

Formulate a Roadmap on IGNOU's Strategy in Enhancing National Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by 2030

Committee Report



राष्ट्रीय मूल्यांकन एवं प्रत्यायन परिषद

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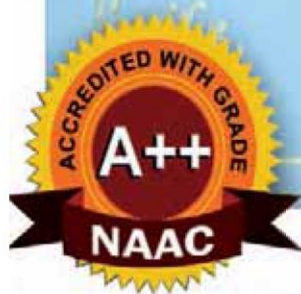
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Date : January 08, 2021



*(Signature)
Director*



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Committee Report



**Planning & Development Division
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Printed at M/s Chandu Press, 469, Patparganj Industrial Estate, Delhi- 110092

ISBN: 978-93-6106-994-9

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Indira Gandhi National Open University
Planning and Development Division

IG/P&DD/22/512
July 13th, 2022

Notification No-45

Subject: Constitution of a Mentor Group to formulate a road map on the IGNOU strategy in enhancing National GER by 2030.

In pursuance of the recommendation of the Planning Board in its 49th Meeting, a Committee has been constituted by the Competent Authority to formulate a road map on the IGNOU strategy in enhancing National GER by 2030 with the following members.

Dr. S.K. Mohapatra	Chairperson
Prof. Rashmi Sinha	SOSS
Dr. Anita Priyadarshini	STRIDE
Dr. V. P Rupam	SRD
Dr. Ashok Sharma	Regional Centre -1 (Delhi)
Prof. Neeti Agrawal	P&DD
Dr. Sunil Kumar	P&DD, Convener

Neeti Agrawal
13/07/22
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To

1. All the members of the Committee
2. AR, VCO

Members of the Committee

Dr. Srikant Mohapatra, PVC	-	Chairperson
Prof. Rashmi Sinha, SOSS	-	Member
Prof. Neeti Agrawal, P&DD	-	Member
Prof. Anita Priyadarshini, STRIDE	-	Member
Dr. V. P. Rupam, SRD	-	Member
Dr. Ashok Sharma, RC Delhi-1	-	Member
Dr. Sunil Kumar, P&DD	-	Convener

Constitution of the Committee

A Committee of the following Members was constituted by the Vice Chancellor to formulate a roadmap and strategy for IGNOU's contribution in enhancing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of the country:

Dr. Srikant Mohapatra, PVC	-	Chairperson
Prof. Rashmi Sinha, SOSS	-	Member
Prof. Neeti Agrawal, P&DD	-	Member
Dr. Anita Priyadarshini, STRIDE	-	Member
Dr. V. P. Rupam, SRD	-	Member
Dr. Ashok Sharma, RC Delhi-1	-	Member
Dr. Sunil Kumar, P&DD	-	Convener

The Committee was notified vide no. IG/P&DD/22/512 dated 13th July 2022.

The Committee held several meetings to deliberate on various issues related to GER – the global and national scenario of higher education, the existing policy framework, the enabling environment created by the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, etc. The Committee also analyzed the enrolment trends in IGNOU in the past 10 years to understand the demographic and geographic patterns of enrolment.

The Committee also consulted various documents like the National Educational Policy 2020, Draft National Higher Education Qualification Framework 2022, All India Survey of Higher Education 2020, Institutional Development Plan and Strategic Plan of IGNOU, Annual Reports of IGNOU, etc. to prepare the report

Based on the perusal of various documents, analysis of data and extensive deliberations, the Committee has recommended a multi-pronged strategy for IGNOU to play a pivotal role in enhancing the GER to 50% by 2035.

Introduction

India launched its National Education Policy on July 29, 2020 with the view that this policy shall give direction to all future educational planning at all levels. The NEP 2020 aims at addressing the issues of development while at the same time creating a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of the 21st century education and is built upon India's traditions and value systems.

The NEP 2020 also gives directions for achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education as India is also a signatory to the SDGs 2030.

The aim of Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030.

The NEP 2020 provides a new and forward-looking vision for India's Higher Education System. It states “Given the 21st century requirements, quality higher education must aim to develop good, thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative individuals” (NEP, chapter 9). While identifying the problems that are present in the system, the NEP has also laid out its vision for changes to be brought into the higher education system. One of the major changes is that the Policy visualizes ODL as a means for increasing access, equity and inclusion.

The policy's vision includes the following key changes to the current system:

- (i) increased access, equity, and inclusion through a range of measures, including greater opportunities for outstanding public education; scholarships by private/philanthropic universities for disadvantaged and underprivileged students; **online education, and Open Distance Learning (ODL)**; and all infrastructure and learning materials accessible and available to learners with disabilities (NEP 9.3(i)).*

The NEP 2020 states that the aim is to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher Education including vocational education from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035 (NEP, clause 10.8). The NEP recognizes the relevance and importance of Open and Distance learning (ODL) in being an appropriate means for improving access, increasing GER and providing opportunities for lifelong learning (SDG 4).

The UGC has circulated the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) document according to which, the total enrolment in higher education was around 38.5 million in 2019-2020, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for population in the age group 18-23 years being 27.1 (male: 26.9; female: 27.3). Enrolment in distance education programmes constituted about 11.1% of the total enrolment in higher education. About 79.5% of the students were enrolled in undergraduate-level programmes.

In view of the above directions of NEP 2020, this Report aims at proposing a strategy to be followed by IGNOU for increasing access and equity and thereby making a contribution to enhancing the National GER by 2030.

Global Scenario

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education comprises a set of targets that are to be achieved by 2030. The difference between earlier global goals and SDGs is that the SDGs have a wider scope and encompass education from primary to higher education as well as adult education and skill development with a focus on quality and equitable education for lifelong learning.

The targets pertaining to higher education are that by 2030 are:

Target 4.3: Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality, technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including University.

Target 4.4: substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Target 4.7: ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

GER – Meaning

According to UNESCO (2014) Gross Enrollment Ratio is the total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education. The GER can exceed 100% because of early or late entry and/or grade repetition.

GER is the total enrolment for a given level of education; population of the age group corresponding to the specified level. A high GER generally indicates a high degree of participation, whether the students belong to the official age group or not.

National Perspective

With reference to the GER in Higher Education, the salient features of NEP 2020 are as follows:

1. Institutional Restructuring and Consolidation

By 2040, all higher education institutions (HEIs) shall aim to become multidisciplinary institutions, each of which will aim to have 3,000 or more students. There shall, by 2030, be at least one large multidisciplinary HEI in or near every district. The aim will be to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education including vocational education from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035.

2. School Education

Ensure Universal Access at All Levels of Schooling from Pre-primary School to Grade 12

NEP 2020 aims to achieve 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio in school education by 2030. The initiatives that will be undertaken for this include

- provision of effective and sufficient infrastructure,
- alternative and innovative education centres to ensure that children who are dropping out of school are brought back into mainstream education,
- universal participation in school by carefully tracking students, as well as their learning levels.

