

Graduates of Indira Gandhi National Open University: How are they placed?

Abstract:

IGNOU came into existence in 1985 and started offering academic programmes in 1987. Since then, it has achieved unprecedented growth in the development and delivery of programmes. The unprecedented growth of academic programmes and vast support service network across the country has resulted in huge student enrollment from different backgrounds. For example, since inception of the university, the annual intake and cumulative student enrollment have gone up from a few thousands to a few 100 thousands. More than 1.6 million students have been registered with the University till 2001. Around 296 thousand students have successfully completed their programmes (till December 2002). Many more thousands students would be completing their programmes in the coming years. It is in this background a study has been proposed to examine:

- How has university attracted huge student enrollment?
- Who are these students and why do they enroll?
- What is the average time taken in successful completion of academic programmes?
- Are students better placed after successful completion of academic programmes?

It is proposed to conduct this study based on students enrolled in various programmes of the university including professional, technical, non-professional and non-technical programmes in order to analyze the success rates and relevance of academic programmes. The proposed study will be organized using the unpublished and published documents / records from the university. Additional information will also be collected through interviews/discussion with the policy makers, administrators, faculty, researchers in general and students in particular. In addition a questionnaire will also be administered (through post/email) to the selected sample students.

Out come of this paper will be useful to the university as to why large number of students are getting enrolled in selected programmes and how far academic programmes offered by the university are really benefiting students across the country taking into account these backgrounds. Since there are no major studies conducted with regard to “success and relevance” of IGNOU programmes, the researcher strongly feels that this may be of great use to IGNOU in particular and other open universities and distance education institution in general.

Introduction

The latter half of the 20th century has witnessed an increased acceptance and recognition of distance education as a viable alternative in tertiary education all over the world in both developed and developing countries. Distance education (DE) is talked of as a means to ensure equality of opportunities of higher education (HE) and to enhance access to and relevance of it. It is being favoured as it uses new communication technologies which increases the possibilities of communication across distances of time and space and overcomes barriers of sex, age, caste, class etc. Perhaps the greatest contribution of communication technology to learning is the way in which it expands the reach of learning services and improves the quality and diversity of the delivery of distance education programmes.

As is true of many countries, India’s involvement in DE grew (in the 1960s) out of the need to provide opportunities of HE to large segments of the population. The concept of DE in India developed from the system of correspondence education which was initiated in Indian Universities in the early 1960s. Since the 1980s DE has evolved into much broader concept with a number of open universities (OU) being set up at the national level namely, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and at the state level, namely State Open Universities (SOU).

Currently the country has 64 dual mode institutions, 10 single mode open universities, and number of other Professional Institutions / Associations such as All India Management Association, Institute of Chartered Accountant of India, Institute of Company Secretaries of India, Indian Costs and Works etc that are offering academic programmes through distance mode. In addition, a few State Agricultural Universities/ (SAUs) are also offering a few non-formal programmes through distance mode across the country. Thus, there is a wide spectrum of educational institutions offering a variety of academic programmes in different disciplines in the form of degrees, diplomas, certificates and non-credit programmes enrolling more than 2.2 million students (approx 20% of the student enrollment in HE (excluding students enrolled in Professional Institutions/Associations and SAUs). The policy makers and administrators have proposed to double the enrollment through distance mode (i.e. 40%) during the 10th Five Year Plan (2002-2007)(IGNOU,2001).

Indira Gandhi National Open University : a case study

IGNOU has achieved many milestones since its inception in 1985, in terms of introduction of programmes and courses, network of Study Centres (SCs) and Regional Centres (RCs), student registration and student success. In addition, a clear paradigm shift has been noticed from traditional courses to professional and technical courses, there is a huge shift in student population to professional programmes, particularly computers and management programmes. A similar trend has also been noticed in the instructional system: from traditional technologies to satellite and telecommunication and computer technology and the basic and study centre concept to diversified delivery concept. The point to note is that it is very clear that the student is being offered a variety of support services at different levels: Head Quarters, Regional Centre and Study Centre, the, increase in academic programmes and courses has not only increased student registration but also student services expanding its provision. Thus, indirectly contributing to greater student access and ultimately success. The growth and expansion of IGNOU since its inception is presented in Table-1.

