

# COMMUNICATION

## Distance Education Programmes at College and University Levels in Jammu Region : An Evaluative Study

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**Abstract:** *The investigator evaluated the functioning of distance higher education programmes of different streams such as B.A., B.Com., B.Ed., M.Com, DIM, M.B.A., BLIS, DMM, DDE and DRD run by the University of Jammu and IGNOU (1988-1992). The growth and development of distance education programmes at the higher education level was also studied with special reference to Jammu Region. Distance learners were satisfied with these institutes with respect to infrastructural facilities in terms of buildings, admission procedure, classrooms, audio-video facilities, library facilities, staffing pattern, orientation of teachers, use of TV, radio and other media, study material's, assignment system, counselling and placement services.*

*Distance learners enrolled with the University of Jammu and IGNOU responded that the study material contained sufficient illustrations, figures and diagrams to explain the concepts and it became easy for them to understand the contents of the study material. Personal contact programmes were of immense help to them in resolving their academic difficulties and doubts. In view of the great demand for the learner-oriented and professional courses, special efforts should be made keeping in view the educational needs of housewives and disadvantaged communities like Gujjar, Bakarwals mobile tribes of the Jammu, etc.*

### Introduction

In India, the first correspondence course at the university level was launched by the University of Delhi in 1962 as an experiment in the field of distance education. The experiment however, was too micro to fulfil the envisaged objectives in the national perspective. For example, it failed to accommodate all qualified and willing persons who could not get admission in conventional system of higher education or who missed it for a variety of reasons. In fact, because of uncontrolled population growth and failure to provide employment to school leavers on the one hand and the growing awareness of aspirations for education of people on the other hand, the demand for higher education has been increasing much faster than that our stagnating economy could afford to accommodate.

The University of Delhi experiment (1962) can be considered as a pace setter for the growth and development of distance education in the form of correspondence courses in India, because for the first time it demonstrated the academic feasibility and economic viability of non-traditional system of higher education on the Indian soil for providing cost-effective higher education to willing and needy people. The Planning Commission took note of the University of Delhi and recommended the adoption of these courses at the university level so as to open the doors of higher studies for all those who deserved it but missed it because of a variety of reasons.

The process of opening correspondence courses, at the university level really got momentum in 1968, when the Punjabi University, Patiala and the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur launched correspondence and continuing education courses. Subsequently, two more universities viz. Mysore University and Meerut University opened such courses in 1969. The period between 1970 and 1980 witnessed a major thrust on correspondence education programme as the institutes of correspondence education/directorates were set up in as many as in 19 universities. It is worthwhile to mention that during 1960s, only undergraduate courses were started as experimental measures, whereas the 1970s witnessed the introduction of postgraduates diploma and certificate courses as well. Between 1980 and 1986, seven more universities started institutes of correspondence courses. By 1992, there were 41 universities offering correspondence courses in the country. As per latest data available there are 72 institutions in the country which offer courses through the correspondence and distance mode.

In India the efforts to establish an open university were initiated in 1971 when Parthasarthy Committee recommended that an open university at the national level be established. Till 1985 this recommendation could not be given any concrete shape. However, at the state level, the Government of Andhra Pradesh on the recommendations of Ram Reddy Committee, the Legislature of Andhra Pradesh enacted the "Andhra Pradesh Open University Act" in 1982. It was in August 1982, the first state Open University in India was established. The university has made a considerable progress and presently it is providing access to higher education to more than 30,000 adults to upgrade their skills and improve the quality of their life. Inspired by the successful experiment of Andhra Pradesh, the government of Maharashtra appointed Deshmukh Committee to examine the feasibility of starting an open university for the state of Maharashtra. By 1989, three more state open universities, namely Kota Open University (Rajasthan : 1987), Nalanda Open University (Bihar: 1989), and Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (Maharashtra: 1989) were established. At the national level, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was established on 20th September, 1985.

### ***The Problem***

The important objectives of the open universities are to: (i) advance and disseminate learning and knowledge by diversity of means, including the use of communication technology, (ii) provide access to higher education for segments of population and in particular disadvantaged groups such as living in remote and rural areas including working people, housewives and other adults who wish to upgrade or acquire knowledge through studies in various fields; and (iii) promote innovative system of university

level of education, flexible and openness in terms of methods and pace of learning, combination of courses, eligibility for enrolment, age of entry, conduct of examination and operation of the programmes with a view to promote learning and encourage excellence in new fields of knowledge. IGNOU established regional and study centres in different parts of the country so as to achieve the objectives effectively and meaningfully. One Regional Centre has been established in Jammu city also. It is expected that this Centre will cater to the educational needs and requirements of the people in Jammu region which comprises hilly as well as plain areas.

