

Enrolment Trends in IGNOU Over The Last Decade — Programmewise and Regionwise Distribution Study

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Abstract: *IGNOU is the Premier Institute of Distance Education in India with whole country under its jurisdiction. So a study of enrolment trends in IGNOU during 1991-2000 gives pulse of the average Distance Learner in the Country. This paper studies the programmewise and regionwise distribution of the learners. The trends would help the University in the planning of the Courses and Programmes for the future.*

Introduction

Expansion of Distance Education (DE) was initiated with the first step being taken in 1962 by Delhi University. During 1960s only four Universities started their correspondence courses. During 1970s, 19 Universities added themselves to this educational endeavour. As on date, we have 62 distance education units in university and deemed universities.

The accelerated growth of DE in the country was poised with the momentous decision of Andhra Pradesh government to establish a unimode, autonomous State Open University in 1982. Thus, Andhra Pradesh Open University, which was later renamed as Dr BR Ambedkar Open University, came into existence at Hyderabad. This triggered similar action by other State Governments including the Union Government. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was established by an act of Parliament in 1985, with whole country under its jurisdiction. Today there are ten Open Universities functioning in the country.

During the initial stages, almost all Distance Education Institutions (DEIs) offered traditional liberal arts courses. Even today in many institutes the major enrollment of students is in these courses. For example, in Dr Br Ambedkar Open University, out of the 94,626 admitted during 1998-99 Academic year, 84,331 (89%) students belong to traditional BA/BCom/BSc courses (Vice Chancellor's Report, 1999). It is commonly observed that this trend is changing in the conventional system as there are less takers for the traditional courses. BA/BCom seats are not filled in many colleges and there is more competition for professional/ job oriented courses. In many DEIs, the demand is more for the traditional courses as stated above. Perhaps this is because DEI is offering a second chance to housewives and working people.

With changing times technologies change and so do peoples' priorities. Society also looks up to the education system for providing the necessary man power with proper training. Education institutions respond by offering need-based courses. By virtue of the structures that DEIs possess, they can respond immediately to such demands. In this context, it would be interesting to study the changing preferences of distance learners over a period of one decade (i.e.) from 1991 to 2000, the concluding decade of the 20th Century. As a case study, the enrolment data of IGNOU during this period is analysed. The contours of overall enrolment and the programme-wise enrolment will help us to study the trends with a view to predicting the future trends.

Distance Education Enrolment and Regional Variations

It is generally observed that the enrolment for DE is higher in Southern States followed by the North, West and the least is in the Eastern parts of the country. For example in 1982-83, out of the total Number of Students registered in DEIs, 61% were from South, 27% were from North, 10% from West and 2% were from East. By 1985-86, 76% of distance learners are from the South, as against 63% in 1982-83.

In the VII Annual Conference of Indian Distance Education Association (IDEA) held at New Delhi in 2000, Prof Amrik Singh in his inaugural address, stated “— one question that needs to be asked and not asked as insistently as it should be is the fact that about one third of the enrolment in Distance Education is in the Southern States where as in terms of population, the larger number are to be found in the Northern States. How and why is this happening? No one has gone into the issue as it should have been done...”. He also felt that this may be due to the policies of the respective State Governments (Singh,2000).

As the Correspondence Education has completed 40 plus years and the Open University system has 20 years of its existence in the country, a systematic and comprehensive study of this aspect is essential.

IGNOU has its jurisdiction all over the country with uniform policies as far as students are concerned. So it will be interesting to study the enrolment trends in various regions of the country over the decade. It is an ideal case to compare whether the trends observed in DE enrolment under various DEIs during the previous decades is replicated in IGNOU or not. If not, whether the uniform policies have had any impact on region wise enrolments.

Methodology

The Vice-Chancellor's Reports at each Convocation of IGNOU from 1991 to 2000 form the source of data for this study. In each Report, the Regional Centre (RC) wise, programme wise and the year/semester wise data is given. The RCs are grouped into the geographical regions as shown in Table 1. In IGNOU, Delhi being the Head Quarters and the capital city of the country, the enrolment in Delhi Regional Centre itself sometimes goes up to 40% of the all India enrolment. For this reason, Delhi is treated as separate region besides the North, South, East and West regions.

