

CHAPTER – 10

HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH DISTANCE LEARNING

Education has been widely recognized as a life-long activity. Consequently, it can be pursued at any age. It is recognized that some types of learning, particularly of some skills, may depend on youthfulness, but there are other areas of learning which can be followed irrespective of age. Indeed, learning at mature age can bring about a depth of understanding which may not be possible in a youth.

In Pakistan, a variety of methods have been tested out from time to time, specifically with the object of :

- a) Overcoming illiteracy, both in children and adults.
- b) Enhancing the skills and knowledge of adult persons in different fields.

In the field of Higher Education, courses by correspondence were the first in distance learning. Some foreign based institutions offered courses leading even up to degrees in various fields through correspondence. The actual levels of learning were never tested, so it is not possible to pronounce a judgment on their usefulness. One thing is however, certain, that this method did create an urge for self-acquisition of knowledge and a habit to continue improving.

Another variant of the Distance Learning Process is the traditional university enrolment for examination purposes of private candidates. Private candidates appearing for different examinations of universities may be persons who have completed a formal course of studies, and have either failed, or for some reason, were unable to take their examinations through recognized face-to-face learning institutions.

Then there are others who have pursued their studies individually, using their own initiative, and merely wish to sit in an examination to get the certificate or degree from a university. Such degrees are, in Pakistan, like in other Third World Countries, essential for job seekers.

OPEN UNIVERSITY

The Allama Iqbal Open University was established in June 1974 in Islamabad with the promulgation of an Ordinance. This was later converted into an Act. It was previously named as the Peoples Open University. The object was to provide educational opportunities to the masses, for those who could not leave their homes and jobs. The Open University is a unique institution in Pakistan, differing in approach and overall structure from traditional universities.

The main campus of the university is located at Islamabad, and there are a number of regional and coordinating offices throughout the country. Its governing bodies are as under: (i)

- a) The President of Pakistan as Chancellor.

- b) The Executive Council, which discharges the same functions as the Syndicate in a normal university.
- c) The Finance Committee.
- d) The Academic Council.

Both English and Urdu are used as the medium of instruction.

The university offers a wide variety of courses, beginning from Adult Education to Ph.D. courses. The table given below shows the enrolment in the Bachelors level and Higher Programmes for the period 1980-81 to 1998-99:

Table

***Student Enrolment (Programme-wise) from First Presentation
Upto Semester Autumn, 1999 ⁽²⁾***

<u>Distance and Non-Formal Higher Education</u>			
a)	<i>Ph.D.</i>		
	i)	Education	8
	ii)	Urdu	5
	iii)	Iqbaliat	15
	iv)	Islamic Studies	12
b)	<u>M.Phil</u>		
	i)	Education	2450
	ii)	Urdu	1280
	iii)	Iqbaliat	2050
	iv)	Islamic Studies	1370
	v)	Mass Communication	12
c)	<u>Master Degree Programme</u>		
	i)	M.Ed./M.A (DNFE)	12000
	ii)	M.A. (EPM)	11000
	iii)	M.A. Urdu	162
	iv)	M.Sc. Economics	3300
	v)	M.B.A. (Old Scheme)	20000
	vi)	M.A. History	2400
	vii)	M.Sc. (Pak. Studies)	7700
	viii)	M.A. Islamiat	2100
	ix)	M.A. Arabic	32

	x)	M.Sc. Live Stock Management	90
	xi)	M.Sc. Forestry Extension	100
	xii)	M.A. TEFL, PGD in ELT/TEFL	7500
	xiii)	M.A. Mass Communication	1500
	xiv)	PGD M.Sc. Women Studies	150
d)	Bachelor Programmes		
	i)	B.A./B.Com./BBA/BLIS/BCA	278183
Face to Face Higher Education			
	i)	M.Phil. Physics	50
	ii)	M.B.A. New System	4800
	iii)	Community Health & Nutrition	2800
	iv)	M.C.S.	50
	v)	M.Sc. Physics	1000
	vi)	M.A. Fine Arts	50
	vii)	B.C.S.	5500
	viii)	PGD in Computer Science	750
In-service Higher Education			
	i)	M.Ed./M.A. Special Education	4500
	ii)	M.Ed./M.A. DNEF, General	37000
	iii)	B.Ed. General	315000
	iv)	B.Ed. Arabic	300
Short Term Higher Education			
	i)	Post-Graduate Certificate in Population Education	3500
	ii)	Short-Term Management / Marketing Courses	700

