UNIT 3 GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF IGNOU

Structure

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit primarily addresses issues of organisation and management of distance education with IGNOU as the focus. It would, at this stage, be in order to refresh our memory about the principles and practices of management that we looked at in the previous blocks. Management is the process of getting activities done efficiently and effectively, making decisions on what to do (goal/objective), how to do it (strategies) and then checking that it is done correctly (monitoring). The functions of management generally fall into four categories: planning, organising, leading and controlling. Planning includes defining goals, establishing strategy, and developing plans to coordinate activities. Organising involves determining the tasks to be done, deciding who does what, how the tasks are grouped, who reports to whom, and where decisions are made. This function has a great deal to do with the design of the structure of an organisation. Leadership is about setting the directions, developing the culture of the organisation, determining its principles and values and motivating the people in the organisation to commit themselves to those principles and values. Controlling generally involves monitoring the activities regularly to ensure that they are done according to the plans made and that corrective measures are taken in time to see that there are no departures from the directions initially set out.

The distance learning system depends a great deal on organising and managing, as there is no direct contact between the teacher and the student, as there is in traditional education. This physical separation of the student from the teacher
and the institution demands that facilities and services are put in place so that any distant (and often isolated) learner can access the learning resources materials, media, tutorials/counselling, etc. and administrative services like enrolment, fee payment, examination schedules, etc. Remember, in a university or a college, a notice stuck on the main Notice Board is the means of communication to all students on any matter affecting their academic life; in a distance teaching institution, every piece of information has to be individually communicated to each student as schedules change, new developments take place, and new procedures are evolved.

Against this background, this unit looks in detail at the pattern of governance and organizational structure of IGNOU. The purpose of this exercise is two-fold. You have already studied the organizational structure of several single mode open universities around the world in Unit 2, Block 3. Going back to the theme after looking at the case of an institution representative of its type in India should enable you to form a clear, informed and definitive perspective on the planning and management processes associated with the development of the open university system in India. This Block intends to focus on the open university system in India in general, and on IGNOU as a lead institution in particular. From this point of view, this unit serves as the tool for narrowing down the focus of this Block. In addition, this unit gives you a lot of details regarding the operational aspects of IGNOU which will indirectly hone and improve your understanding of the managerial processes underlying the system.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After having studied this unit, you should be able to

- explain the basic features of IGNOU and what makes it a unique institution,
- examine the pattern of governance, the structure of the organisation and the relationship among the authorities, the officers, and the units of organisation of the university,
- analyse the structure of the major subsystems, how they are organised, and the ways in which they are functioning, and
- provide a model of an organisational structure for a new open university.

3.2 IGNOU: A UNIVERSITY WITH A DIFFERENCE

In the previous unit, we have discussed at some length how the concept behind IGNOU evolved over a period of time, how the policy pronouncements of the Central Government from time to time influenced the shaping of the open university system, and with what objectives and priorities was IGNOU actually established. It is now time for us to take a closer look at IGNOU as an institution with particular focus on its organisation and management.
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As an institution, IGNOU’s mandate is significantly different from that of any other university in the country, not just a national open university engaged in distance education covering the entire country, but more significantly, by its character as a lead institution functioning as a promoter and standard setter in distance education in India. Perhaps there is no parallel anywhere else in the world of a University performing these dual functions – those of offering programmes and of leading other open universities in their development. In that respect, IGNOU is a unique institution.

All the universities in the country are established under Acts of Parliament or State Legislatures (the only exceptions are institutions deemed to be universities). The pattern of governance of all universities is broadly similar. The Government which finances the universities performs a role which involves giving advice, or even laying down guidelines, with no direct participation in the management. This role is performed through the mechanism of the Visitor in the case of Central Universities and the Chancellor in the case of State Universities. The guiding principle is that universities function with an assured degree of autonomy, with no direct participation by the political government, but their work and contributions should reflect national policies and aspirations and lead to the nation’s development.

The management of the universities is based on the models of self-governing corporate structures functioning on democratic principles. Democracy here has to be understood not in terms of political government involving the Establishment and the Opposition, but as a participatory process of management. Universities have two distinct domains of activity. One is its academic functions, determining what to teach and how (prescribing the courses of study, their content and structure, the standards, the methods of teaching and evaluation of student performance, etc) which is performed by the Academic Council, and the second is the management function which involves administration of the personnel, funds and property, which is the responsibility of the Executive Councils (also called Syndicates or Boards of Managements). The details have been discussed in Unit-4 of Block-2.

