

प्रगति पथ

विश्वविद्यालय समाचार

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SCHOOL OF EXTENSION AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

**Advancing Academic Excellence, Research, and Innovation in
Open and Distance Learning**

About the School

The **School of Extension and Development Studies (SOEDS)**, **Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)**, **New Delhi**, continues to strengthen its academic, research and professional contributions in the areas of **Development Studies, Urban Studies, Extension Education, Population Studies and Tribal Studies**. Guided by its vision of achieving the **highest standards of excellence** in these fields within the **Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system**, the School has been steadily expanding its academic portfolio, **strengthening institutional linkages, promoting research and enhancing learner support mechanisms**.

With a **multidisciplinary orientation** and a strong focus on **local, national and global development concerns**, SOEDS has emerged as an important academic space for developing **knowledge, professional competencies and research capabilities** among diverse groups of learners.



Faculty Academic and Professional Contributions

The academic growth of the School is supported by a **committed faculty** who bring together expertise across the School's major thrust areas, enabling SOEDS to pursue **multidisciplinary teaching, research, academic programme development and institutional responsibilities**.

The School's academic activity during the **two-year period** has been particularly noteworthy in terms of **content development, programme delivery, research, institutional contribution and learner engagement**.

The faculty have contributed substantially to the **development and revision of academic materials**, including the **writing of new units, revision and editing of existing units, development of MOOCs** and preparation of **digital learning resources**. These activities are central to maintaining the **quality and relevance of learning materials in an ODL institution**.



A Broad and Multidisciplinary Academic Portfolio

The School's academic portfolio reflects the changing needs of society and the emerging requirements of development professionals, practitioners, educators and researchers. Its programmes span multiple dimensions of development and social transformation. SOEDS remains committed to creating a diversified academic ecosystem that responds to emerging development challenges while remaining firmly rooted in the principles of inclusive and accessible education.

The school is currently offering 4 Master's level programmes, 6 Post Graduate Diplomas, 1 Diploma, 2 MOOCs and a PhD in the areas of Development Studies, Corporate Social Responsibility, Urban Studies, Population and Family Health Studies, Animal Welfare, Tribal Studies and Value Education. The School has also contributed significantly to Value Education through its Diploma and Certificate programmes, MOOCs as well as Value Education as a six-credit value-added course under the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP).

SOEDS faculty provide the following student support services across programmes to every batch of students

1. Send a welcome mail to the students explaining how to navigate through the programme and also providing soft copies of study materials and assignments.
 2. Send mails with link to exam forms and last dates for assignment submission and exam form filling.
 3. Extract and send the exam schedule from the date sheet to the students for their ease and clarity.
 4. Evaluate more than 50 percent and for some programmes upto 100 percent of the assignments in house and update the marks on ARSMS.
 5. Organize counselling sessions through GD, IRC and zoom/googlemeet
- School's contribution extends well beyond curriculum development and classroom teaching. It encompasses continuous academic interaction, mentoring, learner guidance and support throughout the student lifecycle.



Promotional Activities undertaken by the faculty

1. Interaction with key stakeholders identified during need assessment.
2. Interaction with Regional Centers and Learner Study Centers.
3. Sending emails and letters to related government departments to encourage their staff to take admissions.
4. Extensive use of social media platforms for programme promotion and support services.



Strengthening Learning Resources and Content Development

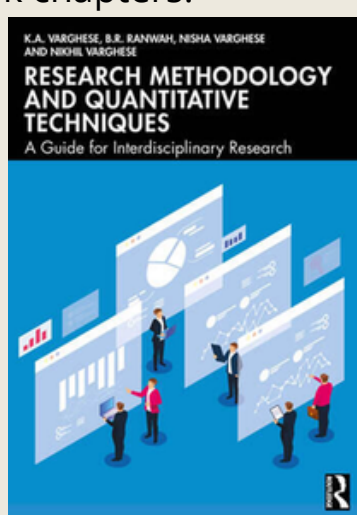
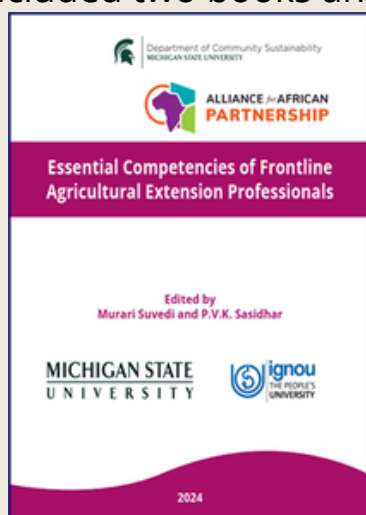
Content development remains one of the major academic contributions of the School. Since its inception, faculty members collectively contributed **278 new units** with **38 units written, 10 units edited, 14 units revised** and **1 Swayam Prabha course developed** in **last 2 years**. Such contributions are especially significant in the ODL environment, where carefully designed **self-learning materials, digital resources and multimedia learning resources** constitute an important component of the learner's academic experience.

