

Role of AIOU in Education and Training

By

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Abstract

This study indicates the role of Allama Iqbal Open University in the field of education and training. The AIOU, the pioneer in distance teaching institution in the Asian region, has implemented various programmes which are formal but used non-formal methods or techniques to reach the door steps of those who may have missed chance for getting education. The study shows that to provide education and training to the masses, University has effectively used the print, sound and pictures for its delivery system with the help of these multi-media instructional system, University is offering courses from literacy to Ph.D level. But the main emphasis given to under graduate level programmes, are based on functional (job related) and technology based courses. The study also shows that University plays significant role in the field of teacher training and offers various teacher training courses like PTOC, PTC, CT, B.Ed, ATTC and TEFL, ELT etc. in a very effective manner. These courses are very conventional in teaching of staff. Hence, these have become in-dispensable part in the field of teaching by meeting 85% requirements of educational field. Based on the statistics and findings, we can say that in Pakistan, a distance education model has been successfully used by the AIOU with its system of reaching the students at their homes or work places and the concept of openness, implying life-long education, the AIOU is filling the gap left by the conventional system and taking education to the area and groups unable to benefit from the formal system of education .

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Introduction

Allama Iqbal Open University is the pioneer in non-formal and distance education which started functioning with an elementary course on Functional Arabic and student enrolment of less than a thousand, is now offering 631 different courses in several fields which range from basic literacy and functional education to the highest levels of academic study i.e. Ph.D, as well as a number of professional education programmes. The annual course enrolment exceeds 907834 in 1999. The University courses and programmes offer a wide choice at a variety of levels for the general public as well as for professional people. It is particularly active in developing courses of rural populations, for the technical and professional field and for those in business. The University has a special responsibility from the Government for the education of women and for adult education in general.

Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to:

- Identify the importance of non-formal education for importing education and eradicating illiteracy on a wider state,
- Identify various programmes, methods and techniques which provide educational opportunities to those who cannot leave their homes and jobs;
- Identify various undergraduate level programmes of AIOU which are based on technology and job-related courses which are helpful for getting employment and for the uplift of country's economy.;
- Identify the role of modern information technology which has made the task of distance education much more easier and effective, and
- Indicate the contribution of AIOU in eradicating illiteracy from Pakistan.

Methodology

The relevant data of the study is collected from the University profile, statistical surveys, reports journals, research papers and other publications, and analyzed in the form of tables.

Teaching Learning Methodologies of AIOU

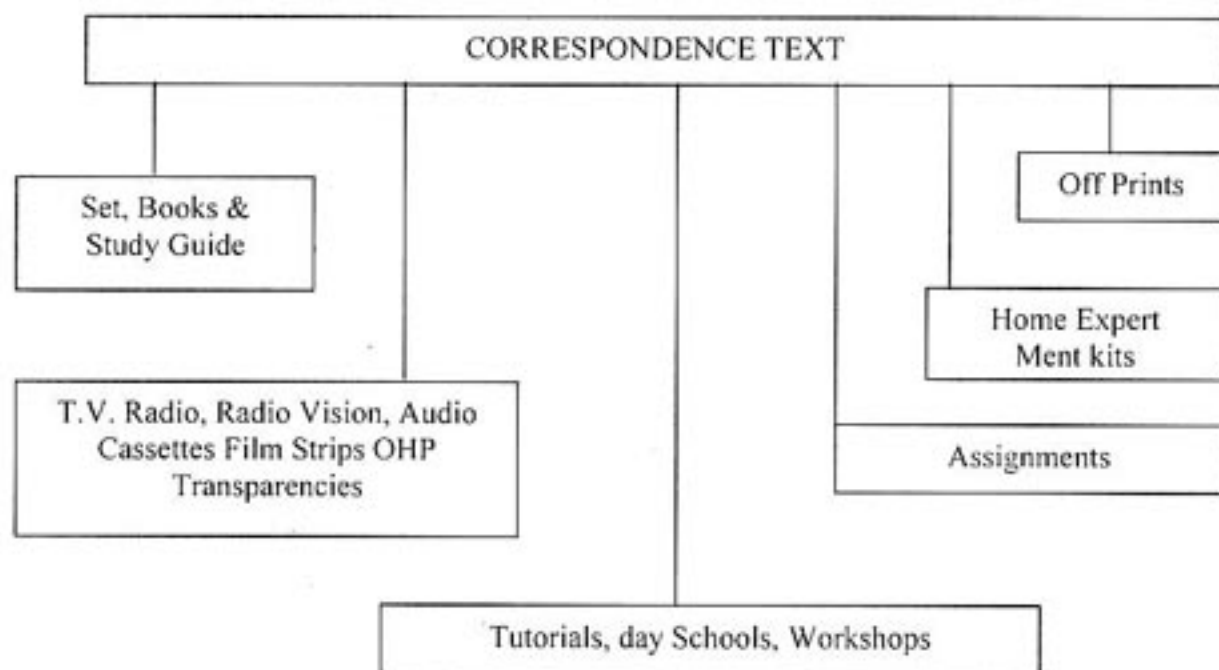
The AIOU is a distance teaching institution using a multi-media approach. The major components of its teaching system are as follows:

