighted in service businesses.

Decision-making processes are also of relevance. Some service providers give their service deliverers the autonomy to make decisions. The processes of delivery and decision-making, thus are of great significance for the successful marketing of a service. The choice of process can therefore be a source of competitive advantage for a service organisation.

Service processes can be analysed according to their complexity and divergence. Complexity is concerned with the nature of the steps and sequences that constitute the process, while divergence refers to the executional latitude or variability of the steps and sequences. Processes have characteristics that can be deliberately and strategically managed within the marketing mix with the purpose of reinforcing or changing the positioning. Processes are thus a marketing mix element which can have a substantial role in reinforcing positioning and in product development. The distance education services are high both in complexity and divergence. The processes and people are closely linked together as mix elements.

It is relevant to mention here the illustration given by Koul and Ramanujam (1993) about the case of electricity and the subsequent exposition of the different roles and functions of various categories of administrative staff working in DEIs. If there is no electricity for a few hours, it will cause a series of difficulties and delays in delivering services and ultimately a number of problems for learners. The machines such as computers, photocopiers, telephones (intercoms) etc. cannot be operated, the routine work and communications will be disrupted. Hence the administrators and the
estate management officials of the organisation should make available the electricity without any interruption; otherwise the efforts of the academic and administrative staff will not be rewarding or may only succeed partially in achieving the educational goals of the DEIs.

The process mix of distance education marketing comprises of the following elements:

3.9.1 Admission Domain

(1) *Procedure in attending to information/ enquiries:* The DEIs have to establish a separate Information Cell with a trained personnel to attend to the enquiries of the prospective learners/ visiting public and to provide necessary information and appropriate guidance to them. Sometimes, it may not be possible to provide the required details immediately. Hence it is very much imperative that a separate ‘enquiry register’ to be maintained in the Information Cell and date-wise enquiries received and action taken must be recorded. In addition there must be proper monitoring mechanism in which a senior official in the rank of Superintendent should verify the enquiry register periodically and ensure that those enquires are properly attended to. Wherever required, the information sought by the people are given either by mail/e-mail/ telephone.

On inquiring this aspect with the study units, it was found that all the study units have separate Information Cell/ Enquiry Counter to provide necessary information and guidance to the learners and public. Only Annamalai University and University of Madras maintain ‘enquiry register’ and also follow-up action taken in respect of enquiries from learners. Further, Annamalai University, University of Madras and TNOU have separate
Grievance Redressal Cell to solve the problems of the learners. It was worth to mention here that 24 hours Help-line Services were offered by Annamalai University and TNOU to the learners who were at a distant to receive information and also record their grievances. The Alagappa and Madurai Kamaraj Universities were yet to provide these facilities to their learners.

(2) **Applications for Admission and Prospectus:** The Applications for admission should contain all the relevant information required for considering the candidate for admission to a specific programme. Besides, it should also contain certain additional information such as community, marital status, employment status, area of residence, which are required for creating a database to analyse the socio-demographic profile of the distance learners.

The quality of the paper, printing and the structural format of the application form are testimony to the image of the DEI. Similarly, the Prospectus need to be designed to provide the necessary guidelines to the learners and the basic information about the programme. The artistic way in which the prospectus are prepared also tells upon the image of the institution.

An analysis of the quality and content of Application form for Admission, it was found that the size, the quality and the content do not vary significantly among the study units. However, there was a wide variation with Prospectus in terms of its quality and the content. A further analysis has revealed that each study unit has their own scheme of developing their Prospectus. For instance, the Alagappa University has two different types of Prospectus – one for Semester programmes and another for Annual programmes; the Annamalai University has different types of Prospectus based on faculty-wise – Arts, Management, Information Technology, Science, Health Sciences, Engineering
and Technology; the University of Madras prepares Prospectus based on levels of programmes – Under Graduate, Post Graduate, Diploma and Certificate; whereas TNOU follows a different pattern – one for Vocational programmes and another for General programmes. The appearance of the Prospectus of Alagappa University and TNOU are considered to be more elegant than the remaining three study units, according to the opinion of learners.

(3) **Admission Process**: The admission process consists of eligibility scanning and confirmation of admission. The turnaround time for admission confirmation from the date of receipt of filled-in application by the study units varies from one to two weeks time. While Alagappa University takes a weeks time, the other study units takes a maximum of 15 days time to confirm admissions.

(4) As pointed under the Price Mix, the course fees is fixed mainly based on competitive pricing method by the study units. On enquiry with the study units relating to mode of payment of course fees, it was found that all the study units collects the fees in the form of Demand Draft. Besides Demand Drafts, the Annamalai and Madurai Kamaraj Universities, and the University of Madras collects the fees through Challans in their campus based banks also.

