

**IGNOU**

**REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES, THEIR ORGANISATION  
AND MODES OF DELIVERY IN TERMS OF ITS  
MANDATE**

**REPORT OF THE  
HIGH-POWERED COMMITTEE**

**MAY 2012**

To  
The Vice Chancellor  
IGNOU, New Delhi

**Subject:** Report of the High-Powered Committee Appointed by IGNOU to Review its Academic Programs and Modes of Delivery, etc, in terms of its Mandate.

Dear Professor Aslam

As decided in the Committee Meeting held on 23 April 2012, and in my capacity as the Chairman of the High Power Committee, I am submitting herewith the final Report of the High-Powered Committee to you for further consideration and action.

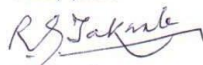
Through a series meetings organized in quick succession, we have examined, reviewed and considered the range of academic programs, structures and partnerships for development and deployment of courses along with their quality assurance mechanisms. Our considerations were based on the information provided to us by the IGNOU officers and Directors of Schools and Centres, and is considered enough for addressing the Terms of Reference given to us.

When information communication scenario and technologies are changing and always connected society is emerging in the country, it is natural to expect emergence of many new approaches, directions and programs. We note here that the IGNOU Act 1985 gives the national level policy "to introduce and promote open university and distance education system in the educational pattern of the country". Subsequent aims and objects in the Act clearly limits our interpretations to the evolution of patterns and policies within this framework. The IGNOU Act 1985 is quite clear, flexible and foresighted enough to enable development of policies and programs by evolving approaches consistent with Open and Distance Education.

The Committee Report considers and gives recommendations as well as approaches to resolve the issues in the framework of the open and distance education (ODE). The Committee realises that this framework of ODE suggested by us affects short term interests and benefits of some. We do believe that our Report will show a right and futuristic way to the further development of IGNOU programs without affecting quantity and quality expansion. Our approaches given in the Report would help in finding future convergent and inclusive ways within always connected society, and help IGNOU in creating paths and avenues of development and progress towards integrated system of education in India.

Committee Members and the Chairman are thankful to you and IGNOU for giving us an opportunity of working on the High Power Committee. We express our pleasure and gratitude for enabling us to do this very reflective and reformative study.

Sincerely yours



**Ram Takwale**  
Chairman, High-Powered Committee

14 May 2012

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

IGNOU has made rapid progress in the last few years. It has multiplied its programme offerings from a little more than 112 five years ago to about 480 in 2012; enrolment has gone up from 275,000 five years ago to 465,000 in 2012. The organisational structures and processes have undergone changes to cope with this expansion; new Schools of studies have been established and new Centres were created; and new delivery systems have been adopted. The Board of Management of the University decided that a Committee should assess the pressures of these changes on the system and recommend the future directions for growth and development to ensure a right balance between the needs of expansion and the imperatives of quality assurance keeping in view the mandate of the university contained in the IGNOU Act, 1985.

The mandate of the University as articulated in the preamble to the Act is “introduction and promotion of open university and distance education systems in the educational pattern of the country and the coordination and determination of standards in such systems”. This mandate does not envisage IGNOU entering the field of formal classroom-based education either to supplement the efforts of, or to compete with, traditional universities offering formal education. On the contrary, IGNOU’s mandate is to expand educational opportunities by reaching out to large numbers of people irrespective of their places, age, prior education and such other constraints that restrict participation in higher education.

As an open university and distance education provider, IGNOU has, over a period of time, established a credible record of performance in the development and delivery of academic programmes through the distance mode. Part of this success is due to the observance of the rigour in its structures and processes diligently cultivated and developed through years of practice. In less than a decade and half, IGNOU came to be known as one of the ten Mega Universities in the world, with enrolments crossing the 100,000 mark. Some of its programmes were internationally acclaimed; a large number of developing countries sought special arrangements for their nationals to pursue IGNOU’s programmes.

Some initiatives taken during the last five years appeared to unsettle the rhythm of the university's orderly growth and development. Among them were the structural changes and the adoption of the full-time campus-based teaching as a mode of delivery. It is difficult to identify the precise cause that triggered these changes; apparently, the anxiety to expand and reach higher levels of enrolment in a short time prompted many of these changes.

At any rate, the rapid expansion in the last five years has posed several problems and challenges. Campus-based full-time education is not an option for IGNOU as it is not mandated to adopt that mode of education; and, if IGNOU has to ensure the quality of its provision, it has to restore the primacy of its processes and procedures that lend authenticity and credibility to its programmes and services.

The recommendations that follow are an attempt to correct the course of development set by some of the recent initiatives taken by IGNOU;

- IGNOU has presently over 480 programmes on offer. The academic structure that oversees the processes from the design of a programme to its successful completion and certification is the School of Studies of the university. Over 100 programmes are presently run outside the jurisdiction of the Schools, through Centres established by the university and an equally large number through partner institutions outside the academic control of the university. Immediate steps should be taken to ensure that no academic programme of the university is run outside the jurisdiction of any one of its schools of Studies. All the programmes currently on offer should be reviewed and brought within the purview of the appropriate Schools of Studies.
- The recent practice of assigning the responsibility to run programmes to Centres established by the university, including Regional Centres, and Chairs established by the university, should be discontinued. These programmes should be assigned to the concerned Schools of Studies.
- The Centres established by the university (there are 18 Centres) do not form part of the statutorily provided academic structure of the university. The university should frame appropriate statutes to establish Centres as academic units and to define their powers and functions.

- Presently, the University has an Institute named STRIDE. It came into existence in 1992 when the then Distance Education Division of the university emerged as the nucleus of a human resource development centre for distance education system of the country and also for developing countries. Although previous efforts did not succeed, it should now be developed as a full-fledged autonomous institute of the university through an appropriate statute.
- There are proposals for setting up other institutes like an institute for sign language. Such proposals as and when received and accepted should be considered for implementation through provisions made in the statutes/ordinances.
- All campus-based full-time education programmes presently offered through Schools of Studies, Centres or partner Institutions should be converted into distance education programmes and delivered through the delivery systems currently in place. Special delivery mechanisms should be designed for those that require instructional systems unique to the nature and content of the programmes.
- Since campus-based programmes have been initiated on a significant scale, the university should undertake an assessment of the contributions that such programmes have made, or would make, to the promotion of distance education system, and based on that assessment a decision should be taken on the continuance of such programmes. Pending such an assessment, fresh admissions to full-time campus-based programmes starting from 2012 session may be held in abeyance. However, students already pursuing such programmes of studies should be permitted to complete their studies and appear at the relevant university examinations.
- Working in partnership and collaboration with multiple agencies and institutions is essential for the success of a vibrant distance education system. These partnerships and collaboration should be governed by well defined criteria that should include: credibility of the partner institutions, properly defined objectives, legally binding contractual obligations, guarding against exploitation of the university's privileges, provision for reviews at regular intervals and renewal/termination, and

establishment of a mechanism for evaluating at specified intervals the performance of partnerships and collaboration in furthering the objectives of the university.

- The Community Colleges scheme launched by the university in 2009 as a part of its mission to contribute to skill development initiatives at the national level has yielded valuable lessons. Based on this experience, the university should now formulate a new scheme structured with the statutory backing of the Act and statutes. The new scheme should be consistent with the objectives of the National Skill Development Mission and the National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework and such other initiatives. The university should establish a statutory mechanism to design, develop and deliver skill development programmes; formulate the processes and procedures for supervision and control as well as assessment, certification and monitoring of performance.
- Till the scheme is restructured on the above lines, no new institutions should be brought within the scope of the existing scheme of Community Colleges.
- Another new scheme launched by the University about three years ago is the “convergence scheme”. This is an emerging concept that visualises the convergence of all formal and non-formal education systems to achieve the common objective of high quality educational provision at an affordable cost and accessible to all. It is not an easy and simple option for a highly complex and structurally fractured education system like that in India. The scheme chosen by IGNOU envisages, in some ways, promotion of enrolments in distance education through provision of incentives to institutions of the formal system to provide full-time classroom-based instruction to help students learn from the self-learning materials the university provides to its distance learners. This initiative has resulted in avoidable stresses and strains in the system by placing a premium on classroom instruction even in the pursuit of distance education programmes. This trend needs to be checked and there should be no further expansion of the scheme by admitting any new institution to it. The students already pursuing their studies

currently should however be permitted to complete their programmes and take the relevant university examinations.

