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Contribution of Distance Education in Development of Higher Education with Special Reference to Chhattisgarh

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Abstract

Distance education may not have replaced on-campus education, but through its flexibility in teaching and learning it can be seen as an alternative for learners who are not able or wish not to take on-campus education. This alternative constitutes an important element of lifelong learning. It is the continuing emphasis of lifelong learning as a policy objective that sets the background to the present research: The study wishes to examine the contribution of Distance Education in development of higher education.

Keywords: Distance Education, Higher Education, Contribution of DE in the development of Higher Education

Introduction

The emergence of Open Learning and Distance Education is probably the most important development in the field of education in recent times. Since learning for all is the ultimate aim of humanity, a new paradigm of networking has emerged which recognizes a new way of learning in the era of present globalization. Distance and Open Learning System helps to accelerate the process of transformation from a conservative and informative society to a functional, knowledgeable and well versed society of the twenty first century. Government of India is also encouraging distance learning mode by encouraging open universities across the country with a basic objective to make the masses educated. Open Universities have proven to bear essential and innovative component of higher education and are perceived by educational planners and policy makers as well as the community as a vital instrument of human resource development and educational justice.

Review of Literature

Studies at International Level

Daniel (1999) In his discussion of mega universities pointed out that as traditional universities move into flexible learning, dedicated distance institutions will have to reassess their strengths and be very conversant with their costs, a return to Peters point on the interrelationship of structure and economics. In moving to online learning, Daniel proposed that mega universities must manage two process: first, the point at which unit cost per student begin to drop, what **Wedermeyer** (1981**)** referred to as to "critical minimum of aggregation", and second, the "enrolment level beyond which the cost of teaching them in conventional ways" (p.61). He recognized that the integration of new technologies would bring different challenges and that the varied costs of different technologies made economic models based on economics of scale no longer accurate. This area is one of increasing interest to distance education administrators.

Mezirow (1990) suggested, in the context of adult learning (which is largely the case in distance learning), that all learning should gear towards transformation of perspectives and higher meaning making. In a community of practice, as a distance teaching professionals are, change in professional identity is crucial for the practitioners to grow and effectively participate in the practice of the (professional) community.

Otto Peters At the special lecture to the International Conference on Distance Education Vienna Conference delegates in 1990, **Otto Peters** had remarked that every university needs to be an open university in several aspects, and that they should be student oriented, practice oriented, and future oriented. In doing so, he remarked, "On the whole, the university of the future will have to be the result of a fundamental process of transformation in which it changes into a university which mainly enables

self-studying in all its forms, oriented towards the *research process,* supports this and in the end makes it into the foundation of its curricula and teaching…

Studies at National Level

Manjulika & Reddy (1999), in their study entitled " Women in Distance Education" , has found that, majority of women have opted for conventional subject combinations such as arts and education courses rather than more professional courses, the most popular professional course among women is B.Ed., the choice of subject in higher education is largely dictated by the socialization, within the family, school and society & the pattern of gender division of a labor in a patriarchal like India infiltrates the sphere of education.

Manjulika & Reddy (1996), As far as access to study centers through which IGNOU delivers its programme is concerned, IGNOU has made commendable progress during the last decade. In 1995, the number of study centres was 225 and the average area served by a study centre was 12,000 sq.km. By the year 2004, the number of study centers has gone up to 888 and average coverage area per study centre is 3,753 sq.km. However, regional variation is very large ranging from 23 sq.km. per study centre in Delhi to 20,936 sq.km. in Arunachal Pradesh. The population served by a study centre varies from 2.8 million in Mizoram.

Ramakrishna (1995) contends that open universities are even more complex than their traditional counterparts and that one of the difficulties is that issues tend to be addressed by going back to the norm rather than thinking differently as is required by this very different structure. More recently, the concern for quality linked closely to economic self-sufficiency, and the impact of globalization and new technologies have further challenged this organizational structure, requiring new models of partnerships and hence methods of coordination and evaluation. The three themes relate closely to these issues and are themselves interlinked. In this sense, YCMOU is not only an example of an open and distance learning institution, it is also an innovative model for addressing these themes and trying to keep the tensions among them in balance.

