

**3.1 UGC-DCE Roundtable on Transformation of CCIs to Distance Education Mode;  
Keynote Address  
-1995-**

*Abstract*

The address begins with describing the features of most Correspondence Course Institutes (CCI) and why it was looked down upon as inferior to formal education. Certain steps were taken to improve the situation, such as establishment of distance education universities and upgrading CCIs into Distance Education mode. The role of IGNOU and Distance Education Council (DEC), the Apex Body of IGNOU, and vision of open and distance education are elaborated. The address then moves to action plan and the proposed model for open learning and distance education. The broadcast network plays a major role in this model, while IGNOU proposes building up OPENET. Other requirements for gradual transformation of CCIs to Distance Education Mode are explained subsequently. The address concludes with his call for all open universities and CCIs to work together as partners and evolve right approach for sharing rather than competing. (By: LA)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Since the introduction of the Correspondence Course education at the tertiary level in India by Delhi University in 1962, the number of universities offering correspondence courses has gone up to 46 with yearly enrollment of about 5 lakh students. The growth of CCIs is in response to the ever increasing demand of higher education. However, the expectations of the Education Commission (1964-66) that the Correspondence Course Institutions should be able to attract nearly 1/3 of the total enrollment at the tertiary level within two decades was not fulfilled and the enrollment by 1984-85 reached to about 5%. Major features of the CCIs as observed in the Report of the CABE Committee on Distance Education are.

- i) Most correspondence institutes offer courses in Arts and Humanities only; enrollment in professional courses is concentrated in B.Ed./ M.Ed.
- ii) Correspondence courses are often an extension of courses offered in the conventional mode and retain the same rigidities with regard to admissions and examinations.
- iii) Virtually all correspondence courses use the print medium exclusively and are not multi-media based.
- iv) Lack of coordination between institutes of correspondence studies has led to considerable duplication of effort and wastage of scarce resources.
- v) Correspondence institutes generally charge higher tuition fees than the conventional system.
- vi) Correspondence institutes are organisationally weak and neglected and their internal efficiency is low.
- vii) Student Support services are virtually non-existent; opportunities for face-to-face contact between teachers and students **are few** and feedback on student assignments is minimal.

Under these circumstances, the correspondence education was looked down upon as a poor substitute for the formal education.

1.2 In order to improve the nature and content of the non-formal education given through correspondence education, two directions of development are being followed:

- (1) Establishment of single mode universities dedicated to distance and open education.
- (2) The UGC efforts in upgradation of correspondence course institutions into distance education mode.

- 1.2.1 The establishment of the first open university in Andhra Pradesh in 1982 really coincided with the world-wide transition from correspondence mode to the distance education mode. At present, there are one national (IGNOU) and six state open universities (BRAOU, Hyderabad; KOU, Kota; YCMOU, Nashik; BAOU, Ahmedabad; Bhoj Open University, Bhopal and Nalanda Open University, Patna) having a combined enrollment of more than 2 lakh students. As a national open university IGNOU gave a lead to the development of distance education by undertaking ambitious programmes of developing and delivering programmes in various disciplines, particularly in technical and professional fields through distance education, and by establishing high quality and standards in distance education. The Government of India has now adopted a policy of encouraging establishment of one state open university in every major state in the country. The open and distance education, though introduced just a decade back, has been widely accepted as a mode for imparting quality education and an appropriate channel of education for the future learning society. Some of the new universities that are getting established in India like Maulana Azad Urdu University are adopting distance education mode as an integral part of their strategy for dissemination of knowledge.
- 1.2.3 The IGNOU Act provides apex body role for IGNOU in coordination, promotion and maintenance of standards in distance education in India. The role is being carried out through the Distance Education Council (DEC), a part of IGNOU, completely guided by the D.E. Council having representation of State Open Universities, CCIs and UGC. Recently, the DEC has been given autonomy in all its operations. The DEC was established only in 1992 and is, at present, engaged in establishing its activities in relation to open universities in India. The responsibilities of CCIs may be taken up by the DEC from the beginning of the 9th Plan period.
- 1.3 The UGC has given a lead by preparing a document on the basis of consensus evolved by the Working Group on Distance Education (1993) and High Level Committee of Vice-Chancellors of eighteen universities which have CCIs (1993). The same sort of recommendations are included in the CABE Report on Distance Education (1994). Dr. Armaity Desai, Chairperson, UGC, took the initiative in establishing a joint committee of the UGC-DEC for effectively implementing the UGC recommendations on upgradation and the present Seminar is the first activity organised for the purpose.