Table 1: Growth and expansion of IGNOU

Parameters	1987	1992	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Programmes on Offer (cumulative)	2	26	39	39	47	50	62	72
Courses on offer (cumulative)	13	256	482	486	553	604	673	854
Students Registered (actuals)	4521	62375	1625 40	1633 94	17254 8	19665 0	29136 0	29898 7
Rural Students	NA	13707	2620 5	1894 0	NA	41886	NA	27%*
Female Students	235	8954	3726 6	3015 9	NA	52898	NA	21%*
Students on Rolls (cumulative)	4521	12081 0	3943 88	4308 32	51658 0	56116 7	75087 3	80427 1
Regional Centres (cumulative)	8	16	17	19	21	26	44	46
Study Centres (cumulative)	77	212	268	315	376	504	626	765
Academic Counsellors (cumulative)	NA	8287	1632 4	1799 1	18991	20000	20364	20500
Students Registered for TEE (Actual)	1484	69189	1473 18	2210 91	26107 8	31900 4	37018 7	50739 5
Attendance at Term-end exam (actual)	593	43019	1310 06	1746 82	26107 8	14409 8	NA	
Students Awarded Degrees/ Diplomas/ Certificates.	Nil	16150	3311 9	2509 5	53298	53298	62369	76704
Audio Programmes produced (cumulative)	NA	425	659	692	795	984	1051	1109
Video Programmes produced (cumulative)	NA	325	606	695	819	941	1102	1246
IGNOU staff strength (cumulative total)	NA	NA	1286	1294	1633	1677	1811	1892
Teachers and academics (cumulative)	NA	NA	236	245	295	294	301	307

Source: Various Annual Reports and convocation reports of IGNOU.

* (% of students to students enrolled, see table 2 for more details).

In the year 2002 the university was offering 72 programmes comprising of 854 courses in different disciplines in the form of degrees, diplomas and certificates. The student enrolment in various programmes in the year 2001-02 was 299,000 and the total number of students on its rolls was more than 840 thousand. Thus, IGNOU is emerging as one of the largest open universities of the world. Interestingly two professional programmes, viz. Computers and Management Programmes accounted for 3/5 of the total student enrollment in 2001.

IGNOU programmes cater to the needs of a wide spectrum of society ranging from the professionally qualified to ordinary members of the public; from business managers to industrial workers and from unemployed youth to housewives. The university has also added doctoral degrees in education and social sciences. Extension activities have also been initiated by the university in the priority areas such as agriculture and natural resource management, vocational and skills training, awareness programmes and specific projects in literacy, development communication and training of rural youth. Thus giving priority for research and non-formal programmes also.

In addition to the programmes being offered in the country, the university has extended its outreach (through its International Cell) to 4 of the Middle East Countries (UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Sultanate of Oman) and 3 island countries in the Indian Ocean. The university is offering academic programmes since 1997 in the Middle East and since 2000 in Indian Ocean islands (Mauritius, Maldives, and Seychelles). Agreements have also been signed with Hanoi Open University, Vietnam and University of Distant Education, Myanmar for offering IGNOU's academic programmes. In collaboration with UNESCO and The International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), the university is offering PGDDE and MADE programmes to students from Ethiopia and Liberia. More than 1200 students (in 2001) have been enrolled from Middle East and Indian Island countries. In addition 46 students from Ethiopia and 15 students from Liberia have been enrolled with IGNOU during that year (IGNOU, 2001).