Panda (1992) analyzed that the Indian Distance Education literature and concluded "most of the studies are either descriptive status surveys or experimental studies with poor methodological footing".

Pillai (1980), in the study entitled " Non-Formal Education-Needs and Provisions for Adults in Kerala, has found that, two-thirds of the respondents had not obtained any additional qualifications after employment, as many as 50 percent of the respondents wished to acquire higher qualifications and another 42 percent wished to acquire higher qualifications if adequate facilities were made available, the two most important reasons for the improvement of qualifications were; getting better pay and improving educational status ,of the three means of acquiring higher education mentioned in the questionnaire (evening colleges, regular study and correspondence courses) evening colleges were preferred most & the degrees enrolled for were Masters degree, degree of Bachelor of Law and other Bachelors degree the most preferred subjects for study were law, psychology and economics.

Sharma (1977) in the study entitled, "Enrolment in Higher Education" , has found that, there have been declining rates of growth in enrolment in higher education during 1970-75,negative rates of growth were observed in some faculties, such as science, engineering and technology, arts, medicine and agriculture. However, there was a higher rate of growth of enrolment from 1960 to 1970,Government policy, new developments in education such as correspondence courses, permitting non-collegiate to appear for degree examinations and the new 10+2+3 system of education diverted students from regular colleges and thus affected the enrolment to some extent, the faster rate of growth in the number of institutions of higher education and enrolment during 1950-70 had resulted in deterioration in the quality of higher education, establishment of a large number of colleges with small enrolment termed under populated than the economy could absorb.

Highlights of the Studies

Review of the above research studies performed on International & National level highlights the following points-

1. Researches present mixed results
2. They are controversial
3. Most of them are experimental.
4. Most the studies are either descriptive status surveys or experimental studies with poor methodological footing.

Lessons for the present Study

1. Since most of the results are mixed and cannot be generalized so result of the present study is self-evident.
2. Chhattisgarh being a new state with major composition of backward classes like SC, ST & OBC being the major residents with their economical, social, geographical & cultural bounding and variety ,with 65.18% of literacy percentage with less basic facilities to make most of the population educated i.e. the motto of EFA-Education For All. Such researches in Chhattisgarh state is most essential as it will help the planners, researchers and other officers involved to extend educational facilities.

Aim of the Study

Following objectives are posed for this research

1. To assess the contribution of Distance Education in the development of Higher Education.
2. To study the development of Higher Education in Chhattisgarh.
3. To study the contribution of IGNOU & MPBOU Universities each in development of higher education in Chhattisgarh.

Hypothesis

H_1

Significant contribution of Distance Education will be found.

H_2

IGNOU would have wider contribution in the development of Higher Education than of MPBOU University.

H_3

Students would be more inclined in professional courses than that of Academic courses in Open Distance Learning.

Delimitations of the Study

Area

Research was conducted under the regional centers of IGNOU & MPBOU Universities situated all over the state of Chhattisgarh.

Faculty

Under academic, M.A., M.Sc. & M. Com. Courses were studied and under professional courses M.Lib., MBA & MCA faculties were studied to find out the contributions through DE.

Sex

Research was be conducted on both male and female participants of all the courses.

Time Research analyzed the contribution of IGNOU & MPBOU from 2003 – 2006 i.e. till the opening of state University (PSSOU).

Although were many agencies in Chhattisgarh serving as in distance mode but the present research was conducted mainly between IGNOU & MPBOU Universities because the state university of Chhattisgarh i.e. PSSOU have recently commenced its working and it was not be possible to measure its contribution in such a short span of time. Although some of its statistics however were taken into consideration.

Research Design

This study is a Survey type Descriptive Research.