## 2. ROLES OF IGNOU AND DEC

### 2.1 Background

2.1.1 At present, Distance Education Council (DEC) is established under sec. 5(2) of the IGNOU Act and forms part of it. It fulfils the role of Apex Body of IGNOU.

2.1.2 IGNOU so far has been performing the two roles :

- (a) **Open University** with a nation-wide jurisdiction and **offering** programmes through English & Hindi as media of instruction.
- (b) Apex Body through DEC for coordination, promotion and maintenance of standards in Distance Education in India.

2.1.3 The open university role dominated all IGNOU activities **so** far. The GOI has put in enough resources at IGNOU's disposal so as **to** make it the leading national OU in the country.

2.1.4 A policy has been adopted to establish one OU in each state. This may change IGNOU's role from a university competing to get its share in student enrollment to a Resource Centre as mentioned in the CABE Committee Report on D.E. This change is very essential since we are adopting a common pool of programmes to be shared by all state OUs and CCI/DEIs.

2.1.5 With the process of globalization, IGNOU has to acquire an international role which will need to maintain high quality in its D.E programmes. With the type of resources and expertise required for the purpose, IGNOU is at present the best suited to fulfil this role competently.

## 2.2. Present Status of IGNOU

2.2.1 In a newly developing D.E scenario in India and the world, IGNOU has to play four roles :

- 1) OU at national level
- 2) Apex Body (DEC)
- 3) Resource Centre for DE system
- 4) International Role

2.2.2 The Resource Centre role is being acquired slowly through the following activities:

- 1) Communication Division will soon be an Electronic Media Production Centre in which about Rs. 80 crore has been invested.
- 2) STRIDE is acquiring the role of training ail functionaries in D.E. in India and in South Asian countries,
- 3) ISRO-IGNOU MOU has made available an uplink and teleconferencing facilities which may change the nature and pattern of DE in India. With wider use of broadcast channels IGNOU can play a lead role with its expertise and facilities, which are not available with any other open university in the country.
- 4) Other Schools/Divisions of IGNOU which are contributing programmes in common pool will have to maintain high quality and social relevance in their instructional materials. At present IGNOU's programmes form the major contribution in the common pool.
- 5) IGNOU has the capability and expertise to lead in the fields such as validation of programmes, programme evaluation, systemic R & D functions, teleconferencing networking, development of OPENET etc. –

### 2.3. Present Status of DEC

2.3.1 The DEC fulfils at present the Apex Body role of IGNOU through coordination, promotion (giving grants to State Open Universities and Distance Education Institutions for their development) and maintenance of standards. The last function, in due course of time, may become assessment and accreditation of DE programmes and Institutions (OUs and CCIs)

2.3.2 The DEC has now started developing the following programmes

- 1) Common Pool of programmes from IGNOU and SOUs. Later on programmes from Distance Education Institutions (DEI) will be added in the common pool.
- 2) Development of norms and criteria for judging standard and quality of programmes. Various committees and task groups are working on the related issues.
- 3) Sharing of common resources by SOUs and DEIs. An MOU is being developed with Gujarat State OU to use Regional & Study Centre facilities jointly.
- 4) Consortium of IGNOU & SOUs on equal basis with common educational network (OPENET)
- 5) Common and Central data bases for all distance education institutions in India.
- 6) Credit transfer system has been developed and will soon be implemented initially amongst OUs and later on among other institutions.