The University of Jammu has also started certain courses through the distance mode. These courses are managed by the Institute of Correspondence Courses of the University. The Institute provides less expensive and flexible method of instruction at the tertiary level to the needy and willing people who failed to join the regular college and university courses due to personal and economic reasons or because of their poor ability to get admission in the formal institution of higher learning.

From the perusal of the related studies reported earlier not a single study has been undertaken in any aspect of distance or correspondence education organised by the Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu or by the Jammu Regional Centre of Indira Gandhi National Open University for the distance learners of Jammu region so as to assess whether the objectives set by two institutions have been realised. Moreover, the studies in distance education conducted in other parts of the country were not evaluative in nature and hence it was not possible to draw meaningful conclusions regarding the efficacy of the programmes launched by different Institutes/Universities under the umbrella of distance/open learning systems. The present study was an attempt in this direction.

### **Objectives**

The following were the objectives of the present study:

- To study the growth and development of distance education programmes at the college and university levels with special reference to Jammu region.
- To evaluate the functioning of distance education programmes at college and university levels with respect to the following components: Course introduced by the University of Jammu and IGNOU at post-graduate and under-graduate levels, admission procedure, enrolment trend of the students, infrastructural facilities in terms of buildings, classrooms, audio-video facilities, library facilities, availability of technological gadgets, staffing patterns, orientation of teachers, teaching strategies, use of TV, radio and other media, dissemination of information, study material, assignment system, evaluation, counselling and placement of services, management system, coordination between various agencies of Jammu University and the Regional Centre of IGNOU with special reference of Jammu region, and finance.
- To suggest measures for the successful implementation of the distance education programmes at college and university levels in Jammu region.



### **Delimitations**

- The study was delimited to Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu and the Regional Centre of IGNOU in Jammu region.
- The study was confined to the students studying at the under-graduate and post-graduate levels.
- The study was restricted to the teachers of the Institutes of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu and other teachers of Jammu University and its affiliated colleges who were associated in providing instruction to distance learners of Jammu University as well as Regional Centre of IGNOU, Jammu region.

### **Method**

#### ***Research Method***

Historical as well as descriptive survey methods were used in the conduct of the present investigation. The information pertaining to the growth and development of distance education programmes at the college and university levels in the historical perspective in Jammu region was collected from various sources including books, officials records/reports of conferences/seminars/workshops, journals, newspapers, magazines, etc. The survey method was used to study the problems and to evaluate the functioning of distance education programmes at different levels in Jammu region. On the basis of results of the study the remedial measures for fulfilling the implementation gaps in the context of the needs of Jammu region were also suggested so as to make the distance education programmes more effective and functional in the region.

#### ***Tools***

Keeping in view the nature of the study, following tools were used for collecting various data:

- Questionnaire
- Interview Schedules
- Observation schedules

#### ***Sampling***

The target population in the present study covered directors/assistant-coordinator, teachers and students of the Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu and Regional Centre of IGNOU in Jammu region. For selecting sample groups from teachers and students, cluster and simple random sampling techniques were used as it was not possible to encompass the entire population of teachers and students associated with the distance education programmes of both the Institutes.

**Selection of institutes :** The Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu and the Regional Centre of Indira Gandhi National Open University in Jammu region were selected for the present study.

**Selection of respondents :** The Director, Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu and officials of the Regional Centre of IGNOU (Jammu region) are the main functionaries who look after the planning, organisation and implementation of distance education programmes of their respective Institutions. Hence, it was thought worthwhile to select and include them in the study.

A cluster sample of 10 teachers associated with programmes of distance education courses by the Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu and a sample of 40 teachers associated with programmes of IGNOU were selected for the study.

A sample of 232 students enrolled with the Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu at the post-graduate level and 438 students enrolled with the IGNOU (Jammu region) at the under-graduate and post-graduate levels were randomly selected for the study.

### ***Procedure of Data Collection***

Data for the present study were collected in two phases: (i) historical perspective, and (ii) descriptive part. Data for the historical perspective of the study regarding the growth and development of distance education in the Indian perspective were collected by reviewing literature including books, journals, magazines, official records and reports, seminars, workshops, newspapers and other relevant sources.

Data for the descriptive part of the study regarding the status of the present distance education programmes were collected from director, coordinators, teachers and students.