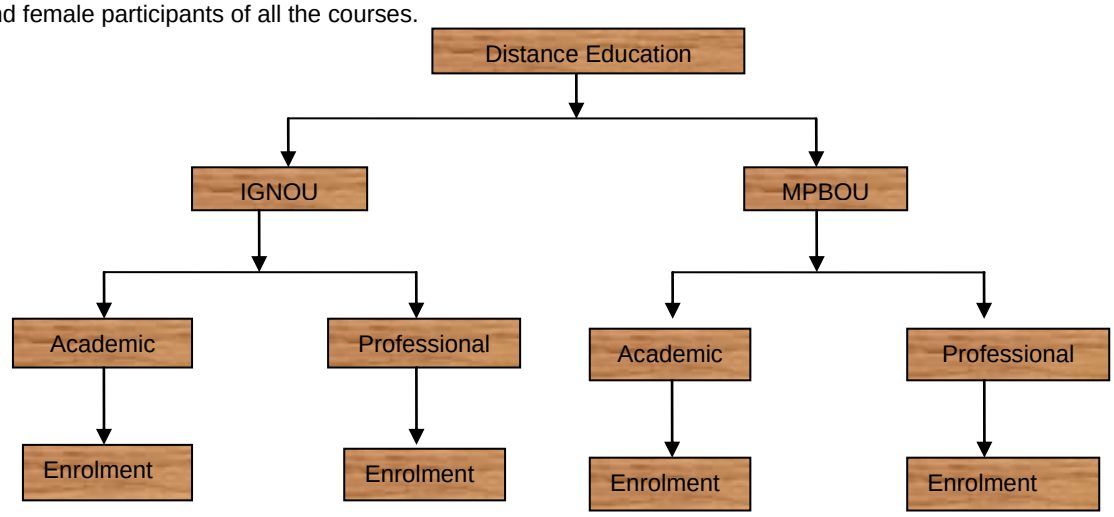
Universe

All the Students of Distance Education involved in IGNOU & MPBOU universities constituted the universe of this study.

Sample for the Study

Figure 1

Sample for Measuring Contribution of IGNOU & MPBOU University.



Variables

Independent Variables: Students of IGNOU and MPBOU University.

Dependent Variables

Enrolment

Tools Used

Records of IGNOU, MPBOU & PSSOU Universities were analyzed to have knowledge of enrolment trends.

Statistical Devices

Percentage to find out the contribution lay down by the Universities were the statistical devices used to find out the results.

Methodology and its Steps

Step 1

1. Construction of scale
2. Performa for Record Analysis
3. Maintaining Repo with the colleagues

Step 2

Administration of the Tools .

Step 3

Analysis and Interpretation of Data.

Findings of the Study and its Discussion

Having undergone the process of present study as per the research design the investigator offers the following discussion and conclusion on the basis of related findings

H_1 - Significant contribution of Distance Education will be found.

During 2003 to 2007 Distance education Program was running mainly by following three Universities.

1. Distance Education Department of Guru Ghasidas University,Bilaspur
2. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGN OU), New Delhi
3. Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University (MPBOU),Bhopal

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Year wise enrolment of students in C.G. under these distance education institution are shown in table 1 below

Table No. 1

Year Wise Enrolment of Students in DE in Chhattisgarh

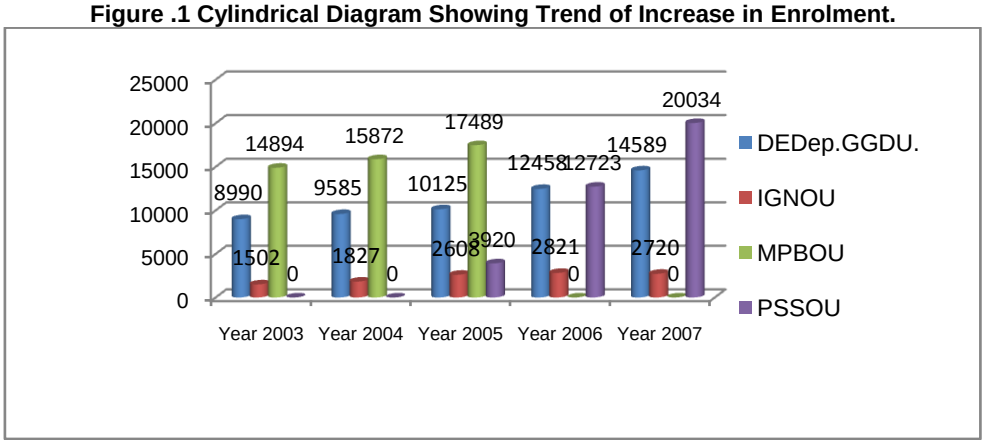
Institute	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
DE Dep.GGDU.	8990	9585	10125	12458	14589
IGNOU	1502	1827	2608	2821	2720
MPBOU	14894	15872	17489	-	-
PSSOU	-	-	3920	12723	20034

Sources: Annual Reports of Ignou, Mpbou, Pssou & Personal Correspondence.

