

Teacher Education through the B.Ed Programme of IGNOU– Access through the Chennai Regional Centre

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Dr. Ashwini Kumar, Deputy Director, IGNOU Regional Centre, Lucknow 226022, Uttar Pradesh
Email: ashwini_ak@yahoo.com Phone: 09451584261

Dr.J.S.Dorothy, Assistant Regional Director, IGNOU Regional Centre, CIT Campus, Chennai 600 113,
Tamil Nadu **Email:** <js_dorothy@yahoo.co.in> Phone: 9840454076

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ABSTRACT

The B.Ed Programme of IGNOU offered through the Distance Learning Mode from the year 2000 has been the boon in developing human resources involved in academic transactions at the School level. Accessibility to the programme is dependent on the availability of seats allotted in line with the Government of India policies covering the welfare of the diverse population, earmarked for the various categories, differently able persons, special civilian segments like war widows, Kashmiri Migrant, which is predetermined by the mandatory qualifying in the prescribed entrance exam conducted by the University. The Programme is unique in that the National Council for Teacher Education of India approved the B.Ed Programme of IGNOU, as the only distance learning programme to be offered by the Distance Education System in the Indian Sub-Continent. This paper discusses how the B.Ed Programme of IGNOU is contributing to the staff development of in-service teachers through the distance education/learning mode in Chennai (Tamil Nadu, South India) Regional Centre. This paper also highlights the Institutions, which served as the Learner Support Centres from the year 2000 (when the programme was launched) till 2009 in the jurisdiction of the Chennai Regional Centre (Tamil Nadu, South India). In addition, this paper elucidates the selected parameters that comprise the profile of the learners, who had enrolled in to the B.Ed Programme of IGNOU from the year 2000 to 2009 (Ten Enrolment Cohorts) by using the complete enumeration methods (N=18159) and the preference for the optional subjects given by the Teacher-student at the time of access into the Programme of study. In a nutshell, this paper gives a brief about the B.Ed Programme of IGNOU, the profile of the learners enrolled in Chennai Regional Centre (Tamil Nadu, South India), preferred optional courses and, the implications of the Programme towards the staff development of Conventional Education System at Secondary level through the distance education/learning mode, which is sure to have an impact in equalising teacher education opportunities through the gross access via the distance learning mode.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher education in India is being offered both by the Conventional Education System (CES) and the Distance Education System (DES). The flexibility of the DES attracts its own clientele mainly because of the systemic characteristics and established credibility of the System. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is one of the Distance Teaching Institutions (DTI) in India offering Teacher education Programmes targeted at the in-service Teachers. The Bachelors in Education (B.Ed) Programme of IGNOU was launched in the year 2000. The present paper gives the detail about the programme and the profile of the learners over a decade (2000 to 2009) at Chennai Regional Centre, one of the second tier administrative setup of IGNOU.

2. A BRIEF ABOUT THE B.Ed PROGRAMME OF IGNOU

The Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) Programme of IGNOU was launched by the School of Education (SOE) in IGNOU in January 2000 at 20 Study Centres in teacher training colleges approved by the National Council for Teacher Education with an enrolment of 100 students at each Centre (Sangai and Garg , 2009). It aims at developing the understanding and competencies required by practicing teachers for effective teaching-learning process at the secondary stage. The programme also provides opportunities of sharing experiences gained by practicing teachers. It enables in-service teachers to select and organise learning experiences according to the requirement of learners. In addition, it provides knowledge and develops in them an understanding of areas such as educational evaluation, school management, etc. The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) and the UNESCO chair in School of Education ensure quality of the programme offered. In the State of Tamil Nadu, the B.ED Degree since its inception is recognized through a separate Government Order No.160 (2004).

2.1 Objectives of the B.Ed Programme: As envisaged in the Programme Guide for B.Ed (2009) the programme aims to enable practicing teachers to achieve the following objectives:

- To systematize experiences and strengthen the professional competencies of in-service teachers.
- To imbibe knowledge and develop an understanding of the various methods and approaches of organising learning experiences of secondary school students.
- To develop skills required in selecting and organising learning experiences.
- To understand the nature of the learning process.
- To develop skills involved in dealing with the academic and personal problems of learners.
- To acquire knowledge and develop an understanding of the various procedures and techniques of evaluation and their classroom applications.
- To develop skills involved in selecting, developing and using evaluation tools.
- To acquire knowledge and develop an understanding of various aspects of school management.
- To develop competencies for organising various instructional and student support activities.
- To develop an appreciation of the role of the teacher in the prevailing socio-cultural and political system in general and the educational system in particular.

2.2 Instructional System: The B.Ed. programme delivery system includes the multi-media approach, i.e., self-instructional print material, audio/video components, assignments, counseling sessions and practical work in school and workshops.

The print materials are the self-instructional materials for both theory and practical components of the programme. It is supplied to the students in the form of blocks. Each block contains 3-5 units.

The audio and video programmes are supplementary, meant for clarification and enhancement of understanding. These are used during counseling and workshop sessions at the programme study centre. Besides, the video programmes are telecast on the national network of Gyan Darshan.

2.3 Structure of the Programme

The Duration of the Programme is Two years. However, flexibility exists in the system to complete the Programme within a Maximum period of Four years. The Total Credits to be completed are 48 Credits. (A Credit in IGNOU signifies the quantum of study-input in terms of student-hours spent in carrying out different learning activities, such as reading course material, working through the worksheets, viewing/listening related CDs, responding to assignments, etc., One Credit is equated with 30 hours of study input). The Total courses to be completed are 8 Theory Courses and 3 Practical Courses.