Learning Package

It includes self learning printed text and supplementary materials including the following items:

- a. Course books/reading material
- b. Assignments
- c. Tutorial schedule
- d. Radio/ T.V. schedule
- e. General Students guide
- f. Student course guide
- g. Assignment forms

The Components of the Teaching System



Source: *Its Never Too Late*, AIOU, 1986.

The students, enrolled with the University, are provided with the course books specially prepared by the institute on self-instructional principles. However, at post graduate level reprints of foreign books are also provided to the students along with a study guide. The study guide is meant to help the students to go through the reading materials according to learning sequence and the course out lines (Syllabus).

"AIOU dispatches 15,00000 packets of course materials each year⁽³⁾" The University has printed 1541615 books⁽²⁾ in 1998-99.

In order to guide the students, part-time tutors are appointed throughout the country out of the roster of qualified experts in each field available with the concerned region. The students have the opportunity to meet the tutors at least twice a month and can also correspond with them . A student seeks continuous guidance through these correspondence, personal visits or face to face group coaching during the tutorials. The tutorials are arranged at a study center established in institutions of formal education, or in the regional offices. In this context, we can say that the regions play a pivotal role in the distance education. The Regional Director organizes workshops/practical training in the region. Examination centers are also arranged by the Regional Director. Recently , all the regions have been linked with the Central Data Base through Email/Fax/Internet to facilitate better and faster communication, removal of student's complaints and response to queries.

"There are over 206 staff at its 32 regional offices. It employees over 18780 tutors in the year 1989-99."⁽²⁾

Statistics shows that "varsity has total 1159 employees in 1989-99, 141 are academic staff members while 1018 administrative staff members".⁽³⁾

The radio/T.V. programmes are broadcast for 110 courses (subjects) according to acquire schedule to supplement, explain and demonstrate the reading material sent to the students. In some cases, prerecorded audio cassettes are sent as a part of reading material. Recording of radio/T.V programmes are also available at some selected study centers to enable the students to use them at their convenience.

Through this multi media instructional technology, 337 radio and 187 T.V programme were presented in the year 1998-1999.

To provide for making of films and cassettes and other audio-visual material, the University has established the Institute of Educational Technology. It has in house facilities for production of T.V. radio and non broadcast programmes and their duplication. The AIOU has prepared about 441 T.V. and over 2345 radio programmes to support the printed course materials. One hour T.V. programmes and fifteen minutes radio programmes are broadcast for the students every day during a semester which have spill over benefits for the general public as well.

Role of AIOU in education

Allama Iqbal Open University is a unique educational institution because its main aim is to provide ready access to academic and professional skills to the people of Pakistan and provide educational facilities to those who cannot leave their homes and jobs.

To achieve this aim, The University offers certificates, Diplomas and Degrees from basic level to doctorate. Therefore, the main focus of the University has been at under graduate level, specially on courses of functional nature (for illiterate and semi-literates). Many of the courses are meant for females only. For example the department of Home Economics was established in 1981. In 1984, department was renamed as Department of Women's Education. It was again renamed in 1998 as Home & Health Sciences.