## **Results**

On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of data, the following conclusions may be drawn.

### ***Historical Perspective***

Distance education system has grown as an alternative system of education. During the last two decades, because of its utility, high productivity, greater flexibility in the scheme of studies and examinations, cost-effectiveness and innovative approach, the DE system has had a significant impact on the system of education throughout the globe.

### ***Status of Distance Education Programmes***

Almost all the teachers who were associated with imparting education to the distant learners enrolled in the Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu are serving in different regular teaching department of the University of Jammu or in

the affiliated colleges. In case of Regional Centre of IGNOU, the centre is also utilising the services of the teachers of various teaching departments of the Jammu University or of its affiliated colleges. It indicated that instruction to distance learners enrolled with both the institutions was mostly imparted by the teachers drawn from formal system and hence most of them were not specifically acquainted with the instructional technology of open learning.

The percentage of female students enrolled with the Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu in B.Ed., LL.B. and M.Com. courses was found to be higher than that of males in almost all the categories viz., rural, urban, general, SC, ST, married, unmarried and employment categories.

On the other hand, the percentage of male students enrolled with IGNOU in Jammu region in B.A., B.Sc., B.Com., M.B.A., DIM, DCO, DRD, DMM, BLIS, CFN, PG-DHE and PGDDE programmes was found to be higher than that of females in almost all the categories viz., rural, urban, general, SC, ST, married, unmarried and employment categories.

It is worth noting that the professional courses like B.Ed. and M.Com. offered by Jammu University through distance mode were more popular among the female learners in comparison to the males. However, the professional courses like B.Com., M.B.A., DIM and DMM offered by IGNOU were more popular among the male population.

The parents of almost all the students enrolled in various courses of both the institutes were literate which indicated that in addition to other factors, parents might also have motivated the students to improve their qualification through distance education. Moreover, the majority of the mothers of such students were housewives and the family income of such students was as low as Rs. 20,000 per annum.

The enrolment trend of students enrolled in B.Ed., LL.B. and M.Com. courses in the Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu, indicated that the enrolment percentage of boys in M.Com. was significantly higher in the session 1984-85 whereas the enrolment percentage in DIM, DCO, BLIS and M.B.A. courses of the students from urban areas was higher in the sessions 1988-89, 91-92, 92-93 and 93-94. Moreover, a low percentage of OBC's students was found in BLIS and CFN courses in the sessions 1990-91 and 91-92.

The Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu has introduced professional courses such as B.Ed., LL.B. and M.Com. at the post-graduate level and IGNOU has introduced professional courses such as CFN and DCO at the undergraduate level and PGDDE, PGDHE, DIM, BLS, DMM, DRD and M.B.A. courses at the post-graduate level in 1988-1992.

The objectives of distance education as envisaged by Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu as well as the IGNOU have been more or less found to be realised in providing education: (i) to those who had joined service and could not continue their studies in formal institutions; (ii) to provide education to those who have no higher education facilities near to the place of their residence; (iii) to provide education to those unemployed youths who could not get higher education because of financial hardships; and (iv) to provide education to those who could not get admission in colleges/university due to low percentage of marks.



The Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu and IGNOU admits students to various courses on the basis of the percentage of marks obtained in the qualifying examination. Since, the exact number of students to be admitted in various courses is not notified in the prospectus by both the organisations, the admissions are made on the 'first-come-first serve' basis. However, in case of admission in M.B.A. course of IGNOU, the students are admitted on the basis of marks in the entrance test conducted by IGNOU at the national level.

The University of Jammu as well as IGNOU give consideration to the recommendations of the University Grants Commission, the needs of the society and the community while starting courses through the distance mode. The functionaries of both the institutions have expressed that the availability of teachers and physical infrastructure were also kept in view while starting these courses.

Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu has provision for reservation of seats for SC, ST, OBC's and handicapped students. But since there was no prescribed limit of students to be admitted in various courses, this reservation did not serve any purpose. In the context of IGNOU the admission was open to all students except in M.B.A., provision for reservations was made by the University. The students from different income groups got admission in various programmes in both the institutions.

Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu as well as IGNOU supported students' learning through counselling and mass-media namely radio, TV and newspapers.

The personal contact programmes were organised by both the institutions for the benefit of students where the problems relating to courses, assignments and other relating issues were discussed. However, University of Jammu faced number of problems due to lack of sufficient accommodation for organising such programmes in and outside the Jammu city. Moreover, the institute also faced difficulty for arranging accommodation for resource persons who were associated with counselling outside the Jammu city. However IGNOU did not seem to face such problems.

