

Teacher Education Through Distance Mode

B.N. KOUL

Director, Division of Distance Education, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi-110068, India

M.B. MENON

Director, School of Education, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi-110068, India

Whether or not teacher education should be given using the methods of distance education is an issue which has been debated for a long time now. Strong views have been expressed both in its favour and against it. Having allowed it under special circumstances, there are institutions which offer such programmes currently, but pressures are building against them. The major argument against them is born of the concern for skills component — practice teaching — which has traditionally been a significant part of each and every teacher training programme in India. The contention is that distance education programmes cannot satisfy this requirement satisfactorily.

The issue is a serious one and has been discussed at the highest policy making levels. More recently the issue has been posed to the Indira Gandhi National Open University, which is responsible for the determination of standards in distance education in the country. This paper presents the views of IGNOU, emphasising that today distance education practices do not necessarily exclude skills based legitimate components in any education/training programme. If distance education institutions provide for skills components adequately there should be nothing against their imparting teacher education/training. Of course, at the operational level very stringent mechanisms are required to manage the programmes satisfactorily.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher education has always been recognised as one of the most crucial means of social and national development. In the Indian context, this view has been endorsed by several commissions and committees appointed after independence. Recently, endorsing this view the National Policy on Education-1986¹ emphasised that the professional improvement and career enhancement of teachers should be addressed on a continuous basis. The Programme of Action² of the Policy highlighted the role of distance education in teacher education programmes, especially in view of

- i) the large number to be catered to,
- ii) the need to organise courses on a continuous basis in the career of a teacher, and
- iii) the unique potential of the distance mode of education to intervene without taking the teachers away from work, thus emerging as a better means of transferring knowledge, understanding and skills to them in their day-to-day practice.

However, it may be mentioned that there are strong views that would have teacher education programmes conducted through non-formal modes abandoned forthwith.

It is this debate that we address ourselves to in this paper, and in doing so outline the thinking of the

academic community of IGNOU in this regard. B.Ed programme being the central issue of the debate, we shall, in what follows, focus on the training of the secondary and higher secondary teachers only.

2. TEACHER EDUCATION FOR SECONDARY AND HIGHER SECONDARY TEACHERS

A professional degree in education has always been considered desirable to the level of being obligatory for all secondary school teachers. However, just after independence about 46% of teachers at the secondary stage were untrained and due to the lack of enough trained graduates, untrained graduates have been recruited all along. This practice continues even now and is likely to continue for a long time to come, for we as a nation have yet to learn the techniques of striking a purposeful balance between field pressures and administrative indifference on the one hand and social aspirations and educational appropriateness on the other. Genuine concern about this situation led to the establishment of a number of teacher training colleges offering a one year training programme which was later restructured to what is now known as the Bachelor of Education programme. These institutions have been catering mostly to pre-service training, while enrolling only a small percentage from the category of working teachers as training in these institutions necessitates the working teachers to be away from work for a long period, which in most cases is not possible.

Beginnings and expansion of the B.Ed programmes through Correspondence

By the sixties educational planners realised that the B.Ed. programmes through formal institutions were not in a position to cope with the growing demand for teacher training. It is around this time (in 1966 to be exact) that the Central Institute of Education (CIE), University of Delhi, started the B.Ed. programme through correspondence-cum-contact mode³. This was a new beginning. The University of Bangalore and the Regional Colleges of Education under the NCERT followed suit. The immediate objective of these programmes was to clear the then existing backlog of untrained secondary school teachers in the system. Here, we need to note the sequence of events — the socio-educational dynamics brought in the correspondence mode of teacher training even before the UGC was fully convinced of the utility of such a mode for purposes of training teachers, as it was later in 1968, that the UGC sent a delegation to the USSR to ascertain the purposefulness of such a mode in the context of teacher training. The delegation⁴ came up strongly in favour of teacher training programmes through the correspondence mode. Consequently the seventies and the eighties saw a proliferation of B.Ed. programmes through the correspondence mode. According to the latest available data today there are fifteen institutes of correspondence (distance) education under the formal universities and one state open university offering the B.Ed. programme through the correspondence mode. To this we must add another State Open University (YCMOU) which is launching the programme in Maharashtra. The latest available profile of student enrolments in the B.Ed. programmes through correspondence is presented below in Table I.