(5) The procedure for *change of address/ medium/ optional or elective subjects* of the learners required to be evolved. There must be a system through which these requests from the learners are to be carried out and the action taken to be informed to the learners within the specified period of time. The absence of such a system would lead to unwanted tension and anxiety among the learners. When this aspect was enquired with the study units, it was found that only the Alagappa University intimate to the learners after incorporating the changes;
whereas the remaining four study units even though they carry out the requests of the learners, they seldom intimate them and it takes a period of one month time invariably by all the study units. This long period to carry out the changes are mainly due to the fact that the study units do not consider them as a priority area and hence keep them pending till they complete other essential work. It may be true from the side of the DEIs, but on the part of the learners, such unnecessary delays not only disturbs them but it should not be forgotten that the perfect execution of such a minor request would certainly help create a strong image on the services of the DEIs. Hence it would be better if DEIs assigns an exclusive staff to take care of these issues.

(6) Procedure for Grievances Redressal of Learners: Grievances or complaints received from the learners are to be given prime importance and each DEI should have well established procedure and system to redress the grievances of the learners. This is the area where all the DEIs should concentrate, as every learner, irrespective of the DEI have some sort of grievances because of the distance from the institution. A few examples are non-receipt of admission intimation, ID cards, course materials, assignment marks, and examination related grievances such as incomplete results, non-receipt of marksheets, provisional/degree certificates and so on. At present the DEIs seldom respond to the grievances of the learners. Therefore every DEI should have a Grievance Redressal Cell with trained personnel who should maintain a ‘Grievance Register’ register to record the grievances of the learners, action taken to redress the grievance and the mode of communication to the learners – mail/ e-mail/ telephone. This Register should be periodically checked by a
supervisory cadre personnel for the smooth and effective functioning of the
Cell.

When the question relating to the mechanism followed by the study units in
redressing the grievances of learners, it was claimed that every study unit has
some sort of Grievance Redressal mechanisms in the name of a Cell/ Section/
Unit to attend to the grievances of the learners. But it is a hard fact that these
units have not solved the grievances of the learners appreciably, as revealed by
the learners. Consequently the problem of learners in getting their grievances
solved, still remains. As mentioned already this is a most critical area and
hence requires extra care and attention on the part of DEIs.

3.9.2 Academic Domain

Basically, whether it is a dual mode or a single mode university, it is
autonomous and its functioning are regulated by their own Statues and Acts.
Accordingly, for conceiving and launching any academic programme including
framing the curriculum and getting them approved by the appropriate Statutory
Bodies of the University, they go in as per the provisions of the respective Acts.
Similarly, besides the approval by the University bodies, all the academic
programmes to be offered through distance education requires approval from DEC.
In addition, the Management and Technology programmes require approval from All
India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and Education programmes requires
approval of National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Nursing programmes
by Nursing Council of India (NCI) and Paramedical programmes by Paramedical
Board. In a few cases, approval from the respective State Government is also
required. It was the moral and legal obligation of the Universities to get approval for
their programmes from the appropriate Statutory and Regulatory bodies as mentioned
above. The learners would also assume that such recognitions were there for the programmes they propose to enroll. Hence any violation or failure on the part of the DEIs to get such recognition would land the learners in trouble as they run the risk of non-recognition of their degrees/ diplomas while they go for employment.

From the enquiries conducted among the study units, it was found that the programmes offered by them have gone through the official bodies of the respective study units. But the main problem was the question of getting necessary approval from the National Regulatory Bodies. Even here, there was two different opinions that the Universities, being autonomous bodies, need not go for approval from national bodies, and whereas the regulatory bodies opine that the Universities should also get recognition from them. Hence the issue, persists.

A question was put to the study units as to how many of their programmes were recognized by DEC, it was found that TNOU has got the approval of DEC for all their academic programmes and Annamalai University out of 249 programmes, they got approval for 110 programmes; whereas the Madurai Kamaraj University and University of Madras has initiated steps to get DEC recognition for their academic programmes and Alagappa University has not yet started any efforts in this regard. But as per the latest information, except Alagappa University all other study units have got DEC approval for all their academic programmes offered through distance education, and Alagappa University has initiated steps to get the DEC approval.

Similarly, only Annamalai University has got the approval from AICTE for their Management programmes and TNOU has acquired the recognition of NCTE for its Education programmes.

It is strongly recommended that for State dual mode universities, the respective State Government should insist that they get approval from relevant
National Regulatory Bodies before launching their academic programmes. It is pertinent to note here that the Tamil Nadu State Council for Higher Education (TANSCHE) has recently sent a circular to all the State Universities offering distance education in Tamil Nadu that they should get approval from the national bodies.