In order to serve distance learners at the grass-root level and middle level the university has established a vast support services network across the country in the form of Regional Centres (RC-middle level) and Study Centres (SC), Programme Study Centres (PSC) Special Study Centres (SpSCs) and Partner Institutions (PI), etc (at the grass root level) under the Regional Service Division (located at the university HQ). SCs/PSCs have been established mostly by the University at conventional universities, colleges and professional institutions and in some cases a few recognized SCs have also been set up at private/semi-government institutions and NGO. The university has also established a few sub study centres and work centres attached to major SCs/PSCs. A few of them have been established in Central jails. The work centres were added only for conducting practical courses and are attached to SCs and PSCs. As the number of lab based programmes have increased and therefore the nature of support has become more specialized. Hence more specialized SCs have also been opened in the last few years i.e. Special SCs (since 1999) for special categories of learners such as the differently - abled, women, minorities, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, etc.

In addition, the University has also added single window operations between IGNOU – the Indian Defence forces (Army, Air Force, and Navy) in order to serve defence personnel exclusively. Under this collaboration the university has established support service network across the country in the Defence units itself. According to rough estimates around 1.3 million Defence Forces are scattered throughout the length and breadth of the country, and many of these forces are in mountainous ranges/deserts and other remote areas keeping in view country's security.

The University has established (by the end of July 2001), 638 centres/units (at the grass-root) under the Diversified Delivery System (excluding 79 Work Centres). The classification presents that there are 304 SCs and 21 Recognized SCs, 4 Sub-SCs, 192 PSCs, and 117 Special SCs with 29 Regional Centres (sponsored by IGNOU). In addition, the university has also established 9 Partner Institutions (PI) under partnership arrangements with private/public institutions and 6 institutional collaborations (under RC Chennai) (Special SCs classification reveal that there were 9 centers for Scheduled Casts and Scheduled Tribes; 05 for minorities; 29 for women; 10 for prisoners; 06 for differently- abled (for example 04 for blind students) and 54 for Rural and remote areas. Under Single Window operation (IGNOU-Defense forces) 17 Army SCs with 17 Recognised RCs have also been established (IGNOU, 2001).

Purpose of the study

This study is part of the broad evaluation of DE system undertaken by the researcher. The major objectives of the study were to find out:

- Who are the students of IGNOU?
- Why IGNOU attracts such a large numbers?
- What is the success rate?
- How are they placed?

Methodology

The study has been undertaken in order to study the developmental effects of education and to find out whether the students are better placed after successful completion of their programmes. Generally a gap of few years should be given to the student after he/she has received the degree and before he/she is asked about the benefits derived from it. Hence, the students who were awarded a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) and Bachelor of Arts (BA) in the year 1996 formed the universe of the study. In 1996; 668 students received MBA degree and 701 were awarded a BA degree. The researcher has deliberately selected these 2 programmes as MBA is a Master's degree and also a professional degree and BA is undergraduate and traditional degree. This study would make an interesting comparison between two categories of learners pursuing not only different types of degrees but whose market is also very distinctly different.

Schedules were canvassed by post to collect data from the above mentioned students (1369 in all). Out of 668 MBA degree holders, 240 (36%) responded and out of 701 BA degree holders, 320 responded (45.6%) by returning the filled-up schedule by post and a few by hand.

Limitations of the Study

Although IGNOU is offering a large number of programmes only 2 programmes have been selected for the study namely the MBA and BA programmes. Secondly data from successful students have been collected from only one batch of students namely the students awarded degrees in the convocation held in 1996. The researcher has chosen deliberately a professional degree (PG) and a traditional degree. The university had not produced any post-graduate level students in the traditional programmes by that time.

Information received from various sources including schedules (canvassed to students) have been analyzed and presented below observation-wise.

Objective -1: Who are the students of IGNOU?