The lectures followed by discussions were used by the teachers in imparting instruction to distance learners of both the institutions. However, brain storming technique and seminars are also used by teachers associated with IGNOU to supplement lectures and discussions.

The University of Jammu supplemented instruction through the use of audio and video cassettes and slide projector during contact programmes for B.Ed. distance learners only whereas IGNOU used these modern gadgets during the contact programmes in almost all the courses.

The University of Jammu, had the core faculty of teachers and their appointments were made through open selection. Moreover, in case of need, the services of experienced teachers from other institutions were also utilised by the University. In IGNOU, there was no provision of any core faculty of teachers. The services of teachers from local institutions were utilised on part-time basis and in special cases the experts from different universities or institutions as well as IGNOU, New Delhi were also invited.

The teachers associated with University of Jammu and IGNOU (Jammu region) were provided orientation through seminars, workshops, summer schools and refresher courses. Both the institutions also sought assistance from Academic Staff Colleges in the country. These orientation programmes were found helpful to teachers in updating their teaching skills and subject content. They were also trained in the use of instructional technologies. IGNOU provided help to distance learners through TV and teleconferencing.

The pattern followed in the preparation of the study material by the Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu was more or less like a textbook with no specified learning objectives and learning exercises. However, in case of IGNOU, each unit of the study material was divided into sub-units. Each sub-unit had a set of learning objectives stated in behavioural terms which were followed by illustrative explanations of the content. The abstract concepts were explained with the help of examples and non-examples. The self-tests were provided at the end of each sub-unit. The study material written by experts was scrutinised by a committee for content and language expert. The experts were paid a reasonable honorarium so as to ensure the quality and excellence of the study material. However, University of Jammu comparatively paid less honorarium to the lessons/study material writers. It may be a reason that expert lesson writers were not involved in writing lessons/study material.

The University of Jammu supplemented study material with additional information in the contact programmes where the teachers interacted with the students in the face-to-face situation. During the contact classes, the students were also motivated to use reference books available with the library of the University. However, the distant learners did not get any academic help through radio and TV programmes, journals and magazines.

Besides, face-to-face counselling, IGNOU also provided enriched content to the distance learners through radio and TV programmes on specified days of the week. The library facilities in terms of reference books, journals and magazines were also provided to the students.

In case of the University of Jammu, the distance learners were expected to write the assignments in English for which no length in terms of words was specified. The assignments were to be submitted to the institute in two months time which they could deposit personally in the institute or by registered post. However, in case of IGNOU, the distance learners could use English as well as Hindi in writing the assignment responses and the length of the assignments was also specified. For short answer type assignments the length was normally fixed 150 words and in case of long answers it was above 300 words. The time for submitting the assignment responses by the distance learners was normally two months.

In case of the University of Jammu the question papers were set by the faculty members as well as by the outside experts, using question papers of previous sessions as models. However, in case of IGNOU, the question paper were set by the experts from other institutions. The experts from IGNOU were involved only in case outside experts were



not available.

The submission of assignments in both the University of Jammu and the IGNOU by the distance learners was compulsory. The main objective of these assignments was to identify the difficulty/weaknesses of the distance learners and suggest remedial help to them. The assignments, used as continuous evaluation, were commented and evaluated by the teachers using numerical scores and returned back to the distance learners with the remedial help for correcting the mistakes.

The performance of the distance learners enrolled with the University of Jammu and IGNOU (Jammu region) was evaluated on the basis of internal and external assessment. Both the universities give 25% of weightage to the internal (continuous) assessment and 75% weightage to the marks obtained by distance learners in the external examination.

In case of the University of Jammu, only essay-type question items were used in the internal as well as external tests for evaluating the achievement of distance learners. However, in case of IGNOU, the essay-type tests were supplemented by the objective-type tests and short-answer tests in the internal and external assessment.

In University of Jammu, the state government provided some financial support for the maintenance of infrastructure, printing of course material, salary of teaching and clerical staff and other miscellaneous items. The UGC grants were extremely poor and no funds were made available by the central government. The tuition fees formed a significant share of the financial resources. However, in the case of IGNOU, the UGC and central government provided adequate funds to the university for running the programmes of distance education. The tuition fee charged from the distance learners was more or less reasonable and the money collected through fees was also utilised for the benefit of distance learners.

No direct financial support in form of stipend/scholarships or fellowships was made available to the distance learners of both the universities. But as per the Government of India rules, SC, ST, physically handicapped and blind students were exempted from admission and tuition fees.