2.3.1 Theory Courses: In the first year, as part of the Theory Courses, the learner has to study three compulsory courses and two content methodology courses. The Theory courses of the First year are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Theory Courses of the First Year

Type of Course	Course Code	Title of the Course	Credits
Compulsory Courses	ES-331	Curriculum and Instruction	4
	ES-332	Psychology of Learning and Development	4
	ES-333	Educational Evaluation	4
Content Methodology Courses (Group B Courses) (any two)	ES-341	Teaching of Science	4
	ES-342	Teaching of Mathematics	4
	ES-343	Teaching of Social Studies	4
	ES-344	Teaching of English	4
	ES-345	Teaching of Hindi	4
	BESE-046	Teaching of Tamil	4

Source: Programme Guide- Bachelor of Education (2009)

In the Second year (till the 2009 cohort of enrolment), as part of the Theory Courses, the learner has to study Two compulsory courses and one Special course. The Theory courses of the Second year (till the 2009 cohort of enrolment) are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Theory Courses of the Second Year

Course type	Course Code	Title of the Course	Credits
Compulsory Courses	ES-334	Education and Society	4
	ES-335	Teacher and School	4
Special Courses (Group C Courses) (any one)	ES-361	Educational Technology	4
	ES-362	Computer in Education	4
	ES-363	Guidance and Counselling	4
	ES-364	Distance Education	4
	BESE-065	HIV and AIDS Education	4
	BESE-066	Adolescence and Family Education	4

Source: Programme Guide- Bachelor of Education (2009)

Until the 2009 cohort of enrolment, only two compulsory courses namely ES334 and ES335 were on offer to the learners. However, from January 2010 onwards, the courses BESE-065 and BESE-066 were also offered as compulsory courses rising the number of compulsory courses to four in the second year of B.Ed. (Student Handbook and Prospectus- Bachelor of Education (2009).

2.3.2 Practical Courses: There are three Compulsory Practical courses for the B.Ed Programme. They are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Practical Courses of the B.Ed Programme

Course type	Course Code	Title of the Course	Credits
Compulsory Courses	ES-381	School-Based Activities	4
	ES-382	Workshop-based Practical Work	4
	ES-383	Practice Teaching	8

Source: Programme Guide- Bachelor of Education (2009)

School Based Activity is a compulsory component for the student and is to be carried at the school/work centre. School based Activity has to be carried out in both the First and Second year of Study.

The following 2 credits of school based activity are to be undertaken in the First year:

- Maintenance of Registers and Records
- Addressing the School Assembly
- Conducting Socio-metric Tests
- Content Analysis Exercise

The following 2 credits of school based activities are to be undertaken in the Second year:

- Administration of Psychological Tests
- Preparation of Cumulative Records
- Preparation of School Time Table
- Organizing career talk/ PTA meeting/ Debate/ Panel Discussion/ quiz programme
- Action Research
- Field Trip
- Innovative work/activities

Workshop Activity is a compulsory component, which spread over the two years of Study. Workshop-I is held in the First year. Workshop-II is held in the Second year. The workshop is continuously held for a period of 12 days. After the preparation of the Schedule on the basis of the guidelines in Student-Teacher Handbook, the resource persons are fixed and communicated to the students in advance. The sessions of the workshop focus towards the practical work to be undertaken at the work centre/school after the workshop. The sessions are meant for group discussion, demonstration, and practical activities. The Criteria for assessment of the student-teacher include punctuality; interaction; participation in activities and discussion and ability in presentation of micro-teaching skills. After the workshop, go for school- based activities and Teaching Practice at the School.

Practice Teaching is a learning process that provides experiences to student teachers for development of their teaching competence (Student Teacher Handbook, 2008). It is a compulsory component, carried out at the work centre/school and is done under the guidance of Mentors. In practice teaching every teacher educator delivers 40 lessons (20 in each subject). Out of 40 lessons (10 in each subject is supervised by mentor according and 10 lessons (5 in each subject) is supervised by supervisor/ teacher educator (Resource Persons' Handbook for Practical Work, 2000).

3. ADMISSIONS PROCESS OF B.Ed PROGRAMME AT IGNOU

B.Ed Programme is one of the programmes offered by IGNOU on the basis of the performance of the learners in the Entrance Test. Candidates who have a Bachelors Degree and two years of experience as a Teacher in transacting the curriculum of the School level Education (Primary to Class Twelve) are eligible to apply for the Entrance Exam. The Entrance Test (with the Medium being either English or Hindi) is held on the same day in all the Examination Centres in India. Aspirants of the B.Ed Programme apply to the University for appearing in the Entrance Exam in the prescribed application form. After the conduct of the Entrance Exam, the Regional Centre-wise merit list is prepared as a based for the admission process. The regulations prescribed by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and the guidelines given by the Government of India for earmarking seats for the various categories are adhered to by the Regional Centre while admitting the candidates .

4. LEARNER SUPPORT CENTRES (LSC) FOR THE B.Ed PROGRAMME OF IGNOU

The Learner Support Centres are the educational Institutions, which serves as the host to render the academic and physical infrastructure facilities for executing the academic transactions (academic counseling, Submission of assignment response, peer interaction, induction into the distance education system in general and into the programme enrolled in particular) involved in the programmes activated in that particular Learner Support Centre. The Learner Support Centres (LSC) are the field level functionaries and work under the supervision of the Regional Centre. The Regional Centre has specific jurisdiction to facilitate the monitoring process of the LSC. The Indian sub-continent has 28 States and 7 Union Territories. Every State and Union Territory has a Regional Centre. However, in certain States, there are more than two Regional Centres with well defined jurisdiction for administrative purposes. The State of Tamil Nadu has two Regional Centres- one at Chennai and the other at Madurai. The State of Uttar Pradesh also has two Regional Centres- one at Lucknow and the other at Varanasi. As far as the B.Ed Programme is concerned, the LSC is referred to as the Programme Study Centre (PSC) and is hosted by regular Teacher Education Institutions (i.e., Conventional College of Education).