- An effort has been made to articulate a new approach to the convergence of education systems in the future. IGNOU can take some steps to follow this approach, first by creating an open university consortium with provision for strong communication networks, sharing of physical and intellectual resources, provision for learner mobility across programmes and institutions, credit transfer, development of quality assurance protocols, and so on. At the next stage, institutions of formal education and their distance education directorates could be supported to join this consortium and expand the distance education provision in the country. While these efforts to integrate distance education provisions are under way, efforts can be initiated to get the formal system also to take similar initiative like the Meta University project that is being discussed at present.



**REPORT OF THE HIGH-POWERED COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY IGNOU TO  
REVIEW ITS PROGRAMMES, THEIR ORGANISATION AND MODES OF  
DELIVERY, ETC. IN TERMS OF ITS MANDATE**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Board of Management of IGNOU at its 111<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 29.12.2011 considered a status report placed before it by the Vice-chancellor seeking guidance and direction from the Board before announcing admissions to the entire range of programmes currently on offer during the academic session 2012. The Board considered the report and authorized the Vice Chancellor to appoint a High-Powered Committee with one or two Board members on it to review the role of IGNOU as mandated, examine the entire gamut of issues and trade-off between quality and quantity as per the Act and make appropriate recommendations. Accordingly the Vice-Chancellor constituted a Committee on 25<sup>TH</sup> January, 2012 under the Chairmanship of Prof. R.G. Takwale, Former Vice Chancellor, IGNOU and Former Chairman, NAAC with the following members:

- i) Professor B.S.Sharma, Member, Board of Management, IGNOU
- ii) Prof. G Sundar, Member, Board of Management, IGNOU
- iii) Dr. P. Prakash, Vice Chancellor, Dr. B.R.A. Open University, Hyderabad
- iv) Dr. Upamanyu Basu, Director (CU-1 Cell) MHRD (A representative of MHRD)
- v) Shri C R. Pillai, Former Director, Planning & Dev. and Teacher Affairs, IGNOU
- vi) Prof. A.R.Khan, School of Social Sciences, IGNOU
- vii) Prof. Santosh Panda, Professor, Staff Training and Research Institute, IGNOU

viii) Prof. M.S.S. Raju, Director, Academic Coordination Division, IGNOU

Note: Prof. B. S. Sharma did not attend the meetings held on 26 March and 3-4 April, 2012 and expressed his inability to attend any further meetings. In his place, Prof. G. Sundar, Member of the Board of Management was nominated and he attended the meeting held on 23rd April, 2012. Dr. Upamanyu Basu could not attend the meetings held on 3-4 April and 23 April, 2012.

2. The terms of reference of the committee are:

- To review the existing range of programmes and courses with particular reference to the concern for quality assurance, viability of enrolment and the modes of delivery in the context of the mandate as contained in the IGNOU Act and recommend appropriate modifications necessary in their systems of delivery including the advisability of the continuance of those which are not considered viable or do not conform to the University's mandate;
- Examine the existing organizational arrangements which are in place including newly created Centres/Chairs and to recommend steps to streamline their role; supervision and control in conformity with the provisions of the Act;
- Review the practices currently followed to associate/recognize several institutions with the programmes of the University and recommend appropriate principles/guidelines for such association, and
- To consider any related issue(s) and make appropriate recommendations.

## THE METHODOLOGY

3. At its first meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2012, the Vice-Chancellor explained the urgency of the matter and requested the Committee to consider the issues involved and make its recommendations as quickly as possible so that the processes of admission to the new academic session are not held up. Normally, the academic year of the University starts in July every year and new admissions are announced at least two months in advance. It was necessary that this schedule is kept and, therefore, he urged the Committee to address the issues placed before it with a sense of urgency and finalise its recommendations preferably within a period of three months or so.

4. The Committee realised that its terms of reference were far too comprehensive and required considerable time and attention to address all of them in great detail. However, from the status Report placed before the Board of Management as well as the detailed briefing provided by the Vice-Chancellor, the Committee identified the following specific issues for more detailed examination;

- a) The broad mandate of the university and its scope;
- b) The academic organisation and structure that are statutorily endowed with the powers and functions to offer programmes of studies and certify their quality and standards for the award of specific qualifications;
- c) Programmes, courses and the modes of their delivery including:
  - (i) Provision for academic supervision and control; and
  - (ii) campus-based face-to-face education along with their academic structure

arising from the current practice of several centres set up by the university outside the Schools of Studies including organisations outside the university offering and, in some cases, assessing student attainments for certification by the university;

- d) Partnerships and collaboration;
- e) The recently introduced scheme of IGNOU Community Colleges and its conformity with the Act, Statutes and Ordinances of the university to provide legitimacy and authenticity to this new initiative;
- f) The new scheme of Convergence, its scope, methods of operation and other relevant issues.

5. All the issues listed above relate to policies, strategies and adherence to the processes laid down in the University Act, statutes and ordinances. The large scale expansion of the University's operations since 2006 has thrown up several academic and administrative issues and challenges. This pre-occupation with expansion apparently led to non-observance of university processes and procedures in launching several new initiatives. The Committee felt that though it will not be possible for it to address all these issues and come out with appropriate solutions within the short time at its disposal, it could broadly identify several areas of operations that were not guided by clearly defined policies and implemented without any well considered strategies. Similarly, there were instances in which the university structures and processes were not observed in letter and spirit leading to jurisdictional conflicts and crossing of boundaries between well-defined areas of operations and functional requirements.

6. The committee also felt that if it could identify the areas and operations that were not adequately backed by statutory processes as well as clear policies and procedures, it could recommend appropriate remedial action to correct these aberrations, if necessary, by temporarily suspending some of the programmes currently running. Finally, the Committee observed that its terms of reference did not involve any fact-finding or evidence collection and therefore much of its work could be done by examining the huge data that the university routinely collects for monitoring its performance from time to time.

7. Having settled the methodology, the Committee decided to proceed with its work and advised the Academic Coordination Division of the University to collect all relevant information and place it before its next meeting.

## **Meetings of the Committee**

8. The Committee held four more meetings, on 18th February, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 3-4 April, and 23 April, 2012. At its meeting held on 9 March 2012, the Committee adopted an interim report and submitted it to the Vice-Chancellor (A copy of the Interim Report is attached as Annexure I). At its meeting held on 23 April, 2012, some Directors of Schools met the committee and presented a note suggesting the continuance of on-campus full-time programmes as a long-term academic policy of the university.

9. We shall now proceed to examine each of the seven issues identified by us and present our views and recommendations in the following paragraphs:

### **A. THE IGNOU MANDATE**

10. One of the specific issues remitted to this Committee is about the conformity of a recent decision of the university to launch campus-based full-time programmes of education on a large scale at its headquarters campus, selected Regional centres and several partner institutions across the country. According to the list placed before the Committee, about one-third of all the programmes currently offered are through the conventional face-to-face mode. This decision has led to serious discussion and debate within the university and outside raising questions about the roles and responsibilities of IGNOU primarily as an open university and distance education promoter and provider and the wisdom of foraying into conventional campus-based education. The reference to the mandate of IGNOU in our terms of reference relates apparently to the advisability of this initiative and its continuance.

11. Before we examine this issue further, it would be worthwhile to make a brief reference to the evolution of open university and distance education systems in the last four decades or so to place the matter in the right perspective. Postal tuition that has a history of about a century and half evolved in to what is now called distance education (learning) only in the 1970s and later. All this started with the establishment of the UKOU in 1969. “The Open University” as it is called defined its approach in terms of openness to

people (open access policy which requires no formal qualifications for entry to the university), places (provision for learning any time anywhere), methods (pace of studies, multiple entry and exit, local and personal support to students, multi media teaching) and ideas (creation of a vibrant academic community dedicated to expansion, refinement and sharing of knowledge). This new approach has evolved continuously during the last four decades and acquired greater emphasis on a number of issues ranging from skills development and programmes of vocational relevance to wider applications of technology for learning leading to the blurring of boundaries between education and training on the one hand and between full-time and part-time studies on the other. The doctrine of open access necessarily implies deployment of distance education methods and practices but does not preclude campus-based teaching where teacher-student interaction is essential to enhance learning and understanding.

12. Since its establishment in 1985, IGNOU has made significant contributions to this story of evolution of the open and distance learning system and has established worldwide reputation not just as the largest distance education provider in the world with an annual enrolment touching 500,000, but also as a credible provider of good quality education. IGNOU is currently at a stage where it has to jealously guard its record of achievements and cement them further to strengthen its place as a world class provider rather than dissipate its energies and resources by venturing into areas that are not primarily its domain.