With this recapitulation of the general pattern of university management in India, we now proceed to consider the details of the management structure of IGNOU.

Check Your Progress 1

What do you understand by the statement ‘IGNOU is a Unique Institution’?
Write your answer in 50 words.

Notes: i) Space is given below for your answer
ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.
3.3 GOVERNANCE

As in the case of other central universities, the President of India is the Visitor of the IGNOU. In this capacity, he has certain over-arching powers in the governance of the University. He appoints the Vice-Chancellor and nominates a specified number of persons on the statutory authorities like the Board of Management, the Academic Council, and the Planning Board of the University. The Visitor can institute inspections and inquiries and on their outcomes, issue directions to the University; he/she can annul its proceedings if they are not in conformity with the Act or with the relevant Statutes and Ordinances. Generally, he also appoints one person on every Selection Committee for appointment of teachers as well as other senior officers.

3.3.1 Structure of governance

The Universities are corporate bodies. The constituents which are incorporated into the University are the members of various authorities as well as the officers of the University who are appointed to various positions as provided in the Act. We will first take up the authorities for discussion.

The important policy making bodies of the University are known as Authorities. At IGNOU there are:

i) Board of Management
ii) Academic Council
iii) Planning Board
iv) Schools of Studies
v) Finance committee.
vi) Distance Education Council

IGNOU, unlike the other Central Universities, does not have a Court or a Senate. Most of the university bodies perform the functions described in the previous block and therefore we shall not repeat them here. We shall only mention their constitution and indicate their unique features where necessary.

Board of Management

The Board of Management is the principal executive body of the university and in that capacity lays down its broad policies, besides managing its affairs. It is a 15 member body, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, and consisting of 4 members drawn from inside, and 10 from outside. The external members are drawn from several constituencies including the government, commerce, industry, as well as distance education and media/communication fields. This composition ensures that the policies and programmes of the university are decided on the basis of informed views of societal needs and expectations. Generally, all the major decisions relating to organisation of the programmes and activities of the university, namely infrastructure development, establishment of delivery systems, cooperation and collaboration with external agencies, and all matters
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relating to the development of the distance education system are taken by the Board of Management.

Academic Council

Another important authority of the university is the Academic Council which is the principal academic body of the university. The Academic Council is responsible for the university's academic policies and the maintenance of standards of instruction and evaluation of student performance in the university. A majority of its members are drawn from among the academics at the university; ten external members are coopted by the Academic Council itself. The concept of an 'academic' in the open university has a wider meaning than what usually understood in the context of the conventional universities. The term includes besides teachers, all those media experts, educational technologists, those providing academic support to students in the regions and others, who are associated with the creation, preparation, production and delivery of the academic programmes and courses at the university.

Planning Board

Unlike many of the conventional universities, the National Open University has a Planning Board, which is the principal planning body of the university. Its responsibility is to design and formulate appropriate programmes and activities of the university. It has a right to advise the Board of Management and the Academic Council. It consists of fifteen members who have a three-year term. The Planning Board is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, and has four members selected from the academics at the University, and five members each nominated by the Visitor and the Board of Management from constituencies like technical/vocational education, media, industry commerce, learned professions etc.

The Project Report (1985) on the Indira Gandhi National Open University envisaged the role of the Planning Board as a "Think Tank" for the university. It therefore, consists of outstanding educationists drawn from different disciplines in the country. It has not only to formulate new programmes but also to give general advice and directions to the university. It is also responsible for perspective planning, as well as for the evaluation of the performance of the university.

Schools of Studies

The Schools of Studies perform the core functions of the University, namely prescribing the programmes of study, formulating the courses, determining their content and structure, and developing and producing the learning packages.

The Schools of Studies are the basic units of academic organisation of the University. Each school consists of a number of disciplines assigned to it by the Academic Council. The creation of any School requires an amendment to
the statute for its inclusion in the relevant statutory provision. Every discipline has a number of positions of Professors, Readers and Lecturers. Depending upon the number of disciplines assigned to each, the strength of the faculty varies from School to School.