**Table I : Enrolment in B.Ed. through Correspondence/
distance education during 1990-91**

Name of the University	Enrolment
Kakatiya University	223
Punjabi University	250
Kashmir University	294
Sri Venkateshwara University	398
Andhra University	400
Jammu University	481
Mysore University	500
Osmania University	611
Berhampur University	728
Utkal University	1100
Madurai Kamaraj University	1963
Kota Open University	4646
Madras University	5976
Barkatulla University	7690
Maharshi Dayanand University	21363
Annamalai University	21417

Source: UGC, Annual Report for the year 1990-91, New Delhi.

It is evident from the above table that the field reality does not support the claim that the enrolment in these programmes has been often very large. However, it is true of a few universities. Annamalai University had an enrolment of more than 21,000 students in 1990-91, the M.D. University of Rohtak enrolled as many as 33,000 in the first year of its establishment (1988-89)⁵, and Kota Open University started the B.Ed. programme with 9000 students in 1988-89, yet a generalization pertaining to the quality of such programmes, involving all the universities, based on these data may not be justified as most other universities enrol only small numbers to these programmes — eleven of the sixteen universities have manageable numbers. It appears reasonable to exercise checks on the "erring" (if we may use the term) universities, rather than ask all of them to abandon their programmes, particularly when the issue of "backlog" continues to be a matter of concern even today.

Backlog of Untrained Teachers

A claim is being made that the backlog of untrained secondary and higher secondary teachers is not a matter of concern any more⁶. However, a perusal of the existing statistics in this regard belies the claim in no uncertain terms (see Table II below).

Table II: Trend in the percentage and absolute number of untrained secondary and higher secondary teachers in the last two decades - 1970-71 to 1990-91

Year	Total No. of secondary and higher sec. teachers (in lakhs)	No. of untrained secondary and higher sec. teachers (in lakhs)	Percentage of untrained teachers
1970-71	6.29	1.55	24.64
1980-81	9.12	1.03	11.29
1985-86	11.58	0.97	8.4
1987-88	12.42	1.04	11.25
1988-89	12.36	1.15	9.3
1990-91	12.73	1.15	9.05

Sources:

1. Educational Statistics(1987), MHRD, New Delhi.
2. Selected Educational Statistics-1985-86 (1987); 1987-88, (1989); 1988-89 (1990); and 1990-91 (1992), MHRD, New Delhi.

It may be seen from the above table that 24.6% of teachers were untrained during 1970-71 amounting to an absolute number of more than 1.55 lakh untrained teachers. This is the period when the UGC and other agencies concerned were all for the B.Ed. programme through correspondence — the prime purpose was to train 1.55 lakh untrained teachers already in the active work force. By 1980-81 the percentage of untrained teachers came down considerably to 11.29 with more than 1 lakh of untrained teachers still awaiting their turn

for training. The figures for 1985-86 were about 0.97 lakh untrained teachers, i.e., 8.4% of the total. Not surprisingly, this number went up in the next two years to about 1.04 lakhs i.e., 11.25% of the teachers were untrained in 1987-88 and 1.15 lakhs, i.e., 9.3% in 1988-89; and the gross number has not changed in 1990-91. It is evident from the data that in about 20 years, in spite of the efforts made towards training teachers through correspondence programmes, the backlog of untrained teachers in absolute numbers has not come down significantly. The reasons for this phenomenon seem to be the following:

- i) The relevant central and state agencies have failed, and failed badly in enforcing desirable employment regulations to check/stop the practice of appointing untrained teachers to the secondary and higher secondary schools — a case of field pressures and administrative indifference.
- ii) Large proportions of student populations enrolled in the B.Ed. correspondence programme have not been inservice teachers necessarily — an issue of social aspirations against the sense of educational appropriateness.
- iii) The number of teachers in the actual work force has doubled since 1970-71, whereby pressures on conventional resources for training teachers must have doubled too.

Consequently, in spite of our efforts the absolute number of untrained teachers at the level concerned has come down from 1.55 lakhs to 1.15 lakhs — a reduction of less than 33% in about twenty years.

The question that looms large in our minds is whether or not the existence of about 10% untrained teachers in the actual work force, the absolute number being a colossal 1.15 lakhs, is a matter of national concern.

It may be noted here that we are talking about the untrained teachers working at the secondary and higher secondary level only — if we include those working at lower levels⁷ the backlog stands at a staggering 3.75 lakhs.

Our stand is that the backlog is still there, staring at us and asking for a solution. We should not close our eyes to it.