13. The preamble to the IGNOU Act, 1985 reads “An Act to establish and incorporate an Open University at the national level for the introduction and promotion of open university and distance education systems in the educational pattern of the country and for the coordination and determination of standards in such systems”. While the expression “open university” is not defined in the Act, “distance education systems” has been defined in Section 2(e) of the Act as “the system of imparting education through **any means of communication** such as broadcasting, telecasting, correspondence courses, seminars, contact programmes or the combination of any two or more of such

means. According to Section 5(1)(v) of the Act, the University has the power to determine the manner in which distance education in relation to the academic programmes of the university may be organized.

14. The objects of the university, according to Section 4 of the Act are:

- To advance and disseminate learning and knowledge by a diversity of means, including the use of any communication technology,
- To provide opportunities for higher education to a larger segment of the population,
- To promote the educational well being of the community generally,
- To encourage the open university and distance education systems in the educational pattern of the country.....

15. The First Schedule to the Act further elaborates the objects of the university and enjoins upon it to endeavour through education, research, training and extension to play a positive role in the development of the country and to that end it shall, among others:

- Strengthen and diversify degree, diploma and certificate courses;
- Provide access to education for large segments of the population, and particularly, the disadvantaged groups such as those living in remote and rural areas, working people, housewives, and other adults who wish to pursue studies in various fields and acquire knowledge;
- Promote acquisition of knowledge in a rapidly developing and changing society by providing opportunities for upgrading knowledge, training and skills;
- Provide an innovative system of university level education that is flexible and open as to methods, pace of learning, course combinations, enrolment criteria, age of entry, conduct of examination, etc.
- Contribute to the improvement of the educational system in India by providing a non-formal channel complementary to the formal system and encouraging transfer of credits, exchange of faculty

and making wider use of the material and software developed by the university.

- Provide suitable post-graduate courses of study and promote research.

16. The First Schedule of the Act that elaborates the objects of the University provides that *“The University shall strive to fulfil the above objects by a diversity of means of distance and continuing education, and shall function in cooperation with the existing Universities and Institutions of higher learning and make full use of the latest scientific knowledge and new educational technology to offer a high quality of education which matches contemporary needs.”*

17. The IGNOU has also been vested with the power by virtue of Section 5(1)(xxvii) to admit to its privileges any college in or outside India subject to the conditions that might be imposed by the statutes, and to confer autonomous status on any college under Section 5(1)(xxvi). College is defined in Section 2(d) as a college or other academic institution established, or maintained by, or admitted to the privileges of the university. There is, however, a restriction imposed by the proviso to Section 5(1)(xxvii) that no college shall be admitted to its privileges (affiliated) by the university without the Visitor’s prior approval.

18. A harmonious reading of the several provisions contained in the IGNOU Act mentioned above suggests that its primary mandate is “introduction and promotion of open university and distance education systems in the educational pattern of the country”. The Act also makes several provisions for fulfilling this mandate as elaborated in the preceding paragraphs. These provisions, read together, do not restrain the university from using classroom engagement as a means to fulfil its mandate.

19. A distinction nevertheless needs to be made between distance education programmes and campus-based programmes that traditional universities offer. There are a large number of universities that offer distance



education programmes alongside classroom-based programmes. These distance education programmes were not their primary mandate; they were initiated essentially as an extended activity to enhance opportunities for those seeking higher education outside the confines of an educational campus either because they could not successfully compete for the limited number of seats available in the institutions or because they were unable to relocate themselves from their work or family. These programmes which were then known as “correspondence education” was never the focus of traditional universities; indeed these programmes never moved to the centre stage in any traditional university. Poor investments, inadequate and indifferent attention to their quality and standards as well as poor social acceptability of the qualifications earned through correspondence education, did not help them acquire much credibility. Even the increasing use of technologies has not helped these programmes which are now rechristened as distance education programmes to earn enough credibility and acceptance.

20. It would be worthwhile to mention that the Acts of incorporation of most conventional universities make specific provisions that enable them to offer distance education programmes and to establish study centres to provide necessary services to their students. Most of the conventional universities offer their distance education programmes under this enabling provision. The IGNOU Act does not have any enabling provision to introduce and run campus-based conventional programmes; the absence of such a provision does suggest that IGNOU has to conform itself to running distance education programmes. In other words, if IGNOU were to run campus-based programmes, it is essential that such an initiative is backed by necessary statutory provisions.

21. In more recent times, evolving technological developments have opened up opportunities for traditional universities to combine elements of distance education with classroom engagement. This process served two objectives; it helped reduce the direct teaching costs that were continuously rising, and two: it freed up space and offered students the convenience of learning at the time of their choice. This blending of classroom engagement with distance education methods and practices was a step forward in blurring the

boundaries between exclusive campus-based education and the imperatives of reaching out to larger numbers by adopting distance education methods. This blended mode works well when several universities work together in a networked model.

22. The establishment of dedicated open universities requires huge capital outlays. While such large investments could be justified in countries that have a relatively large population size, smaller countries are being encouraged to adopt the dual mode model or the blended model. This approach is guided mainly by economic considerations in most developing countries; it does not suggest that dedicated open universities should also venture in to campus-based education.

23. As mentioned earlier, distance education systems in most developing countries have still to acquire parity of esteem with that of conventional universities. Dedicated open universities like IGNOU have acquired significant levels of credibility and acceptance, and it is essential that they continue their efforts in this direction. Any effort by open universities to initiate campus-based programmes on a large scale will certainly be at the cost of their main mission to establish open university and distance education systems as an integral part of their national systems. Campus-based education for a large university like the IGNOU dedicated to distance education does not fit well with its mission; it has to cater to the needs of students from across the country. If IGNOU were to launch campus-based education, it has to establish multiple campuses in different regions or states. With the establishment of several central universities in many more states, IGNOU will not have to undertake this responsibility.

24. The focus of this discussion is not on the effectiveness or efficiency of either mode of delivery. The question posed before us is about the mandate of IGNOU. A simple reading of the preamble to the IGNOU Act provides the answer; it is “introduction and promotion of open university and distance education systems” in the country. The clear focus here is on distance education, and IGNOU is a dedicated “open university”. While there may not

be anything illegal about IGNOU undertaking campus-based instruction selectively, it needs to be incidental to its primary mandate of introduction and promotion of distance education systems. The focus should stay not on modes of delivery, but on distance education as mandated by the Act. We would add that launching of campus-based programmes on any major scale would detract attention significantly from its primary focus to what can at best be called secondary or incidental concerns.

25. In the light of what has been discussed in the preceding paragraphs, we are firmly of the view that IGNOU's foray into full-time campus-based education is an ill-advised step and should be discontinued. We do believe that most of these programmes including those in the performing arts field could be so designed as to incorporate strong distance education components in them. The delivery of some of the programmes in classical arts could, for example, be decentralised through the mechanism of registering classical arts teachers across the country as "recognised teachers" and permitting students to register with them and making arrangements to monitor their progress through the existing regional service network. In our view, what is important is to strengthen the potential of the distance education system to reach out through innovative ways and approaches and use of technologies rather than close the options for students who are looking for opportunities for education outside the conventional mode.

## **B ACADEMIC ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE**

26. According to Section 5 (i) of the Act, the University has the powers to determine the manner in which academic programmes of the University should be launched. It should be organized through the distance education mode. Section 18 of the Act provides that the Academic Council of the University shall be the academic body responsible for maintenance of standards of learning, education, instruction, evaluation and examination within the University. Section 21 of the Act read with Statute 10A provides that there would be a number of Schools of Studies, each with a School Board, responsible for determining the structure of the academic programmes, the syllabi and other matters like designing and development of the courses, their

delivery, evaluation methods and other relevant academic matters. All these provisions put together provide a well-defined framework for the University to design, develop and deliver its academic programmes and observance of these provisions is mandatory for the University to fulfil its functions and responsibilities.

27. Section 21 of the Act provides that the University shall establish as many Schools of Studies as it considers necessary. To begin with, the University established 9 Schools of Studies. Later 2 Schools were added in the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan and 10 more at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan. These Schools were created with appropriate amendments to the Statutes.