The degrees/diplomas awarded to the distance learners by the University of Jammu as well as IGNOU were recognised by UGC, Association of Indian Universities, State universities and Central Universities. But in the job market the degrees/diplomas did not get the same status as the degrees/diplomas awarded to the student enrolled in the regular streams. However, this was not the case with some courses like M.B.A., BLIS and CFN of IGNOU.

Almost all the distance learners enrolled with the University of Jammu and IGNOU (Jammu region) revealed that they joined the courses through the distance mode because: (i) some of them could not afford to join such courses in the regular colleges/universities due to their poor economic conditions; (ii) most of them could not join a regular course due to low percentage of marks in the qualifying examinations; (iii) the facilities for further study did not exist near the place of their residence, and (iv) for most of them study through the distance mode was convenient and

cost-effective.

In case of the distance learners enrolled with the University of Jammu, the study material supplied to them was inadequate. Hence they consulted extra material for preparing their assignments. The quality of the study material was poor and did not equip them properly for appearing in the final examinations. There were many printing errors and in some situations it became difficult for the distance learners to understand the contents of the study material. However, the distance learners enrolled with the IGNOU (Jammu region) expressed their satisfaction about the content, quality and printing of the study material.

The distance learners enrolled with the University of Jammu and IGNOU expressed that the presentation of study material was effective and understandable to them.

A significant majority of the distance learners enrolled with the University of Jammu and IGNOU (Jammu region) responded that the study material contained enough illustrations, figures and diagrams to explain the concepts.

A large majority of the distance learners enrolled with the University of Jammu, expressed that self-tests/exercises at the end of each unit of the study material were not of much use in learning the contents of the study material. On the other hand, a significant majority of the distance learners enrolled with IGNOU expressed that self-tests/exercises were very helpful in learning the content material.

The distance learners enrolled with the University of Jammu expressed that the assignments were more or less helpful to them in the preparation of their final examination. Moreover, the study material and the assignments were not sent well in time and in majority of cases the teachers did not pinpoint their mistakes/errors and suggest any improvement. In the context of IGNOU, a significant majority of the distance learners reported that the assignments were of immense help to them in the preparation of their final examination. It was also revealed by the distance learners that the assignments were properly evaluated by the teachers and were returned back to them well in time along with the comments and suggestions.

The distance learners enrolled with the University of Jammu revealed that participation in personal contact programmes in some courses was compulsory and in some, it was voluntary. However, in case of IGNOU, the participation of distance learners in the personal contact programmes was compulsory.

Almost all the distance learners enrolled with both the Institutes expressed that counselling was of immense help to them in removing their academic difficulties and doubts. They were of the view that counselling enhanced their motivation and sustained their interest in the studies. During counselling the teachers also provided certain remedial measures to the learners and helped them in identifying the problems.

A majority of the distance learners visited the study centre voluntarily once or twice in a month and utilised the services rendered by the centre. In some courses the books and journals in the library of the study centre were available and which the students could use freely during their visit to the study centre. However, in some of the courses the books and journals were not available and the students faced a lot of difficulties in preparing their assignments in the final examination. Moreover xerox facilities were

also lacking in the study centre.

Almost all the students enrolled in both the universities have expressed that the courses which they were pursuing through the distance mode would be helpful to them in the local job market and also in the higher studies of technical, professional and general nature.

For the effective and meaningful functioning of distance education in the traditional universities like University of Jammu, the Director of the Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu suggested that the apex bodies like UGC and Distance Education Council should make available sufficient and adequate funds to these universities, so that they can develop their own infrastructure.

The Director and the teachers of the Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu suggested that the staff of distance education (academic and non-academic) should be oriented so as to update their knowledge and skills in the methodology and technologies of distance education.

The personnel of IGNOU suggested that there should be some core faculty available at the regional centres so that the programmes are organised effectively for the distance learners. They were also of the view that extra classes in the form of tutorial and counselling should be organised for the distance learners living in rural and remote areas. Such students should also be provided stipend/scholarship by the IGNOU.

In view of the great demands for professional courses the IGNOU staff emphasized that the university should make special efforts to open such courses keeping in view the needs of the different regions of the country. They were of the view that special professional courses should be introduced especially for housewives and disadvantaged communities like Gujjar and Bakarwals (mobile tribes of the Jammu).

It was suggested by the teachers associated with distance education programmes that they should be provided training in handling the audio-video and other modern gadgets.