**Procedure of Material Development and Distribution:**

The most significant activity of the distance education is both production and distribution of the course materials. Again both administrative as well as academic tasks are involved and a critical factor as far as the learners are concerned, since the moment they got enrolled, they would expect the materials to be given to them. But very often it is not so. This ultimately leads to legal tangle between the learner and the DEI and spoil the image of the institution and the lack of confidence of the learners on the distance education system altogether.

The non-receipt of course materials on time by the learners is one of the major and a common problem of all the DEIs. This problem is not an exception to the study units which also suffers with the same disease, as reported by the learner respondents. This means that there is some system failure and a fault in the process in the area of production and distribution of materials.

The ideal process commences from forecasting the enrolment and assessing the actual requirements of course materials with reasonable precision. Again, for distance education services, the ideal period of forecasting and keeping the ready stock would be a minimum of three years. It is also suggested that a minimum period of one year is required as ‘Preparation Time’ between the conception and launching of any new academic programme as it involves developing the curriculum, writing and printing of course material and keeping them ready for distribution to the learners, the moment they enrolled. But it is easy to say than done.
The usual problems faced in the above process were inherent delay on the part of the lesson-writers to complete the task of preparation of material within the specific time and the red-tapism in the bureaucracy in providing administrative clearance for the work relating to printing and honouring the printing bills etc.

Hence what is required is the identification of committed lesson-writers, close monitoring of the whole system by the officials concerned, better administrative and financial autonomy to the person heading the DEI and above all the quality of empathy and wisdom on the part of the bureaucrats to provide necessary support to the DEI.

**Personal Contact Programme (PCP)**

Equally important and sensitive area of distance education is the effective conduct of face-to-face programme. In fact the quality of the PCP would have a lasting impression on the minds of the learners on the efficacy and efficiency of the DEI. Hence a foolproof system of PCP need to be evolved by the DEIs.

Among the various critical issues relating to PCP are the duration of PCP, the timing and the venue of PCP, advanced intimation of PCP schedule to the learners and the quality of Resource Persons handling the classes in PCP. From the enquiries with the study units it was revealed that there was no uniformity regarding the number of hours/ days of the conduct of PCP for different programmes. The actual number of days of contact programme by different study units was already discussed under the Place Mix. It is pertinent to mention here that the guidelines given by Tamil Nadu State Council for Higher Education (TANSCHE) regarding the number of hours the PCP to be conducted. The TANSCHE has recommended a minimum of 100 hours of PCP classes for programmes which do not involve laboratory practicals, and a minimum of 200 hours for programmes involving laboratory practicals. But the
analysis of this aspect among the study units reveal that no study unit conducts PCP for the recommended duration. The venue, timing and advance intimation of PCP schedule to the learners for the conduct of PCP are also other critical factors deciding the success of the DEIs. While timing and venue are the contributing factors for the convenience of the learners, the advance intimation of PCP schedule would help the learners to plan well in advance to attend the PCP and to take advantage of it.

The methodology of conduct of PCP also differ among the study units. While Annamalai University is arranging the PCP and selecting their own teachers and engage resource persons on their own from outside, the Alagappa University and TNOU have vested the entire responsibility of conduct of PCP to the Study Centres. The Madurai Kamaraj University and the University of Madras are utilizing their own faculty as well as from outside for the PCP classes within Tamil Nadu and for outside Tamil Nadu, the responsibility was given to the Study Centres.

The basic responsibility of the educational institution is to provide teaching and hence needless to mention it should be the responsibility of the DEIs to take up the responsibility of conduct of PCP on their own. Shifting of this responsibility to the study centre is certainly not acceptable. Since the study centres who do not have the required professional skill and resources and above all reluctant to part with their financial resources cannot do any justice in providing the required service to the learners. These views have been aptly confirmed by the opinion expressed by the learner respondents. Though the DEIs which have delegated these responsibility to the study centres may argue that they have a monitoring system to evaluate the performance of the study centres on this count, practically it is not so. Hence there must be a strong direction from the Government and other Regulatory bodies to the DEIs that this part of the distance education cannot be and should not be delegated to
anybody else and it is the prime responsibility of the DEIs to do it on their own. This point has been stressed because when the PCP is arranged by the DEIs, they would be able to arrange for qualified and competent resource persons. It was reported by the learner respondents that the study centres often use unemployed, inexperienced and sometimes mediocre people to handle the classes, which amounts to diluting the quality of teaching, image of the DEI and defeat of the very purpose of distance education.