28. IGNOU Act does not provide for the establishment of academic structures outside the Schools of Studies. However, from the beginning the University had set up 2 Divisions namely the Communication Division and Distance Education Division, both of which had substantial academic responsibilities embedded in the functions assigned to them. The Communication Division was responsible for development, production and dissemination of media material to supplement print materials. The Distance Education Division was responsible for development of systems and processes, the instructional design the training of faculty/staff and development of the student assessment system.

29. By the early 1990s, the Communication Division with substantial external assistance developed modern media production and dissemination facilities as a major national resource for the distance education system and, in recognition of this change in the functional role of the Division, it was renamed as 'Electronic Media Production Centre'. Around the same time, the Distance Education Division also assumed substantial responsibility for training of distance education personnel for the State Open Universities as well as Directorates of correspondence education of conventional universities. It signified a new role that extended beyond IGNOU, and in recognition of this role the Distance Education Division was renamed 'Staff Training and Research

Institute for Distance Education' to reflect its new roles and responsibilities. The University proposed a new Statute providing for the establishment as an 'Institute' and the appointment of an Executive Director to head it. However, the Statute did not get approved.

30. During the mid 90's, the University felt that it should also organize extension programmes besides academic programmes leading to various awards. After extensive discussions within the University, a Centre for Extension Education was set up with the approval of the Board of Management in 1997. However, the establishment of this Centre was not with any statutory backing at that time, as it was purely an experimental initiative.

31. Sometime later the University established more Centres, namely, National Centre for Innovation in Distance Education, National Centre for Disability Studies and Inter-University Consortium. All these three Centres were activity Centres and were not empowered to offer any academic programmes. Their primary responsibility was to undertake studies and research and establish collaborative relationship with sister institutions engaged in distance education.

32. The 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan witnessed a significant expansion of the University's academic programmes and activities. As mentioned earlier, 10 new Schools of Studies were established and 12 more Centres were added. While the Schools were established through amendment to the statute, all the new Centres were established with the approval of the Board of Management with no statutory sanction for their creation, or to define their powers and functions. As it turned out, many of these Centres began to offer academic programmes and as of now, there are about 150 programmes that these Centres together are running. Some of these Centres are only providing services in such areas as student support, research and training, extension, etc. There are also a few Centres which have not yet become fully functional. The

University system normally provides for establishment of Centres as units of its academic structure. They are established either as parts of the Schools or as independent units. Normally they are engaged in research, training, documentation and extension and support Schools/Departments in different disciplines. In either case, it is necessary that establishment of Centres as units of academic organisation is supported by appropriate statutory provisions to confer legitimacy for their functions and responsibilities, that should be defined appropriately and clearly.

33. In the case of the Centres established by IGNOU, the observations of the Committee are:

- There is no statutory backing for any of the 18 Centres established so far, that are currently in existence.
- There is no appropriate definition of their roles and responsibilities.
- There is no clarity about their relationship/linkages with Schools of Studies.

34. On the basis of these observations, the Committee recommends/suggests that the University should frame a Statute under Section 16 to establish Centres as authorities of the University, or under Section 24(l) to provide for the creation of Centres as statutory units of the University with specified powers and functions.

### **C. PROGRAMMES, COURSES AND MODES OF DELIVERY**

35. The remit of the Committee includes the review of the existing range of academic programmes of the University with particular reference to the concern for quality assurance, viability of enrolment, and modes of delivery in the context of the IGNOU Mandate.

36. The Committee was informed that the number of academic programmes offered by the University went up from a modest 112 in 2007 to 489 in 2011. This exponential expansion in a period of 5 years involved:

- The launch of about 164 programmes in the face-to-face mode on IGNOU campus and at partner institutions across the country.

- About 325 distance education programmes that include online and other technology enabled distance education delivery systems.

37. We shall discuss the issues and challenges arising from this rapid expansion in two parts: (i) the issue of academic supervision and control, and (ii) the continuance of face-to-face, campus-based education from IGNOU's programme profile.

**(i) ACADEMIC SUPERVISION AND CONTROL**

38. During the course of our deliberations, it has come to our notice that the phenomenal expansion in the university's programmes and enrolments since 2007 was achieved by adopting two new strategies: (a) launching full-time face-to-face education on a major scale and (b) empowering most of the new Schools of Studies and Centres including some Regional Centres as well as several institutions with whom the University had established partnerships or collaborations through Memoranda of Understanding to run programmes of the University and those of the partner institutions through a multiplicity of arrangements that involved:

- Acceptance by the university of the programmes run by a partner institution in full or partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of various qualifications of IGNOU;
- Permitting partner institutions to add appropriate modules from IGNOU programmes of their choice to qualify for IGNOU awards;
- Allowing partner institutions, in several cases, to run IGNOU programmes on a full-time face-to-face mode on completion of which IGNOU agreeing to award its degrees, diplomas and other qualifications;
- Accepting a multiplicity of patterns for sharing costs and revenue that varied from institution to institution and programme to programme;
- Establishing partnerships and collaborative arrangements through Memoranda of Understanding (we were informed that there were approximately 450 collaboration agreements through MOUs).

39. These arrangements enabled the University to reach an enrolment level of about 4,65,000 from a modest 2,75,000, five years earlier. The Committee noted that, in the process, a variety of procedures that should have been scrupulously followed by the University in one way or another, were not adhered to leading to compromise of the authenticity and statutory sanctity of the University processes and provisions of the Act. The established procedures require that all academic programmes are launched as per the following practice:

- The responsibility for academic supervision and control of all programmes should be that of one of the university's Schools of Studies;
- It is the School Board that determines the content, structure, instructional system, levels of studies and the student assessment system for each programme to be certified by the university;
- After the School Board has developed the broad outline of a programme, a detailed report containing the programme details, the social/economic needs it is expected to meet, the target groups and their estimated numbers, additional resources required for development of learning materials and learning support, including those expected from the relevant industry, profession and such other interest groups, is prepared and placed before the Planning Board and the Academic Council for approval before programme development work is initiated;
- The learning materials for all programmes are designed and developed by the concerned Schools before they are launched (normally, it takes a lead time of 1-2 years for a certificate programme, 2-3 years for a diploma programme and 3-4 years for a degree programme);
- The Regional Services Division prepares the delivery systems (Study centres, recruitment of academic counsellors, their orientation in consultation with the concerned schools of studies, etc.) while other concerned Divisions like the Materials Production and Distribution, Student Registration and Evaluation as well as the EMPC prepare themselves for the launch of the programme as scheduled.



40. The Committee notes that these processes ensured a fair degree of operational efficiency and timely allocation and utilisation of resources, though it is nobody's claim that there were no slip-ups and significant delays. What is important is that these processes allowed the university adequate time for planning, preparing, producing and organising programmes and courses in a well defined and orderly manner. What we have learnt during the course of our deliberations is that several departures from these established processes and procedures were made to accelerate the pace of expansion in the university's programmes and enrolment since 2007. Some of the major departures that we have identified are:

- The university decided in 2009 to launch campus-based full-time face-to-face programmes. The 11<sup>th</sup> Plan did not mention any such initiative, nor was any provision proposed in the Plan to create the necessary infrastructure for the purpose. In fact, there was no well considered policy adopted by the stakeholders before IGNOU launched this major initiative.
- The university established 10 new Schools of Studies as part of its 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan proposals. But the University also created a number of new Centres though the 11th Plan does not make any specific provision for such centres.
- There were a large number of private players looking for association with established universities (in India and abroad) to establish legitimacy and credibility for their programmes of education and training and were anxious to enter into collaborative arrangements with well known universities and institutions. IGNOU Act provides for collaborative arrangements with other institutions and it appeared to be an attractive route to expansion;
- Having accepted the collaboration route as an attractive option for expansion (also stated to be IGNOU's contribution to enhancement of GER), the university signed up with a large number of institutions across the country to run a variety of programmes (we have mentioned the major features of these collaborative arrangements in paragraph 38);

- Since the number of collaborating/partnership institutions was too many, and the issues of academic and administrative supervision and control were too complex, the University decided that an appropriate School/Centre, including regional centres should be assigned the responsibility for running the programmes covered by partnerships and collaboration. This loose arrangement, in our view, was a significant departure from the statutory demands of academic rigour expected of the university.

41. A quick analysis of the raw data on programmes and enrolment placed before us reveals the following features:

- Full-time face-to-face programmes are mostly concentrated in the newly established Schools of Studies and the Centres;
- Almost all the Centres are running full-time face-to-face programmes mostly in collaboration with an external institution (the number of programmes varies from 40 offered by CCETC (Centre for Corporate Education, Training and Consultancy), 26 by ACIIL (Advanced Centre for Informatics and Innovative Learning) and 25 by NCDS (National Centre for Disability Studies) to between 1 and 3 by several others);
- The Regional centres are running some 17 programmes, all through ODL.

