

# **Access to quality postgraduate education through distance education in Ethiopia**

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**PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR (PHD)**

**2014**

**Access to quality postgraduate education through  
distance education in Ethiopia**

by

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

**PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR**

(Education Management, Law and Policy Studies)

in the  
Department of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies  
Faculty of Education  
University of Pretoria, South Africa

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**PRETORIA  
AUGUST 2014**

## *DEDICATION*

*This PhD is dedicated to my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, without whom my life would be meaningless. I also dedicate this work to my late mother, Mrs Kebenesh Esheta, who I lost at a young age and to my late step-father, Mr Tafessa Egume. They were a good reason for me to continue my junior secondary education which paved the way to my further studies.*

*I also dedicate this PhD project to my wife, Mrs Mestewat Negash Gebrehiwot, the love of my life, soul partner, best friend and greatest source of encouragement. Thank you my Lord Jesus for my children, Jonas, Thomas, Johanna and Leah. Apart from my salvation, my family is God's greatest gift to me.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to thank my Heavenly Father, without whom I would not have been able to get this far. I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. M.T. Chika Sehoole, for his constant encouragement and support during this long process. His quality academic supervision and guidance, which encouraged excellence, has contributed greatly to this work. Professor Sehoole also appreciated the challenges that I was experiencing while undertaking the study and he went beyond the call of duty to assist me in various ways, for which my words of thanks are not adequate enough, but that is the only thing I can do.

I would like to also thank Dr Solomon Gebeyehu, my close friend, who was beside me and assisted me during my studies. I would like to thank my wife, Mrs Mestewat Negasha Gebrehiwot, for her support and encouragement through all my ups and downs and also my children, Jonas, Thomas, Leah and Johanna and her husband, Million Gizaw, for their love and prayers during these long study periods.

I am indebted to the following groups of people and individuals who also positively contributed to my study: The academic and administrative staff of the Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria and EECMY/ELCA for their one-time financial support. My sincere gratitude also goes to the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Education senior officials who participated in my research as well as Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency leaders. I offer further thanks to the Addis Ababa University Institute of Educational Research Centre, IGNOU academic and administrative staff members at the Addis Ababa branch, UNISA in South Africa and the Regional Learning Centre in Addis Ababa, Dr Legesse Kassa and his wife, Bishop Dr Wilhelm Weber LCSA and my colleagues: Dr Wha Suck Lee, Dr Lindelanie, Sarkkikiya, Mr Mengistu Legesse and his wife, Akola Lapite, Perpetua, Samuel Abin, Mussa and Chris Mauki.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my Ethiopian friends for their best wishes, prayers and support; Christ for Generation International church leaders and members in Pretoria, South Africa; Mr Abebe Gebeyehu and his family; Mr Tefera Seyoum and his family; Mr Asefaw Tesfaye; Rev. Alemu Shetta and his family; Mr Messo Erbaye and his family; Miss Barbara Kapenga; Dr Wosenu Yemma; Dr Shewatatek Wogderes; Mr SisayeMelaku and his family; Mr Mesfin Derash and his family; Mr Getu Bogale and his wife; Rev. Solomon Habte and his wife; Dr Misgana Mathewos; Dr Belay Guta, Mr Melkamu Dunfa, Mr Endeshaw Amenu and his family; Mr Gutema Gezemu and his family; and Mr Wondewosen Mekasha and his family, among others.

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## DECLARATION

I, Melese Mekasha Woldeyes, hereby declare that this thesis, which is handed in herewith for the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)** at the University of Pretoria, is my own independent work. It has not been submitted for a degree or examination before at this or any other university.

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**Researcher's Signature**

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**Date**

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to examine the role of distance education in providing access to quality postgraduate education in Ethiopia, using the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) as a case study. It draws on the development of distance education and it further explores the distance education programme delivery system in Ethiopia on the postgraduate level. In addition, the study explores the policy gap between conventional and distance education in relation to international postgraduate distance education. The study, specifically, focuses on the Master of Arts in Rural Development (MARD) programme offered by IGNOU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in terms of the opportunities it provides for alternative access to postgraduate education. It also explores the quality and quality assurance strategies employed in distance education.

Two instruments were used to gather relevant data, namely: interviews and document analysis. The structured interviews were conducted with MARD graduates and current students at IGNOU in 2012. Other semi-structured and structured interviews were conducted with the dean and department head, programme coordinator, tutors, the institution's top-level managers, the course and materials dispatching officer and administrator as well as with policy-makers at the Ministry of Education (MoE).

Furthermore, interviews were conducted with higher education experts and other MoE senior officials in foreign relations and those involved in cross-border private higher institutions. Senior officials from the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) were also interviewed, such as the deputy director and senior officials who are responsible for quality audit and accreditation for both private and public higher education as well as the external quality auditors. A total sample size of thirty respondents participated in the study and the respondents were purposefully selected from diverse areas. The data gathered, using a qualitative method, was analysed. The selected relevant documents for the study were also thoroughly analysed and agreed with the interview findings. The study established that distance education has the potential to contribute significantly to the provision of higher education in Ethiopia. As the main findings of the study revealed, there is recognition

of the MARD programme by the participants, especially the graduates in terms of the fulfilment of certain quality elements which is largely due to the promotion they received after the completion of the programme.

The MoE participants indicated an acceptance of IGNOU in terms of it increasing access to higher education, even though it seems to be unrealistic to state that the quality of postgraduate distance education at IGNOU at this level is of the highest standard. Nevertheless, the quality indicators or elements at IGNOU regarding student support services and the quality of course materials and assessment methods are clear evidence that indicate that IGNOU is addressing the issues of quality enhancement and improvement.

There are, however, a number of factors which can affect the realisation of the potential of distance education programmes in Ethiopia. These are considered in terms of the operations of international providers of postgraduate studies and their role in meeting the increasing demand for quality human resource development in the country. In view of the findings and provided that the necessary conditions are met, it is possible to provide postgraduate studies in distance education programmes in Ethiopia in an efficient and successful manner. This requires careful planning and the alignment of the policy framework with the conventional system of higher education. The study further reveals a range of strengths and weaknesses in the postgraduate level distance education programmes offered by international providers and by IGNOU, in particular.

The main areas of emphasis include the national education policy and its implications for distance education development and the entire institutional and pedagogic system of the cross-border institution; the focus of which includes course material development; the provision of various student support services; as well as the integration of ICT and assessment and evaluation methods. In the light of the above factors the study also identifies some strategies that can be used to develop and increase the effectiveness of these programmes. A significant strategy identified in this study recommends the need to decentralise services into different regional administrative centres. There is, therefore, a need to have comprehensively stocked libraries and quality student support services at the regional centres with adequate

facilities for distance students including services, such as ICT, access to reference materials and counselling.

Frameworks for assuring quality in open and distance learning, identified by Latchem and Jung in Asian Open and Distance Learning universities (ODL) (2007) and Lockhart and Lacy (2002) and an Assessment model used in the United States' distance education context were adopted for the purpose of analysis in this study. Latchem and Jung (2007) examine the various quality assurance approaches employed in Asian Open and Distance Learning universities (ODL). They make suggestions on how to achieve a culture of quality in distance education which is relevant in the context of developing countries, such as Ethiopia. The following three quality indicators were used as tools of analysis: coherence, efficiency and the impact of distance education. These indicators are identified by Perraton (2000:199) and are drawn from the quality criteria specific to distance education. They were adopted as a framework that could be applied to quality distance education in responding to human resource development in Ethiopia.

The study reveals that access to postgraduate studies in the conventional face-to-face system in Ethiopia is still a problem for some students and workers. Therefore, it is recommended that international postgraduate distance education providers should collaborate with local private and public contact higher education institutions in order to provide alternative access to higher education via the distance education mode.



## KEY WORDS

- Access
- Conventional Education
- Delivery Modes
- Distance Education
- Distance Education Generations
- Higher Education
- Qualitative Method Approach
- Quality
- Quality Assurance
- Student Support Services

*“ ... To my mind, education is the spirit of enquiry, the ability to keep one’s mind and heart open to beauty and goodness, indeed all that surrounds us, to be able to think and judge for one self. Education should inculcate a life-long habit to learning. And today, this is all the more necessary because the corpus of knowledge is increasing at a tremendous pace, often making what one has learnt obsolete...” (Indri Gandhi).*

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAU	Addis Ababa University
AVU	Africa Virtual University
ASQ	American Society for Quality
CBHE	Cross-Border Higher Education
CHEA	Council for Higher Education Accreditation
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
DE	Distance Education
EDLA	Ethiopian Distance Learning Association
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HERQAA	Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance Agency
ICS	International Correspondence School
ICTs	Information Communication Technologies
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
IOCE	International Open College of Ethiopia
MARD	Masters of Arts in Rural Development
MoE	Ministry of Education
ODE	Open and Distance Education
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
OOUK	Open University of United Kingdom
QA	Quality Assurance
REB	Regional Education Bureau
SAIDE	South African Institute of Distance Education
SSAC	Sub-Saharan African Countries
SMUC	St Mary's University College
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TQM	Total Quality Management
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNISA	University of South Africa

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Dedication .....	i
Acknowledgments .....	ii
Declaration .....	iii
Abstract .....	iv
Key Words .....	vii
Abbreviations and Acronyms .....	viii
Table of Contents .....	ix
List of Tables .....	xvii
List of Figures .....	xviii

---oOo---

	Page
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY</b>	
<b>1.1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.3 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.5 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.6.1 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION .....	5
1.6.2 SUB-QUESTIONS .....	6
<b>1.7 CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.7.1 COUNTRY, PEOPLE AND ECONOMY OF ETHIOPIA .....	6
1.7.2 EVOLUTION OF EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA .....	8
1.7.3 THE SELECTED CROSS-BORDER DISTANCE INSTITUTION: INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY (IGNOU) IN ETHIOPIA	9
1.7.3.1 IGNOU programmes on offer in Ethiopia .....	10

	Page
<b>1.8 LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES</b> .....	13
<b>1.9 THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY</b> .....	13

---oOo---

	Page
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	
<b>A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON DISTANCE EDUCATION</b>	
<b>2.1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	17
<b>2.2 DEFINITION OF THE TERM, DISTANCE EDUCATION, AND OTHER RELATED TERMS</b> .....	17
<b>2.3 GROWTH AND MAIN DEVELOPMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AROUND THE WORLD</b> .....	19
2.3.1 THE ROLE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN PROVIDING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION .....	22
2.3.2 THE NEED AND RELEVANCE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA .....	24
2.3.3 THE USE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION .....	29
<b>2.4 THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY AND ITS USE IN THIS STUDY</b> .....	34
2.4.1 THE QUALITY INDICATORS USED IN THE STUDY COHERENCE, EFFICIENCY, AND IMPACT .....	39
<b>2.5 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ITS MANAGEMENT</b> .....	43

---oOo---

	Page
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	
<b>A REVIEW OF LITERATURE RELATED TO ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY ISSUES</b>	
<b>3.1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	47
<b>3.2 HIGHER EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN ETHIOPIA</b> .....	48
<b>3.3 THE CHANGING NATURE OF EDUCATION SYSTEM</b> .....	52
<b>3.4 THE CURRENT HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM OF ETHIOPIA</b> .....	56
<b>3.5 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEWS AND RESEARCH FOCUS</b> .....	59

---oOo---

	Page
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	
<b>THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY</b>	
<b>4.1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	62
<b>4.2 LOCKHART AND LACY &amp; LATCHEM AND JUNG APPROACHES</b> .....	64
<b>4.3 THE COMPONENTS OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	68
<b>4.4 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	70
<b>4.5 CONCLUSION</b> .....	71

---oOo---

	Page
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	
<b>THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY</b>	
<b>5.1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	73
<b>5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN</b> .....	73
<b>5.3 THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH APPLICABLE TO THIS STUDY</b> .....	75
<b>5.4 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES</b> .....	77
5.4.1 SAMPLING AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES .....	77
5.4.1.1 Target population and sampling of the study .....	78
5.4.1.2 Characteristics of the population .....	80
5.4.2 DOCUMENTS AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS .....	82
5.4.3 INTERVIEWS .....	83
5.4.4 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES .....	85
5.4.4.1 Analysis of transcribed interviews .....	86
5.4.4.2 Analysis and interpretation of data .....	86
5.4.4.3 Discussion of the main findings in terms of the main research question and sub-questions .....	89
<b>5.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY</b> .....	94
<b>5.6 LIMITATIONS</b> .....	97
<b>5.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS</b> .....	98
<b>5.8 CONCLUSION</b> .....	100

---oOo---

	Page
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	
<b>THE IMPACT OF ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY ON DISTANCE EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT</b>	
<b>6.1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	102
<b>6.2 THE IMPACT OF THE CONTEMPORARY HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY OF ETHIOPIA</b> .....	103
<b>6.3 THE ROLE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION, IN GENERAL, AND DISTANCE EDUCATION, IN PARTICULAR</b> .....	107
6.3.1 PURPOSES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE .....	107
6.3.1.1 Processes to ensure minimum standards .....	108
6.3.1.2 Processes to measure volume .....	108
6.3.1.3 Processes to rank excellence .....	108
6.3.1.4 Processes to foster improvement .....	109
<b>6.4 THE ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION RELEVANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY</b> .....	115
<b>6.5 IGNOU'S PRACTICES REGARDING QUALITY ENHANCEMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES</b> .....	119
<b>6.6 CONCLUSION</b> .....	122

---oOo---

	Page
<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	
<b>INSTITUTIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AT IGNOU</b>	
<b>7.1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	124
<b>7.2 ACCESS TO POSTGRADUATE DISTANCE EDUCATION</b> .....	124
<b>7.3 THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING AT IGNOU</b> .....	126
<b>7.4 CHOICE OF INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY</b> .....	131
<b>7.5 THE QUALITY OF COURSE MATERIALS PROVIDED BY IGNOU</b> .....	135
<b>7.6 STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AT IGNOU</b> .....	137
7.6.1 WHY ARE STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES IMPORTANT? .....	138
<b>7.7 LEARNER ASSESSMENT METHOD OF IGNOU</b> .....	141
<b>7.8 EFFICIENCY OF THE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS AT IGNOU</b> .....	146
<b>7.9 IGNOU'S COMMITMENT TO POSTGRADUATE DISTANCE EDUCATION</b> .....	149
<b>7.10 CONCLUSION</b> .....	152

---oOo---



**CHAPTER 8  
PERCEPTIONS OF VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS OF THE  
QUALITY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION PROVIDED BY IGNOU**

<b>8.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>8.2</b>	<b>THE ETHIOPIAN FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AS A STAKEHOLDER .....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>8.3</b>	<b>HIGHER EDUCATION RELEVANCE AND QUALITY AGENCY (HERQA) AS EXTERNAL QUALITY AUDITOR OF IGNOU .....</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>8.4</b>	<b>IGNOU'S PERCEPTION OF THE QUALITY OF THE MARD PROGRAMME .....</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>8.5</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>172</b>

---oOo---

	Page
<b>CHAPTER 9</b>	
<b>SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
<b>9.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS</b> .....	175
9.1.1 EDUCATION POLICY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION .....	175
9.1.2 THE INSTITUTIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AT IGNOU .....	177
9.1.2.1 Quality of course materials .....	178
9.1.2.2 Quality of student support services .....	178
9.1.2.3 Quality of assessment and evaluation .....	179
9.1.3 PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS OF THE QUALITY OF POSTGRADUATE LEVEL DISTANCE EDUCATION .....	180
9.1.4 QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS .....	183
<b>9.2 CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	184
<b>9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	188
<b>9.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH</b> .....	191
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	192
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	213

---oOo---

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1.1: IGNOU Student Data, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia .....	12
Table 2.1: The Development of Distance Education around the World .....	20
Table 2.2: Mega-Universities Offering Various Courses in Distance Education throughout the World .....	21
Table 2.3: Number of Students Enrolled in the African Virtual University for Degree and Diploma Courses in Business Administration .....	33
Table 2.4: Old Versus New Paradigms for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Education .....	45
Table 4.1: Criteria and indicators for assessing quality in distance Education programmes .....	66
Table 4.2: The Study's Criteria and Indicators to Evaluate Quality in Distance Education .....	69
Table 5.1: Summary of the Main Themes and Sub-Themes .....	87
Table 5.2: Summary of the Complementary Themes and Sub-Themes .....	88
Table 5.3: Quality indicators and Main Research Questions .....	93
Table 6.1: Trends of Academic Staff in Higher Education Institutions .....	104
Table 6.2: Enrolment Trends in Postgraduate Programmes in Ethiopia .....	106
Table 6.3: National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies in Africa .....	109

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1.1: Diagram of the Order of the Study Report .....	14
Figure 2.1: The Five Generations of Distance Education - Short Illustration .....	30
Figure 2.2: An Input-Process-Outcomes Framework for Assessing Quality in Education .....	38
Figure 3.1: Structure of Ethiopian Formal Education System .....	58
Figure 4.1: Conceptual Framework Diagram .....	70
Figure 7.1: Major Components of High Quality Teaching Learning Environment in Distance Education .....	129
Figure 8.1: Learners 'Perceptions of Quality in DE Based on Three Domains .....	156

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The development of human resources in Ethiopia is not efficient and the economy of the country is also weak which calls for strategies that promote efficiency in the use of resources. Fayessa (2010) argues that Ethiopia does not have sufficient resources to build enough traditional classrooms to meet the needs of the country. It is, therefore, necessary to seek alternatives, such as distance education, especially, in order to increase access to higher education and to improve the quality of education to respond to the ever-growing human resource development needs of the country.

Globally, distance education programmes have been acknowledged as changing the lives of many people in developing and developed countries. Several countries offer distance education programmes, including Australia, South Africa, China, Greece and Turkey (Dooley, 2005:262). Based on its nature of delivery, distance education is perceived as a tool or a vehicle designed to reach people in different contexts, such as in rural areas and the workplace (Nwuke, 2008). It is argued that the provision of distance education will improve the well-being of the people and, consequently, contribute to the economic sustainability of the country.

### 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Education is defined in a number of ways, based on the role it plays in different aspects of human life. However, most scholars and educators agree that education is a basic tool which assists economic development, social welfare and political equality (Mishra, Vijayshri & Garg, 2008; Phillips, 1976:312; Manjulinka, 1996:171). This reality makes education a most important human activity. Higher education, in particular, plays a most appropriate role in guiding future development in Ethiopia. National capacity building, sustainable development and poverty reduction endeavours should, therefore, be a priority in the country. Education has a unique

role to play in these respects as Ethiopian society needs investment in education for socio-economic up-liftment.

The education system in Ethiopia has, generally, faced a number of problems, including inequality, inaccessibility, the irrelevance of the old education system and low quality. With respect to higher education, the sector was neglected and currently it faces problems associated with the quality and relevance of programmes of studies and research, equity, resource constraints and inefficient resource utilization (Bogale, 2006). To alleviate the prevailing problems, the country needs to put in place many innovative programmes and projects (MOE, 2003). After acknowledging the undeveloped status of higher education in the country, the present Ethiopian government introduced reforms in the higher education system to enable higher institutions to contribute to the development of human resources needed for the social and economic development of the country.

As a result, new higher education reform policies were adopted in Proclamation No.351 of 2003 and Proclamation No.650 of 2009. For the first time, following the implementation of these reforms, higher education institutions were autonomous and were able to run and manage their own affairs, including appointing their own academic vice-presidents and institutional managers. The main reason for restructuring the Ethiopian education system was to bring about a desired quality of standard and a relevant system for the economic development of the country which is an aspect which was not recognised by the old education system. Thus, the major focus of higher education in the country should be to provide quality and relevant education.

Globally, and especially in a developing country like Ethiopia, if there is an improvement in higher education capacity and capability, there is the potential to contribute to the development of human resources that can facilitate the social and economic development of the country (Thomas, 2008). However, in Ethiopia the universities' contributions to the development of the country through the improvement of human resources are insufficient (Bogale, 2006). According to Fayessa (2010), the development of human resources in Ethiopia is not efficient and the country's economy is also weak. In order to cope with increasing demands for

higher education in the context of diminishing resources, many countries have resorted to distance education as an alternative means of accessing higher education. For example, Fayessa (2010) argues that Ethiopia does not have sufficient resources to build enough traditional classrooms to meet the needs of the country. The call is for cost-effective strategies in the provision of higher education which will not only increase access, but also improve the quality of education. In Ethiopia, as in other African countries, distance education could facilitate the advancement of human resource development at different levels. The Ethiopian Distance Learning Association (EDLA) and the International Open College of Ethiopia (IOCE) have observed that if the country aims to improve the living conditions of its people through education, then it should recognise and acknowledge an inevitable paradigm shift from a traditional face-to-face system of education to a system of distance education (Nwuke, 2008:76). However, in Ethiopia the national education policy has overlooked distance education despite the role it plays in responding to society's needs for access to higher education. Thus, higher education, through distance education, is deemed to be necessary in order to improve the education system to respond to the ever-growing human resource needs of the country (Fayessa, 2010). It is argued that distance education offers an alternative delivery system that could meet the envisaged demand for quality human resources in Ethiopia.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

In Ethiopia higher education opportunities, in general, and postgraduate education, in particular, are limited. This has hindered access to postgraduate studies in public universities and, consequently, led to a shortage of qualified staff and high levels of skill in both the public and the private sectors. For this reason, international distance education providers offer an alternative for accessing higher education at public universities and they offer Ethiopian citizens the opportunity to access postgraduate studies, which broadens the opportunities of access to quality higher learning. It is the contention of this study that international distance education providers, especially IGNOU, can play an important role in Ethiopian human resource development strategy.

While distance education has become a critical aspect of an education system following the development of educational technology, the distance education sector has been less responsive and is underdeveloped in Ethiopia as it was not included in the country's higher education proclamation acts of 2003 and 2009. Against this backdrop, the researcher undertook to investigate the aspects of access and quality of the postgraduate distance education programme provided by IGNOU by focusing on three quality indicators, namely: coherence, efficiency and impact.

#### **1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to explore and analyse the role of distance education offered by an international provider in meeting the demand for access to, and quality of, postgraduate studies and, thereby, responding to the human resource development needs of the country. The study investigates aspects of the quality of postgraduate distance education in terms of three indicators, namely: coherence, efficiency and impact. In order to achieve this, the researcher set out to do the following:

- Conduct a literature review to identify aspects of access to higher education, in general and to distance education, in particular.
- Examine the choice of distance education as an alternative delivery mode to higher education which extends access to quality education for students.
- Analyse the impact of quality distance education in meeting the human resource development needs of the country.
- Investigate the policy gap in higher education in terms of the provision of access to higher education and how distance education has filled this gap.

#### **1.5 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

While there have been some studies related to education in Ethiopia, the emphasis has been mainly on public primary and secondary schools and no comprehensive coverage of higher education and private cross-border distance education. A comprehensive study of this magnitude, therefore, was deemed necessary to fill the gap that may have occurred in the emphasis of previous studies being restricted to public higher education. Greater and more comprehensive insight is the result of this study and, therefore, it makes a significant contribution to the development of distance education in the country.



In recent years distance education has, increasingly, become a popular alternative education delivery system. This development, which is attributed largely to technological advancement, has widened its applicability and its potential to address the current needs of society which the conventional education system could not meet (King, 1999:102).

Although this study was focused on postgraduate distance education at IGNOU, it is suggested that the findings have a wider application by highlighting, in particular, the strengths and weaknesses of the development of distance education in Ethiopia. To be more specific, the findings of this study would do the following:

- Help educational managers recognise the role and function of international postgraduate-level distance education providers in furthering the development of higher education in the country.
- Help the national and regional Ministry of Education bureaus as well as those universities providing postgraduate distance education recognise both the challenges and accomplishments of distance education in the country.
- Contribute to the existing body of knowledge concerning the role and function of cross-border distance education programmes at the higher education level.
- Encourage other researchers to embark on studies focusing on international postgraduate distance education practices and challenges, roles, functions and problems, especially in the context of developing the country.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study posed the following research questions as a guide in addressing the research problem.

### **1.6.1 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION**

The main research question is:

*“How can distance education enhance access to quality postgraduate education in Ethiopia?”*

## 1.6.2 SUB-QUESTIONS

The following sub-questions, which emanate from the main research question, were posed:

- *To what extent does national education policy in Ethiopia support the development of distance education?*
- *How efficient are the lines of communication between the different implementing partners (host faculty and department, and student) in the delivery of the programme?*
- *What are the efficiency elements in the delivery of this programme that enhance quality and how are these ensured?*
- *How do the criteria for quality distance education at IGNOU relate to the higher education quality assurance policy of the country?*
- *What are the perceptions of the various stakeholders concerning the quality of the postgraduate Master of Art in Rural Development (MARD) programme offered at IGNOU in Ethiopia?*

## 1.7 CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA

The main objective of this section is to clarify the context of the study as well as to provide information about the Ethiopian higher education system. It begins with a brief overview of the demographic and socio-economic context, which is followed by a discussion of the evolution and development of education and the history of higher education in Ethiopia. It further highlights quality assurance and challenges that the higher education system faces.

### 1.7.1 COUNTRY, PEOPLE AND ECONOMY OF ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia is a country situated on the Horn of Africa, covering a total area of 1,133,380 million square kilometres (Tesfaye, 2010:78). The capital city is Addis Ababa and the country has a large population, estimated to be approximately 85 million. Statistics show that the country has been growing at an average annual rate of 2.6% in 2010/2011. The economy is based on agriculture with 85% of the population living in rural areas and engaging in agricultural work (Tesfaye, 2010).

Ethiopia is one of the oldest established countries in the world and Africa's second most populous nation, after Nigeria. The oldest human skeletons ever to be found were discovered in Ethiopia, an important contribution to the study of human kind and the historical development of human beings. Some recent studies claim that Addis Ababa, as a historical city, may be accepted as the point from which human beings migrated around the world. Ethiopia is bordered by Eritrea to the north, Sudan to the west, Kenya to the south and Somalia to the east (Tesfaye, 2010). Ethiopia is one of two countries that have the highest number of United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) world heritage sites in Africa, sharing this distinction with South Africa. The country is famous for being the home of long distance athletes; of rock-hewn churches; and where the coffee bean originated. It was one of the first countries to officially adopt Christianity, accepting the religion as a state religion in the fourth century AD - after Armenia. Ethiopia also has a significant Muslim community dating from the earliest days of Islam. It was the destination of the first emigrants in Islamic history and hosts the site of the oldest Muslim settlement in Africa at Negash. The earliest ninth century Sultanates and the holy Muslim city of Harar are also found in Ethiopia (United Nations, 2011).

The country has been a secular one since 1974. Historically, a relatively isolated mountain country, but by the mid-twentieth century Ethiopia became a crossroad of global international cooperation under the leadership of Emperor Haile Selassie I. It became a member of the League of Nations in 1923 and was one of the signatories of the Declaration of the United Nations in 1942, becoming one of the fifty-one original founding members of the United Nations (UN). The role played by the imperial government in supporting the independence of several African countries from colonialism led these liberated countries to adopt Ethiopian's national flag colours of green, yellow and red which are often labelled as pan-African colours.

On 12 September 1974 a military junta overthrew Haile Selassie who had reigned since 1930. The current government of Ethiopia came to power in 1991 and the first president was Dr Negasso Gidada. The EPRDF-led government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi promoted a policy of ethnic federalism. According to the economist, Tesfaye (2010), Ethiopia is currently considered to be one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. The GDP of the country was the fastest growing one for a non-

oil African nation in 2009 and 2010. Various efforts have been made to improve the national economy since 1991, but poverty is yet to be eliminated. Frequent droughts in different parts of the country have contributed to a slowdown in development because the economy is still dependent on traditional agriculture and crop production. It is estimated that 85% of the population is employed by the agricultural sector and the economy is based, predominantly, on subsistence farming.

### **1.7.2 EVOLUTION OF EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA**

For many centuries education in Ethiopia was dominated by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, until secular education was adopted in the early 1900s. Higher education was only launched in 1950 with the establishment of the Addis Ababa University College. There was a need to change and raise awareness of the importance of education in the country's social structure and for children to be encouraged, and be required, to attend school and become educated. Not much improvement in education was observed during Emperor Haile Selassie's regime from 1930 until 1974; it only produced one university college, namely, the Addis Ababa University College.

The Soviet-backed military junta, the "Derg", led by the Mengistu Haile Mariam regime which took over and ruled the country from 1974 to 1991, established four university colleges. In many ways these were, mainly, dependent on Addis Ababa University which played a leading role in their establishment and in their curriculum design and development and staff recruitment.

Generally, higher education in Ethiopia was neglected and, consequently, became underdeveloped. Currently, it faces problems associated with the quality and relevance of programmes of studies and research, equity, resource constraints and inefficient use of resources. The universities' contributions to the development of the country, particularly in the large numbers of the human resources required for development, are not sufficient (Bogale, 2006). Globally, higher education plays a role in the human, social and economic development of the various countries (Thomas, 2008).

Throughout the world problems exist which include ever-growing populations; increases in the complexity of all aspects of life; increasingly higher educational requirements for almost all types of jobs; and a need for technical skills to function effectively within a knowledge economy. According to Matkinw (2010), today, higher education has a significant influence on institutions, learners and teachers as globalisation results in increased competition; more emphasis on economic development; and an increase in communication technologies. Due to inefficiency in meeting all these challenges by means of traditional face-to-face education, in the future distance education will be more expansive in its use of new technologies to reach more people in rural and urban settings (Matkinw, 2010:39). In order to cope with the increasing need for higher education in a context of diminishing resources, many countries have resorted to distance education as an alternative means of accessing higher education. However, this aspect has been overlooked in the national education policy on distance education. In terms of the role it could play in responding to the society's need for access to higher education, distance education is deemed necessary to improve the education system's response to the ever-growing human resources needs of the country (Fayessa, 2010).

### **1.7.3 THE SELECTED CROSS-BORDER DISTANCE INSTITUTION: INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY (IGNOU) IN ETHIOPIA**

As indicated in the previous section, IGNOU is one of the international institutions which offer postgraduate-level distance education programmes in Ethiopia. However, IGNOU is not the only cross-border distance education provider in the country as there are some other international providers as well. The University of South Africa (UNISA), for example, is one of those which has been operating in Ethiopia since 2006 in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and has contributed to the capacity building and human resource development needs of the country. In Ethiopia UNISA is known as a regional learning centre for East African countries. Collaboration between UNISA and the MoE was established through the initiative of two statesmen: the former President of South Africa, Mr Thabo Mbeki, and the late Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Mr Meles Zenawi (UNISA-Ethiopia Newsletter, 2011).

Presently, after extending its services in Ethiopia in 2006, UNISA focuses mainly on capacity building of the newly established universities in the country by using highly qualified academics and leaders. This stands as additional evidence of how the cross-border distance higher institutions make a positive contribution to the development of the country's higher education sector and, thereby, assist in addressing the human resource development needs of the country. On the other hand, it is also an example of the importance of collaboration, through the Ministry of Education, between Addis Ababa University as a traditional contact university and UNISA as a cross-border distance education provider in order to develop higher education, in general, and distance education, in particular. Although the private provision of higher education is relatively new in Ethiopia and unknown to many people in the country, it is making a significant contribution to the economy and to the human resource development needs of the country (Nwuke, 2008).

The researcher's choice of IGNOU as a case study is based on the fact that IGNOU is one of the largest universities in the world which provides higher education opportunities by means of distance mode to local, national and international students. It is one of the leading educational institutions in Ethiopia with a high number of postgraduate students when compared to other private universities in the country. It offers nine various Master's programmes, including a Master of Art in Rural Development. The focus on the Master in Rural Development was based on the fact that a majority of the Ethiopian population (85%) is engaged in agricultural work and lives in rural areas (Tesfaye, 2010). As result, an education programme that has a focus on rural educational development will have some relevance in this context, especially in meeting the human resource needs of the country.

### **1.7.3.1 IGNOU programmes on offer in Ethiopia**

The programmes which are organised through IGNOU's headquarters in Delhi, India, are offered in partnership with a local private university college, namely, St Mary's University College (SMUC) which is based in Addis Ababa. The programmes offered are based on the principle of providing postgraduate studies by means of a cross-border distance educational institution in Ethiopia. The Master's programmes, offered at SMUC through IGNOU, in Ethiopia were introduced in 2006 when the two

parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Addis Ababa. Following the ratification of the Memorandum of Understanding, IGNOU's programmes were officially launched on 18 July 2006. The initial step to bring this internationally reputable university to Ethiopia, in partnership with St Mary's University College which was the first private institution in the country to offer training at post-graduate level, was seen as a positive one.

IGNOU, in collaboration with SMUC, offers nine Master's programmes in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, namely: Master of Business Administration; Master of Commerce; Master of Arts in Public Administration; Master of Arts in Rural Development; Master of Arts in Economics; Master of Arts in Sociology; Master of Arts in Political Science; Master of Arts in Social Work; and Master of Arts in Tourism Management. During 2011/12 the enrolment in all nine Master's programmes was over 4,000 (IGNOU, 2012).

IGNOU, in partnership with a local private university college, namely, St Mary's University College (SMUC) which is mainly based in Addis Ababa, offer various Masters Programmes by means of a cross-border distance educational institution in Ethiopia. The programmes are organised through IGNOU's headquarters in Delhi, India, and are offered in Ethiopia in partnership with a local private university college described above.

Following the endorsement of the Memorandum of Understanding, IGNOU's programmes were officially launched on 18 July 2006. The initial step to bring this reputable private international university to Ethiopia, in partnership with St. Mary's University College to offer training at post graduate level, was seen as a positive development in private sector for the country as this pioneer venture in the history of private higher education institutions in the country provided opportunities for people to pursue higher education while 'working' (IGNOU, 2008).

The majority of the students in the various postgraduate programmes are, mainly, working or professional people who would like to further their studies while working and attending to family matters. The postgraduate Master's programmes open for admissions in January and July of every year and the duration of the degree is two

consecutive years (IGNOU, 2011:14). Table 1.1, below, illustrates the enrolment and number of students who have graduated since IGNOU's inception in 2006 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

**Table 1.1: IGNOU Student Data in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from July 2006 to January 2012**

S/N	Programme	Registered Students	Graduated students	Active Students
1	MARD	577	199	378
2	MBA	473	64	409
3	MCOM	494	48	446
4	MEC	769	82	687
5	MLIS	11	3	8
6	MPA	518	79	439
7	MSO	873	273	600
8	MSW	400	9	391
9	MPS	7	1	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	9	<b>4122</b>	758	3364

(Source: Compiled from data received from IGNOU and SMUC, 2012)

Some programmes, like the Master of Political Science, have very few students. Among the largest number of enrolments in the above programmes is the Master of Art in Rural Development (MARD). The focus of this study has a relatively significant number of graduated and active students, as is shown in Table 1.1. A large number of the participants reflected in the above table attended the Master of Art in Public Administration (MPA) which trains many public and private sectors administrators for participation in the country's various levels of governance.



