
UNIT 1 UNDERSTANDING DISTANCE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Distance education discourse in recent times has acquired its own vocabulary. From simple tuition through the postal medium of correspondence to most sophisticated use of communication technologies, distance education has traversed at least five generations of transformation. And yet, its hard core remains unchanged. And that, in simple terms, is the fact that learning takes place at some place away from where the teacher is. In order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of that learning, a variety of support systems have been pressed into service. These include personal interaction with learners as well as technology-mediated learner support. The concept of open learning that has emerged with the launch of the UKOU has added another dimension to the use of distance learning practices often leading to the assumption that open learning and distance education are two sides of the same coin. We thought it was necessary to acquire some clarity about the several concepts and practices that presently constitute the hard core of distance education. We hope that what follows in this Unit will provide you with a clear understanding of the concepts uncluttered by the confusion that semantics often create. We must hasten to add that this presentation is not designed for any academic debate on distance education, but merely to enhance the understanding of the system of potential practitioners.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss as a potential distance education professional, the fundamental distinctions between different concepts and practices in open learning and distance education that have featured in its phenomenal growth in recent decades;
- analyse the basic concepts and their theoretical and practical underpinnings that will help you in planning and managing distance education systems;
- examine the specific objectives and purposes that distance education systems serve in different environments and contexts and relate their design and development to those environments and contexts;
- explain yourself with some significant lessons distilled from the experience of the last four decades of growth of open learning and distance education systems across the world; and
- appreciate the broad perspective in which open universities have emerged as a viable option to address the issue of access to education in the closing decades of the twentieth century.

1.3 THE EMERGENCE OF OPEN LEARNING AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

The revival of the world economy following the Second World War demanded extraordinary efforts. The death and destruction during the war ruined the world. It required large numbers of people with the knowledge, skills and competence to revive the industries, establish new ones and to run them. Educational provision, especially at the higher levels, needed to be expanded rapidly. Higher education that was essentially an elite pursuit so far turned into mass education. Traditional ways of education and training were not capable of sustaining this transformation. Governments and other educational providers started looking for alternate methods that could accelerate the process. Non-formal education that has thus far been peripheral to the mainstream educational processes began to move centre stage. The development of telecommunications technology in the latter half of the twentieth century provided a big boost to these efforts.

The distinction for being the first distance teaching university goes to the University of South Africa (UNISA) established in 1876 as an examining body in Africa for London University's external examinations. In 1946, UNISA was authorised through legislation to start its own teaching programmes using the method of postal tuition. Soon the UNISA and its correspondence tuition method became very popular in Africa, and the UNISA continues to function (with the merger of other distance teaching institutions in South Africa) as one of the 20 Mega Universities in the world today.

The former Soviet Union and China expanded their education and training provision vastly in the 1950s and 1960s using correspondence tuition supplemented with radio and TV broadcasts. The Chinese Radio and

Television University and the Shanghai Television Institute are two of the world's largest distance education institutions today. But the most powerful impetus for the distance education movement across the world was the successful launch of the UK Open University in 1969. This was followed in quick succession by the establishment of several open universities in many countries. We shall take a close look at the evolution of this movement later in this Unit. But first, let us understand a few basics.

1.3.1 What is Distance Education?

It is not as though distance education suddenly emerged in the middle of the twentieth century. It all started around the time the mail service was launched in Britain around 1840. The credit for launching the first ever postal tuition initiative must go to Isaac Pitman who started teaching shorthand in 1837 using post cards for mailing lessons and getting the practice work done by students back for correction by mail. In 1858, the University of London made a radical departure from convention when it decided that it was not necessary that a student should be presented by an institution where he/she has studied, to take its examinations. Perhaps, it was the first step in delinking formal institutional studies from earning university degrees; self-study became a part of the educational process. London University did not offer any tutorial support for self-study, but several private institutions stepped in to fill the gap and offered tutorial support, mostly through correspondence. Not unexpectedly, many among them also sensed a commercial opportunity in the field.