The School's emphasis on **multiple modes of content delivery** reflects its commitment to ensuring that learning is **accessible to students across diverse geographical and social contexts**.

Research: Expanding the Knowledge Base

Research constitutes another important pillar of the School's academic activities. Faculty members have contributed to doctoral supervision, scholarly publications, books, book chapters and externally supported research.

During the period covered, two Ph.D. scholars were awarded their degrees, while eight new Ph.D. students registered. Faculty members published 29 research articles, with a further nine articles communicated for publication. The School's scholarly output also included two books and four book chapters.



Building Academic Linkages and Partnerships

SOEDS has actively pursued linkages with universities, academic institutions, funding organisations and other stakeholder organisations. These partnerships have supported the development of academic programmes as well as research projects, conferences and workshops.

Linkages with National and International Organizations, Universities and Corporates for Development of Programmes

SOEDS has developed all its programmes by involving experts from various national and international organizations, universities and corporates.



The School has also developed organisational linkages aimed at supporting enrolment in its academic programmes, thereby strengthening its outreach and connecting its programmes with relevant professional and institutional constituencies. Various bodies have sponsored students pursuing SOEDS programmes. Ahimsa Trust is the sponsor for a gold medal for Post Graduate Diploma in Animal Welfare (PGDAW).



Linkages with Funding Organizations and Universities

Internationally funded research project has been completed by the School in the past two years span. The School has also organised and participated in international seminars and conferences, providing platforms for faculty members, researchers, practitioners and other stakeholders to exchange ideas and deliberate on emerging issues. Various sponsors for international projects, conferences and travel fellowships have helped the school to have a global connect.



BEST PRACTICES OF SOEDS

1. TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED STUDENT SUPPORT: LESSONS FROM INTERNET RADIO

SOEDS has also examined the potential of **Internet Radio Counselling (IRC)** as a **scalable learner-support mechanism**. During one of the initiatives, **approximately 45 percent of students** listened to the sessions on average, based on a learner population of **1,041 admitted in July 2017**.

This experiment explored ways of making technology-enabled counselling more **targeted, curriculum-based and scalable**. The policy interventions identified include:

- Development of targeted curriculum-based IRC sessions.
- Scaling up IRC sessions as **Open Educational Resources**.
- Reducing learner-support costs through **technology-mediated IRCs**.
- Undertaking further evaluation of IRC programmes.

The School's analysis highlighted the potential for converting a proportion of conventional counselling at Learner Support Centres into technology-mediated counselling, thereby enabling the University to optimize its resources while extending learner access.

The best-practice framework emphasizes four important dimensions:

- **Assessing learner participation quantitatively.**
- Identifying ways to enhance participation in IRCs.
- **Comparing the economics of different learner-support models.**
- Recommending technology-enabled interventions that can reduce support-service costs.

2. TRANSFORMING STUDENT SUPPORT IN ANIMAL WELFARE EDUCATION: DIGITAL COUNSELLING, INSTANT WHATSAPP SUPPORT, AND CENTRALIZED ASSIGNMENTS EVALUATION

The **Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)**, India, and the University of Edinburgh, UK, jointly developed the Post Graduate Diploma in Animal Welfare (PGDAW), launched in July 2020 and endorsed by the Animal Welfare Board of India. The one-year programme, comprising **4 courses, 85 self-learning modules, 350 exercises and 160 activities**, has enrolled over **5,000 learners** and addresses animal welfare across diverse sectors. Its comprehensive support system includes online counselling, centralized assignment evaluation, ARSMS entry, and continuous learner engagement through 12 dedicated WhatsApp groups.