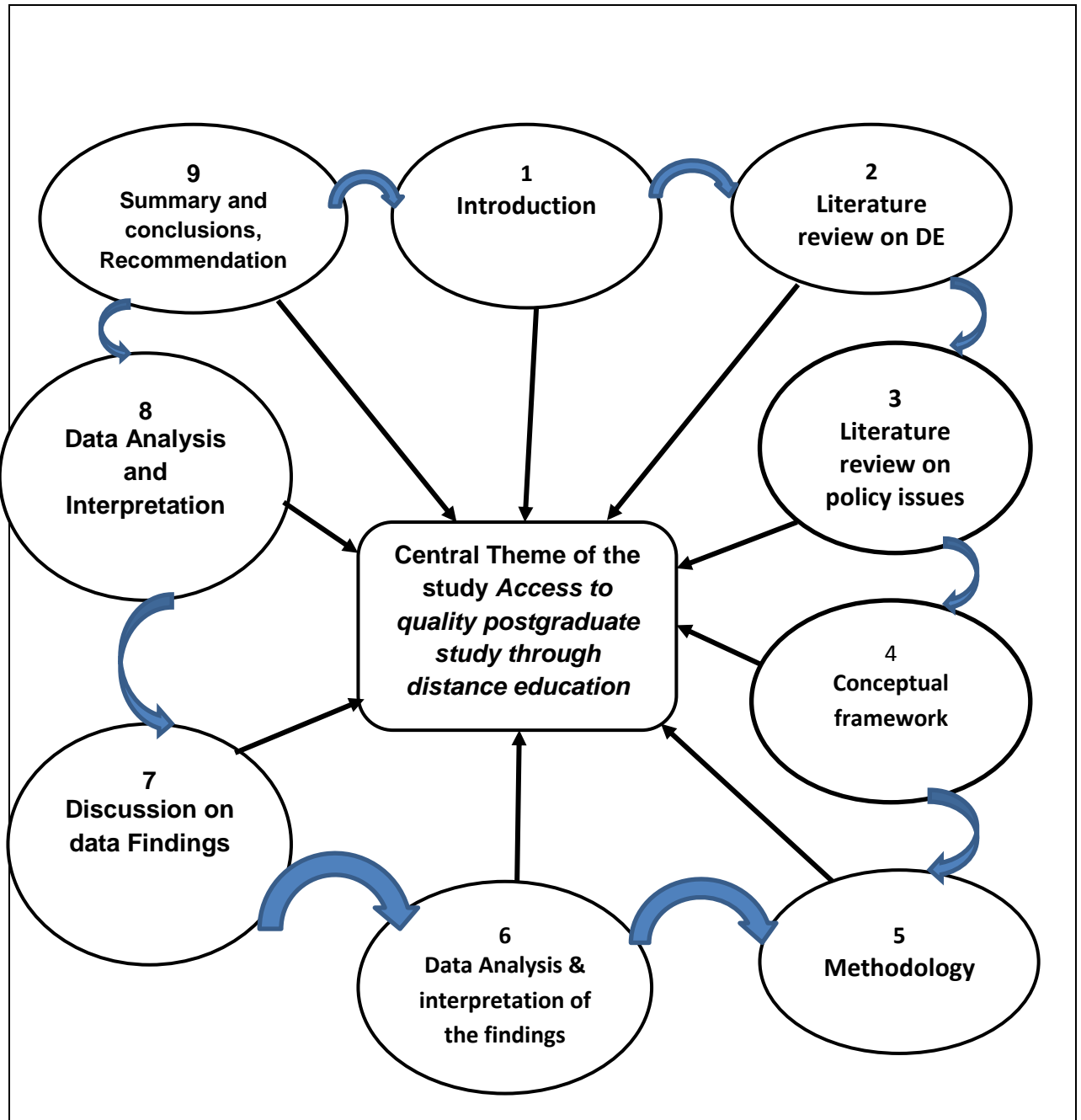
## 1.8 LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

There are a number of limitations to this study but they give validity to the findings of this study. The first limitation is related to the lack of the generalisation of the results, based on the small sample used. Nevertheless, the results that relate to the international postgraduate-level distance education programme in question may lead to inferences applicable to other private international postgraduate institutions in a similar context. A second limitation is related to the limited knowledge some respondents had of distance education. The researcher, however, diplomatically tried to reshape their opinions to suit the main research questions and the study topic accordingly. Many developing countries, especially in Africa, are faced with the challenge of responding to the increased demand for higher education and due to constraints in resources distance education has been used as an alternative means of access to higher education.

Challenges were encountered by the researcher during the course of the study. The first and immediate challenge that confronted the researcher was the fact that as a full time student he had to live alone in foreign country and apart from his family for almost four years. Secondly, the researcher faced a substantial challenge with regard to finances. The researcher was initially promised finance by a church-related donor organisation but after a single grant the scholarship support was terminated and the researcher had to rely on his own and other sources to pay all the necessary costs incurred as well as fund the entire research work. During the whole study period this proved to be strenuous. However, through the efforts of his supervisor, the researcher was able to obtain some funding from the university which alleviated the strain and enable him to complete his study for which the researcher is very grateful, particularly, to his supervisor and to the university.

## 1.9 THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Figure 1.1, below, gives a graphic picture of the structure of the study.



**Figure 1.1: Diagram of the Structure of the Study Report**

As can be seen from the above diagram, the study is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 1**

This chapter introduces the study in terms of its aim; statement of the research problem; rationale; methodology; its theoretical framework; and outline of the chapters. The purpose of the chapter is to provide the reader with an overview as to what to expect, i.e., educational development in Ethiopia. It further explains the problem statement of the research which is based on the debate regarding the

potential of distance education as an alternative education method to provide access to quality postgraduate education. The research gap has been identified by means of background information regarding the undeveloped nature of distance education in Ethiopia. The chapter also includes the purpose of the study; the research problem; and the rationale for the study. Furthermore, it looks at the conceptual framework, the research design and the limitations and delimitations of the study and offers an overview of the significance of the study.

- **Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 focuses on a review of the relevant literature which explores debates around access and quality in relation to postgraduate distance education. The impact of a policy framework on the development of distance education is highlighted. Furthermore, the chapter explores the global development of cross-border distance education.

The pedagogical elements of the selected institution, IGNOU, in line with the quality indicators of the study in the available literature and in the documents analysed, are discussed. Through the relevant literature the various views of scholars regarding distance education; increasing access to higher education; and its relevance in meeting the human resource development needs of the country at large, as it relates to the research topic, are also analysed.

- **Chapter 3**

Chapter 3 is continuation of a review of the relevant literature on policy development and frameworks of distance education in the Ethiopian context. It highlights the historical and policy context for the underdevelopment of higher education in Ethiopia and makes a case for the use of distance education as an alternative means of access to higher education.

- **Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 presents the conceptual framework of the study, based on Lockhart and Lacy (2002) and Latchem and Jung's (2007), assessment models and methods for evaluating distance education programmes. In this regard a framework was developed to assess the quality of postgraduate education provided by a cross-border institution (IGNOU).

- **Chapter 5**

Chapter 5 presents the research design and methodology in terms of a case study approach. In this regard a framework was developed from the qualitative case study by employing purposeful sampling procedures. Two data gathering instruments, namely, interviews and document analysis are discussed. The researcher also presents the profile of the participants and the way the research questions were approached. Some ethical guidelines and considerations and access issues are also explained. This chapter covers methodology, research design, tools and content validation of the research as related to the theoretical framework.

- **Chapter 6**

Chapter 6 centres the discussion on the findings of the study. It discusses the impact of the national education policy on distance education in the Ethiopia and it provides an analysis and interpretation of the data, especially relating to the policy framework and the policy gap identified between conventional and distance education.

- **Chapter 7**

Chapter 7 focuses on analysis and interpretation, followed by institutional pedagogical practices which are identified and which lead to quality postgraduate education through distance education. In this chapter the various institutional pedagogical activities, including student support services, course materials and assessment methods of IGNOU, are highlighted.

- **Chapter 8**

The final discussion on the findings is given in Chapter 8 with regard to the various stakeholders' perceptions of the access and quality of distance education provided by IGNOU in Ethiopia.

- **Chapter 9**

In the final chapter, Chapter 9, a summary is given and conclusions concerning the findings are discussed. Some recommendations and areas for further study are made in this chapter. The major area in which further research is needed is also explained.

In the following chapter, Chapter 2, the importance of distance education and its development and issues of access and quality are discussed.

## CHAPTER 2

### A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON DISTANCE EDUCATION

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a review of the relevant literature related to the growth and development of distance education. It focuses on the concept of quality in relation to the topic of the study, its definition and the types of technologies which are used in distance education. Furthermore, the literature review looks at the main attributes and drawbacks of distance education. This chapter provides an explanation of access and quality of higher education in both conventional and distance education modes. Attention is drawn to the expansion, role and importance of distance education and the need for a policy framework to integrate distance education with conventional face-to-face higher education.

#### 2.2 DEFINITION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION, AND OTHER RELATED CONCEPTS

Distance education, open learning and correspondence education are often used interchangeably, but have different meanings. The following are definitions for distance education and other related concepts:

- **Distance education (DE)**

DE has been defined in many ways by various scholars. Keegan, for example, defines it “as a method of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes to learners, using high quality materials for those learners who geographically departed from their

teachers” (1986:39). Similarly, Moore (1973:6) defines distance teaching as instructional methods in which the teaching behaviours are executed apart from the learners.

The definition of distance education has been explained as “instruction through print or electronic media to persons engaged in planned learning in a place or time different from that of the teacher or instructors” (Keegan, 1986:39). As new technological advancements develop, the traditional definitions of distance education gradually started being reconceptualised by different scholars and educators.

According to Holmberg, distance education is “the form of education in which there is a geographical separation between the teacher and the student” (1985:331). He further notes that “distance education is a form of study which is not at all under the continuous supervision of tutors, and the tutors are not present with their students in lecture rooms.” Holmberg suggests that learners and tutors can be “on the same premises, but which, however, can benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of tutorial organization” (1985:330).

Aguti (2003:24) is of the opinion that distance education teaching takes place by means of printed materials; face-to-face meetings and interaction; correspondence communication between learners and institutions; and the use of other communication channels, such as telephones, radio, computers, video conferencing and the like. Similarly, the Commonwealth of Learning COL (2004) defines distance education as the delivery of learning and teaching for those who are living in the remote areas, mostly separated by the time and space from those who are teaching or providing training.

- **Correspondence education**

Correspondence education, on the other hand, is a traditional distance education system in which courses are offered in the form of printed material. Sometimes they also include different media, such as audio cassettes (Daniel, 1996:48). However, Adams argues that traditional correspondence education, offered by mail by western universities as extension programmes, is mainly for profit-making purposes (Adams, 2007:17).

An accepted, and a good modern, definition of distance education is given by Moore and Kearsley who maintain that “distance education is a planned learning that require special techniques of course design and instruction, communication through various technologies, and special organizational and administrative arrangements” (2005:54). This study uses their and Holmberg’s concepts of distance education as its working definition, namely: “distance education is a form of study which is not at all under the continuous supervision of tutors and the tutors are not present with their students in lecture rooms”(Holmberg, in Moore and Kearsley, 2005:54).

- **Quality**

According to Gandhe (2007:11), quality is matching or fitness for the purpose for which it stands. Gandhe (2007) associates quality with high standards, perfection and consistency, transformation and value for money. In agreement with this view, Harvey and Green define quality as “excellence, fitness for purpose, value for money, transformation and perfection” (1993:9).

- **Quality Assurance (QA)**

In terms of QA Zenawi (2006) suggests that input, process and outcomes are the main elements that ensure minimum standards that enhance the quality of distance education. In other words, QA is a planned process to maintain and enhance the acceptable quality standards for education, which can be achieved by providing the necessary infrastructure.

## **2.3 GROWTH AND MAIN DEVELOPMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AROUND THE WORLD**

It is evident that no developing country, using traditional methods of education alone, can hope to make education universally available in order to meet the qualified human resources needed. Therefore, many countries around the world have developed distance education to increase access to higher education. To ensure that this mode of provision meets the required needs, quality measures have been built into the delivery of distance education. From the available data, the following table indicates the number of countries on different continents and the number of

institutions involved in distance education around the world for example, in the mid-1990s (see Table 2.1, below).

**Table 2.1: The Development of Distance Education around the World**

SN	Regions	Countries	Institutions
1	Africa	34	126
2	Asia	18	101
3	Australia	4	68
4	Middle East	2	3
5	Europe	18	240
6	North America	2	237
7	Caribbean	4	6
8	Latin America	13	54
	<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>835</b>

(Source: Sharma, 1997)

Although the current number of distance education institutions in different continents and regions have increased when compared to the above figures, the researcher was, however, limited in terms of the comprehensive statistical data available for distance education at the time of the research. From Table 2.1 above, it is clear that the majority of distance education institutions (477 institutions out of 835) are located in the developed world, such Europe and North America.

However, despite their large populations all other developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean have less than 300 distance educational institutions. This, therefore, implies that much more is required to be done in developing nations to further develop, and use, the potential of distance education.

According to Moore (2005), the late 1960s and early 1970s were times of critical change in the expansion of distance education all over the world. Today, many worldwide mega universities provide distance education as a single mode of delivery system. The following table, Table 2.2, illustrates the more current higher enrolment rate in distance education in different countries.



**Table 2.2: Mega Universities throughout the World Offering Various Courses in Distance Education**

Country	Institution	Established	Enrolment
India	Indira Gandhi National Open University	1985	3.5 million
Pakistan	Allama Iqbal Open University	1974	3.2 million
China	Open University of China	1979	2.7 million
Turkey	Anadolu University	1982	884,081
Indonesia	University of Terbuka	1984	646,467
Bangladesh	Open University of Bangladesh	1992	600,00
South Africa	University of South Africa	1873	328,179
Korea	Korean National Open University	1982	210,978
UK	The Open University of the United Kingdom	1969	203,744
Iran	Payame Noor University	1987	183,000
Thailand	Sukhothai Thammathirath	1978	181,372
Spain	Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia	1972	180,000

(Source: Allen and Seaman, 2012)

The Indira Gandhi National Open University of India is the largest distance university in the world with 3.5 million enrolled students in various fields of speciality in 2012. Allama Iqbal Open University in Pakistan is the second largest Open University with a total of 3.2 million students. The University of South Africa (UNISA), the oldest distance education university, founded in 1873, had 328,179 student enrolments in 2012 ([www.indiaempowered.com](http://www.indiaempowered.com)). The above Table shows that the highest enrolment rate is found in developing countries. For example, China, India and Pakistan are the three leading countries in terms of distance education student enrolment. However, as described above, the number of the distance education institutions in the developing nations is small when compared to the so-called developed countries.

Even though there are some differences in these institutions, they share important similarities: all of them are single-mode distance teaching institutions, dedicated mainly to distance education programmes. Their main approach to teaching and learning is through this mode and they employ teams of experts and specialists to

design courses. Furthermore, they accommodate a large number of students to meet the various educational needs of their countries and beyond their borders (Dirk, 2001). When offered the chance, distance education became an option for many African adults as a means of pursuing their academic careers due to its merits and the quality of the distance education programmes (Pityana, 2004).

Some of the major factors that have necessitated distance education, globally, are the ever-growing world population; an increase in the complexity of all aspects of life; increasingly higher education requirements for almost all types of jobs; and the global knowledge economy putting pressure on individuals in terms of having access to education and lifelong learning to remain productive and competitive. Thus, the capacity of 'human capital' formation has become a pre-condition for a nation's development. A conventional education system is limited to its scope to meet the learning needs of the people and open and distance education has emerged as an alternative mode of access to expand the scope and coverage of higher education (Simpson, 2003).

In recent years distance education has been seen as an effective and efficient system to meet an ever-rising demand for higher education in both developed and developing countries. More particularly, distance education plays a major role in developing countries, like Ethiopia, that have limited resources to cope with an increased number of students in need of higher education in a context where few workers are adequately trained (Nwuke, 2008). Globally, the development of human resources that can play significant role in the social and economic development of the various countries depends on their higher education capabilities (Thomas, 2008).

### **2.3.1 THE ROLE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN PROVIDING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION**

Millions of adult learners in various countries across the globe have benefited from access to higher education through distance education (Meyer, 2002). At a global level, many studies have been conducted which are concerned with distance education providing access to higher education. For instance, a study carried out by the Research Academic Cooperation Association in Europe (2007 and 2008) shows

that the involvement of international postgraduate distance providers in Europe was increasing access to higher education through cross-border higher distance education, including OUK. Thus, distance education has the potential to increase access to higher education and, thereby, be accepted by many people in both developed and developing countries.

As such, no research supports the perception that traditional face-to-face instruction in the contact education system is of superior quality when compared to that provided by the distance education mode of delivery (Campbell and Swift, 2006). Moore and Kearsley (1996) maintain that there is no evidence to support the idea that the conventional education system, or classroom instruction, is the best and only method of education delivery. Courses offered by means of distance education can be as effective as classroom instruction, provided that they are well-prepared, designed and implemented. Therefore, if distance education can be effectively planned and prepared; if it is able to uphold quality and standards; and if it can be delivered at different educational levels, it could respond to the growing demand for higher education and improve, and meet, the human resource development needs of a country.

Distance education programmes are changing the lives of many people, in both developing and developed countries. According to Dooley (2005:262), for instance, in Australia, Europe, South Africa, China, Greece and Turkey distance education is seen as a tool or a vehicle to reach the people, especially in rural areas and it serves to improve their well-being and economic sustainability. For example, many famous African political leaders studied for their higher education qualifications through distance education. The former late South African President, Nelson Mandela, President Robert Mugabe and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu are among them. The advantages of distance education are applicable to Ethiopia where higher education, especially postgraduate studies, are limited and where a majority of the population is situated in the rural areas and they are engaged in the agricultural sector.

According to Panjab, (2004), the advantages and benefits of distance education include the fact that there is no geographical separation of political boundaries; costs

are low when compared to traditional face-to-face delivery modes; it saves time; and it is flexible as there are no classroom boundaries to learning. In addition, there is no age barrier as older and young people have equal access to distance education and, lastly, distance education promotes lifelong learning. In distance education the focus is on the needs of the people, to whom the education message is addressed, including various groups, such as dropouts from conventional high schools; out-of-school youth, on-the-job people, farmers, teachers and women (Sharma, as cited by Sharker, 2011).

The flexibility of the distance education delivery system allows students to fit in their study plans/programmes with their work, social and family commitments. It allows them to study at home, in the office or in any place and at any time that suits them. “As many can attest today, distance education also plays a vital role in the expansion of female education at the higher level. For example, in Pakistan women, who, for economic, family, social or cultural reasons, are unable to attend traditional face-to-face education, now benefit through distance education” (Malik, 2010:166). It is obvious from the above information that distance education is the single tool for females in Pakistan for enrichment of their educational status. The distance education system is becoming increasingly popular in Pakistan, especially for female students in providing access to higher education (Malik, 2010:1780).

### **2.3.2 THE NEED AND RELEVANCE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA**

In Ethiopia, as in other developing countries, distance education has a significant role to play in human resource development at different levels. With reference to the Ethiopian Distance Learning Association (EDLA) and the international Open College of Ethiopia, Marew believes that “if the country aims to improve the living conditions of its people through education, then it will need to recognize and acknowledge an inevitable paradigm shift from traditional face-to-face education system to a system of distance education”(Marew, 2006:78). Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Kenya in East Africa have effectively utilized distance education to significantly improve their human resource base, especially in their training of teachers (UNISA, 2008:7).

The development of human resources in Ethiopia is not efficient and the economy of the country is also still weak and calls for strategies to promote efficiency in the use of its resources. In this regard, looking for alternatives, especially for higher education through distance education, is deemed to be necessary in order to improve the education system and to respond to the ever-growing human resources needs of the country (Fayessa, 2010).

While in reality the country requires a flexible approach to education, the focus so far has been on conventional public contact education and, therefore, a paradigm shift to distance education is required. Fayessa (2010) argues that while higher distance education, especially at tertiary level, can be seen as a strategy for promoting human resource development in Ethiopia, the role of distance education has been overlooked in the higher education reform documents.

The argument for the development of distance education depends on policies being in place for encouraging training at postgraduate level. It is for this reason that this study sets out to show what its impact may be on distance teaching institutions in Ethiopia if higher education, especially at postgraduate level, for sustainable human resource development is promoted. To this end, analysing the education policy and its implications for postgraduate distance teaching institutions is vital.

According to Marew (2006), distance education is particularly suited to Ethiopia, as it is in other developing nations, for the following main reasons:

- It has the potential to reach a large group of people in a short period of time in both rural and urban settings.
- It allows for flexibility in targeting specific courses/issues and audiences.
- It is cost-effective.
- It enables voluntary teachers and professionals from different parts of the world to participate from where they are without, necessarily, gathering in the same place.

An advantage and benefit of distance education is its ability to increase the capacity for education in new subject areas, such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Through the use of the new ICTs there is an obvious improvement in the provision of distance education in terms of increasing access to higher

education (Robinson, 2008). The use of ICTs and their supportive role in the offering of distance education has been recognised in national educational systems around the world, especially in developing countries (Moore & Tait, 2002). In view of this, Panjab, (2004) believes that distance education is a revolutionary innovation of providing dynamic and cost-effective access to, and quality in, education. This dynamism in distance education came about because of several fast changes that have taken place as a result of new ICTs interventions. Distance education is cost-effective compared to conventional education systems, considering that not much time and money needs to be spent by students in terms of travel to attend class. It is possible to study further through distance education while working and attending to social and family commitments.

Recently, Ethiopia has rapidly developed its higher educational institution system by increasing the number of its higher education institutions (HEIs). From only 2 universities in 1991, the number has increased to 22 in 2009 and the number is expected to reach 33 by the end of 2014 (Kate, 2010). Enrolment has increased from an annual intake of more than 5,000 in public universities in the early 1990s to approximately 79,500 at the beginning of the 2010 academic year. This surge in the number of enrolments includes those of private institutions which constitute 20% of the intake (Kate, 2010). This rapid expansion in higher education has increased the demand for qualified staff to run the newly established universities in order to meet the required standards of quality education (Bogale, 2006).

Furthermore, researchers at the Forum for Social Studies (2009) have argued that “the results of the external quality audits recently conducted by the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) indicated that the available inputs and process to maintain the quality of higher education have not been able to keep pace with the phenomenal rate of physical expansion and enrolment growth” (Forum for Social Studies, 2009: x). However, the situation of private higher institutions in the country in terms of quality has not been addressed. This study aims to examine it, with a specific focus on the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) as the case study.

The aim of this study is to examine and analyse access to quality postgraduate education through IGNOU and its relevance in contributing to the development of human resources in Ethiopia. The inquiry is based on the premise that distance education has been overlooked in Ethiopian higher education and that it has the potential to contribute to increasing access to higher education and, thereby, meeting the human resource development needs of the country. This study was conducted at Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), with particular focus on the Master's programme in Rural Development. IGNOU is a national university which was established in 1985 and has its headquarters in New Delhi, India. Currently, it has 40 partner institutions, globally, including St Mary's University College in Ethiopia. It also boasts more than 3 million students and 1,462 qualified staff and faculty members from all over the world (IGNOU, 2012).

In this study, the researcher has examined the paradox of education in Ethiopia which is that while the reality of the country demands a multiple approach and mode of education provision, the emphasis in Ethiopia has been only on the expansion of the provision of contact-based education and has neglected distance education. It is argued in this study that access to quality higher education through distance is possible, provided that the necessary conditions are fulfilled, namely: that it is accredited; meets the required criteria for quality standards; that it is designed to address the human resources needs of the country; and that it is able to fulfil the needs of the learners in terms of access and flexibility in its mode of delivery. The major sources of information for the study are document analysis and responses from interviews. The findings of the study show that distance education has the potential to increase access to higher education in Ethiopia. Furthermore, the quality indicators or elements at IGNOU with regard to student support services; the quality of course materials; and assessment methods are given as the evidence of quality enhancement and improvement in a distance education institution.

According to Williamson (2009), distance education can be administered inexpensively; it brings first-world knowledge to the third world; and the learners can access the classroom from where ever they are. The perceptions of many people of distance education have changed; previously, people asked: "*What is distance education?*" followed by the question: "*Why distance education?*" and, today, it is:



*“What else but distance education?”* DE is no longer an option but a necessity, especially due to changes brought about by new information technologies. The quality of each distance education programme depends on the quality of the services provided to the learners by the institution.

Although distance education offers an alternative solution to the ever-growing educational needs and demands of the world’s population, it is not without its own challenges. Aluko, (2007) and Baggaler, (2008) cite the following among some criticisms encountered concerning distance education:

- Some people criticise its quality when compared to the traditional education system.
- In some distance education institutions no regular academic and administrative assistance is provided to distance education students.
- There is a lack of counselling services for distance education students at some levels.
- There is an insufficient number of administrative staff to meet the needs of the ever-increasing number of distance education students.
- A belief still exists among academics and others that distance education is a second-class education system.
- The drop-out rates are estimated at 40-50% for distance education students after registration and these are negatively perceived in developing countries.

There has been criticism regarding the lack of face-to-face contact and interpersonal classroom contact as well as of the mentoring system of distance education and this increases doubts concerning the quality of instruction given by means of DE. Research indicates that the “perception of quality has a profound effect on the acceptability of distance education degrees and programmes” (Allen and Seaman, 2004:27), especially those offered online.

The main reason for this negative perception is, amongst the others, the accreditation status of institutions offering online degrees as some degree-offering distance education programmes are not accredited. According to Adams (2007), many allegations have been levied over the years against distance education and this remains the case today. Nevertheless, the attitudes of many people are

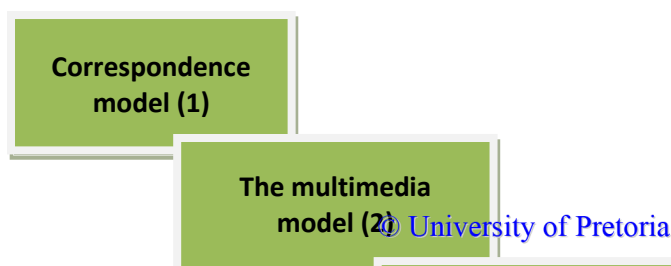


changing due to the significant increase of access and the improvement of quality in distance education. It should also be noted that distance education is now given greater credit for its good practices and flexible learning opportunities for working people. Aguti (2003) suggests that most of the programmes in distance education have good study materials and that they help to bring about desired changes in teaching and learning at higher education institutions. New technological innovation (ICTs) has improved the delivery of distance education in terms of facilitating communication between the learners and their instructors and among students themselves. Through the mediation of new technology the lack of face-to-face contact and interpersonal classroom contact is replaced by frequent internet communications between students and teachers and in some cases by tele-conferencing methods.

### 2.3.3 THE USE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

According to Stale (2008), Open and Distance Education (ODE) has, to a certain extent, been developed in recent years by various technological means, targeting marginalised groups or those living in remote regions. While correspondence education has existed for more than 200 years, modern distance education which involves the wide-ranging use of technology is, generally, accepted to have started with the establishment of the Open University of the UK (OUUK) in 1969. Following the success of the OUUK, a number of open universities were established in various other places. For example, in Asian countries the Korea National Open University (1972); the Allama Iqbal Open University (1974); and the Open University of Sri Lanka (1978), among others, were constituted (Jung, 2013:xxi).

In many countries ODE has been introduced for different purposes; in some cases it is to meet the needs of higher education while in others it is used to improve the quality of teachers. The four major distance and open learning technology-mediated models are widely known as Single Mode, Dual Mode, Mixed Mode and Consortia (Rumble, 1989; Birnbaum, 2001). Taylor (2001) explains the five generations of distance education technology models in the following diagram:



### **Figure 2.1: The Five Generations of Distance Education, a Short Illustration**

Distance education operations have evolved through the five generations indicated in the above figure which were identified and described by Taylor (2001). The first generation, 'Correspondence Model', was based on print technology; the second generation, 'Multimedia Model', included printed materials, audiotapes, videotapes and computer-based learning. The third generation, 'Tele-learning Model', used audio tele-conferencing, video-conferencing, audio graphic communication and broadcast TV/radio and audio-tele-conferencing while the fourth generation, 'Flexible Learning Model' utilised interactive multimedia online, Internet-based access to WWW resources and computer-mediated communication. The fifth generation, 'Intelligent Flexible Learning Model', was based on interactive multimedia (IMM) online, Internet-based access to WWW resources and computer-mediated communication, using automated response systems (Taylor, 2001:40).

However, after the adoption of technological innovations, described above, and due to the rapid development of ICTs distance education has reached another high level as Open Educational Resources (OERs) have, increasingly, been made available by Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) institutions. Rumble and Litto, (2009) explain that with the new information technology development in the mobile, the delivery of electronic learning materials has become possible as mobile-learning-built strategies on portable computing devices. This has brought another

technological advancement to the teaching and learning process by adding a high value to the technology used in both conventional and distance education. Quinn (2012) maintains that according to the World International Telecommunication Union report of 2010 90% of the world's population has access to mobile networks. Therefore, mobile technology has been used for accelerating the teaching and learning process to add high technological value to distance education.

OERs organise academic and licensed resources in a way that they can be re-used, re-purposed, re-mixed and re-distributed by interested individuals (Janet, 2010). OERs consist of many types of educational materials in various fields, including a range of textbooks, lecture notes, assignments, tests, projects, audio and video applications and the like.

The opening of such documents and materials for public use is with an open license. The nature of the open material means that anyone can legally and freely copy, use, adapt and re-share it (Janet, 2010). According to the Global Forum Report (2007), distance education has been acknowledged for its cost-effectiveness, compared to conventional education systems in increasing access and quality to higher education; through distance learning the cost has been dramatically reduced and there has been a marked increase in the availability of quality higher education.

These two technological devices, namely: mobile and Open Educational Resources (OERs) have allowed new providers to charge the educational customers a much lower price and open up access to higher education to the masses in the developing countries. Furthermore, Rumble and Litto, (2009) are of the opinion that mobile learning (m-learning), with the delivery of electronic materials built-in learning strategies and with the help of portable computer, allows access from anywhere and at any time for distance education learners.

However, the models of distance education described above and the full use of ICTs have not yet found expression in the Ethiopia context in the cross-border distance provider, IGNOU. It is argued that efforts need to be made by this and other similar institutions to effectively utilise these technological mediated models in distance education to develop this sector in the country. Munene, (2007) explains the

important role ICTs plays in the provision of distance education, especially in terms of the World Bank donation which aided the establishment of the African Virtual University (AVU) in 1997. AVU delivers distance education to twenty-seven African countries, including Ethiopia, at fifty-five learning centres by means of information communication technologies and satellite systems. The aim of the AVU in sub-Saharan Africa is to provide world-class higher education and training programmes to students and professionals.

The main emphasis of the AVU is on the satellite transmission of distance education to many African countries. The AVU, which is based in Nairobi, Kenya, has developed into a Pan-African University. According to Moore and Kearsley (2005), the AVU has the following main objectives:

- To increase access to college-level and continuing education;
- To make the best educational resources accessible to all students by means of a common network;
- To increase the information and communication technology capabilities of all participating learning sites to ensure the sustainable growth of the sites and the programme; and
- To supply skills training to Africa's growing population of professionals.

The AVU offers a variety of programmes, certificates, degrees, diplomas and short courses, including bachelor degrees in Business Administration and Computer Science in both French and English. Table 2.3, below, reflects the number of students enrolled at the AVU for Business Administration courses through distance education *via* satellite mediation in collaboration with four prominent universities, namely: Addis Ababa University, Kenyatta University, the University of Dares Salam and the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology in Africa.

**Table 2.3: Number of Students Enrolled in the African Virtual University for Degree and Diploma Courses in Business Administration**

University	Program	2004	2005	2007	2008
<b>Addis Ababa University</b>	Degree	71	107	0	0
	Diploma	0	0	15	0
<b>Kenyatta University</b>	Degree	14	22	0	0
	Diploma	0	0	0	1
<b>University of Dar es Salaam</b>	Degree	15	10	0	0
	Diploma	0	0	1	0
<b>Kigali Institute of Science &amp; Technology</b>	Degree	40	49	0	0
	Diploma	0	0	3	2

(Source: Graber & Bolt, Susan, 2011)

In Africa, however, there are challenges regarding the use of ICT because of the irregular supply of electricity in countries across the continent and this is something which needs further attention for improvement by the governments of African countries (Graber and Bolt, 2011). In their research Moussa and Schwere (1992) identify five major factors which limit the success of ICT projects in Africa: institutional weakness, human resources, funding, local environment and technology and information change.

For the AVU, one of the major challenges it faces in delivering distance education has been a lack of access to the internet and its infrastructure in many African countries. Therefore, in order for the AVU to be successful in delivering programmes in these countries' further development, their governments need to embark on efforts and programmes to improve the ICT infrastructure in their respective countries.

Darkwa, (2007) suggests that for sub-Saharan African countries to be successful in distance education there must be "a national strategy that aligns different resources, such as government, academic, and private resources. Developing ICT infrastructure in Africa is a question of funding and political leadership and, thus, the Ministries of Education must urge for policies that encourage distance education" (Darkwa, 2007:58). Furthermore, it is clear that for distance education to grow further and develop on the continent funding must be made available to improve the

development of ICTs and the infrastructure needed in these countries and this is something which needs the further attention of the various governments (Graber & Bolt, 2011:80). In distance education the debate is not only about the provision of access to higher education but there is a growing concern about issues of quality which become important for all providers of, and students in, higher education.

## **2.4 THE CONCEPT, QUALITY, AND ITS USE IN THIS STUDY**

Across the globe it is an accepted fact that competitiveness is the nature of a knowledge market economy. In responding to this reality, quality education and training programmes have been at the centre of the national education agenda of many countries. Quality and productivity are stressed everywhere in the world and a focus on quality improvement is only achieved through better systems of cooperation and partnerships with quality enhancement organizations and research institutions, universities, government and private organisations (UNESCO, 2013).

To ensure the quality of products and services in different sectors, including higher education, different countries started establishing various agencies. Amongst these, for example, is the American Society for Quality (ASQ) which is known to be passionate about quality and serves as a voice for quality (American Society for Quality, 2007); it has been the world's leading authority on quality for more than half a century and has many individual and organisational members. This professional association mainly promotes learning, quality improvement and knowledge exchange to improve business results and it supports the creation of better workplaces and communities, worldwide. As a voice for the quality movement, ASQ offers technologies, management concepts, tools and training to quality professionals. Furthermore, it advises and encourages all its partner bodies to make good progress towards quality cultures for the improvement of people's quality of life.

Higher education, including open and distance learning, is important for social and economic transformation and it is inseparable from the notion of quality. Most public debate on the quality of education has concerns about students' levels of achievement and the relevance of learning to the world of work as well as to the social, cultural and political worlds of the students. The debate frequently also

includes concerns about the conditions of learning, such as supply of teachers and facilities (Grisay and Mahlck, 1991).

Quality has become a central theme in higher education and the main reason that quality in higher distance education is important is so that graduates, equipped with skills relevant for the country's further development, are produced (Don, 2007). The notion of quality pre-supposes a fundamental purpose of higher education of "transforming the life experiences of students" (Harvey & Knight, 1996, as cited by Aluko, 2007:167). Quality is usually connected to the concepts of efficiency and effectiveness and although the concept of quality does not have a universally accepted definition, many scholars consider quality in education in terms of what the system is all about and what the system offers the learners.

Campbell and Rozsnyai (2002) recommend that in the field of higher education quality should be considered to be a notoriously vague, slippery concept. This simply suggests that it is not possible to find a universally accepted and comprehensive definition of quality in higher education. Therefore, defining the term quality in the contemporary higher education is challenging.

Vroeijentijn (2006) points out that the concept, quality, has been subjected to various ambiguous interpretations. Quality, as fitness for purpose, sees quality in terms of fulfilling a customer's requirements, need and desires. In education fitness for purpose is usually based on the ability of an institution to fulfil its mission or programme of study to fulfil its aims. Conformity with an institution's mission as well as the capacity to fulfil customers' requirements is the principal perspective that is upheld by scholars with the eyes of stakeholders. This way of thinking is obviously of paramount importance to external stakeholders (Harvey, 2006). Quality, as transformation, refers to the classic notion that sees quality in terms of change in the learners from one state to another.

According to Gandhe, quality in distance education is "defined as fitness for purpose in combination with exceptional high standards, perfection and consistency, value for money and transformation capabilities" (2007:11). In education quality is determined by three crucial elements, namely: input, process and outcomes. Input includes the key-players: the learners and the academic and administrative staff members who



have the necessary skills and facilities for teaching and learning; process consists of the various teaching and learning activities; and the outcomes are the graduates and their acquired skills and training. An understanding of the input, process and outcomes framework related to quality needs to be further elaborated in the Ethiopian context.

In Ethiopia, as elsewhere, quality in education faces definitional problems. It becomes more problematic when quality is conceptualized in terms of a particular aspect of education because, as Dare (2005) observes, “all the elements associated with educational quality are interrelated. A serious defect in one element is likely to have implications for quality in others” (Dare, 2005:17). Moreover, questions regarding quality may be posed about any important aspect of the educational system: infrastructure, school buildings, administration, leadership, management, teacher training, educational materials, and teaching and student achievement. Nevertheless, the quality indicators of this study, namely: coherence, efficiency and impact, are focused mainly on the important aspect of distance education system but they are also directly or indirectly interrelated to the aspects of quality indicators described by Dare (2005).

The relevant literature suggests that quality is both a quantitative and a qualitative issue. Its indicators should, therefore, convey notions of quantity and quality (Dare (2005). Van den Berghe (1997) defines quality indicators of education as performance indicators that refer to a quality characteristic or objective, thereby referring to the broad context of performance evaluation in which the learners operate. It may also be understood in terms of quality characteristics and the achievement of quality objectives. According to Dare (2005), the nature and quality of input which includes teachers and non-teaching staff, significantly determines the outcome of educational provision. However, teachers are the principal factor in educational provision and they affect the quality of education in a major way. Matters of concern related to teachers are: the number of teachers available; pupils-teacher ratios; and the personal characteristics of the individual teachers.