Every School has a School Board which is responsible for designing courses, determining their content and structure and developing the course material. The Board also approves the syllabus in accordance with the course structure on the advice of Expert Committees. For each programme of study, the Board formulates proposals for the orientation programmes of counsellors, and course writers as well as lays down general guidelines for counselling students. In addition, the School Boards are expected to review the methodologies for material development and preparation, the courses already on offer for necessary revision and also the arrangements for the delivery of programmes. The School Board consists of teachers of the School, a few teachers from other Schools, and five external experts in the disciplines assigned to the School.

The Schools function under the overall supervision of the Academic Council.

Finance Committee

As in other central universities, there is at IGNOU a Finance Committee of not more than 7 members. All these members, other than the Vice-Chancellor, hold office for a term of three years and it meets at least thrice a year. Its important powers and functions are:

- to prepare the annual budgets and fix the limits for the total recurring and non-recurring expenditure. No expenditure shall be incurred by the university in excess of the limits so fixed;
- to examine the proposals relating to revision of grades, upgradation of scales, etc., before they are considered by the Board of Management;
- to consider the annual accounts and financial estimates of the university prepared by the Finance Officer, before they are submitted to the Board of Management;
- to examine the accounts and scrutinise the expenditure.

Distance Education Council

You will recall that in Unit-2, while discussing the uniqueness of IGNOU, we made a reference to its special role in leading the open university system in the country and its promotional, coordinating and standard setting functions. The operationalisation of this role took some time and effort.

The basic features of this role were provided in the guidelines of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) in June 1987 which we considered in Unit 1. These were:
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- development of an Open University Network
- pooling and sharing of programmes and courses
- establishment of a Coordination Council.

It is this Coordination Council which later emerged as a statutory mechanism to perform the functions of promotion, coordination and maintenance of standards in the open and distance education system in India. This mechanism is called the Distance Education Council established in 1992 as a statutory authority under a special statute framed under the IGNOU Act.

The Distance Education Council is chaired by the Vice-chancellor of IGNOU. The Education Secretary, Government of India, and Secretary, UGC are its ex-officio members. The Council has three members nominated by the President of India, two members of the Board of Management of IGNOU nominated by it, two Vice-Chancellors of State Open Universities, two Directors of Distance Education from Dual Mode Universities, a member of the UGC and a distance education teacher.

We mention the DEC here since it is an authority under the IGNOU Act, and we shall discuss its roles and functions as well as its contributions to the growth of the open and distance education system in India in some detail in the last unit of this Block.

Check Your Progress 2

Match the authorities in Column 1 with their characteristics in Column 2.

Note: Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the Unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i) Academic Council</td>
<td>a) Is the principal executive body of the university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Board of Management</td>
<td>b) Gives general advice and directions to the university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Planning Board</td>
<td>c) Maintains the standards of instruction and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv) Finance Committee</td>
<td>d) Looks after financial estimates of the university</td>
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3.3.2 Officers of the university

We shall now turn to the officers of the University, who are appointed to various positions provided in the Act. The powers and functions of each of
these officers as well as the method, terms and conditions of their appointment are specified in the Act and the Statutes.

Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor is the chief academic and executive officer of the university, and is appointed by the Visitor from a panel of not less than three persons prepared by a Search Committee. The Vice-Chancellor is the Chairman of the Board of Management, the Academic Council, the Planning Board and the Finance Committee. It is the duty of the Vice-Chancellor to see that the Act, the statutes, the ordinances and the regulations are duly followed in the day to day working of the university.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor

The Project Report for the National Open University suggested that the open university, because of its multi-farious functions should have more Pro-Vice-Chancellors than the conventional universities have. The suggestion was accepted and incorporated in the Act of the university.

According to the provisions in the Act, Pro-Vice-Chancellors are appointed by the Board of Management on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor for a term of three years; however, they demit office when the Vice-Chancellor's term of office ends. The principle enshrined in this provision is that the Vice-chancellor chooses his/her own team of senior management and the whole team goes out of office when the Vice-Chancellor himself/herself leaves. The senior most member of this team, however, stays on till a new Vice-Chancellor is appointed and he/she assumes office. Each Pro-Vice-chancellor is assigned specific areas of work like Schools of Studies, Student Support Services, Technology Applications, etc. At present, Indira Gandhi National Open University has five Pro-Vice-Chancellors.