For programmes with up to 500 learners, the PGDAW model offers a cost-effective and scalable approach. Key practices include a **Nodal Hub Model** for centralized online counselling and optimized faculty resources; **automated multi-tiered communication** through timely course materials, WhatsApp/Telegram groups and email reminders; **staggered dispatch of printed materials** aligned with admission confirmation; and **effective use of internal faculty** for assignment evaluation and ARSMS entry. The model successfully managed 547 learners, achieving a **56.1% pass rate (307 graduates) in the first examination cycle**, while maintaining high learner engagement and operational efficiency.

PGDAW – July 2022 Session Summary

- **Enrollment:** 547 learners enrolled in the July 2022 session.
- **On-boarding & Communication:** The Programme Coordinator emailed all 547 learners on August 29, 2022, providing SLM softcopies, the programme guide, assignments, and WhatsApp group link (follow-up emails were sent in September and October 2022).
- **Material Distribution:** Coordinated with the MPDD to dispatch hardcopies of the SLM in three separate lots across August, September, and October, 2022.
- **Learner's Engagement:** A total of 438 learners joined the official WhatsApp group.
- **Assignment Management:** 422 learners submitted assignments. These were directly received, evaluated, and updated in the ARSMS by the Programme Coordinator at zero cost to the university.
- **Academic Outcome:** 307 learners successfully completed the Programme, achieving a 56.1% pass rate in 1st exam cycle.
- **Academic Delivery:** Regional Centre (RC) Bangalore served as the Nodal RC for online counseling.
- **Session Breakdown:** Conducted 1 induction session and 32 online counseling sessions, led by the Programme Coordinator and 4 approved external academic counselors.
- **Financial Overview:** Generated Rs. 32.27 Lakhs in total admission fees against a total Programme expenditure of Rs. 23,400 (paid by RC Bangalore to the external counselors).

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH / ACADEMIC COLLABORATIONS (2011–2026): SOEDS

Over the past 15 years, the **School of Extension and Development Studies at IGNOU** has significantly advanced its global academic footprint through strategic research and educational partnerships across North America, Africa, Asia, and Europe. These international alliances successfully culminated in the execution of six major international research projects and the launch of a Niche area **'PG Diploma in Animal Welfare (PGDAW)' Programme** in ODL with measurable institutional and societal impact.

The global collaborating countries and institutions include:

North America

Michigan State University – East Lansing, Michigan, USA

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) – Washington D.C., USA

Africa

Egerton University – Njoro, Kenya

Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) – Lilongwe, Malawi

Makerere University – Kampala, Uganda

University of Nigeria – Nsukka, Nigeria

University of Pretoria – Pretoria, South Africa

University of the Free State – Bloemfontein, South Africa

Asia

Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka – Belihuloya, Sri Lanka

Tribhuvan University – Kirtipur, Nepal

Agriculture and Forestry University – Rampur, Nepal

General Directorate of Animal Health and Production – Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Europe