5. PROFILE OF THE LEARNERS OF ENROLLED IN B.Ed PROGRAMME - A CASE STUDY OF CHENNAI REGIONAL CENTRE OF IGNOU

Primary data given in the application form by the learners at the time of admission into the Programme was retrieved to arrive at the profile of the learners. All the enrolment data available in Chennai Regional Centre for the ten consecutive cohort of enrolment from the year 2000 to 2009 were collected. A total of 18159 learners were enrolled into this Programme from the year 2000 to 2009. However, while tabulating the values, only the valid frequencies for the

respective response have been taken into account for discussing the various parameters of interest, which falls within the scope of the study. The data was analysed on various aspects such as Region wise enrolment, Learner Support Centres over the years, Gender of the enrollees, Category of the enrollees, Area of place of stay of the enrollees, Marital Status of the enrollees, Social Status of the enrollees, Differently enabled Enrollees, Preference for the optional subjects given by the Teacher-student at the time of access into the Programme of study. The various aspects that are being discussed under this section which falls within the scope of the objectives of the present study are the following:

5.1 Learner Support Centres: The Learner Support Centres (LSC) are geographically separated and spread across the State of Tamil Nadu. It is also apt to mention that until 2004, the Chennai Regional Centre was having the jurisdiction all over Tamil Nadu. In 2004, the jurisdiction of the TamilNadu location was bifurcated between two Regional Centres namely Madurai Regional Centre and Chennai Regional Centre. However, till the 2008 cohort of enrolment, the admission process was jointly done for both the Chennai and Madurai Regional Centres in Chennai. The number of LSC for the B.Ed Programme at Chennai Regional Centre is given in Table 4.

Table 4: Learner Support Centrewise enrolment in B. Ed programme

Cohort of Enrolment	Number of Learner Support Centres	Number of Enrollees	Admission Process for
2000	02	200	All over Tamil Nadu (i.e., both Chennai and Madurai Regional Centre)
2001	03	296	
2002	04	400	
2003	08	800	
2004	08	800	
2005	14	1400	
2006	30	3000	
2007	30	2996	
2008	57	5699	
2009	26	2568	Only for Chennai Regional Centre. Jurisdiction for 14 number of districts in the State of Tamil Nadu
Total		18159	

From Table 4, it can be observed that the number of enrollees is in proportion to the number of Learner Support Centre (LSC). As per the norms of the University, the maximum capacity for a LSC is 100. At times, the candidates prefer to forego their admission into the B.Ed Programme, if the LSC of their choice is not available to them. In such a case, the vacancy exists in the LSC. The B.Ed Programme is one of the revenue generating programmes for the Chennai Regional Centre. Until the cohort of enrolment for 2008, the admission was done for both the Chennai and Madurai Regional Centres after preparing the Merit list for the state of Tamil Nadu. From the cohort of enrolment for 2009 onwards, the Merit list was prepared for the districts which fall under the jurisdiction of the Chennai Regional Centre. Of the 31 districts in Tamil Nadu, 14 districts are under the jurisdiction of the Chennai Regional Centre and the remaining 17 districts are under the jurisdiction of the Madurai Regional Centre (RSD, 2007).

5.2 Gender: The number of Enrollees belonging to the Chennai Regional Centre for the ten cohorts of enrolment (2000 to 2009) based on the Gender is given in Table 5.

Table 5: Genderwise enrolment in B. Ed programme

Cohort of Enrolment	Female		Male		Total number of Valid frequencies
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
2000	110	55	90	45	200
2001	153	52.05	141	47.95	294
2002	226	56.65	173	43.35	399
2003	474	59.3	326	40.8	800
2004	426	53.3	374	46.8	800
2005	811	57.9	589	42.1	1400
2006	1795	59.8	1205	40.2	3000
2007	1735	57.95	1259	42.05	2994
2008	3647	65.40	1930	34.60	5577
2009	1739	67.7	829	32.3	2568
Total	11116	61.65	6916	38.35	18032

As evident from Table 5, a majority of the enrollees are women (consistently above 53% over the decade) in the Chennai Regional Centre. The highest gross enrolment in women was the highest in the cohort of enrolment of 2009 (67.7%) at Chennai Regional Centre whereas, the highest gross enrolment in men was highest in the cohort of enrolment of 2001 (47.95%) at Chennai Regional Centre. The highest gross enrolment in women over the decade 2000 to 2009 could be attributed to teaching being the preferred profession by the women. This finding is in line with one of the earliest finding by Faith and Croom (1988), who had concluded that “the gender factor addresses the phenomenon whereby large number around the world study on distance education programmes, close to half the total enrolment . This mode of study suits women. They can study at home and fit study around their traditional responsibilities, largely domestic. Where access to a campus institution is difficult or impossible due to geography or cultures, distance education provides educational possibilities for women”.

5.3 Category: The number of Enrollees belonging to the Chennai Regional Centre over the ten cohorts of enrolment based on the Category [General, Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), Other Backward Class (OBC)] is given in Table 6.

Table 6: Enrollees in B.Ed Programme based on category

Cohort of Enrolment	General	OBC-CR	OBC-NC	Scheduled Caste (SC)	Scheduled Tribe (ST)	Total number of Valid Frequencies
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	
2000	165 (82.5)	<i>Not Applicable, as the reservation exclusively for the OBC Non Creamy Category came to effect only from 2009 Cohort of Enrolment</i>		32 (16)	3 (1.5)	200
2001	243 (82.1)			47 (15.9)	6 (2)	296
2002	298 (74.5)			93 (23.3)	9 (2.3)	400
2003	596 (74.5)			196 (24.5)	8 (1)	800
2004	595 (74.4)			201 (25.1)	4 (0.5)	800
2005	1058 (75.6)			334 (23.9)	8 (0.6)	1400
2006	2719 (90.6)			269 (9)	12 (0.4)	3000
2007	2172 (72.5)			803 (26.8)	21 (0.7)	2996
2008	4715 (82.7)			957 (16.8)	27 (0.5)	5699
2009	608 (23.7)	772 (30.1)	789 (30.7)	383 (14.9)	16 (0.6)	2568
Total	13169 (72.5)	772 (4.3)	789 (4.3)	3315 (18.3)	114 (0.6)	18159