Effectiveness of the Distance Education Courses/Programmes

Closely related to the issues of large enrolments and backlog is the issue of the effectiveness of the distance mode of education/training. Here, we do not intend to go into the details of the effectiveness of the mode under consideration, instead we shall present a brief comment on what is happening the world over as far as teacher education programmes are concerned. For this purpose, given below are a few glimpses of what is being done at some open universities outside India.

1. Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Thailand⁸

Bachelor's Degree Programs in Education are as follows:

1. Four-year Bachelor's Degree Program with two study areas, namely, 1) Elementary Education with majors in Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education, and 2) Secondary Education with majors in Thai, and Social Studies.
2. Two-year Bachelor's Degree Program with five study areas, namely, 1) Elementary Education with majors in Early Childhood Education and Elementary education, 2) Secondary Education with majors in Thai, Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics, 3) Educational Administration, 4) Guidance, and 5) Non-formal Education.
3. One-year Certificate Program in Teaching.

2. Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan⁹

Teacher Training Programmes

Teacher Education is one of the prominent features of the University and the University offers the following teacher training programmes:

- Primary Teaching Certificate (PTC) for Primary school teachers
- Certificate of Teaching (CT) for middle school teachers
- Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) for secondary school teachers
- Master of Education (M.Ed) special Education
- Arabic Teachers Training Course (ATTC)
- Post Graduate diploma for the Teaching of Arabic (B.Ed, Arabic) for the teachers teaching Arabic at Secondary School level
- P.G.D. in ELT

Out of these teacher training programmes PTC, CT, and ATTC were offered before 1985 whereas B.Ed., M.Ed. (Special Education) and Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching of Arabic (B.Ed. Arabic) were planned and offered in 1988. Post Graduate level Population Education course for secondary school teachers was also offered in Autumn 1988 for the first time. This shows a tremendous development made by the University in the area of teacher education specially for the training of secondary school teachers. At this time, the University offers 19 courses in the area of teacher education and a number of courses are in the process of development for the full-fledged accomplishment of the programmes initiated in 1988.

3. Deakin University, Deakin, Australia¹⁰

In 1986, the majority of the 727 Bachelor degree conferals were distributed as follows:

Bachelor of Arts in Education 105 (14.4%)

- Bachelor of Education 154 (21.2%)
- Bachelor of Science 138 (19.0%)
- Bachelor of Commerce 76 (10.5%)
- Bachelor of Arts (Humanities) 130 (17.9%)
- Bachelor of Arts (Soc.Sci.) 81 (11.1%)

(It may be noted that the largest number of conferrals is in the field of teacher education.)

4. Open University, The U.K.¹¹

The Bachelor's degree in education may include various combinations from the following courses:

- Conflict and Change in Education: A Sociological Introduction
- Contemporary Issues in Education
- Curriculum Design and Development
- Curriculum Evaluation and Assessment in Educational Institutions
- Curriculum in Action: An Approach to Evaluation
- Curriculum: The Context, Design and Development
- Economics and Education Policy
- Education and the Urban Environment
- Education, Economy and Politics
- Education for Adults
- Management and the School
- Management in Education
- Management in Post-compulsory Education
- Mathematics across the Curriculum
- Methods of Educational Enquiry: An Empirical Approach
- Research Methods in Education and the Social Sciences
- School and Society
- Schooling and Society
- Society, Education and the State
- Special needs in Education
- Urban Education

5. The Zimbabwe Integrated National Teacher Education Course¹²

ZINTEC programme through the distance education mode shows "how distance education may motivate curricular reforms in the conventional system of education — following the ZINTEC approach, the conventional three year teacher training programme in Zimbabwe has been reformed to be given over four years now".

The point we intend to make here is that cutting across the Developed and the Developing Countries, the effectiveness of distance education is not questioned today. **Instead, the questions and issues now raised, and need to**

be raised again and again, pertain to how best this methodology may be used to meet specific educational objectives. The way in which distance education courses/programmes are planned and implemented are much more deliberate and complex than has ever been conceived and executed in the conventional systems. Universities can go wrong because of bad planning and faulty implementation, but that is the failure of planning and/or the process of implementation and not that of the distance mode of education. The failure is that of the men behind the system, not the system.