Counsellors or well-trained social workers connected to schools/school complexes and teachers will continuously work with students and their parents to ensure that all school-age children are attending and learning in school.

3. Higher Education

Increase GER in Higher Education so as to reach 50% by 2035.

As mentioned, the aim will be to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education including vocational education from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035.

4. Open and Distance Learning will be expanded, thereby playing a significant role in increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio. Measures such as online courses and digital repositories, funding for research, improved student services, credit-based recognition of MOOCs, etc., will be taken to ensure that it is at par with the highest quality Face to Face programmes.

5. Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education

Set clear targets for higher GER for SEDGs (Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups).

6. Promotion of Indian languages

To ensure the preservation, growth, and vibrancy of all Indian languages, several initiatives have been envisaged. More HEIs, and more programmes in higher education, will use the mother tongue/local language as a medium of instruction, and/or offer programmes bilingually, in order to increase access and GER and also to promote the strength, usage, and vibrancy of all Indian languages.

With regard to increasing the GER, the NEP 2020 has clearly envisaged the following:

- Institutions will have the option to run Open Distance Learning (ODL) and online programmes, provided they are accredited to do so, in order to enhance their offerings, improve access, increase GER, and provide opportunities for lifelong learning (SDG 4).
- All ODL programmes and their components leading to any diploma or degree will be of standards and quality equivalent to the highest quality programmes run by the HEIs on their campuses.
- Top institutions accredited for ODL will be encouraged and supported to develop high-quality online courses.
- Such quality online courses will be suitably integrated into curricula of HEIs, and blended mode will be preferred.

By 2025, at least 50% of learners through the school and higher education system shall have exposure to vocational education, for which a clear action plan with targets and timelines will be developed. This is in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4.4 and will help to realize the full potential of India's demographic dividend. The number of students in vocational education will be considered while arriving at the GER targets.

More HEIs, hence more programmes in higher education, will use the mother tongue/local language as a medium of instruction, and/or offer programmes bilingually, in order to increase access and GER and also to promote the strength, usage, and vibrancy of all Indian languages.

As per All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2017-18, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education has increased from 24.5% in 2015-16 to 28.4% in 2021-22.

Initiatives by the Government

In order to increase the enrolment in higher educational institutions, various measures have been taken by Government which includes:

- Issuing new UGC regulation for Open and Distance Learning that allows entry of reputed institutions to offer education on the distance mode.
- Using ICT technology- SWAYAM portal to reach out to people and allow them to secure good quality education.
- Opening of more centrally funded institutions.
- Encouraging opening of institutions by State Governments through the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) which aims to achieve equity, access and excellence in higher education. The scheme supports components such as upgrading autonomous colleges to universities, clustering colleges to establish a university, setting up of new professional colleges in unserved and underserved areas as well as providing infrastructure grants to universities and colleges to scale up capacity.
- More scholarship programmes to supplement the cost of education.

Moreover, Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) has been established under the Companies Act, 2013 to leverage funds from market to finance improvement in infrastructure in top institutions of education.

Other Policy Decisions

The UGC constituted a committee to prepare Detailed Project Report (DPR) for establishing the proposed **model colleges in low Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) districts** in India.

- 3.5 crore new seats will be added to Higher education institutions.
- The autonomous colleges in India will be able to offer online and distance education programmes from the 2022-23 academic session without prior approval from the University Grants Commission (UGC), provided they meet certain criteria, according to modified rules suggested by the higher education regulator. The new rules will also allow them to employ education technology firms to develop content and evaluation systems.
- The Gross Enrolment Ratio at all levels of school education has improved in 2019-20 compared to 2018-19 and there has been an improvement in the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) at all levels of school education, according to the report on United Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) 2019-20 for School Education in India.
- Gross Enrolment Ratio of girls has increased to 90.5 per cent (from 88.5 per cent) at Upper Primary level, 98.7 per cent (from 96.7 per cent) at Elementary Level, 77.8 per cent (from 76.9 per cent) at Secondary Level and 52.4 per cent (from 50.8 per cent) at Higher Secondary Level in 2019-20 (from 2018-19).
- The report released by the then Education Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal mentioned that the Gross Enrolment Ratio increased to 89.7 per cent in 2019-20 (from 87.7 per cent) at Upper Primary level; 97.8 per cent (from 96.1 per cent) at Elementary Level; 77.9 per cent (from 76.9 per cent) at Secondary Level; and 51.4 per cent (from 50.1 per cent) at Higher Secondary Level.
- According to the report, in 2019-20, enrolment of girls from primary to higher secondary is more than 12.08 crore. This is a substantial increase by 14.08 lakh compared to 2018-19. Between 2012-13 and 2019-20, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) at both Secondary and Higher Secondary levels have improved. The UDISE+ report shows a remarkable improvement in the number of schools with functional electricity, with functional computers, internet facility in 2019-20 over the previous year.
- To improve the GER of our country, a holistic approach is of immense significance. We need to upgrade the educational infrastructure, open more distance education centres; more schools, higher education institutions, professional education institutions, vocational education institutions and technical education institutions are required.

- Various educational schemes have been launched by Government of India to improve the scenario of education in our country. These schemes mainly include computer education schemes, educational schemes for disabled/differently abled children, Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS), Educational Schemes for Minorities, Fellowships and Scholarships Schemes for Minorities, Pre-Matric and Post-Matric scholarships, Non-Formal Education Programme (NFEP), Samagra Shiksha, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Operation Blackboard, Schemes for Language Development, National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), etc.

We need to focus not only on the enrollment but also on the dropout rates at various levels of education as well as on the Gender Parity Index (GPI). The results of various classes at various levels have direct impact on further enrollment/progress/dropout rates. Among all these, the expenditure on education is yet another determining factor. As far as enrollment is concerned, we need to bring all eligible children of all age groups under the umbrella of education including the children of various castes, SC/ST/OBC/children with special needs (CWSN)/boys/girls/ different socio-cultural backgrounds, professions, etc.

We have to closely monitor the enrollment trends at regional and national levels, among all possible categories, and at all educational levels. Here comes the importance of research and development, various surveys like AISHE, etc. Their findings help decide future course of action at micro and macro levels. Various surveys on enrollment and current attendance, expenditure on education, retention and dropout, educational institutions, status of education and vocational training, survey on never enrolled persons, pupil-teacher ratio, regional and national perspectives, etc. are highly required to monitor to improve the status of education and GER of our country.

The State-Wise Gross Enrolment Ratio (2019-20) reveals different levels for boys and girls. The National Level data shows that for Higher Secondary (11-12) level for 2019-20, Boys GER is 50.5, Girls GER is 52.4 and total is 51.4. For Higher Education (18-23 years age group) for 2019-20, the GER of Boys is 26.9, for Girls it is 27.3 and the total is 27.1.

There is a wide variation State-wise in the GER. For this, there may be various reasons which need to be examined minutely in order to achieve the target of 50% GER by 2035. Also, for this purpose, we need to identify and include all possible target groups of students.