(OBC-CR= Other Backward Class Creamy Layer; OBC-NC= Other Backward Class Non-Creamy Layer; Number in parentheses indicates the percentage)

From Table 6, it is evident that a majority of the enrollees are from the General Category in Chennai Regional Centres followed by Scheduled Caste and then by the Scheduled Tribe from the cohort of enrolment year 2000 to 2008. In the year 2009, the reservation policy was executed for the Government of India after diversification of the Other Backward Class on the basis of the Income. Accordingly, the Other Backward Class was categorised into the creamy layer and the non-creamy layer on the basis of the income. If the family income exceeds Three lakh Indian Rupees, then they are categorised as creamy layer. However for administrative purposes this category certificate is issued to non-creamy layer individuals by the Tahisldhar (Head of the local administration). With this as the background viewing the enrollees in the B.Ed Programme based on category, the majority of the enrollees are from the non-creamy layer Other Backward Class (30.7%) followed by the creamy layer Other Backward Class (30.1%) then by the General Category (23.7%) and then by the Scheduled Caste (14.9%) and lastly by the Scheduled Tribe (0.6%) in the 2009 enrolment cohort.

At this juncture, it would be apt to mention that at IGNOU, the admission into the B.Ed Programme is on the basis of the reservation framed by the Government of India (GOI). In case when the candidature for the respective reserved category is not available then it is re-appropriated for the next category by stepping down to the next category. The admission procedure of IGNOU also falls in line with one of the findings by Sharma (2001) who after conducting an in-depth study of the Teacher Education through the Distant Mode had concluded that all the Correspondence course Institutions (CCI)/Directorate of Distance Education (DDE) have reservation for SC and ST students i.e. the under privileged groups in the social hierarchy, in the admission process.

Data pertaining to the individual cohort of enrolment on the basis of Gender and Category is given in Table 7.

**Table 7: Enrollees in B.Ed Programme based on the Gender and Category
(Individual cohort)**

Category	Gender		Cohort of Enrolment										Total number of Valid frequencies
			2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
General	Male	Number	68	110	120	223	254	414	1066	817	1458	120	4650
		Percentage	41.2	46.02	40.54	37.4	42.7	39.1	39.2	37.6	31.59	19.7	35.6
	Female	Number	97	131	177	373	341	644	1653	1353	3156	488	8413
		Percentage	58.8	54.81	59.79	62.6	57.3	60.9	60.8	62.4	68.40	80.3	64.4
	Total			165	239	296	596	595	1058	2719	2168	4614	608
Other Backward Class-Creamy Layer	Male	Number	<i>Not Applicable, as the reservation exclusively for the OBC Non Creamy Category came to effect only from 2009 Cohort of Enrolment</i>									263	263
		Percentage										34.1	
	Female	Number										509	509
		Percentage										65.9	
	Total												772
Other Backward Class--Non Creamy Layer	Male	Number	<i>Not Applicable, as the reservation exclusively for the OBC Non Creamy Category came to effect only from 2009 Cohort of Enrolment</i>									282	282
		Percentage										35.7	
	Female	Number										507	507
		Percentage										64.3	
	Total												789
Scheduled Caste (SC)	Male	Number	21	28	49	101	119	170	137	429	456	156	1565
		Percentage	65.6	59.6	52.7	51.5	59.2	50.9	50.9	53.4	48.71	40.7	50.5
	Female	Number	11	19	44	95	82	164	132	374	480	227	1533
		Percentage	34.4	40.4	47.3	48.5	40.8	49.1	49.1	46.6	51.28	59.3	49.5
	Total			32	47	93	196	201	334	269	803	936	383
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	Male	Number	1	3	4	2	1	5	2	13	16	8	53
		Percentage	33.3	50	44.4	25	25	62.5	16.7	61.9	59.3	50	50
	Female	Number	2	3	5	6	3	3	10	8	11	8	53
		Percentage	66.7	50	55.6	75	75	37.5	83.3	38.1	40.7	50	50
	Total			3	6	9	8	4	8	12	21	27	16
Total for individual cohort of Enrolment (Valid Frequencies)			200	294	399	800	800	1400	3000	2994	5577	2568	17828

As evident from Table 7, it can be noted that the number of women enrollees was higher in both General Category and OBC (Creamy and Non-creamy layer) in all the nine cohorts of enrolment. As far as the Scheduled Caste (SC) category is concerned, the number of Men enrollees was higher in nine cohorts (2000 to 2008), but in the recent cohort of 2009 enrolment, the women tops the men in enrolment which is an encouraging factor. In the Scheduled Tribe (ST), in three cohorts of enrolment (2005, 2007 and 2008) the number of male enrollees was higher; in five cohorts of enrolment (2000, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2006) the number of female enrollees was the highest; however in the recent cohort of 2009 enrolment (as also experienced in an earlier cohort of 2001), there is an equal number of enrollees in both the gender.

5.4 Area of Place of Stay: The number of Enrollees belonging to the Chennai Regional Centre over the ten cohorts of enrolment based on the Area of Place of Stay is given in Table 8.