It is interesting to note that none of these new Centres have designed, developed or produced any programme on their own.

42. In the Committee's view, therefore, it is absolutely necessary that the University should make all efforts immediately to restore the sanctity of its statutory processes in determining the programmes of study, their content and structure, their modes of delivery and the procedures for assessment of student performance and certification. In order to do this, on the basis of the facts placed before us, we make the following recommendations:

- i) The academic control and supervision of all programmes to be certified by the University should vest with one of its Schools of Studies. In other words, there shall be no programme of study of the University which is outside the purview of any of the Schools. The

programmes presently offered by the Centres and other Units/Divisions including those run by newly created Chairs of the University should immediately be brought under the control of the relevant Schools of Studies.

- ii) The responsibility of running the programme shall not be assigned to the Centres until appropriate statutory provisions are made. However, we would like to make a special mention of the unique role played by STRIDE in training distance education personnel since the inception of IGNOU in 1985. It has not just helped create a body of specially trained and professionally qualified distance educators for the open university and distance education system in India but also in a large number of developing countries across the world. In recognition of this role, we recommend that STRIDE should be given the status of an autonomous institute through the framing of a new statute and it should be empowered to offer programmes of education and training.
- iii) The Committee was informed that at the initiative of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and with substantial funding provided by that Ministry, a project to set up a special institute for training in sign language is under way. We welcome this initiative and recommend that it should be set up by making an appropriate provision in the statute. In future, when any such new initiatives are taken, we urge that the university should consider framing of appropriate statutes or ordinances to provide a statutory framework for implementing them.
- iv) The Committee noticed that presently there is a pattern of mixing and matching the contents of programmes offered by IGNOU with those of several other institutions who have entered into partnerships or collaborative arrangements with the University. We understand that some of those programmes, either in full or in part, contributed by the Partner Institutes or collaborating organisations have not had any detailed scrutiny by the concerned Schools of Studies. The practice followed is that a general endorsement was obtained from the Academic Council for these collaborative

initiatives, and the programmes offered by them including their evaluation practices were accepted for the purpose of certification by IGNOU. We recommend that these programmes should be subjected to the same processes. The IGNOU Act provides for recognition of programmes and courses offered by other institutions and arrangements for transfer of credits earned by learners for obtaining certification from IGNOU. We recommend that these programmes should be subjected to the same processes of recognition for certification.

- v) The IGNOU has put in place processes for transfer of credits involving a rigorous scrutiny of the academic standards and the quality of teaching, learning and certification practices followed by the institutions with whom such arrangements for credit transfer are made. There are some programmes that follow these processes. We recommend that wherever partner institutions' programmes and certification are accepted by IGNOU for the purpose of its own awards, the credit transfer procedures and processes should be scrupulously followed.

## **(ii) CAMPUS-BASED FACE-TO-FACE EDUCATION**

43. The Committee understands that nearly one-third of all the present programmes offered by IGNOU is in the face-to-face mode. As the Committee mentioned earlier, the mandate of IGNOU demands that IGNOU should focus primarily on the promotion of distance education. Any effort by IGNOU to move into face-to-face mode on a large scale either on its own Campus or elsewhere will be a serious drag on its primary responsibility. However, having started campus-based face-to-face programmes, we recommend that the university should make an assessment of the contribution that this initiative has, or would, make to further the university's mandate to promote distance education system in the country and, based on that assessment, a decision should be taken on continuing these programmes. Pending such an assessment, we recommend that fresh admissions to campus-based programmes starting from 2012 may be held in abeyance. As recommended

by us in the interim report, students who have already been admitted to such full-time programme on the campus at New Delhi and elsewhere should be permitted to complete their studies and appear in the relevant University examinations.

44. The Committee was also asked to examine the question of continuance or otherwise of certain programmes of studies based on the viability of their enrolment and concern for quality. The Committee understands that there are as many as 185 programmes with single digit enrolments. While the Committee would not like to judge the need for specific programmes only on the basis of the enrolment that they attract, the Committee is conscious of the fact that demand does not necessarily reflect a critical need nor is viability a function only of the cost involved in running a programme and its economic sustainability. However, on a casual reading of the list of such programmes and their enrolment as well as the fact that many of them are offered in the face-to-face mode and in collaboration with one partner institute or the other, the Committee feels that those offered in the face-to-face mode should be reviewed in the light of the recommendation made in the previous paragraph. The Committee, realizes that work-place-based education and training, wherever possible should be accepted as an essential component of distance education initiatives and such of the current programmes with low enrolment as can be converted into work-place-based training supplemented with appropriate distance education modules should be allowed to continue. In all these cases, as we said earlier, academic control and supervision by the concerned Schools of Studies should be ensured. Pending such conversion, no new admission should be made to any full-time face-to-face programmes irrespective of the size of the enrolment.

### **(iii) MONITORING AND REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES**

45. This discussion leads us to the consideration of an important element of the university's operations. In paragraph 35, while discussing the existing processes and practices for programme determination and launch, we mentioned the importance of preparing a detailed project report and placing it

before the Planning Board for consideration and approval. Section 19 of the IGNOU Act provides for the constitution of a Planning Board as its principal planning body with responsibility also for monitoring the performance and development of the university. We recommend that after programmes are launched, a report on their performance in terms of enrolments, response from the concerned interest groups, student feedback, etc., should be prepared at regular intervals and placed before the Planning Board which may advise on their continuance, modification, withdrawal, etc. It is important that the programme profile of the university undergoes periodic revision, updating and modifications.

#### **D. PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION**

46. The IGNOU Act provides in Section 5(1)(vii) that the University may cooperate with, and seek the cooperation of other Universities and institutions of higher learning, professional bodies and other organizations for fulfilling the objectives of the University. As an Open University and a distance education provider IGNOU has to depend on a variety of institutions and agencies for delivering its programmes and services including learner-support and other logistics. In the process, the University will naturally be establishing and maintaining a large network of institutions and facilities in fulfilment of its objectives. For instance, the University has already set up over 3000 Study Centres through which it reaches out to its enrolment of over 450,000. Further, the flexibility provided by the University in its academic programme design promotes multiple entry and exit, credit transfer, recognition of programmes and courses offered by other institutions in part fulfilment for the award of its qualifications, etc. Apparently, IGNOU has to function in close collaboration with a variety of institutions and organizations for different purposes.

47. It is not unusual that several professional organizations, institutions and bodies approach the University from time to time to develop and offer programmes of education and training in which the concerned sectors feel shortage of trained manpower. For instance, as far back as in 1991, the

Nursing Council of India approached the University to develop and launch a degree programme for serving nurses. Several such initiatives were later launched in the areas of teacher education, banking, construction industry, leather industry, tourism and hospitality sector, defence services, etc. In most such cases the University has entered into collaboration with such organizations/agencies through Memoranda of Understanding that laid down the terms of collaboration that included the roles and responsibilities as well as the duties and the obligations of the collaborating parties. The basic features of this collaboration were that while IGNOU undertook the responsibility for designing and developing programmes of education and training including evaluation of student performance and certification, the collaborating partner provided the technical/professional inputs necessary for developing the programmes, and where necessary, appropriate support for delivering the programme through work place-based Study Centres or specialized Programme Centres.

48. With the multiplicity of such collaborative arrangements and the diversity of the types and nature of programmes, the University also had to face several problems and challenges in pursuing this approach on a large scale. One of these challenges was the emergence of several new institutions with claims of involvement in innovative initiatives in education and/or innovations in technology enhanced education. We notice that currently there are partnerships and collaborative arrangements with a large number of institutions in the country most of which involve running programmes on a full-time face-to-face mode. It is interesting to note that some of these programmes are offered through IGNOU's own Centres (like the CCETC and ACIL, for example) running as many as 65 programmes (we have discussed this issue in paragraph 38).

49. The collaborations with outside institutions are of various types. Broadly, three categories can be identified:

- i) Sponsorships: The first type of collaboration is more in the nature of sponsorship, the collaborative agency identified the area of education/training and provided the funding while IGNOU designed,

developed and delivered the programme. A number of programmes from the School of Agriculture come in this category.