University of Edinburgh – Edinburgh, United Kingdom

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECTS COMPLETED

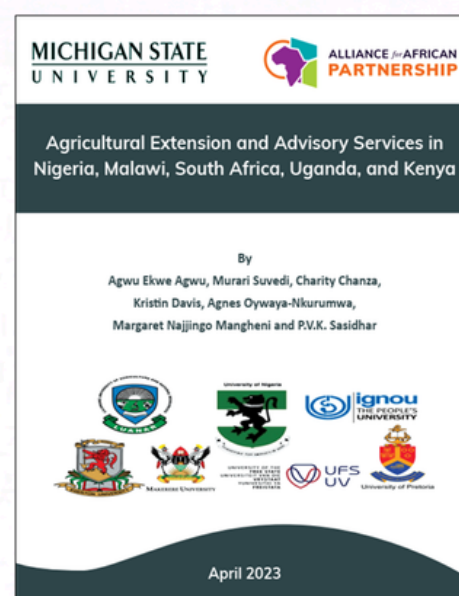
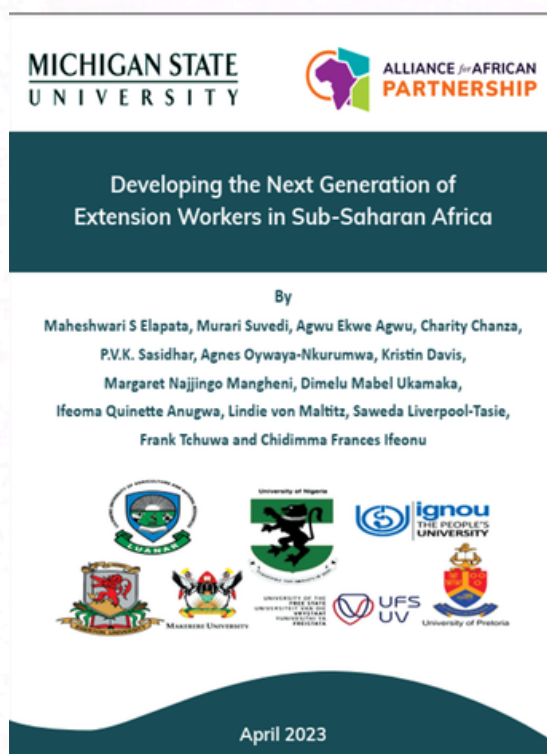
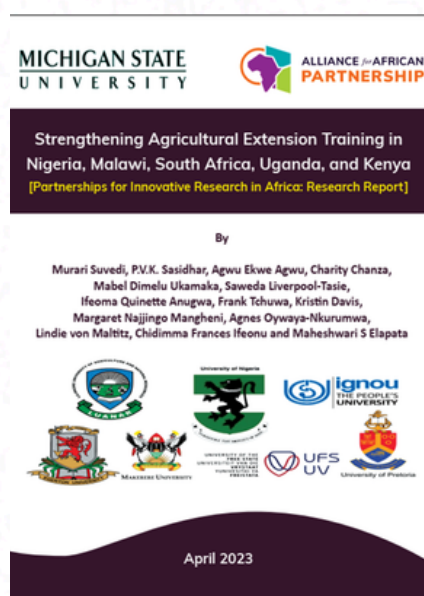
Project 1: Strengthening Agricultural Extension Training in Nigeria, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, and Kenya (2023) – Funded by AAP-PIRA (Alliance for African Partnership -Partnerships for Innovative Research in Africa Grant, Michigan State University.

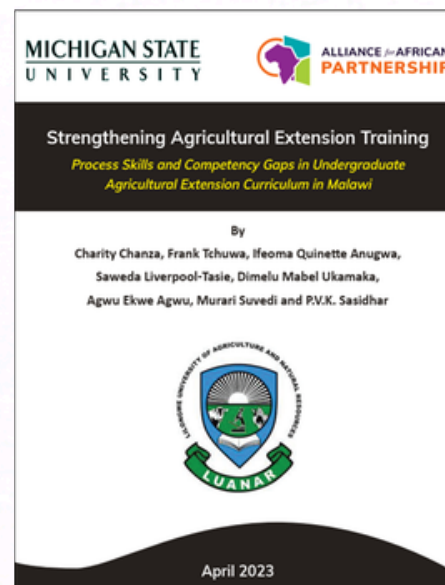
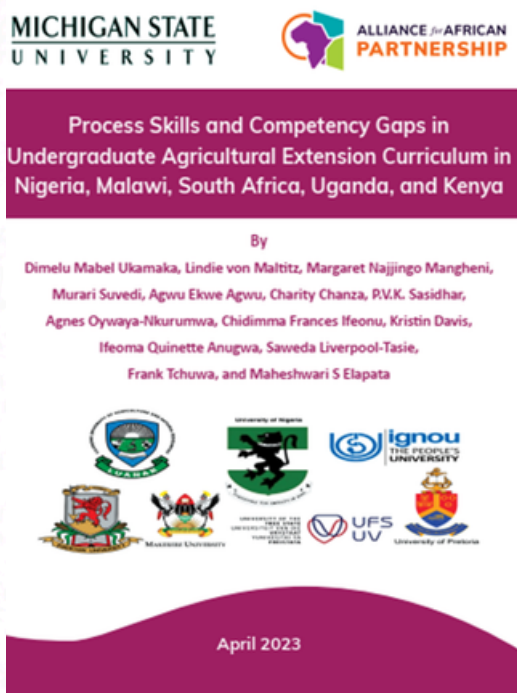
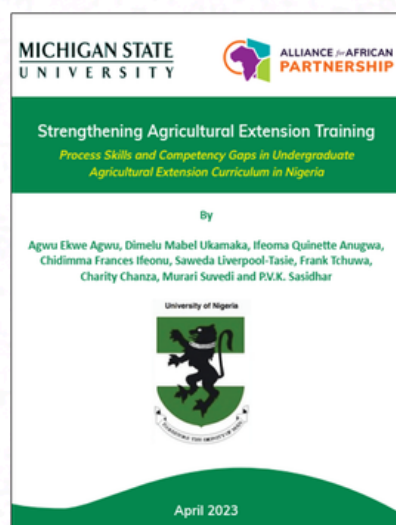
Outcome: This AAP-PIRA research report plays a vital role in reforming undergraduate (UG) agricultural extension curricula across sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, and Kenya). Aiming to build demand-driven, decentralized, and participatory advisory services, the report outlines **11 core competencies and 97 sub-competencies** to be integrated into UG programs.