Directors

Directors are a category of senior officers of the University who are drawn from the academic as well as the professional/technical/administrative streams, and ranked next to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor in the hierarchy of the University. All the Schools of Studies are headed by Directors (this position is equivalent to that of Deans in conventional universities). There are besides several other Divisions, each responsible for a functional area (Regional Services, Student Registration and Evaluation, Material Production and Distribution, for example), and each one of them is also headed by a Director.

The Act provides that every Director be appointed by the Board of Management, on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor if the person to be appointed is already a teacher of the University, and in all other cases, on the recommendation of a Selection Committee. These provisions have been further elaborated, and made more explicit over a period of time. Currently, the Director of a School is appointed from among the Professors of that School, on
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the basis of rotation among the disciplines assigned to it. A director of a School holds office for a term of 3 years. Directors of various Divisions are generally appointed through the system of open recruitment. Their term of office is 5 years which can be renewed.

The Directors of Schools and Divisions exercise both administrative and financial powers. Their administrative powers are generally supervisory, in respect of the staff working in their respective schools/divisions; they are also responsible for the execution of the functions and tasks assigned to the Schools and Divisions. For the performance of these functions, they are delegated adequate financial powers under the University’s Financial Code.

Registrar

According to the IGNOU Act, the Registrar is appointed by the Board of Management on the recommendation of a Selection Committee.

The Registrar is the custodian of the university’s records and properties, and provides Secretarial support (issuing notices, convening meetings, preparing agenda and minutes) of all the university bodies. He represents the university in its dealings with all external agencies and organisations. He is also the disciplinary authority for secretarial and ministerial staff.

Finance Officer

The Finance Officer is appointed by the Board of Management on the recommendation of a Selection Committee. The Finance Officer holds and manages the properties and investments of the university, advises the university on its financial policies ensures that the limits fixed by the Finance Committee for recurring and non-recurring expenditure for a year are not exceeded, is responsible for the preparation of the annual budget and keeps a constant watch on the cash and expenditure of the university.

Check Your Progress 3

Here are three incomplete sentences about the functions of the officers of IGNOU. Complete them.

Note: Compare your answer with one given at the end of the Unit.

i) The Pro-Vice-Chancellor at IGNOU is appointed by the ____________________________.

ii) The ____________________________ is the custodian of records of the university.

iii) The Finance Officer advises the university on its ____________________________.
3.3.3 Finance

IGNOU is funded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The amount of grants received directly from the government sources was over 90% of the total revenue in 1987-88, which was the first year of IGNOU’s academic operation. The basis on which the Central Government provides finances to the educational institutions established by it is ‘cover-the-deficit’. During the initial period, this pattern worked well. However, as the University expanded and its enrolment increased, the university began to earn substantial revenues, and the proportion of government grants in the revenue expenditure came down significantly. Ten years after its establishment, 80% of its annual revenue expenditure was being met by the University from its own fee income while the government grants progressively declined to just about 20 percent or so. All the capital expenditure of the university is fully provided by the Central Government. This includes land and buildings, audio-video production facilities, computing facilities and other equipment, furniture, and so on. Provision for all these facilities is made by the government as development funding which also includes investments on new programmes and courses. Such development funding is provided through Five Year Plans.

3.4 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE: SUB-SYSTEMS

We have mentioned earlier in this unit that the management of IGNOU, as indeed of all universities in India, is modelled on the basis of self-governing corporate structures. These structures, which we considered in the previous section, are the university’s corporate bodies and are therefore, referred to as the statutory authorities. What is significant about these structures is that they cannot be modified or refashioned by the university management on its own; it requires the sanction of the Visitor to make any changes in their composition or functions. However, from the point of view of organisation, the previous discussion would have given you an idea about where decisions are taken and by whom, within the organisational framework of IGNOU.

Organising, as we indicated in the introduction to this unit, involves much more than the structure of governance. It involves, for example, determination of the tasks to be done, decisions about who does what and who reports to whom, and how the tasks are grouped into coherent fields of activity for the purpose of better coordination and improvement in efficiency and effectiveness. In what follows in this section, we shall discuss how IGNOU went about organising its activities.

After studying the organisational structures of open universities in Britain, Pakistan and Thailand, IGNOU decided that it should evolve a structure that would be flexible enough to permit experiments and innovations as the university gained experience while the functional needs of the system were met.
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adequately. Generally, the open learning system is known to comprise four major sub-systems. These are:

- curriculum design and development as well as preparation of instructional packages;
- provision of student services including tutorials and other local services;
- production and distribution of materials;
- management and administrative support including personnel, funds, infrastructure, etc.