The functions of the University are provided in section-4 of the Allama Iqbal Open University Act, as under: (i)

The University shall have the powers:

- (a) to provide educational facilities to people who cannot leave their homes and jobs in such manner, as it may determine;
- (b) to provide such facilities to masses for their educational uplift, as it may determine;
- (c) to provide facilities for the training of teachers in such manner, as it may determine;

- (d) to provide for instruction in such branches of learning technology or vocations as it may deem fit, and to make provision for research and for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge, in such manner as it may determine;
- (e) to prescribe courses of studies to be conducted by it;
- (f) to hold examinations and to award and confer degrees, diplomas, certificates and other academic distinctions to and on persons who have been admitted to and have passed its examinations under the prescribed conditions;
- (g) to confer in the manner prescribed honorary degrees or other distinctions on persons approved for the purpose;
- (h) to provide for such instruction for persons not being students of the University as it may determine, and to grant certificates and diplomas to such persons;
- (i) to confer degrees on persons who have carried on independent research under prescribed conditions;
- (j) to accept the examinations passed by students of the University at other universities and places of learning as equivalent to such examinations of the University, as it may determine;
- (k) to cooperate with other universities and other authorities in such manner and for such purposes, as it may determine;

- (l) to institute Professorships, Senior Instructorships, Associate Professorships, Instructorships, Assistant Professorships, Lecturerships, Counsellorships and any other posts and to appoint persons thereto;
- (m) to create posts for teaching, research, extension services, administration and other related purposes and to appoint persons thereto;
- (n) to recognize as University Teachers such persons, as it may deem fit;
- (o) to institute and award fellowships, scholarships, exhibitions, bursaries, medals and prizes under prescribed conditions;
- (p) to establish teaching departments, institutes, faculties, laboratories, workshops, audience level regional and other centres of learning for development of teaching and research and educational technology and to make such arrangements for their maintenance, management and administration, as it may determine;
- (q) to supervise and control the discipline of the students of the University and to promote the extra-curricular and recreational activities of such students, and to make arrangements for promoting their conduct, health and general welfare;
- (r) to demand and receive such fees and other charges, as it may determine;
- (s) to make provision for research and development of educational technology and advisory services and with these objects to enter into arrangements with other institutions or with public bodies under prescribed conditions;
- (t) to provide for making of films and cassettes and other audio-visual material and enter into arrangements with Broadcasting Corporation of

Pakistan, the Television Corporation of Pakistan and such other organizations, as it may deem fit;

- (u) to enter into, carry out, vary or cancel contracts;
- (v) to receive and manage property transferred and grants, bequests, gifts, donations, endowments and other contributions made to the University and to invest any fund representing such property, grants, bequests, trusts, gifts, donations, endowments or contributions and to convert one kind of property into another, in such manner as it may deem fit;
- (w) to provide for the printing and publication of courses and teaching material and other works; and
- (x) to do all such other acts and things, whether incidental to the powers aforesaid or not, as may be requisite in order to further the objects of the University as a centre of education, learning and research.

The Executive Council is the main administrative body of the university and its composition is given in Appendix-I.

The University claims to have an enrolment of all types of courses of almost 900,000.⁽⁴⁾ As a result of this very large enrolment, it has been able to keep the fee structure reasonable and to be self-supporting to a large extent. The table below gives a summary of the recurring budget of the University:

Table

Budget Estimates 2000-01
Actuals 1997-98, 1998-99, 1999-2000 ⁽³⁾

Summary at a Glance (Recurring) (Rs. in Million)

<i>Particulars</i>	<i>1997-98</i>	<i>1998-99</i>	<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>2000-01</i>
	<i>Actuals</i>	<i>Actuals</i>	<i>Actuals</i>	<i>Budget Estimates</i>
RECEIPTS				
Govt. Grant in Aid	82.657	74.391	79.598	83.578
Own Resources	265.654	383.311	365.681	402.275
Total Receipts	348.311	457.702	445.279	485.853
PAYMENTS				
Pay and allowances	117.534	114.967	138.382	181.624
Other charges	145.104	219.655	245.508	297.989
Pension Fund	7.086	5.226	5.673	6.240
Total payments	269.724	339.848	389.563	485.853