It was during the middle of the 20th century that pressure began to build on governments and the universities to expand opportunities for education to larger numbers. And, there were other pressures too. As we noted earlier, post-war reconstruction of economies, post-colonial nation-building efforts of many new countries, and still later, the rising costs of overseas education, have all contributed to distance education becoming an attractive option.

Distance education is not just one single method of teaching and learning. It is a configuration of several approaches and systems depending upon the specific needs and also upon specific situations. Distance education systems and institutions serve a variety of purposes ranging from:

- augmentation of educational provision especially for the adults and the working population;
- expansion of provision for professional, technical and vocational education for meeting the identified needs of specified industries and other productive sectors of the economy;
- meeting the needs of training of teachers; and
- the education and training of techno-managerial personnel required for emerging economies.

At its core, distance education is characterised by the following distinct features:

- the learner and the teacher are separated in time and space;
- the teaching-learning transaction has to be facilitated by some degree of interaction through appropriate mediation;
- comprehensiveness of the learning experience is an important influence on the learning outcomes;

- since most distance learners also happen to be mature adults, their learning styles and preferences vary as between individuals and groups.

With the recent growth of distance education that found the substitution of the traditional teacher with a variety of learning resources, the importance of resource-based learning as a means of improving the quality of education gained greater attention and recognition. The traditional universities also began to adopt resource-based teaching and learning practices as a means to improve the quality of their educational provision. Somehow, this trend, combined with the growing use of distance education methods by conventional universities too, to widen access, gave rise to the belief that resource-based learning and distance education serve the same purpose. It would therefore be useful, from the planning perspective, to clarify a few concepts at this stage.

Distance education describes a set of teaching and learning strategies (or educational methods) that can be used to overcome spatial and temporal separation between teachers and learners. These strategies or methods can be integrated into any education programme and, potentially, used in any combination with any other teaching and learning strategies in the provision of education (including those strategies that demand the bringing together of teachers and learners at the same time and/or place). Put differently, distance education is teaching and learning in which learning normally takes place at a place different from teaching.

1.3.2 Resource-based Learning

Resource-based learning involves the use of instructionally designed resources for the communication of curriculum between teachers and learners through a variety of different media. Resource-based learning methods can be integrated with any education programme, using any mix of contact and distance education strategies. Resource-based learning need not necessarily involve separation of teachers from learners in time or space; it is nevertheless, used to overcome such separation. In other words, while distance education can usefully employ resource-based learning strategies to enhance its effectiveness, it is not essential that all resource-based learning must essentially be part of distance education methods.

Arbitrary though this distinction is, it helps to understand that the move towards resource-based learning does not, by itself, achieve the goals of distance education or vice versa. Most distance education programmes seek to overcome separation in time and space with the use of resources; in some cases, telecommunication technologies such as video-conferencing are used only to get over the problem of distance. Conversely, many efforts to develop educational resources have not systematically focused on achieving economies of scale that have historically provided the central motivation to most distance education programmes.

The major objectives behind the drive towards resource-based learning are:

- breaking down the traditional notion that a talking teacher is the most effective strategy for communicating the curriculum;
- directing a significantly large proportion of total expenditure to the design and development of high quality resources, as a strategy for building and assuring the quality of educational provision;

- implementing strategies to shift the role of the teacher from simply talking to passive students to stimulating engagement and interaction between them and the teachers;
- investigating the potential that the integration of new educational technologies with teaching and learning environments has for supporting, improving or enhancing those environments.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What factors led to distance education becoming an attractive option during 20th century? (Answer in about 40 words).

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1.3.3 Technology-enhanced Learning

This is yet another misconception that is gaining ground, which considers that distance education' and 'education technology' are interchangeable, or is a single composite term. The lack of clarity about these concepts often leads to poor quality strategic planning. In many ways, it is similar to the conceptual integration of open learning and distance education (as open and distance learning) that led to a notion that all distance education is intrinsically "open". Similarly, many people in the developing countries who are harnessing educational technologies assume that these technologies ensure the benefits of good quality distance education. What they are really doing, in most cases, is simply finding technology-enhanced ways of replicating traditional, face-to-face education models. Many such projects have blazed a sad trail of failed educational technology projects, most notably in applications of broadcasting technologies to transmit lecture-type instruction, wasting huge amounts of time and money. The positive impact of these failures is that planners in developing countries that have still to launch distance education programmes on a large scale do not have to repeat these costly experiments.

