

Open and Distance Education

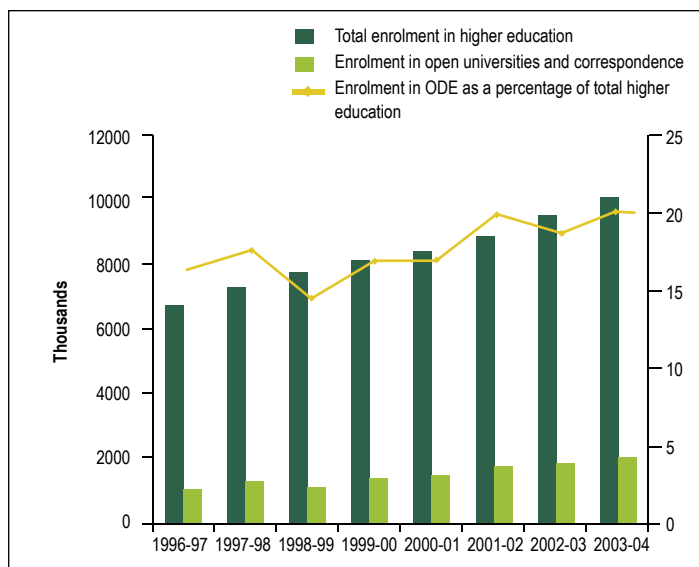
Introduction

Distance education is provided by open universities and correspondence courses offered by Distance Education Institutions (DEIs) of conventional universities. Almost one-fifth students enrolled in higher education in India are receiving education through the distance mode, i.e. through the open universities or through the correspondence courses of traditional universities. Given the rapid expansion required in higher education in India, open and distance education can play an extremely significant role in meeting the increased demand for higher education. Moreover, there is an unprecedented opportunity with regard to technology especially in the form of open courseware. However, problems relating to quality as well as brand equity of distance education persist.

Current Scenario

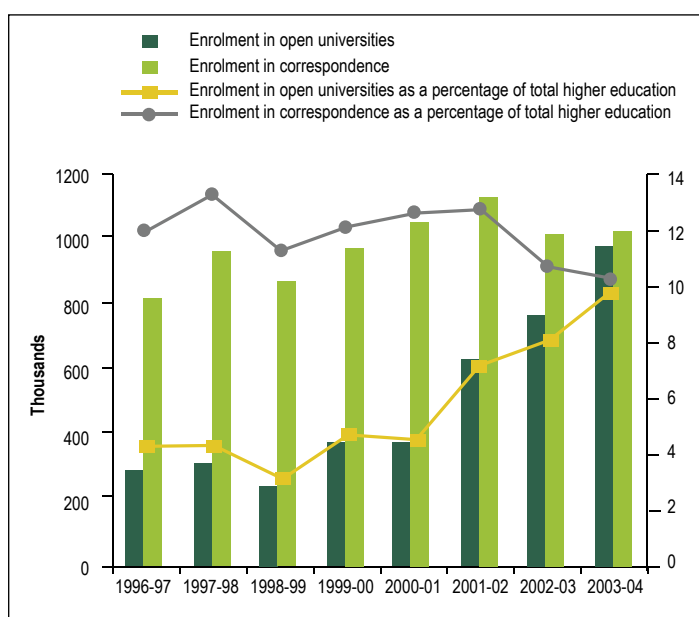
Enrolment: In 2004-05, around eleven million people were enrolled in higher education in India, of which the open and distance education system (including correspondence courses offered by distance educational institutions (DEIs) of conventional colleges) served roughly 20 per cent. Within this, open universities served 10 per cent of the higher education need. The figure below illustrates the growth in enrolment in higher education and open and distance education from 1996 to 2004. In 2000-01, only 4 per cent of the higher education need was served by open universities, but in 2003-04 the figure was around 10 per cent, while the overall distance education contribution is around nineteen per cent. The figure below also shows the contribution to distance education by open universities and by correspondence courses of conventional universities.

Figure 44: Contribution of Open and Distance Education (ODE)



Source: MHRD

Figure 45: Enrolment in open universities and correspondence courses



Source: MHRD

Institutions: In India there are 14 open universities – 13 state open universities and one national Open University – Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). IGNOU now has a cumulative enrolment of about 15 lakh, offers a total of 126 programs and has a teaching staff of 325 and 1157. Distance education through correspondence courses is provided by other regular universities as well. As on date there are 119 Correspondence Course Institutes (CCIs) in conventional Universities. In 2003, open universities served only eight per cent of the total higher education enrolment, while correspondence courses constituted nearly one fifth of the total higher education enrolment.