The project delivered **10 research reports** to the funding agency:

- ❑ **4 Sub-Saharan Africa regional reports**
- ❑ **5 Country-specific assessment reports**
- ❑ **1 Research dissemination workshop report**

PROJECT REPORTS





Project 2: Strengthening Agricultural Extension Training in South Asia (India, Sri Lanka and Nepal)-Process Skills and Competency Gaps in Undergraduate Agricultural Extension Curriculum (2020) – Funded by US Department of State under Fulbright programme.

Impact: Based on the study recommendations, agricultural colleges and universities in South Asia (India, Sri Lanka and Nepal) could upgrade their agricultural extension curricula to prepare the next generation of extension professionals needed for agricultural development. The recommendations have already been submitted to 7th Deans Committee constituted by Indian Council of Agricultural Research for the revision of UG agriculture curriculum in India, and to similar bodies in Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Strengthening Agricultural Extension Training in South Asia (India, Sri Lanka and Nepal)

Process Skills and Competency Gaps in Undergraduate Agricultural Extension Curriculum

(Fulbright Program Research Report)

By

Murari Suvedi & P.V.K. Sasidhar



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

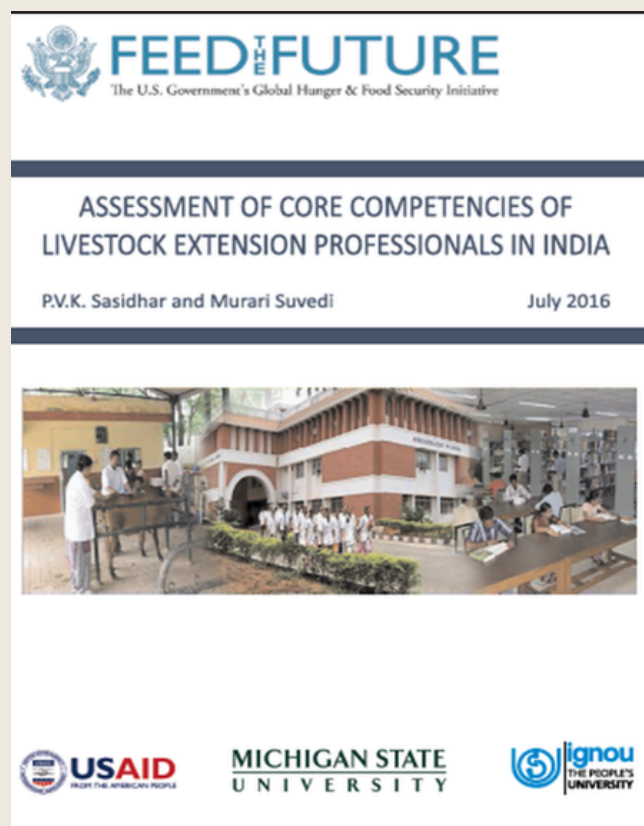


December 2020

Project 3: Assessment of Core Competencies of Livestock Extension Professionals in India (2016) – Funded by USAID.