IGNOU’s strategy was to design a structure that would, in the initial stages, respond to the functional needs of each of these four sub-systems. It was envisaged that no simple structure could perform all the complex functions that a vast system like IGNOU would be called upon to perform and that it would be advisable to proceed with caution and let the structure evolve in response to functional needs. Accordingly, the initial organisational structure was designed on the following basis:

- the core functions of course design, development and preparation are to be performed by the schools of studies. specialised facilities were organised to assist the schools in developing systems and procedures as well as in designing and developing audio-video material support;
- in the delivery of student services, the university had to rely heavily on the facilities and infrastructure available with other institutions and organisations and appropriate mechanisms were set up to mobilise these resources;
- all print material production was given out on contract to private presses and the university developed central warehousing and distribution facilities;
- the university developed its own administrative support system and modern technologies were inducted in its academic and administrative functions;
- the structure should be reviewed and modified from time to time with a view to improving efficiency, reducing costs and making the system effective.

We will now proceed to consider how the organisational structure of IGNOU evolved over a period of 13 years (1986-99) and how each of the major sub-systems was organised during the period.

The organogram giving the complete structure of IGNOU is given in Fig. 1 and details are presented in the following sub-sections.
Fig. 1: Organisational Structure of IGNOU
3.4.1 Course design, development and preparation

a) Schools of Studies

While discussing the constitution of the University, we have had occasion to deal with the Schools of Studies which are responsible for the core academic functions of the university. It is not necessary to repeat the details of the composition and functions of the Schools of Studies and their Boards. The University has 9 Schools, namely:

i) School of Humanities
ii) School of Sciences
iii) School of Social Sciences
iv) School of Education
v) School of Continuing Education
vi) School of Management Studies
vii) School of Engineering and Technology
viii) School of Computer and Information Sciences
ix) School of Health Sciences

Every School has a number of disciplines assigned to it. Each discipline has a Coordinator who is designated by the faculty of that discipline from among its members. Every programme of study has a Programme Coordinator and every course has a Course Coordinator. For designing the programmes and courses, the Schools constitute Expert Committees. The preparation of learning packages is done with the help of external course writers. The media packages are developed and produced by the Communication Division (now Electronic Media Production Centre) in collaboration with the Schools.

In the early stages, the manuscripts for printed materials, when finalised, were handed over to the Printing and Publication Division. This practice has since been reviewed and now every School gets its printing work done directly from the press.

b) Electronic Media Production Centre (EMPC)

The significance of education technology in the open university system was acknowledged and recognised from the beginning. In fact, IGNOU Act itself mentions that in the promotion of open learning system, IGNOU will endeavour to use all means of communication technology.

In the early stages, the university set up a Communication Division to prepare the audio/video texts that were to support the printed material.

The Division was headed by a Director who was assisted by three Joint Directors, one each for Radio and Television, Engineering, and Research and Development. Besides producing programmes to supplement the course
material, the main functions of the Division are to organize educational broadcasts through government media for the open university students, to undertake research in communication methods and technology applications for distance learning, and to organize training programmes for the media personnel both within IGNOU and outside it.

During the initial phase, there was only one TV studio and one audio studio, along with the associated facilities. Most of the programmes were produced at the studios. Before the studio set-up became operational, the strategy of producing audio/video programmes was largely through outdoor shootings, followed by post production work. Wherever necessary, outside facilities like an audio studio, additional equipment, etc. were hired from private sources. To cope with the increase in the demand of audio/video production to cater to the number of new academic programmes that the university launched, freelance producers were engaged in addition to the staff producers.

The initial infrastructure of the Communication Division was developed with the support provided by the Governments of Britain (studio facilities) and Japan (post production facilities). During 1994, the Government of Japan provided a generous grant to establish a state-of-the-art media production facility comprising two fully equipped video and two audio studios with all associated facilities. It was with the commissioning of these facilities in 1995 that the erstwhile Communication Division was renamed the Electronic Media Production Centre and its functions were reorganised. Almost simultaneously, the university also launched, with the support provided by the Indian Space Research Organisation, a teleconferencing facility to provide academic counselling to students. The video programmes of the university were already being telecast through the national television network since 1991. The technical and organisational support required for teleconferencing as well as for television diffusion devolved on the EMPC.