Under the banner of this department, the University had started a pilot project called "Integrated Functional Literacy Project" for women through its distance teaching system. Financial assistance for the project was offered by the Netherlands government and it was sponsored by Women's Division, Government of Pakistan. The aim of the project was to provide opportunity of education to women in for flung areas who could not attend the formal system of education due to social financial or cultural reasons. This project was completed semi-successfully.

Similarly, an other project Women Education Matric Project was also assisted by Netherlands Government. It is a regular programme of AIOU whose main objectives are: to take education to the doorsteps of those women who for some reasons could not continue their education;

To provide the facility of secondary school education for those women who have no access to a high school in their areas;

To provide such courses to women which are of their interest and also cater to their need.

The programme is intended to enable them to pursue further education in formal and non formal system. An important aim of the project is to awaken the educational consciousness among women, to improve their functional capabilities, to introduce new skills and vocational education among women and makes them conscious of their importance of augmenting their income. Initially, this project was launched in some selected areas which as gradually extended to the whole country. It was planned to educate about 10,000 girls per annum under the project by 1990-91 only 679 students were enrolled and out of it 54 completed/passed their matric exams. The present statistics show that the rate of enrolment (female) is highly increased, but the output is still not satisfactory e.g. the SSC course enrolment upto 1997-98 are 38199 in which only 16399 students have passed their matric exams. It means the pass percentage is 43%.

The AIOU's work at grass roots level, literacy and for vulnerable groups dates back to its inception. Initially the communiting work was scattered in different academic departments. In 1987 work of all projects was streamlined and placed in the Bureau of University extension and special programme (BUESP). In 1995, BUESP was upgraded to a Faculty. However, in the 57th meeting of the Executive Council in Feb; 1998 it was renamed as Institute of Mass Education (IME). IME has versatile experience of launching community based programmes like basic Functional education programme (BFEP) literacy programmes like integrated Functional literacy programme (IFLP) Islamabad literacy project (ILP), reading materials for no literates and middle school project.

Under this vast project, the University, after undertaking detailed surveys of target areas, developed literacy and skilled oriented teaching materials. Numerous class cycles for adults (both male & female) each of six month duration were run in the selected villages of Rawalpindi, Mirpur, Bannu and Hyderabad districts. Need-based literacy materials in Urdu and regional languages were prepared. Those materials emphasized literacy, social awareness and skill development. The statistic showed that from

1980-81 to 1987, 4684 students were enrolled in IFE/FEFRA/BFEP/IFLP, out of it 2881 students were passed and the pass percentage was 61.5%.

It is interesting to note that the University has a large number clientele at SSC, intermediate and Bachelor levels.

The University is offering 154 graduate B.A. level courses at present (i.e.; upto Autumn 1999 semester). The programme at Bachelor's level are B.A. (Mass Communication, Darse Nizami, Design, Fine Arts and Library Information Sciences), B.Com., B.B.A, B.C.S. and B.Sc Primary Eye care. The statistics show that in Bachelor's Degree programmes 387210, students were enrolled from 1979-80 to 1998-99. Out of which 24491 students qualified their B.A; B.Com, BLIS and BBA. The detail results of B.A; B.Com; and B.B.A are as follows;

Statistics of Graduates (Completers) 1981-1999*

Programme	1981-85	1986-90	1991-95	1996-99	Total
B.A.	1169	5222	8153	8005	22549
B.Com	-	132	220	93	445
B.B.A.	-	-	269	409	705
BLIS	-	-	360	432	792

Source: 25 years of AIOU 1974-99. Islamabad. Nov. 1999 (PP. 88-89)

The University is offering about 75 undergraduate/intermediate courses at present in different clusters, such as F.A; F.Sc. Family and Community Health programme, Pre-Medical, Home Economics, Pre-Engineering, and in Darsi Nizami.

At SSC level; 22 courses have so far been developed by various departments of the University. Figures show that 1441 students gained their matric and 26753 students gained their intermediate certificates.