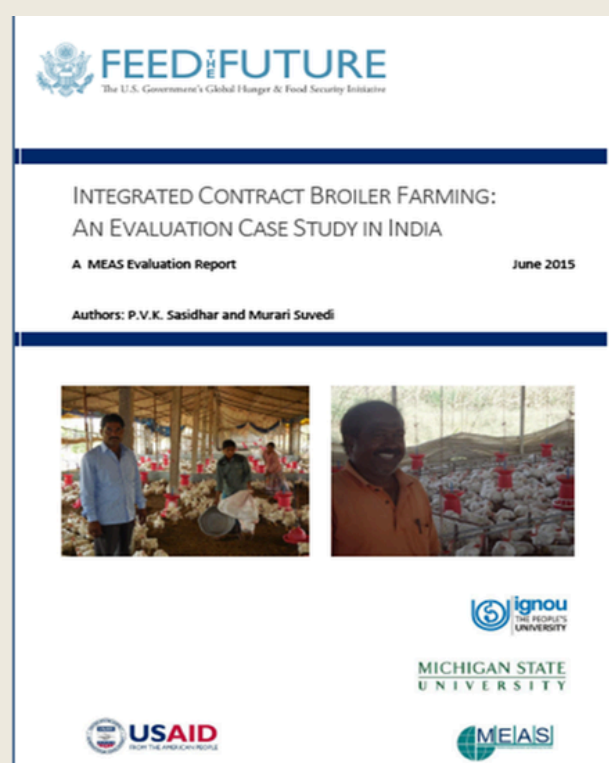
Impact: Specific policy interventions recommended to Veterinary Council of India:

- a) Improving competencies through hands-on pre-service instruction in veterinary colleges and (b) proper assessment of competencies before certification, and competency development through continuing veterinary education programmes



Project 4: Integrated Contract Broiler Farming – An Evaluation Case Study in India (2015) – Funded by USAID.

Impact: One of the key recommendations was to establish a regulatory body on contract farming to safeguard the interest of poultry farmers. Based on the recommendations of this report, the Government of India formulated model contract farming act and issued guidelines on contract broiler farming.



Project 5: OIE PVS Follow-up Evaluation of the Veterinary Services of Cambodia (2018). Funded and Authorized by WOA – OIE, France.

Outcome: At the request of the Cambodian government, the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH/OIE, France) appointed an independent team comprising Dr. John Weaver, Dr. Ronello Abila, Dr. Julie Punderson, and Dr. P.V.K. Sasidhar to conduct a PVS Evaluation Follow-up of Cambodia's veterinary services from 7–18 May 2018. Using the 2013 PVS Tool (6th edition), the evaluation aligned with Chapters 3.1 through 3.4 of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code. This report details the strengths and weaknesses of Cambodia's veterinary services against these standards and provides strategic recommendations to improve performance.

**OIE PVS Follow-up Evaluation
of the Veterinary Services of
Cambodia**
7 – 18 May 2018

Dr. John Weaver (New Zealand-Team Leader)
Dr. Ronello Abila (Philippines)
Dr. Julie Punderson (USA)
Dr. PVK Sasidhar (India)

Disclaimer

This evaluation has been conducted by an OIE PVS Evaluation Team authorised by the OIE. However, the views and the recommendations in this report are not necessarily those of the OIE.

The results of the evaluation remain confidential between the evaluated country and the OIE until such time as the country agrees to release the report and states the terms of such release.

World Organisation for Animal Health
12, rue de Prony
F-75017 Paris, France

Project 6: Evaluation of a Distance Education Radio Farm School Programme in India: Implications for Scaling up (2011) – Funded by IDRC, Canada.

Impact: The evaluation helped in scaling up of radio farm school programmes and had a major impact on developing awareness, knowledge and changes in attitude and in involving end-users in poultry outreach activities (Research Work Completed while serving in ICAR and Published after joining IGNOU).