The reorganised EMPC consists at present of the following units:

- production unit responsible for the design and development of media packages for the university’s academic programmes;
- engineering unit responsible for infrastructure development and maintenance;
- education and training unit which organises programmes of training for media personnel from IGNOU as well as from state open universities. This unit also supports the academic programmes of the university in media studies;
- marketing and customer services unit which is responsible for extending the EMPC facilities to other agencies and organisations to ensure the optimum use of the infrastructure provided.
c) **Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) (Previously Division of Distance Education)**

The Distance Education Division was initially set up for providing necessary academic support to the Schools of Studies in preparation of self-learning print material, programme evaluation and staff development. Assistance in the former field i.e. the development of self-learning materials has been well formalized, and is provided on a regular basis.

In addition, the Division launched a Diploma programme in Distance Education with a view to developing the much needed human resources for the existing distance education centres and others which were to come up soon. Later, the Division also launched post-graduate programmes in distance education leading to the Master's Degree to the students in India and other commonwealth countries. Other activities of the Division included the organisation of a number of short-term training programmes and workshops for academics and other professionals in the university, both at the headquarters and at the regional centres, training of trainers in distance education, and preparation of manuals and handbooks for functionaries at various levels.

It is a measure of the critical significance of these efforts that the Distance Education Division was upgraded in 1993 as the Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) with the following functional responsibilities:

- research in distance education system and its methodologies;
- training of distance education personnel;
- a national resource centre for the development of distance education personnel;
- extension of its facilities and expertise to the developing countries in the South Asian Region.

### 3.4.2 Student services

In a distance teaching system students have to be provided with a wide range of services. In simple terms, these services include access to information about programmes, courses, how to enrol and when, whom to contact for tutorial guidance and advice, where to pay fees, where to sit for examinations, and so on. Unlike the traditional system, in which the students generally have uniform levels of attainment, motivation and commitment, the open learning system usually has a vastly heterogeneous body of students. They are from diverse backgrounds, with varying levels of prior educational attainments, and their objectives are vastly different to fit any single pattern of attitudes and behaviour. The managers of the open learning system have therefore to take all these factors into account while designing and organising the student services sub-system.
In establishing the student services sub-system at IGNOU, there were several concerns which had to be taken into account. These were:

- the vastness of the country and the varying patterns and levels of educational development in different regions;
- establishing the credibility of the distance education system in the context of the none-too-satisfactory experience with correspondence education;
- securing the involvement of the vast educational infrastructure already available in the country in the promotion of distance education;
- providing easy access to information, materials and services to students.

At its very inception, it was felt that IGNOU would have to work through a large number of study centres to reach out to a large numbers of students in all parts of the country, and that it would be necessary to establish a number of Regional Centres to supervise and coordinate the work of a certain number of Study Centres. With these purposes in view, the IGNOU Act itself provided for the establishment of a study centre network spread throughout the country. Also, to coordinate and supervise the work of study centers, provision was made for the establishment of Regional Centres.

**Regional Centres** are mostly located in the state capitals. At present there are 22 regional centres, each of which is headed by a Regional Director. His/her principal responsibility within the region is to direct the university’s efforts in accordance with established policies and procedures, and to coordinate the working of the study centres in his/her region. An average Regional Centre now has three Assistant Regional Directors (of the level of Lecturers) and an Assistant Registrar, besides some fifteen supporting staff drawn from the administrative stream.

At this stage, it would be useful to reflect on a major issue that is critical to the organisation and management of a vast and complex system like IGNOU. And the issue is that of centralisation versus decentralisation. To begin with, it was felt that most of the student services should be provided centrally to ensure uniformity in their nature and quality. Soon enough, it was realised that excessive centralisation compromises the efficiency of these services and therefore the Regional Centres which so far functioned only as an intermediate node for dissemination should become a more active nodal point for students to access various services. Gradually, several functions began to get decentralised and the Regional Centres assumed the role of more dynamic centres of activity within the IGNOU system. The major functions which are now being performed by the Regional Centres are:

- establishment of the Study Centre network in the region which also includes work centres, programme centres and facilities for practical and experimental work;
- liaison with State Governments, universities and other educational institutions in the region;
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- appointment of part-time staff at the Study Centres;
- coordination and supervision of the working of the study centres;
- admission of students to all programmes;
- collection of fees from the students;
- appointment of counsellors/tutors for each study centre;
- evaluation of student assignments and maintenance of assignment records;
- ensuring the efficiency of the delivery system;
- provision of access to teleconferencing.