It follows that attempts at harnessing the potential of different technologies to support interventions in education need not be regarded as distance education interventions. Technologies can be applied in a range of ways that can support an almost limitless combination of teaching and learning strategies, not all of which are necessarily distance education interventions.

1.3.4 Need for Increased Flexibility

As we noted at the beginning of this Unit, more and more countries and their education providers are now seeking to explore and implement new ways of providing educational opportunities to learners. Growing integration of distance education and resource-based learning methods and practices into education systems is putting tremendous pressure on the capacity of those systems to manage them effectively.

Unplanned changes undermine many attempts to widen access to education, and often, those who push such changes find themselves working against administrative systems that are designed almost entirely for traditional face-to-face education for students of particular age and educational achievements. It is not that these systems are inadequate or unresponsive, but it is only one type of configuration among many alternatives. Changes in institutional and national administrative systems have generally lagged behind processes of building new educational configurations.

Views are gaining ground that removal of all artificial distinctions between distance and face-to-face education practices can help to simplify educational policy frameworks, while ensuring the type of flexibility needed to support continuing adaptation and improvement of education practices of all education providers. Within such national and/or institutional policy frameworks, it would be useful to consider the implementation of a range of measures that include distance education, technology-enhanced education and resource-based education, each supporting and reinforcing changes at the institutional level.

The need for greater flexibility is particularly relevant to a large number of smaller countries that have relatively smaller populations, especially those in Africa and Asia. In most of these developing countries, the size of the education systems is also very small. It will be very difficult for most of them to establish and maintain parallel education systems based on the modes of delivery of educational services. Small nations will have little or no option but to diversify their delivery systems, and make provision for distance education along with conventional class-room based teaching. In other words, mainstreaming distance education provision along with traditional education suggests itself as a strong option for expanding educational opportunities and to sustain the overall development of the education system as a whole.

1.3.5 What is Open Learning?

The founding of the UK Open University in 1969 was a big breakthrough in many ways. First, it established the philosophy of open access to university education, that is, anyone who is interested and willing to pursue a university programme, irrespective of their prior learning attainments, could join the UKOU. Second, it developed new approaches to curriculum design, course development and delivery of educational programmes. Third, it enlisted the support of broadcast television in a big way to reach out to widely dispersed student groups across the United Kingdom. And finally, it laid out its systems and processes in a manner that inspired credibility and assured the quality of its products and services.

By all accounts, the launch of the UKOU was a big success. It was a dramatic move not just to widen the gates of the university but more importantly, it was a statement about what proper public involvement can do for distance education that was so far dominated by the private sector. Distance education systems and methods acquired credibility, respect and a place in the education landscape in most education systems across the world. The establishment of the UKOU was followed in quick succession by the establishment of similar universities in South Korea (1972), Pakistan (1974), Thailand (1978), China (1979), Indonesia (1984), India (1985) and so on. These institutions are generally known as single mode open universities.

1.3.6 What is Open and Distance Learning?

At this point, it would be worthwhile to pause for a moment and reflect on the commonly used expression “open and distance learning”, and understand what it really means. Open learning and distance education are two separate and distinct concepts each with its own identity and context. As mentioned in the context of the UKOU, open learning refers to a philosophy or approach that underpins the organisation of educational provision at the higher education level. This approach does not insist that prior educational attainment of a specified type is pre-requisite for the next higher stage of education. Thus, any mature student who is willing to learn and is motivated, could enrol in a degree programme even if he/she has no previous educational qualification that would normally entitle him/her to join a university. This is the approach that the UKOU defines as “open to all, irrespective of prior educational requirements”.

Distance education, on the other hand, refers to the methods of delivery of educational programmes and services. What defines the distance mode is the physical separation of the learners from their teachers. In this mode, teaching-learning transactions do not take place synchronously, or at a specified place. Learners have the choice to determine when they want to learn and where. Add to that another choice about what they want to learn. Having made their choices, distance learners are provided the freedom and the facilities to access a variety of learning resources to learn from. Most often, a range of technological means are deployed to enable learners to access these resources. They include printed materials, audio and video tapes, radio and television broadcasts, CDs/DVDs, worldwide web and the Internet. Web-based interactive tutoring as well as traditional face-to-face interaction is also part of the learner support provision.