The students in any OU are normally from diverse demographic backgrounds as compared to campus based conventional university student. They are mature, mostly adults and working in various professions. Many of them may be even home makers, and some of them may need specific support due to various reasons such as being geographically and economically disadvantaged groups, differently abled etc. In addition, many students may have not access to SC/RC/University (HQs) or other support provided by IGNOU through its tele-communication network due to various reasons as explained earlier or due to lack of access to technology/cannot afford to possess technology, lack of transportation or cannot afford to travel to SCs or other units of the university / due to various socio-economic reasons. Therefore, in the ODL system many of the programmes do not insist in attendance in tutorials (except in some of the practical / training and field based courses). The students can complete any programme without visiting any of the units (support service centre/university HQs) during his/her minimum-maximum period of the study except in the case of practical based courses where there is some percentage of securing the minimum attendance. The profile of IGNOU students from 1987 to 1998 have been compiled and presented in table -2.

Table 2: Profile of students enrolled at IGNOU (in percentage)

Category	1987	1988	1989	1992	1995	1996	1997	1998	2000
Female	5.2	27.8	17.0	14.6	22.5	22.0	23.0	18.4	27
SC/ST (Schedule Cast/Schedule Tribe)	5.2	9.3	11.6	6.1	7.0	6.0	16.0	--	7
Rural & Tribal	NA	NA	13.5	21.9	23.0	8.3	16.5	11.6	21
Employed	NA	NA	NA	55.7	62.0	57.0	67.5	--	NA
Unemployed	NA	NA	NA	34.3	38.0	43.0	32.5	--	NA
Below 25 yrs.	NA	NA	NA	39.0	36.9	41.0	39.0	--	NA
Between 26-35 yrs.	NA	NA	34.0	47.1	45.0	--	40.6	--	NA

- N.A. : Not Available

Sources: 1. IGNOU, annual reports.

2. +Ansari M. M. (2002) Planning for Open Distance Learning : Reflection on Access and Equity Issues, 15th AAOU Proceedings,2002,IGNOU, New Delhi.

The profile of students enrolled for the year 1997 reveals that 16% are from rural, remote and tribal areas, 23% women and 6% SC/ST and 79.6% students are in the age group below 35 years. The profile further reveals that female enrolment has gone up from 5.2% in 1987 to 14.6% in 1992 and 23% in 1997. The other most disadvantaged group namely the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes represented around 6% in 1996 and 1997. Further programme-wise breakup shows that maximum number of women and rural students are enrolled in women studies, library sciences, BA and B.Com programmes of the University. However, the students of Management and Computer Programmes are mainly from mainly urban areas i.e. cities, major cities, and metro cities.

Objective -2: Why IGNOU attracts such large number of students?

- It is a national open university with its jurisdiction all over the country, offering a large number of programmes in two languages (English and Hindi).
- It offers a large number of professional programmes which are very relevant as they have been introduced by IGNOU in accordance with national *needs*.
- The University has established a vast student support services network across the country (Regional centres with full-time staff) and study centres with part-time faculty: Currently, the university is employing more than 22,000 part-time faculty drawn from reputed institutions to serve its learners throughout the country(table -1).
- Flexibility in student admission, course completion, method of instruction has made it convenient a way to earn a degree/diploma/certificate, especially for those who are too busy to commute to a campus and attend classes.
- Its curricula cover many disciplines. Its systematic approach to course development and multi-mode instructional system has also attracted large numbers.
- Recognition of its awards by the government, public and, private sectors, when institutions of HE in the country --- factors that have contributed it's should growing student population.
- Above all IGNOU follows a modular approach in offering / completing academic programmes with minimum- maximum duration (e.g. management, computer and engineering programmes).

Objective: 3 What is the success rate?

In all more than 296 thousands students have completed their programmes successfully since the inception of the university (1987 to 2002) (IGNOU 1988/89 to 1999/2000) and IGNOU 1994-2002).

- Around 63,776 students have completed Masters in Business Administration (MBA)/ Post graduate (PG) Business Management Diploma and other PG level programmes till 2002. In addition 41,521 (excluding 2002 data) students have also completed their Diploma in Management till 2002. Interestingly, 11007 students have secured their MBA degree till 2002. Thus showing more number of successful candidates from management related areas.