Within this domain, instructional content and materials, such as materials that support teaching and learning; the institution; building space, including the classroom and other structures; as well as availability of equipment needs to be

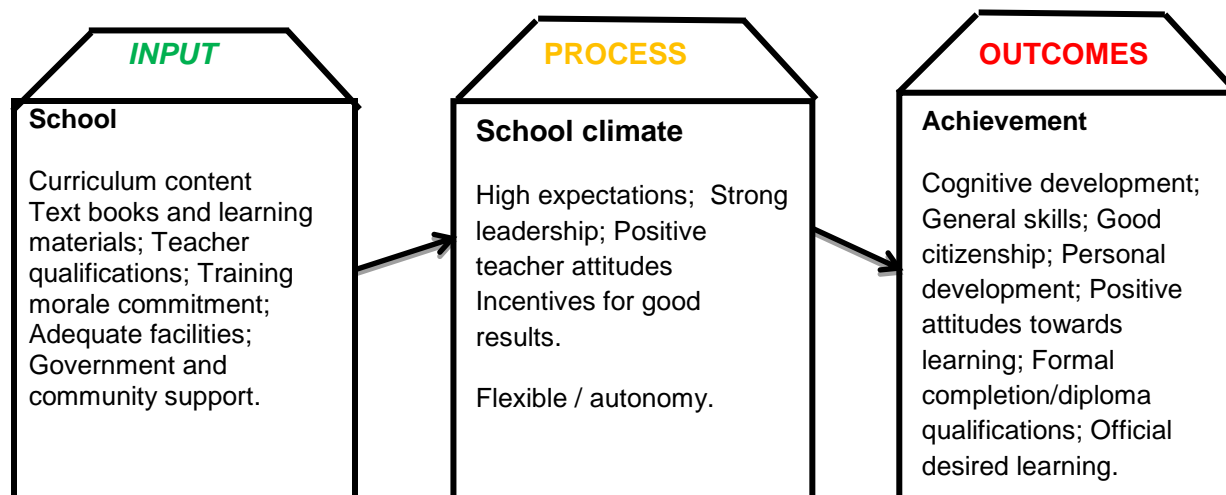


considered as input factors. An important input that functions together with the other inputs is finance, which is categorized as capital and recurrent expenditures. The construction of classroom buildings stands as an example of a major capital expenditure in education. The salaries of teachers, particularly represents the most important aspect of recurrent education expenditure (Dare, 2005). The process component of equality relates to aspects, such as pupil-teacher interaction in classroom management and control and daily time-on-task with classes. Furthermore, it concerns regular attendance and the punctuality of the teacher for instructional activities as well as the intensity of operation which has to do with length of the school day in terms of how many days teachers are effectively available for school work on a semester basis.

Dare (2005) describes the output of educational service as constituting immediate evidence of quality in terms of the achievement of students in examinations. For many stakeholders, including parents, the performance of students in national level or standardized examinations is enough of an indication of the quality of the education that has been provided. When, for instance, people talk of falling standards in education, they are basing their assertions, principally, on poor examination results. The quality of education service is also indexed by non-measurable outcomes, such as improved health habits and effective participation in social and political activities. In the light of the above, it may be concluded that the basic categories of the framework, i.e., input, process and outcomes in higher education as quality indicators, have a similar purpose and components to serve in conjunction with the quality assessment indicators used in this study and described above. However, the input, process and outcomes framework also has a dynamic application of planning and controlling the conventional and distance education systems.

Due to the flexibility and extensiveness of this framework it can also be applied to other areas of life, such as those operating in industry and production. This study utilized an input-process-outcome-context framework as an additional basis for defining quality and in categorizing different measures of quality in postgraduate distance education. Quality indicators and the input, process and outcome framework in which inputs were translated into outcomes, together, depicted the eventual results where distance education is seen as a productive system. It is, therefore, possible to conclude that the outcomes for the desired quality human resource development needs of a country depends on the necessary inputs that

each higher education system, including distance education, puts in place to bring the desired quality change in education. The framework for input, process and outcomes, which was identified in the literature (UNESCO, 2005) illustrating quality in education, is given below in Figure 2.2.



(Source: UNESCO, 2005)

**Figure 2.2: An Input-Process-Outcomes Framework for Assessing Quality in Education**

As the above illustration shows, the outcomes of the education systems for both conventional and distance education are based on the input provided by each institution and on an efficient and effective teaching and learning process. In order to achieve effective teaching and learning outcomes one has to, seriously, consider input. Nevertheless, all activities that take place in human beings, who are very complex and highly individualistic, are sometimes difficult to measure in terms of quality. Therefore, the quality of education at any level needs to follow the interaction described above and fulfil the requirements for quality. The Dakar framework for action declares that “access to quality education is the right of every child” (UNESCO, 2005:27) and it affirms that quality is at the heart of education. These processes have a systematic link and complement each other in this study in three quality indicators, namely: coherence, efficiency and impact. All of these find expression in the quality assessment process conducted in a cross-border distance education institution, such as IGNOU.

Sirkanthan and Darlmpile (2004) argue that “quality has to do with a natural expression of capability; it is concerned with doing what we do well, and doing better what we are supposed to do” (Sirkanthan and Darlmpile, 2004:267). In the case of distance higher education institutions, the best place to identify quality or best practice is in teaching. In this thesis the researcher uses the quality indicators proposed by Gandhe (2007) and Harvey and Green (1993): coherence, efficiency and impact to assess the whole quality process of IGNOU’s teaching and learning in postgraduate distance education programmes.

According to Ojokheta (2004), there is no gainsaying the fact that quality is very important in distance education and that distance education institutions should adjust their academic structures to improve the quality of teaching and learning. In economic terms, distance education has produced a better skilled workforce which is involved in the growth and development of countries. Today, the knowledge economy has become the most important factor determining the level of competitiveness and the further development of societies (Cabuk, 2013).

Typically, graduates of distance education programmes find it easier to participate in the economic mainstream, as is evident in their direct employment in public and private organisations and in creating and maintaining their own businesses at different levels. Gaba (1999) explains that distance education can provide for the needs of those who are on-the-job and who may be physically challenged or disadvantaged by facilitating access to higher education institutions. DE provides an alternative means of training and further development for those who need their knowledge and skills developed.

Evidence shows that there are individuals who, after retirement, have chosen to engage in upgrading their qualifications and skills and have gone on to become small business owners/managers and educators who have helped enhance the development and growth of both local and national economies (Ojokheta, 2004).

#### **2.4.1 QUALITY INDICATORS USED IN THIS STUDY: COHERENCE, EFFICIENCY AND IMPACT**

Gandhe (2007) is convinced that the aim of education is not simply to learn, but that it is a means to prosperity in one's personal life and to achieving high living standards. Thus, education is aimed at meeting these demands and aspirations and, therefore, it needs to focus on quality. In terms of Gandhe's grouping quality in distance education needs to combine at least five elements: high standards; precision and consistency; fitness for purpose; value for money; and ability to transform. In this study the quality indicators described above were chosen for the purpose of analysing access to quality postgraduate education through distance education. The three quality indicators chosen for the study described above are based on Perraton's (2000:199) identified indicators of the quality criteria specified for distance education.

The rationale for the selection of these three quality indicators which is more fully described in the chapter dealing with methodology is as follows: Firstly, coherence as a quality indicator is used to investigate the extent to which the national education policy of the country supports the development of distance education and how IGNOU's policy is implemented in the local Ethiopian context. Secondly, efficiency is used as a quality indicator to investigate the efficiency elements in the delivery of the programme (MARD) that enhances quality and establishes how these elements are ensured. The investigation includes the question of how efficient the lines of communication are between the different implementing partners, such as staff members and students, as well as IGNOU's communication with other stakeholders, including MoE. Thirdly, impact is used as a quality indicator to investigate the perceptions of various stakeholders relating to the quality of the postgraduate MARD programme offered by IGNOU. This includes their perceptions of the MoE, HERQA and the experiences of staff and students as the main stakeholders.

Sirkanthan and Darlmpa (2004) argued that the internal monitoring of quality involves on-going checking of quality with the purpose of improvement and judgement of the performances of all activities carried out by each involved higher education institution. Gandhe (2007) elaborates further by saying that quality in education needs to reflect the purpose for which the learners invest their time in order to achieve their desired objectives. This means that unless the quality of education is improved and sustained, the sustainable development of countries in

Africa, including Ethiopia, will be negatively impacted. However, different views have emerged on whether or not the same quality assessment method can be applied to campus and distance education programmes. This is mainly related to the dynamic nature of teaching and learning practices that differ between conventional and distance education models.

Heyman (2012) believes that public relation exercises and fascinating advertisements cannot motivate and inspire consumers to purchase poor quality education products. In the late 1960s the Japanese adopted a concept and approach called Total Quality Management (TQM). This concept was developed by an American scholar, W. Edward Deming, a famous management scholar, who first identified a total quality management philosophy which made a significance contribution to American quality manufacture and consumer's needs at the beginning of 1960s. Because of his ideas, product quality improved and popular satisfaction was achieved. His influential work spread to Japan, instructing top executives and engineers in quality management and it was a driving force behind the improvement in, and rise of, the Japanese economy. Deming contributed directly to Japan's phenomenal growth in exports and its current technological leadership in automobiles, shipbuilding and electronics. His ideas were, mainly, concerned with continual improvement, making quality a culture for the improvement of products and service to society by allocating resources to provide for long term needs rather than short term profitability and with a plan to become competitive; to stay in business; and to provide jobs (Deming, 2010).

Taking its cue from this TQM programme, for example, the North-Eastern State University in the United States developed and implemented a total quality management strategic plan for its distance learning programme and course development as complete quality-measuring instruments (Thompson, 2002:13). However, there are different means which can be used for sustaining the quality of distance education; the relevant literature about distance education identifies the need for continuous staff training in distance education provision as being vital for quality improvement in distance education. Mills (2006:141-147) points out that at the Open University in the United Kingdom, distance education tutors are the main concern of the university in terms of quality assurance in a distance education

system. Therefore, it is strongly suggested in the distance education literature that staff support, including training, helps to significantly sustain, maintain and advance the quality of distance education.

The other important area of quality enhancement in distance education is a focus on student support services. Therefore, learner support is a central pillar in the provision of successful distance education programmes; it is, indeed, the lifeblood of distance education. Mills (2006:142) emphasises that the fundamental feature of successful distance education provision is ensuring support for distance learners.

Two dimensions of learner support are identified in the literature: academic and administrative support. “Academic support, sometimes known as tutorial support, is provided to students in the cognitive intellectual and knowledge issues specific to certain courses, while non-academic support (administrative) support deals with helping students in the affective or organizational aspects of their studies” (Thompson, 2002:7-8). The other determinant factors that enhance quality distance education equally are the quality of course material production and its distribution.

The literature, related to distance and higher education, further underlines the importance of the role of student assessment in the transformation of teaching and learning at universities. According to Srikanthan and Dalrymple, “the major purpose of learner assessment, includes providing feedback which enables a judgement to be made about a student and to focus on, and enhance, student learning, while learning is taking place as well as provide information to enable evaluation and planning for improvement of educational programmes” (2004:275). They explain that the major purpose of assessment includes providing information for a judgement to be made about the students’ achievements; this focuses on improving student learning and providing the necessary information for judging individual performance for further improvement while learning and teaching programmes are taking place. Its purpose also includes providing clear information which enables understanding individual performance in order to judge and plan for the improvement of educational programmes. Assessment should aim to reinforce knowledge of the skilled workforces’ needs for the country’s further social and economic development.

The quality of distance education varies greatly from place to place and, therefore, opens and distance education has faced an on-going struggle to establish its credibility and legitimacy, even when its quality is good. Its success in achieving quality education has varied in different countries and institutions (Sukati, 2011:5). There are exemplary institutions that are doing well in distance education, such as the UK's Open University. There are countries where higher education is doing well in terms of teaching and learning, but there are many distance education institutions, including unaccredited online distance education providers, that are only there for profit and who are operating below required standards and take students' money, even though they only provide poorly copied notes; they do not offer assignments; they provide no support services for the learners and only communicate with them when informing them of their examination times; and they issue duplicated certificate at different levels.

## **2.5 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ITS MANAGEMENT**

According to Sirkanthan and Darlmpé (2004), many higher institutions in contact face-to-face and distance education have challenges concerning quality and are forced to establish quality assurance systems and units in their institutions to ensure that acceptable standards and quality of education are maintained. However, according to Jung (2013), discussion of quality assurance in distance education and e-learning is a fairly recent phenomenon. When the first open universities were established, such as the University of South Africa in 1946 and the Open University in UK in 1969, there was no discussion of quality assurance as it is understood today. Establishing a quality assurance system in education has become important to contribute significantly to economic growth and development and education, whether the conventional form or distance education mode, must be of a high quality and meet the skills demands and needs of the country (Jung, 2013:13).

According to Stell and Gnanam (2004), some researchers argue that the quality of distance education should be judged by the same criteria and standard as face-to-face traditional education; others maintain that the assumptions and mechanisms applied in traditional institutions are not applicable as distance education is so very different. However, different views have developed as to whether or not the same



quality assurance (QA) practices can be applied to campus-based and distance education programmes.

Jung and Latchem (2007) feel that using the same quality assurance criteria for both contact and distance education programmes can be problematic, especially with regard to new developments in distance education where teaching takes place across borders; distance education institutions use different ways of managing quality assurance in their context and, according to Jung and Latchem (2007:241), there are three ways in which quality assurance is managed and operates under open and distance learning. These include the use of the central systems, collective systems and dispersed delegated systems. Jung and Latchem (2007:241) maintain that within centralised systems, quality assurance (QA) is accomplished by designated offices in accordance with national or institutional policies, procedures and criteria. The collective system assigns responsibilities to various boards, councils and committees at different levels.

In dispersed or delegated systems each administrative office and academic division is held accountable for quality which means that achieving the desired quality standard and improvement in education is the responsibility of all stakeholders and that their full attention and involvement is crucial in the whole system of education. These stakeholders include students, parents, institutional leaders, government, employing private companies, teachers and others who are involved in technological innovation to facilitate teaching and learning. Among other things, the rationale behind Asian countries' establishment of quality assurance systems for distance education is mainly to improve the quality of distance education by ensuring accountability in the provision of this sector. This should also be true in all other countries involved in distance education to enable them to maintain a quality standard.

Srikanthan and Darlmphe (2004) agree when they state that best practice in distance education includes institutional commitment and involves the curriculum and instruction, faculty support, student support, evaluation and assessment. Nevertheless, in a market which is becoming increasingly competitive, it is vital that providers understand what quality means to the consumers of the 'product' (distance



education being a mix of both goods, such as study guides and computer software and services) that they offer.

Thus, as a consequence of the new challenges related to quality higher education, accreditation and quality assurance is likely to differ in other ways, as noted in the Table 2.4, below.

**Table 2.4: Old versus New Paradigms for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Education**

Old Paradigm	New Paradigm
Teacher/Instructor Centred	Learner Centred
Centralized	Local
Hegemonistic	Deferential
One Size Fits All	Tailor made
Closed	Open
Us versus Them	Collaborative
Quantitative	Qualitative
Prescriptive	Flexible
Time as Constant/Learning as Variable	Learning as Constant/Time as Variable
Teacher Credentials	Teacher Skills
Consolidated Experience	Aggregated Experience
Regional/National	International/ Global
Static	Dynamic
Single Delivery Model	Distributed Delivery Model
Process	Outcomes
Infrastructure	Services

(Source: Pond, 2002)

From the above discussion and illustration it can be seen that there is a paradigm shift from the one where distance education emphasised that the learner is at the centre of all teaching and learning activities. Unlike the old paradigm, the new paradigm encourages flexible learning in terms of individual learner interests and it promotes quality rather than quantity. In principle, the new paradigm shift in accreditation and quality assurance is meant to bring about a desired quality higher education by ensuring the quality aspects. However, these depend on the practical applications and the commitment of each distance education provider.

A persistent problem that should be addressed is the acceptance of distance education which is strongly related to the issue of quality. Therefore, ensuring quality in distance education is a most important change that has emerged. Antony and Gnanam (2004) maintain that technological advancement in the education system solves the problem of quality in distance education. It is believed that the integration of technology into education has narrowed the gap between the conventional and distance education modes of delivery, mainly, by filling the distance gap between the learner and the institution.

The use of new technology in distance education, especially of computers and connectivity, has improved what Moore (1993) defines as 'transactional distance'; this is in relation to instructional dialogue, structure and learner autonomy which is pedagogical, not geographical, and necessitates special organisations and teaching places. The use of technology, like internet connectivity, can narrow the gap which means that through the integration of technology in distance education, especially the ICTs, the debate concerning inherent problems in distance education, like face-to-face interaction can be solved by the use of technology between teacher and learner and also in learner-to-learner interaction.

According to Perraton (2000:199), in order to assess the effectiveness of distance education, the framework needs to include quality criteria specific to distance education. Benchmarks identified in the literature for evaluating the quality of internet-based distance education programmes also serve to assess or evaluate the quality of various distance education programmes, including IGNOU's postgraduate programmes. Some of the identified criteria and benchmarks include institutional support, course development, the teaching/learning process, course structure, student support, faculty support and evaluation and assessment.

However, these criteria and benchmarks need to be considered with great care and should be embraced by every institution which participates in distance education programmes. The quality enhancement and assurance policy of any distance education providing higher institution must consider, among other things, the important element of learner output in relation to quality. In other words, the

institutions need to consider the performance of students or the achievement of the learners.

In the next chapter, Chapter 3, a review of literature related to Ethiopian higher education policy issues will be discussed.

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## **CHAPTER**

### **A REVIEW OF LITERATURE RELATED TO ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY ISSUES**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter discussed the development of distance education around the world and its potential to provide access to higher education, in general, and for the Ethiopian context, in particular. The chapter further discussed the concept of quality and how it was used in this study. The purpose of this chapter is to review and discuss the historical and socio-economic background of education policy reform in Ethiopia. The main argument in this chapter is that the provision of an education policy environment is imperative for the effective and efficient provision of higher education that contributes to the socio-economic and political development of Ethiopia. It is also emphasised that reform-making and implementation transcends national systems and is influenced by the global trends in higher education.

According to Laura and Bagley (2013), competition has become central to the higher education sub-sector in a modern, open and integrated world. Key facets of global competition include the development of global university ranking systems, academic capitalism and the merger of "strong" and "weak" institutions. Global higher

education competition includes issues, such as university rankings, quality assurance, cross-border higher education provision, and privatization. Higher education policy and the global competition phenomenon make a critical contribution to understanding how globalization continues to exert a pressure on higher education policy (Laura & Bagley, 2013:137).

Evidence from the literature review demonstrates that there is need for national distance education policy integration if one is to run a successful distance education programme. Such policy development can frame a higher education system in a general sense and contribute to the human resource development of a country. At an institutional level, policy will enhance the adequate existing efforts of the institution and broaden professional opportunities by deploying resources effectively in such areas as capacity building, career planning, quality teaching, management and administration and supporting the development of reward and recognition programmes (Wgeol, 2002:4).

The survey of policy and practice in sub-Saharan African countries by the Commonwealth of Learning Support, (SAIDE, 2003) suggests the need for sub-Saharan Africa to prioritise policy and planning around large national programmes which are, usually, programmes supported by international aid (funding and/or technical assistance) that are launched to meet priority national development needs. It is important that these programmes should be based on, and are aligned with, regional and local priorities rather than the agendas of international funders and development agencies. A second issue is that distance education programmes often need considerable support because distance education is regarded as “second class” in many countries in the region, with the result that there is a resistant attitude and mind-set towards its quality issues (SAIDE, 2003:19).

### **3.2 HIGHER EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN ETHIOPIA**

The history of higher education in Ethiopia traces its origin from the Orthodox Church. However, a secular higher education began in 1950 following the establishment of the University College of Addis Ababa (World Bank, 2003). According to Yizengaw (2004) and Bogale (2006), the development of higher

education was neglected and remained underdeveloped for almost six decades. It faced problems associated with quality and relevance of programmes of study, research, equity, resource constraints, and inefficient resource utilization (Yizengaw, 2005). With these problems, the contribution of higher education institutions to the development of the country, particularly in the area of supplying the large numbers of trained manpower required for development, is not significant. As in other countries in Africa, Ethiopia recognises that higher education is a prerequisite for achieving its national economic development and poverty reduction strategies (World Bank, 2003). Indeed, this requires an alignment between higher education provision and other sectors in the country. It is also true that the higher education system is undergoing transformation in order to respond, and adequately gear up, to the development needs of the society and the country (Yizengaw, 2004: 12).

This aspiration is possible if the challenges mentioned above are worked out. Following a realisation that the old national education policy of the country was not responsive, the present government of Ethiopia introduced reforms in the higher education system in order to contribute more directly to its national strategy for economic growth and poverty reduction. In this context, the World Bank reported that “this time reform of higher education was embraced as a critical national need by the government of the day” (2003: 1). Similarly, Yizengaw (2005:2) added:

The Ethiopian government has introduced several policy and strategy provisions and major re-engineering or reform initiatives. The initiatives are mainly efforts to realign the system in order to contribute more directly to the country’s strategy for rapid economic growth and poverty alleviation.

The main reason for restructuring the Ethiopian education system is to bring about the desired quality standard and a relevant and responsive education system for direct economic development in the country. The available literature indicates that the stimulus to reforming higher education started in the 1960s and gained momentum after the establishment of the democratic government in 1994. Since education is important in socio-economic development and for the competitiveness of a country, the government prepared and implemented the Education and Training Policy (TGE, 2003) as a framework for higher education reform and transformation (Yizengaw, 2004). The policy covers various issues in education ranging from quality, relevance, management and leadership to finance, system of evaluation,

monitoring and accountability (Yizengaw, 2005: 4). In short, the policy was a major initiative taken by the government to alleviate major educational problems with the view of improving the education system of the country (MOE, 2003).

With respect to higher education, the government held two conferences at Nazareth in 1995 and at Debre Zeit in 1996 which addressed issues of higher education (Yizengaw, 2005). The main issues discussed under the two conferences were:

- General status and major problems of higher education in Ethiopia;
- Issues of effectiveness and efficiency;
- Alternatives for widening access to higher education;
- Resource base of financial requirements;
- Quality and relevance of undergraduate and graduate programmes;
- Research and studies in higher education;
- Relations between regional governments and higher education institutions;  
and
- Relations between higher education and the other levels of education.

As a result of the Debre Zeit conference, a document entitled, *Future Directions of Higher Education in Ethiopia* (MOE, 1997), was prepared. The document outlined two important areas: Firstly, it identified priorities for action and clearly defined the vision and mission of higher education in Ethiopia. Secondly, it built and consolidated the partnership among major stakeholders on issues and strategies on higher education reform (Yizengaw, 2004:7). The document also identified the challenges facing higher education in Ethiopia.

In line with the above effort, the current government of Ethiopia also endorsed a contemporary education and training policy in 2003, which was amended later in 2009 after the fall of the old Derg regime in 1991 in order to facilitate higher education reform in the country. The new national education policy (2003) denounced the old education system as deficient and unable to produce the required quality workforce for the all-round development of the country (Bogale, 2006). The reform measures of 2003 (Proclamation No. 351/2003 and 2009 Proclamation No. 650/2009) laid the foundation for major reform in the higher education and training system. The new Higher Education Proclamation of 2003 covered three levels,

namely, the overall system, the institutions and the academic programmes (Higher Education Proclamation No.650/2009). At the system level, the proclamation initiated and encouraged private provision as one of the key aspects of the expansion strategy. At institutional level, the public higher institutions in the country became autonomous and for the first time they were able to run and manage their own affairs, including appointing their own academic vice-presidents and institution managers. At the level of programmes, new degree courses geared towards the labour market and national development needs was introduced (World Bank, 2003:2).

Following these reforms, the country's higher education sector experienced a rapid growth from having just two universities in 2000 to the establishment of 22 universities by 2010, with more being developed (Tesfaye, 2010:). The enrolment in higher education increased significantly from 39,576 in 1996/97 to 91,834 in 2001/2002 with private institutions making up 21% of the total enrolment in tertiary education (World Bank, 2003:11). The annual intake rose from 3,500 in the 1990s to 30,000 in 2010, of which 20% represent private institutions, including the Indira Gandhi National Open University (Kate, 2010:3).

However, this rapid expansion in higher education has increased the demand for qualified staff to run the newly emerging universities (Bogale, 2006). "The ever growing world population, the increase in the complexity of all aspects of life, the increasingly higher educational requirements for almost all types of jobs, the accelerated change in nearly all occupations, and the special educational needs of disadvantaged and minority groups have all contributed to the emergent of the new social and educational needs" (Holmberg,1986:2; Bishop, 1989:154). Many more people need to be educated which creates an increased demand for access to higher education. In this context, distance education has emerged as a viable option to cope with this rapid expansion of higher education. Ethiopia also needs to look for alternatives, especially higher education through distance education. This is deemed to be necessary in order to improve the education system and to respond to the ever growing human resources needs of the country (Fayessa, 2010).



The lack of policy for distance education results in potential misunderstanding and misperceptions. At a national level, this may be a lack of cooperation in the increasingly technology-driven education sector (Moore & Kearsley, 1996:200). Policy should promote, encourage and support the orderly development of distance education as well as associated technology, infrastructure, and capacity building. The relevant literature also suggests that there has been an expansion of higher education in Ethiopia after 2005, especially in private higher education where 60 new institutions have been added, including private distance education providers. The global trend of private higher education in developing countries has attracted many debates which are based, mainly, on the perceptions of those who are suspicious of the quality of education in distance education.

It has been argued by Holmberg (1985:5) and Bishop (1989:154) that “the most predominately used education system (conventional face-to-face system) has failed to satisfactorily respond to the ever-expanding demand for education globally.” The higher education reforms in Ethiopia have focused mainly on traditional face-to-face institutions at all levels, including in the overall system; at institutions; and in academic programmes (Higher Education Proclamation No.650/2009). Evidence from the literature review indicates that for successful distance education programme development there is a need for a national distance education policy. At an institutional level, policy will enhance existing commendable efforts; broaden professional opportunities; deploy resources effectively in such areas as capacity building, career planning, quality teaching, management and administration; and support the development of reward and recognition programmes (Wgeol, 2002:4).

### **3.3 THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

The changing nature of any country’s education system depends on, among other factors, the policy framework aimed at changing the government’s priorities as well as being responsive to global demands. For example, the economic and political changes which took place in Europe and South Africa in 1990s were a manifestation of these factors. According to Harry (1999), the growing demands for higher education in industrial nations were caused by structural unemployment which may have increased the demand for higher learning. This has been seen clearly in



Australia and Canada where distance education has paved the way to expanding primary, secondary and tertiary-level education as an alternative to the traditional face-to-face education system (COL, 2004).

According to Aguti (2003), distance education has been used for a variety of programmes in Uganda by both public and private institutions which include all levels of educational opportunities, starting from primary school and proceeding to secondary and tertiary levels. Aguti further suggests that, in addition, distance education has served Uganda in solving its acute shortage of secondary school teachers. The change in education experienced in Eastern Europe and South Africa was the manifestation of political changes that reshaped the education system of those countries. Evans (1996) argues that political change in Europe also changed the former correspondence courses which were associated with previous governments and that universities reshaped their curricula to work with new European education systems. After the fall of the apartheid regime in 1994, South Africa has undergone many reforms and changes in its education system (Education Africa, 1997). These changes include changes in education, with distance education being seen as one of the methods to increase of access to education (Harry, 1999; Evans, 1996).

The effect of undeveloped higher education in many places, including Ethiopia, is a lower recognition of public benefits, which explains the neglect of tertiary schooling as a vehicle for public investment by many governments. Higher education is also a means and source of income for well-educated individuals and private benefits which eventually lead to societal development through direct and indirect economic ties or relationships. The main reason why individuals seek education on the tertiary level is their desire to develop new skills and knowledge and then to improve the skills and understanding of their co-workers who do not possess tertiary level qualifications. The advanced knowledge they have acquired through higher education provides graduates with knowledge, skills and confidence, resulting in positive effects for production and job creation (Kevin, 2007:76).

The central premise of this section is that it is not possible to understand education in isolation from general developments in society. It is further emphasised that

education, as part of the public sector, is shaped and informed by changing views on the role of the state. To a large extent, such trends significantly influence public sector reforms, including those in education. While tracing the education policy reform, it is worth noting that the transformation of higher education is taking place on a global scale which has also found expression in Ethiopia.

Since 1991 numerous changes have taken place in the social, economic and political sectors of Ethiopian society, which have either directly or indirectly influenced education policies. Chale, (1993:21) maintains that the country's educational system at all levels derives its objectives from the national ideology. Levin (2001) observes that changes in the substance of education policy are accompanied by important changes in the political process. Thus, it can be seen that it is not possible to examine the education policy in isolation without taking into account the broader context of the economic and social development of the country.

The historical effect of undeveloped higher education in many places, including Ethiopia, was a lower recognition of public benefits which explains the neglect of tertiary schooling as a vehicle for public investment by many governments. Individual gains can benefit society as a whole because higher earnings for well-educated individuals raise tax revenues for governments and ease demands on state finances. They also translate into greater consumption which benefits producers from all educational backgrounds. In a knowledge economy tertiary education can help economies keep up, and it also enables them to catch up, with more technologically advanced societies. Graduates of higher education are more likely to be aware of, and make better use of, new technologies. They are also more likely to develop new tools and skills themselves (Marginson, 2010:62).

In this study the national education policy context refers to the environment in which postgraduate level distance education programmes relate to, and align with, the entire higher education policy framework. It includes, among others, strategic plans by the Ministry of Education and other concerned ministries as well as the environment's support of distance education in terms of human resources and financial grants for various programmes. Ramdoo (2009:1499) acknowledges national policy master plans of government and its people's vision for various

sectors, including the country's education systems. Furthermore, he is of the opinion that misunderstanding and a lack of positive perception of distance education leads to the misuse of this innovative education delivery system, whereas a better understanding of the concepts that are related to national concerns assist in organizing more effective and efficient practices. Policy could be taken as another dimension of transactional distance. According Carony and Samoff (1990), the theoretical and empirical analysis of a country's education policy is vital to inform education and social transformation, especially in third world countries.

Although, the importance of higher education is highlighted above in terms of its benefits in producing the desired human resource development needs of countries, it still faces some challenges which include a lack of resources that impact negatively on the quality of education. The most predominately used mode of education (conventional face-to-face system) has failed to satisfactorily respond to the ever expanding demand for education globally.

Sehoole (2002) notes that policy-makers at a national level need to embrace policy research and the policy process. In order to have an effective policy, especially for higher education, application in the policy process should be based on research and knowledge to produce achievable objectives which are similar to other developed and developing countries. Distance education policy in Ethiopia needs to be based on research and knowledge. For example, the draft policy framework for the provision of distance education at South Africa highlights the importance of a specific policy on distance education (CHE, 2012). The three contextual factors which have necessitated a specific policy framework for distance education in the South African context are that

- the distance education component of higher education has grown considerably in numbers;
- the higher education system, generally, needs to grow further if South Africans are to meet the targets set in policy; and
- the increasing use and flexibility of ICTs has opened up new opportunities for quality expansion in teaching and learning (CHE, 2012:8).

The above contextual factors that have necessitated the need to develop distance education policy in South Africa provide important lessons for the Ethiopian context in its development of higher education policy which incorporates distance education.

### **3.4 THE CURRENT HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM OF ETHIOPIA**

According to the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Education (MOE, 2009), the reform in the education system, which took place in 2003, was recognized quite early in the education sector strategy document. However, the practical implementation of the policy framework only took place gradually. The main reason for restructuring the Ethiopian education system as described above was to bring about the desired quality standard and responsiveness to human resources and development needs of the country.

The current education system was established in 2003 and the system is structured as follows: “8-2-2-3 pattern; that is, eight years primary, two years general secondary education (Grades 9-10), two years preparatory secondary (Grades 11-12) and three to five years university education” (MOE, 2009). This replaced the former education system which consisted of six years primary education; four years lower secondary education; two years upper or higher education; professional training up to university level consisting of two to six years at undergraduate level; and two to five years at postgraduate level up to PhD level.

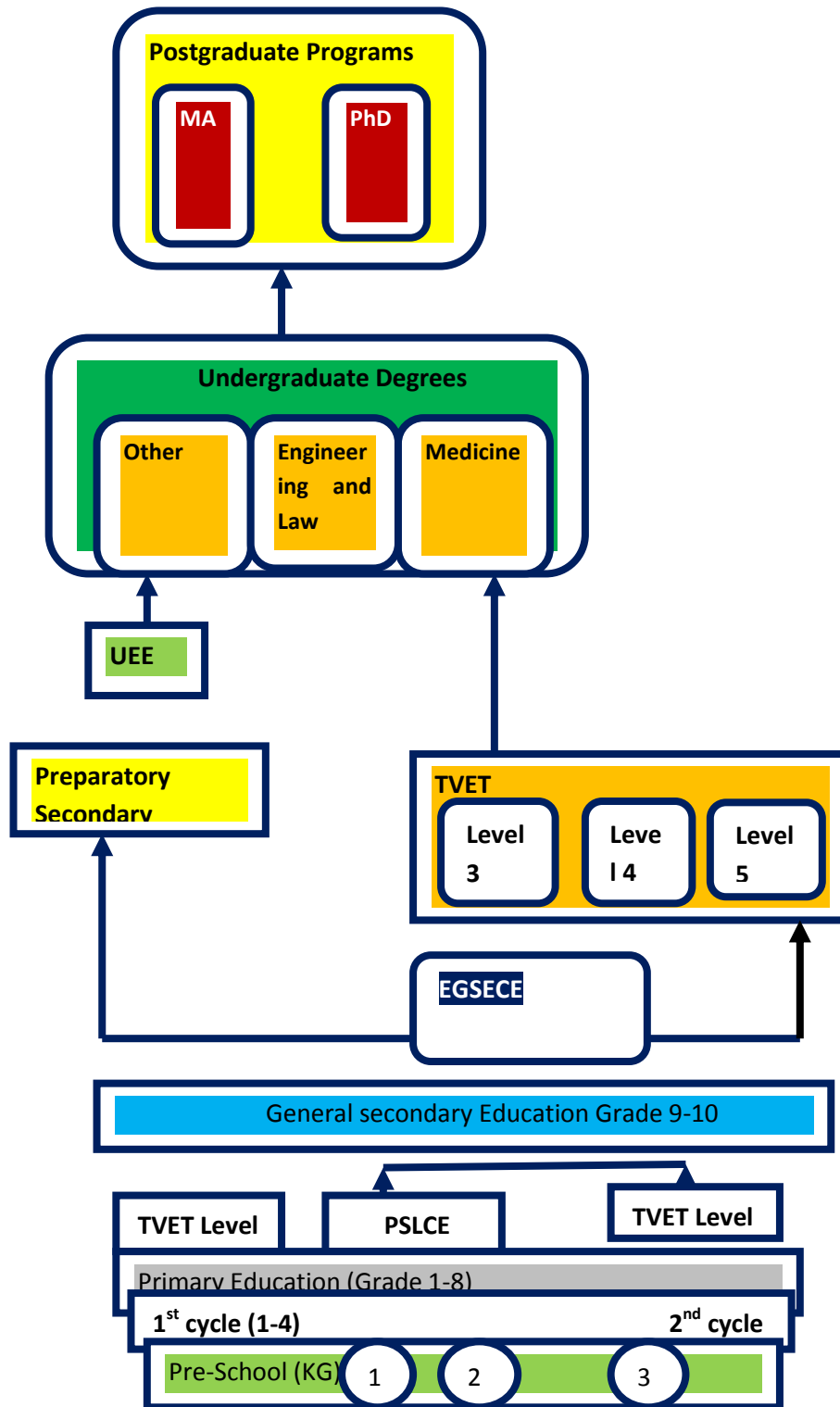
Presently, the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE) comes at the end of the upper primary cycle. Level 1 Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is provided for dropouts from the lower primary cycle (end of Grade 4) and Level 2 TVET is given to dropouts of the upper primary cycle (end of Grade 8). At the end of the general secondary education, students are required to sit for the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination (EGSECE).