Table 1: The Geographical Regions and the IGNOU Regional Centres with Respective States under their Jurisdiction

	REGION	RC and the STATES
1.	NORTH	KARNAL (Haryana & Punjab) SHIMLA (Himachal Pradesh) LUCKNOW (Uttar Pradesh, Partly) DEHRADUN (Uttar Pradesh, Partly) JAMMU (Jammu part of Jammu & Kashmir state) SRINAGAR (Kashmir part of Jammu & Kashmir state)
2.	SOUTH	HYDERABAD(AndhraPradesh) BANGALORE (Karnataka & Goa) COCHIN (Kerala & Lakshadweep) CHENNAI (Tamilnadu,Pondicherry, Andaman &Nicobar Islands)
3.	EAST	PATNA (Bihar) BHUBANESWAR (Orissa) KOLKATA (West Bengal) GUWAHATI (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim) SHILLONG (Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura)
4.	WEST	AHMEDABD (Gujarat, Daman, Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli) JAIPUR (Rajasthan) PUNE (Maharashtra) BHOPAL (Madhya Pradesh)
5.	DELHI	DELHI (Delhi and adjoining parts of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana)

To study the changing priorities of Learners, programmes are grouped as follows:

- 1) Management Programme (MP)
- 2) Bachelors Degree Programme (BDP) (including the non formal BPP)
- 3) Computers
- 4) Engineering & Technology
- 5) Other Graduation and PG Programmes
- 6) Diploma and PG Diploma Programmes
- 7) Certificate Programmes

The grouping is given in Table 2.

For the year 1991-1992 students from defence services are categorized under addresses like c/o 56 APO, c/o 99 APO. So they are not included in any region as they are spread throughout the country and their geographical identification is not possible. Similarly, for courses like Bachelor in Information Technology (BIT), Advanced Diploma in Information Technology (ADIT) for which the all India enrolment figures are only given, are also not included. Of course, their numbers are not significant in the overall enrolment. The study will be comprehensive, if the year wise number of RCs and Study Centres (SC) is also mentioned along with the number of courses on offer in each year.

Table 2: Groups of the Academic Programmes

S.No.	MAIN GROUP	ACDEMIC PROGRAMMES INCLUDED
1.	MANAGEMENT	MBA, DIM, PGDIM, PGDMM, PGDFM, PGDHRM, PGDOM, MBA (Banking & Finance)
2.	BACHELORS DEGREE PROGRAMME (BDP)	BACHELORS PREPARATORY PROGRAM (BPP) (Non Formal Entry to BDP) BA, BCom, BSc
3.	COMPUTERS	MCA, BCA, CERTIFICATE IN COMPUTING (CIC), DIPLOMA IN COMPUTERS IN OFFICE MANAGEMENT (DCO)
4.	ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY	B. TECH (CIVIL IN CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT) B. TECH (CIVIL IN WATER RESOURCE ENGINEERING) (includes ADCM, ADWRE)
5.	OTHER GRADUATION/PG PROGRAMMES	BTS, BLIS, BEd, BSC (NURSING) MADE, MLISC, MTM
6.	DIPLOMA PROGRAMMES	PGDDE, PGDHE, PGDRD, PGJMC, PGDT, PGDMCH, PGCR, ADTS, DTS, DCE, DCH, DECE, DNHE
7.	CERTIFICATE PROGRAMMES	CDM, CES, CFN, CIG, CNCC, ANC, ACC, CPFM, CRD, CTE, CTS, CTS (P)

Table 3: Growth in Number of Programmes, Regional and Study Centres during the Decade

Year	Number of		
	Programmes	Regional Centres	Study Centres
1991	14	16	170
1992	17	16	202
1993	21	16	219
1994	28	16	229
1996	33	17	255
1997	39	17	268
1998	39	19	315
1999	47	21	376
2000	50	26	504

The Changing Contours of Learner Preferences

During the decade of study (i.e.) 1990's, in the initial years the major programmes on offer by IGNOU were Management Programmes (MP), Under-graduate Programmes (including formal and non formal) and other Certificate and Diploma Programmes. A

total of 14 Programmes were on offer. By the end of the decade, i.e in 2000 it was offering 50 programmes and the major Programmes are Computers, MP, UG Programmes, Engineering & Technology Programmes, other Diploma and Certificate Programmes.