Table:3 Success Rate for few selected programmes

CERTIFICATE	School of Studies	Year of introduction	Enrolled Till 2000	Successfully completed till 2001	Pass %
Food & Nutrition	Continuing Education	1989	32153	6382	19.8%
Guidance	Education	1993	6055	1107	18.3%
Tourism Studies	Education	1995	4477	1142	25.5%
Computing	Social Sciences	1996	158173	124608	78.8%
Disaster Management	Computer Sciences	1999	1018	285	28%
	Social Sciences				
DIPLOMA					
Office Management	Computer Sciences	1991	26194	7405	28.3%
Creative writing	Humanities	1998	7557	504	7.0%
Early Childhood Care & Education	Continuing Education	1995	3781	360	9.5%
Nutrition & Health Education	Continuing Education	1994	8966	650	7.3%
PG DIPLOMA					
Journalism	Humanities	1996	7433	1389	18.7%
Higher Education	Education	1992	5409	432	8.0%
Rural Development	Continuing Education	1992	20619	2086	10.1%
Distance Education	Education	1987	10076	1898	18.8%
Maternal & Child Health	Education	1998	2474	773	31.2%
	Health Sciences				
UNDER GRADUATE					
Library & Informaion Sciences	Social Sciences	1991	18442	5459	30%
POST GRADUATE					
Library & Information Sciences	Social Sciences	1994	3876	1073	27.7%
Distance Education	Education	1993	532	284	53.4%

Source: Data Compiled from various Annual Report and Convocation Report of IGNOU.

Note : Successful candidates and enrolled students for undergraduate and postgraduate candidates till 2001 & 2002 respectively.

- Infact the students enrollment for computer related programmes is gradually increasing in leaps and bounds. Past few years, the university is securing maximum enrolment in Computer programmes viz. short-term (CIC) and long term (BCA& MCA). Interestingly, more than 124 thousand students have

completed their certificate (CIC) and Diploma (DCO and PGDCA) till 2002. Of course huge students enrolments have been attracted towards Bachelor Degree (BCA) and Master Degree (MCA) in computer applications in the recent past. Since these programmes are of longer duration, high success rates will be seen in the coming 5/6 years.

- Large number of successful candidates has also been noticed in library sciences (2692 students (Bachelor degree- BLIS and 1071 Post-graduate degree-MLIS) till now. Similarly, 7369 students have completed their diplomas in Rural Development (Table-3).
- Of course the traditional demand for traditional degree (BA/B.Com and BSC) is still there due to various reasons. Around 13,586 students (9931 BA, 963 BSC and 2692 (B.Com) have obtained their degrees from IGNOU.

Table 3(a), 3(b) and 3(c) will provide more details about successful students for degree & diploma programmes for 1997 to 2002.

Year	Total students enrolled	BA	BCOM	BSC
1997	1364	1029	295	40
1998	1575	1179	315	42
1999	1668	1175	356	137
2000	1765	1158	405	202
2001	2547	1874	438	234
2002	2923	2054	580	289

Table 3 (a) : Increasing student success trends for traditional programmes

Source : Various Convocation Reports of IGNOU (1997 to 2002)

Table 3 (b) : Successful (students) Diplomas leading to MCA

Year	Students enrolled	Students successfully completed		
		PGDCA	ADCA	MCA
1997	2115	41	-	-
1998	4435	106	-	-
1999	8540	204	69	-
2000	16678	405	165	02
2001	22417	1284	269	105
2002	39547	3000	1895	606

Source : Various Convocation Reports of IGNOU (1997-2002)

Table 3 (c) Students success trends for selected UG & PG Programmes

Programme	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Under Graduate						
BDP	1364	1375	1668	1765	2549	2923
BLIS	347	405	474	569	650	733
BSC(N)	NA	NA	43	128	198	247
BCA	-	-	NA	20	73	123
Post Graduate						
MADE	14	22	66	30	24	10

MBA	979	1321	1683	2328	3080	NA
MLIS	13	101	255	275	205	224
MCA	-	-	-	45	166	379

Source : Various Convocation Reports & Annual Reports of IGNOU (1997 to 2002)

Successful graduates(BA) reveal that there were higher number of females as compared to males in the professional post-graduate programme(MBA). The reasons for the lower number of females were that :

- there were less number of female students enrolled in the management programme (since females representation in the managerial, supervisory, administrative cadres is much lower as compared to males in the country).
- Traditional programmes domination is still continuing in traditional family set-ups in rural and small towns due to circumstances prevailed in these groups/areas.