Programme	1981-85	1986-90	1991-95	1996-99	Total
Matric	-	-	563	878	1441
Intermediate	2547	9786	7182	7238	26753

Source: 25 Years of AIOU 1974-99; Islamabad Nov. 1999 (PP. 88-89)

AIOU is offering four Ph.D programmes in Islamic Studies, Iqbaliat, Urdu and Education; Six M.Phil programmes i.e. M.Phil in Islamic Studies, Iqbaliat, Urdu, EPM, Teacher Education and Distance and non formal education; and fifteen Master level programme i.e. TEFL, EPM, Pak

Studies, Economics Mass Communication, Business Administration, Special Education, History, Nutrition; Fine Arts Design, physics, Islamic studies, DNFE and M.Ed (With four specializations)

The Allama Iqbal Open University has factually played its conferred role of spreading education. The University statistics of Higher Education show that at M.A./M.Sc/M.Ed/ PGD level the total enrolment from 1979 to June 1999 are 47620, out of which 1767 students of M.A/M.Sc/M.Ed /PGD in (EPM,TEFL,MBA, Economics & Pak Studies) received their degrees upto June 1999.

In the programme/level of M.Phil Iqbaliat, Urdu, Islamiyat, Education, Educational Planning & Management and Distance & Non Formal Education, 99, 130,77, 22,6 and 10 students respectively obtained their degrees in their respective areas.

Actually the main aims of the University are to provide life long education system. It is organized to help people to integrate or alternate their occupational and educational activities in a meaningful way. It is particularly attuned to the vocational and career needs of the people living in the era of rapid technological change. It provides the means of integrating knowledge and information received outside formal educational institutions into a coherent pattern according to the interests of the individuals. The current explosion of knowledge coming in the wake of rapid scientific and technological advancement necessitates a frequent replenishment of one's intellectual and occupational capabilities.

Modern machine age is an age of obsolescence in which familiar methods, techniques and modes gives way to new and unfamiliar ones requiring higher levels of sophistication. In order to stay and progress in the labour market and also to operate as an informed and enlightened citizen, in individual needs constant feed back and re-education.

Role of AIOU in Functional Education

Allama Iqbal Open University provides 14 Functional (Job related) non credit and 83 STEPS courses, which enable them to become

* Here it is important to know that the number of students who actually passed various courses is much higher than the number of degrees and certificates issued. Approximately 10-20 percent cases remain in the pipeline for want of completion of formalities.

beneficial for the society. The prime purpose of functional education is to assist individuals who are already employed or seeking employment, in acquiring more knowledge better skills and the constructive attitudes required for improved productivity.

For the education of skilled labour, technicians and other occupations in business, industry and agriculture, AIOU gives higher priority to them, and conducted on the job training programmes through functional education like child care, poultry keeping at home; livestock management, electricity in the villages, agricultural credits. This project of AIOU was assisted by ODA, but now it has been converted into a regular programme of the University.

For the development of agriculture, agro-industry and farm machinery for rural areas , courses have been developed like sericulture and bee keeping, veterinary, first – aid, fertilizers, insecticides, storage of good grains, preparation and use of manures kitchen gardening, Fruit and vegetable preservation, Dairy products, Home baking, farm implements, maintenance of tractors, maintenance of tube wells, wheat harvesters and threshers. With the help of these programme farmers can improve themselves and significantly play important role in the economic uplift of country's economy. Statistics show that from 1977-1999, 3674 students gained certificates in agricultural courses from AIOU.

In the area of vocational education /Open technical courses about 26623 students have passed individual technical courses of various technology. From 1997-99, 3148 students out of 3840 have passed in the open technical courses while 8000 students have passed in electronics and electric wiring. This encouraging participation rate provides the University to introduce further courses of Basic Electronics, Maintenance of House Hold, Electric Appliances, Automobile Maintenance, Air condition Maintenance, Refrigerator Maintenance, Auto Servicing and Computer courses. These programmes are also broadcast on ETV and radio for facilitating of their students. Furthermore, with the collaboration of industries, AIOU has established study centers in the locality to develop and strengthen functional education.

Role of AIOU in the Field of Teacher Training

A comprehensive knowledge of the subject is still the primary qualification for those who teach others, whether formally or informally.

The teachers hold a central place in the field of education. They must transmit to new generations the cultural heritage of a society – the knowledge, skills, customs and attitude acquired over the years. However, if teachers are not well trained, how the above objectives of education could be achieved .