The relative preferences of Learners can be assessed in terms of the percentage of enrolment in that Programme in the total enrolment and also the number of students enrolled in that programme.

Table 4 gives the enrolment wise top three groups of programmes in each year in the decade with the percentage in overall enrolment in parenthesis. It shows that Bachelors Degree Programme (BDP) has been the top ranker in the first four years of the decade, while Management Programme (MP) were on top for next three years and then the Computer Programmes were ahead in the later years of the decade.

Table 4: Enrolmentwise Top Three Programmes in the Decade

Year	First Highest Enrolment	Second Highest Enrolment	Third Highest Enrolment
1991	BDP (60)	MP (28)	Certificate (07)
1992	BDP (51)	MP (28)	Certificate (09)
1993	BDP (48)	MP (35)	Certificate (08)
1994	BDP (45)	MP (41)	Certificate (06)
1995	MP (46)	BDP (29)	Certificate (07)
1996	MP (48)	BDP (28)	Computers (11)
1997	MP (36)	Computers (27)	BDP (26)
1998	Computers (35)	MP (28)	BDP (27)
1999	Computers (39)	BDP (28)	MP (21)
2000	Computers (49)	BDP (24)	MP (16)

From the Table 4, it is seen that the BDP share has been reducing and it seems it is stabilizing in its contribution, whereas for MP, it had increase in the initial years of the Decade and reached its peak during 1995 and 1996 and afterwards it started decreasing. Computer Programmes were started in 1992 with Diploma in Computers in Office Management (DCO) and later CIC, BCA and MCA were added. In tune with the increasing importance of Information Technology (IT), the enrolment for Computer Programmes is increasing. Enrolment wise, Computer Programmes have acquired eminent position during the last three years of the Decade. These three groups of Programmes are constituting around 90% of the total enrolment.

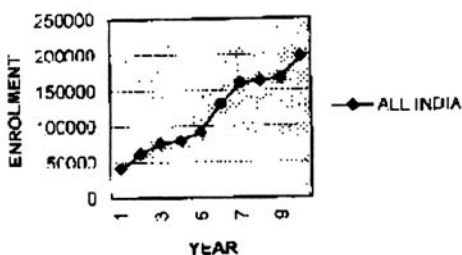
IGNOU is offering several other programmes which are socially relevant and for specific target groups, like PGDDE and MADE for practicing and prospective Distance Educators. The enrolment in such Programmes cannot be high, as they are targeted to specific groups, whereas the BDP, Computers etc. are for general public, so their enrolment will be high.

For MP, in the initial years, there were two streams of admission, one with Entrance Test and the other without Entrance Test. But from 1997 onwards, the without Entrance Test stream was stopped and all admissions to MP are made through Entrance Test only. Perhaps, this might have contributed partially to the downtrend in enrolment for MP. Similarly for Computer Programmes, there was Entrance Test for PGDCA (which is part of MCA) admission. But later the admissions are made without Entrance Test for MCA, for those who possess the prescribed entry qualifications. So it also might have added to the increasing enrolment. Thus the admission criteria also has its impact on the enrolment.

