

for the withdrawal of special treatment to Small Industries.

The Government, the CII and other trade associations would do well to study effective models, selectively adopt some of their useful features and evolve appropriate strategic measures which would result in the creation of an India Incorporated which can face and survive global competition successfully.

A few service sector segments such as software and hotels/tourism were at present included in the

package of incentives under the main policy. There were several other service activities such as consultancy (project/management consultancy) shipping repair/maintenance, pre-publishing services, super-speciality hospital and health care, education, staight imaging laboratory services and the like which might have a good potential.

Incentives presently given to merchandise export should be extended to service sector exports and with type of new incentives should be introduced. The duty

entitlement pass book (DEPB) and Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) Scheme would be relevant to Service Sector.

Special incentive for manpower exports, allowing hospitals to adjust payment in dollars made by foreign clientele against fulfilment of export obligation, support to building of hospitals abroad and negotiating at the WTO to remove restrictions imposed by foreign medical insurance companies on customers getting treated in India. □

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OPENING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN INDIA

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Open University system has now taken firm root in India. In addition to one national open university in India (IGNOU, New Delhi) five State level open universities are also functioning in Andhra Pradesh (Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad), Rajasthan (Kota Open University, Kota), Bihar (Nalanda Open University, Patna), Maharashtra (Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, Nashik) and in Madhya Pradesh (Madhya Pradesh Bhoj University). Two more State level open universities are likely to be started in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Further 49 institutions have correspondence/distance education units. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) recommended that each State should have one open university. There is a strong feeling among the educationalists that open learning opportunities and creation of proper environment for effective learning are most necessary in the Indian context.

Challenge to the Open/distance Education System

Maintenance of standards at par with regular students and assurance of quality education will be crucial to the future of the open/distance education system in India. However

many feel that acquiring education through correspondence or distance education mode is undesirable and less respectable; modern distance education system takes into account some of these perceptions and prejudices.

Relevance of Evaluation in Quality Education

In the open education system, quality cannot be maintained without proper evaluation and effective monitoring of the system. Evaluation is an integral part of the systems approach.

The responsibility of motivating the learners to pursue a course through the Distance Education System lies with the institutions offering the courses. In the same way, the examinations cannot be isolated from teaching-learning process in the open learning system; it serves a diagnostic and motivational function and stimulates clear understanding and fuller learning. Therefore, evaluation can be an effective tool to measure the quality of education in the open university system.

It is important to note here that the examination and evaluation pattern of KOU is based on the following two

aspects viz., terminal examinations-70% Weightage and continuous assessment-30% weightage. Continuous assessment has two aspects i.e., assignments and mid-term tests.

Similarly, in Tamil Nadu, the Centre for Distance Education, Bharathidasan University, offers MCA, MBA and PGDCA courses under semester pattern with CIA. Tests and assignments are the components of CIA (25% weightage) in addition to university terminal examinations (75% weightage). IGNOU gives due weightage to the concept of continuous assessment in addition to the external examination at the end of the year.

Arguments against Continuous Assessment

There is a strong feeling among the learners under open university system that distance/open learning is a self study course and so the learners should not be forced to attend the compulsory contact classes, to write mid-term tests and to submit assignments at regular intervals. In practice, unless there is an effective monitoring system, in terms of continuous evaluation and end examination, it is not possible to find out whether the learners have properly

studied the reading materials supplied, utilised the multi-media approach to teaching/learning and prepared themselves for the university end examination. Besides, to disprove the arguments levelled against continuous assessment, it is pertinent to state the findings of a study conducted by Rothore that more than 90% of the students believed that assignment, a component of continuous assessment, helped them in the process of learning and preparation for end examination. This implies that the assignment and mid-term test may form a compulsory component of the distance/open learning system. In order to ensure quality education to the learner of open university system, dedicated teachers and educational administrators are most important to monitor the system.

Quality Education - Ways and Means

All correspondence course institutions, whether big or small, have to ensure the following in order to provide quality education to their learners as those who study in the regular stream.

- * the supply of high quality course materials to the learners.
- * adoption of multi-media approach for imparting education.
- * implementation of effective student support services through study centres/mobile study centres in the ratio prescribed.
- * giving access to library facilities.
- * provision of equipment at all the study centres for all play-back of audios, videos and recorded radio and T.V. programmes.
- * drafting of well-motivated senior teachers from the regular stream and core department of open university system in the ratio prescribed.
- * availability of computers for administrative records.

- * major portion of the revenue from the students obtained through the correspondence system should be utilized for developing the infrastructure facilities of the system.
- * staff development and training for academic and administration,
- * establishment of research and development cell to process the efforts to be taken after getting feed back from the students, teachers, administrators and others for the improvement of the programme.

Quantity vs. Quality

P.H. Sethu Madhava Rao viewed that the quantitative expansion in the field of higher education has adversely affected maintaining the quality/standards. There has been a steady erosion in the quality in many institutions which has resulted in offering sub-standard education with consequent efforts on Student Performance. Therefore, it is clear that there is a close relationship between quality of education and the number of students enrolled in the open/distance stream of institutions. Heavy enrolment may strengthen the financial position of the institutions.

To prove the above inferences, it is absolutely necessary to cite the U.G.C. guidelines regarding optimum size of enrolment for each correspondence education unit with a view to maintaining high standard. The guideline states that in a State a new university can introduce correspondence course only when a university already offering correspondence course reached the optimum size of enrolment namely 10,000. Besides, the NCTE and UGC identified that the major cause for the deterioration of the quality of education of practical oriented programme like B.Ed is due to lack of restriction of the size of enrolment. It is heartening to note here that the size of enrolment for B.Ed. course is restricted to 500.

When the size of enrolment into correspondence course/open university

is larger, monitoring the system, particularly the concept of evaluation and examination for such larger size, may not be effective; the evaluation system is likely to become unmanageable and uncontrollable with the result the quality of education will get deteriorated. On the other hand, large size of enrolment as already discussed leads to establishment of more study centres, appointment of more core as well as guest faculty.

In accordance with the above norms, a university, which offers correspondence courses with an enrolment of one lakh learners has to establish 200 study centres, 2,000 full time core faculty and 2,000 strong core faculty.

The problems faced by part time correspondence course institutions with 200 study centres, 2,000 teaching staff and corresponding non-teaching staff, will be different and more complex; then the problems of distance learners may not be attended to. Therefore, it is always desirable that each university should have optimum size of enrolment in its correspondence stream.

Conclusion

In order to create appropriate learning environment in India and to impart quality education through distance/open stream, the U.G.C. or other recognized bodies should always insist upon adherence to all the aspects of guidelines prescribed. Otherwise the learners of distance/open stream may not reap the fruits of the system fully; they cannot compete with their counterparts in the regular stream in the employment market due to lack of subject knowledge. If needed, necessary legal provisions should also be made to this effect, so that, distance stream may play effective role in higher education. □

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