In accordance with the new education system, students now have the option of pursuing either the academic stream (higher education programmes in Grades 11 and 12) or the vocational education stream through TVET programmes (Level 3 to Level 5), based on merit and their personal preferences. Similarly, those going into

university education from the preparatory programmes are expected to sit for the University Entrance Exam (UEE) which was developed, and is administered, at the central level (see Figure 3.1 below).

Within the framework of the ETP a twenty-year Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) with five-year rolling phases was designed in order to improve educational quality, relevance, efficiency, equity and extend access at all levels. According to the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, the higher education system only received attention during the preparation and implementation of the Education Sector Development Programme (2000/01-2004/05 and 2005/06-2010/11), following the adoption of the National Capacity Building Programme in 2002” ( MOE, 2005).

The emphasis in both phases regarding higher education was to provide good quality higher education to a large number of students based on merit. However, the new policy did not include distance education policy. In terms of the above description of the higher education system the whole integrated functions and lines of communications structural illustrations are shown below in Figure 3.1.



**Figure: 3.1: Structure of the Formal Education System of Ethiopian**

(Source: MoE, 2008/09)

Although the significance of higher education as a tool for producing the desired human resource development needs, as highlighted above, is recognized, there are

still many challenges being experienced in this field, especially in Ethiopia and in other developing countries. The challenges facing higher education include the problem of quality and a lack of resources.

Ethiopia needs to look for an alternative mode of delivery in order to address the new social and educational needs outlined above. Higher education, through distance education, is deemed to be necessary in order to improve the education system in response to the ever-growing human resource needs of the country (Fayessa, 2010:212). Therefore, the national higher education policy of the country needs to accommodate an open and flexible learning system to positively contribute towards providing access to higher education.

### **3.5 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH FOCUS**

Evidence from the literature has established that a successful distance education programme should be supported by a national distance education policy. The success of any country's education system depends on, among other factors, the policy framework aimed at addressing the government's priorities as well as being responsive to global demands. The literature also shows that distance education in many parts of the world has been used as an alternative means of providing access to higher education for both developed and developing countries. It has contributed to the improvement of efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of higher education, given the flexible mode of delivery imbedded in it which includes the use of modern technology (ICTs).

There is consensus in the literature that distance education has grown and developed as an alternative delivery mode to the conventional education system in providing access to higher education on a world-wide level, especially in developing countries. In addition, the literature reveals that if education is believed to be life-changing, then it has to be quality education. Without quality there is no life-changing education. It cannot be disputed that education is most important for the production of quality human resources.

In Ethiopia, as in most developing countries, the responsibility for quality assurance is placed on each and every public and private institution. The Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) is an entity which ensures the quality of higher education in Ethiopia for both public and private education sectors. Without appropriate quality education there cannot be an expectation of sustainable development in any country, especially in developing countries like Ethiopia. Therefore, the improvement of education quality is of special significance in the Ethiopian context. The distance education system, for example, is able to reach students in rural areas and the disadvantaged sections of population better than the conventional face-to-face system. In order to fulfil its vital role in Ethiopia's sustainable development, it must raise the quality of all aspects of its operations.

The experiences of many countries show that maintaining quality in higher education and ensuring minimum standard with regard to three elements is crucial. These elements are an integral part of the study quality indicators, namely: coherence, efficiency and impact. The complementary parts of these are: input, process and outcomes. As has been discussed in the preceding sections, input includes the key role-players of teaching and learning, such as students, tutors/instructors and facilities for the process; process includes teaching-learning and the support services provided during the whole process; and the outcomes are the graduates, themselves, and the skills and knowledge acquired by individual learners. If all these important elements are handled well in distance education programmes, they will contribute to quality improvement and enhancement of processes. Nevertheless, there are no universally agreed principles and standards used to measure quality in education; different higher institutions use different measures to check the quality of their programmes.

According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA, 2012), in order to ensure quality in distance education programmes national accreditation organisations have, independently, developed standards, policies and processes for the evaluation of distance education. However, the main reason behind the quality culture and quality enhancement in higher distance education is to produce ever-larger numbers of relevant graduates for the countries' further development.



To conclude, distance higher education may be considered as an alternative option to conventional face-to-face education, particularly for mature and mid-career students; for students with disabilities; and for who access to contact education is difficult or impossible. The flexibility of distance learning is, thus, highly attractive as students may study in their own time at home while continuing to work and earn an income; live near or far from a university campus; earn initial or postgraduate qualifications; undertake professional development; equip themselves for a change of career; top up incomplete programmes of study; take courses that are unavailable elsewhere; and improving their general education.

Government departments and employers in the corporate sector sponsor students for initial or continuing professional development in distance education and training programmes, enabling them to improve their knowledge and skills in their own time without withdrawing them from the workforce. This can be realised through an adequate framework of policies at national and institutional level to enhance wider access and quality improvement in the higher distance education sector (CHE, 2012:33).

In the next chapter, Chapter 4, the conceptual framework of the study will be discussed.

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## CHAPTER 4

### THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to develop a framework which will shed light on the study, using an assessment model for quality in distance education, with reference to the increasing access to quality postgraduate distance education that is offered by the international cross-border institution, IGNOU, in Ethiopia. The framework is conceptualized to explore perceptions of the various stakeholders, including academics, administrative staff and policy-makers together with institutional strategies and policy contexts at different levels aimed at enhancing quality in distance education. The main objective of the framework is to show the quality elements or indicators of the study found in this specific distance education system in terms of providing access to quality education through appropriate teaching and learning approaches, supportive and motivated facilitators, effective infrastructures and policy issues.

However, the strategy of seeing distance education as an alternative source for access to quality postgraduate distance education in contrast to the traditional education system may prove useful or otherwise, depending on the awareness and commitment of those directly involved. These stakeholders include the Institutions, the MoE and policy-makers at the state and national levels in the country. Some influences have been determined by institutional policy which is, itself, influenced by the state and national policies of the country (Moore, 2005:8). Therefore, in order to answer the research questions the involvement of all concerned groups: learners, staff/programme-coordinators, administrators, policy-makers and educators of distance education at a higher level and the MoE are important.

The development of a framework which can shed light on strategies for quality postgraduate distance education was a challenging task. Before deciding on this framework, the researcher considered various theories from different disciplines to find a relevant theoretical conceptual framework for the study. Theories are

statements about how things are connected. Their purpose is to explain why things happen as they do to help sort out our world and to make sense of it; to guide us on how to behave in it; and to predict what might happen next. Theories form relationships between things in a systematic way. They are based on information that people collect in daily life by seeing, hearing, touching, sensing, smelling and feeling (Henning, 2004:14). All theoretical frameworks in different disciplines provide a general representation of the relationship between things in a given phenomenon. The conceptual framework, on the other hand, embodies the specific direction in which the research will be undertaken (Aguilar, 2010).

In exploring this, the researcher conducted an intensive search of various models which have been employed in different countries. Relevant theories which are related to the higher education system, in general, and distance education, in particular, have been identified by various scholars. Prior to constructing this framework as a relevant theoretical tool for the purpose of exploring and analysing the national education policy gap as well as the perceptions of various stake-holders, including students and policy-makers, a serious investigation was carried out.

In the process, among others, the following theory and conceptual framework and model was investigated and analysed: an assessment model and methods for evaluating distance education programmes identified by Lockhart and Lacy, (2002). This model consists of seven components: institutional readiness; instructional design; human development needs; enrolment and graduation trends; policy; student's readiness; and learning outcomes.

Distance education has grown tremendously in higher education institutions in the United States and it has become one of the most powerful forces influencing national policy. Correspondingly, the need for assessment has become strong for higher education administrators and facilities to show that they are delivering quality programmes and courses (Lockhart and Lacy, 2002:98). Indirectly, this is assessing the quality of education provided by the distance education institutions. Their main assessment areas, given above, focus on faculty training and support needs; student support service's needs, and online learning results as well as various student readiness tools and distance education planning and learner assessment

instruments. This model utilises data found from tracking distance education student grades and retention rates (Lockhart & Lacy, 2002:103).

The second theory which the researcher investigated was the social development theory identified by Garry and Cleveland (1999) which summarized the process of organizing human energies and activities at higher levels to achieve greater results. Social development theory consists of two interrelated aspects: learning and application. Similar to social development theory, human capital theory was also investigated which represents the investment people make to enhance their economic productivity.

According to Bablola (2003), human capital theory emphasizes how education increases the productivity and efficiency of the workers by increasing the level of human capability. The interesting part of this theory which adds some value to this study is that to contribute significantly to economic growth and development, education must be of high quality and should also meet the skill-demand needs of the country. The third theory investigated was the education system theory, identified by Steiner (1988), which describes the connection between teachers, students, content and context. Steiner explains that these components form a system of education and affect relationships (Steiner, 1988:107). In organising education, an understanding of the whole system is required for intelligent action and to prevent unwanted consequences. Further understanding of the whole system as an integrated unit helps to maintain a balance in development activities (Fayessa, 2010:28). Lastly, the researcher examined Moore's (2005) transactional and systems models which deal, mainly, with the learners and instructors interaction model, mediated by ICT.

#### **4.2 LOCKHART AND LACY (2002) AND LATCHEM AND JUNG (2007) APPROACHES**

Although all the theories and models described above have some elements in common, the researcher decided to use the relevant frameworks that were developed by Lockhart and Lacy (2002) and Latchem and Jung (2007) which are based on the quality indicators in distance education. Both of these are similar and

may be, adequately, used together as an assessment model and methods for evaluating distance education programmes.

In integrating the two models minor modifications were made to the previous conceptual diagram constructed by the three core quality indicators, namely, coherence, efficiency and impact. From the Lackhart and Lacy (2002) model the following elements were taken to be part of the framework to show wholeness: institutional readiness and communication, ICTs, learning outcomes and retention.

It is evident that these three quality indicators, among others, are relevant to this study. The three quality indicators properly address the quality, policy issues and pedagogical elements of the selected institution (IGNOU). They are relevant for assessing the perceptions of various stake-holders of the quality of teaching and learning at IGNOU, especially the MARD programme. Furthermore, it enabled the researcher to assess the student support services provided by the institution and the course materials as well as the learner assessment methods. Additionally, the perceptions of the stake-holders with regard to the final outcomes of the MARD programme which were related to the acceptance of graduates in the workplace were investigated.

The study draws together an integrated analysis with three sub-themes for the study from which other sub-themes emerged. These include education policy and its implications for the development of distance education; institutional and pedagogical practices of IGNOU; and the perceptions of various stakeholders. The perceptions and the extent to which distance education has been integrated with the traditional face-to-face education system depend on the policy context in relevant ministries and agencies as well as the country's human development plans.

To realise this, Jung and Latchem (2007) identify three ways in which quality is managed and operated by Asian open and distance teaching providers, including the use of a centralised system; a collective system; and dispersed and delegated systems. In a centralised system, quality is managed by designated offices in accordance with national or institutional policies, procedures and criteria. Collective systems, on the other hand, assign responsibility to various boards, councils, and

committees at different levels, stages and aspects of quality assurance. In dispersed or delegated systems each administrative office and academic division is held accountable for quality (Latchem and Jung, 2007:241).

Using the above approaches/systems, institutional quality management and monitoring procedures in distance education would, typically, cover planning, management and administration, course design and course development and delivery. Furthermore, these procedures also cover learner support, learner assessment and technology applications in the teaching and learning process which, together, assist in bringing about the desired changes in the quality of distance education. Latchem and Jung (2007) also offer some important suggestions on how to encourage and achieve a culture of quality in distance education which is relevant to all developing countries, including Ethiopia. These principles and procedures have been taken as relevant and applicable to the Ethiopian context in assessing the quality issues of distance education provided by cross-border institution.

The two main driving forces of this study were access and quality. Within the context of distance education wider access and quality improvement are seen as positive aspects of postgraduate study, especially with the assistance of ICTs. Nonetheless, some differences can be identified when distance education intentions are associated with quality dimensions. This is, however, debatable in distance education research in which the most frequent focus on e-learning pedagogical issues does not sufficiently address the quality standards for distance education in many places. For example, research indicates that the “perception of quality has a profound effect on the acceptability of distance education degrees and programmes” (Allen & Seaman, 2004:27), especially those offered online without institutional readiness and passing the proper accreditation procedures.

In the context of this study, distance education intentions go beyond attending to the interests of the student; they include management of distance education providers and the involvement of the MoE and its role in promoting distance education. This study goes beyond exploring factors that can influence the development of distance education and it recommends that the government should place a priority on

promoting distance education as an alternative to the traditional education systems and focus on the influence of academics, policy-makers and other stake-holders.

As pointed out in the literature review, there are many quality dimensions to assess the quality standard of distance education. Jung (2011) is of the opinion that quality and quality assurance in distance education is still at an early stage of development compared to conventional higher education. Moreover, societal and cultural environments affect quality and quality assurance policies and practices, as indicated in Jung (2010), depending on reconciling all different perspectives; considering societal and cultural variations; and reaching agreement on the quality criteria and standards by which to judge the quality of input, process, and output of distance education (Jung, 2011:47).

In this study the criteria for assessing the quality of distance education for Asian regions are not only limited to the three quality indicators chosen for this study. Criteria and indicators for assessing quality in distance education programmes include the following which are given in Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Criteria and Indicators for Assessing Quality in Distance Education Programmes**

Criteria	Indicators
<b>Coherence</b>	<p>To what degree is distance education integrated into mainstream educational/ institutional policy, structures, expertise, programmes?</p> <p>What distinctive role does ODL play (extending access to disadvantaged group, facilitating in service training, etc)?</p>
<b>Cohesion</b>	<p>To what degree is there a balance between central and local elements of the programme?</p> <p>How efficient are the lines of communication between the different implementing partners at different levels and different geographical sites?</p>
<b>Quality Management</b>	<p>Is there a policy, plan and framework for ensuring quality? Does this include a statement on personnel, and expected areas/levels of expertise?</p> <p>Is monitoring and evaluation information used for managing quality?</p>
<b>Accessibility</b>	<p>Have stated goals about overcoming barriers to access been achieved in terms of the composition of the learner population, such as rural/urban, disadvantaged or geographical reach?</p> <p>How do the figures compare with equivalent programmes in</p>

	conventional education? What are the attendance figures at study centres?  What are the distances learners have to travel to reach study centres?
<b>Effectiveness</b>	What are enrolment, drop-out, completion and successful completion rates? How do they compare with equivalent programmes in conventional education?
<b>Impact</b>	What changes have taken place as a result of the programme? What changes have taken place in teaching methods, skills, curriculum, confidence and improvement in quality of life, such as promotion, employability and mobility?
<b>Efficiency</b>	How efficient is the delivery of materials to the learners? How efficient are the channels of communication between the different stake-holders? What is the turnaround time of assignments?
<b>Acceptability</b>	How far are the programme/ learners/qualification accorded acceptance and status? What recognition of qualifications by employers, professional associations and other educational Institutions can be determined through the level of salary obtained? To what degree does the programme draw on/provide mainstream resources (inspectors, study centres, tutors) and a nationally recognised examination system?

(Source: Report prepared by the International Research Foundation for Open Learning for EFA Monitoring Team, 8 UNESCO, Paris, and April 2004).

#### 4.3 THE COMPONENTS OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

From the quality indicators for the study, taken from the quality assurance criteria employed in Asian open and distance learning and complemented in Lockhart and Lacy (2002), an assessment model and methods for evaluating distance education programmes were identified that were relevant and fitting for this study. The three selected quality indicators specific to the study, namely, coherence, efficiency and impact, were found to be relevant for the assessment of the quality of postgraduate programmes offered by IGNOU in partnership with SMUC. These quality indicators were taken from the work of Latchem Jung (2007) as well as Perraton (2000).



In judging the effectiveness of distance education, the framework needs to include quality criteria specific to distance education. The following table, Table 4.2, contains the three criteria specifically selected for the study to evaluate the quality of distance education programmes. The indicators used for the purpose of the study are summarized below in three boxes and complemented with other sub-indicators.

**Table 4.2: The Study's Criteria and Indicators to Evaluate Quality in Distance Education**

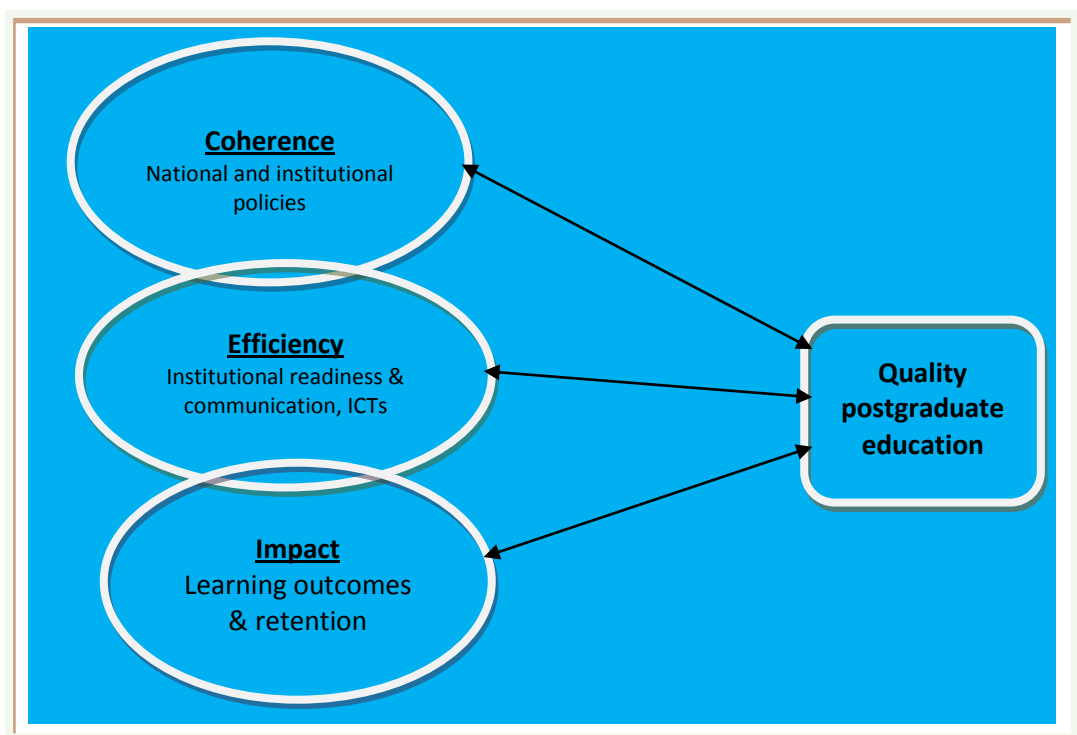
Criteria	Indicators
Coherence (National & institutional policies)	<p>Coherence will be assessed in terms of attainment of alignment among different levels of coordination, namely: central office of IGNOU, India, and IGNOU in Ethiopia and Faculty and Department (where the programme is located). The questions posed in relation to this quality indicator are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How efficient are the lines of communication between the different implementing partners at different levels and different geographical sites in terms of the delivery of the programs?</li> <li>• How coherent and aligned is the national education policy with other policy strategies including IGNOU and HERQA?</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b> (Institutional readiness & communication, ICTs)	<p>This quality indicator will assess the level of efficiency of the delivery mode by posing the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How efficient is the delivery of materials to the learners?</li> <li>• Who is responsible for the delivery of learning materials?</li> <li>• What is the cycle of the delivery? Is this adhered to?</li> <li>• Once materials have been dispatched, what learner support mechanism is in place? Is this followed up appropriately?</li> <li>• When are assignments supposed to be delivered to students?</li> <li>• When are assignments supposed to be submitted to lecturers?</li> <li>• What are the marking procedures? Who marks the assignments and what is the turnaround time for this?</li> </ul> <p>It can be argued that efficiency has to do with the process aspect of the theoretical framework.</p>
Impact (Learning outcomes & retention)	<p>This quality indicator assesses the views and perceptions of stakeholders involved in this programme by posing the following questions:</p> <p>What are the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the quality of distance education that is offered by IGNOU?</p> <p>What is the acceptance of MARD graduates in the workplaces after completion of this program?</p> <p>This has to do with the output of the program.</p>

Each section of the above table with its corresponding sub-themes describes the main elements and reflects on the framework's integral parts. The efficiency of the delivery system is reflected in the second criteria and the policy issues in the first, as well as the perceptions of the various stake-holders in terms of the outcomes of the programme, are included in the final criteria and its descriptor. However, the components listed above might overlap and be intertwined to give full picture of the study.

#### 4.4 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The following diagram serves to illustrate the same quality indicators, specifically chosen to be part of a conceptual framework of the study. The conceptual framework adopted for this study should help the reader understand the interrelatedness of the three selected variables or indicators, complemented with others mentioned above. These indicators suggest and assume interplay between the main activities of teaching and learning as they directly affect the delivery of distance education in this programme. However, since quality is a multi-dimensional concept one needs to be reminded that this framework may not fully describe the essence of all quality dimensions.

#### Theoretical or Conceptual framework



(Source: Latchem & Jung, 2007; Lockhart & Lacy, 2002)

#### **Figure 4.1: Conceptual Framework Diagram**

The quadrants which make up the framework may influence each other to suggest an integrated system for promoting distance education at IGNOU. In this regard, the above diagram has been extended to portray some elements that can influence the ability for education institutions to ensure that quality elements act coherently and efficiently, with impact. Systematic integration with national and institutional policy issues, ICTs integration, learning outcomes and retention are perceived as desirable elements in this study and refer to the perceptions of various stakeholders regarding how they feel about the importance and relevance of distance education at the level of higher education in terms of provision of access to quality postgraduate education. Furthermore, other relationships between these three quality indicator intentions have been depicted.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter an attempt was made to develop a conceptual framework that will be used to analyse how the cross-border distance institution, IGNOU, provides access to quality postgraduate education in Ethiopia. Together with the relevant literature on distance education, the researcher used two theoretical perspectives to develop the conceptual framework, namely: the quality assessment model and methods for higher education identified by Lockhart and Lacy (2002) and the quality assessment indicators model for distance education identified by Latchem and Jung (2007). In addition, an attempt was made to illustrate contextual factors that elicit the need for the transformation of distance education's collaboration with public universities. Finally, the conceptual framework describes the quality indicators which may be used to judge either the success or failure of IGNOU at an institutional level.

It is also relevant to address the "input, process and outcome" framework before concluding. In this study there is an appreciation of an input-process-outcome-context framework as an additional basis for defining quality and to categorize different measures of quality in postgraduate distance education, complemented by

the three quality indicators of the study. Coherence might relate to the process function and input with impact and efficiency on the economic side which goes to linking the input and impact dimensions to achieve the desired outcomes of producing quality human resources. The integrated relationship of these components was deemed to further work in harmony to assess and analyse the quality standard of postgraduate education at IGNOU. Moreover, the three identified components, input, process and outcome, model combined with the three quality indicators used in this study build on three domains: supportive, pedagogical, and environmental factors. As described in Chapter 5, the three domains which are the study's themes are analysed and used to categorize and organize the quality dimensions in a meaningful and efficient manner. While input from providers, assessors, and government are valuable in managing and enhancing quality in distance education, in order to improve learning experience and performance of distance education institutions it is essential to fully understand the learners' perceptions of quality in distance education (Jung, 2011:2). Together, these depicted the eventual results of education as a productive system, in which inputs are translated into outcomes.

It is argued that distance education can provide access to quality higher education, provided that it fulfils the quality criteria for the programme and, thereby, responds to societal needs. Quality in distance education in the higher education sector will allow it to become a solid alternative source to the traditional higher education system that is more efficient, more effective and more responsive in meeting the human resources development needs of the country. The outcome of creative and competent human capital can lead to the economic growth of the individual; of the society; and of the nation as a whole (Cloete, *et al.*, 2011:11).

To summarize this Chapter, then, the framework explains the influence of various parts of an integrated system of assessment of the quality standard of distance education. It is assumed from this framework that due to differences in perceptions, different groups may have a different understanding and, therefore, may respond differently to distance education initiatives. The response in terms of how they plan and deliver the postgraduate programme at IGNOU through curriculum design and staff and student support services may, or may not, be successful in meeting a targeted mission to provide quality education, depending on institutional

structures/organisational commitments. This framework, therefore, has been important to this study because it has helped the researcher explore stakeholders influence and involvement in developing distance education as an alternative form to the traditional education system to access to higher education.

In the next chapter, Chapter 5, the research design and the methodology employed for this study will be discussed.

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## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this chapter is to present the research design and methodology adopted for the study. The research methodology, data collection procedures and data analysis procedures are explained. In addition, validity, reliability and general ethical issues are included as they apply to this study. The research design chosen for this study is a qualitative approach in which the application of the research instruments, such as document analysis and interviews, are discussed. The reason for selecting the qualitative approach is, mainly, based on the nature of, and research questions posed in, this study.

#### **5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design is defined as a general strategy or plan for conducting a research study which includes the exploration of posed research questions as well as a detailed presentation of the research steps to be followed in collecting, choosing and

analysing data (Gay and Airasian, 2003). However, the choice of research design is based on the researchers' assumption, research skills and research practices which influence the way in which data is collected (Creswell, 2009).

There are three recognized approaches for conducting research: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Qualitative research is based on a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context (or real world settings) and, in general, the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest. In other words, research is carried out in real-life situations and not in an experimental; manner; it depends on interviews and observation (Maree, 2007:5). In agreement with this, qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or group ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures. Data is, typically, collected in the participants' setting, with data analysis inductively building from particular to general themes and the researcher interpreting the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2007:7).

In this research study the main data gathering instruments were interviews and document analysis which complemented each other in the process of the analysis and findings. The quantitative research process is that which is systematic and objective in its ways of using numerical data from only a selected sub-group of a universe or population to generalize the findings to the universe that is being studied (Maree, 2007:145) which is not the case in the qualitative research method. Quantitative research is, therefore, a means of testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured by means of various instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures (Creswell, 2008:27). Mixed methods research is relatively new and builds on both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Taddie & Tashakkori, 2009). It is an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms and involves philosophical assumptions; the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches; and the mixing of both approaches in a study (Creswell & Clark, 2007:5).

A qualitative research method was utilised for the study, using a case study design. Case studies are believed to be useful in the study of human behaviour, as they

assist in understanding specific experiences relating to the phenomena under investigation (Stake, 1978). According to Stake (1995), there are three different kinds of case studies, namely: intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. The selected case study used for this thesis is an intrinsic case study.

Stake's (1995) definition of an intrinsic case study is a single case design which attempts to fulfil the primary interest of the researcher in understanding a specific case in-depth and shed light on it. The intrinsic case study is often used in exploratory research where the researcher attempts to learn about a certain phenomenon which was not known before by studying a single case in-depth. Therefore, the use of a case study is, especially, relevant for this study as it offers a deeper understanding of the problem.

Punch argues that "properly conducted case studies, especially in situations where our knowledge is limited, have a valuable contribution to make in educational research" (2009:123). The key characteristic of the case study is that "the social unit selected is a single example of the many cases that make up the type of unit question" (Rayne, 2004:31). Therefore, in this study the Indira Gandhi National Open University in Addis Ababa was used as a case study for the research.

### **5.3 THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH APPLICABLE TO THIS STUDY**

According to Punch (2005:58), qualitative research is a research inquiry that usually emphasises information about the world in the form of words, meanings and interpretations that people in different settings make, rather than a research inquiry that focuses on numeric information or quantification. A qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding descriptions that individuals or groups give to social or human problems (Creswell, 2009:4). Therefore, the qualitative research method provides the researcher with an insight to understand the meanings people attach to various social phenomena. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003:13), the choice of the qualitative approach is grounded in the nature of the enquiry because the research deals, largely, with entities, processes and meanings that cannot be measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency. Qualitative research, in general, is made up of a set of activities that locate the researcher in real world. It

consists of a variety of interpretive practices that make the world visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003:4-5).

The approach of this study is qualitative in order to provide insight into the complexity of the organisation of open and distance learning in the context of Ethiopia. The data covers education policies involved in the offering of quality postgraduate distance education. How the officials of the Ministry of Education, higher institutions leaders, lecturers (tutors) and students understand quality in distance education programmes was also part of the investigation.

The information gathered for this study is a combination of documentary information, individual information from interviews and the responses of the alumni of the Master of Art in Rural Development (MARD). The documentary information and the interviews were analysed and interpreted using the qualitative research paradigm. The analysis techniques comprised a number of activities, such as selecting, describing, interpreting, evaluating and connecting evidence to communicate the findings to the readers (Dey, 1993).

In this study, the researcher used qualitative data to study the perceptions and experiences of students in a postgraduate programme. Structured interviews were conducted with respondents that included graduate students, programme coordinators, government officials and institutional officials. The researcher collected and analysed data and integrated the findings in an effort to elaborate, enhance and clarify the results.

The rationale behind choosing the qualitative approach in this study was based on two reasons. Firstly, the use of the qualitative methods helps to understand the perceptions and interpretations of the respondents and, therefore, the researcher used different categories of participants and complemented the findings with a document analysis in order to examine the different dimensions of the phenomenon under discussion.

Secondly, according to Ereaut, qualitative research seeks the “analysis of unstructured information, such as interview transcripts, open-ended responses,



feedback forms, photos and videos. Qualitative research, does not just rely on statistics or numbers, which are the domain of quantitative researchers” (2011:28). Qualitative research is concerned with meaning in context; it involves the interpretation of data. The qualitative researcher needs to actively engage with the data which presupposes a standpoint or point of departure. This means that qualitative research acknowledges subjective elements in the research process (Carla, 2008:149).

Qualitative research is used to obtain the perceptions of people and their attitudes to various matters; it looks to people’s behaviour and attitudes as well as their concerns, motivations, aspirations and general lifestyles; and it is used to inform business decisions, policy formation, communication and research. Qualitative research, however, also involves the analysis of any unstructured material, including customer feedback forms, reports and media clips. The convergence of the collected data enhances the credibility of the research findings (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 3).

In summing up qualitative research Lodico, Spauling and Voegtle maintain that “one of the major advantages of qualitative method is that it provides the strengths of qualitative research, providing in-depth look at context, processes, and interactions and precise measurement of attitudes and outcomes” (2006: 311). More specifically, the researcher used structured interviews to collect qualitative data and to complement it with document analysis in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the research problem and, eventually, to achieve clarity regarding the research results (Rayne, 2004:175, Hesse-Biber, 2010: 4). Therefore, the use of a qualitative research approach enabled a complete understanding of the problem under investigation.

## **5.4 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES**

The following strategies were used in the collection of data.

### **5.4.1 SAMPLING AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**

In qualitative sampling “strategies involve the selection of units or cases for a research study by using both purposive sampling or non-probability sampling (to

increase external validity) and purposive sampling strategies (to increase transferability)” (Teddlie & Yu, 2007:78). In qualitative research, the sample population size is usually small and purposefully selected from those individuals who have the most relevant information about, and experience with, the studied phenomenon (Maree, 2007:265).

In this study the researcher combined stratified and purposive sampling techniques to select the research site and the potential respondents. This was done by putting the population into sub-groups (strata), so that each unit belonged to a single stratum from which the researcher then selected units (Teddlie & Yu, 2007:4). The aim was to select a sample that was representative of the MARD postgraduate students in terms of the characteristics of interest of the study. This technique was used to select students, based on their course specialisations.

A purposive sampling technique was used whereby the researcher selected the research site and participants, based on their characteristics and their knowledge of the research topic being investigated. For the purpose of this study, the sampling site was IGNOU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. As Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtler (2006) observe, purposeful sampling allows the researcher to identify key informants who have a specific knowledge about the topic under investigation as a result of their experiences or roles they have played in relation to the topic under investigation.

#### **5.4.1.1 Target population and sampling size of the study**

All the participants in the study were drawn from the Indira Gandhi National Open University’s management, academic staff and students. Others were from the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency as well as officials from Ministry of Education in the Federal Ministry of Education in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia.

As described earlier, the researcher used the purposive sampling technique to select the sample for the study. In total, the sample size consisted of 30 respondents. The sample for interviews consisted of five senior officials from the Federal Ministry of Education: two policy-makers, two higher education experts and one official who are responsible for private higher education institutions, including

distance education. Five officials from the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) were selected, three of whom are senior officials responsible for both accreditation and quality audits and two who are from the External Quality Auditor at Addis Ababa University (AAU).

Ten interviewees were drawn from the research site (IGNOU, Addis Ababa); four were from management bodies and were decision-makers and six were from academic staff members, including the programme coordinator and head of department. The sample also included five graduates and five prospective MARD students, making a total of ten MARD students. Therefore, added to a total of twenty officials from the institute and Ministry of Education as described above; the total sample size consisted of thirty respondents.

The participants from the Ministry of Education were among those who have extensive experience in higher education and their involvement in policy-making and its implementation helped the researcher to unlock their experiences with regard to policy. Their practical assessment of international distance education providers in terms of their contribution to increased access to quality higher education was considered to be important. The respondents listed above from the Federal Ministry of Education have an extensive and rich experience in education, ranging from ten to twenty-five years. Hence, these respondents were selected to inform the issues related to the implementation of policy. Similarly, the respondents selected from the HERQA have been involved in licensing and performing quality audits for both public and distance teaching institutions at the national level and have served the Agency for between four and seven years.

The participants from the distance education institution, IGNOU, provided information about the management and organisation of distance education programmes. This group of respondents have worked for five to ten years in coordinating the activities of distance education at their respective institutions in addition to their experience from other places. The fourth group of participants, the lecturers and tutors have three to seven years' experience in marking assignments and examinations and in tutoring in the distance teaching institutions. Their

experience is, therefore, pertinent to the practice of distance teaching and learning activities.

The final category of participants were the IGNOU MARD programme graduates and current students who had two to five years' experience as postgraduates and they provide their perceptions of the various aspects of distance education as students. What the researcher found to be a most important aspect in conducting interviews was the willingness of participants to provide information. The researcher benefited from the assistance of all the groups who were involved in the study.

#### **5.4.1.2 Characteristics of the population**

From the research site, IGNOU in Addis Ababa, ten interviewees were consulted from the management: four who are involved in decision-making and six academic staff members, including the programme coordinator and the department head. The sample of student respondents comprised ten postgraduate MARD graduates and current students and twenty officials from the Institute and Ministry of Education, as described above.

Interviews with graduated MARD students were conducted in order to obtain their views on the impact of IGNOU's MARD programme in contributing to the human resources development needs of the country (see Appendices 4-10). It was deemed necessary to interview the graduates from the programme because they had information in terms of their experience and most of the participants had been in the first batch of students in the programme. Furthermore, this study focused on access to quality postgraduate students, specific to MARD, who were identified as key role-players in the postgraduate distance education programme which includes the input, processes and output of the education system (Sahney, 2004).

With regard to the interviews, structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher with all interviewees. The key participants, namely, MoE senior officials, HERQA and IGNOU staff members at different levels and MARD students and graduates, were asked twelve structured interview questions.

Relevant documents were also studied to cross-check the information obtained for the study.

The profiles of the respondents, including gender and age, are based on Ministry of Education senior officials who participated in the interviews; the respondents varied in age and gender. Most of the respondents fell in the age range of 37-48 years followed by age 50 and above. This implies that most of the participants were experienced adults. The number of the different genders of the staff was six male and four female which indicates that the major participants were male. However, female participation in this specific context was four which is within the equitable range. The other participants who worked for the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's Ministry of Education and who are responsible for the entire higher education quality control and enhancement came from the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA).

As depicted in the primary data, most of the respondents were in the age range of 45-48 years, followed by age 50 and above. This again indicates that in distance education most of the participants were adults. In terms of gender, eight were male and two were female; thus, most of the participants were male. The staff profile of participants from IGNOU indicated that most of the respondents fell in the age range of 47-50 years and this implies that most of the participants were experienced adults. The participants from IGNOU were all male. Regarding the profile of student participants for this research project most of the student participants fell in the age range of 47-50 years, followed by the 37-46 year age range; most of the postgraduate distance education students were, therefore, adults. The gender profile of the students was nine male and one female; the majority of the student respondents were male.

Thus, the overall picture from the above description shows that an overwhelming majority of respondents were male. In terms of the ages of the respondents, the majority of students and staff respondents were above 45 years. This implies that participants in distance education programmes are mature and that they are adults who are pursuing their postgraduate studies while working and attending to family matters. This is one of the positive aspects of distance education, that people of a

more mature age are able to access higher education to meet their educational needs whereas previously higher education opportunities were limited for postgraduate students, particularly those of mature age.