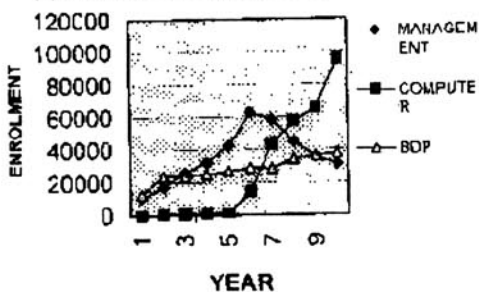
The enrolment trends in reference to all India, Programme wise and Region wise are represented diagrammatically from Fig.1 to Fig. 5. Each figure contains four sub parts a,b,c,d. Each sub part indicates either All India or Programme wise or Region wise trends. The common observation from all these figures is that the regional trends are almost similar to that in All India enrolment trends. The All India Programme wise trends are given in Fig. 1(c) and 1(d).

The interesting observation is the difference in enrolment trends for Formal and Non-Formal BDP. Fig. 3(a) and 3(c) gives this information. For Formal stream, Fig. 3(a) there is a continuous increase, whereas for BPP, there is fluctuation in the enrolment.

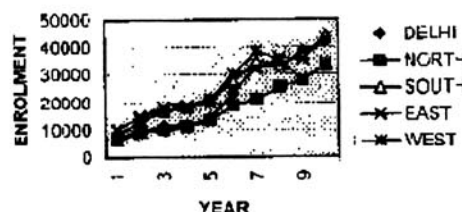
(a) ALL INDIA TOTAL ENROLMENT



(c) ALL INDIA PROGRAMMEWISE TRENDS I



(b) REGIONWISE TOTAL ENROLMENT TRENDS



(d) ALL INDIA PROGRAMMEWISE TRENDS - II

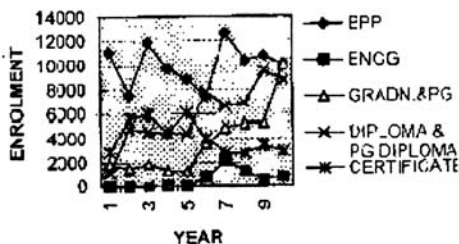
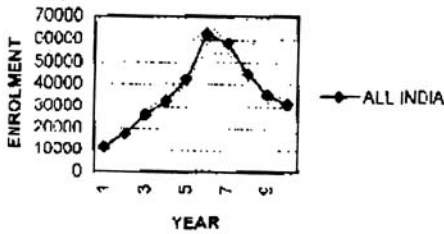
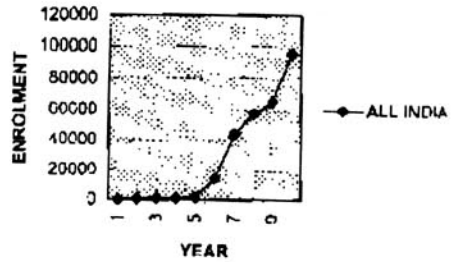


Fig. 1: Trends in Enrolment

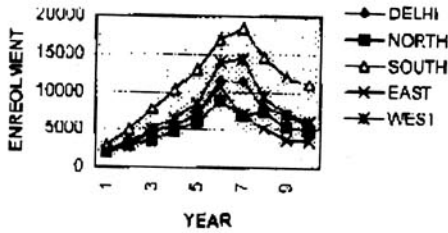
(a) ALL INDIA MANGEMENT ENROLMENT



(c) ALL INDIA COMPUTER ENROLMENT



(b) REGIONWISE MANAGEMENT ENROLMENT



(d) REGIONWISE COMPUTER ENROLMENT

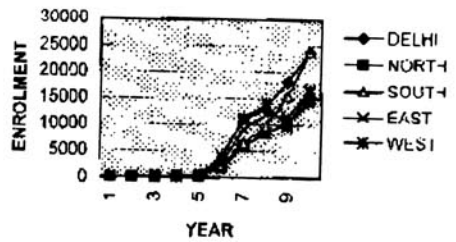
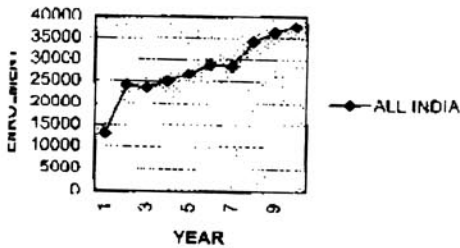
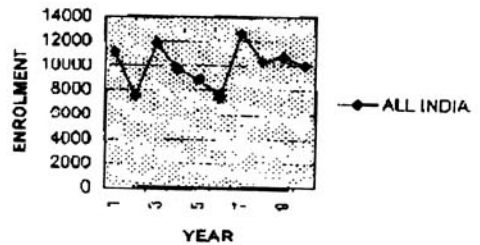