3. CONCERNS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, THE UGC AND THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Besides the State Ministries of Education, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, the University Grants Commission, the National Council of Educational Research and Training and the National Council of Teacher Education are the agencies which influence the policy and practice of teacher education in India. Leaving out from our discussion the State Ministries of Education for obvious reasons, in this section we shall reflect and comment, briefly though, on the views of the latter agencies in order to arrive at the stand we may take on this issue.

Concerns of the Government of India

Keeping in view the facts that the Government of India has established a national university not only to run various courses/programmes through the distance mode but also to promote and determine standards therein, that efforts are on to establish a network of distance education institutions to make the system more responsive to social needs and more cost efficient and that substantial sums have been contributed to international bodies like the COL (Canada) for the promotion of distance education, our firm belief is that the Government of India

- i) strongly believes in the effectiveness of distance education,
- ii) makes all the efforts to promote it both nationally and internationally, and
- iii) is determined to use this system to improve the existing state of educational affairs in the country.

A glimpse of this concern is evident in one of their communications¹³ to the NCTE, and we quote it :

- "i) One of the important aspects of B.Ed. Correspondence programme, which needs consideration is whether correspondence B.Ed. courses should also be made available to nursery and elementary school teachers who wish to improve their qualifications and thereby career prospects and if yes, what should be the eligibility criteria for this category of candidates? The considered advice of the NCTE or NCERT is requested on this vital point.

- ii) It would be helpful, if an up-to-date state of norms and guidelines could be evolved for B.Ed. correspondence courses keeping in view (a) the developments since 1980 (especially, the NPE and POA) and (b) the fact that at least for certain categories of candidates such courses will have to be run for quite a few years to come.
- iii) It is not clear what specific steps, the NCTE or NCERT has taken so far to implement the Resolutions passed by NCTE from time to time for generally putting an end to correspondence courses by way of formally taking up the matter with the UGC and Universities/State Governments concerned. If the matter was pursued with these bodies, what stand they took?"

From this communication we conclude that the Government of India is keen not only to improve the lot of secondary school teachers but also that of the primary school teachers. Secondly, the concern is about the efficient running of distance education courses, and thirdly there is evidence that the Government favours the process of participatory decision making. All this is commendable. However, the Government has to function through various agencies like the UGC etc., to which we turn now.

Concerns of the UGC and the NCTE

The views of the UGC with regard to distance/correspondence education in general are evident from the following statement:

"The Commission has been supporting the programmes of distance/correspondence courses with a view to providing a new stream of education to enable a large number of persons with necessary aptitude to acquire further knowledge and improve their professional competence"¹⁴.

However the UGC shifted its point of view considerably in the eighties basing it on the working of the correspondence courses and on the advice of the NCTE.

The NCTE appointed a committee in 1980 to ascertain the quality of B.Ed. programmes offered through correspondence in several universities. After looking into the operational aspects of these programmes, especially the practice teaching component, the committee¹⁵ recommended that the programmes be confined to the respective states in which the universities concerned operate, that the programme through correspondence-cum-contact mode be offered only to clear the backlog of untrained secondary and primary teachers and that the first degree in professional preparation of secondary school teachers be obtained only through a formal course. It needs to be mentioned here that of the ten recommendations made by the committee, one recommends the correspondence mode for a specific purpose

(to remove the backlog), two propose to stop it altogether and seven recommend reforms to make the system effective. Interestingly, the seven reformative recommendations do not seem to have made any impact, or if any steps were taken to implement those reforms they have generally not succeeded.

Subsequently, concerned about the continuing deterioration in teacher education through correspondence mode, the August 87 meeting of the NCTE Standing Committee on Secondary and College Teacher Education concluded that B.Ed. through correspondence should be scrapped, and at the end of the meeting of the Standing Committee (August, 1987) a delegation led by Dr. K.L. Shrimali submitted a memorandum¹⁶ to the Ministry of HRD, GOI, demanding that the B.Ed. programmes offered through the correspondence mode be stopped forthwith.

At this, among other things, the Government of India sent a query to the NCTE, which we have quoted in full under reference no. 13. This was done in July 1988.

The NCTE did not act in haste. Instead, giving due consideration to the feeling among many educationists that the general deterioration of standards in secondary teacher education and the proliferation of B.Ed. programmes through correspondence are causally linked and also to the fact that recently impressive developments have taken place in the field of distance education, the NCTE appointed another committee to look into the relevant aspects of teacher education through correspondence and make recommendations on the use of distance education therein. The Committee met on March 31, 1989 and then on June 8, 1989. It made five recommendations¹⁷, the major ones being as follows:

- (i) The teacher education curricula demand a great deal of weightage for live classroom experiences and other forms of human interaction.
- (ii) Teacher education through distance education modes, if suitably organised can emerge as a trend setter in **quality training** for those working in face-to-face mode (see item 5 on page 4).