#### **5.4.2 DOCUMENTS AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

Document analysis was another source of data for this study. According to Hatch “documents are powerful indicators of the value systems operating within institutions” (2002:117). In the analysis of documents the researcher focused on all types of written communication that could shed light on the phenomenon that was investigated. Generally, primary sources include data that is unpublished, but may be in published form. According to Punch (2005:184), documents, both historical and contemporary, are a rich source of data for social research. Documentary sources of data might be used in various ways; some studies depend entirely on documentary data and in other research, such as in case studies or grounded theory studies, documentary data may be collected in conjunction with other instruments of research.

Documentary information and interviews were analysed and interpreted in terms of the qualitative method. The techniques comprised a number of activities, such as selecting, describing, interpreting, evaluating and connecting evidence to communicate the findings to readers (Dey, 1993). All institutions involved generate documents that create a written record of official activities within the institutions and these documents were analysed for the purpose of this study as they provided a history of, or trend in, what the study intended investigating. In this study, the following documents were reviewed and analysed: national as well as institutional policy documents, student records, course contents, strategic plans, evaluation reports and reviews of government policies. More specifically, the following documents were analysed:

- The Ethiopian government policy for General Education and Training policy related to higher education provision and quality as well as access related to it (MoE, 2003).
- Policy for higher education, particularly Proclamations No. 351/2003 and 650/2009, to assess the expansion and access and quality, relevance

and equity and also determine if there is an alignment with DE and the admission policies to higher education.

- Regulations and manuals of distance education programmes from selected postgraduate level programme centres to assess whether the provision of postgraduate distance education would be in sync with the human development needs of the country. The output of the programme, especially MARD, was assessed as well as the impact it had on the graduates, using the student profiles. These documents were received from IGNOU which covered the period 2006-2012.
- The Federal Ministry of Education's central administration manual, reports, strategies and plans and procedures related to the provision of quality education.
- The Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency's (HERQA, 2006) guidelines and checklists for quality assurance; regulation papers; accreditation policy documents; and procedures were analysed.

The researcher used the documents after checking their accuracy by cross-checking with other sources of information. These documents were found to be very useful in bridging information gaps and they served the purpose of triangulating information. In a general sense, the document analysed revealed some sense of complementary action with interview results which will be described in Chapters 8 and 9 of this thesis.

### **5.4.3 INTERVIEWS**

An interview is a purposeful conversation between an interviewee and interviewer and it involves two or more people. In qualitative research there are three types of interviews, namely: structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews (Maree, 2007:87). This study used structured as well as semi-structured interviews because they offer respondents the chance to talk freely about events and the various issues related to the main topic (Punch, 2009).

The interview guide was written in English, but the interviews were conducted in the official language of Ethiopia, Amharic, because of the proficiency of the interviewees



in this language. In order to ensure the systematic collection of information, the researcher used the interview guide approach which contained the possible topics of the study. Moreover, during the interviews the researcher managed to ask some probing questions in order to explore participants' views on the topic. There was flexibility in arranging interview based on the respondents' availability during working time.

The interview questions focused on, among others, the general understanding of distance education with respect to policy, role, access to quality distance education methods of course delivery, relevance of postgraduate distance education to the country's higher education development needs as well as the main issue of quality. Open-ended questions were used in interviews with post-graduate students in this programme. The qualitative questions consisted of structured and unstructured, open-ended items where respondents provided their own opinions and impressions. The open-ended items were intended to elicit the respondents' views, perceptions and suggestions about various aspects of quality distance education. Some of the possible questions that students were asked are included and described in the appendices (see Appendix 4).

The interviews with all categories of participants took between 45 minutes and 1 hour each to complete. In the agreement with the respondents the researcher recorded voices of some of the interviewees during the interviews by using a tape recorder. However, there were some individuals who did not want to be recorded, in which case the researcher only took notes of the information they provided. In the qualitative interview process, the main objective of conducting interviews, whether they are structured, unstructured or semi-structured, is to see the world through the eyes of the participants. This is done in order to obtain rich descriptive data that will help understand the participants' social reality by acknowledging the participants as valuable sources of information, provided their information is used correctly (Maree, 2007:87).



#### 5.4.4 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Data analysis is the process of making sense of the data collected for a specific purpose. Essentially, it is the way in which the researcher makes sense of the data which involves the perceptions and information obtained from the respondents and that the researcher has seen and read in order to consolidate incorporate and corroborate what was conveyed by the interviewees and what emerged from the documentary analysis.

According to Hennie (2010:14), qualitative data analysis is known as an on-going interactive process which continues during the life cycle of the research project, i.e., from data collection to data analysis. It is a complex process which operates as a cycle until the research project has been completed. From the simple data process to the abstract concepts, this process includes inductive and deductive reasoning methods and descriptive interpretation (Merriam, 2009:176). Therefore, the analysis process implies that data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined (Maree, 2007:100). The qualitative data and analysis which was employed in this study combined interviews with document analysis in order to provide convergent and divergent evidence about the phenomenon being studied.

Interview materials and documents were the major sources of information for the analysis. A combination of the data collection methods through triangulation enable the researcher to reduce the weaknesses inherent in each method and, by doing so, enhance the credibility of the data collected. The analysis of the data gathered was informed by analysis techniques drawn from qualitative research approaches. In order to acquire qualitative data the researcher used Dey's (1993) model which consists of three processes: describing, classifying, and connecting.

According to Dey (1993), analysis is a process of resolving data into its constituent components to reveal its characteristics, themes and patterns. In his model Dey maintains that the analysis should "first offer thorough and comprehensive descriptions that include the context of action, the intentions of the social actor and the processes in which the social action is embedded" (1993:12). In the second

stage he suggests that data should be classified in order to give meaning where the data is categorised and assigned themes and codes.

#### **5.4.4.1 Analysis of transcribed Interviews**

Carla (2008) and Maree (2007) are of the opinion that data analysis is the process of putting the raw information in the form of a summary of the context description, which means that when analysing the qualitative data the researcher's goal should be to summarise what s/he has seen or heard in terms of common words, phrases, themes or patterns that would assist the understanding and interpretation of what emerges.

This can be understood or described in terms of the main research question and the objectives of the study. Data analysis can be accomplished in many ways, such as through various software programmes, like the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), ATLAS.ti and NIVIVO-9-10. However, due to time constraints in learning the relevant software tool to analyse the qualitative data, namely, Atlas.ti, the researcher opted to do the analysis manually. With regard to this study, the relevant documents mentioned above were analysed accordingly. The quality enhancement policy and strategy of IGNOU; the performance of the students; enrolment; graduation rate; the quality of course materials; examination schedules; the students' results recording system; and procedures related to assessment methods were analysed. A descriptive analysis of student enrolment and graduation rates assessment was done throughout the process.

#### **5.4.4.2 Analysis and interpretation of data**

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of distance education in providing access to quality higher education in Ethiopia. This section presents the findings related to the main themes and the sub-themes and the quality indicators of the study. Furthermore, it presents the characteristics of the research population as well as the research questions and the procedures used in addressing the questions that were posed.

In the investigation different enquiry techniques were identified and used to establish what the practices of IGNOU, as a cross-border distance education provider, were in increasing access to quality postgraduate education through the distance education mode in Ethiopia. This was done in terms of the major quality indicators chosen for the study and explained above, namely: coherence, efficiency and impact. The data analysis focused on the basic research question and sub-questions as described in Chapter 6. The conceptual framework of the study also shed light on the analysis of the gathered data.

Chapter 8, as mentioned above, deals mainly with research findings which were determined by using the qualitative method for the study. This method has been included to precede the in-depth analysis of the documents, interviews with the participants in this study and observations made during the field work. The document analysis was based on the qualitative method and was complemented with the interviews which yielded the results of the study.

Furthermore, the findings in this chapter were complemented by the results of the document analysis as shown in Chapter 5 (see Chapter 5, Table 5.4.2) which contains questions formulated to highlight quality distance education criteria related to the three chosen indices of assessment of this study, namely: coherence, efficiency and the impact of quality distance education. The three indicators were identified and discussed as major themes from which other themes were developed with corresponding sub-themes. The following tables provide examples of criteria specific to the evaluation of quality in distance education programs and on which this study is based.

**Table 5.1: Summary of the Main Themes and Sub-Themes**

<b>Main Themes:</b> <b>Coherence</b>	<b>Sub- Themes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The integration of local and international quality control, enhancement and assurance policies, procedures and strategies;</li> <li>▪ Selection of instructional technology for the program/communication systems;</li> <li>▪ The distinctive role distance education plays in extending access to disadvantaged groups, facilitating various training and education related to policy; and</li> <li>▪ Opening up of equal opportunities for all to higher education, regardless of age and other social factors.</li> </ul>
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<b>Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Approaches to delivery mode of distance education and delivery of materials to the learners;</li> <li>▪ Channel of communication between the different stakeholders;</li> <li>▪ Staff and student recruitment and selection principles and procedures;</li> <li>▪ Faculty and administrative support for the students; and</li> <li>▪ Library and ICT support for the learners.</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expectations of student performance;</li> <li>▪ Assessment methods for students;</li> <li>▪ Impressions of learner performance;</li> <li>▪ Graduates' achievements and acceptance by stakeholders;</li> <li>▪ Changes that occur among graduates as a result of the program;</li> <li>▪ On teaching methods, skills, curriculum, confidence, improvement in quality of life (for example, promotion, employability and mobility); and</li> <li>▪ Has the program resulted in particular local development?</li> </ul>

The other related and emerging sub-themes, which complement the above themes, are listed below in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2: Summary of the Complementary Sub-Themes attached to the above Main Themes**

<b>1. Main Themes</b>	<b>Sub-Themes</b>
Quality of learning materials delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of relevant methods</li> <li>• Selection of appropriate communication channels and feedback system;</li> <li>• The alignment of materials with course designers' objectives; and</li> <li>• Use of project samples and context relevance.</li> </ul>
2. Quality of student support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic support sessions;</li> <li>• Use of modern communication technology for interaction between lecturers and students;</li> <li>• Administrative support for students for smooth teaching and learning;</li> <li>• Tutorial sessions and practical teaching and learning processes;</li> <li>• Learner-with-learner interaction;</li> <li>• Contact sessions and classes; and</li> <li>• Delivery modes of the programme.</li> </ul>
3. Quality of output assessment methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectations of students' performance;</li> <li>• Assessment methods for learners;</li> <li>• Marking of students' scripts;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length of feedback on assignments/examinations; and</li> <li>• Impression of learners' performance.</li> </ul>
4. Quality assurance process for distance education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IGNOU's vision of quality and awareness of key players;</li> <li>• Staff development process;</li> <li>• Acceptance of the graduates at large (MARD); and</li> <li>• The perception of all stakeholders concerning IGNOU's quality of education.</li> </ul>

These sub-themes emerged from the quality indicators of the study described above, namely, coherence, efficiency and impact. The significant tools to assess the process of bringing about quality distance education, in general, can be summarised as follows:

- The quality of student support services;
- The quality of course materials; and
- The quality of assessment methods of learners.

The above three themes have influenced the assessment of the quality of teaching and learning in distance education. The quality assurance methods used by IGNOU and HERQA, as a fourth emerging theme in conjunction with the above, have been taken as a mechanism to ensure the overall quality of standards in distance education. In the analysis of the findings these four themes were thoroughly investigated in terms of the provision of postgraduate distance education at IGNOU and, according to the participants, found to be successfully implemented. Providing adequate support services for staff and students in distance education, as indicated above, obviously leads to the successful achievement of quality higher education.

#### **5.4.4.3 Discussion of the main findings in terms of the main research question and sub-questions**

This section describes the data gathered through interviews and documents that were analysed systematically with regard to the research questions. The responses from postgraduate distance students, MoE senior officials and HERQA and IGNOU administrative and academic staff, on similar issues are presented in percentages in the tables. The responses are also was presented in the form of statements, where

necessary, and then analysed. The analysis in this chapter is based on higher education policy, in general, and distance education, in particular.

The analysis focuses on the link between quality enhancement functions and practices through the indicators which are categorised in five themes. This is for the purpose of answering the main research question which is related to the chosen study themes, namely: coherence, efficiency and impact, and with the integrated approach to the main and sub-themes from the perceptions of all respondents. In the next section, the main research question and sub-questions are further described, in light of producing quality postgraduate distance education.

In order to capture the relevant information, the researcher posed the following question: *How can distance education enhance access to quality postgraduate education in Ethiopia?* This question focuses on eliciting particular information with respect to access to quality postgraduate education. The responses to this question are organized into four sub-sections as follows:

- Contribution of National Education policy to the development of distance education;
- Mode of communication in the delivery system;
- Efficient delivery of the programme; and
- Quality enhancement policies and strategies.

The above sub-sections are related to the various aspects of responses given by the participants concerning the acceptance of distance education in Ethiopia as an alternative delivery mode to the conventional education system. From the above major research question the following five sub-questions were identified:

**1. *To what extent does the national education policy of Ethiopia support the development of distance education?***

This question refers to how the cross-border distance education institute has been accepted by the government of Ethiopia in terms of the national education policy. The cross-border education institute's international perspective and link to the local institution in the country was considered. This question is also related to the country's overall educational policy framework which could be used in distance education. To answer this question the researcher considered the nature of local and

national level policies and strategies in terms of postgraduate distance education delivery and its quality assurance strategies, principles and implementation which are related to HERQA.

**2. *How efficient are the lines of communication between the different implementing partners: government, host faculty and department and students in the delivery of the programme?***

This question focuses on an understanding of the different key players' smooth interaction and communication in the process, with and without technological means being considered. These include the level of communication taking place between the students and the institution. The researcher analysed the lines of communication which exist between headquarters and the partner institution as well as the entire institution communication system, including communication between the MoE and HERQA.

**3. *What are the efficiency elements in the delivery of this programme that enhance quality and how are these ensured?***

This question is concerned with student issues, instructional methods and pedagogic practices related to the quality of the course materials; it includes the various aspects of student support services which are provided as well as the effectiveness of the assessment and feedback systems of the institution.

**4. *How do the criteria for quality distance education at IGNOU relate to the higher education quality assurance policy of Ethiopia?***

This question considers whether IGNOU's quality assurance and enhancement strategies and policy are in line with Ethiopia's HERQA policy. This question also provides the basis for investigating how the country's quality enhancement and assurance principles relate and function in terms of international quality enhancement practices and principles and how they complemented one another.

**5. *What are the perceptions of the various stake-holders concerning the quality of postgraduate programmes offered by IGNOU in Ethiopia?***

This final sub-question considers the specific expectations of achievement of the learners or graduates by all the stake-holders involved, including the learners in IGNOU's MARD programme and whether they felt they obtained quality distance



education. In the analysis and interpretation, the major themes were sub-divided into three core parts, related to the study's quality indicators, namely: coherence, efficiency and impact. To this effect, the sub-divided specific three themes were summarized and analysed as follows:

a) **The education policy and its implications for the development of distance education**

This refers to the further investigation of the involvement of the private sector and, specifically, how cross-border distance education providing institutions, in general, have responded to the higher education sector policy of the country. These parts of the discussion include the policy and strategic guidelines of HERQA's quality assurance practices and IGNOU's quality enhancement policy, strategic plans, and procedures. As a main part of the discussion this is related to, and shares insights from, another dimension of the quality indicators of the study, namely, coherence (see the Research sub-Questions 1 and 2).

b) **The institutional and pedagogical practices of IGNOU**

This section assessed and analysed IGNOU's provision of increasing access to quality postgraduate education for the working forces of the country and, thereby, contributing to its human resource development needs. It refers to the institution's activities which are assumed to provide quality higher education through distance education in conjunction with the students and staff and the various support services which could be provided, such as course materials and the quality of the assessment and evaluation methods. This sub-section relates to, and shares insights with, the second quality indicator of the study, namely efficiency (see Research Questions 3 and 4).

c) **The perceptions of various stakeholders**

These include officials of MoE and the main quality enhancement and control agency HERQA. The other key players were the student and the different institutional bodies, including tutors and general-decision making bodies at IGNOU as well as policy-makers.

Their perceptions about their institutional organization and about IGNOU, as well as the internal quality assessment practices and evaluation of the provision of the



quality of postgraduate programme, were assessed - as were the perceptions of the learners' achievements, at large, in Ethiopia (this is also related to the third quality indicator, namely impact (see Research Question 5 in Table 5.3, below).

**Table 5.3: Quality Criteria in Relation to the Main Research Questions Described and the Sub-Themes that Emerged are Systematically Categorized**

Quality Criterion	Main Research Questions (Themes)	Sub-themes/Headings
<b>Coherence</b>	1) <i>To what extent does the national education policy of the country support the development of distance education?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contemporary national education policy</li> <li>HERQA's policy strategies</li> <li>IGNOU's policy related issues.</li> </ul>
	2) <i>How do the criteria for quality distance education at IGNOU relate to the higher education quality assurance policy of the country?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HERQA's QA policy, and</li> <li>IGNOU's international or cross-border QA policy: How do these go together?</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>	3) <i>How efficient are the lines of communication between the different implementing partners?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host faculty and department</li> <li>IGNOU, as partner institution, in AA</li> <li>Student and staff communication lines.</li> </ul>
	4) <i>What are the efficiency elements in the delivery of this programme that enhance quality and how are these ensured?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teaching-learning quality in IGNOU's MARD programme</li> <li>Quality of course materials</li> <li>Student support services</li> <li>Assessment methods quality.</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	5) <i>What are the perceptions of various stakeholders concerning the quality of the postgraduate MARD programme offered by IGNOU?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perception of the MoE as stakeholder</li> <li>HERQA as quality control or evaluator</li> <li>Students as main stakeholders</li> <li>IGNOU's staff impressions</li> </ul>

The summary in the above table indicates that there has been a systematic interrelationship between the various themes and quality indicators that serve the analysis in a more comprehensive manner.

In dealing with the specific quality indicators, a conceptual study was undertaken by reviewing relevant documents concerning quality distance education issues in relation to the main study. The first part of this chapter analyses the facts in relation to this concept. In the analysis of this section the characteristics of the higher education policy of Ethiopia and its main aspects were specifically selected.

This section has discussed the approaches to the research and the characteristics of the student participants in the study as well as the profiles of the various categories of respondents who participated in the study. The participants' profiles, the main and sub-research questions and how the researcher addresses those research questions was considered. Furthermore, in this chapter an analysis of the data gathered by means of interviews and the documents that were systematically analysed in an integrated way in conjunction with the first quality indicator, namely, coherence, are reported on.

Responses from key players, including postgraduate distance students, the MoE senior officials and HERQA and IGNOU administrative and academic staff as well as the analysis of data, were presented. The chapter also attempted to show the systematic integration of the different parts of the analysis of quality distance education from within the scope of the quality indicators which shed some light on the main research questions. The following section is devoted to a brief explanation of the validity and reliability of the study.

## **5.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY**

As indicated earlier, this study is qualitative in nature and so the researcher opted for a gradual process of validation, which was built into the work from beginning to end. Maree (2007:37) explains that the responsibility of the researcher can be ensured by the reliability and validity of the way in which the research has been conducted. Validity is needed for standardisation and has to do with how well the construct(s) covered by the instruments are measured in different groups of related items (Maree, 2007: 217). In qualitative research the validation process is an on-going process which is acceptable in qualitative research and was, therefore, included in the research procedure to ensure the validity and reliability of the study.

Validity is based on a demonstration of the accuracy of the research instruments which aim to measure the required areas. Validity is one of the most important characteristics of a test or measuring instrument and it is essential in all forms of research and in all types of measurement and assessment tools (Welman, 2007:142). Quality in qualitative research can be reinforced by validity, both practically and effectively (Maree, 2007:38). Content validity can be described as “the degree to which a test measures the intended content areas and requires both item validity and sample validity, whereas item validity is concerned with whether the test items are relevant to measurement of the intended content area. Sample validity, on the other hand, is concerned with how well the test sample of the total content is being tested” (Gay, 2000:163).

In this study, among other things, content validity was applied where the instrument must show that it fairly and comprehensively covers the areas intended to be measured. Content validation of qualitative research can be addressed by means of the depth, richness and scope of data collected. Therefore, the interviews schedules for the different categories of respondents were validated by ensuring the following:

- The selection of appropriate research methods and research instruments in order to answer the research questions.
- The question items on the interview schedule were selected based on the literature review in Chapter 2 which included studies by Moore and Kearsley (2005), Moore (1973), Manjulinka, Venugopal and Reddy (1996), Holmberg (1985), Jung and Latchem (2007), Adams (2007), Bishop (1989), Keegan (1986) and Taylor (2001). These scholars point out that distance education is a welcome relief in higher education because of its potential to allow access to quality higher education to those who have been denied educational opportunities for various reasons. However, new students demand for this mode of delivery is still limited due to the impression that it offers a lower quality education. Therefore, it becomes necessary to confirm the validity of this impression, in spite of the acknowledged landmark advances achieved in the delivery of quality distance education.

In light of these, as indicated earlier, with regard to instrument validity as the researcher structured and semi-structured interviews were used in order to collect information from the participants. In the first stage of the study the interview questions were drafted and sent to the researcher's supervisor to establish whether they would, indeed, be able to capture the information required. He studied them, and offered some critical suggestions and comments and returned them to the researcher who then, used the suggestions and comments to update the original questions. Eventually, after the third set of recommendations, the interviews questions were finalised. The validity of the entire research process, including the validity of the research instrument, was further enhanced by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee at the University Pretoria. After reviewing the ethics application document, the committee issued a certificate that the proposed research met the established research ethical standards. In addition, two pilot interviews were conducted before engaging in the actual data collection. The aim of the pilot study was to assess the adequacy of the research instrument and to ascertain whether it would capture as comprehensively as possible the full range of the information needed for the study (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006:103). Validity is about determining the truthfulness of the research results (Joppe, 2000). To ensure validity in this study, the above instruments or tools (interviews and document analysis) were selected by the researcher as appropriate for collecting relevant information for testing. To ensure validity in every aspect of this study, continual checks and revisions were made to the overall validation of the instruments applied during the investigation.

According to Rayne and Payen (2004:195), reliability is about confidence concerning the way data is collected and the research could be repeated without different results. In other words, "reliability is that property of a measuring device for social phenomena (particularly in the quantitative methods tradition) which yields consistent measurements when the phenomena are stable, regardless of who uses it, provided the basic conditions remain the same" (Welman, 2012:145).

Gay (2000) agrees with the above by maintaining that reliability refers to the extent to which tests on subjects or information gathered will consistently give the same score each time it is repeated on the same object or subject. To ensure the reliability of the data, documents pertaining to distance education programme planning, preparation and implementation were carefully examined and analysed in line with

the above guidelines. Example of these documents include reports, workshop manuals, the Negarit Gazeta of Higher Education No.351/2003 and its subsequent Proclamation No.650/ 2009, HERQA's (2006) higher education quality assessment guidelines and other related educational documents. Therefore, the choice of the relevant unit of study, respondents and interviewees and the instruments used to collect data and analyse it were in line with the guidelines. To ensure the reliability of the study, the following were taken into consideration:

- Ensuring a good rapport between the researcher and the interviewees; and
- Using structured and semi-structured questions for interview schedules.

It is the researcher's opinion that if the same instruments were to be applied to the same respondents and given the same situation and analysed in the same way, the findings of the study would be consistent with the findings of this study. In qualitative research, the concepts of validity and reliability can be understood as trustworthiness and attempting to achieve rigour and quality in the research process and findings (Creswell and Miller, 2000:126).

## 5.6 LIMITATIONS

Some of the challenges faced during this study were the following:

- First and foremost, challenges in the field were mainly related to the problem of accessing some of the senior MoE and HERQA officials. In many cases higher officials at the Ministry of Education level were engaged in numerous meetings; even after the researcher secured appointments with some officials to conduct interviews, the interviews were often cancelled due to unexpected meetings. In addition, the death of the country's Prime Minister, Melas Zenawi, during the data collection period interrupted the research process for many days. However, some of the MoE, HERQA and IGNOU top-level managers and academics were very cooperative as some received the researcher more than once and provided him with the necessary information, which he appreciated.
- Secondly, collecting the necessary documents for analysis was easy to obtain from some units but not from others. This is because in some offices the required policy documents and strategic plans documents were not

organized, which required the researcher to replicate visits to ensure that all documents were acquired. However, there were efficient units which immediately provided the researcher with the necessary copies of documents from their units.

- Thirdly, the problem of arranging all the appointments for interviews that needed to be conducted was easy in some cases, but difficult in others. An example is the interviews conducted with MARD graduate students who felt they had no spare time to have the interviewer with them at the learning center as they were employed full-time and, therefore, it was necessary to travel to their respective workplaces and offices to conduct the interviews.
- Fourthly, there were some participants who asked the researcher to provide them with the interview schedule ahead of time in order to prepare themselves for answering the structured interview questions. The researcher attempted to reassure the interviewees that no special preparation was needed to give in-depth and first-hand information.
- All the interviews were conducted in line with essential ethical issues with regard to research which include the confidentiality of the results and findings of the study as well as the protection of participants' identities; both of these were strongly emphasized (Maree, 2007:42).
- Fifthly, despite the possibility of using computer software for purposes of analysis, all documents and all the interviews were analyzed manually as the researcher was not proficient enough in the use of the various computer software programs for data analysis.
- Lastly, the researcher realised he had gathered too much data by using the structured and semi-structured qualitative approach. However, to avoid confusion during the final analysis phase, this situation was corrected whereby the researcher focused mainly on the relevant qualitative data in order to address the topic.

## 5.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Researchers need to consider the moral accuracy of the responses from the research participants as a basic concept in qualitative research is trust (Hennie, 2010:44). The need for ethics in research cannot be over-emphasised. According to Welman (2012:181), in each stage in the research process the researcher must ensure fairness. However, ethical issues must be interpreted in the light of the research context and of other values at stake. Therefore, a conscious effort was made to ensure fairness in the following areas during this research and at various levels.

The supporting letters from the head of Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria enabled the researcher to access the MoE and IGNOU in Addis Ababa. Permission from IGNOU, MoE, and HERQA in Addis Ababa to work in the international postgraduate distance education programme was obtained from the relevant offices. This was settled after the ethical clearance had been approved and granted by the authorities of the University of Pretoria.

The informed consent of the student participants and the other respondents was later obtained. Following the receipt of written consent, individual appointments were made with the interviewees after whom the interview process, including the need to use a tape recorder, was explained to them. Senior officials of MoE and top-level employees and academic staff at IGNOU gave their consent to participate in the study after being informed about their right to withdraw from the study if they so wished.

During this study, participants' anonymity was preserved and they were assured that any information they provided would be treated in the strictest confidence. A research study guarantees confidentiality when the researcher is able to identify a given person's response but gives his/her word not to do so publicly (Earl, 2005:65). The researcher stressed the notion of the confidentiality of the information before the interviews so that the participants were aware that their information would be used for research purposes only (Kavale, 2009).

One of the challenges faced by the researcher and experienced by other researchers when conducting a qualitative inquiry was his inability to distance his



personal views from the study during the process of analysis. However, during this process care was taken to guard against this by doing the following:

- Firstly, the interview data was edited and transcribed by the researcher before reducing the data. This was done in order to identify and eliminate errors.
- Secondly, the privacy, anonymity and the confidentiality of the respondents was maintained. For instance, pseudonyms were ascribed to the interviewees instead of using their real names during the interview analysis.

First and foremost, it is the researcher's intention to report the exact findings and not include any superficial data that emerged from the study. Secondly, the findings are written in simple English which would easily be understood by readers. The researcher believes that this will facilitate the process of providing an in-depth description of the data in a clear manner. Thirdly, it is the researcher's goal to make the report, containing of the summary of the research findings available to the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which was the postgraduate distance education institution that was the subject of this study.

## **5.8 CONCLUSION**

In Chapter 5 the research design and methodology used for the study was clarified, including the data analysis process. This chapter has explained the process of undertaking this research; the profiles of the participants; and it has stipulated the research questions and how they were interpreted and used in this study. Furthermore, the chapter has attempted to show the systematic integration of the different parts of the analysis of quality in distance education from within the scope of the quality indicators which shed a light on the main research questions. Validity and reliability of the study and ethical issues that can affect the process of this study were also commented on and the limitations encountered during the study process at different levels were also explained.

In the following chapters the details of the presentation, analysis and the interpretation of the data are given. The first part of the analysis focuses on education policy and its implications for distance education, related to the first main



research question. The subsequent chapters discuss the effective practice of quality distance education at IGNOU; the perceptions of the various stakeholders, including those of the students regarding the quality of distance education at the postgraduate level and the main objectives of the general education; the training policy of the country which was established in 2003 and 2009 as well as its effects on the distance education sector; the policy context of HERQA and IGNOU's institutional strategic plans; and conclusions reached and recommendations made.

In the next chapter, Chapter 6, the impact of Ethiopian higher education policy issues will be discussed.

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## CHAPTER 6

# THE IMPACT OF ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY ON DISTANCE EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the methodology and research design adopted for this study. This chapter discusses findings concerned with education policy and its related issues. In the first part the researcher provides an overview of the policy framework which has a bearing on distance education. The contemporary education policy of Ethiopia is discussed and its implications for the development of distance education are determined. The aim is to establish whether the Ethiopia's education policy sees distance education as an essential strategy to extend access to higher education. Furthermore, the document analysis and respondents' viewpoints with regard policy issues are discussed. The education policy, in terms of its implications on distance education, is presented systematically in accordance with the first main research question.

In this section, the gap in policy is examined in relation to one of the quality indicators chosen for this study, namely, coherence. This provides a basis for analysing whether there is any coherence in, or integration of, the policy framework between the conventional and the distance higher education sectors in the country. The researcher has used Bandenhort's (2010) definition of coherence to organise the findings where coherence is about building in quality by means of the framework so that at the end of each function one is able to recognise the conclusion as being solid and worthwhile. It is the thread that holds all the sections together as well as being the directional line that takes the whole process exactly where it should go.

Bandenhort's definition suggests that the adoption of any policy framework, with its subsequent guidelines, should be coherent enough with regard to the activities taking place for its further implementation. Therefore, the national policy framework was used to examine IGNOU's international context; its vision to provide quality

postgraduate distance education in the country; and HERQA's quality enhancement policy framework.

## **6.2 THE IMPACT OF THE CONTEMPORARY HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY IN ETHIOPIA**

Ethiopia has a seventeen hundred year old tradition of elite church education, including higher education. The secular system is a recent development dating from 1950 with the founding of Addis Ababa University College. Subsequently, this university paved the way for the establishing of other higher education institutions in the country that attempted, with considerable early successes, to meet international standards. However, they became inefficient within a few decades because of their conservative orientation, declining quality and low output which continues until fairly recently (Fayessa, 2010:84).

As described elsewhere in this thesis, the current government of Ethiopia endorsed a contemporary education and training policy in 2003, which was amended later in 2009 after the fall of the old Derg regime in 1991 in order to facilitate higher education reform in the country. The new national education policy (2003) denounced the old education system as deficient and unable to produce the required quality workforce for the all-round development of the country (Bogale, 2006).

As a result of the adoption of this new reform, the annual enrolment in higher education rose from 3,500 in the 1990s to 30,000 in 2010, 20% of which represents private institutions, including Indira Gandhi National Open University (Kate, 2010:3). Nonetheless, this rapid expansion in higher education has increased the demand for qualified staff to manage the newly emerging universities (Bogale, 2006). The government decided to address this problem in order to, adequately, increase the number of qualified staff and in its efforts to bring about the desired changes in progress. For example, from the available data the following Table 6.1, Indicates the academic staff development trend that resulted from the government's reform efforts in this sector.

**Table 6.1: Trends in Appointment of Academic Staff in Higher Education Institutions**

Year	Government				Non-government				Total	
	Ethiopian		Expatriate		Ethiopian		Expatriate		Total	Female
	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female		
2007/08	8841	744	655	106	1,504	232	28	4	11,028	1,086
2008/09	13,176	1,465	950	126	1,553	187	29	14	15,707	1,792
2009/10	15,255	1,286	631	110	1,493	195	23	13	17,402	1,604
2010/11	17,990	1,631	721	121	2,082	224	31	14	20,822	1,990
2011/12	18,234	1,823	789	131	2,545	289	34	16	23,767	2,312

(Source: Ministry of Education Annual Abstract, 2011/12)

The above table shows that since the introduction of national education policy reform there has been a significant increase in the number of appointments of academic staff members. Based on the data of the last five years, as there is no data for 2000 and subsequent years, the number of academic staff members increased substantially from 11,028 in 2008/09 to a total of 23,767 in 2012. Nevertheless, due to the rapid increase in public higher institutions the government needs to put further efforts into equipping the newly emerging universities with adequately qualified academic and administrative staff (Bogale, 2006). Although female participation in higher education institution's personnel is growing, as can be seen in Table 6.2, there still remains much to be done by the government to improve the appointment of females. Reform also opened the way for higher institutions to improve the management and planning of institutional autonomy.

Before dealing with the merits and demerits of the education policy of Ethiopia, an analysis of the new education and training policy in terms of its main objectives was conducted. In brief, the national education and training policy's main objectives are given as follows. Higher Education policy shall have the following general objectives:

- To produce skilled manpower in quantity and quality that will serve the country in different professions;
- To expand higher education services that are free from any discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, sex, politics and any other aspects of life;

- To provide an equitable distribution of higher education institutions all over the regional states;
- To extend education at all levels and make it more relevant to the needs of the country and increase its quality;
- To provide higher education and social services that are compatible with the development needs of the country; and
- To achieve autonomy of higher educational institutions to manage their own academic affairs and human and financial resource (Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation No. 351/2003: 2235).

The document also reflects the need to address the educational needs of the formal and non-formal education system, starting from kindergarten to university levels. In its broadest terms, the ideals of the objectives appear to be interpreted in a way that they address the needs of all citizens rather than an exclusive focus on a certain education level. Some of the major strengths of this policy, for example, include the overall direction of the policy targeting and promoting knowledge and professional skills; human rights; culture; and positive environmental attitudes (Proclamation No. 351/2003 and Page 2235 & 650/2009).

Since its inception the effects of this new education and training policy include a significant increase in the number of higher institutions and, as a consequence, the enrolment rate and participation of female students in higher education. As evidence, the following table illustrates the increase in postgraduate education enrolment rates, including those of the non-government higher educational institutions in the country, especially in the postgraduate programmes. Table 6.2 presents the enrolment trends in postgraduate programmes in higher institutions for both public and private higher educational institutions.

**Table 6.2: Enrolment Trends in Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions by Ownership and Year**

Public or Government					Non-Government		Total		
Master's			PhD		Master's		Total	Female	%Female
Year	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female			
2007/08	7,211	702	258	7	-	-	7,469	709	9.5
2008/09	9,436	1,069	325	26	364	51	10,125	1,146	11.3
2009/10	12,621	1,485	791	47	860	171	14,272	1,703	11.9
2010/11	18,486	2,490	789	99	875	193	20,150	2782	13.8
2012	22,804	4,635	1849	319	1,007	228	25,660	5182	20.2

(Source: MoE Statistical Abstract, 2011/12)

The above table shows a significant increase in postgraduate enrolment, both in public and private higher educational institutions in Ethiopia. The percentage of female postgraduate students in the country also indicates a significant improvement from 9% in 2007 to 20.2% in 2012. The sharp increase in enrolment was because of the private higher education sector, including distance education. However, tertiary enrolment in Ethiopia remains significantly low compared to other developing countries. Currently, it stands at 1.5%, suggesting that more needs to be done to develop alternative means of education, including distance education. Therefore, government needs to attract more private investors, especially in the higher education sectors. Nevertheless, distance education and even the public Higher Educational Institutions have the responsibility to ensure the quality of their own educational programmes.

The inclusion of the role of non-formal education in the policy could be seen as a positive move, but there are still challenges in its implementation. As has been noted in the above discussion, the policy document could be perceived as a major promotional guide and, furthermore, it may be seen as sufficient in laying the foundation for the expansion of education at various levels. According to Fayessa (2010), however, in practice the policy shows clear imbalances and bias towards conventional education. Promoting relevant formal and non-formal options to meet the demand for skilled labour is given as an objective of the policy, but this is not realised in practice and applies particularly to distance education where there is little

indication or discussion of it in both educational policy documents produced by the Ethiopian government in 2003 and 2009.

The national education and training policy of Ethiopia clearly states that the need for access to and the relevance of, higher education in the country must include quality education in order to promote a quality workforce for the country's further development (MoE, 2003). However, flexible education, including distance education has been neglected and overlooked in the national education policy of the country. Sibande,(2011:280) suggests that there should be an emphasis on the need for decision-makers at the national as well as institutional level to believe that distance education and the face-to-face mode have equivalent value and that it needs to be demonstrated at the decision-making level. This point suggests that distance education should be integrated into education modes through the policy framework.