Table 8: Enrollees in B.Ed Programme based on the place of stay

Cohort of Enrolment	Urban		Rural		Tribal		Total number of Valid frequencies
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
2000	110	55	85	42.5	5	2.5	200
2001	173	58.4	122	41.2	1	0.3	296
2002	228	57	172	43	0	0	400
2003	475	59.3	319	39.9	6	0.8	800
2004	421	52.6	378	47.3	1	0.1	800
2005	722	51.6	674	48.1	4	0.3	1400
2006	1350	45	1643	54.8	7	0.2	3000
2007	1323	44.64	1638	55.26	3	0.1	2964
2008	<i>Data not available</i>						
2009							
Total	4802	48.70	5031	51.02	27	0.27	9860

From Table 8, it is evident that the majority of the learners are from Urban place of stay consecutively for six cohorts of enrolment from 2000 to 2005. It is interesting to note that for two consecutive cohorts of enrolment (2006 and 2007), the majority of the learners are from Rural place of stay. The number of enrollees in these two cohorts was significantly high to a level that it could make the overall number of enrollees to be from rural place of stay (51.02%) over the ten cohorts of enrolment. This implies that the urban enrollees are well aware of the credibility of the Distance Education System and employment prospects after acquiring the B.Ed Degree and it takes a little longer time duration after the launch of the Programme to reach to the rural place of stay.

The number of Enrollees belonging to the Chennai Regional Centre based on the Category and that of the place of Stay (Urban/Rural) is given in Table 9.

Table 9: Enrollees in B.Ed Programme based on the Category and place of stay

Category	Gender		Cohort of Enrolment									Total number Valid frequency
			2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	
General	Urban	Number	100	150	186	386	341	581	1255	1057	<i>Data not available</i>	4056
		Percentage	60.6	61.7	62.4	64.8	57.3	54.9	46.2	49		51.8
	Rural	Number	63	93	112	210	253	476	1459	1102		3766
		Percentage	38.2	38.3	37.6	35.2	42.5	45	53.7	51		48.1
	Tribal	Number	2				1	1	5			9
		Percentage	1.2	0	0	0	0.2	0.1	0.2	0		0.1
	Total		165	243	298	596	595	1058	2719	2159		7833
Scheduled Caste (SC)	Urban	Number	10	20	38	86	78	138	93	261		724
		Percentage	31.3	42.6	40.9	43.9	38.8	41.3	34.6	33.3		37
	Rural	Number	20	27	55	108	123	194	175	522		1224
		Percentage	62.5	57.4	59.1	55.1	61.2	58.1	65.1	66.6	62.6	
	Tribal	Number	2			2		2	1	1	8	
		Percentage	6.3	0	0	1	0	0.6	0.4	0.1	0.4	
	Total		32	47	93	196	201	334	269	784	1951	
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	Urban	Number	0	3	4	3	2	3	2	5	22	
		Percentage	0	50	44.4	37.5	50	37.5	16.7	23.8	31	
	Rural	Number	2	2	5	1	2	4	9	14	39	
		Percentage	66.7	33.3	55.6	12.5	50	50	75	66.7	54.9	
	Tribal	Number	1	1		4		1	1	2	10	
		Percentage	33.3	16.7	0	50	0	12.5	8.3	9.5	14.1	
	Total		3	6	9	8	4	8	12	21	71	
Total for individual cohort of Enrolment			200	296	400	800	800	1400	3000	2964	9861	

From Table 9, it is evident that the majority of the learners belonging to the General category were from Urban place of stay consecutively for six cohorts of enrolment from 2000 to 2005. It is interesting to note that for two consecutive cohorts of enrolment (2006 and 2007), the majority of the learners belonging to the General category are from Rural place of stay. In enrollees belonging to the Scheduled Caste Category, the majority of the learners were from rural place of stay consecutively for all the ten cohorts of enrolment. As far as the Scheduled Tribe Category is concerned, the majority of the learners were from rural place of stay for all the four cohorts of enrolment (2002 and consecutively from 2005 to 2007).

It is also evident from Table 9, that the highest number of enrollees from Tribal place of stay was five, which was in the enrolment cohort of 2006 from enrollees belonging to General category. Next to the General category enrollees, the next highest number of enrollees from Tribal place of stay was from the Scheduled Tribe (ST) in 2003 enrolment cohort (n=4) followed by the Scheduled Caste (SC) in three enrolment cohort namely 2000, 2003 and 2005 (n=2) .

5.5 Marital Status: The marital status of Enrollees belonging to the Chennai Regional Centre over the ten cohorts of enrolment is given in Table 10.

Table 10: Marital Status of the Enrollees in B.Ed Programme

Cohort of Enrolment	Married		Unmarried		Total number of Valid frequencies
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
2000	114	57	86	43	200
2001	153	51.7	143	48.3	296
2002	233	58.3	167	41.8	400
2003	502	62.8	298	37.3	800
2004	484	60.5	316	39.5	800
2005	805	57.5	595	42.5	1400
2006	1891	63	1109	37	3000
2007	<i>Data not available</i>				
2008					
2009					
Total	4182	60.64	2714	39.36	6896

From Table 10, it is evident that both the married and unmarried individuals have enrolled for the B.Ed Programme of Study at IGNOU. However, the statistics in the Table 10 indicate that the percentage of the married individuals are more when compared to the unmarried individuals amongst the enrollees of the B.ED programme for seven consecutive cohort of enrolment (2000 to 2006). This is an indication that both married and unmarried individuals resort to the Distance Learning System (DLS) to enhance the educational qualification.

5.6 Social Status: The Social status of Enrollees belonging to the Chennai Regional Centre over the ten cohorts of enrolment is given in Table 11.