IGNOU: Mandate and Action Plan

Mandate and Objectives of the University envisaged in the Act and Statutes

IGNOU was established by an Act of Parliament in 1985 “for the introduction and promotion of open university and distance education systems in the educational pattern of the country and for the co-ordination and determination of standards in such systems” (IGNOU Act, 1985). The First Schedule of the IGNOU Act states that one of its objectives is “to provide access to higher education for larger segments of the population, and in particular, the disadvantaged groups such as those living in remote and rural areas including working people, housewives and other adults who wish to upgrade or acquire knowledge through studies in various fields.”

The mandate of the University is to:

- provide access to higher education to all segments of the society;
- offer high-quality, innovative and need-based programmes at different levels, to all those who require them;
- reach out to the disadvantaged by offering programmes in all parts of the country at affordable costs; and
- promote, coordinate and regulate the standards of education offered through open and distance learning in the country.
- to achieve the twin objectives of widening access for all sections of society and providing continual professional development and training to all sectors of the economy, the University uses a variety of media and latest technology in imparting education.

This is reflected in the formulated vision of IGNOU, keeping its objectives in focus, which reads:

“The Indira Gandhi National Open University, the National Resource Centre for Open and Distance Learning, with international recognition and presence, shall provide seamless access to sustainable and learner-centric quality education, skill upgradation and training to all by using innovative technologies and methodologies and ensuring convergence of existing systems for large-scale human resource development, required for promoting integrated national development and global understanding”(www.ignou.ac.in).

IGNOU has achieved many laurels in the field of higher education and is recognized as a ‘Mega University’ that provides education to over 3 million learners across India as well as overseas. It offers over 259 Programmes plus 41 online Programmes which are of academic and vocational nature and has a network of over 56 Regional Centres and more than 2000 study centres that provide extensive student support services. study centres that provide extensive student support services. The University’s philosophy stands strongly upon the principles of open learning and offers a flexible system of higher education.

Following the launch of the National Education Policy 2020, the University has taken many

initiatives in order to implement the NEP and contribute to its goals. These include the development of an Institutional Development Plan (IDP) along with a Vision Document as well as a Strategic Plan for concretizing the action plan.

The Institutional Development Plan developed by IGNOU has built up revised Vision and Mission of the University in order to meet the objectives of NEP 2020. This vision states:

Vision and Mission of the University –2030

In the context of contemporary developments, the changing needs of society and the challenges and opportunities offered by new technologies, there are areas where the University has to venture to keep pace with the demands of the new- age learners and make the University a world-class institution of higher education and research.

Vision

“To be a premier Open and Online University of the country with national and international recognition for its technology-driven quality higher education catering to the needs of learners and society guided by the core values of openness, flexibility, affordability, inclusiveness, lifelong learning and excellence” (Strategic Plan 1.1).

Mission (with respect to GER)

Expanding the reach of the University to achieve the targeted GER and include the unserved target groups including the SEDG’s into the fold of higher education;

The IDP has identified areas and set targets which will help to achieve the University’s mandate of ensuring equitable access to quality education to all while at the same time offering high quality, innovative, accessible and need-based programmes at different levels.

The Strategic Plan 2020-2030 has set targets to be achieved which are as follows:

- Increase the GER in higher education by doubling the annual enrolment through:
 - Developing and offering high-quality online programmes and MOOCs;
 - Implementing multiple entry-exit in UG and PG degree programmes;
 - Promoting course-wise registration and certification and credit transfer;
 - Translation of all programmes to regional languages using artificial intelligence;
 - Special efforts to attract and enroll learners from Socially and Economically
 - Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs); and
- Expanding the outreach of IGNOU programmes in foreign countries through linkages with foreign governments, collaboration with foreign HEIs and enhancing the enrolment and making IGNOU a global educational hub.

(Source: Strategic Plan 2020-2030)

Trends in Enrolment in IGNOU

Trends in enrolment in IGNOU in the last ten year since the financial year 2012-13 to 2021-22

Table 01: Strength of Fresh and Re-registered Students

Financial year	Fresh		Re-registered		Total	Higher education enrolment of the nation as reported by ASHIE	Contribution of IGNOU (Fresh) in nation higher education
	No	%	No	%			
2012-13	385518	54.0	328939	46.0	714457	3,01,52,417	1.3
2013-14	398547	55.0	325673	45.0	724220	3,23,36,234	1.2
2014-15	418598	56.4	323828	43.6	742426	3,42,11,637	1.2
2015-16	455882	57.3	340245	42.7	796127	3,45,84,781	1.3
2016-17	545840	59.5	371277	40.5	917117	3,57,05,905	1.5
2017-18	652504	60.8	420074	39.2	1072578	3,66,42,378	1.8
2018-19	673797	58.6	475159	41.4	1148956	3,73,99,388	1.8
2019-20	818997	60.7	529951	39.3	1348948	3,85,36,359	2.1
2020-21	709963	56.1	555225	43.9	1288416	4,13,80,713	1.7
2021-22	711581	55.2	577938	44.8	1289519	4,32,68,181	1.6

The strength of fresh enrolment is around 55.0 % of total enrolment; rest are re-registered students. The provision of re-registration is only in academic programmes offered at the Bachelor and Master degree programmes with minimum duration for successful completion is more than a year except B.Ed. programme. The good strength of re-registered students reflects high pass out rate and movement of students to next level in academic programmes having provision of re-registration.

IGNOU's contributions in GER in higher education have been consistently improving in the last ten years as reflected in the in the bar graph. In 2012-13, 1.3 % of nation's enrolment was contributed by fresh enrolment in IGNOU that escalated to 2.1 % in the year 2019-20.