3.9.3 Task Schedules

Every task in the distance education should have a prescribed schedule of time for effective functioning. Some of the tasks which require specific time schedule are:

- **Admission Schedule:** There must be a specific time schedule from the date of receipt of applications till the issue of admission confirmation. This should also be mentioned in the Student Handbook/Prospectus so that the learner will be aware of the time schedule within which he would be receiving the information about his admission status. Further, this would also avoid unnecessary enquiries from the learners. On scrutiny of the Prospectus issued by the study units, the researcher could not found the admission time schedule in any of the Student Handbook/Prospectus issued by the DEIs. Hence it is recommended that the DEIs should necessarily incorporate the Admission Schedule in their handbooks issued to the learners not only to minimize the repeated enquiries from the learners, but also create a goodwill on the part of the DEIs.

- **Advertisement Schedule:** The DEIs should prepare a Schedule of advertisements, which comprises of the details of the media, timing and frequency of advertisements, so that the amount invested on advertisements
can bring maximum return in terms of responses for admission. Similarly a scientific allocation of funds for advertisement must also be made in the budget. It was observed from the study units that they have their own schedule of advertisements and allocation of advertisement budget that too based on the previous year allocation rather than objective based.

- Similarly definite **time schedule** should also be followed and communicated to the learners regarding the course material distribution, examinations and declaration of results. It is quite appreciable that Alagappa and Annamalai Universities and University of Madras have a definite Examination Schedule including the definite dates of commencement of examinations every year. Whereas Madurai Kamaraj University and TNOU do not follow any definite dates of Examinations.

### 3.9.4 Evaluation Domain

Yet another significant area of distance education is the conduct of examinations and declaration of results. Unless there is a clear and definite system it would lead to confusion and chaos in the entire examination system. The process starts from issue of Examination Application Form to the learners and ends with issue of Certificates. The other activities include sending the Examination Schedule, issuing Hall tickets, identification of suitable examination centres, preparation and despatch of question paper and other stationeries to the examination centre, smooth conduct of examinations, arranging for evaluation of answer scripts and declaration of results within a definite time schedule and issue of Certificates.

On enquiry with the learner respondents, they reported that they find it difficult to get the Examination Application on time and also not aware of the fees to be paid and the last date for applying to the examination. To overcome this kind of
grievances the DEIs can follow the pattern of IGNOU which includes the examination fees along with the course fees with the conception that all the learners would appear for the examinations for the first time. The respective examination application format are provided in the Student’s Handbook. When these aspects are enquired with the study units, it was found that all the study units invariably have their own websites and they load Examination Application Format with instructions to fill-up the application, fees particulars and last date for submission, Examination Time-table and also Results declared after evaluation.

It is pertinent to note here that the Examination Application, Examination Schedule and the time of declaration of results are incorporated in the Prospectus will serve the purpose to the learners to plan and write the examinations without any tension. Besides, as done by the School Education, the DEIs may announce results over mobile service also to facilitate the learners to know their results.

To a question relating to the turnaround time of announcing results put to the study units, it was revealed that Alagappa University declares the results in a recorded time of one to two months; whereas the Annamalai University takes 3 to 5 months time to declare the results. This time delay may be due to huge enrolment and also more number of programmes offered by the Annamalai University. However, it is reasonable that all the DEIs declare their results within a time span of 2 to 3 months to facilitate the learners to join further degree or diploma programmes and also who seek job opportunities.

At present the learners of distance education who have successfully completed the examinations are not permitted to receive their Degrees in person in the Convocations, probably this may be due to the large number of learners getting the degree through this mode. It may be true, but at the same time atleast the Rank
holders in each programme may at least be allowed to participate and receive their
degrees in Person in Convocation, as a sort of motivation. This would also give a
feeling to the learners that they are also treated on par with the students of regular
mode.

3.10 CONCLUSION

The DEIs adopt various strategies to reach out to learners, devise strategies to
balance the media mechanism to deliver the programme, establish the student support
service network to minimize the gap between the learner and the institution, and many
more steps they take to make the distance education programmes – a success.

Therefore, viability and sustainability of such system may be enhanced
through application of marketing approach to serve the learners in an improved way.
There are a number of activities which are undertaken in marketing, they include –
doing research, designing a programme around the marketing mix, preparing a
strategic plan, performing a marketing audit etc. These activities are interrelated and
fit closely together and serve as a tool for managing the distance education system.

Even amongst those DEIs which claim to have developed more sophisticated
marketing approaches, only a few have capitalized on full potential of marketing, and
recognized that everyone within an organisation has the ability to contribute to
external or internal marketing initiatives. Many organisations are still reluctant to
make the change necessary to focus on the marketplace, even when the need for more
active marketing is generally agreed. As such developing marketing initiatives among
staff working in DEIs needs some basic conceptual framework.