It is generally admitted that the number of teachers is not upto requirement and that the quality of their education and training is deficient. To cope with this problem, AIOU plays vital role in the training of teachers. For this purpose AIOU is offering various teachers training courses in a very effective manner and at a very reasonable cost. It provides in- service education for various groups and levels of teaching. The teacher education programmes of the University include Primary Teacher's Orientation Course (PTOC) , Primary Teacher's Certificate (PTC); Certificate in teaching (CT), Arabic Teachers Training Course (ATTC), Bachelor in Education (B.Ed), Master in Education (M.Ed) and post Graduate Diploma in English language teaching (ELT)

Educationists are of the view that AIOU's courses are of national and international level. These courses are very conventional in teaching of staff hence, these have become indispensable part in the field of teaching by meeting 85% requirements of educational field. The salient features of teacher's training courses are:

- a. Through introducing teacher's training courses, the untrained teachers and other related people deprived of all facilities, can be trained in their respective fields.
- b. Traditional syllabus of teacher's training is being replaced by such modern courses only because they have conformity with the needs of the present era.
- c. Teacher training courses are entirely field based.
- d. Education Department is getting double benefits by the introduction of these courses, firstly by getting their teachers trained abundantly; secondly, the teachers are performing their jobs without any break.

Statistics of teacher training completion certificates/degree awarded by AIOU upto June 1999 are as follows:

Level/ Programme	1977-80	1981-85	1986-90	1991-95	1996-99	Total
PTOC Old	48200	-	-	-	-	48200
PTOC New	-	-	-	10278	22512	32790
PTC	133	2400	18217	21583	66485	108828
CT	-	-	4718	4443	30008	39169
B.Ed (G)	-	-	-	15023	17304	32323
M.Ed. Special Education	-	-	-	25	329	354
PGD (Special Education	-	-	-	-	11	11

Source: 25 Years of AIOU, Nov. 1999, Islamabad. P.88

For the promotion of Arabic language, AIOU has launched Arabic programmes through media and text books. Two well known programmes in this context are Al-Lisan-ul-Arabi and Lughat-ul-Islam. The utility of these programmes were highly successful in students both formal and informal alike.

Apart from T.V. programmes, frequent workshops were held for Arabic school teacher in various parts of the country to be followed shortly by teacher training programmes for college lecturers. No doubt the University has rendered valuable service, both qualitatively and quantitatively, to the course of Arabic learning in the country.

Statistics of Arabic Teacher Training Course (ATTC)

Programme	1981-85	1986-90	1991-95	1996-99	Total
ATTC	1301	1605	1442	3618	7966
B.Ed Arabic	-	-	50	-	50

Source: 25 Years of AIOU, Nov. 1999 (p88)

Another significant role which AIOU plays in the field training is the establishment of the Matric level programmes in the teaching of English as a foreign language and post graduate diploma in English language teaching. As we know functional English has been made compulsory from Matric to the B.A. level and the above mentioned courses which are devised under the guidance of foreign experts not only benefited for the English teacher because it is a teacher training course who enhance the

efficiency of secondary and tertiary level lectures as well as the students of AIOU and other institutions too.

Statistics of Teacher Training Course in English (TEFL,ELT, TEIL)

Programme	1981-85	1986-90	1991-95	1995-99	Total
Diploma in TEFL	-	-	212	340	552
PGD in ELT	239	255	20	5	519
Diploma in TEIL	-	31	61	64	156

Source: 25 Years of AIOU, Nov. 1999 (p.88)

AIOU has the credit to be the first University of its kinds in Asia and second in the world. It has a wide potential to train teachers. Over 85 thousand primary teachers have got PTC Diploma from this University, while 30 thousand teachers have obtained CT diplomas and 25 thousand acquired B.Ed. degrees.

AIOU has also provided Pakistan living abroad with on excellent opportunity to continue their education without leaving their destination and facing any dislocation. Recognizing the efforts of the University in the field of literacy, the institute has been awarded Raja R. Singh Award and the UNESCO NOMA AWARD.

The overall performance of AIOU from 1975-76 to 1998-99 are shown in the table mentioned below which shows a significant contribution of the University in the field of education and training.