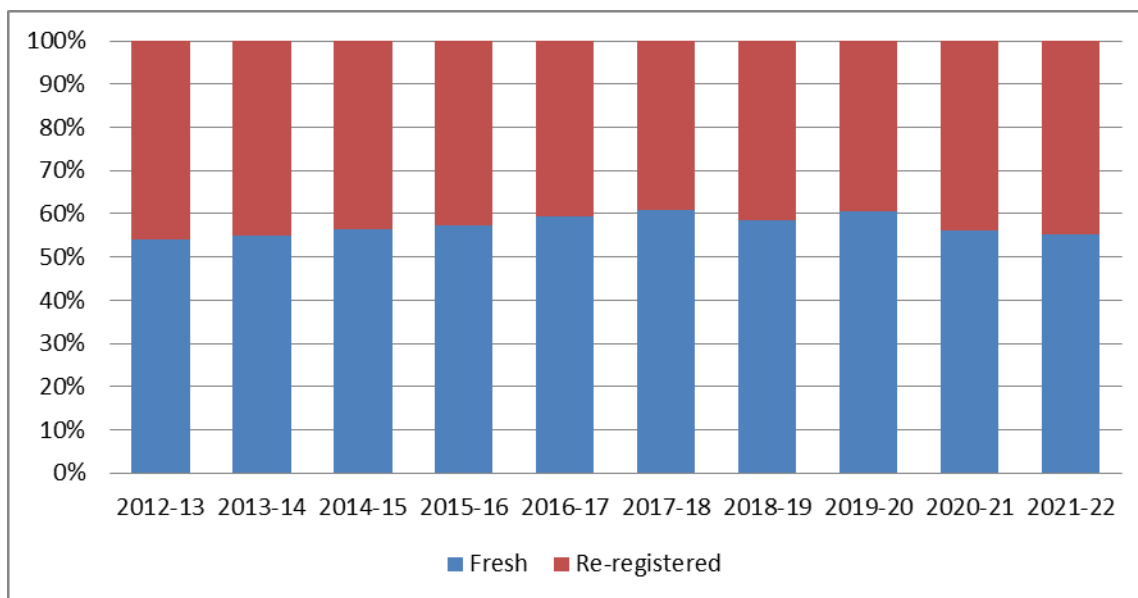


Figure 01: Data of Fresh and Re-registered Students

Annual Growth in Enrolment

The graph given below reflects the strength of re-registered students is almost 60% of fresh students. Fresh students enrolled in academic programmes at Graduate and Master Levels on completion of requisite numbers of credits/courses can re-register for advanced level. Thereby strength of re-registered students is not an independent parameter, it is completely dependent on the strength of fresh enrolment; emphasising that the annual growth in enrolment is assessed only in terms of fresh enrolment.

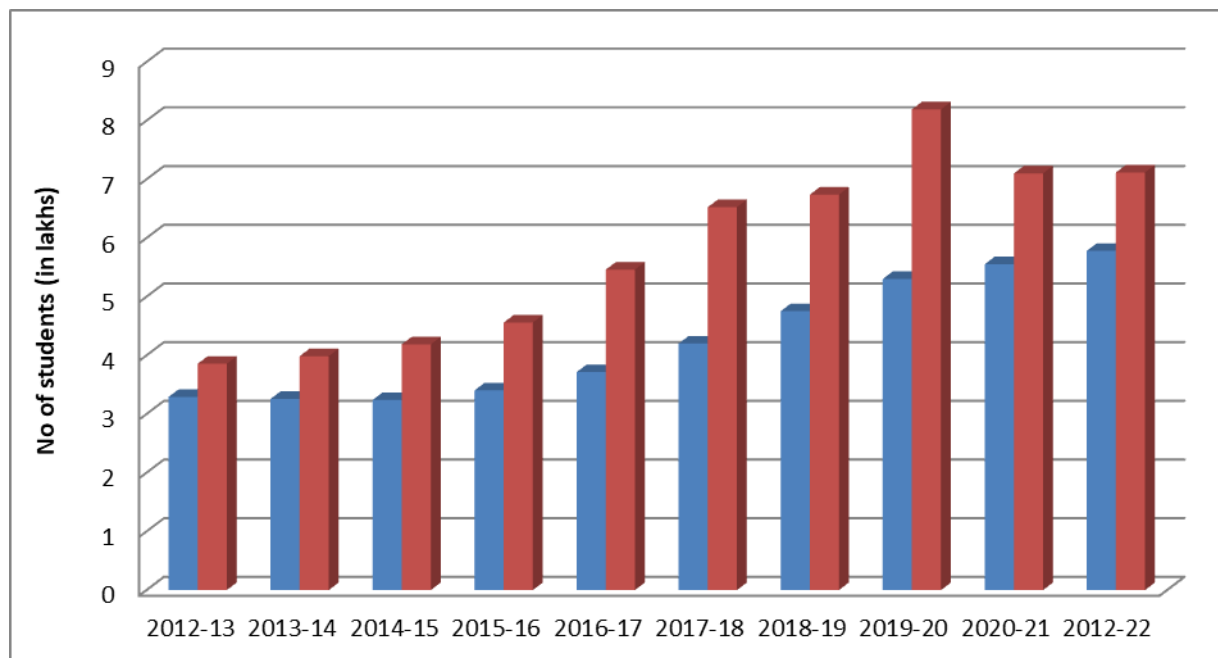


Figure 02: Strength of Fresh and Re-registered Students

Annual Growth in Fresh Enrolment

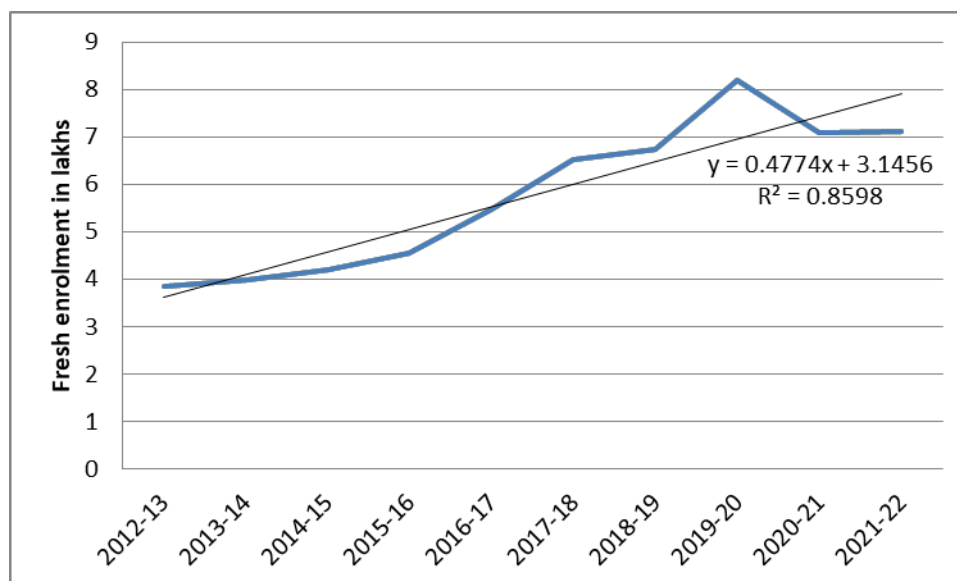


Figure 03: Trend in Fresh Enrolment

The graph in figure:03 reflects linear growth in fresh enrolment over a period of ten year. The short-term growth in enrolment is computed in terms of progressive annual growth as depicted in table 2.

The progressive annual growth in fresh enrolment is calculated with the formula:

$$\text{Progress annual growth in year X} = \frac{(\text{Enrolment in Year X} - \text{Enrolment in year (X - 1)}) * 100}{\text{Enrolment in Year X}}$$

Table 02: Progressive Annual Growth Rate in Fresh Enrolment

Financial year	Fresh enrolment (in laths)	Annual growth rate
2012-13	3.86	
2013-14	3.99	3.4
2014-15	4.19	5.0
2015-16	4.56	8.9
2016-17	5.46	19.7
2017-18	6.53	19.5
2018-19	6.74	3.3
2019-20	8.19	21.5
2020-21	7.10	-13.3
2021-22	7.12	0.2

The table reflects uneven annual growth in the fresh enrolment. There was an exceptional growth rate of 21.5 % in the financial year 2019-20, however the growth rate was negative in following financial year 2020-21.