### **6.3 THE ROLE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION, IN GENERAL, AND DISTANCE EDUCATION, IN PARTICULAR**

In the global context the mission of quality assurance in many countries is to “promote public confidence that quality of provision and standards in higher education are being protected and enhanced” (Brown, 2000:301). According to Scott (1998), although the issue of quality has been at the heart of many debates, especially in the higher education sector, the development of the existing international policies and practices in higher education have occurred without much concern for quality assurance. However, now a point has been reached in the development of higher education where international policies and practices face the limit of their development unless the challenge of quality assurance is immediately and properly addressed in terms of all its aspects.

Scott (1998) further argues that because of the high mobility of students and higher education teachers around the globe and students' ability to transfer credits between similar degrees and diplomas, the quality assurance systems of various international institutions operate as a means to facilitate the recognition of foreign degrees. This seems to indicate an integration of international policy and general quality assurance practices at government and institutional levels.

### **6.3.1 PURPOSES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE**

According to Ashcroft (2002) and Dalrymple (2004), the quality assurance processes regarding teaching and research, especially in the developed world, is designed to perform numerous organizational, political, and developmental functions which, mainly, include the following:

- Ensure minimum standards through effective and efficient process as a cornerstone for quality in higher education;
- Provide the necessary inputs in higher educational institutions to ensure quality;
- Be a leader in teaching and learning by following quality improvement strategies and by measuring the volume of the work; and
- Rank excellence and foster further improvement.

#### **6.3.1.1 Processes to ensure minimum standards**

Processes to ensure minimum standards are the cornerstone of higher education quality assurance systems throughout the world. In most systems such processes are considered essential to ensure the quality of education and educational services provided by higher education institutions. Each institution can be expected to ensure that minimum standards are being met in their programs through a variety of internal mechanism that include checking the system for established benchmarks and validation and by reviewing check-lists.

#### **6.3.1.2 Processes to measure volume**

Some of the indicators used in quality assessment in developed countries are used to measure volume. Examples of these indicators include the number of students that are recruited in relation to those completing each year of a program and graduating.

#### **6.3.1.3 Processes to rank excellence**

Research assessment exercises often have the intention of ranking excellence in order to enable differential funding for activities that might be seen as equally fruitful.



### 6.3.1.4 Processes to foster improvement

“Quality activities may be directed towards quality enhancement, either as its primary motivation or as a side effect of the reflection on data compiled for compliance or other purposes. The international quality assurance, organizations’ sole wish is to encourage institutions to develop systems for quality enhancement to operate alongside those for quality control and assurance” (Kahsay, 2012:59).

Quality assurance processes in African higher education are a very recent development. Now most sub-Saharan Africa countries, including Ethiopia, are facing major capacity constraints and a lack of a policy framework. Therefore, further studies are required to provide the necessary information to various stakeholders, including governments, educational policy-makers and employing organisations, in order for them to participate in the quality assurance processes (Materu, 2007).

According to the World Bank (2007), higher education quality assurance mechanisms in sub-Saharan African countries have not yet been developed; of 54 African countries only 16 have established quality assurance agencies and some are not autonomous in fully performing their duties as quality control or enhancement entities of higher education, both public and private. Among others who still operate under the control of their government or Ministry of Education are Ethiopia, Ghana, Sudan and Zimbabwe. The following table, Table 6.3, contains the only national quality assurance and accreditation agencies established in Africa.

**Table 6.3: National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies in Africa**

Country	Agency	Date Established	Level of Autonomy
Kenya	Commission for Higher Education (CHE)	1985	Semi
Nigeria	National Universities Commission (NUC)	1990	Semi
Cameroon	National Commission on Private Higher Education (NCPHE)	1991	No
Ghana	National Accreditation Board (NAB)	1993	No
Tanzania	Higher Education Accreditation Council (HEAC)	1995	Semi
Tunisia	Committee National d’Evaluation (CNE)	1995	Semi
Mauritius	Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)	1997	Semi

Country	Agency	Date Established	Level of Autonomy
<b>Liberia</b>	National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE )	2000	Semi
<b>SouthAfrica</b>	Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE)	2001	Semi
<b>Ethiopia</b>	Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance Agency (HERQA)	2003	No
<b>Mozambique</b>	Evaluation and Accreditation Corporation (EVAC)	2003	Semi
<b>Sudan</b>	National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (NQAAC)	2003	No
<b>Egypt</b>	National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)	2003	Semi
<b>Namibia</b>	National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)	2004	No
<b>Uganda</b>	National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)	2004	Semi
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)	2005	No

(Source: Materu, 2006)

Several African countries, including Tunisia and Madagascar are currently in the process of establishing quality assurance agencies (Materu, 2006). However, there are already-established higher education quality assurance agencies that are still subject to approval by government, such as the case with the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia and the Ministry for Higher Education in Ghana and Sudan. Quality remains a major concern in most African countries and it needs to be given a high priority as an indispensable part of revitalising higher education in Africa countries. More recently and with the World Bank's support regional quality assurance networks have been established in Africa and Asia as well as in other regions across the world (Materu, 2006). The main objective of this network is to exchange information on current development and practice in the improvement and maintenance of quality in higher education. Furthermore, the value of cross-border collaboration in quality assurance at a global level and in Africa is for mutual recognition and accreditation of educational quality and status.

Based on her own experiences of working for two years in Ethiopia as a Volunteer Higher Education Advisor, Ashcroft (2002) is of the opinion that Ethiopian higher education does not yet have the proper quality assurance systems with the required policy framework to be able to measure up to international standards and, thereby, assure its stakeholders that the education provided is relevant and appropriate to produce the required quality workforce for the country's further development. Ethiopian universities, both public and private, are not in a position to assure respective stakeholders of the quality of their courses; they cannot assure their stakeholders that their students, their teaching, learning and assessment processes or their facilities meet institutional, national or international standards.

This lack of assurance suggests the need for a policy framework to strengthen systems to ensure quality in higher education in developing countries, including Ethiopia, and to assure various stakeholders of the relevance and appropriateness of higher education programs in producing quality human resources.

As has been described in Chapter 2, the literature suggests that managing quality in higher education is a challenging task and the main reasons for this are related to the different meanings that quality has for different stakeholders and because of the complicated nature of the educational product. However, different views have emerged on whether or not the same quality assurance practices can be applied to on-campus and distance education programmes.

Some argue that the quality of distance education should be judged by the same criteria and standards as those for face-to-face, contact education (Latchem, 2007). Conversely, Jung and Latchem (2007:250) argue that using the same quality assurance criteria for both contact and distance educational programs can be problematic, especially with regard to new developments in distance education where teaching and learning takes place across borders. In addition, distance education institutions are using different ways of managing quality assurance in their own context.

According to Jung and Latchem, there are three ways in which quality assurance is managed and operated under open and distance learning. These include the "use of

the central systems, collective systems, and dispersed delegated systems” (Jung and Latchem, 2007:241). They point out that within centralised systems quality assurance is accomplished by designated offices according to national or institutional policies, procedures and criteria. The collective system assigns responsibilities to various boards, councils, committees at different levels.

Van (2002) further argues that since the 19<sup>th</sup> century quality assurance has become a central objective of government policies and an important mechanism to ensure the quality of higher education in many developing countries. As in other sub-Saharan African countries, a concern about quality in higher education in Ethiopia is on the rise, despite the rapid expansion of institutions and enrolment (Ashcroft, 2004; Teshome, 2007).

To this effect, this study investigated what the policy in Ethiopia says about the quality of education provision in terms of distance education in the country. The researcher posed the following question to guide the information gathering process:” *What strategies does the Ministry of Education use to ensure quality higher education, in general, and distance education, in particular?*” The question was intended to elicit information about whether the MoE had developed policies/strategies to facilitate the operation and role of distance education in Ethiopia and what the practice on the ground was.

In particular, the researcher examined various strategic and policy papers written by the MoE which addressed the issue of quality. The national education and training policy of the country established HERQA as an independent body in the Ministry of Education. The purpose of establishing HERQA by the government of Ethiopia was so that it could be responsible for quality in higher education in both private and public institutions.

The researcher interviewed participants to obtain their views on how private higher education institutions ensure the quality of their programmes. Participant 4 (P-4) who was a senior official in the Ministry of Education confirmed that the country has no higher education policy or distance education policy framework. He said:

*“There is a general policy which was established in 2003 and amended in 2009. A general education and training policy includes all levels of education, starting from elementary school to higher education. The general education and training policy and proclamation Acts 320/2003, include all levels of education. However, the higher education proclamation Acts emphasises three pillars in the policy: the quality of teaching and learning processes, teacher training and development, research work and community services. These pillars are directed towards solving certain community-level problems for the further development of the society.”*

The above view was corroborated by another HERQA official (P-3 from HERQA) who said:

*“In Ethiopia there is no such a thing as a higher education quality policy or distance education policy. However, there is a general policy, established in 2003, which include all levels of education. In the higher educational sector, the quality of teaching and learning processes has been given special attention by the government to enhance quality education in the country.”*

The only available tracer study that has been conducted in Ethiopia is by the study group, the Forum for Social Studies (FSS, 2009), which is a large project that was financed by the European Union to research quality in higher education institutions. The study indicates that the national education policy of Ethiopia emphasises the development of quality assurance and has created a separate entity to assure quality in both public and private higher education institutions. A national education policy framework, therefore, plays an important role in enhancing and assuring quality in the education sector in Ethiopia.

However, based on the analysis of government policy documents and the views from the participants, it is clear that there are no legal guidelines and clear directions for distance education and how to address quality at the higher educational level. Furthermore, there is no policy statement that focuses on the role of distance education which suggests that there is a policy gap between conventional and distance education, as acknowledged by the officials from the MoE. Therefore, distance education needs to be acknowledged as part and parcel of the higher education system, together with traditional face-to-face education, and integrated

into the national education policy so that quality assurance in distance education can be addressed.

In addition, there is ambiguity among stakeholders on education policy in terms of the role of distance education. According to Fayessa (2010), educational policy-makers are expected to look for alternative strategies to promote the efficient use of resources, especially in developing countries like Ethiopia. A similar observation made by Mays (2005) was that for sub-Saharan African countries to be successful in distance education, three essential elements should be considered: a clear national policy, an appropriate institutional culture and a consideration of cost-effectiveness. Therefore, a comprehensive policy of education that promotes the development of open and distance education in the country is needed to alleviate the problem (Fayessa, 2010).

In terms of mode of delivery, Aderinoye, (2004) further notes that in economic terms the contribution of distance education in producing a better qualified and skilled workforce obviously helps the local and national economic development of the country. In other words, graduates of distance education programmes find themselves participating in the economic development of their country, even retired individuals who have upgraded their skills and knowledge. However, for distance education to contribute to the economic growth of the country, it should be of a high quality, well-planned and aligned to the national development plan of the country.

To summarize, there are many factors that hinder the effective integration of DE in the national education policy of Ethiopia which include a lack of clear information about the potential of distance education in providing access to quality higher education as well as the perceptions of policy makers about distance education. Evidence from the literature review and interview data has demonstrated the implications of a national policy deficit in Ethiopia. It was, thus, concluded that the system of open distance education at the tertiary level in Ethiopia is underdeveloped and neglected because of a policy gap while it possesses strategic merits. Therefore, it is suggested that the Ethiopian government needs to come up with a clear policy on distance education programmes.

## 6.4 THE ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION RELEVANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

Just as in other developing countries, the Ethiopian government has prioritised quality in higher education as part of a strategy to respond to the human resource development needs of the country. In this regard, it established HERQA in 2003 as its main agency to ensure quality in education. The mandate of this agency included conducting assessments of applicants for licenses, pre-accreditation and accreditation and external quality audits; ensuring the relevance of higher education institutions with regard to national policy; and proposing national benchmarks and standards for quality, among other responsibilities.

The function of HERQA encompasses both traditional contact and distance higher education systems. The agency has not yet developed a clear policy framework; it only has general guidelines to ensure quality in both distance and higher education. However, based on the general guidelines HERQA has drafted its own ten focal assessment areas to ensure the quality of higher education.

Available records and documents regarding this issue affirm that HERQA follows guidelines to maintain quality in higher education in both public and private sectors. In order to address this, government officials were asked the research question to understand the policy of government in terms of quality assurance in higher education, in general, and distance education, in particular. This was done to establish whether HERQA had already developed policy to further enhance quality assurance in higher education.

The responses of the interviewees indicated that there was no specific policy on quality assurance in higher education. Aspects of quality in higher education are sub-summed in the 2003 general education policy. In this regard, a principal officer from HERQA had the following to say:

*“To my own understanding, there is no separate higher education quality assurance policy. However, the general education policy adopted in 2003 and amended by 2009 serve this purpose. HERQA was established by the endorsement of the Ethiopian people’s representative parliament to pursue the higher education quality issues in the country.”*



The above view was corroborated by another HERQA official (P-3 from HERQA) who said:

*“As far as I am concerned there is no a higher education policy or distance education policy and not as well for quality assurance. However, there is a general policy, established in 2003, which include all levels of education. In the higher educational sector, the quality of teaching and learning processes has been given special attention by the government to enhance quality education in the country.”*

In agreement, another respondent (P-2 from HERQA) commented:

*“Well, I am a senior researcher at Addis Ababa University at the Institute of Educational Research. I also worked with the MoE as a higher education quality auditor both for public and private universities. Generally speaking, there is no higher education quality assurance policy in the country. There is a proclamation Act made by the government in 2003 which serves for both regular and distance education quality control strategies in the country. According to this proclamation Act, the government or private higher institutions are expected to operate according to this proclamation Act. To ensure the higher education quality of the cross-border providers, the government established the quality enhancement autonomous agency to control both the public and private higher education quality. However, in practice it controls the private ones; not really the public higher education institutions so far.”*

The above responses indicate that both the 2003 and 2009 education policy documents allowed for the establishment of a quality assurance policy in higher education for both the private and the public sectors. A significant number of participants that were interviewed were aware of the importance of having a policy in quality on distance education. However, documentary analysis points to the fact that there is no quality assurance policy in higher education in Ethiopia. Therefore, the implication of a lack of quality assurance policy directly affects the strategic function of ensuring quality in both private and public higher educational institutions.

In agreement, Ashcroft (2002) maintains that Ethiopian higher education does not yet have the proper quality assurance policy framework to be able to measure up to international standards. This implies that the government of Ethiopia needs to



provide HERQA with a policy framework to fully exercise its autonomy and, therefore, the need to establish a quality assurance policy to ensure quality is apparent. In addition, a quality assurance body with more power and authority and with its own strong and workable policy is crucial in order to enhance quality in both distance and contact higher educational institutions. Following the expansion of public and private universities in Ethiopia, there is growing conflict in increased access that has been facilitated by the expansion and quality. Therefore, it has become even more important to establish a quality assurance policy to ensure quality in the wake of this expansion.

According to Roper and Shaw (1993), quality is seen as meeting the requirements of employers and the expectations of various clients. In the context of education, the clients are the students and the employers. In assuring the quality of teaching and learning, unlike other service industries, the quality of the educational product, i.e., the learner outcomes, is not wholly under the control of educationalists; they can only control the process. The learner's contribution is vital and, therefore, should form part of the quality requirements. Thus, through negotiation a quality contract or quality entitlement between the learner and the college can be achieved. Roper and Shaw (1993) believe that quality in teaching and learning is about perfection, inspiration, conforming to requirements, fitness for purpose and improving and empowering customer/client satisfaction. For quality to be ensured in any setting there is a need for it to be integrated into the system, including the policy framework within which it operates.

Although the establishment of HERQA by the endorsement of the parliament of Ethiopia in 2003 was considered commendable, the participants' views seemed to suggest that there was a need to establish a separate policy framework to strengthen the agency's authority and responsibilities to ensure quality higher education. The absence of a quality assurance policy is echoed by Zenawi:

*"In Ethiopia there is no comprehensive policy framework employed when the private higher institutions apply for accreditation. What is currently being used as a way of accrediting an institution is checking the availability of the required inputs such as buildings, classrooms, teacher-student ratios, the curriculum for the programme to be accredited, libraries and ICT facilities, and location of the institution. It is, the presence of the facilities and resources, not*

*the quality that will be checked while conducting the accreditation visit, which needs further improvement” (2006:5).*

According to the above quotation, accreditation is based on the assessment of physical infrastructure and facilities; there is no actual process of quality assurance whereby educational standards are judged on the basis of student performance. Zenawi (2006) is of the opinion that the practice of assessing quality in Ethiopian higher education is not well structured. However, the practice of assessing quality at the universities does exist, but it is not structured and is usually haphazardly implemented (Zenawi, 2006). Zenawi (2006) suggests that the practice of quality assurance in Ethiopia is not very different from that of many other countries where the only intention of quality assurance is to maintain or ensure minimum standards indicated in the quality of input, processes and outcomes.

Globally, there are no universally agreed upon quality assessment benchmarks or yardsticks to check the quality of education programmes. There is no same measurement of the standards of quality as different institutions use different yardsticks to check the quality of their programmes. In Ethiopia, involving students and teachers in feedback about their experiences, a common practice used as the main tool for improving quality in some universities, is not currently implemented in the country's universities, both the public and the private ones. HERQA does assist institutions in designing their own quality care systems, but there is no practice of looking for evidence to check on student performance and employers' opinions of graduates. This identified gap highlights the need for the establishment of a separate quality assurance policy for the country as a mechanism to strengthen HERQA's performance.

The researcher examined various strategic and policy papers written by MoE experts which address the issue of quality. The analysis of the documents revealed the following:

- The national education and training policy of the country, which established HERQA as an independent body in the Ministry of Education, provided it with a mandate to take responsibility for quality in higher education in both private and public institutions. However, no policy framework was provided

by the policy-makers to engender the desired quality education in the country and, thereby, to respond to the human resource development needs of the country.

- HERQA, as a major guardian agency for ensuring quality, should become more involved in appropriate research work and further studies in order to establish an appropriate system to be a quality protector in higher education in Ethiopia (HERQA, 2009). The efforts to ensure quality in higher education by different organisations, including government at national and regional levels, should be through quality assurance agencies with objectives aimed at improving quality in higher education. This, then, would improve the quality of production by the workforce and contribute to the development of the country (Martin and Antony, 2007). Therefore, strengthening the quality agencies' functions with the required legal support from government in conjunction with the development of an adequate and necessary policy framework will help to enhance and maintain quality in higher educational institutions' and support their efforts to ensure quality outcomes.

## **6.5. IGNOU'S PRACTICES REGARDING QUALITY ENHANCEMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

This section deals with IGNOU's quality enhancement practices and strategies. IGNOU has been operating in partnership with St Mary's University College (SMUC) since 2006, providing postgraduate distance education programmes and nine different Master's programmes throughout the country. This partnership is the result of national policy that offers institutions the right to provide private higher education at both national and international levels. As was described earlier in this thesis, IGNOU is not the only cross-border distance education institution in the country, there are some others as well, namely: The Open University of the UK, Nalanda Open University, Global Health Leadership Yala University, University of South Africa (UNISA) and the Jethro-Leadership and Management USA International Institute, are amongst others.

Conventional and distance education higher institutions are responsible for ensuring that they provide quality education and for ensuring that they fulfil their declared

vision and mission whereby the management of each higher institution is expected to do more to enhance the provision of quality higher education. Therefore, the central issue for those who are involved in the teaching and learning process is the provision of quality in higher education (Peter, 2004:5).

As part of complying with the policy directive for higher education institutions in Ethiopia to offer quality education, IGNOU identified the following functions, among others, to ensure its educational quality (IGNOU's quality strategic manual, 2008:9-11):

- Initiate the process of an academic audit and engage in a serious exercise to revise course materials, both print and audio-visual, by incorporating information on the latest developments in all areas of study;
- Designate the better-performing disciplines, schools, centres and institutes as centres of excellence;
- Develop an ever-evolving mechanism for continuing professional development for teaching and support staff;
- Take education to unreached levels and enable participation in national development through integrated local development and promote a spirit of excellence in student support services;
- Encourage capacity building in agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture and natural resources management; and
- Regard effective student support services as an important prerequisite for enhancing quality distance education.

In view of the above, participants from IGNOU commented on how the institution is committed in its mission policy and in delivering education of a high quality. In response to questions related to quality assurance, in general, and post graduate programmes, in particular. An official had the following to say:

*“Well, we have adopted the general policy of IGNOU from headquarters on providing quality distance education by all national and international partners of IGNOU. One thing needs to be clear: that the quality aspects of higher education with IGNOU will not be compromised by anything. The process to ensure quality in distance education is by providing services, like student support services and educational materials provision.”*

Another participant, a chief officer (P-2 IGNOU), said:

*“The quality assurance policy of IGNOU is internationally recognized as you can infer from the document. The quality issues in IGNOU’s postgraduate studies are so well known and to the required standards. There are the improvements and recognition from time to time as one of the prominent international distance education providers. Therefore, I don’t think there will be any question of quality issues with regard to postgraduate distance education provision of IGNOU in Ethiopia. It has also similarity with our HERQA, since the general principle of the quality assurance system adopted from abroad by the instruction of the World Bank.”*

Other participants, P-1 and P-3, shared similar views. Many participants said that IGNOU is demonstrating its efforts to fulfil its own established vision and mission by providing quality distance education, globally. Its quality assurance policy does not contradict that of HERQA. However, although IGNOU has institutional policy documents developed in 2006 and 2008, within those documents there are no specifically stated policy mechanisms or strategies on how to improve quality in higher level distance education, especially in Ethiopia.

Furthermore, although there are some similarities between the quality assurance of IGNOU and HERQA, in general, some areas are more specific in the quality assurance of IGNOU, such as tracer studies from the labour sector in order to capture and understand the perception of employer organisations’ demands. Other such aspects need to be included so that IGNOU can comply with the quality requirements in higher education provision in order to be more responsive to employing organisations’ demands and, thereby, improve its own curriculum development.

In Ethiopia, even though there are various bodies responsible for ensuring quality in higher education, such as the government, the Ministry of Education and the quality assurance agency, the ownership of quality remains mostly with the institution and not with HERQA, the Ministry of Education or any other international quality control organisation (CHE, 2004).

In view of the above, in its mission and vision policy, IGNOU seems committed to delivering distance education of the required quality and standard. Hence, terms such as “efficiency”, “excellent” and “to the standard” are used in its mission statement (IGNOU, 2006). Consequently, IGNOU’s criteria of quality, with its indicators, were subject to analysis in this study; it was found that the criteria and its indicators are related to HERQA’s general principles. This is because HERQA’s strategic plans and principles are, primarily, adopted from outside and are foreign-oriented (HERQA, 2007). Furthermore, in all these cases, aspects of understanding quality assurance and enhancement practices in developing countries, including Ethiopia, were derived from foreign international organisations, such as the World Bank. However, as IGNOU lacks an over-arching quality assurance policy framework, senior management at host and partner level need to take note of this and be advised that QA measures and good practice should be established, consolidated and documented as the IGNOU QA framework (Jung, 2013:177).

## **6.6. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has discussed education policy in Ethiopia and how it addresses issues of access and quality. It has provided an overview of the policy frameworks on quality distance higher education in Ethiopia and their relevance and application to private providers and to distance education. It has highlighted the fact that distance education’s contribution to providing access to higher education has been overlooked by the national education policy. There is, therefore, a need for policy-makers to integrate distance education into the national higher education policy of the country, in conjunction with conventional higher education.

Information about the quality assurance of IGNOU which was obtained from official documents was highlighted. The relevant documents obtained and analysed from the MoE offices and from HERQA and complemented by the interviews results, revealed the policy gap which exists between conventional and distance education. The question of what is lacking in the national education policy frameworks was analysed in relation to the country’s general education policy documents. The coherence between the national education policy and IGNOU and HERQA’s policy frameworks was also investigated. It was found that there was some alignment

between HERQA and IGNOU's quality assurance principles and strategies. It was further found that, apart from serving as general and broad guidelines to all national and partner institutions, there were no specific policy mechanisms on how to improve the quality of distance education in Ethiopia.

Therefore, the broader policy framework for IGNOU's quality assurance should be adjusted in terms of the higher educational needs of the country. Additionally, with regard to the quality assurance and enhancement policy of higher education, it was also suggested by the participants that there is a need to have a quality assurance policy for the further development of the HERQA.

The next chapter, Chapter 7, focuses on the effectiveness of the practice of quality distance education at IGNOU, which includes the institution's pedagogical approaches. Whereas the main concern in Chapter 6 is the perceptions of the various stakeholders, including the learners, about the policy of distance education at the postgraduate level, Chapter 7 deals with institutional practices related to quality teaching and learning at IGNOU, in terms of the second quality indicator, namely efficiency.

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## CHAPTER 7

### INSTITUTIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AT IGNOU

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with institutional practices related to teaching and learning at IGNOU. The institutional and pedagogical practices are related to the second quality indicator, namely, efficiency. This is in line with Research Questions 2 and 3:

- a) What are the efficiency elements in the delivery of this programme that enhance quality and how are these ensured?
- b) *How efficient are the lines of communication between the different implementing partners?*

To answer the above questions, efficiency as the quality indicator in the provision of distance education are assessed in this chapter in terms of the choice of instructional technology; assessment of course materials; student support services; learner assessment methods; and IGNOU's commitment to postgraduate distance education in Ethiopia. Since access and quality issues are the main related elements of this study, each is treated separately.

#### 7.2 ACCESS TO POSTGRADUATE DISTANCE EDUCATION

This section focuses, mainly, on access to postgraduate distance education with specific reference to the Master of Art in Rural Development (MARD) programme at IGNOU. This programme which is organised through IGNOU's headquarters in Delhi, India is offered in partnership with a local private university college, St Mary's University College (SMUC) Addis Ababa, and it is offered on the principle of providing postgraduate studies through a cross-border distance educational institution in Ethiopia.

Access to borderless education through distance education, such as that offered by IGNOU, has been widely used as an alternative mode to conventional education.



This mode of delivery, namely, distance education or borderless education, is practiced in many universities throughout the world, including the United States of America, Canada, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand (Dooley, 2005). In Asia and Africa there is an unmet demand for higher education and open and distance education is considered to be a strategy that could widen access to higher education on these continents (Harry, 1999).

To meet the demands for higher education, many societies across the globe are using distance education. The use of communication technology in distance education programmes has made it possible to reach many people, especially those who for various reasons have been denied access to higher education in traditional face-to-face education institutions, including those living in remote rural areas and full-time employees who cannot afford residential higher education due to limited time and finances (Harry, 1999).

In support of this Matkinw (2010) suggests that higher education in the world, today, is impacted by various factors which have significant consequences for institutions, learners and teachers. In terms of the rapid growth of globalisation, which has resulted in increased competition for further economic and social development, more people are required to train further and re-train themselves to cope with global pressures. The external pressure experienced by working people today is, apparently, related to becoming more skilled and qualified to be able to compete in the labour market. In future, through the use of new technologies distance education will help to overcome the constraints of offering higher education, such as reaching people in remote rural areas and as well in urban settings (Matkinw, 2010).

At this point, the researcher was interested to examine what IGNOU has achieved in terms of enhancing access to quality postgraduate education. In order to capture relevant information the researcher posed the following question: *“How can distance education enhance access to quality postgraduate education in Ethiopia?”* The responses to this question are organised into sub-sections as follows:

- The contribution of the national education policy with regard to the development of distance education; the mode of communication in the

delivery system; the efficient delivery of the programme; and quality enhancement policies and strategies.

- The awareness of the theory of distance education which assists in determining a specific delivery system in teaching and learning with a move to further construct the quality issues in distance education.
- The programme is purely paper-based in its mode of delivery which shows similarities between the conventional and distance education system.

Interviews were conducted with various participants in order to determine which factors influenced access to quality postgraduate distance education. The many pedagogical practices related to teaching and learning at IGNOU; preparation and quality of course materials; student support services; communication channels; as well as assessment methods were systematically commented on by the participants, especially the student participants. Accordingly, their views are noted in the following sections.

### **7.3 THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING AT IGNOU**

In order to successfully achieve quality distance education, all institutions providing this mode of education need to establish policies and infrastructure which are suited to the learner population, such as the continuous development of teaching and learning. Quality teaching and learning activities in distance education can be established and maintained by providing quality support services for the learners as well as through further commitment on the parts of the providers.

To establish how the quality of teaching and learning is ensured, the following question was asked: *“What methods/strategies are used to evaluate the quality of the teaching and learning process of IGNOU’s MARD programme?”* In the course of responding to this question, the following views were expressed by the participants.

One of the student participants (P-5) had the following to say:

*“I think teaching and learning through tutorial sessions are good. However, teaching and learning depend on the hand-out (modules) distribution to learners followed by explanations. The study guide is provided to each learner to help internalise the materials before doing self-assessment, assignments, tutorials and exams. Before we sit for exams we need to*

*complete certain assignments as required and receive the necessary feedback on time before we sit for exams. However, there are some teachers who are not qualified to conduct tutorial sessions in some subjects. This requires the institution to employ more qualified lecturers.”*

P-7, a graduate student from IGNOU, said:

*“In IGNOU’s context, it has an international level acceptance of the status of teaching and learning. I think the institution is very serious in terms of its educational delivery modes of distance education, compared with others. However, the teaching and learning system needs to be flexible in some places and should be aided with new communication technologies for further improvement.”*

P-2, IGNOU student participant summarised the situation as follows:

*“The tutorial sessions are conducted every month and the academic support given by the department for MARD programme was commendable. However, some lecturers who provided tutorials were not well qualified, so there is the need for some improvement in order to assign qualified teachers. The self-explanatory materials we received helped us much to concentrate on our study even in our own times. Therefore, as distance education way of delivery mode I can say is fine. However, it needs further development to be mediated by the means of new communication technology also.”*

In brief, participant’s views suggested the importance of creating conducive teaching and learning environments through the provision of relevant course materials as well as conducting adequate tutorial sessions. However, there were some participants with other views and their comments are given below. P-5 had the following to say:

*“As far as I remember, the tutorial sessions conducted in our department without pre-orientation sometimes gave us problems. For example, I missed some tutorial sessions which were very important for me. These happen with miss communication between the lecturer and students through the internet. Actually, the tutorial programmes which have not been given with the initial schedule led us to confusion. This is as a result of some tutors is coming from other universities and they missed their own programmes as they work at IGNOU on a part time basis. I think IGNOU needs to have an effective communication system and qualified prepared lecturers and tutors to handle*

*effective tutorial sessions, which are very important for distance education learners.”*

P-3, a student participant with similar view, summarised the situation as follows:

*“The tutorial sessions given at IGNOU, especially in MARD, are practical. However, some tutors are not well-qualified and prepared to give us the required academic advice and direction. Some of them missed their programmes and try to fix other times instead which may not be convenient to the learners. I think in this regard IGNOU needs to have its own permanent and qualified teachers and tutors. Since we depend more on our course materials, some students are not even regularly attending tutorial sessions. As far as I am concerned the tutorial sessions at IGNOU need to be more attracting and stimulating for distance education participants.”*

A shortage of qualified and prepared lecturers/tutors to run tutorial sessions seems to affect the quality of teaching and learning in distance education. In this regard, tutorial sessions which are so essential in a distance education environment need to be strengthened at IGNOU. This part of the learning and teaching process is crucial to circumstances where two key players actually meet in order to minimise the problems of face-to-face interaction.

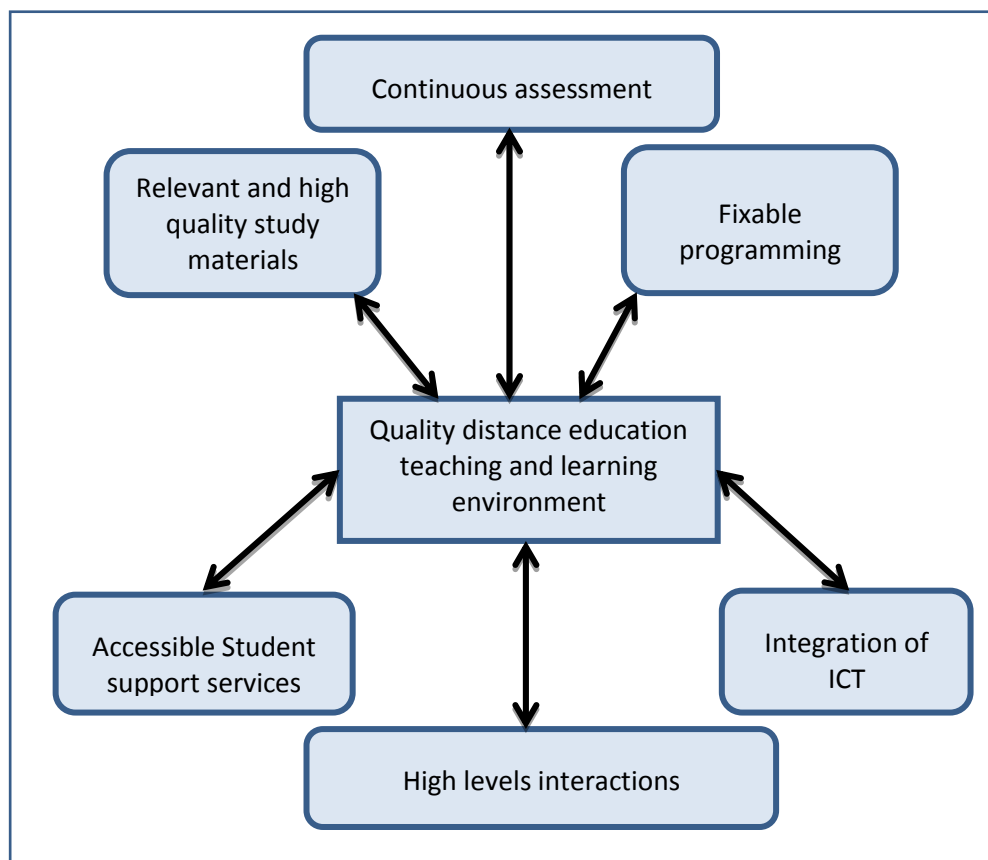
In the quality teaching and learning process in distance education, a review of the relevant available literature, including the work of Moore (1996:22) and others, suggests that in distance education there is always a space separating the learners from the institution and from their teachers. Moore calls this space transactional distance; he maintains that this distance affects both teaching and learning and, therefore, that the necessary efforts should be made to bridge this distance so that effective teaching and learning can take place. In a university context tutors are critical for successful teaching and learning to take place; they participate in tutor communities, share practices, develop relationships, construct ideas and guide learners in acquiring knowledge and skills (Grant, 2010).

In order to stimulate high quality teaching and learning the teaching process needs to recognise the needs and potential of the learners. It has to encourage independent learning in order to ensure effective learning experiences. This can be

achieved by means of relevant and high quality course and study materials; flexible programming; continuous assessment; and the integration of ICT for high-level interaction. However, producing quality teaching materials, in it-self, is not enough; it should be more accessible and applicable to the needs of the students (Holmberg, 1986; Keegan, 1996; Robinson, 1996).

Furthermore, the above scholars are in agreement regarding the emphasis which should be placed on producing quality course materials and its effective distribution to the learners.

The following figure illustrates the components of high quality teaching learning environments in distance education programmes. In order to have a successful teaching and learning environment in distance education, the major components of a high quality teaching learning environment, as reflected in Figure 7.1, need to be fulfilled.



(Source: Aguti, 2003:357)

**Figure 7.1: Major Components of High Quality Teaching Learning Environment in Distance Education**

As the above figure shows, to have quality teaching and learning programmes in distance education, quality study materials and accessible student support services for both academic and administrative purposes are required. Furthermore, the use of continuous assessment methods for the learners and the integration of ICT are among the important components included on the above figure. Therefore, to have a quality teaching and learning process, the major components of the quality teaching and learning environment shown above need to be well-established and applied to support the educational process.

Based on information from the student respondents, IGNOU has made an effort in its goals to fulfil its vision and mission to provide access to distance education at higher levels. In particular, the learners and recent graduates were satisfied with the MARD programme in terms of teaching and learning activities. However, this does not mean that the teaching and learning process at IGNOU meets all the expected quality standards for distance education. According to the participants of the study, some of the quality standards missing from distance education at IGNOU include good communication channels between the learners and the host faculty/headquarters, qualified and prepared staff members and decentralized student support services, both academic and administrative, among others, which need special attention from IGNOU's management.