Successful Graduates/ Post-graduates: sex-wise(1996)

Proramme	Total Graduates	Male	Female	Female % to total graduates
BA	707	466	241	34%
MBA	668	602	66	10%

Source: Data Compiled from 1996 Convocation Records, SRED, IGNOU.

Time taken in completion

MBA (21 courses) is offered semester-wise (2 semesters in a year) through modular approach and can be completed with in 2 and a half years i.e. minimum period. BA (96 Credits) is of three years duration. BA can be completed between 3-8 years, thus providing minimum – maximum period with flexible approach. Interestingly, 43% of MBA students have completed their programme with in 3 years as compared to 8.3% BA students. Thus showing high level motivation in order to secure their degree due to its relevance in the job market, and for career advancement. In addition entry criteria (selection of a student) for MBA admission had also played a major role since University admits students with specific qualification experience/without experience (depending upon qualification) through an admission test. Where as with regard to BA two types of students (formal 10+2 and non 10+2) are being taken with different backgrounds. 4 per cent of students have taken 9 years to complete BA although its maximum period was 8 years. It indicates that these students must have re-enrolled in order to complete their programmes. Interestingly an MBA postgraduate student on an average has taken 3.93 years compared to 5.86 years of a BA graduate.

Table 4: Time taken for successful completion.

Number of years	MBA		BA	
	Number of students	(%)	Number of students	(%)
03	290	43.0	59	8.3
04	160	24.0	144	20.3
05	62	9.2	88	12.5
06	40	6.0	129	18.3
07	52	7.6	143	20.2
08	46	6.9	116	16.4
09	17	2.5	28	4.0
10	05	0.8	NIL	
TOTAL:	668	100.0	707	100.0
Average time taken	3.93 Years		5.86 Years	

Source: Field Data

Objective: 4 How are they placed?

As already mentioned; 668 MBA graduates and 707 BA graduates were chosen for the study. 36% of the MBA graduates and 45.6% of BA graduates responded.

Profile of the respondents

MBA graduates

Most of them are residents of a metro city or major city and are full time employees. Two thirds of them had acquired a professional degree at the undergraduate level too. Interestingly 90% of the respondents were male and in the 40-50 years age groups except for one who was over 50 years of age. Presently all of them are earning more than IRS 250,000 annually. 80% of them possess a TV, VCR and Telephone. 65% of them also have a computer within an Internet connection and 50% of them also have a cellular phone. Majority of these respondents were from metro and major cities.

BA graduates

50% of them are living in city, 37.5% in metro cities and the remaining in small towns/ villages. 60% of them are full time employees or part-time employees. 75% of them are males and 25% females. 85% of them earning less than IRC 100,000 per year. All of them possess a TV but only 25% of them have access to a computer and Internet connection and only 50% have a telephone.