Data Interpretation

1. When we reveal the table no. 1 above we find that there is a trend of increase in enrolment from the year 2003 to 2007.
2. In the year 2005 Pt.Sundarlal Sharma (Open) University Chhattisgarh Bilaspur (PSSOU) came into existence and started its functioning, from the 2006 MPBOU closed its working in Chhattisgarh. Since then the table reveals that in the enrolment of PSSOU there is a trend of increase in enrolment from 2005 – 2007.
3. This trend of increase in enrolment indicates that hypothesis of positive contribution seems to fulfill..

Figure .1 Cylindrical Diagram Showing Trend of Increase in Enrolment.



Year

Thus, trend of increase shown by statistical data and graphical representation indicates that hypothesis chosen is fulfilled and contribution of Distance Education has been proved.

Discussion

Year wise comparison of the table showed that as the population increased the demand for higher education also increased and the supply was done through Distance Education mode very promptly. Students are so desperate and needy of higher education degrees that state Open University PSSOU got more than 20,000 students in the very first three year of its commencement. This proves that there is a significant contribution of Distance Education in the development of Higher Education.

Conclusion

On the strength of the above result & discussion it can be concluded that contribution of distance education is increasing significantly in the development of higher education in Chhattisgarh. Thus, contribution of Distance Education is Significant.

H_2

IGNOU would have wider contribution in the development of Higher Education than of MPBOU University.

Table No. 2

No. of Courses & Students in IGNOU & MPBOU (Between Years 2003-2007)

Institution	No.of Courses	No.of Students
IGNOU	120	11,478
MPBOU	110	48,255

Source : Annual Report of IGNOU & MPBOJ .

Data Interpretation

1. When we reveal the table no. 2 above we find that Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) New Delhi offers more no. of courses than that of Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University (MPBOU), Bhopal.
2. Table no. 2 also reveals that Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) New Delhi has less no. of students than that of Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University (MPBOU), Bhopal.
3. The above statistics reveals that Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University (MPBOU),Bhopal has less no. of courses with more no. of students providing wider contribution in the development of Higher Education than of IGNOU .
4. The above findings indicates that hypothesis of wider contribution of IGNOU does not seems to fulfill.

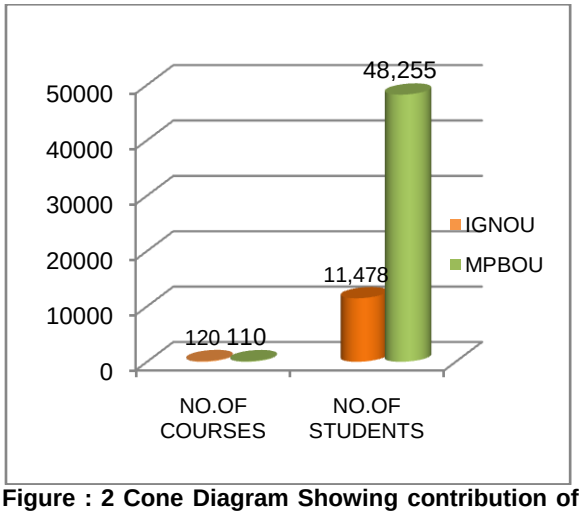


Figure : 2 Cone Diagram Showing contribution of IGNOU & MPBOU in the Development of Higher Education.

Thus, trend of increase shown by statistical data and graphical representation indicates that the hypothesis chosen is not fulfilled and wider contribution of Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University (MPBOU), Bhopal in the development of Higher Education is found.