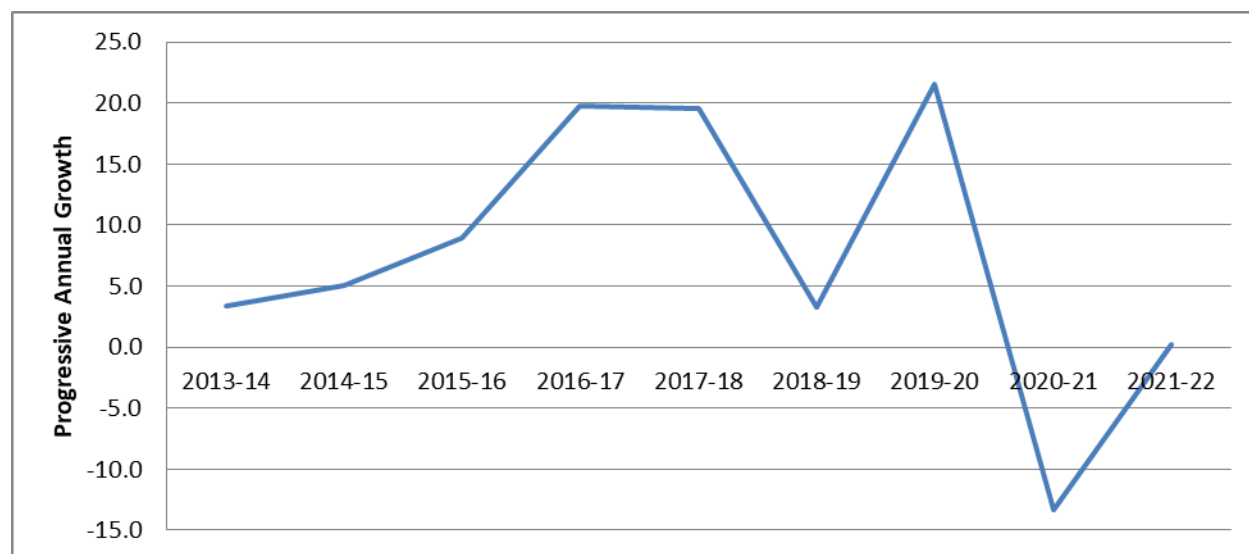


Figure 04: Annual Growth Rate in Fresh Enrolment

Trend line in progress of fresh enrolment

There is linear growth in annual fresh enrolment over a period of 10 years. The linear growth is reflected by the equation:

$$\text{Enrolment in lakhs} = 0.477 \times \text{Year of enrolment} + 3.145$$

$$R^2 = 0.859$$

The high value of Correlation Coefficient ($R^2 = 0.859$) between actual data of fresh enrolment and data outcome of trend line reflects that trend line mentioned above is reliable in estimation enrolment in prospective years if similar conditions prevail in following years. The annual growth rate in fresh enrolment over a period of 10 years is about 4.7% however there was a sudden drop in the annual growth rate in the last two years of analysis due to COVID pandemic.

The fresh enrolment of 8.19 lakhs in the FY 2019-20 is odd one out (exceptionally) very high in respect of rest of data; if it is replaced with average of fresh enrolment of previous and next year then trends in fresh enrolment can be better explained after removing odd one out data. The revised trend line becomes:

$$\text{Enrolment in lakhs} = 0.438 \times \text{year of enrolment} + 3.230$$

$$R^2 = 0.925$$

The value of Correlation Coefficient has substantially improved with removal of odd data.

Gender-wise Enrolment

Academic Programmes in the Discipline of Education, Home Sciences, Nursing, Food and Nutrition and Social Sciences etc. seem to be more popular among female students and academic programmes in Engineering, Technology are more popular among male students. This analysis emphasizes necessity to understand the trend in enrolment of male and female students so that University can design academic programmes to meet the academic and training needs of specific gender.

Table 03: Gender-wise Enrolment Strength

Financial year	Male		Female		Total
	No	%	No	%	
2012-13	212405	55.2	172578	44.8	384983
2013-14	219727	55.1	178725	44.9	398452
2014-15	227016	54.3	191436	45.7	418452
2015-16	248325	54.5	207283	45.5	455608
2016-17	306667	56.2	239058	43.8	545725
2017-18	365893	56.1	286310	43.9	652203
2018-19	379749	56.4	293904	43.6	673653
2019-20	447865	54.7	371059	45.3	818924
2020-21	380774	53.6	329168	46.4	709942
2021-22	373502	52.5	338079	47.5	711581

Table: 03 reflects that strength of female students remained consistent in past ten years. The strength of female students varies in a narrow range of minimum 43.6 % and maximum 47.5% of fresh enrolment. The highest participation of female was noted in the year 2021-22.

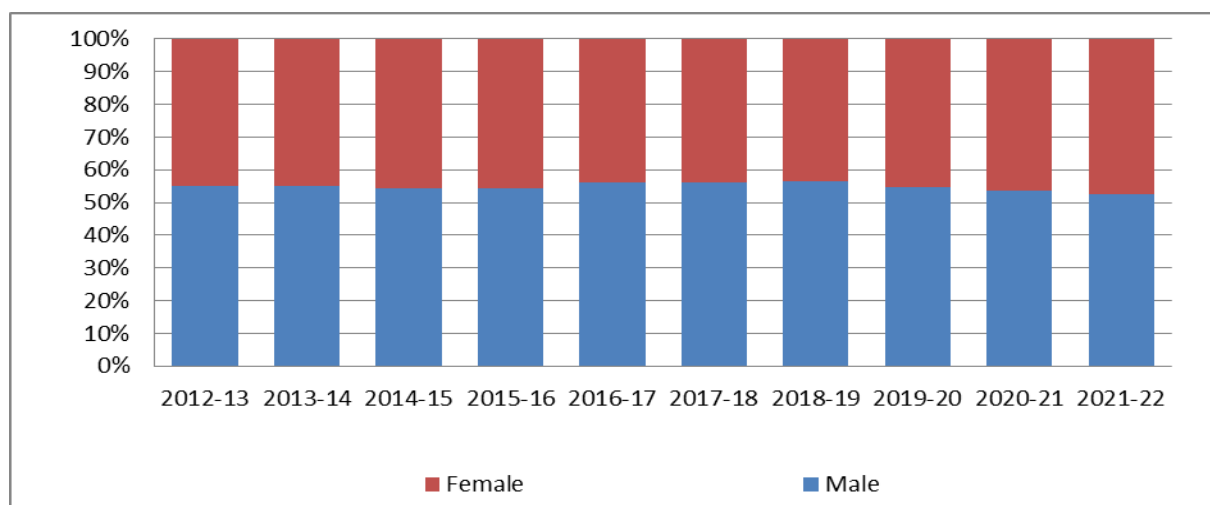


Figure 05: Gender-wise Fresh Enrolment Data

The figure 05 reflects that strength of males and females in fresh enrolment remain consistent in the last ten years. The strength of male and female students was almost equal, therefore the University should focus on designing its academic programmes in knowledge and skills areas which are in demand among females to retain the healthy ratio of male and female students.