Fig. 2: Enrolment Trends in Management and Computer Programmes

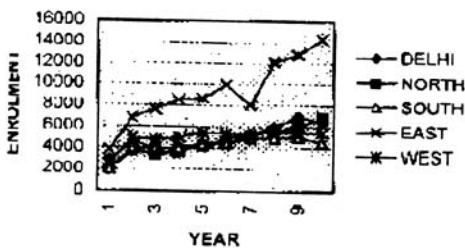
(a) ALL INDIA BDP ENROLMENT



(c) ALL INDIA BPP ENROLMENT



(b) REGIONWISE BDP ENROLMENT



(d) REGIONWISE BPP ENROLMENT

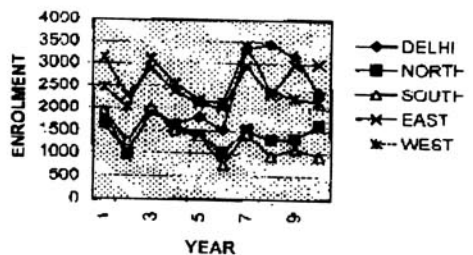
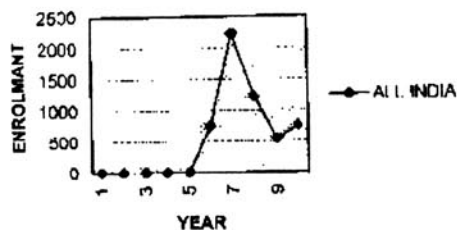
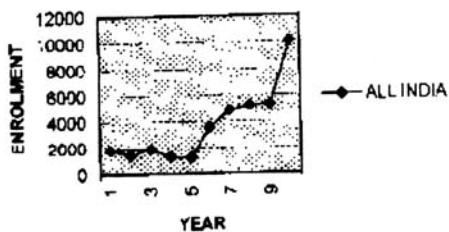


Fig. 3: Enrolment Trends in BDP and BPP

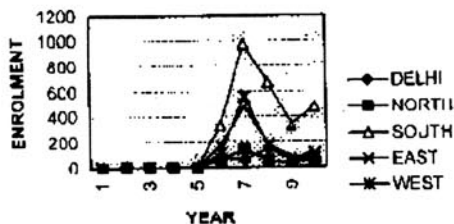
(a) ALL INDIA ENGINEERING ENROLMENT



(c) ALL INDIA GRADN.&PG PROGRAMMES



(b) REGIONWISE ENGINEERING ENROLMENT



(d) REGIONWISE GRADN.&PG PROGRAMMES

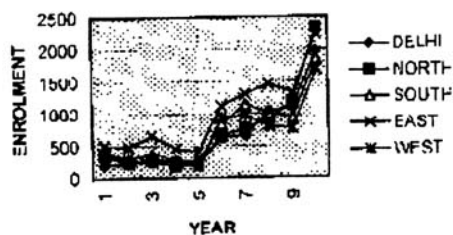
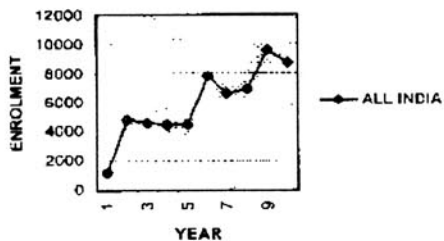
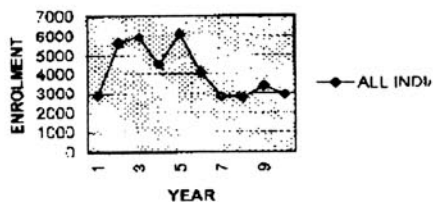