Discussion

It was assumed that IGNOU being the National Open University providing vast number of programs of diverse nature with intense use of technology, fully developed student support services, on-line enrolment and evaluation facilities and many more outstanding features would have more number of students in Chhattisgarh but the results were shocking indicating the more number of students in MPBOU year by year. The reason behind this shocking fact was found dilution of examination process .This dilution lead to the famous mindset of the people that the examination of open universities is supposed to be given with open books.

Conclusion

On the strength of the above result & discussion it can be concluded that apart from above stated reason, in spite of being the National University IGNOU failed to attract people because of its limited numbers of study & information centre's, which MPBOU University offered in large number and that to in local & easy language. Thus, MPBOU University has wider contribution in the development of Higher Education than of IGNOU.

H_3

Students would be more inclined in professional courses than that of Academic courses in open distance learning.

To verify this hypothesis course wise admission in IGNOU for Chhattisgarh during 2003 to 2007 was analyzed.

Table No. 3

Year Wise No. of Students in Various Courses of IGNOU in Chhattisgarh During 2003-07

Course			2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
PROFESSIONAL	Computer IT	A1	227	162	158	147	156	227
	Education B.Ed.	A2	105	313	409	412	413	1652
	Enginee. & Tech.	A3	52	111	102	125	116	506
	Health	A4	-	44	16	25	-	85
	Management	A5	325	314	391	466	588	2084
	TAA		709	944	1076	1175	1273	5177
ACADEMIC	Conti. Ed.	B1	121	120	175	254	189	859
	Humanities	B2	52	136	146	95	79	508
	Science	B3	24	48	56	47	37	212
	So.Sci.		596	570	1155	1250	1142	4713
Total B			793	738	1532	1646	1447	6292
G. Total			1502	1682	2608	2821	2720	11469

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Table No. 4
Year Wise Strength of Students In Professional & Academic Courses in IGNOU

Courses	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
Professional	(678) 709	(723) 944	(1177) 1076	(1273) 1175	(1228) 1273	5177
Academic	(824) 738	(879) 793	(1431) 1532	(1549) 1646	(1487) 1447	6156
Total	1502	1602	2608	2821	2720	11,333

To test the significance of H_3 x^2 test is applied**.**

Calculated value of x2 is 90.82 .The tabulated value of x^2 at 4df at .01 levels is 13.277.

Data Interpretation

1. When we reveal the table above we find that calculated value of x^2 is higher than tabulated value x^2 at .01 level of significance i.e. x^2 is significant which means that course and year wise enrolment are not independent.
2. When we reveal the table above we find that year wise enrolment do differ significantly in different courses. The table reveals that year wise enrolment in academic courses is more in comparison to enrolment in professional courses.

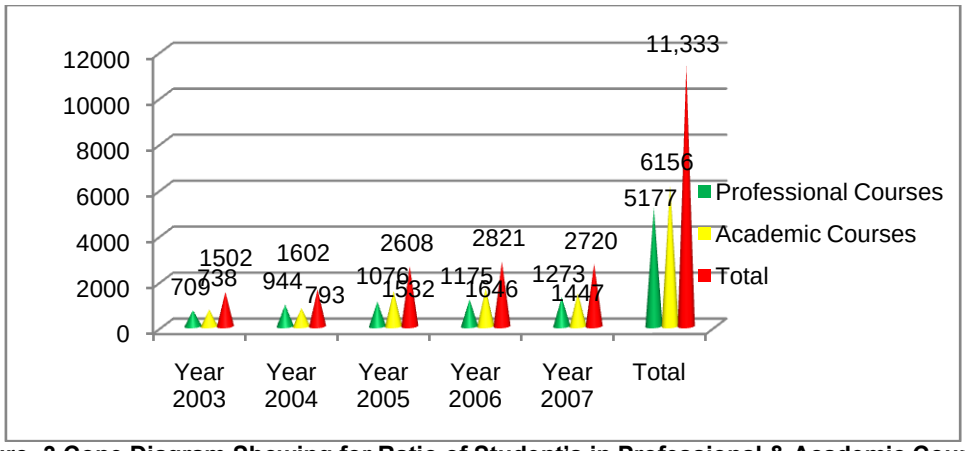

Figure: 3 Cone Diagram Showing for Ratio of Student's in Professional & Academic Courses

