

Remarks: Indira Gandhi National Open University



INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

*National Seminar on "Performance Indicators in Distance
Education"*

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*Remarks by
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Mr. Chairman,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I deem it a great honor to be invited to make a statement at the opening ceremony of this seminar on Performance Indicators in Distance Education. I also bring greetings from my colleagues in Vancouver as well as on behalf of the Commonwealth of Learning,

I would like to congratulate the Distance Education Council and the Indira Gandhi National Open University for organizing this useful meeting. By so doing, you are providing a great service not only to the practice of distance education here in India but also the region and the rest of the Commonwealth. Since taking office as the president of the Commonwealth of Learning, I have had the pleasure of participating in a number of distance education-related events in this great country. I am deeply impressed by the systematic and single-minded way in which India is going about renewing its commitment to Distance Education and provisions for a greater educational access to her people. This meeting is a fine example of both an introspection of what was and where it should go.

In most countries, more so in our part of the world than any other, there is an acceptance that to develop and sustain a healthy economy to assure social stability and a vigorous democracy, an ever increasing pool of skilled and knowledgeable people are required. The skills needed do not remain the same throughout one's life. More than ever before job change is becoming a part and parcel of career

development. In addition the expansion of the knowledge base itself especially in the sciences and technologies make it imperative for providers of education, especially in the higher education sector, to do more than they had ever done previously.

What we are facing therefore is the double challenge of providing more with less. The costs of higher education is escalating and this includes the distance education sector as well. These escalating costs are unavoidable in the contexts of the volume to be educated and in the diversity of the products, without compromising quality. This therefore requires the management of institutions to be both effective and efficient; it must be efficient in the use of human and physical resources and, effective in providing the best framework for teaching and learning to take place, research to be sustained and students allowed to develop their full potential. Satisfying all of these needs has become a much more complex challenge especially for those of us who are functioning at the cutting edge of educational delivery, as distance educators do.

Governments which continue to fund most post-secondary education in many of our countries require assurances from those of us employed to manage these ventures and expenditure. They need constant assurance that the public money is judiciously spent and that 'the value for money' question asked of and by them is satisfactorily answered. To respond to these demands institutions themselves have to design measurements of efficiencies and effectiveness which will provide unambiguous information. Performance indicators which are the subject of this conference are but one way of searching for this information.

In the time-honored traditions of conventional higher education two established types of efficiencies have been subjects of scholarly scrutiny. These are the internal efficiencies which refer to events within which an institution operates and external efficiencies which refer to events after the student leaves the college or university.

External efficiency has been the subject matter of the economics of education, e.g. the way acquisition of different levels and types of schooling leads to employment and higher earnings, as well as the way educational costs compare to social and private benefits. The Asian Development Bank, World Bank and a few think-tanks have conducted some remarkable studies and published the findings.

Internal efficiency issues have been analyzed by a wider spectrum of scholars and can be clustered under three main groups. These are the *so called "drop - out" considerations; * "educational quality" issues and * "cost - effectiveness". I am certain that all of you are familiar with the many published works in this field . No other field of educational delivery offers greater opportunity to measure precisely the indicators of performance to draw conclusions on these internal efficiency issues than distance education and no other country has the whole range of models and or typologies for scholars to have a field day than this great country of yours.

Mr. Chairman and colleagues, your deliberations over the next few days will offer not only findings of work previously done or presently on-going but also enable us to frame new questions to seek greater clarity on a number issues that distance educators are seeking answers for. These issues will range from

identifying indicators from course development to retention rates of learners; from materials dispatch to learners to turn around time of assignments from tutors; from receipt of application forms for enrollment in courses to announcement of examination results by faculty. It takes courage to seek answers to these issues and it is a matter of great pride to me that we of the distance education fraternity have the courage to examine them openly and freely.

I wish you well in your seminar, look forward to reading the many papers tabled and take great pleasure in declaring this seminar open.

Thank you.