Table 11: Social Status of the Enrollees in B.Ed Programme

Cohort of Enrolment	Ex-Serviceman		War Widow		General		Total of Valid frequencies
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
2000	8	4	0	0	192	96	200
2001	18	6.1	1	0.3	277	93.6	296
2002	9	2.3	0	0	391	97.8	400
2003	56	7	1	0.1	743	92.9	800
2004	54	6.8	4	0.5	742	92.8	800
2005	85	6.1	1	0.1	1314	93.9	1400
2006	0	0	0	0	3000	100	3000
2007	0	0	0	0	2996	100	2996
2008	0	0	0	0	5699	100	5699
2009	0	0	0	0	2568	100	2568
Total	230	1.26	7	0.05	17922	98.69	18159

It can be observed from Table 11 that the enrollees whose social status is Ex-serviceman had enrolled in to the B.Ed Programme for six consecutive cohort of enrolment (2000 to 2005); likewise the enrollees whose social status is War widow had enrolled in to the B.Ed Programme in four cohort of enrolment (2001, 2003 to 2005). Even though the number of Ex-serviceman and war widow who had availed of the concession due to them (from IGNOU in general and B.Ed Programme in particular) is very small, this is an indication for the compliance to the norms prescribed by the Government of India (GOI) during the admission process of IGNOU for the B.Ed Programme. It is also noteworthy to mention that GOI not only have big allocation for the Defence activities in its budget but also have welfare measures to the "men in the uniform" even after their service term in the Defence and after their death during their service term in the Defence. One of the measures rendered to the Defence personnel after their service term is the provision to accommodate them in availing of Education facilities so as to facilitate them to accustom to the civil life. Similarly, one of the welfare measures given to the spouse of the personnel who had laid down their lives while on service is reservation for them in the education system.

5.7 Differently enabled learners: The number of Enrollees who are differently enabled belonging to the Chennai Regional Centre over the ten cohorts of enrolment is given in Table 12.

Table 12: Differently enabled enrollees in B.Ed programme

Cohort of Enrolment	Differently enabled		General		Total of Valid frequencies
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
2000	4	2.0	196	98.0	200
2001	11	3.71	285	96.28	296
2002	13	3.25	387	96.75	400
2003	30	3.75	770	96.25	800
2004	25	3.12	775	96.88	800
2005	28	2.0	1372	98.0	1400
2006	26	0.86	2974	99.14	3000
2007	55	1.84	2941	98.16	2996
2008	77	1.35	5622	98.65	5699
2009	30	1.16	2538	98.81	2568
Total	299	1.65	17860	98.35	18159

One of the reasons for establishing the Distance Teaching Institutions (DTI) is to take the education to the doorsteps of the disadvantaged individuals. The Government of India also gives concession in entry qualifications for individuals from such special categories. From Table 12, it is evident that differently enabled enrollees are one of the beneficiaries of the B.Ed Programme of IGNOU. The highest number of this type of beneficiary was in the enrolment cohort of 2008 (n=77); however, viewing the number of differently enabled enrollees to the general enrollees, percentagewise in comparison to the Total number of valid frequencies, the highest number of beneficiary was in the enrolment cohort of 2003 (3.75%) with the slighter closer range in 2001 enrolment cohort (3.71%).

5.8 Preferred Optional Subject: In IGNOU, any two of the Content Methodology Courses referred to as the Group B Courses in the First year and one Special course referred to as the Group C Courses in the Second year needs to be chosen by the learner at the time of submission of the application form. Some learners do avail of the facility to change the opted course for a fee prescribed by the University, within the first three months of the registration of the programme, many adhere to the option exercised by them at the time of admission.

The Content Methodology Courses referred to as the Group B Courses in the First year include Teaching of Science (ES-341), Teaching of Mathematics (ES-342), Teaching of Social Studies (ES-343), Teaching of English (ES-344), Teaching of Hindi (ES-345) and Teaching of Tamil (BESE-046).

The Special course referred to as the Group C Courses in the Second year include Educational Technology (ES-361), Computer in Education (ES-362), Guidance and Counselling (ES-363), Distance Education HIV and AIDS Education (BESE-065) and Adolescence and Family Education BESE-066.

The Preference for the optional subjects given by the Teacher-student at the time of access into the Programme of study number of Enrollees for the Group B Courses in the Chennai Regional Centre over the ten cohorts of enrolment is given in Table 13 and that of the Group C Courses is given in Table 14 respectively.

Table 13: Preferred Group B Optional Subject in B.Ed programme

Course/ Cohort of Enrolment		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
ES341	Number	67	111	162	324	316	523	1020	963	1528	476
	Percentage	33.5	37.8	40.5	40.5	39.5	37.4	34	32.2	26.8	18.5
	Rank	4	4	3	2	4	3	3	5	5	5
ES342	Number	79	132	196	323	332	625	1285	1120	1920	757
	Percentage	39.5	44.9	49	40.4	41.5	44.6	42.8	37.5	33.7	29.5
	Rank	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	4	4
ES343	Number	89	116	130	328	324	501	1047	1092	2310	1280
	Percentage	44.5	39.5	32.5	41	40.5	35.8	34.9	36.5	40.5	49.8
	Rank	2	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	2
ES344	Number	161	223	309	607	620	1124	2047	1710	2982	1246
	Percentage	80.5	75.9	77.3	75.9	77.5	80.3	68.2	57.2	52.3	48.5
	Rank	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3
ES345	Number	4	6	3	18	8	27	32	25	46	19
	Percentage	2	2	0.8	2.3	1	1.9	1.1	0.8	0.8	0.7
	Rank	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6
BESE046	Number	<i>Course Offered from 2006</i>						569	1070	2612	1358
	Percentage							19	35.8	45.8	52.9
	Rank							6	4	2	1
Total Number of Valid Frequencies		400	588	800	1600	1600	2800	6000	5980	11398	5136

From Table 13, it can be observed that amongst the Group B Courses, the course on Teaching of English (ES-344) has been the most frequently opted course with the highest number of learners opting this course, in consecutive nine cohorts of enrolment (2000 to 2009). The course on Teaching of Mathematics (ES-342) has been the second frequently opted course. It ranked second in six cohorts of enrolment of which four cohorts are consecutive cohorts of enrolment (2001 and 2002, 2004 to 2007). The course on Teaching of Social Studies (ES-343) ranked three in four cohorts of enrolment (2001, 2005, 2007 to 2008) and in the latest cohort of enrolment of 2009, it has moved up the ladder and ranks second. The course opted least is the course on Teaching of Hindi (ES-345), which can be attributed to the fact that Hindi as a language used in Schools of Tamil Nadu is very minimal.