- ii) Joint course offerings: In some cases both the parties offer courses and share the responsibility of admissions and evaluation. The certification is done by the IGNOU. The mode of delivery is a mix of face-to-face and ODL (like B.Sc. Hospitality of *Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology* of Ministry of Tourism, a few B.Com and M.Com programmes of SOMS which are in collaboration with *Institute of Chartered Accountants of India* and *Institute of Company Secretaries of India*). There are many such programmes.
- iii) IGNOU as the award giving agency: The third type of collaboration involves IGNOU playing the role of certifying the qualifications earned from a collaborating institution. Broadly, there are at present two types of such collaboration: in the first, IGNOU does not contribute any course but approves the courses offered by the partner institution and plays some role in paper setting and moderation but does not conduct examinations. The collaborating institution admits the students, delivers the courses through ODL or face-to-face mode and evaluates students (such examples are Bachelor's Degree in 3D Animation and Visual Effects by *MAAC*). In the second category of collaboration, the University just approves the programme and certifies the students who qualify in the examinations conducted by the partner institution. The collaborating partner designs the programme, delivers it, conducts the examination and hands over the results to IGNOU for issuing the grade cards and certificates/degrees. In this category are the programmes offered by Rehabilitation Council of India (they just pay Rs. 100 per student for certification). There are many more such programmes.

50. In our view, the direct beneficiary of these partnerships is an external organisation that gains legitimacy and credibility flowing from IGNOU's certification of their programmes. It is true that these programmes contribute to some increase in IGNOU's enrolment numbers and revenue receipts. We wish to point out that this trend if it is allowed to continue unchecked will lead



to IGNOU becoming a soft option for many institutions to gain acceptability and credibility. We would hasten to add that the Rehabilitation Council of India, which is a statutory body, stands on a different footing and the programmes run by it need to be placed in a special category to be settled between IGNOU and RCI.

#### **(i) LICENSING AND FRANCHISING**

51. We understand that some partners who are running IGNOU programmes have created separate networks of sub-centres or have established some sort of franchise /licensing practices. In most such cases, IGNOU is not aware of the arrangements between collaborating partners and their sub-centres. Lack of transparency and non-disclosure of crucial information can lead to abuse of any power or privilege. Though we have not investigated this matter in any detail, we must record our apprehension that any such practice is wholly unhealthy and should be completely prohibited. We recommend that all agreements with partner institutions and collaborating agencies should incorporate a legally binding clause that any privilege, right or benefit flowing from any association with IGNOU cannot be licensed, franchised or delegated to any third party under any circumstances.

52. In our view, the guiding principle for all partnerships and collaborative arrangements should be:

- (i) Such arrangements (partnerships) should create a large scale participatory learning and development environment that can reach larger numbers.
- (ii) They should be for fulfilling the mandate and objects of the University.
- (iii) The process needs to be transparent and accountable.
- (iv) Such special networks created for University Programmes/Training should be mutual or joint networks and not exclusive to any one partner.
- (v) Under no situation subletting/franchising be permitted.

53. While partnerships and collaboration with multiple agencies are unavoidable for a network-based institution like the IGNOU, we suggest that these arrangements should be governed by well defined terms and conditions. In our view, the guiding principles should be:

- All collaborative initiatives should be with institutions and organisations that have a credible record of performance in their respective fields;
- All partnership and collaborative agreements should have clearly defined objectives and well understood and legally binding provisions that establish enduring relationships for the attainment of common goals;
- Care needs to be taken to ensure that such partnerships do not offer opportunities to exploit the fair name of the university by offering, or holding out to offer, academic degrees and awards for partner institutions' programmes without rigorous scrutiny and recognition;
- There should be regular reviews of the outcomes of such partnerships and collaboration and provisions should be made for their renewal and/or termination.
- The University should establish an appropriate mechanism, preferably under the supervision of the Planning Board, to regulate, monitor and evaluate the performance of all partnerships and collaborations.

#### **E. COMMUNITY COLLEGES SCHEME**

54. The IGNOU Act mandates, among others, that the university shall continually offer opportunities for upgrading knowledge, training and skills in the context of innovation, research and discovery in all fields of human endeavour, and provide education and training in the various arts, crafts and skills of the country, raising their quality and improving their availability to the people. Very clearly, addressing the skill development needs of the country

and developing and implementing appropriate programmes for the purpose are among the objectives of the university.

55. IGNOU has been making efforts to address this concern since the early 1990s. It has developed and run vocational training programmes for the tannery workers in collaboration with the leather industry and training of construction workers in cooperation with the Construction Council of India. If these initiatives have not taken deep roots and captured the imagination of the national education system, the primary reasons were:

- Vocational education and training has not gained any recognition in spite of several attempts starting with the Junior Technical Schools in the early 1960s, vocationalisation of higher education in the late 1970s and efforts at its more recent revival. The earlier initiatives did not make any impact primarily because vocational education was conceived as a terminal stage with no opportunities for further education, and quite obviously, such an approach was considered exclusivist and therefore destined to fail;
- Changes at the workplace and the ways of work have undergone dramatic changes in the last two decades or so. Today's workplace is no more the blue collar environment; the workforce today consists of knowledge workers. Automation has revolutionised the nature of work and the skills required at the work place. The new work force needs new skills; skills in scheduling, operating, coordinating, monitoring (more managerial) and communicating. These changes have made the social perceptions about technical and vocational education;
- More importantly, today, the doors for further education are not shut to anyone who wishes to learn and seek education and training for his/her personal development and better career prospects. The open university and distance education system has not just penetrated all regions, including remote areas, but also gained social acceptability and credibility. With its flexible approaches to admission, programme choices, modularity, multiple points of entry and exit, credit transfer and such other learner-friendly initiatives the open university system has

captured the imagination of the people who are looking for opportunities for lifelong learning.

- The recent decision of the Government of India to launch a National Skill Development Mission has offered a fresh impetus to push for the skill development initiatives in the formal education sector. This initiative provides the best opportunity for the IGNOU to push forward with the initiatives it had already taken and reformulate its strategies and approaches to skill development initiatives.

56. In 2009, IGNOU launched its Community Colleges Scheme. The main objectives of the scheme were:

- Skill-based education leading to certification by IGNOU;
- A successful intervention into the National Skill Mission;
- Contribution towards enhancement of Gross Enrolment Ratio; and
- Provision of vertical mobility from vocational to higher education.

57. Some 500 vocational training institutions across the country, including the training centres of the Defence Services, were selected through Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between IGNOU and each of these colleges. The major provisions in the MOUs were:

- IGNOU will certify the courses offered by these institutions on the basis of successful completion of the courses they are currently running;
- IGNOU will nominate a representative on the relevant authorities of the colleges to ensure that the content, instructional system and testing practices are of acceptable quality;
- The students of these institutions will be awarded an Associate degree if they earn 64 credits in all (the programme they complete from their own institution together with, if necessary, additional modules from the many programmes offered by the university); and
- The colleges can admit students to IGNOU's programmes selected by them and charge a fee prescribed by them from which IGNOU will be paid the standard fee.

- Community-based training institutions who wish to join this programme have to sign an undertaking accepting the terms and conditions of the Scheme.

58. The programme has run for two years now. Though the initiative has still to be formalised as a regular programme of the IGNOU, it is worthwhile to examine the experience gained from this experiment and draw appropriate lessons and based on those lessons formalise the scheme as early as possible. The important issues that have surfaced from the two-year experiment are:

- The authenticity of the statutory provisions in the IGNOU Act is not formally and fully reflected or protected in the contractual obligations entered into between the IGNOU and the participating institution;
- Structures and processes for the supervision and control of the programme are not settled through statutory provisions;
- Curriculum structure and assessment procedures are not formally laid down;
- Monitoring and evaluation systems are not strong and adequate;
- There are no quality assurance processes and mechanisms;
- Accreditation of prior learning, credit transfer, and further requirements for grant of Associate degree by IGNOU need to be clearly spelt out;
- In the absence of these provisions, there are opportunities for misuse of the scheme that permits enrolment of students in the regular programmes of the university.

59. In our view, the Scheme of Community Colleges fits well with the IGNOU's mandate for skill development. The conceptual design of the Scheme should be based on:

- (i) The Scheme should address the needs of the community at the local level (both knowledge & skill development and use of technology at the lowest level).
- (ii) It should also respond to the needs for developing new knowledge and advanced skills to meet the regional and national needs.

- (iii) At the next level these colleges should address the needs of skill development to meet the needs of the global work place.