And to conclude, it recommended that clear and unambiguous guidelines incorporating new possibilities in distance education be arrived at. In sequence with the recommendations it presented a set of seven well conceived guidelines¹⁸ that could be followed in order to organise effective training programmes through the distance mode.

It needs to be stated emphatically that this committee does not only appear to be better informed about the potential of distance education but is also positive in its approach. For example, it does recognise the distinction between correspondence mode and distance education mode and then recommends the latter unhesitatingly.

"What therefore, needs to be emphasised is that the weakness in the B.Ed. (correspondence) prog-

rammes is not due to deficiency inherent in the Distance Education mode, but due to the fact that the correspondence mode is merely a truncated form of distance education, and even there the way the specific aspects of such programmes are implemented leaves many things desired. Therefore, rather than arriving at a summary judgement at the demerits of B.Ed. (correspondence) programmes, it is necessary to come out with clear and unambiguous guidelines incorporating the new possibilities in Distance Education, and seek ways and means to persuade the concerned institutions to follow these guidelines all these being done in the spirit of improving the quality of teacher education programmes imparted through correspondence mode."¹⁹

Again, this Committee does not contribute to the view that nonformal training courses are the only cause of the falling standards in teacher education. It is certainly more objective in so far as it does not fall into the trap of comparing the **worst** of distance education programmes with the **best** of formal programmes — the comparison is just not tenable.

"The committee is alive to the growing opinion among educationists that there is rapid deterioration in the quality of teacher education. The committee also takes notice of the view of several leading educationists that B.Ed. (correspondence) programme is one major contributor to the falling standards in teacher education. However, the committee realises that these observations are not subjected fully to verification, and that the observation about the falling standards of teacher education may apply even to the B.Ed. programmes offered through conventional face-to-face mode."²⁰

Then, it does not contribute to the idea of stopping B.Ed. programmes through the distance mode for purposes of awarding first degrees and expresses so in no uncertain words.

"Elsewhere the state authorities and the state universities should assess the situation and take decision about starting Distance Education Programmes for pre-service teacher education. If such a decision is taken, then all the points mentioned in the above stated guidelines should be followed to maintain the quality of teacher preparation".²¹

And lastly, it appeals the NCTE to stand by the distance mode of teacher training for the benefit of the nation.

"It (the NCTE) should develop awareness about the need for a better quality of teachers and win the professionals in higher education to the national task of clearing backlog of untrained teachers and maintaining the quality of teacher preparation."²²

Suprisingly, these recommendations and the appeal

from an expert body notwithstanding, the education panel of the UGC²³ decided that the first professional degree in education should not be given through correspondence. Further, through recent communications²⁴ from the UGC, we understand that the NCTE Standing Committee on Secondary and College Teacher Education met in February 1991 and then in June 1991 and suggested that the first professional degree should not be given through distance mode. And more recently the issue has gone public, as the Hindustan Times, New Delhi Edition, dated September 6, 1991 carried a write up entitled "B.Ed. postal courses may go". The write up concludes with these words.

"The NCTE resolution was forwarded to the UGC but since the responsibility for coordination and maintenance of standards of distance education has been entrusted to the IGNOU under an Act. of Parliament, the UGC cannot take a unilateral decision. Hence, the final decision will require interaction with the IGNOU and HRD Ministry."²⁵

This review of the situation will not be complete without a few words on the implementational strategies adopted by the UGC from time to time.

Agreeing to the recommendations of the 1980 committee of the NCTE in favour of (i) discontinuing all B.Ed. programmes through correspondence and (ii) not starting any new ones, the Commission 'decided not to assist any new programmes through correspondence' (1987-88). The universities having the programme were advised to review their admission policies, as the Commission observed that 'the backlog of untrained teachers in the schools in most of the states had been cleared' (1987-88). While it is commendable that the Commission has been sensitive to the recommendations of the NCTE, it is surprising to find that the Commission observed that the backlog of untrained teachers was no more an issue. In fact about 1.04 lakh teachers were still untrained in the secondary and higher secondary schools when the above statement was made (see details on page 2/3).