2.3.3 The DEC thus plays or is going to play a role of UGC + NAAC + Resource Centre + Information Centre & Centre for Facilitating Student Mobility.

2.3.4 All these roles can be played competently if the DEC gets expertise and resource back-up appropriately. At present IGNOU forms the major resource centre for DEC in all its programmes.

2.3.5 IN the development of ED system in India, market motivation is going to be a major attraction and many. DE institutions are likely to offer programmes without properly caring for their quality and standards (E.g. Management courses through D.E.) DEC has to play an important role in such a situation.

### 3. VISION OF OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

Roles and programmes being identified for IGNOU and DEC clearly indicate the development of Open Educational Network (OPENET) in India. The OPENET at the beginning will have the following components.

- 1) Physical Network of 41 Regional Centres offering 79 Academic Programmes with about 800 courses through 721 Study Centres from where 5 lakh students will be served annually.

- 2) Broadcast Network for offering programmes on Training and Development Communication Channel (TDCC)
- 3) Computer Network that will link all the open universities and their Regional Centres and in future all Study Centres for communicating voice, data and images.

#### 4. BRIEF PLAN

##### 4.1 The proposed model

The movement towards open learning and distance education is driven by the desire to harness the latest technology. The last well defined stage is the induction of television and video.

However, if the system of open education has to make the required leap from catering to a few hundred thousand students every year to the required few millions, it is time now to leverage new technology based on digital networks

The objective of the proposed network is that over a period of three to five years, a prospective learner could access the network from a point (which could be a study centre, PCO, Post office) near to his home and for many from the home itself.

The technology being proposed to be relied upon comprises satellite communications, computer networks and the distance education pedagogy to provide two-way communication between the learners and the providers of the learning resources. Two-way communication includes Voice, Image and Data.

IGNOU, with its experience in the core competencies required and its ability to network between the academics and educational planners and managers, is well positioned to take a lead in this initiative.

IGNOU and State Open Universities from Andhra Pradesh, **Rajasthan and Maharashtra** are already in the process of establishing a **OPENET** consisting of physical, broadcast and computer networks.

The Broadcast Network will consist of the existing facilities provided **by the ISRO** at IGNOU headquarters at Delhi and Ahmedabad, with **teaching and** teleconferencing studio at IGNOU, Delhi and Receiving End Conference Rooms at 23 places. The receiving end rooms will be increased to a large number by adopting open approach and inviting participation from State OU's, Colleges and Universities locating study centres and **even** private agencies. At many of the receiving end facilities, talk-back facilities **may not** exist, in which case learners can use the Computer Network.

##### 4.2 Information flow over the network-

Since the network will cater to lakhs of student-service-related **transactions** over the widely dispersed learning centres, the traffic over the **network will** be heavy. Broadly, the categories of information flow over the **network may** be classified as follows:

- Administrative, financial and MIS related
- Information regarding various Distance Education courses their structure, timing, cost
- Job, self-employment and career opportunities information,
- Computer mediated learning support to the remote and isolated learner from a network of experts - especially relevant for applied knowledge
- Peer to peer learning via special interest groups created on the network
- Training/orientation programmes for counsellors
- Guidance and counselling through Tele-conferencing facilities by top experts in India on TDCC in common pool programmes.

IGNOU proposes to undertake the building up of the OPENET for all the distance education institutions in India within the next 3-5 years. It is expected that the initial capital investment would be forthcoming from the State and Central Governments and the operational costs will be borne by the D.E. Institutions and Open universities from their resources. This effort we hope, will lead the Indian Distance Education into the Networked Education System serving millions of learners in the country.