60. The objectives of the Scheme of Community Colleges should be development of skills consistent with the objectives of the National Skill Development Mission. In order to meet these objectives, we recommend the restructuring of the Scheme as indicated below:

(i) There should be an appropriate statutory mechanism responsible for designing, developing and delivering all programmes of skill development through the instrument of Community Colleges.

(ii) This statute should have the following provisions:

- The composition of the Authority, Board or any other structure for the administration of the Scheme; and
- Its composition powers and functions.

(iii) The Processes:

This body when established shall lay down the details of the terms and conditions for selection of colleges or institutes, their responsibilities including duties and obligations, the processes for settling the curricula, the instructional system, assessment procedures and practices, quality assurance systems, the basis of sharing the fees, accreditation/ recognition procedures, mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of their performance, additional requirements to earn Associate degree, and the modules to be completed for further higher education programmes of their choice and so on.

61. Till such restructuring takes place, we recommend that no new colleges should be admitted to the Scheme of Community Colleges.

## **F. CONVERGENCE SCHEME AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION**

62. The objective of the Convergence Scheme is to achieve greater access and equity in higher education. The concept is based on convergence of the traditional university system and the open and distance education system so as to achieve enhanced and optimal utilization of the physical facilities,

intellectual and knowledge resources in institutions and in forging integration of the two modes of education. The Scheme has been implemented in IGNOU by identifying educational institutions in the country from among the conventional face-to-face teaching institutions. The scheme provides that these selected institutions shall function as convergence centres and admit students to ODL programmes of IGNOU along with their regular students. IGNOU offers all its self-study material along with supplementary audio-visual learning materials to these centres. The scheme permits the centres to charge an additional fee that could be as high as three times the fees charged by IGNOU for its programmes, ostensibly for providing face-to-face teaching to students in IGNOU courses. The fees received are shared in the ratio of 40:60 by IGNOU and the Convergence Centre in case of general courses, and 50:50 in case of professional courses. Students are evaluated in their examinations as per the IGNOU procedures and norms.

63. The idea of convergence of formal and non-formal systems has been considered feasible and essential in the context of the digital communication revolution and its impact on socio-technological progress and transformation. The concept of convergence anticipates new initiatives such as joint degrees being awarded by participating institutions from the two systems (formal and non-formal) through a system of credit transfer; it also envisages students pursuing dual degree programmes simultaneously, one from formal university and another from distance education university.

64. The Scheme: The Committee was informed that there are 501 Convergence Scheme centres working at present in the country. Out of these, 40 are the existing study centres recognized and established by IGNOU for its usual delivery mode. The new centres are therefore 461. Each centre is given Rs. 4 lac for creating the essential infrastructure and Rs. 3 lac per annum as recurring grants for 3 years. The University announced the Scheme in 2007, started its implementation in 2008, and, during the last 3 years, has distributed around Rs 35 crores to support the convergence centres. The centres enrolled 45466 students during the academic year 2011-12 for 94 IGNOU programmes. The centres have retained Rs. 30 crores from fees collected from students and have given around Rs. 30 crores to IGNOU.

65. Observations: The Committee notes that:

1. The Scheme has been implemented in a large number of partner institutions called convergence centres (CC) by extending financial support to them to give face-to-face education. The Committee observes that promoting face-to-face education with substantial financial support from IGNOU is not consistent with the IGNOU mandate. This activity has only created internal contradictions as well as issues for the whole system.
2. The centres which are working both as IGNOU study centres as well as convergence centres deal with two streams of students; one receives instructions according to ODL, which imparts guidance for about 10% of the total time required for full time teaching for '*covering the syllabus*'; and the other stream of students gets class room teaching covering the complete syllabus according to the traditional face-to-face education. This inevitably has provided an opportunity for comparison between the two streams of students and has undermined the philosophy and role of distance education. The effect of the Convergence Scheme as it is now implemented encourages face-to-face teaching by attributing higher value to classroom engagement which does not fit well with the self-study and self-instructional approach followed in the open and distance education system.
3. The Committee understands that some of the convergence centres are activated without ensuring the availability of qualified teachers to provide instruction in the subject areas of the IGNOU programmes offered by them. This affects the quality of learning-teaching provision at the institution. They usually invite experts from outside, charge higher fees from students and get larger benefit of fee share. This has created another channel of exploiting IGNOU programmes by managing their face-to-face teaching and gaining higher income from tuition fees. Further, this differential treatment between the traditional Study Centres and the new Convergence Centres has led to a sense of de-motivation among the former that adversely impacts



the study centre system working for many years with IGNOU programmes.

4. The convergence scheme centres do not function under the supervision of the Regional Centres, and the system to ensure their quality of teaching and operations is not in place. No university from the formal system has been enrolled or partnered under the Scheme for the implementation of convergence and therefore the concept of joint degree and credit transfer has not been tried out.

66. In the light of these observations, we make the following recommendations on the convergence scheme as it is in operation now before we proceed to articulate our vision of the evolving concept of convergence in the Indian context:

- i) As we recommended in our interim report, pending a comprehensive review of the existing convergence scheme, no new institutions should be selected under the scheme and no fresh admissions should be made to IGNOU programmes at the existing centres. Those who have been admitted to IGNOU programmes and are pursuing their studies should be permitted to complete their studies.
- ii) Provision of financial support to convergence centres to meet the cost of classroom teaching is inconsistent with the objectives of IGNOU and should be discontinued immediately except in cases of subsisting contractual obligations.
- iii) Those centres under the convergence scheme that fulfil the requirements of study centres may be admitted to the IGNOU delivery system by redesignating them as 'study centres'.

#### **(i) AN APPROACH TO THE SYSTEM OF CONVERGENCE**

67. The Committee is of the view that Convergence of the formal and non-formal systems of education is a welcome development in Indian education. It needs to be promoted appropriately by evolving a partnership approach with other universities- open, dual mode as well as formal – by sharing their physical and intellectual resources, and contributing to the efforts at raising

the quality of educational provision. In the processes of course development as well as delivery, IGNOU has so far used formal university and college resources quite heavily. However in return it could not give much to the formal system except the self-learning materials, which is well recognized for its high quality, nationally and internationally. If the Convergence Scheme has to take off in a significant manner, IGNOU will have to raise its own share of resources and infrastructure to contribute effectively to the policy and programme of convergence. We recommend that IGNOU should address the following concerns:

- i) **Creating Communication Infrastructure:** The Indira Gandhi National Open University has now created open and distance learning infrastructure comprising teleconferencing as well as networking facilities that link students, teachers and educational institutions; developed open education resources (e-Gyankosh); operationalised a course team approach for working together and creating quality instructional material as well as deployment methodology through multi-media use and study centres; and has made efforts to develop a consortium approach through a cluster of institutions for sharing resources and facilities. The Committee considers that these are highly significant developmental achievements of the ODL system and could be used effectively in leveraging the Convergence Scheme to make it a great success in offering quality education to large numbers. The ODL infrastructure and distance education facilitations will no doubt enrich the formal system of education, particularly with the prospect of the entire population of India getting always connected by 2G and 3G internet communication. This will place IGNOU on an equal footing if not on a stronger partnership with the other renowned formal universities.
  
- ii) **Consortium Approach with OUs:** The Committee considers it essential that convergence should be tried with courses and programmes of state open universities by forming a *national consortium of IGNOU and all the state open universities* in India. The Open University Consortium can create joint ODL communication infrastructure, open education

resources (OER) as well as pools of expertise, and offer a wide variety of programmes/courses that would provide multiple choices to learners and learning support resources, contributing greatly to increasing access and quality of higher education.

- iii) A similar consortium approach involving open universities and distance education institutions (DEIs) of the dual mode universities could be the next step in establishing and promoting convergence.
  
- iv) The formal education system has one very significant mechanism that separates it from non-formal ODL system i.e. the classroom engagement. However recently, with the advent of satellite communication and now with web casting and 2 and 3 G communication technologies, both the systems can converge and use the distributed classroom as a common device for teaching purposes by pooling together the best expertise, experience and resources for teaching. IGNOU can contribute significantly to the partnership of formal and non-formal systems by creating *technology enabled distributed classroom system* through networking. The '*distributed classroom*' of the synchronous and asynchronous nature can promote extensively the interaction between and amongst students and teachers. The system at present can use audio graphic conferencing, video conferencing and web casting effectively to increase the outreach, inclusion and quality of education. All these technologies and expertise required for this purpose are currently available in the country, within IGNOU and with many partner institutions of IGNOU.
  