Learning Outcomes

Career Advancement

All the respondents of both categories have expressed that they were able to carry out their present jobs better as a result of their pursuing higher education with IGNOU. Data presented in Table 5 reveals that 48% of the MBA graduates also got promotion as compared to 25% of BA graduates. MBA being a professional qualification would naturally prove to be more beneficial. However, only 33.0% of the MBA graduates got a pay rise on completion of the programme, whereas all the BA graduates have mentioned that they achieved a pay rise. 75% of the BA graduates have expressed that they could improve their career prospects with a BA degree in hand as compared to 50% MBA graduates. In IGNOU all the MBA students are already working in a managerial capacity as it is one of the criterion for admission to the MBA programme; whereas entry requirement to the BA Programme is having successfully completed 10+2 or lateral entry through non-formal stream where no formal qualification is required provided the incumbent is over 18 years of age and has passed the entrance examination and completed a 6 months preparatory programme offered by IGNOU before entering the BA or B.Com stream. Therefore, the BA graduates have mentioned that their degree opened up more avenues for them and improved their career prospects. Interestingly both categories (75%) felt that their programmes of study enabled them to learn more about subject and kept their mind active and also enabled them to gain more confidence.

Table 5: Learning Outcomes: Career Advancement

Particulars	MBA Graduate (Achieved) (%)	BA Graduate (Achieved) (%)
Carry out present job better	100	100
Get a promotion	48	25
Pay rise in present job	33	100
Improve career prospects	50	75
Learn more about a subject	56	71
Interest to keep mind active	75	75
Gain more self-confidence	60	73

Source: Field data

Social Benefits

Socially also both groups gained a lot. The degree of gain of course varies individually which is given below in Table 6. As compared to MBA graduates the BA graduates developed new friendships. It may be presumed that the students pursuing the BA programme were in less responsible positions than those pursuing MBA Programmes hence had probably more time for leisure and sharing more time with each other. Also they (BA) seemed to have acquired new horizons and new goals and became better communicators. The social impact is more on the BA graduates who also mentioned that they developed newer interests, different from the past and also became more balanced and mature. On the other hand majority of the MBA graduates did not express such feelings since many of them were better placed in terms of job, mobility and contacts due to their placement in their respective organisation.

Table 6 : Social impact

Particulars	Programme	To a great extent (%)	To some extent (%)	Little (%)	Very Little (%)	Not at all (%)
Become more self-confident	BA	47	37.5	10.0	5.5	-
	MBA	43	40	10	7	-
Developed new friendships	BA	62.5	25	12.5	-	-
	MBA		37.5	20	25	17.5
Became better communicators	BA	50	25	25		
	MBA	-	17.96 (120)	08.98	-	08.98 (60)
Acquired new horizons, new goals	BA	48	37.5	10	4.5	
	MBA		25	50	25	
Developed new interests different from the past	BA	34	36	25	--	5.0
	MBA	33	25	37.5	4.5	
Became more balanced and mature	BA	32	48	12	8	
	MBA		16.7	21	62.3	--
Developed new ideas/gained knowledge	BA	45	30	12.5	12.5	--
	MBA	18.0	28.0	24.0	20.0	10.0
Acquired a new way of looking at things	BA	56.0	12	14	15.6	4.1
	MBA	33	50	10	7	

Source: Field Data

Financial Implications

Majority of the respondents had met the costs for their study from their own salaries as they were all employed persons. This has been clearly noticed in MBA. Family support has been seen with most of the BA graduates. Some of them spent money on private coaching specially in BA. They mainly utilized the support facilities provided by IGNOU. Other than the Programme fee which they all felt was nominal. They had to spend money on travel to attend counseling and examinations at study centers and visit Regional Centres. When the respondents were asked whether the costs and time spent and efforts put in were worth compared to the benefits accrued by acquiring a degree from IGNOU. The response of the MBA graduates was very positive. 70% of them mentioned that it was worth spending as benefits were seen and 30% felt that it was not worth spending and substantial benefits were to be seen. On the other hand the BA graduates response was lukewarm. 20% mentioned that it was worth spending, as they were seen benefit. 25% felt it was worth spending, as benefits did not matter. 35% felt that spending was necessary due to compulsion and 20% felt it was a waste. This kind of response is quite natural in a developing country like India where a graduation (BA) is a very basic qualification and not really a stepping-stone to any major career. A professional qualification has become essential for getting a proper break in any career.