While most of the open learning programmes are normally delivered through the distance mode, it is not necessary that all distance learning programmes should necessarily be open learning programmes as well. Advances in technology have made it possible for several universities to deliver classroom teaching of their normal programmes to large groups of students on or off campus or even after hours or on holidays. Most of the universities in the developed countries, as we noted earlier, now use some form of distance teaching and learning in their programmes. However, the greatest push for distance education in the latter half of the twentieth century came from the open universities. This association of distance education with open learning became so strong that the two concepts came to be clubbed together to denominate a new genre of educational provision. The globalisation of education provision that now transcends national boundaries has given this association greater substance and strength.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What do you understand by the concepts ‘Open Learning’ and ‘Distance Education’?
(Answer in about 40 words).

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1.4 WHY DISTANCE EDUCATION?

The perception about higher education as an elitist pursuit has changed radically in the second half of the twentieth century. The relevant age-group participation ratio in higher education has vastly increased in recent times across the world. In the developed world, it is now well over 50%. Most developing countries are now trying to catch up. Expansion of campus-based institutional provision is no longer a realistic or practical solution. Across the world, distance education systems are gaining acceptance and most governments are making heavy investments in distance education. Why?

1.4.1 Widening Access

Widening access to education at all levels is now accepted as an important component of the development agenda especially for all developing countries. The extent of the educational provision at the university and college levels currently available in most of these countries is far too inadequate and their age participation ratio does not even touch double digit levels. In most cases, they may have to double the current provision to reach that level. That involves setting up double the number of institutions that now exist, providing them with the necessary physical infrastructure, and appointing as many more teachers as are currently in place. Most of these countries simply do not have the resources to venture into that effort.

Traditional institutions of higher education like the universities have over long periods acquired several rigidities with regard to their methods and processes. For instance, those who wish to enter these institutions have to satisfy several requirements like age, previous qualifications, residential requirements and so on. These attributes often tend to create barriers between institutions and people for whose benefit they were established in the first place. What kind of alternative systems could address these concerns? Distance education offers the answer.

1.4.2 Augmentation of Provision for Education and Training

In its early days, distance education was an instrument for meeting the needs of technical and vocational training. The City and Guilds of Britain is one of the earliest examples of providing training through home study methods in several vocational trades and awarding qualifications.

In New Zealand there is an Open Polytechnic which was established in 1946 as a Technical Correspondence Institute. It offers technical and vocational courses by home study methods. It offers some 600 programmes in three major fields, namely, technology, commerce and general studies. Almost 25% of all New Zealand students pursuing technical and vocational education and training are students of the Open Polytechnic.

From these traditional home study methods, there emerged more innovative, industry-specific and custom-made technical and vocational education and training programmes using modern information and communication technologies in several parts of the world. In the UK, for example, the Wye College of the University of London offers diploma and Master's degree programmes in Agricultural Development and the National Extension College in the UK offers several technician training programmes.

The Cleveland Open Learning Unit (COLU) in the UK was set up to respond to the changing needs of Industry and Education. Beginning with the

Process, Oil and Engineering industries, the COLU now offers a wide range of training programmes that integrate all aspects of academic and vocational requirements. The Manchester Open Learning (MOL) was set up in 1979 as a national provider of client-customised, tutor-supported, accredited open learning programmes to meet the training and personnel development needs within organisations, specially at the junior and middle management levels. The Open College of Arts (OCA) in the UK has developed a wide range of courses in Art and Design, Calligraphy, Drawing, Creative Writing, Garden Design, History of Art, Interior Design, Music, Painting, Photography, Video Production, etc., which are delivered through methods similar to those of the UK Open University.