Since there was no facility for pursuing Ph.D. programmes in IGNOU as well as in the Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu for the distant learners who passed various post-graduate courses through the distance mode, it was suggested by the teachers and the students that such programmes (Ph.D.) should also be started.

The teachers of both the institutions favoured autonomy for running distance education programmes. It is generally observed that open learning institutions were duplicating the courses of the traditional universities. They suggested that open learning institutions should be given autonomy for starting new courses, formulating need-based syllabi, developing instructional technology and evaluating the system. They further suggested that the courses should be need-based so as to cater to the cultural, social and economic needs of the target group.

### **Educational Implications**

The findings of the study have certain implications for both the University of Jammu and the IGNOU (Jammu region) for running distance education programmes which may be laid down as under :



- The distance education courses introduced at the under-graduate and post-graduate levels are hardly adequate in number keeping in view the choices of the distance learners in the Jammu region. Moreover, most of these courses do not cater to the needs of the disadvantaged communities like Gujjars and Bakarwals. It is suggested that certificate or diploma level courses in cattle rearing and dairy technology may be started for the benefit of the students of these communities.
- Most of the objectives of the distance education are fulfilled by the University of Jammu and IGNOU. However, the benefits of these programmes have not reached the far flung hill, rural and *kandi* areas of Jammu region. Hence, it is suggested that some survey studies should be sponsored by these institutions so as to identify the areas of Jammu region which have so far remained deprived of the benefits of the distance education programmes. This will help achieve the objective "Education for All".
- The students belonging to deprived communities especially in the remote areas are not exposed to the structure of entrance tests. Since in some of the courses like M.B.A. etc. IGNOU admits students on the basis of their performance in entrance tests, it is suggested that some counselling sessions may be organised by the Regional Centre for orienting these students for such tests.
- The information regarding the availability of various courses through the distance mode is not disseminated effectively in the farflung areas of Jammu region. Hence, the universities should organise special programmes through radio, television and if possible, counselling sessions at the Panchayat/Block level.
- The facilities in terms of physical infrastructure and teaching faculty are less in comparison to those available for the students in the formal teaching departments, it is suggested that special care may be taken by the funding agencies like UGC, DEC and state government to provide more funds to the faculty of distance institutions. This step will be of immense help in raising the morale of the functionaries and teachers associated with distance education programmes.
- Provision of educational opportunities to women has been an important issue in the education sector since independence. Despite efforts made by the state government and voluntary organisations, these could not make sufficient contribution towards women equality. It is suggested that some special courses should be started especially for housewives living in rural areas and more incentives should be provided to them in the form of scholarship/stipend.
- In order to achieve excellence in distance education the teachers should be oriented in innovative techniques like brain storming, problem-solving, project method, seminars, mastery learning strategies, formative evaluation, etc.
- It is suggested that besides Hindi or English, Urdu which is the official language of Jammu & Kashmir should also be used.
- The assignments are the effective means of evaluating the performance of the distance learners on a continuous basis. It is generally observed that the teachers assign grades to the assignment responses and hardly pinpoint the conceptual

mistakes committed by the students. The evaluation of assignment responses should be diagnostic and remedial in nature. Hence, it is suggested that the teachers should be given training in the evaluation of the assignment responses and writing suggestive comments for remedial purposes.

### Suggestions for Further Research

The present study was undertaken to evaluate the distance higher education programmes in the Jammu region. In view of its scope in terms of area, programmes, instructional technology and evaluation techniques the following suggestion may be considered for further studies.

- A comprehensive survey study in Jammu region may be undertaken for identifying academic, professional and vocational courses keeping in view the needs of distance learners.
- Some experimental and longitudinal studies may be undertaken for developing models relating to script writing and editing of study materials, organisation of PCP, evaluation of assignment responses, office management, production of audio video programmes, choice of media and communication technology.
- Augmentation and strengthening of student support services, improvements in the delivery system, decentralisation of administration and extensive use of communication systems need to be studied using experimental and case study approaches.
- Formative and summative models for evaluating performance of distance learners with the help of well designed experimental studies need to be developed.
- Cost effectiveness of the on-going programme of distance/open education in relation to institutional and private costs need to be studied. In the 'institutional costs' both recurrent costs (staff salaries and benefits, training materials, utilities, maintenance of facilities, training service etc.) and capital costs (annual costs of buildings, equipment and vehicles etc.) may be included. The 'private costs' may include both direct costs (tuition and other fees, room rents, books supplies and transportation) and 'indirect costs' which pertains to earnings as a result of taking the course.

*Note:* This paper is based on author's doctoral dissertation.

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