The total enrolment in B.Ed. correspondence programmes during 1987-88 was 22,646, although the UGC directives about discontinuing the programmes had gone to all the universities concerned. Obviously, they did not respond to this directive. Of course, CIE (The University of Delhi) had stopped it long back in 1971 and the Regional Colleges of Education also wound up their correspondence programmes, some in 1987 and some in 1988. But, most of the universities continued with their B.Ed. correspondence programmes, one increased its enrolment substantially and the other introduced the programme for the first time and that too with a very large enrolment. Consequently the total enrolment in B.Ed. correspondence programmes was reported to be 32,100 during 1988-89. This is in addition

to the 14,039 enrolled in M.D. University, Rohtak²⁶. The universities have not taken seriously the advice or the directive of the UGC. The enrolment has only been increasing.

Then, once again responding to the views of the NCTE Standing Committee on Secondary and College Teacher Education, the UGC directed the universities to discontinue the programme with immediate effect. In all probability the universities may not take the directive seriously this time either, exactly the way it was ignored earlier on, perhaps because the B.Ed. programmes through correspondence have in most cases become more or less self-supporting. Any threats of stopping grants for this programme have not had the desired effect in the past, they may not have any in the future, as each state will have to take cognizance of its field realities. To sum up, in terms of implementation, ironically, the earlier directive of the UGC has succeeded in closing down some good programmes, i.e., the ones given by the Regional Colleges of Education, but has not touched the bad ones. What may the recent directive do is anybody's guess. In all probability the UGC may be persuaded to allow these programmes for some more time. In such a situation, is there a different way of solving this problem, a more pragmatic and constructive way, a way that does not ignore field realities, is imaginative and professional in its approach!

This brings us to the role of the IGNOU. As of now IGNOU functions only as an Open University and it has not yet fully taken over the function of co-ordination and determination of standards. Of course, the mechanism namely the Distance Education Council (DEC) has been set up for this purpose, but it will take some more time to become fully operational. Besides, as on today DEC has jurisdiction over open universities only.

4. IGNOU AND ITS ROLE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

According to the IGNOU Act (1985)²⁷, IGNOU has been given the dual mandate of functioning

- i) as a university to 'provide opportunities for higher education to a large segment of the population and to promote the educational well being of the community' and
- ii) as an apex body 'to encourage the Open University and distance education systems in the educational pattern of the country and to co-ordinate and determine the standards in such systems'.

As stated above the University has yet to take charge of the distance education programmes of the conventional universities as far as the second objective listed above is concerned. But, it is not before long that this responsibility too has to be shouldered, and so keeping in view her objectives, the general quality of the teacher education programmes given through the distance mode, the

views and recommendations of the NCTE and the actions initiated by the UGC, IGNOU is expected to, and she must take appropriate steps with regard to teacher education programmes in anticipation of her assuming the role of co-ordination and determination of standards all over the country.

An objective assessment of the situation in the area of B.Ed. correspondence programmes in the country and the reactions of the NCTE and the UGC in this regard constitute the bases for the following comments:

1. The quality of B.Ed. programmes through correspondence in general is considered to be inferior in many of the institutions. While this is true, it does not, however, mean that teacher training cannot be given effectively through the distance mode. In this connection attention needs to be drawn to Muley Report²⁸ on Correspondence Education and what it has to say about the Postgraduate Diploma in the Teaching of English given through the correspondence mode by the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad. It is the first degree in educational practice for most who take this course. The point is that a well planned, appropriately implemented and strictly supervised distance education programme does serve the intended purpose satisfactorily.
2. Compromising the requirement of practice teaching again is not a feature of Distance Education. To our best knowledge Distance Education does not preach or practice truncated study programmes. If practice teaching and other face-to-face components are to be parts of a programme they must be and are included without any hesitation. We presume, we may not ask a whole system to be given up because some institutions practise it the bad way. We have enough examples of substandard practice — grossly substandard practice — in many disciplines in conventional institutions. On that count, we have not thought of stopping instruction in all the institutions in those disciplines. Unfortunately, we have not even thought of pulling up the erring ones.
3. Some institutions are concerned only with enrolling more and more students at the cost of the quality of programmes. That a few universities admit large numbers of students is no fault of the system of Distance Education. It is the failure of the universities concerned and also of those who are expected to exercise control over them. The drastic step of putting an end to B.Ed. through distance mode both for preservice and inservice teachers does not appear to be the solution for the problem. A more positive and constructive approach is advisable. We think that the ZINTEC experience has definite and positive lessons to teach us (see item 5 page 4).
4. The major reasons for the deterioration of quality are
 - (i) lack of restrictions on the size of enrolment and

(ii) inferior organisation of the practice teaching component of the programmes.