The Open Learning In Scotland (OLIS) was established in 1990 to offer a complete range of open learning services to industry including advice on the availability of open learning materials, and programmes that would meet the specific needs of a particular industry or organisation, tutorial support, provision of practical training, etc. The OLIS offers a range of Process and Engineering programmes to industry, from multi-disciplinary engineering process plant operations to instrumentation and electronics at the higher National Certificate level. The OLIS is, in fact, a joint venture between the Petroleum Open Learning which was created in 1988 to provide a comprehensive range of open learning services to oil and gas industries and a College of Further Education in England.

The National Technological University (NTU) in the US makes televised lectures available through satellite at specially set up reception centres, which are based within firms. The NTU's clients are big firms which buy its services and enable their employees to take NTU's courses. The NTU is essentially a network service provider, linking educational institutions and large companies for meeting their personnel development needs.

Augmentation of educational provision is surely one important function of distance education. Just as important is the question of expanding the educational opportunities for large numbers of people who, for one reason or another, remained and continue to remain outside the scope of education. That includes the accumulated unmet demand for higher education due to shortage of places in the existing institutions, people at work who are looking for opportunities to improve their qualifications, those who wish to acquire new knowledge and skills to switch jobs or for relocation of their families, unemployed youth and women who wish to become earning members of their families and those who missed opportunities for education early in life or had to drop out from schools.

1.4.3 The Changing Labour Market and its Needs

Recent trends indicate that today's labour market needs people with specific ready-to-use skill sets to meet the varying demands of the globalised economy. In a fiercely competitive market, the old-fashioned approach of recruiting young people and training them on the job is no more an option. While industry is prepared to support such programmes of education and training, they prefer to spin it out of their immediate area of responsibility. It helps existing institutions to use their resources better, supplement their earnings and above all bring them closer to real life and understanding of the needs of industry and other employing sectors of the economy.

Developments in technologies also changed the nature of the workplace. Most of the manual work is now replaced by automation. Yet, this development did not replace the need for people. What it did was to replace the skill sets required for running the automated processes. The new workforce required more knowledge, higher and sophisticated levels of skill, and not the least, enhanced levels of managerial and supervisory or coordinating competence. This transformation of the workforce needed new approaches to education and training that integrated theory with practice. And what better way to do it than making the workplace itself the theatre for education and training?

Distance education methods and techniques, advancements in ICTs have made the ideal of lifelong learning a reality. An ideal that has been talked about for decades has found a means for making it a workable proposition. It has also made it possible to transform learning as a means for livelihood and indeed for development itself.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

Identify and elaborate briefly two major objectives for establishing open/distance education institutions. (Answer in about 50 words).

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1.4.4 Economic Competitiveness

Equally important is the concern of governments to improve the living conditions of their people, accelerate the pace of their economic and social development, and improve their national competitiveness in a globalised economy. Human development and capacity building is the key to realising this goal.

Most of the developing countries do not have the resources or the infrastructure to develop the manpower they need nor can most of them afford to send their people abroad for higher education. As we have noted, collaborative educational initiatives in which overseas institutions provide education and training to nationals of developing countries by using distance education methods and techniques provide an answer. Soon enough, distance education emerged as an effective and affordable alternative to overseas education.

1.4.5 Education and Globalisation

Developments in distance education have made cross-border education a reality. In the past the traffic from developing countries to the West in search of higher education and professional and technical training was indeed very high. The high cost of education and the trends initiated in the early eighties in the UK and other countries to charge overseas students the full cost of education put paid to the hopes of nationals from many poor countries for

overseas education. That led to the search for ways that could help and facilitate nationals from the developing countries in their pursuit of higher education abroad. The establishment of agencies like the Commonwealth of Learning to support developing countries of the commonwealth to meet their higher education needs through the instrumentality of open learning and distance education was a major outcome of these efforts. It significantly reduced the cost of travel and residence for the poor students from the developing countries; high quality programmes from the best universities of the world were now available at their doorstep.

The acceptance and popularity of distance education systems across the globe also made it possible for several universities in the developed world to make their programmes available to nationals of other countries through the distance mode. This led to the emergence of large scale cross border education that soon developed in many cases into purely commercial enterprises. It is another matter that this trend had to be addressed and systems had to be put in place to protect the interests of students from developing countries from cross commercial exploitation. We have discussed this issue in detail in Unit 3 of Block 2.