Thus, figures shown by statistical data and graphical representation indicates that students are significantly more inclined towards academic courses than professional courses so hypothesis of more inclined in professional courses than that of Academic courses in open distance learning does not seems to fulfill**.**

Discussion

As far as Science, Humanities & Continuous Education is concerned the direction of difference is in favor of professional courses but the data of Social Science turns the difference in favor of academic courses . It means in IGNOU in last 5 years the students of Chhattisgarh are more inclined towards academic courses that in Professional courses. Whether academic or professional, most of the students of Distance Education are of working group who usually appear in examination either to acquire degrees or to upgrade their percentage. Professional Courses mostly directs its students towards career advancement thus students are more inclined in professional courses in open distance learning. Distance Learning Institutions also pay greater attention towards running more and more professional courses as they pay higher amount of fees as compared to academic courses.

Conclusion

Although students are significantly more inclined towards academic courses than professional courses, but if we leave the data of Social Science there is a clear incline towards professional courses.

Suggestions for Distance Education

1. Open University should have no boundary viz physical & social.
2. Open Universities need to change & to adapt as per demands of society.
3. Learner Support Services (LSS) should be treated as the backbone of ODL.
4. The major objectives of Higher Education should be Expansion (access), Inclusion & Excellence (Quality).
5. In Srilanka National Online Distance Education Services has been launched. In India also we need to use public as well private agencies to provide DE because collective effort & contribution at each level will lead to the desired goal.
6. Regular Updating of the Correspondence Course Materials should be done.
7. Provision of a Wider Range of Options. A number of options, comprising interdisciplinary subject areas, should be offered to the participants.
8. Development of a More Practical Orientation toward 'learning by doing' involving direct application of the knowledge and skills through the inputs received in their lessons and through face-to-face contact.
9. Courses could be made more relevant by bringing in elements of 'project work' into

their lessons and through inquiry-oriented field assignments which require the participants to use the community as a resource.

10. In place of an exclusively one-way flow of information two-way dialogue between the tutor and the participants could be used. One way of making the lessons more interactive could be by introducing in-text tasks requiring practical application of the ideas and principles presented in them.
11. Increased Use of Educational technology and More Modern Methods of working is required.
12. Computer technology needs to be increasingly harnessed not only for streamlining administration and dispatching lessons and assignments, but for course development, the design and preparation of lessons, handouts, worksheets and assignments, and also for monitoring, revising, evaluation and updating – all of this is lacking at present. The Department can also develop a valuable "Data Bank" and other kind of useful access material for extensive use.
13. Improved Structure and Format in the Design of Lessons. They should contain clear sub-headings and other focusing devices. There should also be use of more graphics.
14. Assignments should not be left unassigned till the very end. The submission density of the assignments may be reviewed. There is also need of work in greater flexibility – all the courses may not need to have the same number of assignments; certain demanding tasks may be given greater weight while other could be made more challenging.
15. More open procedures of evaluation should be used.
16. There is also a need to move away from 'product' type evaluation to 'process' evaluation, both with regard to participant assessment as well as program evaluation.
17. Making evaluation more formative and offering the participants greater initiative in the evaluation process would mean building development, especially in the area of empathy for the course participants elements of evaluation into the lessons themselves. Suitable procedures for this need to be developed.
18. Participants could be asked to determine what makes a good 'distance tutor' or tutor-counselor on contact program. Criteria for determining an effective DE teacher could be elicited form them by asking them to list all those things a DE tutor would have to do in order to qualify for each of the levels on a grade scale from A (the highest) to E (the lowest). Later, when the participants get back their assignments, they could use these criteria in evaluating their tutors on the basis of the comments offered.
19. Tutors could carry out self-evaluation of their own performance through various procedures such as maintaining a diary or using questionnaires or checklists.