If a few universities give sub-standard degrees by subverting the system of distance education, why are they not derecognised ! This recommendation was made in the memorandum referred to earlier. Why has this recommendation been ignored?

5. The argument that backlog has been removed is unfortunately not sustainable. Backlog of untrained teachers is still disturbingly large. To say that the percentage of untrained teachers at the secondary and higher secondary levels is a mere 10 per cent is somewhat misleading. This figure in absolute numbers has remained the same over the decade or, to be more precise, has increased from 1.03 lakhs in 1980-81 to 1.15 lakhs in 1988-89 (see Table-II, page 2). Calculating at an average rate of forty students per teacher, about 46 lakh students are being taught by untrained teachers today. If we include the case of lower levels of education, the total number of untrained teachers comes to be 3.75 lakhs. The situation is grim. We need to be more realistic and take an objective view, since the issues that we are considering have long term implications.
6. The fact that some states have removed the backlog and that some have a surplus of trained teachers does not solve the problems of other states. In the prevailing culture and circumstances in the country, the human resources at these levels are not as mobile as we may like them to be. Market forces may influence mobility; but so far, we have not seen this happening, for more than one reason. States with the backlog will have to be catered to.
7. The insistence of the NCTE and the UGC that the first professional degree in education should not be given through distance education system does not seem to be supported by expert and professional advice, nor does it stand the test of operational feasibility. The main force behind the proposal of a blanket ban on B.Ed. programmes through distance education, it appears, is the NCTE Standing Committee on Secondary and College Teacher Education, which has ignored the expert advice of the committee set up in 1990. Already a number of substandard institutions offering B.Ed. programme in the conventional mode have come up in certain States. The blanket ban will encourage and promote the mushrooming of such institutions. While the erring universities are more amenable to correction, the same is not true of private parties who commercialise education. Of course, arguments about legislative measures can be advanced; but our experience shows that such measures have not so far succeeded in achieving their objectives. We have not been able to force the closure of bogus universities operating openly and offering degrees and exploiting the innocent youth desper-

ately trying for a university diploma or degree. We have to guard against simple remedies as the ban may lead to by products that may prove worse than the malady. These fears are real and are by no means imaginary or far fetched.

8. The failure in exercising effective influence on the universities for purposes of discontinuing or improving standards in B.Ed. correspondence courses may be a result of the fact that many of these programmes generate enough funds for themselves and do not look for grants from the UGC. Somehow it has not been possible to use the strategy of derecognizing substandard programmes; besides, the reformative recommendations made by the NCTE committees in 1980 and then in 1990 have remained in the background. Should we not become more emphatic about them and consider dealing with erring institutions rather than resorting to the drastic step of barring a whole mode of education from entering a discipline at the degree level.
9. A large number of graduate primary teachers need upgradation of qualifications for upward mobility, but their concern is ignored completely under the pretext that higher positions are not available. It needs consideration, whether denial of opportunities for upgradation of qualification can be justified on the ground that there are no positions available for promotions. Have we closed down any universities because we suffer from educated unemployment?

It may be seen from the above discussion that today we may not ignore or underestimate the potential of distance education for purposes of imparting teacher training. Instead, we should adopt a positive approach, utilise all the possible inputs, develop new ones if needed, to make this system a success. What may IGNOU do to achieve this success ? We shall conclude the paper with our response to this question.

IGNOU's Role

Keeping in view the fact that the nation established IGNOU in order to promote and maintain standards in Distance Education, she must promote distance education as an effective mode that can cater to cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of education successfully. Accordingly, IGNOU may take the following steps with regard to the issue under consideration.

1. IGNOU may not consider imposing a blanket ban on B.Ed. programmes through correspondence. Indeed, it will be a setback for Indian Education if a newly accepted, powerful and potent mode of education is barred from being used in a specific area of knowledge because of lapses on the part of some users.
2. It will be diserable for IGNOU to endeavour to take a

leader's role and demonstrate how these programmes may be run to the satisfaction of the academics in general and the NCTE in particular, as IGNOU cannot afford to accept the denigration of a system which she has to foster by virtue of the very mandate that brought her into being. IGNOU shall attempt to achieve this objective by strict positive measures — such as implementing forthwith the reformative recommendations made by the NCTE Committee in 1990. Interestingly, most of the recommendations and guidelines as they appear in the report of the Committee constitute a part and parcel of the line of thought and the implementational scheme of the IGNOU courses on teacher education. IGNOU stands by them and is in full agreement with them, minor differences notwithstanding.