1.4.6 Some Lessons for Planners

There is pretty much for aspiring planners and managers to learn from the brief discussion of the growth and development of open learning and distance education systems across the world during the last four decades or so. Given the significant role that distance education plays in expanding educational provision, and the explosive growth in the use of ICTs in education around the world, it would be useful to bear in mind some useful lessons that can be drawn from the applications of new technologies in education, including some expensive failures. These include:

- Imposition of inflexible technological choices without taking the educational needs and contexts into account;
- Inadequate investments in integrating curriculum and course design and development processes;
- Applications of technologies that have not been tested for their pedagogical soundness for particular programmes;
- Unexpectedly high operating costs that neutralise economies of scale;
- Cost escalation in the provision of learner support that matches the delivery technologies;
- Inadequacies in designing and implementing effective management and administrative systems that are compatible with the technologies used; and
- Shortage of personnel with the skills and competence necessary for programme development and delivery.

1.5 THE OPEN UNIVERSITY PARADIGM

The first generation distance education programmes have a history of over 150 years. We have seen that Pitman's short hand lessons, known to be the first model of the modern distance teaching enterprise, started as early as in the 1830s. Pitman designed his shorthand programme and developed the

instructions to learn it. He mailed it to his students asking them to do the exercises and return them to him for correction and further refinement. This was the origin of correspondence education. It took all of a century and a quarter for a new generation of distance education to emerge. In the following sections, we shall explore this exciting journey and the many milestones it has traversed.

1.5.1 Early Distance Education Initiatives

We have seen that distance education was in significant use for training in skills and for developing the competencies of the workforce. However, this mode of education delivery had not had the parity of esteem with the formal face-to-face mode of higher education for a long time. The scepticism about its legitimacy was indeed a major block in its gaining acceptability as an effective means for acquiring knowledge and depth of understanding which required close interaction with teachers.

By the middle of the twentieth century, several universities across the world adopted this practice to train manpower in critical areas of shortages. Most universities in the former Soviet Union were offering correspondence tuition in several subjects of science, technology and the professions to people working in the farms, factories and other establishments. In the People's Republic of China too, many universities were offering correspondence tuition in the 1950s to large numbers of people. The objective of this initiative was to train as large a number of people as possible in a short time to meet the country's demand for technical manpower. Over 800 of the 1000 or so Regular Higher Educational Institutes in China were offering correspondence education during this period. China also established four exclusive Higher Correspondence Institutes to meet the urgent needs of manpower. The main purpose of correspondence education was to train large numbers of in-service personnel making use of the facilities and personnel available with the formal institutes. In the early 1990s, China had over one million students enrolled in correspondence education.

The success of correspondence education in the Soviet Union and China during the post-war reconstruction era prompted other countries to adopt similar practices. India was one such country that launched correspondence education in 1962. By the turn of the century, over 60 Indian universities were offering correspondence education programmes in which more than one million students were enrolled.

1.5.2 The First Open University

The launch of the UKOU in 1969 marked a new beginning that heralded the second generation distance education initiatives. If correspondence education relied almost exclusively on printed materials and postal tuition, the second generation distance education initiative, namely, open universities used other communication channels like radio, television and other audio and video technologies to support interaction between learners and their teachers. We shall take a close look at these methodologies later in this Unit. For now, let us take a look at the some of the major open universities that came into existence in the latter half of the twentieth century across many parts of the world.

The UKOU which in many ways was the pioneer of the open university system was established in 1969 to provide a second chance to adults who had not received higher education, and fuller professional training and

qualifications for those who prefer to study while continuing to work and to improve continuing education facilities in the UK. Apparently, meeting the higher education needs of the adult learners was the major aim of the British Open University. Its mission statement reads:

- Open as to people, playing a leading role in the transition to mass higher education by serving an increasingly large and diverse student body:
- Open as to places, contributing to the widening of educational opportunities by making its programmes, courses and services available throughout the European Union and more widely in the world;
- Open as to methods, using distance teaching methods and new learning technologies and teaching techniques to serve home and work based students;
- Open as to ideas, being a vibrant academic community dedicated to the expansion, refinement and sharing of knowledge.
- *(This mission statement is the revised version after the European Union came in to existence)*

We shall look at the organisation and structure of the UKOU in greater detail later in this block.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What is the major difference between first and second generation distance education initiatives? (Answer in about 30 words).