Fig. 4: Enrolment Trends in Engineering and other Graduation & Post Graduate Programmes

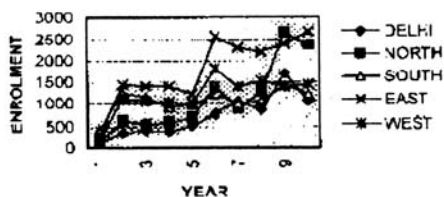
(a) ALL INDIA DIPLOMA & PG DIPLOMA



(c) ALL INDIA CERTIFICATE ENROLMENT



(b) REGIONWISE DIPLOMA & PG DIPLOMA



(d) REGIONWISE CERTIFICATE ENROLMENT

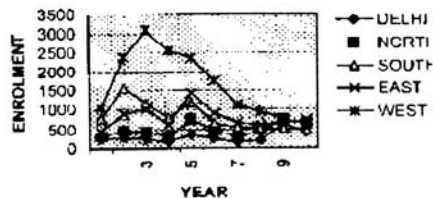


Fig. 5: Enrolment Trends in Diploma & PG Diploma and Certificate Programmes

Regionwise Distribution

As mentioned earlier, during 1980s the enrolment in DE was lowest from Eastern parts of the country to the order of a meager 2% in All India enrolment. Amrik Singh (2000) also commented on this and stated that this might be due to the policies of the respective State Governments.

Region wise total enrolment variations

In IGNOU the policies are uniform through out the Country. In this background, the enrolment trends among the Regions are studied. It is startling to know that among all the five Regions, in the Decade, the Eastern Region topped the list in overall enrolment for Six years among the Ten years under study! The other lowest Region during 1980's (i.e) Western Region is second highest enrolment Region in IGNOU for five years in the Decade. This may be because of the absence of any strong DEIs in these Regions in early 1990's. But despite the existence of various Open Universities later, the enrolment from Eastern and Western Regions is very good. Similar is the case with South. In spite of the strongest centers of DEIs, the Southern Region of IGNOU is doing good by occupying top position for three years in the decade. During other years it has Second or third highest enrolment among the regions. Delhi has topped the list once. Fig.1(b) gives diagrammatic representation for this trend.

Region wise, programme wise variations

After observing the overall regional trends, it is interesting to study there whether any one Regional Variations for specific programmes. For example, maximum enrolment for a particular programme in a particular region etc. These variations are given in Figures 2 to 5. Striking observation from the Figures is that for Management and Engineering Programmes, where in South tops for all the ten years, whereas for BDP, Eastern Region has topped all the ten years. In reference to BDP, the position of South is always fourth or fifth. Perhaps this may be because of availability of Undergraduate Programmes in the local mediums by local DEIs, SOUs as BDP is offered only in English and Hindi mediums by IGNOU.

For other Graduation and Diploma Programmes also, East has topped the list for eight years (1991-1998) whereas for Certificate Programmes, Western Region is on top of the list for nine years.

Thus, it is seen that in contradiction to what was observed during 1980's, Eastern Region has performed very well during 1990's, followed by the West. Performance of the South is also very good in spite of the presence of strong DEIs and SOUs. Delhi, of course, always does better. The performance of North is increasing and probably in selected areas.

Conclusions

The study indicates that the learner preferences for IGNOU Programmes are changing. The learners now prefer computer courses for better job opportunities. Besides, IGNOU

is also attracting the traditional target group for the under graduate programme .

In spite of the presence of strong DEIs, the performance of certain regions is very good. This reminds the comment made by Simpson (2000) that Student Support Services will become differentiating factor for students to prefer a DEI.

Amrik Singh's opinion about low enrolment regions in DE appears to be suggesting the truth, because in this study where the policies are the same throughout the country, the untapped Regions (i.e) East and West are top in enrolments!

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