Region-wise Analysis

Table 04: Region-wise Enrolment Strength

Financial year	Urban		Rural		Tribal		Total
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
2012-13	213393	55.9	153998	40.3	14320	3.8	381711
2013-14	213972	54.1	162668	41.1	19188	4.8	395828
2014-15	233253	55.7	170182	40.7	15163	3.6	418598
2015-16	250292	59.0	161433	38.1	12194	2.9	423919
2016-17	344250	63.1	188147	34.5	13409	2.5	545806
2017-18	385382	59.2	253249	38.9	12405	1.9	651036
2018-19	403616	59.9	253856	37.7	16325	2.4	673797
2019-20	428887	52.4	369897	45.2	20213	2.5	818997
2020-21	346295	48.8	352929	49.7	10739	1.5	709963
2021-22	354098	49.8	346109	48.6	11374	1.6	711581

IGNOU has significant strength of students from rural areas. The parity with respect to quality higher education through class room mode is not consistent across the nation. It has been noticed that there is poor density of higher education institutions in rural and tribal areas. Good strength of enrolment from rural and tribal areas proves that IGNOU is successfully bridging the gap of demand and supply of higher education in these areas.

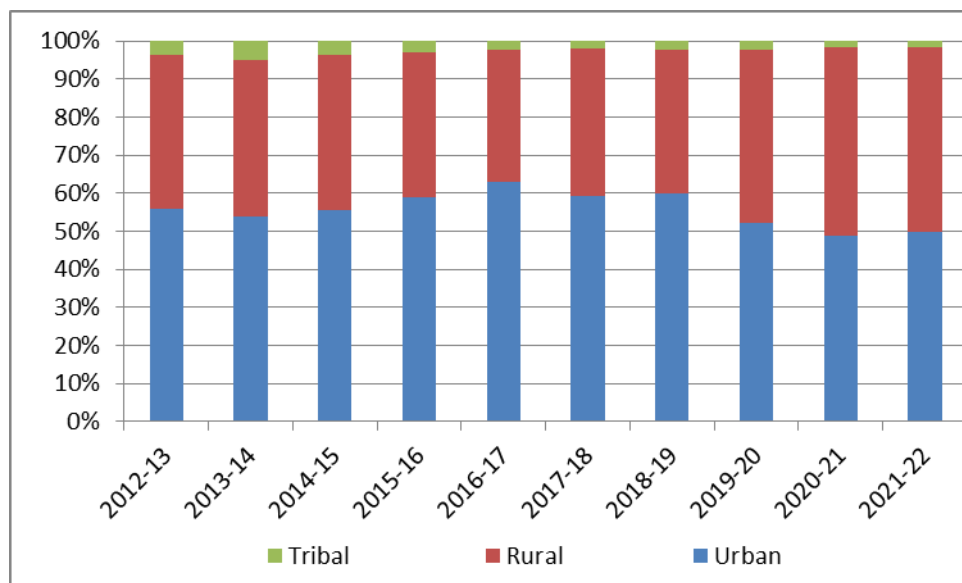


Figure 06: Region-wise Fresh Enrolment

The figure 06 reflects improvement in strength of students from rural areas during the period of the report. The University can further improve it by offering academic/training programmes to meet demand of youths residing in rural and tribal areas. Going ahead with offering of academic programmes in regional language and opening of study centers in rural and tribal belts can further boost enrolment in these areas.

Social Category-wise Analysis

Students are classified into four categories i.e., General, SC, ST and OBC, recently the University introduced one more category “EWS”. Very few students opted for EWS category, hence students who opted for EWS have been merged with General category to bring consistency in the reporting of the data.

Table 05: Strength of students classified on social category

Financial year	General		SC		ST		OBC		Total
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
2012-13	225131	58.4	34352	8.9	34440	8.9	87859	22.8	385518
2013-14	225224	56.5	36327	9.1	36327	9.1	91509	23.0	398547
2014-15	243963	58.3	42281	10.1	39753	9.5	92601	22.1	418598
2015-16	274903	60.3	45769	10.0	40242	8.8	94968	20.8	455882
2016-17	303539	55.6	68650	12.6	53192	9.7	120459	22.1	545840
2017-18	400412	61.4	84929	13.0	55647	8.5	111516	17.1	652504
2018-19	397249	59.0	96835	14.4	62129	9.2	117584	17.5	673797
2019-20	417921	51.0	150643	18.4	100293	12.2	150140	18.3	818997
2020-21	375447	52.9	116037	16.3	53580	7.5	164902	23.2	709963
2021-22	379666	53.4	106779	15.0	55148	7.8	169980	23.9	711581

The enrolment of SC and ST students indicates growing trend from 2012 to 2019 but dropped in subsequent years. The University introduced a scheme of financial support to SC and ST students in terms of fee exemption/reimbursement in the financial year 2015-16. This provision became a catalyst in enhancing enrolment of SC and ST students. The strength of OBC remained consistent during the period of analysis in the range of 17% to 24%.

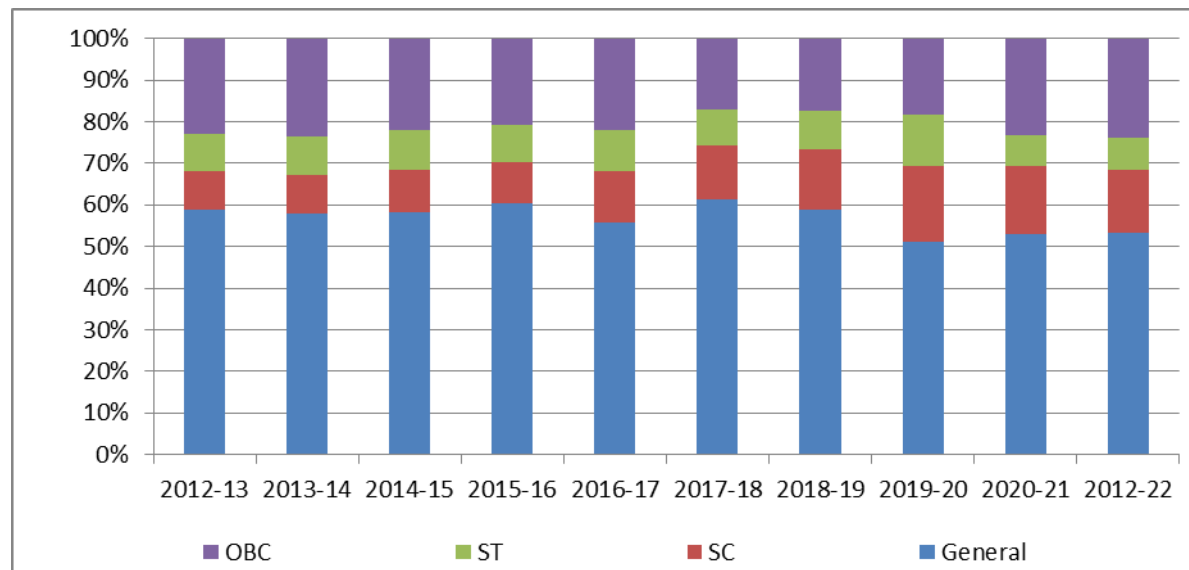


Figure 07: Social Category-wise Enrolment Data

The figure 07 illustrates a positive impact of the scheme of financial support on improving enrolment of SC and ST students. The University should support such initiatives and approach NGOs and other agencies catering to the social needs of the underprivileged for extending financial support to IGNOU's students from economically weaker section.