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1.5.3 Other Major Open Universities in the World

The Korean National Open University (KNOU) was established in 1972 as a part of the Seoul National University to offer two-year junior college programmes through the distance mode. In 1982, KNOU was separated and set up as an independent open university to offer undergraduate programmes in a number of fields. It now offers both Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes in a number of fields, and is the largest university in South Korea with an enrolment over 150,000.

The Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) in Pakistan was established in 1974 for providing facilities for the educational uplift of the masses, including those who are unable to attend conventional institutions by carrying education to their doorsteps. The programmes offered by the university are in four major areas: functional education, general education,

teacher education and professional education. The functional education programmes of AIOU combining basic education with the development of skills/competences has been acclaimed as one of its major successes.

The Universidad Nacional Albierta in Venezuela was founded in 1977 on the open university principle in response to the scarcity of study opportunities for adults, and the spectacular growth of the social demand for higher education. The main aims and objectives of the university are to train professionals in areas that are priorities for national development and to offer educational opportunities for those who have been unable to attend traditional higher education institutes.

The Universidad Estatal a Distancia was established in 1977 by the Government of Costa Rica to alleviate the shortage of places in higher education and to make higher education accessible both to those who could not take advantage of traditional courses and to the agricultural and working population. Education and training of teachers and educational administrators and personnel engaged in health services, cooperatives and agriculture were the major focus of the university's programmes.

The Sukhothai Thammathirath Open University (STOU) in Thailand was established in 1978 with the objective of providing lifelong education, expansion of educational opportunities for secondary school graduates, personnel development and training of skilled manpower, and promotion of democratic values. The STOU offers programmes at the Master's and Bachelor's degree levels besides certificates. Almost three-fourth of its student are from rural areas.

The Anadolu University in Turkey, established in 1958, was authorised in 1982 by law to launch open education programmes through the distance mode. It has emerged as one of the mega universities in a short time. Its open education system had an enrolment of over one million students in 2003. The university offers junior college and associate degree programmes in Business and Administrative Services, Health Management and Services, etc.

The Open Universteit in Netherlands (OUNL) was established by the Government of Netherlands in 1984 (it is the only government-funded distance education institution in the Netherlands). The OUNL charter identifies the following objectives:

- To provide adults with a second chance to enter higher education;
- To offer an alternative form of higher education to people who are not attracted by the traditional forms (second route);
- To create a more affordable form of higher education;
- To encourage innovation in higher education as regards both content and methods.

In 1985, the Government of India established the **Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)** to expand educational opportunities for large numbers of people using distance education methods and ICTs. We shall look at the organisation and structure of IGNOU in greater detail later in this course and therefore, at this stage, we only take note of this development.

The Ministry of Culture and Higher Education in Iran set up the **Payame Noor University (PNU)** in 1987 as a unique single mode distance teaching state university. The main aims of the University are:

- To promote the scientific and cultural development of the society;
- To provide skilled manpower in areas critical to national integration and development;
- To create opportunities for individuals with family and work commitments to pursue their studies towards a degree;
- To present degree level programmes to under qualified and unqualified teaching staff of schools at the Bachelor's degree level;
- To satisfy the ever increasing demand for higher education while holding cost to society within acceptable bounds;
- To arrange public training and short and long term updating courses to keep people informed of the latest scientific and technological achievements;
- To make higher education accessible to residents of the rural areas and outreach sectors.

In any discussion on distance education institutions, the **University of South Africa** occupies a special place. It was not established as an open university in the sense that most of the institutions described in the preceding paragraphs came into existence. And yet, it is the oldest distance teaching institution in the world. It was founded in 1873 as an examining agency for Oxford and Cambridge Universities, In 1946, it was given a new role as a distance teaching university and continued that role since then. In 2004, Technikon, SA was merged with UNISA and also incorporated the distance education component of the Vista University (VUDEC). The combined institution is still known as UNISA offering certificate, diploma, degree and research programmes in many fields. It has over 200,000 students on its rolls.