The facilities available at the Regional Centres include a library containing books relevant to distance education, course materials developed by the university, reference books, and also audio and video tapes.

It is at the Study Centres that the students are provided with important human support in the form of academic counsellors in addition to facilities for listening to and viewing the audio and video tapes. The study centres have been established depending on the number of students and their geographical distribution. In most cases, the study centres are hosted by conventional colleges, and in some cases these are in other institutions which have the necessary infrastructural facility.

Each study centre is headed by a part-time coordinator under the overall supervision of the head of the institution, where the study centre is located. There may also be an assistant coordinator, if the number of students attached to the study centre is large. Besides, there are part-time academic counsellors, who provide assistance to the students in scheduled counselling sessions. The coordinator coordinates the work of the counsellors/tutors, and acts as a link between the university, the Regional Centre and the study centre. The University has at present about 600 study centres, spread all over the country.

Some of the major functions of a study centre are:

- it is the contact point for the students with the university;
- it arranges counselling, guidance, and advice for the students;
- it receives all student assignments and makes arrangements for their evaluation;
- it has a library which stocks all the required study materials for the courses and programmes of the university;
- it provides listening/viewing facilities for the audio/video programmes produced by the university for various courses and programmes.

The management of the Regional Centre Study Centre network throughout the country is the responsibility of the Regional Services Division at the
headquarters of the University. This Division is headed by a senior academic who is assisted by a number of academics and administrative staff.

The Regional Services Division at the headquarters forms through its network of study centres and regional centres, the link between the University and its students. It is the efficiency and effectiveness of this link that determines how the university is able to fulfil its mandate. It is not enough to produce the best academic programmes; they should reach the students who in turn should feel satisfied with the efficiency and quality of the services that go with the delivery of the programmes. The management of the university has to be vigilant about the performance of this sector and its functioning needs to be kept under constant monitoring and review.

The IGNOU has a separate Division for Student Registration and Evaluation. This Division coordinates admission to all programmes of the university and maintains the student registration records. All University examinations, including assignment evaluation, are organised and coordinated by this Division, which works in close cooperation with the Regional Services Division.

3.4.3 Material production and distribution

The material distribution function consists mainly of the despatch of study materials to students. Initially, the university decided that materials to all students would be despatched centrally. For this purpose, a central warehouse was established for storing, sorting, packing and labelling the materials. As soon as admissions were finalised, the address labels of all the students were prepared by the Computer Division and handed over to the Distribution Division. A certain degree of mechanisation was also used in the preparation of packages for despatch.

With the rapid expansion of enrolment, and the multiplicity of programmes and courses, the distribution system became too complex and its efficiency came under severe pressure. Delay in the receipt of materials by students began to increase, as did their complaints. The university responded with several new approaches. For programmes with large enrolments, the university transferred materials in bulk to Regional Centres for local redistribution. These arrangements also posed several new problems. Students did not collect the materials when they reached the Regional Centres which had to make arrangements for storing them. Sometimes, even the bulk carriers failed to reach the destinations on time.

This is an area where no simple solutions exist. Considering the vastness of the country and the ever increasing number of students, the management has to constantly try and evolve new and imaginative approaches to solve the problems of logistics involved in the distribution of materials. Some of the important steps being tried out are:
Governance and Organisational Structure of IGNOU

In the last two years, the university has revived its centralised distribution system. With detailed advance planning and close supervision, the distribution of materials is now completed as per the schedules. The measures taken are:

- improved inventory management and control;
- preparation of detailed despatch schedules for each programme and adherence to those schedules;
- programmewise preparation of address labels as soon as admissions are finalised;
- direct despatch of materials for low enrolment programmes;
- engagement of bulk mailers and despatchers for high enrolment programmes.

Whereas the printed texts are despatched to the individual students, the audio/video material is despatched only to the study centres and the regional centres. The students have to visit their study centres if they wish to use audio/video material. There are no arrangements for lending, leasing or selling the audio/video tapes directly to the students. The average student attendance at study centres is only around 36%. It follows that a large majority of students do not access the audio/video tapes, either because they need to travel long distances to study centres to do so or because they do not feel that the use of electronic media is essential for their studies.