3. IGNOU proposes to launch a variety of teacher education courses at various levels of instruction in years to come as a continuing education programme.

4. No prospective trainee will ever be admitted to a programme (such as B.Ed., M.Ed. etc.); instead students will have to work through courses and only when they accumulate the required credits will they be awarded any certificates/diplomas/degrees.

5. To begin with, during the entire experimental stage which may last for a few years on run, most of the IGNOU courses in this area will be open to in-service teachers only, except a few at lower levels which may suit parents as well.

The approach visualized by IGNOU is given in more details in the programme of action duly approved by the IGNOU Academic Council. This paper, it is hoped, brings home the approach of IGNOU academic community in all its frankness and sincerity.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. *National Policy on Education - 1986*, 1986, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, New Delhi.
2. *National Policy on Education - 1986 : Programme of Action*, 1986, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, New Delhi.
3. *A Report of the NCTE Committee on Teacher Education Programme through Distance Education Mode*, 1990, NCERT, New Delhi, p. 2.
4. *Report of the UGC delegation to study evening and correspondence courses in the USSR*, 1969, UGC, New Delhi.
5. *A Report of the NCTE Committee on Teacher Education Programme through Distance Education Mode*, 1990, NCERT, New Delhi.
6. *UGC Annual Report : 1987-88*, UGC, New Delhi, pp.176-177.
7. *Selected Educational Statistics : 1988-89*, 1990, MHRD, Government of India, New Delhi.
8. *Sam Sorn : Academic Bulletin*, 1988, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Thailand, p. 37.
9. *Vice-Chancellor's Report - 1985 to 1988*, 1989, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, (Pakistan), p. 30.
10. *Statistics : 1986*, 1986, Deakin University, Deakin (Australia), p. 61.
11. *Open University Course Materials*, 1989, Open University Educational Enterprises Ltd., Milton Keynes, England, pp. iii, iv and v.
12. *Distance Education : A Spectrum of Case Studies*, 1990, Koul BN and Jenkins J. (Eds.), Kogan Page, London, p. 100.
13. Communication No F.7-10/87-TE.1 dated 13th July 1988, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi.
14. *UGC Annual Report : 1984-85*, UGC, New Delhi, p.103.
15. *Report on Correspondence Courses (leading to the award of B.Ed. Degree)*, 1982, NCTE, New Delhi.
16. Memorandum submitted to the Minister of Human Resource Development by the deputation of the members of NCTE, 1987.
17. *A Report of the NCTE Committee on Teacher Education Programme through Distance Education Mode*, 1990, NCERT, New Delhi.
18. *Ibid.* pp. 9-12.
19. *Ibid.* p. 8.
20. *Ibid.* p. 7.
21. *Ibid.* pp.11-12.
22. *Ibid.* p. 12.
23. *UGC Annual Report : 1988-89*, UGC, New Delhi, p.54.
24. Letter from the Secretary, UGC, DO No.F.8-6/80(ER/NFS) dated August 2, 1991 and Communication No.F.8- 6/80(ER/NFE) dated August 24, 1991, UGC, New Delhi.
25. "B.Ed. Postal Courses May Go", *The Hindustan Times*, September 6, 1991, New Delhi.
26. Ruddar Datt, 1991, "Growth of Distance Education in India", *Indian Journal of Distance Education*, Vol IV, Chandigarh.
27. *Indira Gandhi National Open University Act 1985 (No 50 of 1985)*, and *The Statutes of the University, 1991*, IGNOU, New Delhi.
28. *Report of the Committee on Correspondence Courses (Mrs. Vijaya Muley Committee)*, 1986, (Unpublished) UGC, New Delhi.

Abbreviations Used: CIE—Central Institute of Education (Delhi University); DEC—Distance Education Council (IGNOU); GOI—Govt. of India; MHRD Ministry of Human Resource Development; NCERT—National Council of Educational Research & Training; NCTE—National Council of Teacher Education; UGC—University Grants Commission; YCMOU—Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University.