The trend of the flow of option for the Group B courses is given in Figure 1.

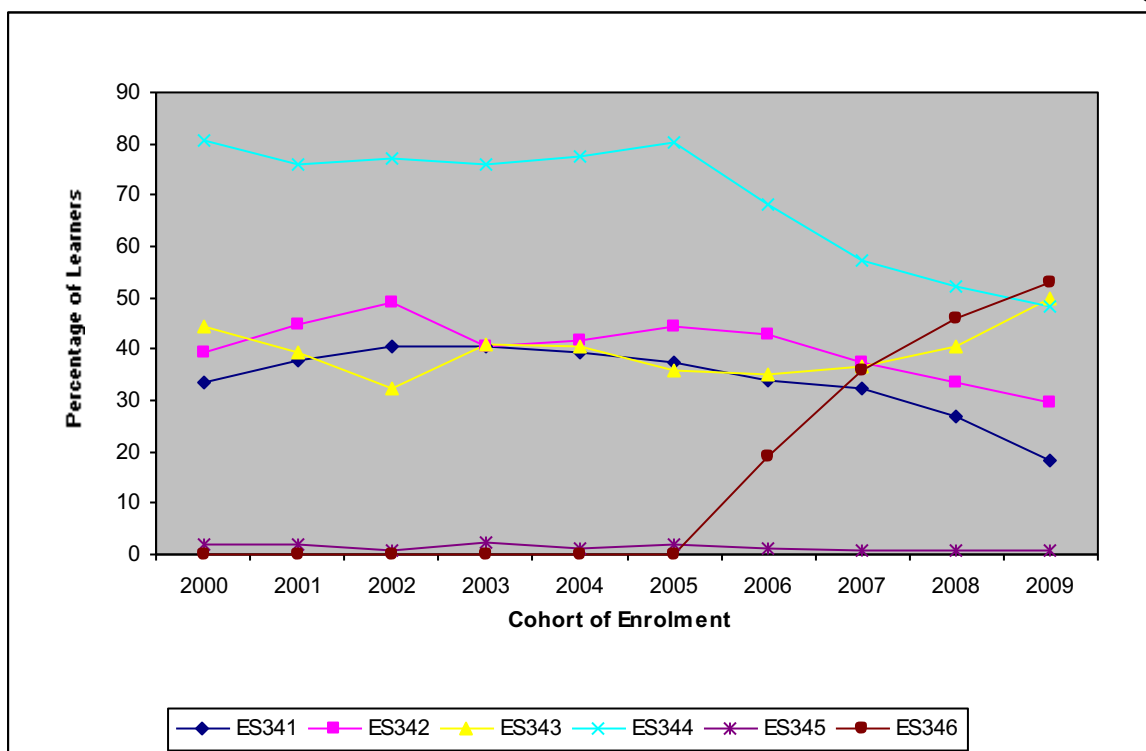


Figure 1: Preferred Group B Optional Subject in B.Ed programme

The Figure also supports the information provided in Table 14 and obviously indicates of how the course BESE046 (Teaching of Tamil) has been consistently on the rise over the last four cohorts of enrolment after its launch in the year 2006, with the highest number of learners opting to study.

Table 14: Preferred Group C Optional Subject in B.Ed programme

Course/ Cohort of Enrolment	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
ES361	Number	38	80	127	254	263	478	1063	909	1608	666
	Percentage	19	27.21	31.75	31.75	32.87	34.14	35.44	30.36	28.21	27.04
	Rank	3	3	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2
ES362	Number	56	107	146	248	209	396	619	613	938	327
	Percentage	28	36.39	36.5	31	26.12	28.28	20.64	20.47	16.45	13.27
	Rank	2	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
ES363	Number	88	88	97	249	268	431	1116	1281	2900	1377
	Percentage	44	29.93	24.25	31.12	33.5	30.78	37.21	42.78	50.88	55.90
	Rank	1	2	3	2	1	2	1	1	1	1
ES364	Number	18	19	30	49	60	95	201	191	253	93
	Percentage	9	6.46	7.5	6.12	7.5	6.78	6.70	6.37	4.43	3.77
	Rank	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Total Number of Valid Frequencies	200	294	400	800	800	1400	2999	2994	5699	2463	

From Table 14, it can be observed that amongst the Group C Course, the course on Guidance and Counselling (ES-363) has been the most frequently opted course with the highest number of learners opting this course, in six cohorts of enrolment of which four cohorts are consecutive cohorts of enrolment (2000, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009). The course on Educational Technology (ES-361) and Computer in Education (ES-362) has been the course ranked first in two cohorts each (2003 and 2005 cohort for ES-361 and 2001 and 2002 for ES 362). The course opted least is the course on Distance Education (ES364) throughout the ten cohorts of enrolment taken for this study (2000 to 2009).

The trend of the flow of option for the Group C courses is given in Figure 2.