Quality: The quality and delivery mechanisms of distance education provided by correspondence courses are relatively poor. Most correspondence courses are instituted as a mode of resource generation in view of the unmet demand for higher education. Further, the resources thus earned are not used for the improvement of the correspondence programs. Therefore, quality concerns become secondary to those of numbers and income. Due to inadequate mechanisms of quality control and regulation, students graduating from both regular courses and correspondence courses get the same degree, despite sharp differences in quality of pedagogical process and achievement. Substantial investments in

Table 16: Enrolment in open universities and correspondence courses (1996 to 2003)

Year	Total enrolment in higher education	Enrolment in open universities	Enrolment in open universities (% of total)	Enrolment in correspondence	Total enrolment in open & distance education
1996-97	6842598	294947	4.31	819110	1114057
1997-98	7260418	316089	4.35	959228	1275317
1998-99	7705520	247168	3.21	868459	1115627
1999-00	8050607	381862	4.74	971991	1353853
2000-01	8399443	379286	4.52	1055317	1434603
2001-02	8821095	632214	7.17	1123344	1755558
2002-03	9516773	765489	8.04	1012779	1778268

Source: Department of Secondary & Higher Education, MHRD

Table 17: Enrolment and teachers in open universities in India (2003-2004)

Open University	Enrolment	Students on Roll	Teachers	Budget [#]	Revenue Receipts [*]
Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi	334315	1187100	307	21170	13950
Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad	190320	-	89	3320	2730
Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University, Kota	5999	-	30	355	390.5
Nalanda Open University, Patna	1805	8484	6	948	95.95
Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, Nashik	102642	800587	39	2189	1600
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad	13824	68865	39	-	-
Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University, Bhopal	192230	192230	36	121.5	1129.04
Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata	14734	225244	4	310	175
Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon Open University	8025	22172	11	-	-
Karnataka State Open University, Mysore	19580	33172	63	46	1156
Tamil Nadu Open University, Chennai	9361	9361	20	192.9	192.9
	[#] Budget plan + non plan			[*] in Rs Lakh	

Source: Distance Education Council

correspondence courses must be made by universities to improve resources, delivery and modes of pedagogical assistance and assessment.

International comparisons: Most of the developing countries worldwide have realised the need for open universities. Developed countries such as France and UK have pioneered open and distance education. United States remains the undisputed leader in online education. Table 18 below lists *mega* open universities of the world, along with enrolments and budget.

Issues in the Current Framework

1. The same form and structure of degree programs:

Open and distance education imparted in open universities system has evolved alternative delivery modes with a lot of flexibility. However, it has retained the same form and structure, eventually culminating in a degree or diploma certification. Though this is followed to retain recognition from employers and acceptance from society, it has not made the system responsive to the dynamic developmental needs of the people.

2. Limited linkages with the workplace: The emphasis on people's education with a focus on work related skills and productivity as expected in the Report of Education Commission (1964-66) on Education

and Development is yet to be achieved and built into the open and distance education system. Linking education with productivity demands linking learning with workplace based training and education for value addition.

3. Limited coverage and access: Although the existing size and the share of the open and distance education system in higher education is significant, it is still too small to support life-long learning for the citizens of the country.

4. Lack of access to media: Study texts form the main study materials for a large majority of students. Pedagogical use of various electronic media is yet very limited.

5. Lack of coordination: There is an overlap of target groups to be covered by the open schooling and open and distance higher education. The latter is for mature adults and many open universities have reduced the age criteria from 21 years to 18 years to enable open admission for preparatory courses essential for admission to open degree programs, for those who have not class twelve graduates. Since open schools also cater to mature adults, it is essential to have coordination amongst the school and higher education programs to cater to diverse needs of mature adults.

Table 18: Open and distance education in other countries - mega universities

Country	Institution	Enrolment	~Budget in Million US\$		Unit Cost*
Pakistan	AIOU	456,126			
Turkey	Anadolu	1,187,100	32.4	budget for 2000	10
China	CCRTVU	2,300,000			40
France	CNED	184,614	56.0	1995 figure	50
India	IGNOU	1,187,100	47.0	budget for 2004	35
Korea	KNOU	196,402	> 79.0	1995 figure	5
UK	OU	203,744	> 300.0	1995 figure	50
Thailand	STOU	181,372	> 46.0	1995 figure	30
Indonesia	UT	222,068	> 21.0	1995 figure	15

* Unit cost per student as a percentage of the average for other universities in the country