- v) The concept of convergence of formal and non-formal systems of education has arisen due to the advances in the information and communication technologies. The devices such as mobile cell phone, tablet PC, etc. are soon becoming a handy tool for any common person. This is made possible due to the integrated use of broadcasting, telecommunication and computing sciences. The newer and later generations of internet connectivity have raised the power of

interactivity, and increased intimacy among group learners through 3G video-conferencing. These developments are heralding the emergence of new generations of distance learning environments by increasing the powers of processing information and communication. Imparting technology empowerment to learners and to the system of ODL is the task of the Open University System in the country. During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, two very significant and revolutionary developments have taken place. The first is open resource movement with open licensing system of 'creative commons', in which learner uses the open resource to learn, adopt, adapt, change, reuse the content for personal learning and applications; and user contributes back the improved version of it for open use by others. Creating this 'cognitive wealth' for the use of all is a great collective and collaborative effort of human kind and has to be used effectively in the ODL system of India. It is to be noted that the UNESCO and COL have already taken measures at the global level to induct OER concept in all educational systems and institutions of countries. The second movement is of self organisation and mobilization through the networked communities. Various networking technologies such as face book, blogs, etc have played an important role in empowering people. Both these are to be used in the convergence system to empower particularly in forming learning groups and learning communities to promote life-long-learning in the knowledge society which is now emerging in India. The proposed Meta University project, in some ways signifies the beginning of a new approach to educational provision through the promotion of a consortium of formal institutions which augurs well for convergence that we have discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

- vi) Research has shown that learning outcomes are the highest when learners interact with the learning resources; the next best outcome is achieved through peer learning and the teacher's role in teaching or giving learning support occupies the third place. These findings could be used effectively in building the convergence system.

68. We realise that the Indian education system is a complex structure, comprising as it does multiple agencies, different regulatory bodies, division of responsibilities between the Centre and the states and, not the least, a bewildering variety of institutional systems and patterns rendering it extremely difficult even to coordinate their functioning let alone integrate them. While an integrated approach is essential to attain the objective of convergence, we cannot expect everything to be in place before we venture into this initiative. Nevertheless, we consider it possible to make some small but effective beginnings to make convergence of education systems a reality in India. Having outlined, in some detail, the emerging scenario of convergence in the education systems in the coming years, we make the following recommendations for the development of an effective system of convergence in the Indian education system:

1. IGNOU should promote and lead the formation of consortia of (a) National and State Open Universities in India, and (b) Open Universities and DEIs in India, to facilitate sharing of common goals, approaches and values with a win-win approach.
2. A common communication infrastructure network should be created to link the participating institutions and the network of their study centres with access devices made available to learners or at the study centres.
3. Since technology use and networking constitute the core of convergence, it is essential to establish information feedback and quality assurance mechanisms within each participating institution and its networked members with provision for continuous monitoring of their quality and performance by making the system transparent and accountable.
4. The delivery mechanisms of the participating institutions should provide:
  - a. Networking to link students, teachers and their institutions;
  - b. OER for the programmes to be implemented by participating institutions;
  - c. Creation of 'distributed classroom' by using the latest ICT and internet-based classrooms.

5. Establishment of a common Credit System for transfer of credits by using the good offices of UGC, MHRD, AICTE etc.
6. Capacity building for all those working in the networked system, both in face-to-face and virtual networked situations, for training in ICT use for communication and networking cooperatively and collaboratively (Wiki processes).
7. Promotion of the use of mobile and tablet pc in internet communication to increase access, inclusion and equity to eliminate regional imbalances and disparities.

## ANNEXTURE

### Interim Report submitted to the Vice-Chancellor on 9 March 2012

High Power Review Committee meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2012 at 10.00 a.m., Board Room, VCO, Maidan Garhi, New Delhi-110068 - Interim Recommendations .

The following were present:

1. Prof. Ram G. Takwale ...Chairman
2. Prof. B.S. Sharma, Member, BOM
3. Dr. P. Prakash, VC, Dr. BRAOU
4. Sh. Upamanyu Basu, Director (CU-I Cell), MHRD
5. Sh. C.R. Pillai, Former Director, IGNOU
6. Prof. A.R. Khan, Director, DU
7. Prof. Santosh Panda, Professor, STRIDE
8. Prof. M.S. Senam Raju, Director, ACD ...Convenor

The Committee had three meetings so far. The issues arising out of the terms of reference were discussed extensively in these meetings. The Committee recognized that there are several complex issues involved in the terms of reference ranging from conformity with IGNOU Act, Statutes and Ordinances of the University in offering and implementing the programmes; the authenticity of the processes and procedures followed and their modes of delivery, including the recognition of agencies and institutions to run these programmes. The Committee felt that it will not be possible to arrive at any firm conclusion on all these issues within a short period of time. Nevertheless, as the fresh admission season is about to begin, it was felt desirable to arrive at some conclusions and make recommendations in respect of these issues before fresh commitments are made.

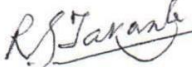
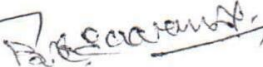
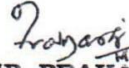
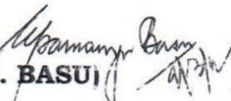
Keeping this in view, the Committee makes the following interim recommendations:

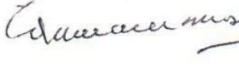
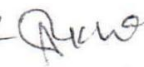


1. **Mandate:** The Mandate of the University as mentioned in the preamble of the IGNOU Act is, "introduction and promotion of open University and distance education systems in the educational pattern of the country and for coordination and determination of standards in such systems". Obviously, IGNOU's mandate is to function as a distance education institution and its primary responsibility is to do all that the IGNOU Act requires to promote distance education system.
2. The objects of the University (Clause 4 of IGNOU Act) are to advance and disseminate learning and knowledge by a diversity of means, including the use of any communication technology, to provide opportunities for higher education to a larger segment of the population and to promote the educational well being of the community generally, to encourage the Open University and distance education systems in the educational pattern of the country and to coordinate and determine the standards in such systems, and the University shall, in organizing its activities, have due regard to the objects specified in the First Schedule. It is therefore, necessary that the University must stay within its main objective of providing distance education and maintain its standards. Any foray into campus based education is likely to detract the University from its mandate and therefore should not receive any priority in its programmes offering.
3. **Programmes:** The Committee noted that of the current offering of approximately 500 programmes, 2/3<sup>rd</sup> are offered by the Schools of Studies and the rest through IGNOU Centres, including Regional Centres, and some through collaborative arrangements with



external agencies. The existing provisions in the Act require that the basic unit for organization of academic programmes is its Schools of Studies, and offering of programmes outside the purview of the Schools would not be in conformity with the statutory provisions. The Committee, therefore, considered that restoration of the primacy of processes in offering academic programmes has to be carefully worked out. In the meanwhile, the Committee considers it necessary to recommend suspension of fresh admission to the programmes run both by the Schools and outside the purview of the Schools for the session commencing in 2012 in respect of all face to face campus based programmes offered either at the Headquarters or Regional Centres or in collaboration with other agencies on their campuses. However, those who have been admitted and are pursuing their programmes will continue till they complete the prescribed duration of their programmes.

4. **Community Colleges:** The Committee noted that the Community College Scheme was initiated in 2009. This Scheme, however, has not been formally developed in conformity with IGNOU's Statutes & Procedures and therefore, requires to be reformulated to provide statutory authenticity to their process, including curriculum development, instructional system, assessment procedure, quality assurance processes, accreditation of prior learning, credit transfer and other such requirements. It might be necessary that an Expert Committee may have to go through these issues and reformulate the Scheme. Till then, this Scheme may be kept in abeyance and no fresh commitment be made.
5. **Convergence Scheme:** The Committee discussed the concept of Convergence Scheme in detail and felt that Convergence as a concept primarily refers to the coming together of different methods and procedures of delivery of programmes, in order to attain the common objectives of learning. Recognition / Association of External Institutions to further this concept is unclear. The Committee considers that this issue needs to be addressed further and pending a final decision on the advisability of its continuance in its present form, new commitments including fresh admissions under the existing Scheme may be kept in abeyance. However, students admitted and are pursuing programmes of studies should be allowed to continue for the duration of their programmes.





  
 (RAM G. TAKWALE) (B.S. SHARMA) (P. PRAKASH) (U. BASU)





  
 (C.R. PILLAI) (A.R. KHAN) (SANTOSH PANDA) (M.S. SENAM RAJU)