Proposed Strategy

Strategy is a long-term plan adopted by an institution with the intention of accomplishing its objectives and goals. Strategy is basically used to give an institution a competitive edge over its competitors. It also establishes the institution's direction and purview in order to fulfill its vision and goal. Based on institutional strengths and weaknesses, strategies are created in response to environmental challenges and opportunities. A plan must be future-focused and action-oriented. Institutional strategies are crucial because they help the institution reach its goals. It is important for institutions to have their own promotional strategies. In order to improve the GER, the institution should have a specific marketing as well as advertising strategies.

Marketing strategy

A marketing strategy is described as the approach taken by an institution to draw in potential learners and persuade them to utilize the services of the institution. It involves choosing a target market and creating a marketing mix and aids in attaining the marketing goals of an institution. This helps in building a trust in prospective learners' minds. An institution can convert potential learners' needs and wants into demand by using an effective marketing plan. It is a long-term strategy designed to give a University/Institute a competitive edge over its competitors.

Marketing Techniques for improving GER in ODL and Online programmes

The purpose of marketing plans for ODL and online learning is to draw attention to the capabilities of the educational institutions and to communicate the caliber of instruction to the intended audience of learners. Analysis of competing institutions, positioning of educational institutions, and promotion of educational programmes to a specific group of learners are the main focus of the marketing strategy. Services provided by educational institutions are intangible and intertwined since they are service-based organizations. Effective marketing techniques are therefore needed to convey its excellence to the learners who make up their target market.

The marketing plans for an ODL and online system ought to be centred on the institutions' brand, positioning, and implementation of the curriculum, the mode of instruction, the cost structure, the availability of jobs etc.

The following are the various **marketing techniques** that ODL and online institutions can employ to increase the GER:

1. The **value of a service** might range from learner to learner, making marketing a service distinct from selling a product. The usefulness of the instructional services largely depends on the understanding of the learner. An institution should advertise other services to get learners to enroll in a course because it is impossible for it to regulate how well a learner understands something. For instance, educational institutions can provide prospective learners with information on the structure of lectures, content, library resources, and counselling services.
2. **Exchange programmes:** The institution needs to emphasise the MOUs it has with international institutions/government institutions that allow learners to take part in exchange programmes. It will enable a learner to learn from a broader perspective.

3. **Library resources:** Another attraction for learners is well-maintained libraries with a broad selection of books and periodicals.
4. **Technological resources:** Modern technology and laboratory resources provide learners the feeling of receiving high-quality services.
5. **Relationship marketing:** This type of marketing entails creating and maintaining a long-term bond with learners that fosters loyalty and trust. Relationship marketing has an effect on the potential learners' attitudes and behaviours toward the system, which in turn helps to develop a positive perception of the institution. Relationship marketing guarantees that the learner will receive support similar to that provided by traditional institutions. Relationship marketing can be performed through social connections that foster brand loyalty and by establishing structural connections by giving learners customized instruction. A full-time service desk for the learners to answer these queries can be maintained.
6. **Promotion of short-term courses:** Short-term courses, such as six-month certificates, can enhance an adult professional's portfolio. Such experts who want to update their expertise or obtain further certification might choose from these courses. Promotion of such courses therefore becomes important. Institutions can collaborate with businesses to carry out such activities on a broad scale.

Advertising Strategy

A plan to reach and persuade a potential learner to enroll for a specific academic programme is known as an advertising strategy. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, including the benefits and distinctiveness of the services offered by the institution. The qualities of the learners, additional ways for the learners to learn about the services offered, and best use of the available funds are all factors which are to be considered while framing an advertising strategy.

Overall, this means that the decisions made must be consistent with the available resources and the goals must be clear. Although Open Distance Learning (ODL) has gained popularity in recent years, more work needs to be done before it can be used to its full potential. Following the selection of the best choice, the implementation phase becomes crucial and necessitates a sound strategic framework. The utilisation of novel techniques and a proper strategic management are crucial for strengthening the system.

Techniques for Advertising

1. **Advertising:** Educational institutions may occasionally place advertisements about upcoming programmes and courses in newspapers or publications, as well as on billboards. Institutions must make sure that the readers of the newspaper or magazine chosen for advertising are the targeted learners. Another option is to use internet advertising tools and promote its programmes through social media platforms.
2. **Promotion:** Learners frequently enroll in a course provided by a specific university or institution based on the opinions of their friends and family. As a result, publicity is a crucial

strategy for marketing universities. However, one should make sure that their university receives favorable press.

3. **Social media:** Institutions can promote their courses using their official Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter sites. Blogs are another form of social media that may be used to disseminate information. Social media platforms are inexpensive and have a larger audience. One of the most current trends in marketing is **digital marketing**. Regular updates about the institution's prospects and new advancements should be posted by the institute on these sites.

4. **SEO (Search Engine Optimization):** This is a cutting-edge method of promoting the institution's name. When a potential learner conducts a search for a course using this strategy, the name of the institution should appear at the top or on the first page of the search engine. The institution needs to make sure that they use distinctive keywords to describe the webpages or contents. The institute's website should have few technical areas in order to rank among the top search options.

5. **Chatbot:** An educational institution's website might contain a chatbot that visitors can communicate with if they need help navigating the site. Certain frequently asked questions should be addressed by a chatbot.

6. **Email:** Educational institutions use this as their go-to method of promotion. The technique is helpful for reaching out to current learners or former learners. However, the majority of emails sent to potential learners can be flagged as spam and won't reach their intended audience.

7. **Events:** To interact directly with prospective learners, institutions should either host educational events or participate in education fairs. Such gatherings give educational institutions the chance to interact physically with prospective learners, which is seen to be more effective than any other kind of advertising.

8. **Mobile app:** Institutions can create their own apps for mobile devices where they can post study materials, course information, faculty information, admission procedures, and latest news and alerts.

9. **Web analytics** are being used by educational institutions to identify the potential learners for their services. Web analytics entails gathering information about a user's online actions in order to analyse their behavior. These analytics can be utilised by institutions to determine which parts of the website visitors use most frequently and which courses are in great demand

10. **E-supply/E-brochures:** Institutions can create e-books, flyers, or brochures that can be downloaded to share information with prospective learners. These pamphlets can be easily found online and include QR codes that lead to website URLs.