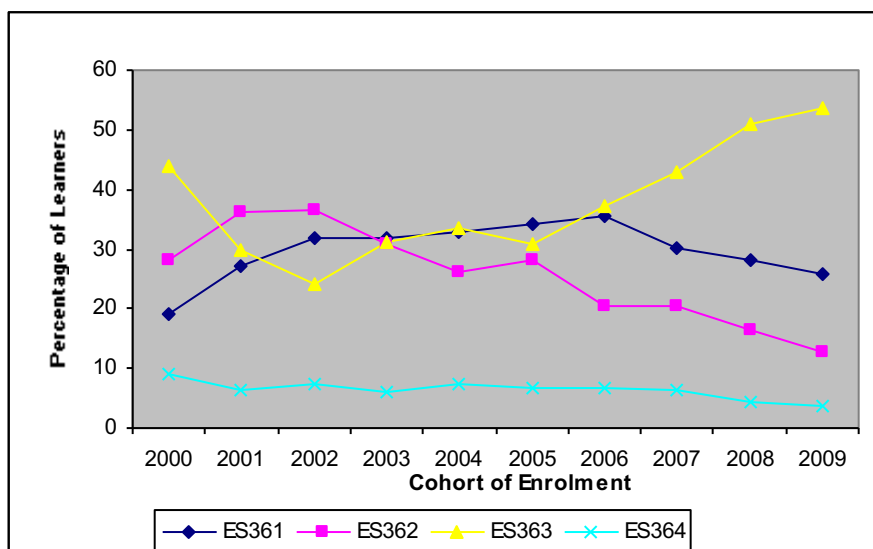


Figure 2: Preferred Group C Optional Subject in B.Ed programme

The Figure also supports the information provided in Table 15 and obviously indicates of how the course ES363 has been the course with the highest number of learners opting to study and is consistently on the rise over the last four cohorts of enrolment.

6. DISCUSSION ON THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The following are the implications of the basis of the major findings of the study:

1. A majority of the enrollees are women (consistently above 53% over the decade) in the Chennai Regional Centre. Similar finding was found when Gender and Category was analysed for General and Other Backward class Categories. This is also an indicator that the in-service teachers who stood in the Merit list for admission into the B.Ed Programme are women. This could be attributed to teaching being the preferred profession by the women. This reinforces one of the earliest findings by Anand (1985), who had categorised women, Academic orphans (who could not pursue education due to socio-economic compulsions like the learners who come from General Category) as one of the types of learners who come into the fold of distance education.
2. The fact that the overall number of enrollees for the latest two cohorts of enrolment (2006 and 2007) are from rural place of stay (51.02%) in spite of the urban enrollees topping the six consecutive cohorts of enrolment (2000 to 2005), implies that the urban enrollees are well aware of the credibility of the Distance Education System and employment prospects after acquiring the B.Ed Degree and take advantage of an educational programme once it is launched; but it takes a little longer time duration after the launch of the Programme to reach to the enrollees of the rural place of stay. In addition, this finding corroborates with the statement put forth under the Advantages of Open and Distance Learning in the Trainer's Kit 001 of COL, which states that the Open and Distant Learning "overcomes physical distance (enrollees from rural area is an example), accommodates low or dispersed enrolments i.e., low enrolments in one geographic region but additional enrolments elsewhere" (Trainer's Kit 001, 1999).
3. High enrolment of the married individuals for seven consecutive cohort of enrolment (2000 to 2006), enrolment of enrollees whose social status is Ex-serviceman for six consecutive cohort of enrolment (2000 to 2005); presence of the enrollees whose social status is War widow in four cohort of enrolment (2001, 2003 to 2005); enrolment of differently enabled enrollees talk aloud of not only the clientele of the Distance Teaching Institution in general but also is an example of how IGNOU in particular is catering to the aspirations of a wide array of learners from diversified background. This finding relate to the view of Banerjee, (1990) who had opined that the distant learning has been the accepted as a "servo-mechanism" for meeting the ever growing demand for education.
4. The course option for the Content Methodology courses and the Special courses is exercised at the time of submission of the application form of the learners. With the provision to receive the Study materials at the time of submission of the application form, at times shortage arises due to sudden demand for a particular course, which is influenced by the local demand and the subject in which the learner has completed the Under graduate programme.

7. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following suggestions are being put forth as directions for further research

1. A study can be conducted to know the attitude of the passed-out learners of the B.Ed programme to know the impact of the knowledge gained and the practicability/usability of the same in field.
2. Critical Analysis of the content coverage aspect in the print materials of the B.Ed Programme by Expert in the Subject/field level, so that the material can be used as a reference material/handouts for workshops/training programmes in all Educational Institutions catering to Teacher Education.
3. For the Present study, only the data of enrollees pertaining to the Chennai Regional Centre was taken as a case study. It is being suggested, a comprehensive study involving complete enumeration of all the Regional Centres can be undertaken. It is being felt that extending the scope of the Study to all the Regional Centres will give in-depth, collective information about the learners enrolled for the B.Ed Programme.
4. Tracer studies showing the mobility of the learners in employment/income generation after the successful completion of the B.ED Programme for all learners in general and for specific categories like differently enabled, ex-serviceman, war widow etc. in particular will throw light on how the B.Ed Programme offered through the distance mode has fulfilled its social responsibility.
5. Attrition and completion rate within the minimum/maximum prescribed period or readmission period can be undertaken.

8. DEFINITION OF THE TERMS USED IN THE PAPER

1. **B.Ed Programme of IGNOU:** The Bachelor's Degree in Education is a Programme of Study of two year duration and the learner is given flexibility to successfully complete the Programme of Study within the maximum time limit of three years.
2. **Regional Centres:** The Regional Centres are the second tier administrative structure in Indira Gandhi National Open University. Keeping with the expansion of the Learner Support Centres, more Regional centres were setup by dividing the jurisdiction of the places originally under the parent Regional Centre.

9. CONCLUSION

Teacher training is one of the most widespread purposes for which open and distance learning has been adopted (Trainer's Kit 001, 1999). Koul and Menon (1992) after tracing the policy and commission reports in India which recommend the need for Teacher education through the Distance mode have concluded their paper with a question "What may IGNOU do to achieve this success". After eight years of this published paper i.e., in 2000, IGNOU launched the B.Ed Programme. In a nutshell, this paper gives a brief about the B.Ed Programme of IGNOU, the profile of the learners enrolled in Chennai Regional Centre (Tamil Nadu, South India), preferred optional courses and, the implications of the Programme towards the staff development of Conventional Education System at Secondary level through the distance education/learning mode, which is sure to have an impact in equalising teacher education opportunities through the gross access via the distance learning mode. This paper covered the various aspects over a decade from 2000 to 2009 cohort of enrolment of B.Ed Programme at Chennai Regional Centre.

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