#### 5. STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR TRANSFORMATION

5.1 As mentioned earlier in para- 1.3, the UGC has developed a detailed programme of action for transforming CCIs to the DE mode. The programme requires action at the CCI, university, state government and UGC-DEC level and is directed towards

- 1) Institutional Reforms
- 2) Academic Reforms
- 3) Staff Development
- 4) Student Support Services Development
- 5) Networking of distance education and other universities
- 6) Dual Mode System Development

5.2 In order to implement the programme of action, we propose the following strategies :

- (1) Every CCI should prepare its own Project Report for effecting the total transformation by proposing time-bound programmes under each category mentioned above. The Project Report should contain all the necessary details along with the costs.

(2) The UGC-DEC should consider the Project Report as the basis for funding during the remaining period of VIII Plan period (1995-97) and for planning the funding for the IX Plan period (1997-2002).

(3) The approach to the funding should be on the sharing basis and every CCI should identify its own contribution depending on its resources for the programme of transformation and its expectations from the UGC-DEC.

(4) NETWORKING be given centrality in all the future funding from the UGC-DEC to CCI by extending the OPENET facilities to all the CCIs on the basis of partnership. This will imply

4.1 Common Pool of programmes - each CCI may contribute best of its programmes, assessed by the DEC for their, quality to the common pool, and will have the right to use the common pool programmes for offering them to their students by observing the norms and conditions for sharing.

4.2 **Tele-conferencing facilities** will be made accessible **to** the study centres of the CCIs. They will have an **opportunity** of using this national facility **for** their students. The receiving-end conference rooms could be established by each CCI and used regularly for student **counselling**, training of counsellors and functionaries of CCIs, **etc.**

4.3 Computer network facilities of the OPENET will be made accessible to the CCIs in due course of time. The CCIs will be able to establish their own nodes linked to OPENET at their service and student study centres for flow of their own information.

5. The UGC-DEC should undertake a programme of comprehensive computerization of each CCI and the programme of developing WAN (Wide Area Network) to connect all the CCIs, DEC and UGC through a computer network. The UGC-DEC may undertake a pilot project to computerise completely 3-4 selected CCIs for developing comprehensive system design appropriate to CCI. Ultimate goal should be to develop LAN (Local Area Network) for CCI to be linked with WAN. The task could be entrusted to a private computer agency for development and implementation.

6. Training programmes for various functionaries identified on the basis of Project Report by the CCIs could be undertaken by S f RIDE in a big way by using the tele-conferencing facilities. For this purpose, each CCI may establish receiving-end facility at its HQ. Part support for this should be given by the UGC and the activity be coordinated by the DEC.

7. Credit transfer system should be adopted by each CCI by appropriate changes in its structure of programmes and courses to allow students to have wider access to programmes from the common pool. The DEC has already developed the scheme and is being implemented in open university system. It is possible to convert the existing courses/papers into credit system by properly identifying units and their credits and making the programme and offerings of CCI modular.

8. The DEC should undertake immediately, with the support of UGC and cooperation of CCIs, the work of developing central data base for all CCIs. The DEC is already doing similar task for open universities in India. The work will involve preparing central data base of

- A. Institutional information
- B. Programme and delivery service related information
- C. Student related information

In fact each CCI should have such a data base to be linked ultimately by WAN with other institutions and help the DEC to develop such a database in the larger interest of the open and distance education system.

The other programmes arising out of the Project Reports of **CCIs** could be taken up by the UGC-DEC for further action.

#### 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

6.1 The whole programme of action proposed is for gradual transformation to distance education and networked education system to achieve the long term vision of open and distance education aimed at establishing knowledge/education network for all. This is possible if all the open universities CCIs work together as partners and evolve right approach of sharing rather than competing.

6.2 In the networking process the quality and standards of the programmes and the delivery system has to be accorded the highest priority, the responsibility of maintenance of which is entrusted to DEC. At present DEC is engaged in development of norms and criteria for assessment of standards in various types of programmes such as professional, technical etc. The exercise is expected to be complete during this year and DEC may be ready to accept the responsibility of CCIs by the beginning of IX Plan Period.

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