The government has not invested too much on the development side, as would be obvious from the developmental expenditure outlined below:

Table Budget Estimates 2000-01
Actuals 1997-98, 1998-99, 1999-2000 ⁽³⁾

Summary at a Glance (Development) (Rs. in Million)

<i>Particulars</i>	<i>1997-98</i>	<i>1998-99</i>	<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>2000-01</i>
	<i>Actuals</i>	<i>Actuals</i>	<i>Actuals</i>	<i>Budget Estimates</i>
RECEIPTS				
a. Opening Balance	- 1.123	2.553	4.585	0.001
b. Government Grant	6.083	7.000	8.168	20.00
Total Income	4.960	9.553	12.753	20.001
PAYMENTS				
a. Campus Development	2.353	4.968	12.752	20.001
b. Other items (furniture, equipment, books & media production etc.)	0.054	--	--	--
c. Misc. Research & Dev. Programmes	--	--	--	--
Total expenditure	2.407	4.968	12.752	20.001

THE VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY

The Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of Pakistan, have announced the establishment of a Virtual University in the very near future. It shall be a totally new venture in Pakistan and indeed, even the world over, there are not too many institutions of this nature. Consequently, planning must be done carefully, and execution must be meticulous, so that the persons produced are of the right type in terms of knowledge, moral and ethical outlook.

Face-to-face learning brings a person in touch with other human beings and the knowledge that he acquires is tempered by the reality of the surroundings. Virtual learning, if totally divorced from personal contact with other human beings, may produce persons who are knowledgeable in a particular field, but can be totally lacking in human feelings, human values and ethics. This issue must be kept in mind by the planners of the Virtual University; perhaps some blending with face-to-face learning could be useful in producing a well-rounded personality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The rapidly increasing population of Pakistan, and the rising number of students seeking admissions in institutions of Higher Learning makes Distance Learning an attractive proposal.
2. The Open University experience has been successful, and needs to be properly guided and administered.

3. The present size of enrolment of the Open University, which is nearing about one million, suggests the opening of other such universities, so that enrolments are manageable.
4. The Regional Centres of the Open University must be better staffed and equipped to provide a certain percentage of face-to-face learning, particularly at the higher levels.
5. Quality concerns must be addressed by the Allama Iqbal Open University, so that its degrees are at par with other universities, and are acceptable in the job market, both at home and abroad.
6. Experimentation with the Virtual University must be taken with care and caution. Some face-to-face interaction must be provided, so that the human and ethical aspects of knowledge are not totally ignored.
7. The use of the radio and television as media for distance learning needs to be further explored and strengthened, and standardized in terms of successful international models, while also indigenizing them in the light of local / national needs, aspirations and constraints.

APPENDIX-I⁽¹⁾

- i) the Vice-Chancellor, who shall be its Chairman;
- ii) one member of the National Assembly to be nominated by the Speaker of the Assembly;
- iii) the Chief Justice of Pakistan or his nominee;
- iv) the Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan;
- v) one nominee of the University Grants Commission;
- vi) one Dean to be nominated by the Chancellor on the recommendations of the Vice-Chancellor;
- vii) one Professor, one Associate Professor, one Assistant Professor and one Lecturer of the University to be elected by the Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors and Lecturers of the University, as the case may be, from amongst themselves; provided that a Lecturer shall be eligible for election if he has completed a minimum of two years' service in the University;
- viii) three persons of eminence to be nominated by the Chancellor;
- ix) the Managing Director of the Pakistan Television Corporation;
- x) the Director General of the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation;
- xi) one Alim, to be nominated by the Chancellor; and
- xii) one woman to be nominated by the Chancellor.

References

1. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education. Allama Iqbal Open University Act 1974, Ministry of Education, Islamabad. 1974.
2. Allama Iqbal Open University. Basic Statistics of AIOU 1975-1999. Research and Evaluation Centre, AIOU, Islamabad, Pakistan. 1999.
3. University Grants Commission of Pakistan. Financial Profile of Public Section Universities 1995-2000. University Grants Commission. Islamabad. 2000.
4. Allama Iqbal Open University. Future Five Years Plan of Allama Iqbal Open University (2001-2005). Research and Evaluation Centre, AIOU, Islamabad, Pakistan. 2001.