Educational Implications of the Present Study

Keeping in view the findings of the above research, following facts are relevant for the educational implications of the present study-

1. Higher education perspective has gradually increased during the last few years. Contribution lay down by IGNOU and MPBOJ Universities in the development of higher education is significant. The role of Open Universities and Distance Education Institutions is justified.
2. Distance Education system can be used as an important and efficient medium to cut short the difference of literacy percentage.
3. In a new state like Chhattisgarh Distance Education can be adapted and advertised as an efficient, flexible and cost-effective medium of providing education to population of remote areas.
4. Help to study and analyze student profiles in order to examine the coverage of target groups like women, rural people, in-service persons, over flow from the formal system, etc.
5. Distance Education can be used as medium of providing social & educational justice to the deprived ones including access to higher education to larger segments of the population.
6. Open universities need to take the issue of research very seriously if they wish to be at the forefront of higher education nationally or internationally and if they wish to be seen as universities.
7. Most of the researchers in distance education have modest knowledge of pedagogical hypothesis and have had limited training.
8. The majority of the research published is descriptive and cannot be generalized.
9. Experimental research under controlled conditions is practically missing.

Scope for Further Research

1. Kinds of distance learning formats suitable for Chhattisgarh region.
2. Telecommunications infrastructure available and accessible to distance learners.
3. Kinds of instructional design used by distance learning institutions in developing their courses.
4. To study and analyze the teaching learning methodologies adapted by the correspondence/ distance education institutions.
5. To evaluate the quality of the instructional materials and other student support services.
6. To study and analyze student profiles in order to examine the coverage of target groups like women, rural people, in-service persons, over flow from the formal system, etc.
7. To study the economic viability of correspondence education in Chhattisgarh.
8. To work out a reliable average unit cost of educating a correspondence course student in comparison with the cost per student of the formal system.

9. To study various possibilities of collaboration and networking among the CCIs and to give wider choice of courses to the students.

Some Additional Observations

Having undergone the process of present study as per the researcher offers the following additional observations

1. There are wide opportunities for Higher Education in Chhattisgarh due to Open Learning System.
2. Distance Education has emerged as a most preferred alternative of Higher Education in Chhattisgarh.
3. Distance Education is the best mode of providing social & educational justice to the deprived ones.
4. Distance Education mode of learning generates awareness & friendliness to the Technology.
5. In present context, there is need to change the name of Open University to Flexible University
6. In the world of Distance Learning W.W.W stands for Who, When & What.

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Enclosures

S.N.	Name of Open Universities	Year of Establishment
1.	Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University, (BRAOU) , Hyderabad	1982
2.	Indira Gandhi National Open University,(IGNOU), New Delhi	1985
3.	Vardhman Mahavir Open Univbersity, (VMOU), Kota	1987
4.	Nalanda Open University , (NOU) Patna	1987
5.	Yashwantrao Chouhan Maharashtra Open Universityt,(YCMOU), Nashik	1989
6.	Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University ,(MPBHOU), Bhopal	1991
7.	Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkear Open University, (BAOU), Ahmedabad	1994
8.	Karnataka State Open University ,(KSOU), Mysore	1996
9.	Netaji Subhash Open University,(NSOU), Kolkata	1997
10.	UP Rajarshi Tandon Open University, (UPRTOU), Allahabad	1998
11.	Tamil Nadu Open University, (TNOU), Chennai	2002
12.	Pt.Sunadrlal Sharma (Open) University Chhattisgarh, (PSSOU), Bilaspur	2005
13.	Uttarakhand Open University, (UOU) Haldwani, Nainital	2005
14.	Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, (KKHSOU), Guwahati	2005
15.	Odisha State Open University, (OSOU), Sambalpur	2016

Source: http://www.Eduvidya.com/open-Universities-in-India

UGC Approved Higher Education Institutions in India

Universities	Central Universities	43
	State Public Universities	316
	Deemed Universities (Government)	37
	Deemed Universities (Government- Aided)	11
	Deemed Universities (Private)	79
	State Private University	1
	Central Open University	176
	State Open Universities	15
	State Private Open University	1
	Institutes of National Importance	69
	Institutes under State Legislature Act	5
	Others	6
Colleges	Colleges	38056
Stand Alone Universities	Stand Alone Universities	11922

Source: AISHE Portal (www.aishe.gov.in)