References

- IGNOU (1994 to 2002) Convocation Report (various issues), IGNOU, New Delhi.
 IGNOU (1988/89 to 1999/2000) Annual Report (various issues), New Delhi, IGNOU.
 IGNOU (2001) Convocation Report, IGNOU, New Delhi.
 IGNOU (1999) Convocation Report, IGNOU, New Delhi.

IGNOU (2001), RSD, IGNOU, New Delhi (Unpublished document).

IGNOU (2001) 10th Five Year Plan (2002-2007), New Delhi IGNOU(Unpublished).

Manjulika. S. and Reddy V. Venugopal. (1999) *Unexplored dimensions of open universities*. New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House (Pvt.) Limited.

Reddy. V. Venugopal and Manjulika. (2000) *The world of open and distance learning*, New Delhi, Viva Books (P) Ltd.

About the Author: is currently working as Regional Director, Regional Centre, Delhi-II. He has been working with IGNOU in various capacities, such as faculty member (SOMS), Assistant Director, Deputy Director and Regional Director in the Regional Services Division since the University's inception. Dr. Reddy is the author of two books namely "Distance Education in India: A Model for Developing Countries"(1996) and "Unexplored Dimension of Open Universities"(1999). He has also edited two books viz "The World of Open and Distance Learning" (2000) and "Towards Virtualization" (2002). His E-Mail : vgreddy@hotmail.com and ignourd2@ndf.vsnl.net.in.

Table 1: Growth and expansion of IGNOU

Parameters	1987	1992	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Programmes on Offer (cumulative)	2	26	39	39	47	50	62	72
Courses on offer (cumulative)	13	256	482	486	553	604	673	854
Students Registered (actuals)	4521	62375	1625 40	1633 94	17254 8	19665 0	29136 0	29898 7
Rural Students	NA	13707	2620 5	1894 0	NA	41886	NA	27%*
Female Students	235	8954	3726 6	3015 9	NA	52898	NA	21%*
Students on Rolls (cumulative)	4521	12081 0	3943 88	4308 32	51658 0	56116 7	75087 3	80427 1
Regional Centres (cumulative)	8	16	17	19	21	26	44	46
Study Centres (cumulative)	77	212	268	315	376	504	626	765
Academic Counsellors (cumulative)	NA	8287	1632 4	1799 1	18991	20000	20364	20500
Students Registered for TEE (Actual)	1484	69189	1473 18	2210 91	26107 8	31900 4	37018 7	50739 5
Attendance at Term-end exam (actual)	593	43019	1310 06	1746 82	26107 8	14409 8	NA	
Students Awarded Degrees/ Diplomas/ Certificates.	Nil	16150	3311 9	2509 5	53298	53298	62369	76704
Audio Programmes produced (cumulative)	NA	425	659	692	795	984	1051	1109
Video Programmes produced (cumulative)	NA	325	606	695	819	941	1102	1246
IGNOU staff strength (cumulative total)	NA	NA	1286	1294	1633	1677	1811	1892
Teachers and academics (cumulative)	NA	NA	236	245	295	294	301	307

Source: Various Annual Reports and convocation reports of IGNOU.

* (% of students to students enrolled, see table 2 for more details).

In the year 2002 the university was offering 72 programmes comprising of 854 courses in different disciplines in the form of degrees, diplomas and certificates. The student enrolment in various programmes in the year 2001-02 was 299,000 and the total number of students on its rolls was more than 840 thousand. Thus, IGNOU is emerging as one of the largest open universities of the world. Interestingly two professional programmes, viz. Computers and Management Programmes accounted for 3/5 of the total student enrollment in 2001.

IGNOU programmes cater to the needs of a wide spectrum of society ranging from the professionally qualified to ordinary members of the public; from business managers to industrial workers and from unemployed youth to housewives. The university has also added doctoral degrees in education and social sciences. Extension activities have also been initiated by the university in the priority areas such as agriculture and natural resource management, vocational and skills training, awareness programmes and specific projects in literacy, development communication and training of rural youth. Thus giving priority for research and non-formal programmes also.