From conclusions based on the available literature review, it is clear that in order to successfully provide quality distance education certain important elements need to be present or they need to be addressed. For example, according to the CHEA (2002), the following should be seriously considered by all distance education providers:

- Commitment to distance education by each provider institution;
- Stakeholder involvement in quality improvement issues;
- Student support infrastructure;
- Student-faculty and student-to-student interaction;
- Faculty composition and lecturers' qualifications;
- Curriculum and learning issues;
- Technology;

- Assessment methods; and
- Institutional partnerships.

Due consideration and implementation of the above elements are vital for quality teaching and learning to take place in every institution providing distance education. Student support services; an adequate number of qualified staff; quality improvement mechanisms; and the use of new technologies for teaching and communication purposes are among the important variables described above.

Similarly, in studying quality teaching and learning experiences, Neumann (2000) has identified five further key components, namely: resources, content, learning flexibility, student-faculty contact involvement. Bates (2005) suggests that opportunities for interaction should be consciously designed for distance education study programmes which range from student-faculty contact to student-to-student contact services.

Furthermore, according to McDonald, “the aim of delivering higher quality learning experiences for students is a central part of every university mission, and its achievement is crucial to the success of the institution” (1996:78) and, therefore, participants of this study were asked questions about the delivery of postgraduate distance education from the perspectives of the student. A summary of the analysis of the interviews conducted with students who had completed their studies as well as with current MARD students has clearly revealed some of the facts that are contained in the literature (McDonald, 1996).

#### **7.4 CHOICE OF INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY**

Unlike the residential mode of delivery, various instructional technologies are required for the suitable delivery of distance education. Based on this fact, appropriate questions were put to participants to obtain information on whether lecturers/tutors had developed and used various types of instructional methods for the presentation of distance education courses at IGNOU and how they were structured and integrated into the design of the course materials.



With regard to the instructional technology used by IGNOU, course presenters and students said that the university was dependent, mainly, on printed materials. This is contrary to Bates who suggests that “if an institution is dedicated to provide quality distance education, it needs to be flexible with regard to choice of various appropriate technologies to enhance the teaching and learning process at large” (2005:6). While printed materials are the main method of delivery at IGNOU, during contact sessions the researcher observed that these materials were supplemented with the use of transparencies.

In addition, the researcher examined various instructional materials and teaching method manuals prepared by IGNOU experts. Most of the teaching and learning materials were in print form. The findings are interesting in that the printed material was complemented by the use of technology, like audio and video tapes for instructional purposes.

In relation to the above, P-3, an IGNOU academic and Chief Academic Officer, summed up the situation as follows:

*“We provide the learners with the printed materials for all modules together with their assignments’ guides. Still, we don’t have fully established instructional methods to accommodate the new technology, like computer laboratory and the like. Since all the printed materials are imported from outside, especially from India, the materials’ preparation and course design go hand-in-hand.”*

Participants P-4 and P-2 had similar ideas in common as this:

*“As far as the new technology is concerned, like e-mail, internet for teaching, learning, and communication purposes, for limited interaction were used. But to be honest, almost all tutors depend mainly on printed materials. I think we need further improvement on that. However, the use of instructional technology needs further development. It has been improved much since the beginning of IGNOU’s establishment in Ethiopia and still they are improving from time to time”.*

In corroborating the above comments, the relevant document analysis carried out by the researcher on this issue indicated that the reliance on print-based materials not



only targeted a specific group (MARD), but rather applied to all Master's programmes offered at IGNOU in Addis Ababa. Thus, a large number of participants interviewed for this study agreed that the main instructional technology used for the programme was print-based. However, during the contact sessions the use of print-based material was supplemented by transparencies. The cross-border distance education provided by GNOU requires the utilisation of more than one medium for teaching and learning. There is, therefore, a need to encourage the implementation of multiple delivery systems. However, the use of a variety of instructional materials and methods depends on the financial resources of the institution.

Distance education in Africa has been used to address the problem of a lack of qualified teachers by the use of four main modes or models of provision (Taylor, 2001). These models are the following:

1. Single mode institutions that offer only distance education, such as IGNOU and the University of South Africa (UNISA);
2. Dual mode institutions that provide both face-to-face education and distance education, such as the University of Pretoria, the Universities of Fort Hare and the Western Cape in South Africa, the University of Botswana, University of Zambia and the University of Kenya.
3. Mixed mode institutions where the teaching staff design, deliver and administer distance education programmes as well as offer conventional programmes, such as the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Pretoria in South Africa and the University of Mauritius and Eduardo Mundane in Mozambique.
4. Consortia institutions are groups of autonomous institutions combining efforts and resources to offer distance education, as in the case of the African Virtual University (AVU). According to Manjulika (2002:89), AVU has demonstrated particularly encouraging growth statistics.

In all these modes of delivery printed materials are most dominant, even in the face-to-face systems. The success of these modes of delivery relies heavily on proper management and administrative structures which both assist learners in accessing support services and in achieving their desired outcomes.

In some instances, most of the student participants reported the dominant use of printed course materials (modules) as part of the instructional method. Furthermore, students acknowledged that they depend mostly on tutorial materials for study purposes. The growth of distance education has been associated with the expansion of information communication technologies and IGNOU's efforts to use new communication technology are vital in its attempt to provide quality postgraduate distance education in Ethiopia. For developing countries to be more successful in distance education, the use of modern technologies, like ICTs, need to be a top priority. In distance education, printed course material constitutes the basis of teaching and learning and is a major component of support for the learners. Printed material is made available to most of the students of IGNOU's programme through the tutorial centres (Numan, 2011).

Currently, population growth and the demand for employment across the world is increasing pressure on governments to provide educational opportunities to all their citizens. The unequal distribution of access to ICT across the world has benefited some developed countries and marginalised developing ones, such as those on the African continent. For a country to be successful in distance education in its use of ICT, infrastructure which includes telecommunication links needs to be developed. In developing countries, especially, the government plays a vital role in creating and developing such infrastructure which may be difficult because of a lack of resources and, sometimes, the improper use of limited resources. Weak telecommunication systems, compounded by a lack of clear vision and human resources to develop ICT systems as well as a shortage of capital, are a setback in the use and development of ICT in Africa (Daniel, 2000).

In conclusion, all the administrators, programme co-ordinators, deans and tutors interviewed in this study agreed that the main instructional technology selected for the programme was print-based. All participants were of the opinion that print materials are the dominant medium of delivery in distance education and are useful. However, some commented that it should be supported at IGNOU by new information communication technology systems (ICTs) for effective teaching-learning to take place.

## 7.5 THE QUALITY OF COURSE MATERIALS PROVIDED BY IGNOU

According to the available literature, quality in distance education is perceived in relation to the production of quality course materials and its efficient distribution to the learners. The quality of teaching materials can be realised if they are supported by three important pillars, namely: well-designed curriculum, solid course content and meaningful assignments and quality student support services. Nevertheless, whatever the term quality may refer to in distance education, a concern for quality becomes important in that this mode of education is still the most effective means of making education accessible to millions who, for one reason or the other, have previously been denied access to higher education (Aluko, 2007:160).

Currently, the use of multimedia delivery seems to suggest an improvement in the quality of course materials in distance education teaching and learning. Materials which assist students to achieve the intended outcomes of a course or programme would probably be considered to be of an acceptable standard or quality. Relevant and quality course and study materials enrich the quality of education administered by distance education institutions (Taylor, 2001). The physical, emotional and cognitive distance, which Moore (2007) calls transactional distance, existing between tutors and learners and which are caused by a communication gap could be solved by adequate, relevant and varied course materials.

Well-designed study materials that meet the needs of the learners, therefore, also meet the needs of the country in terms of the development of the country's trained workforce. The access of students to all the study materials required in different courses is equally important. Furthermore, there has to be a quality assurance system for the development of the study materials to confirm the quality of the course materials at IGNOU. The participants' views regarding the quality of course materials provided by IGNOU are given below.

P-3, a student participant, said:

*"The course materials are of good quality and help us even in our day-to-day working context. If one keeps well and uses the materials for different purposes in his/her daily activities they are really very helpful. I, personally, have benefited from them because they are well prepared and relevant to our*

*country's situations. Generally speaking, I think they are very good and of good quality to apply in our workplaces as it deemed necessary. The materials serve as very good tools since they are of the best standard and well prepared."*

P-1 and P-4 commented:

*"No doubt about the quality of course materials, the course description in the modules were found useful, self-explanatory, but some of them are hard to internalize until we get further explanation in the tutorial sessions. Although the quality of course material is commendable, the Indian context in some courses still needs to be changed into the Ethiopian context."*

Based on the information obtained from the interviews, it seems that both graduates and currently registered students of the MARD programme were positive regarding the quality of their course material. The document analysis and the relevant literature review were used to substantiate the findings. Since its inception, IGNOU has become well-known for the quality of the learning materials that it produces. The learning materials developed by IGNOU were initially known as self-instructional materials for distance learning programmes (Jung, 2013:172). However, participants felt that some of the course material was too heavily biased in the context of India as the course materials were prepared in India and served all international partners institutions, including IGNOU in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. Participants said that they sometimes found the content of the course difficult to understand. For example, the study material for 2005, 2008 and 2012 in the programme, Master of Art in Rural Development, for the authorised course at IGNOU, namely: Rural Development Planning and Management, in discussing Rural Development Agrarian Issues, states:

*"The Ryotaangahasactive in Shimoga, Belgaum, Bijapurand Bellary districts in Karnataka consolidated themselves on a non-party basis. The outcome was the establishment of the new Karnataka RajayaRyotaSangha (KRRS), the same name as that of CPI led KRRS, with the leadership in the hands of Rudrappa, Sundaresh and Nanjundaswamy (a professor of law and a Lohia inspired socialist).This crystallisation was facilitated by NarayanaSwamy Naidu who earlier toured theState under the sponsorship of Shimoga leaders. Thenceforth, an ideology of ruralismwould guides the future expansion of the movement. Specific issues and area-specificproblems submitted from time to*

time, were being replaced by a new framework, which “made clear that agriculture had to be treated as a commercial unit as in industry. The same treatment was demanded for agriculture in respect of price policy and supply of electricity and other inputs as was given to industry” (IGNOU, 2012:30).

Although, the course materials were referred to by only a few student participants, the researcher’s document analysis of materials, an example is the above extract, has led to the conclusion that considerable amount of work needs to be done at IGNOU on the material to improve its content and quality. A recommendation is that the course materials should be clarified and should, at least, relate to the Ethiopian context; the different terminology in Hindi in the material, as in the above extract, should be written in simple and understandable English for the various international students in the same field of study. In addition, some student participants offered suggestions for the further improvement of the content of the course materials that were also mainly related to the course material content, dominated by text related to the Indian context. The participants suggested that it should be changed to apply to Ethiopia. Otherwise, in terms of quality, the participants commented that course materials available at IGNOU for postgraduate distance education students’ were of a fair quality.

## **7.6 STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AT IGNOU**

Student support services have always played a major role in distance education programmes. According to Simpson (2000), the positive integration of student and faculty support as well as the use of effective technology, encourages meaningful instruction. These services enhance communication between students and the institution. Simpson believes that “education professionals can provide a successful model for effective teaching and learning that can aid institutions in providing quality education, as well as ensuring the success of students participating in distance education” (Simpson, 2000:54).

Simpson (2000) further suggests that the dominant feature of distance education is its physical situation, something which needs to be addressed in the provision of sufficient relevant materials by means of a variety of media. This can be achieved

through the use of adequate mechanisms of student support in conjunction with assignments, feedback and other support to assist students in their studies.

Student support services are a central pillar for successful distance education programmes. In addition, Mills maintains that the fundamental feature of successful provision of distance education is the “conscious provision of adequate support for distance learners” (2006:45). As has been explained, learner support services are important for providing support in terms of relevant and adequate information, academic and administrative assistance, resources, and other moral and psychological support for the distance education learners.

Providing these types of support can help distance learners complete their studies successfully and within the allocated time-frame. However, different kinds of support need to be given to distance students throughout their study, not only sometimes. Support services assist in alleviating problems that distance learner’s experience, such as the feeling of isolation and alienation from the tutors and institutions and from fellow students (Simpson, 2002). However, there are some scholars, such as Molefi and Kishore (1998), who are of the opinion that success in distance education depends mainly on high motivational factors related to the individual learners.

Therefore, providing the necessary support services for distance education, both to the staff and students, is one of the ways in which distance education higher institutions are able to sustain their standards of quality. Mills (2006:142) underscores this fact by pointing out that the fundamental feature of successful distance education is the provision of responsive support for distance learners. Therefore, the support of learners is a useful basis for monitoring and evaluating the quality of distance education programmes.

### **7.6.1 WHY ARE STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES IMPORTANT?**

According to Molefi (1998) and Kishore (1998), distance students, especially when they start the programme, encounter problems in terms of the social, psychological, economic and cultural context of learning and the new way of life and, therefore, appropriate student support services in distance education become crucial. The

possible student support services are divided into two and are comprised of administrative and academic support.

Administrative support in distance education includes record-keeping, enrolment, material and books dispatched by e-mail and library services. Academic support includes tutoring, counselling services, courses and study centre facilities. Furthermore, it includes electronic communication technologies, such as the internet, radio, audio tapes, videos and television.

However, the types and scale of student services that could be offered by an institution depend largely on the capacity of that particular institution. According to Molefi (1998), student support services are provided in order to facilitate learning so that students achieve their ultimate goals. To help students realise the institutional objectives of the course, the institution and its various support systems should collaborate and aim to minimise the negative effects of isolation which the students may experience; for example, they should strive to address the lack of regular personal contact between the educators and the students. By providing the necessary student support services, higher distance institutions could, possibly, minimise the drop-out rates as well as provide and deal efficiently with quality teaching and course materials. Furthermore, institutions should seek to improve the learning experiences of their students by providing extra assistance to students who may be experiencing academic difficulties as well as to those experiencing personal problems.

From the strategic manual documents of IGNOU (2012), under effective student support services, the following points are emphasised as being pre-requisites for effective student support services:

- Improve completion rate;
- Reduce drop-out rate;
- Provide sustainable, quality education;
- Enhance the credibility of distance education;
- Make the support services effective; and
- Increase the use of interactive technology, among others.



According to Kishore (1998), an analysis of learner support services is one way of ensuring the success of the teaching-learning experience in a distance education system. Building on that and in order to obtain the views of student participants on the support services provided by IGNOU, the researcher asked different questions related to its academic and administrative purpose. One student participant, P-7, whose views were supported by fellow students, P-6 and P-8, had the following to say:

*“The student support services are okay, but still it needs to be improved. Always the academic support services are good; however, some staff member are part-timers they are not in the centre always to address the individual need of students, which can affect the quality of the expected support from needy students. I think IGNOU needs to have more permanent qualified teachers in different subjects to provide the necessary academic support to the students, according to their needs. The administrative supports is fine physically when we came to the centre; however, there were some problems with those students living in remote areas who still experience difficulties with lack of communication with modern technological means for those living in the countryside. Therefore, to solve this problem IGNOU also needs to open branches in different administrative regions, to give more effective student supporting place.”*

Another participant, P-3, with a similar opinion, said:

*“I think the student support services, especially the administrative support services, need to be decentralised to district levels to provide service to the majority of participants who are living in the country side and usually travel a long distance to access administrative and academic support services from this institution. What I mean is that, even though the student support services are fine, the long distance we have been travelling was exhaustive in terms of time and expenses. Personally I feel that needs improvement.”*

Moreover, the students participants were asked to rate the services rendered by the administrative staff at IGNOU. A large proportion of them rated the support services as good, especially those offered at local level. However, there were some student participants who said that the support they received from headquarters in India, did not meet their expectations because of delays in responses to their queries. In addition, most student participants indicated that services related to academic advice



were provided regularly. Overall, student participants felt that the student support services were good. A few participants suggested that there could be active interaction with their instructors through, for example, tele-conferencing.

In this section, the researcher examined the provision of support services for the learners by means of the available written documents in relation to procedures for granting access to the materials for all learners. Furthermore, the researcher also discussed information concerning the support services that are used at IGNOU obtained from the analysis of documents. Ideally, ensuring access to, and the quality of, student support services is part of the institution's responsibilities. In practice, however, these support services remain centralised and the need to decentralise the provision of such services was suggested as part of improvement plan for the institution.

Since some postgraduate distance education students come from far away and travel more than 850km to reach the institution to pursue their further education, the decentralisation of the library, administrative and academic support services is important for the benefit of these students and for the institution's reputation. Putting necessary student support services in place without delay and, thereby, diminishing the costs of long distance travel would contribute positively to enhancing the quality of distance education. However, the student support services described above need to be decentralised as a matter of urgency to different regional and administrative regions of the country so that they are available to all postgraduate distance education participants. The researcher further recommends that tutors and coordinators should be well-trained in effective principles of distance education, its support systems and how to offer sufficient support effectively. At the same time, students should be properly oriented to the advantages of attending tutorial sessions.

## **7.7 LEARNER ASSESSMENT METHOD OF IGNOU**

Assessment is acknowledged as a “key motivator of learning and as an integral part of the teaching and learning process” (SAIDE, 2003:11). Monitoring the performance of distance education is more relevant as this mode of delivery is learner-based. For

quality to be ensured in distance education there is a need for it to be integrated into all the systems of the delivery. According to Sriuastava (2002), the distance education mode of delivery is now a common phenomenon all over the world and it is described as the mode to provide access to higher education. Scholars suggest that continual formative student assessment opportunities help to motivate students across vast distances. This type of assessment allows the students to determine their preparedness to write summative examinations or assessments.

According to the available relevant documents at IGNOU in Addis Ababa (2008), assessment methods are sub-divided into three parts. The learners' assessment consist of self-assessment, formative and summative evaluation or assessment. The practice of learner assessment is recognized as "a key motivator of learning and an integral part of the teaching and learning process" (SAIDE, 2003:11). Furthermore, Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2004) indicate that the major purpose of assessment is to provide information for judgement to be made about a student's achievement with the purpose of improving student learning as it is taking place. It also provides clear information to obtain an understanding of the individual's performance and, hence, helps to judge and plan for improvement in educational programmes. The effort to establish the desired skilled workforce for the country's social and economic development can be addressed through appropriate assessment techniques.

With regard to the academic assessment methods used at IGNOU, for example, two student participants, P-6 and P-4, acknowledged that

*"The tutorial and assignment submission and feedback system is so good; the exam periods arranged are at an international level. All who are attending similar programmes or courses are required to take an exam on the same date and at the same times, to keep its assessment quality standard all over the world. When we did our assignment we can't copy as it is from the books or printed material but we have to critically analyse and reason out according to our own understanding. The exam types are also subjective in nature that we need to choose according to our own individual understanding to write the answer. If it was objective types it was relatively easy at least to guess, but in subjective style no chances."*

In addition, P-6 reported that the assessment methods were in three areas: tutor-marked assignments, projects and final examinations. In the following quote P-8 describes the nature of the exams:

*“The examination types are rigid and mostly subjective in nature which we need to choose among many themes, the specific themes we want to write according to our individual understanding. Many students found that subjective types of exam questions are difficult than compared with objective types of exam questions and students feel relatively easy to score good marks. As subjective exam questions are not involve guessing. However, the subjective style favours people who studies thoroughly and prepared for exams. If possible, I would like to suggest for flexible types of exam questions, objective as well as subjective questions. Otherwise, the assessment methods are according to the set standard, but the feedback return times normally take two months and sometimes more.”*

The majority of student participants affirmed that the formative and summative assessment methods of evaluation at IGNOU were of a quality standard. Each student was required to complete four to six assignments by specified due dates before they were able to write the end of term examinations. However, regarding feedback for the final examination, one of the student participants had the following to say:

*“...After we did our final exams, which they call it normally the term-end exams and which is taken twice a year at all host and partner institutions at different places but in the same times. This final exam is marked and assessed from headquarters in New Delhi and sent to the partner institutions later. But the return of the feedback normally takes two months and sometimes more. I think it needs further improvement to have the student feedback with in shorter time’s frames. For me the subjective types of exams are fine and preferred that.”*

In relation to this, student participants indicated that feedback took an average of two to three months, something which they viewed as a weakness. Even the final results took more than three months to be released as examinations were marked at headquarters in India. Student participants suggest that there should be an improvement in providing feedback. The findings from the documents analysis also revealed that IGNOU adopted three forms of assessment: self-assessment,

formative assessment and summative assessment. Students are given assignments to complete and the marks count towards the final mark. According to IGNOU learners' assessment methods, all the assignments and projects which are seen as formative assessment comprise 30% of the term or semester result and the remaining final term-end examinations account for 70% of the total semester result. However, the long turnaround time for feedback - which is part of the quality of teaching and learning activities - needs serious attention.

From the available document analysis the following has been extracted from IGNOU's common prospectus (IGNOU, 2013:14):

### **IGNOU Student Evaluation System:**

The system of evaluation at IGNOU is different from that of conventional universities. IGNOU has a three system of evaluation for example, the following quotation from IGNOU 2013, prospectus shown practical facts as follows:

1. Self-assessment exercises within each unit of study.
2. Continuous evaluation mainly through assignments which are tutor-marked.
3. Term-end examinations.

The project work where the evaluation of the students depends upon various instructional activities undertaken by them, a learner has to submit TMA responses to the Coordinator of the Study Centre concerned to which Term-end examination is conducted at various examination centres spread all over the country. This take place usually June and December every year at the same times. The tutor-marked assignments results and projects work results constitute 30% and the term-end results comprise 70% of the academic year final results. (IGNOU Pros, 2013:13).

Tutors/lecturers were also interviewed to get their perspectives. The participants' responses included the following. Participant P-2 commented:

*"The student assessment methods are used worldwide in IGNOU's context. The assessment methods of the learners are of an accepted international standard. Therefore, I can say they are of high quality for distance education. The assessment methods of IGNOU are mainly divided into three parts, and the fourth is the student self-check assessment or evaluation. The three parts*

*of assessment methods include projects, tutor-marked assignments, and term-end exams.”*

In agreement with P-2, P-3 maintained:

*“In IGNOU assessment methods are unique, especially the term-end exams are provided at the international levels with same date and times. Therefore, one can say they are of a high quality for distance education. The assessment methods of IGNOU can be categorised into three parts, namely: projects, tutor-marked assignments, and term-end exams. In the MARD programme especially, students are required to do projects and submit the final thesis after they finished their course work successfully.”*

It seems that participants share similar views about the quality of the assessment methods and systems as applied at IGNOU. However, there were a few student participants who described assessment method sat IGNOU as rigid. Furthermore, they felt that the final examinations, which usually take place at the same time across all the IGNOU partners, do not take into consideration the objective local reality of each country’s needs. They suggested that IGNOU’s assessment system should be reviewed.

On the basis of the document analysis and data gathered from the interviews, it can be concluded that there is an assumption that the fact that examinations are written on the same date and at time make them quality assessments. Nevertheless, this may not, necessarily, be so as the different time zones and the objective realities of each country may vary. This point could, therefore, be used to recommend that in keeping the central curriculum and the quality of the final examinations standard, the IGNOU branch in Addis Ababa should prepare the final examinations and projects within the country according to the local time and objective reality of the students. Thus, this finding points to the need for IGNOU to establish its own internal assessment system.

In terms of assessment methods, feedback and comments included those of IGNOU’s administrators. Regarding postgraduate MARD programme graduate performance, for example, one of the administrative officers had the following to say:

*“Since the start of postgraduate education through distance in collaboration with IGNOU here in Addis Ababa, honestly speaking we have not made any survey on that yet. So far we had only two cohorts completed up to now and we are going to have the third Baths recently, we will make in the near future the tracer survey studies from the employer’s perspectives for further development of our programme. However, the graduate’s feedback we have so far is encouraging, in terms of their promotions to the higher levels with more responsibilities and with more reasonable salaries increments and benefits packages after their graduations.”*

Despite not having surveyed this programme these comments, however, suggest the positive impact of the programme in terms of its graduates’ promotions and salary increments at work.

## **7.8 EFFICIENCY OF THE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS AT IGNOU**

Smooth communication is the backbone of any organisation as it helps to ensure the successful implementation of its major objectives. Since the distance education mode of teaching and learning is conducted in different places, it requires a smooth and highly efficient communication system (Bates, 2005) and, in turn, an effective communication mechanism in the organisation facilitates a smooth working environment. In order for effective communication to take place in the teaching-learning environment, all concerned bodies in the organisation need to accept their responsibilities.

If the communication mechanism is inadequate and poor it will definitely lead to misunderstanding and frustration among its members. Effective communication is created when there are adequate facilities and infrastructure to support it. Communication should be clear, accurate and timely. Through technological means, especially through ICTs, improved interaction between and among students and teachers has become possible. Efficient and clear communication between the tutors, students and the university staff is essential for upholding the excellence of teaching in distance education (Chiu *et al.*, 2008). However, in distance education communication between learners, educators and administrators has proved to be a critical problem.

As much evidence shows, telecommunication technologies now enable global opportunities for organisations and individuals to communicate with one another to conduct various meetings and activities and to provide value-added services (Lin and Chlamtac, 2000). However, developing and cultivating further communication support amongst key players in distance education, such as the students and their lecturers, still remains a concern to all parties involved and should be a matter for further improvement.

The researcher asked participants questions to assess the status of the communication channels at IGNOU. In response to those questions, one participant from IGNOU's administration stated:

*“The communication channels between the staff and students are in person and through e-mails and by mail. To be honest, sometimes it is very difficult to get hold of some students from rural areas, due to inefficiency of the electronic media channels. In some towns it is very easy to communicate with postgraduate students while at their respective working areas. Since postgraduate students are coming from different places for tutorials and assignment submission and to get feedback, it is okay to have communication. However, there are times whereby in some cases for urgent matters we may not reach the concerned students. Sometimes, due to poor communication infrastructures in the country, especially with internet access, we lack smooth communication with our students who sometimes miss their tutorial schedules.”*

Another participant, P-4, said:

*“The communication lines exist through phone, email, post, and in person. However, sometimes we have encountered problems. For example, the e-mail message we disseminated to our student would not reach them in time. They are not able to reply in time as required. This has created a lot of misunderstandings in our teaching and learning process in terms of communication. Since the electronic system of our country in different places is not efficient we most of time fail to communicate with them. The electronic system failure, especially during the exam times, creates much confusion, with respect to time difference between Indian and Ethiopian local times, since the term-end exams are administered in the same date and time all over the world. There are some students who missed their exam time tables*



*and this leads to prolonging their times of completion of the programmes in different Masters Programs, including MARD. Therefore, our communication system needs to be entirely improved by ICT for the smooth communication between staff/students and management bodies.”*

In brief, the above responses illustrate the existence of communication between students and the institution at the local level as well as the challenges in the communication channels between various stakeholders at IGNOU, which suggest that a favourable teaching and learning environment does not exist. This miscommunication directly affects the teaching and learning process and, eventually, has a negative effect on the quality provision of distance education. The communication system, especially between headquarters and its partner intuitions, needs further improvement. Suggestions have been made regarding the improvement of infrastructure technology in the country by the participants.

P-7 commented:

*“The communication channels are fine. The course materials were distributed to us on time. The various assignment papers with its submission dates and tutorials programme papers were given at the right times. All these were provided during the orientation and introduction times. These take place just after we settled our bills for tuition. The library information and the assignment procedures and guides are also given. The project work and tutorials dates and deadlines for pre-preparation and time management were clearly communicated. Although communication at a local level was fine, at the national level information and feedback from headquarters Delhi, India, was in many times very late, and this is something which needs special consideration to improve communication.”*

According to IGNOU’s administrative and academic staff, there are clear lines of communication within the national and partner institutions at IGNOU. These communication lines are between the educational providers at local level and their governing structures. Although communication lines between the local staff and students seem to be working well in terms of physical communication, communication by means of the electronic system is reported to still be problematic. Additionally, some student participants expressed their feelings of dissatisfaction with the communication delay in receiving their final results from headquarters in



India. This, in particular, had to do with the students' issue of obtaining the necessary feedback on their final examination and project results. As high level of communication or interaction in postgraduate programmes are required to achieve the desired results in the teaching and learning process in the distance education sector the need to have regular and clear communication between students and institutions/tutors and among students was been emphasised by the respondents. Communication between students and the institution at various levels is needed in order to obtain the necessary support from the staff at headquarters, regional or local centres and tutors in the different subject areas. The lines of communication between tutors and the students need to be active and highly interactive with regard to teaching.

Furthermore, contact sessions and student group meetings and discussions are crucial for distance students. The delay of communication from headquarters in providing students with feedback and assessment results should not be ignored and attention should be given to further improvement as this affects the quality of education in one way or another. An effective assessment and feedback system in distance education is vital for the students to complete their studies within stipulated timeframes. Therefore, there can be no gain-saying by the cross-border institution that they are providing quality distance education unless there is prompt communication between all the stakeholders in the teaching and learning process - including the main stake-holders, the learners. Communication lines at IGNOU at local and host institution level need to be quick and timely as well as efficient and to the satisfaction of the learners and others stakeholders.

## **7.9 IGNOU'S COMMITMENT TO POSTGRADUATE DISTANCE EDUCATION**

To be successful, distance education requires considerable organisational commitment which includes the establishment of workable policies, procedures, and infrastructure for continuous improvement in order to achieve and maintain a high quality of teaching and learning. However, all these factors require significant financial resources for technology and support and for faculty members and administrators to comprehensively manage the of distance education that include the logistics of distance learning and the various student support services (Numan, 2011).

As was explained in preceding chapters, the quality of education at IGNOU was assessed in terms of coherence, efficiency and impact. Therefore, a focus was placed on defining the term 'quality', as it is a most important issue in education and it is beneficial for society in drawing the government's attention to quality higher education in the country. Leading stakeholders and those in key positions concerned with quality in higher education are the government, academics and students and their parents, taxpayers and the employers of graduates. The staff members who were interviewed were asked to comment on the level of commitment of the IGNOU authorities to distance education, especially at the postgraduate level. All indicated that there is a high commitment to the provision of quality postgraduate studies all over the world, including Ethiopia. It is noteworthy that distance education programmes contribute significantly to increasing access to higher education in the country.

According to the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia (MoE, 2012) statistics, the percentage of contributions of private higher education institutions, including distance education, reached 25% in 2011/2012. The question posed to participants was related to their views on the commitment of IGNOU as a cross-border distance institution and their evaluation of the degree of commitment that IGNOU has in providing access to quality postgraduate education in Ethiopia. Participant P-3 summarized the situation by stating:

*"As far as commitment is concerned, from day-to-day activities and its broader objectives and vision, IGNOU has a high commitment to run this programme. The offering numbers in various Masters Programmes is increasing from time to time shows to this commitment IGNOU started its operation in 2006. There was a limited number with few Master's programmes. However, now it has reached up to nine different masters programmes. This clearly shows its commitment to contribute more to postgraduate education in the country."*

The same view was expressed by a top management official at IGNOU:

*"The commitment of the host institution IGNOU at headquarter level seems encouraging. They visited us and cross-check the implementation of various Master's programmes to ensure its quality. I think the increase on various*

*Master's programmes with more fields of studies also shows their commitment to develop the sector further to contribute to the expansion of higher education."*

In addition, one of the student participants, P-6, further summarised the situation:

*"I would say IGNOU was committed to its mission and vision to provide quality postgraduate education in the country. This could be judged by the rapid improvement this institution has made. As a private cross-border institution that started its operation seven years ago with small rented private units in the country, after only few years it has got its own attractive building which can accommodate postgraduate students with good environment in the country. Generally, IGNOU is committed to its mission and objective to be a quality distance education provider."*

Another student participant said:

*"I am among the first batch of IGNOU's MARD programme from when it started in 2006. Since then there are many positive improvement, especially with the infrastructure like computer labs and a library and with various offices. During our time they were limited in private owned rooms and [have] now constructed their own campus, which I think is a positive change and shows its commitment to develop further its services in the country."*

In corroborating the above, the relevant document analysis carried out by the researcher on this issue also indicated that IGNOU's strategic plan for the expansion of postgraduate level distance education shows some commitment to its mission. Thus, IGNOU's expansion in postgraduate studies in the country can be seen as a positive aspect of its commitment. However, without high quality and the transfer of technology in education, IGNOU will not completely fulfil its commitment to providing quality postgraduate education and the above suggests that there is the required commitment from the host institution of IGNOU to run quality postgraduate distance education in Ethiopia and in other partner institutions. On the other hand, various participants in this study offered suggestions for the purpose of improvement of IGNOU in certain other aspects. These suggestions should not be ignored, but rather be given a high priority by the host institution to further its commitment to provide quality postgraduate education in the country.

## 7.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt with institutional practices related to quality teaching and learning at IGNOU. It has also systematically discussed the institutional and pedagogical practices at IGNOU in relation to the second quality indicator, namely efficiency. In particular, the chapter focused on whether the quality of teaching and learning experiences, the choice of instructional technology, course materials, student support services, learner assessment methods and IGNOU's commitment to the delivery of postgraduate level distance education were satisfactory. While these pedagogical aspects are interrelated, all students and staff support factors are equally relevant in order to bring about the desired quality distance education. On the basis of the findings, certain conclusions can be reached.

Firstly, based on the student participants' responses, IGNOU has demonstrated an effort in its goal to fulfil its established vision and mission to provide quality distance education at higher levels. Secondly, quality course materials are available in its postgraduate programme (MARD). The student participants were of the opinion that the student support services are offered at IGNOU need to be decentralised in to various regional centres. Thirdly, a strong learner assessment method and communication system among the various stakeholders which needed further improvement was suggested by the participants as important points, among others.

Finally, on the basis of the findings described above, it can say that there are quality elements in the provision of distance education at IGNOU in Ethiopia at postgraduate level. However, the various suggestions made by the participants should not be ignored to bring about the required quality education at postgraduate level. Among others, maintaining an effective communication mechanism in the institution among all stakeholders with the help of advance ICTs facilitates to achieve quality and tracer assessment surveys on employer's perspectives give important feedback on the performance of the graduates need to be underlined. Without fulfilling the above important elements for actual teaching and learning at IGNOU, there is no point in discussing quality enhancement issues in the development of distance education.

The next chapter, Chapter 8, focuses on the various stakeholders' perceptions of the quality of teaching and learning in terms of graduates achievement and acceptance of IGNOU.

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## **CHAPTER 8**

### **PERCEPTIONS OF VARIOUS STAKEHODLERS OF THE QUALITY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION PROVIDED BY IGNOU**

#### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, the second quality indicator of the study or theme was analysed, namely, the efficiency of teaching and learning at IGNOU. This chapter presents a discussion of the third issue or theme related to the findings from the various stakeholders' perceptions of IGNOU increasing access to quality distance education.

The above is in line with the focus on postgraduate education through distance education by a cross-border institution as the main objective of this study. Therefore, this chapter analyses findings in terms of the third and final theme related to the main objective which involves the perceptions of various stakeholders who participated in this study, namely: MoE and HERQA officials, students, graduates and administrative and academics staff members at IGNOU.

Quality, as discussed elsewhere in this study, is an ambiguous concept. However, as the working definition for this study, quality in Higher Education means 'fitness for purpose.' Quality is judged by assessing the degree to which the intended outcomes are achieved. Higher Education institutions both traditional contact and distance

education ones, take responsibility for the quality of their own educational programmes and also for the assurance of their quality. Quality in Higher Education considers the following three main elements:

- Input: Learning, resources, staff profile and student admissions;
- Process: Teaching, learning and assessment processes; and
- Outcomes: Graduate employability and achievement and research results (Dare, 2005).

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the perceptions of various stakeholders concerning the provision of access to quality postgraduate studies, especially in the MARD programme offered by IGNOU, based on the data from interviews conducted and documents analysed. The systematic and practical implementation of quality was assessed in terms of the final quality indicator, namely: impact. This quality indicator was assessed in terms of different categories of the stakeholders' views, as is shown in this chapter. The emphasis placed on quality by each distance education institution determines the extent of its acceptance by the public and different stakeholders', including policy-makers', change of perception of distance education and their perception of the achievements of graduates.