3.4.4 Management and administrative support

a) Computer Division

In view of the large numbers that the university has to deal with—in admission, in evaluation, in monitoring, and in maintaining records—the use of computers has become a necessity.

The Computer Division initially used to process all data related to the students admission and examinations. The data related to the admission process, recording of continuous assessment, processing of Computer Marked Assignments, recording of examination data (marks etc.) and producing the grade cards. The administration and accounts of the university are also computerized through the efforts of this Division.

The Division also generates profiles of the students on relevant variables, which provide the necessary back-up for policy decisions. For example, the geographical distribution of the students, the age group of the students in a particular programme, etc.

As mentioned earlier, the importance of computerisation of all operations was recognised even at the time of the preparation of the project report. Presently, all teachers have access to personal computers for their day-to-day work. Computing systems have also been developed and put in place in most of the operational areas, such as those of admission, distribution, examination, etc.
Planning and Management at IGNOU

With these developments, the university no longer depends on a centralised computing facility and the major functions of the Computer Division at present are:

- software development for applications;
- maintenance of computer hardware;
- training of personnel;
- establishment and maintenance of LAN and WAN;
- maintenance of central data base.

b) Planning and Development Division

The Planning and Development Division performs a key role in the development of the university. It not only evaluates and reports the status of various aspects of the development of the university at a particular point of time, but also provides perspective and strategic plans for the future. The most crucial decisions that the university has to take are in the area of the determination of programmes and courses. The Planning Division of the university shares this responsibility with the Schools and provides the data-base for taking these decisions. It has to constantly monitor information on manpower needs, areas of shortages and emerging occupational scenarios. We shall discuss the role of planning in IGNOU in some detail in the next unit.

c) Administration, Finance and Estate Management

Like any other major organisation, IGNOU also has to administer and manage its personnel, property and finances. Separate organisational units have been set up to deal with each one of these aspects. Personnel administration of the university is the responsibility of two Divisions – an Academic Coordination Division that deals with all administrative matters relating to the academics of the university, while the Registrar's office looks after the administration of all other staff. The Finance and Account Division looks after the administration of finances and accounting while a separate Division consisting of engineering and technical staff looks after campus construction and estate management.

The University has recently established a Centre of Extension Education to initiate extension programmes for the benefit of the larger community. The programmes and activities of the centre are formulated on the advice of an Extension Council set up by the University.

Another new unit set up recently is the International Cell. The major function of this unit is the administration and coordination of all international programmes. The university has recently launched a number of its programmes outside India. This is a growing area of activity and the organisational framework for its operations is yet to be fully developed.
Check Your Progress 4

Compare the organisational structure of IGNOU with that of any conventional university that you have been associated with or have a knowledge of and list 2 or 3 main differences.

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

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3.5 LET US SUM UP

This unit pertains specifically to the structure of governance and organisation of the IGNOU. It gives you information about the various authorities of the university like the Visitor, Board of Management, Academic Council, Planning Board, and Finance Committee and the Distance Education Council. The officers of the university are the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Directors, Registrars and Finance Officer. The organisational structure of the IGNOU consists of the various Schools of Study and the Divisions that have academic as well as administrative functions. It also discusses IGNOU’s role as an apex body performing the functions of coordination and promotion of distance education in the country.

3.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1. IGNOU’s mandate is significantly different from that of any other university in the country. The dual roles assigned to IGNOU are: offering programmes of education and leading other open learning institutions in their development. This is a unique feature which has no parallel in the world.
Planning and Management at IGNOU

2. i) - (c)  
   ii) - (a)  
   iii) - (b)  
   iv) - (d)  

3. a) Board of Management  
    b) Registrar  
    c) Financial policy  

4. The conventional universities have a more or less simple structure. The core functions of teaching and research are performed by the faculties consisting of several departments. The courses prescribed by the faculty are taught in direct interaction with the students. In the IGNOU, the major role of the faculty is to design, develop, and prepare courses; these teachers are not directly involved with students. Unlike the conventional universities, IGNOU has a large system for production and distribution of instructional materials. The media production facilities set up by IGNOU are another major departure in its organisational design.