11. **Marketing Automation:** This permits institutions to automate the process of emailing or engaging prospective learners. Utilize machine learning and artificial intelligence techniques to time the delivery of emails or messages to the right recipient based on the results of their searches.

12. **Video Content:** Institutions are able to film their campus and the services they provide, then publish the movies to their websites. Such videos can give prospective learners or parents' information about the location where they will spend the following few years.

13. **Programme Branding:** To set distance education programmes apart from other programmes that are similarly available, institutions should work to develop a brand for them. They need to develop unique programmes that give benefits that no other institutions do.

14. **Meta Tagging:** In an ODL system, learners have less opportunities to communicate with instructors. By employing a system of allocating certain keywords to various courses, this can be prevented. The course materials should be related to the keywords chosen. For instance, terms like big data or machine learning should be supplied for a data sciences course. For the sake of searching, these keywords will serve as meta-tags. This will enable learners to enter the relevant keywords to access the courses.

15. **Podcasts:** Tutorials on podcasts by experts in the field can be given to the learners.

What advertising tactics can the University use?

- Before the admissions process begins, the virtual interaction between teachers, learners, and parents, similar to open houses should be conducted.
- Newspaper and social media placement drive.
- Can create and make available to learners an introductory archive of video lectures for each of its courses.
- Public discussion forums on social media sites for certain topics where learners can ask questions. This will encourage interaction between faculty and learners.
- Occasionally plan educational and cultural activities in which learners from different Universities might take part. Both positive PR and word of mouth will benefit from this.
- Programmes for faculty development and online workshops.

Strategy is a continuous process and the institutions must strive to build and sustain its brand with changing times to increase the GER in higher education. The seven lessons of strategy must be remembered to have a competitive edge. These are proper process, focus, innovation and knowledge base, emphasis on team strengths, institution's layout, looking for and seizing chances, and institutional transformation.

The crux is that planning the strategy is crucial but proper implementation and execution is important for the institutions to survive in the long run.

Summary and Recommendations

IGNOU is uniquely positioned in terms of its outreach and academic resources, and is therefore in a position to make a positive contribution in the exercise of enhancing the GER. Following are the core areas of strength of IGNOU:

- Creation of high-quality educational content, both in print and non-print form
- Radio and television channels for dissemination of educational content
- Extensive outreach through its national network of Regional and Learner Support Centres
- National pool of teachers/academic counsellors/evaluators

All these put together make IGNOU not just a university, but a national resource centre and a national higher education platform, capable of making significant contribution in the GER. The Committee the following recommendations for the consideration of the Competent Authority:

Resource Atlas of the country

For increasing the outreach of higher education in a systematic manner, the first pre-requisite is a micro-level understanding of varying educational needs and the resources available to meet them. With an ever-expanding national network, IGNOU is in a position to prepare a district-wise Resource Atlas of higher education for the country. The Committee recommends that a Task Force may be constituted to undertake this task in a time-bound manner. Once ready, this will be a first of its kind document and will be immensely useful in planning educational interventions.

Collaboration and Networking

Collaboration at national and regional level will play a key role in achieving the twin objective of expanding access to higher education and reaching out to all segments of population.

Recently IGNOU has collaborated with the Ministry of Skill Development for providing opportunities of higher education to the students of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). This collaboration is expected to benefit about 5 lakh students every year. Through another important collaboration with the Ministry of Defence, IGNOU is going to offer a uniquely designed skill-based Bachelor Degree Programme to lakhs of defence services personnel. This will not only make a marked contribution in the GER, it will also improve the employability prospects of the personnel post retirement. Similar collaborative arrangements have been made with various other Ministries, viz. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of External Affairs, etc. At the regional level also, IGNOU has entered collaborative arrangements with different state government institutions. All this goes to show that the Government is looking up to IGNOU with high expectations.

Possibilities of new collaborations with government bodies, educational and professional institutions and the industry/corporate sector, both at national and regional level need to be vigorously explored. The University may consider constituting a Committee for exploring various possibilities of collaboration.

Skill Education

The NEP 2020 envisages the integration of general higher education with skill education. The University needs to make concerted efforts in this direction and work with the various Sector Skill Councils to align the programmes/courses with the NSQF framework. Programmes with employability will have higher demand and this will result in higher participation in higher education and higher GER. The University has been recognized by NCVET as an Awarding Body and Assessing Body for skill education.

Identifying new areas of educational intervention

While the range of programmes offered by the University is already quite diverse, there is a need to break new ground and offer programmes in areas for which there is an unmet demand. All the Schools of Studies and Regional Centres of the University need to focus on this aspect.

Identifying new potential target groups

New potential target groups need to be identified at national as well as regional level. Some of them are:

- Persons from both organized and unorganized sectors registered with the Workers' Board, Ministry of Labour, Government of India.
- Persons associated with Cooperatives and Self-help Groups
- Paramilitary Forces (CRPF, BSF, ITBP, etc.) and Police personnel
- Workers in the Retail and other service sectors.

There are several other potential target groups that the University needs to reach out to.

Coordination with State Governments

The Regional Centres of the University need to work in close coordination with the respective State Governments to identify and fill the gap between demand and supply of higher education opportunities. The State Government employees working in different sectors need to continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills. IGNOU can play a greater role in meeting this requirement.

In all the states, there is a wide gap between the GER at senior secondary and higher education levels, which indicates that a large number of students completing senior secondary are not able to enter higher education. IGNOU can effectively supplement the required educational provisions, contributing to enhancement of GER.

Special initiatives to reach out to the disadvantaged population

While IGNOU has been taking various measures to encourage the participation of the disadvantaged groups, further efforts are required to ensure their participation in proportion to their population in different parts of the country.

Alumni Engagement Policy

With about 3.6 million alumni, the University has perhaps the world's largest alumni base, spread across the country. They can play a crucial role in reaching out to the grass root level and

in creating a favourable environment for IGNOU's intervention. A well-articulated policy for alumni engagement shall make a positive contribution.

Provision for Simultaneous Registration

The University Grants Commission has recently announced a policy which allows simultaneous registration in two academic programmes at UG/PG levels. There is a need to create awareness about this policy. In particular, students pursuing technical education can be encouraged to take up programmes in Social Sciences/Humanities or other areas of their interest. This will also be in line with the NEP's emphasis on holistic, multi-disciplinary education.

Technology Intervention and Upgradation

The University needs robust technology infrastructure at all levels not only to support its ever increasing student base, but also to enroll new students. Better communication with the potential students will lead to higher conversion. The University may consider providing bulk SMS and bulk email facilities to all the School of Studies, Operational Divisions and Regional Centres for more effective communication with existing as well as potential students. The University may also consider putting in place a National Call Centre to address the queries of the existing and potential students.

Use of Social Media

Social media has emerged as a powerful communication tool, and this potential can be gainfully harnessed for creating awareness about educational opportunities and connecting with the potential students. A well-articulated social media Policy needs to be put in place to ensure optimal utilization of this tool.

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