Statistics at a Glance 1975-76 to 1998-99

-Year of establishment	1974
-Course enrolment	5463029
-Students enrollment	2162304
-Gender participation rate	Male 47% Female 53%
-Completers/Awards Up to June 99	409294
-Course being presented	546
Course offered under short term	85
-Educational programmes (STEP)	2000 (Approx)
-Tutors	79641
-Study Centre	13872
-Books Printed	10075773
-Radio programme presented	11799
-T.V. programme presented	2490

Source: Basic Statistics of AIOU 1975-99. Islamabad AIOU (P.10) Nov.1999.

Student Profile

Age Distribution

20 years & Below 13%	21-30 61%	31-40 20%	41-50 5%	51 years & above 1%
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Occupational Distribution

Employed (Govt.) 58%	Employed (Private) 9%	Students 18%	House hold 6%	Business 7%	Agri. 1%	Others 1%
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Provincial/Area-wise Students Participation 1997-98

NWFP 13%	Baluchistan 1%	Punjab 72%	Sindh 6%	AJK 3%	FA 4%	FANA 1%
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Urban-Rural Dispersal

Rural 58%	Urban 42%
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Source: AIOU Basic Statistics of AIOU 1975-1999 (P.11)

These statistics show that the students of AIOU come from all parts of Pakistan-from remote areas in Baluchistan to the Northern Areas, From Sindh to Azad Kashmir, from Punjab and NWFP. AIOU has tried its level best to facilitate the students with modern communication equipment. It has installed 50 e-mail and Internet connections. AIOU is putting on air its educational media material on PTV-2 which is bearing out its transmission through satellite to more than 45 countries. Today, the AIOU, is the biggest University of Pakistan in terms of students enrolment which in each semester runs upto million plus.

Findings and Discussion

This study shows that the distance and non-formal education system of AIOU is the most suitable system of our society. Because

majority of our population still lives in the rural areas and the University provides facilities to study at home and in their own time for those who are unable to attend the formal educational institutions.

This system has opened up educational opportunities for those who might have missed better education due to early employment and wish to upgrade their knowledge and skills in their spare times in the evenings at home.

Distance Education System of AIOU also provides educational opportunities to those home bound girls and women whose conservative parents, under the pressure of old age traditions, do not allow their daughters to go out to the formal schools.

One of the great achievements of AIOU is to open a new vistas for those lower class children who have very little chance to get higher education in the fields like Business Administration, Computer Science, Medicine and Engineering. To meet this challenge AIOU established a student Assistance Fund. Furthermore, for the quantitative expansion of education, university offers various technical training and higher educational programmes on a very nominal cost.

Recommendation

The major recommendations of the study are as follows:

- i. To make special programmes of computer courses (Short Course) for under-matric students.
- ii. To establish computer centers in the University campus for educating, training and skills of hard ware and soft ware technology.
- iii. To establish well equipped, laboratories and workshops.
- iv. To develop ETV programmes on computer sciences natural sciences, family laws, Home management, nutrition and dietetics, working and baking courses, flower arrangement and candle making, language courses (Chinese, French, English etc), and road ethics (principles of driving a car on road).

Conclusion

Allama Iqbal Open University is a unique educational institution in Pakistan, as it is operating on distance education system. It plays a significant role to help create right kind of leadership, to produce leaders not only in the scientific and technological world, but also leaders in the social and economic spheres, leaders of commerce and industry, leaders of literature and religious knowledge.

During the last two decades, this institution has made a substantial contribution towards the educational progress in Pakistan. It has, undoubtedly, such a long and glorious record of service to its credits. It has played significant role in giving new dimensions to Pakistan's education system. This system (distance education) is suited best to our society because majority of our population still lives in the rural areas and it is difficult for them to attend the formal educational institutions. But the non formal educational system of AIOU provides an opportunity to the people to educate themselves in spite of certain cultural barriers; to enhance and improve their education through its innovative distance education system. This system also opens the window of opportunities for the working class as it operates in the evening. This system also provides opportunities to women to contribute their share in boosting up individual as well as society through Distance Education. It is because of this fact that the literacy ratio of women is 45% which is quite aspiring and even amazing.

In nutshell, people from all lifestyle are getting cheaper and standard education at their doorsteps through AIOU's distance education system. The institution is further trying its best to facilitate the people through implementing its slogan *Education For All*.

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