

Kothari Commission  
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## 12. OPEN EDUCATION

12.1.1 The open learning system augments opportunities for education, ensures access, is cost-effective and promotes a relevant, flexible and innovative system of education. The initial experience of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and the State Open Universities, as well as the National Open School underlines the tremendous potential of the open learning system.

### 2. THE OPEN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

12.2.1 The IGNOU which launched its academic programmes in 1987 has made significant progress. The University presently offers Bachelor's degree programmes in 13 disciplines, a Master's degree in Business Administration, and several diploma and certificate programmes. The annual enrolment has increased from about 4400 in 1987 to over 62,000 in 1992. The three State Open Universities, namely, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University in Andhra Pradesh (BRAOU), the Kota Open University (KOU) and the Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University in Maharashtra (YCMOU) together admitted about 65,000 students in 1992. The distance education institutions (open universities and institutes of Correspondence Education of conventional universities) accounted for about 11.5% of the enrolment in higher education in 1990-91.

12.2.2 Several new programmes in employment-related areas are being developed by the IGNOU. Advanced Diploma programmes in Construction Management, Advanced Diploma in Irrigation and Water Resources, Postgraduate Diploma in Journalism and Mass-Communication, Bachelor's Degree in Nursing and Master's Degree in Distance Education and Library and Information Science are some of the new programmes under development by the IGNOU. The State Open Universities have also launched a number of relevant programmes in Electronics, Horticulture, Education and Communication besides the diploma and degree programmes in Humanities, Commerce and Social Sciences. The Directorates of Correspondence Education of the conventional universities have also been diversifying their-programmes. These institutions are presently offering a large number of diploma and certificate programmes in technical/professional areas.

12.2.3 The IGNOU has set up a Distance Education Council as a statutory body for the promotion, coordination and determination of standards of the open university/distance education system.

- \* The Distance Education Council will take steps for networking the State Open Universities and other distance\*education institutions, for sharing courses and programmes, and developing a

pattern and structure for the open university programmes that would facilitate student mobility among programmes as well as institutions.

- \* The open university/distance education programmes would be structured on a modular pattern with provision for transfer of credits. Students will have the facility of registering for courses of their choice which, in appropriate combinations, will enable them to obtain certificates, diplomas or degrees.
- \* The Distance Education Council will encourage joint development of programmes and courses by IGNOU, State Open Universities and the Directorates of Correspondence Education of conventional universities.
- \* It will also recommend financial assistance from IGNOU to state open universities for their development and for undertaking specific projects.
- \* It will initiate steps to organise programmes of training for the development of human resources for the open university/distance education system especially in such areas as course development and production, organisation of support services, etc. The possibility of establishing institutional mechanisms for this purpose will be explored.

12.2.4 The Distance Education Council will ultimately assume the responsibility for developing the existing correspondence education programmes on a selective basis and converting them into distance education programmes of an acceptable quality. However, for the time being, the responsibility for the development of distance education programmes in the conventional universities will remain with the UGC. There would be close consultation between the UGC and the IGNOU in the development of such programmes.

12.2.5 Electronic media will be progressively involved in the expansion of open learning. Doordarshan is already telecasting programmes of the IGNOU three days a week for 30 minutes from 6.30 to 7.00 a.m. The AIR stations of Hyderabad and Bombay are broadcasting selected IGNOU programmes. The Hyderabad station of All India Radio has set up a transmission network in Andhra Pradesh for broadcasting the programmes offered by the BRAOU. A few of the Institutes of Correspondence Education have made arrangements with the All India Radio for broadcasting their lessons. Distance education requires as a matter of prereq-

uisite multimedia instruction and its success will substantially depend on the availability of facilities for broadcasting and telecasting. Efforts will be made during the Eighth Plan period to augment and network these facilities so that these programmes can reach a larger number of students.

12.2.6 Measures will be taken to promote the mobility of students among Open Universities and among the traditional universities and open universities. A significant development in this regard is the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Pondicherry and the IGNOU which provides for recognition of each other's degrees and diplomas as well as transfer of credits for courses successfully completed by students between the two universities. Efforts will be made to promote similar arrangements with other universities.

12.2.7 The recommendation of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) that each State should establish an open university will be pursued with the State Governments for implementation during the Eighth Plan. The IGNOU will provide technical and consultancy support to the State Governments for this purpose. The Distance Education Council will prepare guidelines for providing financial support to State Open Universities for their development. Such assistance will include support to develop new programmes and courses. The course materials already produced by the IGNOU and other open universities would be made available to new State Open Universities which could offer them through the languages of the region so that access to open university programmes is widened. In order to promote the open university system on a significant scale, the existing rules framed by the UGC for declaring open universities fit for central assistance will be reviewed

### 3. The OPEN SCHOOL SYSTEM

12.3.1 The National Open School (NOS) already established, will be strengthened and developed to widen access to education at the Secondary and Higher Secondary levels. Efforts will be made to establish Open Schools in different States so that secondary education is significantly expanded through different regional languages.

12.3.2 The possibility of launching vocational education programmes through the open learning system will be explored\*. For this purpose, meaningful linkages will be established with workstations, industries and other organisations. Such bilateral initiatives will help administer the theoretical and practical components of the vocational education packages.

12.3.3 The possibility of setting up a national consortium on open schooling will be explored in order to initiate coordinated steps in such areas as policy issues, priorities, long-term national and state needs, establishment of Resource centres for development of materials, development of

human resources for the open learning system, monitoring and evaluation of its performance, etc.

### 4. EMPLOYMENT RELATED EDUCATION

12.4.1 The open learning system at the secondary and tertiary levels will focus attention on education and training in areas related to employment and self-employment, it will seek the involvement of the existing institutions and organisations in commerce, industry, the service sectors as well as rural development organisations, including the mobilisation of the material and human resources in such organisations in the development of appropriate programmes and their delivery. Efforts will be made to develop close cooperation and collaboration between open education institutions and the agencies which use trained manpower both in the public and the private sectors as well as the professional organisations in various fields.

12.4.2 The open learning system will take steps to meet the continuing education needs of the manpower already employed in different sectors. It will help develop programmes in close cooperation with the concerned employing organisations for training and retraining of manpower, for the upgradation of skills for application of new technologies and also in providing opportunities to serving personnel to improve their qualifications for their professional advancement. The open learning system will seek the support and cooperation of a wide spectrum of employers in the fulfilment of these objectives.

### 5. TARGETS AND RESOURCES

12.5.1 During the Eighth Plan period, the enrolment in the open university/distance education system is expected to increase from about 11.5% of the total enrolment in higher education to about 16.5%. In absolute terms, this would involve a net addition of 4 lakhs students to the enrolment in the open university/distance education system by the end of the Eighth Plan. The open learning system at the Secondary and Higher Secondary level is expected to enrol an additional 6 lakh students during the Eighth Plan Period.

12.5.2 It is important that the cost-effectiveness of the open learning system is maintained. The strategy for this purpose will include:

- \* Involvement of the material and manpower resources of the user agencies in the development of programmes and courses for the open learning system and in the delivery of various services to students through establishment of Study Centres at the work place, involvement of employers in tutorials, counselling, etc.
- \* A system of differential fees under which the level of fees will be determined on the basis of the objectives of the programmes, the target

**groups for whom the programmes are designed and other relevant factors (for example, higher fees for programmes in management designed**

**for serving managers and lower fees for programmes designed to improve the competence of primary school teachers).**