The trend of establishing single mode open universities appears to have got reversed in the last decade or so. The 1990s saw only two new open universities, one each in Bangladesh and Tanzania. We shall look at this development in some detail later.

1.5.4 The Role of Open Universities

This brief survey of the open universities highlights the emergence of a new genre of dedicated open universities across the world. Within a short period, nearly all of them came to be called "Mega Universities" enrolling over 100,000 students each. It speaks eloquently of the popularity of the open and distance learning movement and the credibility and quality of its performance.

A cursory reading of the objectives of the open universities that we looked at in the preceding sections brings out several common features. Notable among them are:

- Nearly all of them seek to provide education and training to adults and people at work;
- Besides regular programmes of education leading to university degrees, most of them offer short programmes for upgrading knowledge, skills and also qualifications;

- Most of them have their targeted audiences in rural areas and usually inaccessible locations for whom higher education is out of reach;
- Open universities are conceived as instruments of lifelong education;
- A second chance or an alternative route is a recurring theme in the objectives of most of these universities;
- Affordable costs and acceptable quality run across the primary considerations in establishing these universities.

Check Your Progress 5

- Note:** i) Space is given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

Why do you think that dedicated Open Universities emerged all over the world? (Answer in about 40 words).

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1.6 LET US SUM UP

It has been our endeavour in this Unit to take you through different forms and structures that distance education systems and institutions have acquired in various contexts and environments. Our purpose in doing so is, as we mentioned in the introduction to this unit, to acquaint you with the range and diversity of distance teaching and learning structures and organisations. What we wish to emphasise is that there is no unique structure for a distance education system and that its organisation and management can be shaped and developed according to the needs and circumstances of the environment. In this process we addressed various conceptual issues related to distance education such as – resource-based learning, technology-enhanced learning; open learning etc. We also dealt issues related to widening access, the changing labour market and its needs, globalisation and competitiveness and emerging Open University paradigm.

In describing the existing systems, and in analysing the principles and practices followed in their organisation and management, we are aware that we might have been repeating what has already been stated elsewhere. However, we also realize that while it is easy to present knowledge and information, understanding requires the use of redundancy or discussion, and preferably both. Redundancy involves communicating the same idea in many different ways, and contexts. What we have presented here, and what follows in the remaining units of this Block have all a particular contextual setting, and that is in the manner in which distance education managers would look at the problems and concerns, which may be quite different from the perspective of those concerned mainly with subject matter specialisation or pedagogy.

1.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

Many factors such as pressure on governments and the universities to provide and expand opportunities for education and higher education to large numbers; reconstruction of economies after the second world war, post-colonial nation building efforts of many new nations; rising costs of overseas education and resource crunch etc. led to distance education becoming an alternative and viable option.

Check Your Progress 2

These two concepts are distinctly separate and each one with its own identity and context. 'Open Learning' refers to a philosophy or approach to provide education with openness and flexibility and thus reduce rigidities/hurdles in any form of education. 'Distance Education' refers to the method of delivery of education programmes and services. In delivering its programmes distance education uses large extent of the philosophy of open learning i.e. flexibility in terms of age, experience, course combinations etc.

Check Your Progress 3

Widening access and equity through augmentation of educational provision, and ensuring relevance for programmes through significant expansion of technical/professional/vocational education are two important objectives that distance education institutions seek to fulfil. The flexibility in the structures and process as well as its ability to reach out to large numbers through the use of information and communication technologies provide distance education institutions with an edge in realising both these objectives.

Check Your Progress 4

First generation DE initiatives relied exclusively on printed material and postal tuition where as second generation DE initiatives use various communication channels like radio, T.V. and other audio-video technologies to support interaction between learner and their teachers.

Check Your Progress 5

Every country realised the need for continuing and life long learning which is essential for the development of the country. To fulfil that need dedicated open universities emerged in many countries to provide an alternative to adults who want to continue their higher education and to provide opportunity to upgrade their skill and knowledge.