Various scholars have suggested that some of the weaknesses in providing distance education in developing countries are rooted in the way distance education is perceived by some individuals and groups of people (Aguti, 2003: 369; Robinson, 1996: 186-187) as such perceptions eventually determine the support they give to distance education. The perceptions of various stakeholders, including government policy-makers, also play an important role in the further development and improvement of distance education; the way they perceive distance education and the incorporation of distance education into higher education may positively or negatively affect their roles in the processes. Literature also suggests this to be the case – as is, for example, illustrated by Marew, (2002) who asserts:

Open and distance learning (ODL), as an educational method and philosophical construct, has been identified as the instrument with the most potential for solving the higher education problems associated with access and quality issues in developing countries such as Ethiopia. Despite the important role it plays and the increased popularity of open and distance

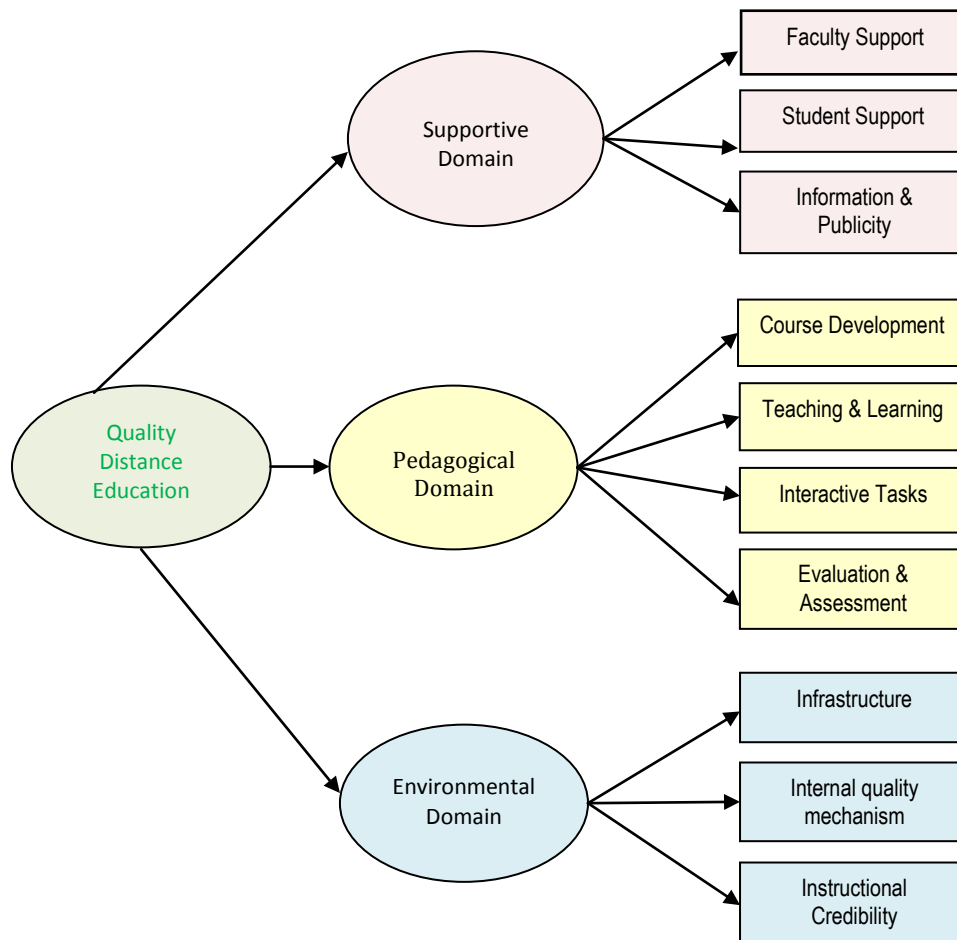
learning, different people perceive the advantages of ODL differently and their perceptions have influenced attitudes towards the acceptance and use of ODL in the education system in Ethiopia and elsewhere. Of the various problems facing distance education today, one that stands out is how it is perceived by the individuals involved in it. In other words, assessing the problem of perception of the sector by beneficiaries and/or stakeholders is a crucial factor. This is because the success of the open and distance education system is affected by how it is viewed by the individuals involved in the system (Marew, 2002:47).

Seyoum further explains that the perceptions of tutors and other stake-holders play a significant role in the “successful implementation of distance education” (2008:89). Consequently, this section focuses on the perceptions of participants in distance education at IGNOU and is based on an investigation of the impact of the characteristics of the individual participants and their successes which are reported in this study. The findings are expected to have practical implications for the successful implementation of distance education programmes by assessing the various stake-holders’ perceptions.

According to Jung (2011), ensuring the quality of distance education from the perspective of the learners is emphasised in three main domains, namely: the supportive domain; the pedagogical domain; and the environmental domain. Jung (2011:10) elaborates on the three main domains which are responsible for maintaining a high quality distance education:

- The pedagogical domain is related to course development, teaching and learning, interactive tasks and evaluation and assessment;
- The supportive domain is concerned with faculty support, student support and information and publicity; and
- The environmental domain is infrastructure, internal quality mechanisms and instructional credibility.

The following figure illustrates the relationship of the three domains.



(Source: Jung, 2012:10)

**Figure 8.1: Learners Perceptions of Quality in Distance Education Based on Three Domains**

In the supportive domain, student support was the best indicator of quality distance education; in the pedagogical domain, evaluation and course development were most influential, accounting for between 83% and 84% of the variance in the domain; and in the environmental domain, the infrastructure and instructional credibility dimensions were powerful indicators of quality in distance education, as perceived by the Asian learners. According to Jung (2011), each explained a worth of about 85-86% recognition of the total. Jung elaborates further that the three domains described above are like that of the supportive domain which has an assistive quality that helps learners to participate effectively and efficiently in distance learning and includes three quality dimensions: faculty support, student support and information and publicity. The pedagogical domain refers to a core quality aspect in distance education that helps learners develop and adjust their knowledge, skills and



attitudes, both independently and collaboratively, and includes four quality dimensions: course development, teaching and learning, interactive tasks and evaluation and assessment. The final domain is the environmental domain which refers to contextual quality aspects that create distance teaching and learning environments where learners work productively and flexibly with high confidence include three quality dimensions: infrastructure, internal quality assurance mechanism and institutional credibility (Jung, 2012:5).

Nevertheless, the quality standard of distance education has to be determined through comprehensive research in order to achieve the desired results of functional quality teaching and learning standards. Therefore, the assessment of programme outcomes, from the stakeholders' perspectives, is a critical and important component for educational effectiveness. The researcher analysed this in conjunction with the literature and on the basis of participants' views of quality enhancement and the acceptance of the postgraduate programme by different stakeholders, as described in Chapter 7. Consequently, this section focuses on the perceptions of participants concerning distance education quality at IGNOU and it is based on an investigation of the impact of the characteristics of the individual participants and their successes which are reported in this study. The findings are expected to have practical implications for the successful implementation of the distance education programme by assessing the various stakeholders' perceptions.

## **8.2 THE ETHIOPIAN FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AS A STAKEHOLDER**

It is argued that some of the weaknesses in providing quality in distance education in developing countries emanate from the way in which distance education is perceived by many stake-holders. Aguti (2003) argues that the positive and negative perception people have of distance education determines the various support services given to distance education which, eventually, leads to its further development as an alternative education means to conventional education. Therefore, in order to fully understand the potential of distance education and to ensure a positive change in perceptions, there has to be clear information about it. In

this sense, awareness creation is essential to provide the broader meaning of distance education as an alternative solution to face-to-face education.

Those who favour distance education maintain that distance education is cost-effective and that it provides access to higher education, thereby meeting the human resource development needs of the countries in which it takes place (Dhanajan, 2001). Therefore, to obtain a clear picture regarding the effectiveness of distance education, it is crucial to further understand and be informed about its potential and quality.

In assessing the perceptions of the Ministry of Education concerning access to distance education provided by IGNOU the researcher used both documentary analysis and interviews to collect views and opinions from officials. The interviews with MoE officials shed some light on what the programme has achieved in terms of quality postgraduate studies. Generally, the participants agreed that the programme had a positive impact in promoting higher education through distance education. The quotations below, taken from the responses of the various participant, are examples of these perceptions.

Commenting about the quality of the MARD programme, participant P-3 from the Ministry of Education summarized his observations on the issue of access to quality distance education as follows:

*'In a general sense, regarding access to quality distance education of IGNOU, the level of teaching and learning at postgraduate distance education, I can simply say it is good, and comply with the international standards of quality. The use of instruction in the delivery of distance education and the course materials assist us in the transfer of new knowledge and best practices from developing nations, like India. IGNOU's contribution towards the expansion of higher education through distance teaching is commendable. However, the use of new technologies needs further improvement on the delivery of postgraduate distance education.'*

P-5 (MoE) further explained the achievement of IGNOU in its postgraduate programme in increasing access to quality distance higher education and the status of graduates in Ethiopia:

*“The quality of learning materials and student support services offered at IGNOU are good. Since IGNOU meets the international standard of distance education, especially with the relevance of MARD course in India. I think it is very welcome to our country, because India has very good rural development programmes in their country. I have been in India for more than six years and found out that, their agricultural system and studies are well designed and to the quality standard. However, case studies, which are more focused on the Indian context, may require further improvement to make them relevant to the Ethiopian context.”*

As explained above, it seems that the MoE acknowledges IGNOU’s quality teaching and learning. Furthermore, its positive contribution to increasing access to higher education is accepted. Therefore, it can be argued in this study that increasing access to higher education in itself may be perceived as an important contribution to the expansion and development of quality higher education in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, some improvements regarding the preparation of course materials in order to reflect the Ethiopian context were suggested by participants and these suggestions should not be ignored.

A slightly different perspective was given by P-2:

*“Well, the perception has to be based on experiences; however, as educational experts we need to know HERQA and MoE’s evaluation results on IGNOU’s postgraduate education quality. First and foremost, according to my knowledge, the cross-border provider’s motive, priority and relevance have to be assessed; whether these providers are providing higher education according to its relevance and quality required to the satisfaction of the country’s human resources needs, or only for money-making purposes. I mean this because Ethiopia does not have much experience in cross-border distance education and some experiences from other places are teaching us to be cautious in implementing distance education programmes.”*

Another official from the MoE, P-4, with similar point of view maintained:

*“It would have been better to have the feelings of Ministry of Agriculture about the achievements of the MARD graduates at their respective field of specialities. IGNOU’s MARD programme started being offered in our country relatively very recently. Therefore, we don’t as yet have full information about*

*its provision, except it is said that it is following the MoE as criteria for the quality of its program .I think the MoE is not only providing accreditation, based on inputs and outputs, but also needs to control the process and final results through HERQA. Also I feel the cross-border higher education quality criteria needs to accommodate the country's minimum requirements and the quality aspect in different fields.”*

In addition, the document analysis related to the above issues revealed that the Ministry of Education is seriously following-up on the quality and the relevance of the programmes of the cross-border distance education institutions. For example, the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia developed principles and guidelines to provide accreditation and pre-accreditation for cross-border higher educational institutions. The following statements from the draft MoE manual address this particular issue. The MoE (2011) guidelines for the Accreditation of Cross-Border Higher Education (CBHEs) in Ethiopia for Master's programmes include the following provisions:

All entrants into Master's degree programmes offered by CBHEs must meet the minimum Ethiopian requirements for higher education enrolment. Evidence that the entrant has successfully completed his/her undergraduate degree courses with a minimum GPA of 2.00 in his/her major areas and passing in an entrance examination. The CBHEI shall be bound by the advice of HERQA and MoE with regard to admissions, entry requirements and the conduct of courses/programmes, as may be communicated to them from time to time. The admission of students for a course of study, examination and assessment of requirements should be equivalent to comparable programmes delivered by the awarding institution (MoE, 2011:15).

Some of the conditions set out by HERQA for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of CBHE in Ethiopia state:

The foreign higher education institution (FHEI) should offer either only programs/courses that have been properly accredited by an accreditation authority in its country of origin or through appropriate, authorized self-accreditation that, in the opinion of HERQA, has appropriate standing and authority. A local partner that seeks to operate in a collaborative arrangement with a FHEI shall be required to seek accreditation from HERQA.

The accreditation permit to operate as a FHEI shall be renewable, within a given period depending on the levels of programs. Permission to operate will

also be revocable at any time, based on reasonable grounds and following a process which accords procedural fairness.

FHEIs accredited to operate in Ethiopia will be subject to the quality assurance requirements of their overseas accrediting authority and any other requirements specified by HERQA as conditions of the accreditation to operate in Ethiopia (HERQA, 2006:8).

The researcher also examined the relevant literature related to this issue which reflects diverse views concerning distance education providers. Some are doing well and operate in the best interest of the students, while other private distance education institutions, arguably, focus more on so-called money-making rather than on providing relevant and quality higher education. According to Fayessa (2010), even in Ethiopia the programme areas of the private sector that offer distance education at diploma level are highly market-oriented in their response to the needs of the workplace. The serious monitoring and evaluation of the provision of cross-border higher educational institutions by the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia, therefore, seems to be prudent.

As one of the participants observed, the cross-border distance education institutions' motives; the relevance of their programmes; and their quality should be seriously investigated by the concerned bodies. Alemu, (2010) is of the opinion that although the role played by the private sector in the expansion of higher education in Ethiopia is commendable, quality is as important if the country is to benefit from its extensive human resources. To this effect, there should be clear commitment and action from the various stakeholders to support the expansion of higher education that is of a high quality and standard. Policy-makers should continue to outline clear legal frameworks for higher education institutions and strictly enforce them (Alemu, 2010).

In conclusion, there was some acknowledgment by participants of IGNOU's quality teaching and learning and of its positive contribution to increasing access to higher education. It can be argued from the findings of this study that increasing access to higher education, in itself, may be perceived as an important contribution to achieving quality higher educational expansion in Ethiopia. However, some participants were not fully in agreement as they felt that, at that point in time, they

were notable to confirm that quality postgraduate education was provided by IGNOU. They further believed that the MoE should seriously follow-up and monitor the relevance and quality of this sector. This simply shows that all participants were not unanimous about the quality of postgraduate education provision by IGNOU. Therefore, as one of the participants observed, the cross-border distance education providing institutions' motives and relevance of their programmes need further serious investigation by the relevant bodies before any conclusions regarding quality could be reached.

### **8.3 HIGHER EDUCATION RELEVANCE AND QUALITY AGENCY (HERQA) AS EXTERNAL QUALITY AUDITOR OF IGNOU**

The Ethiopian Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) is an autonomous body established in 2003 by an act of parliament and serves as an external quality auditor for higher education. The quality assurance process in Ethiopia, both for public and private higher institutions, is carried out by this agency (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5). HERQA has made a considerable effort to ensure the quality and relevance of Ethiopian higher education, both in traditional face-to-face and distance education.

HERQA, in accordance with its mandate, developed new guidelines for the accreditation and quality assurance of cross-border higher education in order to meet the needs of its stakeholders. Nevertheless, according to HERQA's guidelines for the accreditation of cross-border higher education in Ethiopia, foreign providers are only allowed to provide higher education programmes at second degree and above levels. These programmes are assumed to help in fostering the transfer of technology and knowledge (HERQA, 2011). The cross-border higher distance education programmes offered by IGNOU's Ethiopian branch are expected to be of comparable standard with those offered by the host institution in its home country. Furthermore, it must meet the standards and quality assurance requirements currently applicable to Ethiopian higher education institutions.

To further understand the perceptions of HERQA regarding the quality of IGNOU's postgraduate studies, the researcher attempted to establish whether the general

evaluation of the Master of Arts in Rural Development programme meets the quality requirements of HERQA. The aim was to obtain information on whether HERQA's quality enhancement and assurance policies and procedures, which are designed to bring about quality distance education, are applied in IGNOU's various instructional activities.

To begin with, the researcher examined various strategic papers written by HERQA experts, including the quality audit manuals and the criteria and checklists for the purpose of the inspection and accreditation of cross-border higher educational institutions in terms of quality assurance. In addition, interviews were conducted to complement the document analysis. In response to the question regarding their evaluation of the Master of Arts in Rural Development programme in terms of increasing access to quality postgraduate education, one officer from HERQA, P-3, reflected on the situation by saying:

*"I think this MARD programme, among other programmes, has significance for Ethiopia. Our provision of the accreditation permit is the result of the programme's relevance and the meeting of the quality standard for human resources development needs of the country. Honestly speaking, IGNOU's MARD programme has got an internationally accepted standard of quality, and we have simply accepted the recognition given by the Commonwealth to it and only made a corresponding check so far to see how this programme gives relevant postgraduate education for rural development. How that fits to our country and the quality of this program, according to our criteria, can be said to be good and up to standard. We have observed that IGNOU, with its partner institute in Ethiopia, SMUC, is trying to improve the quality of its various programmes, and they are aligning with the MoE and HERQA requirements. We have seen positive development and good understanding and effective communication for further quality enhancement of the higher educational development, both for private and public higher educational institutions."*

A senior official of HERQA, in agreement with the above, said:

*"IGNOU's MARD programme is good and relevant to our country. It is a well-recognised programme in the country of origin, India, and produced evidence in the form of a certificate about its quality and accreditation at the international level to our Agency. IGNOU seems good at distance education,*



*especially in the rural development Master's programmes in the country. Its programme's relevance has already been examined and accepted by different stakeholders in the country of its origin and in outside countries. Its efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the higher distance education level can be seen as a positive contribution to the country's human resources development needs."*

A third example, from an interview with a higher education accreditation officer, demonstrates the point:

*"The private higher educational institutions, including distance providers, are the recent phenomenon in the country. Some of them are recognized in their home country and are accredited at the international level, for example IGNOU by Commonwealth organizations, and fulfil the minimum quality standard to provide postgraduate studies in our country. Their contribution in providing access to higher education is welcomed. However, the quality issues are not the only concern in the distance education providers but the public universities as well. Some of the private higher educational institutions are doing better than some newly-mushroomed public universities in the country in terms of quality issues. As far as IGNOU is concerned, the MARD programme is doing well and to the required standard. But we expect more improvement and development from IGNOU since this institution has recently been established in this country and brings good experience from its country of origin in its teaching and learning activities in the knowledge transfer to our country."*

From the available literature the following is related to the recognition of the quality of IGNOU's programmes by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL, 2004) organisation:

IGNOU has, in a relatively short time after its establishment in 1985, contributed significantly to higher education, community education, and continual professional development. As a world leader in distance education, it was conferred the Centre of Excellence Award in Distance Education in 1993 and the Award of Excellence for Distance Education Materials in 1999 by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada. The University is committed to quality in teaching, research, training and extension activities, and acts as a national resource centre for expertise and infrastructure in the ODL system. The University has established the Centre for Extension



Education, National Centre for Disability Studies and the National Centre for Innovation in Distance Education, to focus on specific learner groups and enrich the distance learning system (COL, 2004:11).

The findings of the document analysis regarding HERQA's status in ensuring quality require further research and studies. They show that the agency needs to embark on more serious study and research to ensuring quality and relevance in both the public and private higher education in Ethiopia and to promote its case.

In substantiating the need for further research on the matter of quality, the following excerpt is given from the strategic plan that was drafted for HERQA:

Since it is still in its infancy, HERQA has not yet embarked upon serious studies and research work. It has not commissioned or undertaken a study on most of the critical issues to ensure quality and relevance in higher education in the country. As a long-term strategy, each higher education institution may be required to put in place effective quality assessment and management systems focusing more on the enhancement of the learning experiences and outcomes of students. HERQA needs to identify critical issues that need to be filled through studies and research. Issues of labour market demands from teaching and learning, required characteristics of programme and institutional review/assessment models and methodology, frameworks for monitoring, reflective overview and evaluation, criteria for selection of reviewers, auditors and assessors, key skills in higher education that need to be looked into to ensure quality and relevance, and concepts of assessment for example need to be addressed with studies, research and compilation of best practices from other good performing countries and sister agencies(2006:39).

From the above extract, a conclusion can be reached of the importance of further studies and research on issues of labour market demands and the quality and relevance of higher education, both for public and private higher institutions. Furthermore, the need for best practices from other well performing countries to ensure quality and relevance of higher education for the agency's growth and development are shown to be crucial. However, HERQA mainly assists institutions in designing their own quality assurance systems and does not actually act as the main external quality auditor. HERQA does not, for example, attempt to corroborate results of student performance in a search for evidence. The other relevant points of concern which need to be mentioned include assessment and evaluation practices.

It was found that IGNOU and HERQA had no practice of collecting feedback from the labour market through tracer studies in order to capture employers' reactions and comments.

An important lesson may be drawn from undertaking research on the acceptance and performance of graduates in the world-of-work by understanding the perceptions of the stakeholders, especially the employers, of the relevance of the programme and the quality of the work. Furthermore, the need for further studies and research to discover best practices from other well performing countries in ensuring quality and relevance of higher education for the growth and development of the agency needs to be underlined.

In conclusion, the above comments and suggestions by the participants may demonstrate acceptance of IGNOU's teaching and learning process by HERQA, the accrediting agency; its teaching and learning was also acknowledged by participants. IGNOU's efforts to allow access to its postgraduate programmes and meet minimum quality standards are seen as positive aspects of the institution by some participants. However, some elements of quality can be observed at this partner institution in Addis Ababa, it cannot be concluded that all quality practical aspects at IGNOU in its pedagogical activities are implemented at the same level in its Ethiopian branch as at the host institution. Therefore, considering the relatively recent establishment of IGNOU in Ethiopia and in order to enhance quality at IGNOU in Ethiopia, all the constructive comments and suggestions made by the participants of this study need to be seriously considered by the IGNOU local and as well as by the host's management bodies.

#### **8.4 IGNOU'S PERCEPTION OF THE QUALITY OF THE MARD PROGRAMME**

Distance education fulfils a vital role in expanding access to education and increasing access to higher education opportunities. The success of distance education depends on the perceptions of the faculty members who provide instruction to the learners. Therefore, it is crucial to cultivate a positive change of attitude towards quality in distance education in the eyes of the educators, learners and members of faculty.

The research question that was posed to guide the data gathering process for this specific issue was the same for all IGNOU academic and management staff as well as MARD students/graduates. This was done with the intention of assessing the perceptions of the individual graduates and the professional institution concerning the status of the achievements of the graduates from the MARD programme. The views of the participants regarding the achievements of the MARD students are given below. For example, one of the administrative staff members from IGNOU, P-5, summarised the situation as follows:

*“Regarding the acceptance of the graduates after their completion of Master’s studies, I can say all are doing well at their respective workplaces. Especially the rural development field of study is one of the most practical postgraduate studies, and learners are applying their education on a day-to-day basis at their workplaces. However, still we don’t have a system of collecting information about our graduates from the employer organizations. Despite this, the information we have so far from the graduates is really encouraging, in terms of their personal promotions and acceptance at the workplaces.”*

Another academic member of IGNOU highlighted the situation and said:

*“Since our country’s economy is based on agriculture and the majority of our population live in the rural areas, this programme is making a positive contribution. As far as I understood from my students, most graduates are doing well at their work places. Most of them are working with the rural communities and impacting their rural communities through their postgraduate education and are accepted by their employers. Even if we don’t have a survey research from the field, most of the graduates received promotion after their postgraduate studies in their respective workplaces including those working at the offices being programme coordinators and rural development project managers.”*

In general, the above comments and suggestions by IGNOU administrative and academic staff illustrate the acceptance of IGNOU’s graduates in their respective workplaces because of the quality of the education they received. However, the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning at IGNOU and, thereby, meet the human resources development requirements of the country by understanding the perceptions of the employer organizations should not be ignored.

From the perspective of the students and graduates, the following views were expressed. One of the graduates of IGNOU, P-2, stated:

*“According to my own experience, the achievements of IGNOU’s MARD graduates are very good and rewarding. After I got my Master’s degree in the Rural Development programme I was promoted to the higher level with more responsibilities and benefits. I think it’s the same for all who graduated with me and who are now serving in different private and public organizations, respectively. Even the benefit packages with the NGOs are higher than the government salaries.”*

Another participant, P-4, noted:

*“In my case, after my graduation with MARD, I got a promotion with certain amount of salary increment and given more responsibility in the hierarchy of my organization, which is, of course, in a private international NGO. However, I am not well informed about others. I think as an institution IGNOU needs to have thorough research on this to know the status and acceptance of its graduates from the views of each employing organization especially towards MARD programme graduates. Area of further research rising from this especially in the workplace is so important.”*

The available literature also suggests this to be the case. Gagne and Shepherd, for example, maintain:

Studies have found no difference in the quality of education received through distance learning versus conventional university classroom settings. Many studies have determined that students taking distance learning courses perform as well as students taking courses via traditional face-to-face methods. Perceptions of the distance learning system in the instructional process is influenced by an individual’s beliefs about the advantages of distance education, for himself, as a student, as an employer, whose employees are also distance learning students, or as an educational planner, desirous of providing potent solutions to educational problems (2001:27).

A study carried out in Nigeria related to the perceptions of learners in distance education indicates that they were favourably disposed to open and distance learning institutions (Ogidan and Olakuleh in, 2006). According to Ogidan and Olakulehin (2006), the results of the special study conducted with 120 distance

students showed the great interest of the students in the unique features of distance education institutions, including open access, opportunity for flexible learning, provision of quality learning materials, use of multi-media and ICTs. Their study affirms the crucial role of distance education in positively influencing the perceptions of students in developing countries, such as Nigeria. However, in line with the above, the use of multi-media and ICT support of teaching and learning is not yet fully developed at IGNOU's partner institution in Addis Ababa. This is one of the areas that IGNOU's local and host management bodies need to further consider for improvement.

A significant number of participants from IGNOU's staff and graduates of the MARD programme who were interviewed acknowledged the importance of the programme and the promotion opportunities that some graduates have experienced after completing their degrees. Similarly, staff participants, from what they had heard about their former students, acknowledged the usefulness of the programme in producing competent and capable graduates. However, they admitted the importance of conducting surveys on the achievements of their graduates from the perspectives of the employers, which have not yet been done.

In addition, Thomas (2008), for example, suggests that the provision of higher education by distance education institutions has become an important avenue for self-development and a key to promotion opportunities. In terms of further education, research and service, higher education's role in human resource development plays a prominent role in creating positive changes in society. In this context, higher education is about empowerment and raising the quality of life where people can continue to improve their knowledge and skills in order to enhance the development of society. Currently, the social and economic role of higher education, whether obtained through conventional or distance education, is viewed by many as integral to all aspects of social development.

Development through distance or conventional higher education has two-fold benefits. On the one hand it plays a role in individual development, as has been shown through the above comments by various participants. Those who obtained their postgraduate qualifications through IGNOU experienced a change in their

personal lifestyles and in promotion opportunities. On the other hand society also benefits from having an increasing number of graduates who are trained at a higher level.

On this issue and in line with the available literature Aderinoye and Ojokheta (2004) summarise the above point by acknowledging that distance education benefits society and the individual:

Open and distance education is acknowledged as a mechanism for sustainable development. It noted further that distance education helps extend the market for education to clientele who might not have been previously served. The problem of unsatisfied demand for education versus actual supply of educational services has contributed to the acceptance, growth, and implementation of distance education programmes in many places as a means to bridge the gap between demand and supply. In terms of development, the worth of distance education must not only be measured simply from what a given individual can contribute towards community and national development. It must also be measured in terms of the changes or improvement in the provision of access to quality higher education and thereby meet the human resources development needs. The individuals also enjoy as a result of the skills and knowledge they have learned and acquired from distance education (Aderinoye and Ojokheta, 2004:9).

Similarly, there is no doubt that, globally, distance education has broadened opportunities for underprivileged or marginalised people, including women and girls, in particular, by facilitating and increasing access to higher education in many developing countries. In Asia, for example, female enrolment in most dedicated distance e-learning universities is over 50% and in Korea and Pakistan the participation rates of females in higher education by means of virtual and distance education is also more than 50% (Jung, 2011). However, with the competitive expansion of distance education in Asia, distance education institutions must prove the quality of their teaching and learning in order to positively influence the perceptions of many followers (Baggalery, 2007).

In brief, the views expressed by the participants as well as perspectives from the literature demonstrate the importance of quality higher education through distance

education in the positive development of society and the individual. Furthermore, participants also commented on the importance of evaluation and feedback, especially with regard to tracer comments and reactions from employer organisations. It is recommended that this should be done in order to make the programme and institution more relevant for the further development of the human resource needs of the country. In line with the participant views, the researcher's review of documents shed further light on the issue of reinforcing the importance of the implementation of quality assurance methods in order to foster good support systems and to bring about a change of perception of distance education. As was clearly shown in the conceptual framework of this study, for example, at present in Asian countries there are increasing numbers of private distance education providers who are more concerned with profit-making than with education but there are also those who are genuinely concerned about the quality of education they offer to their students.

Latchem and Jung (2009:41) note that with the phenomenal expansion of distance education and an increasing dependency on distance education to provide access to education, especially higher and postgraduate education, there has been growing public concern over the delivery of quality distance education. Therefore, quality assurance and the accreditation of various distance education programmes in Asia became an issue that received special attention. In this region, each of the institutes providing distance education was convinced of the need to strengthen their quality assurance systems in order to bring about a change of perception of distance education and to achieve a culture of quality which is relevant to all developing countries, including Ethiopia.

In general, the officials at IGNOU believe that distance education is highly relevant to the country because it facilitates access to higher education which is of benefit to students and society. The findings in this study also revealed that there is general consensus among IGNOU graduates and faculty members that the achievements of the MARD programme and the general acceptance of its graduates by the employers seem positive. This further suggests IGNOU should establish an assessment method to collect feedback from employers regarding the performance of their graduates. This can also help IGNOU adjust its curriculum design and



production of course materials to align with the human resource development needs plan of the country.

## 8.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the perceptions of various stakeholders of the quality of postgraduate-level distance education provided by IGNOU in Ethiopia. This was done by focusing on the assessment of the perceptions of the Ministry of Education, HERQA, and IGNOU administrative and academic staff. The chapter further analysed the advantages that graduates of the MARD programme enjoy on completion of their studies. In the final analysis, the importance of employer's comments and feedback on the performance of graduated students was underscored. Thus, with regard to MoE, HERQA and the participants from IGNOU, it was found that within IGNOU and in HERQA there is a lack of feedback from potential and current employers concerning their views of this programme -an issue which, therefore, requires further attention and improvement. Furthermore, quality in higher education, in general, and distance education, in particular, can be achieved through collaboration between government, universities and the private sector.

To summarise, according to the participants of this study on a collective and individual basis, there are many factors that hinder the effective development of distance education. Some of the problems in bringing about quality distance education relate to the institution and also to the stakeholders' perceptions of distance education. Furthermore, the context of the national education policy impacts on the development of distance education and its influence on the narrow perception of distance education cannot be ignored. In this sense, distance education is not yet developed in Ethiopia and this indicates the need for the greater promotion of distance education in the country by means of a policy framework.

The negative or narrow perception of distance education is another challenge that hinders its integration with the face-to-face or traditional education and, thereby, its incorporation into the national education policy of the country. Although distance education is prioritised in Ethiopia, based on the above factors it could be argued



that the development of distance education in Ethiopia is still slow. Therefore, the role of the national education policy context is crucial because it determines the way in which distance education is perceived by many stakeholders, including the policy-makers.

From the findings of this study it can be also argued that developing distance education in Ethiopia is an alternative mode of delivery that could be used to reach those who are marginalised and living in rural areas further and that it needs the support of different stakeholders, including government and the private sector. Unless this takes place, marginalised groups will not easily access higher education. In other words, there is a need for distance education to be incorporated into the national education policy in Ethiopia. Therefore, to ensure the further development of quality postgraduate distance education programmes, effective collaboration between universities on a policy level needs to be emphasised. This collaboration should take place between the traditional contact and distance education providers and between public and private sector.

Overall, in the Ethiopian context higher education, in general, and postgraduate, in particular, is limited. Distance education could be an alternative option in providing access to postgraduate education but it is not clearly developed in the national education policy of the country. Despite this fact, international distance education such as that at IGNOU provides opportunities to prospective students by providing increased access to postgraduate education.

For distance education to succeed and in order to bring about the desired change in perception concerning access to quality postgraduate studies and, thereby, increasing access to higher education, much depends on strengthening the quality of, particularly, cross-border distance education institutions. This means that there should be a further emphasis on the quality of distance education, to develop the desired paradigm shift in perceptions of distance education. To achieve a paradigm shift in perceptions concerning the quality of distance education needs further effort to reach the required level of an accepted standard. However, it is difficult to conclude that IGNOU provides quality postgraduate education in providing access to higher education.

The study established that the potential of distance education to produce a quality workforce should to be seen as a positive development which finds expression in the quality of higher education given to the learners. This study has further found a lack of tracer studies at HERQA and IGNOU for feedback of the views of employers of graduates concerning the programme. The above observations, therefore, compel the researcher to recommend that further research should to be undertaken to determine the perceptions of the employers concerning the achievement and performance of the graduates.

In the next and final chapter, Chapter 9, the summary of the whole thesis, implications and conclusions of the study and recommendations for the improved development of distance education and further research in Ethiopia will be discussed.

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## CHAPTER 9

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 9.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study, as stated in the first chapter, was to critically examine the extent of access to quality postgraduate education through distance education in Ethiopia. This study further assumed that the role of cross-border distance education providers was important in enhancing access to the opportunities available in higher education. This chapter provides a summary of the implications and conclusions of the study and sets out to make recommendations for the improved development of distance education in Ethiopia. It also presents suggestions for future research. The next sections, therefore, summarise the findings and draws conclusions based on the interviews and document analyses data in relation to the literature review, conceptual framework, and the quality indicators.

The findings of the study were systematically analysed to build an argument using factors from the analysis and an interpretation of the major themes which were sub-divided into three core parts. Quality assurance practices in both distance and conventional higher education of the country were highlighted and the study's quality indicators, namely: coherence, efficiency and impact were systematically dealt with. To this effect, the sub-divided specific themes; the national education policy which includes HERQA's quality enhancement policies and pedagogy; the perceptions of the various stakeholders; and the quality assurance system of the country in relation to IGNOU are summarised below.

##### 9.1.1 EDUCATION POLICY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

This refers to the investigation of the involvement of the private sector and, specifically, how cross-border distance education providing institutions, in general, have responded to the higher education sector policy in the country. This part of the

discussion includes HERQA's policy and strategic guidelines as well as IGNOU's quality enhancement policy, strategic plans and procedures.

Evidence from the data analysis and the literature supports the opinion that Ethiopia's higher education sector is, in general, underdeveloped, and that distance education, in particular, does not respond. The education policy should promote access to all types of education in Ethiopia, including distance education. However, in the policy documents distance education has been overlooked and neglected. What is interesting with regard to the national education policy document of Ethiopia is that the flexible aspects of education are implied but not clearly stated and they are, therefore, lost in implementing policy. Encouraging the participation of the private institutions in higher education is desirable. This is, especially, the case with private higher institutions in Ethiopia, including IGNOU, that have increased alternative access to higher education through distance education, whilst the education policy-makers have overlooked this need.

Globally, distance education has been rapidly accepted it has become a priority in many countries; and, furthermore, it has changed the lives of many people, both in developed and developing nations. According to Dooley (2005:262), for instance, in Australia, Europe, South Africa, China, Greece and Turkey, distance education is perceived as a tool or vehicle to reach the people, especially in rural areas to improve their well-being and economic sustainability. This is also applicable to Ethiopia which has a majority of its population in the rural areas where distance education could be an alternative means to accessing higher education.

The MoE is responsible for coordinating, guiding, and controlling the activities of all traditional face-to-face and distance education institutions in the public and private sectors in Ethiopia. The lack of knowledge concerning the contributions of private institutions to tertiary education has resulted in a lack of integration in the development of the education policy. As a result of the findings described above, it can be argued that distance education has a potential to offer alternative means of access to higher education. The practices of the distance teaching institutions in Ethiopia have been adversely affected by a lack of national policy guidelines which should provide set standards of practice. Therefore, a comprehensive education policy that promotes the development of open and distance education in the country

is needed to alleviate this problem. Thus, the majority of participants in this study suggested that the Ethiopian government should develop a clear policy on distance education programmes and, thereby, ensure its quality.

### **9.1.2 THE INSTITUTIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AT IGNOU**

This section assesses and analyses IGNOU's provision of increasing access to postgraduate education for the workforce of the country and, thereby, contributing to the human resource development needs of the country. This refers to the institution's activities which are assumed to provide quality higher education through distance education. It is related, mainly, to the learners, staff and the various support services which could be provided to postgraduate students, including course materials and quality assessment and evaluation methods.

#### **9.1.2.1 Quality of course materials**

As stated in preceding chapters, quality in distance education is perceived in relation to course materials and services to indicate 'fitness for purpose'. Most student participants expressed positive perceptions of the quality of their course materials. Furthermore, students specified that they depend, mostly, on tutorial materials for study purposes -something which they found practically useful. Relevant and quality course and study materials enrich the quality of education offered by distance education institutions (Taylor, 2001). Since open learning and distance education teaching and learning mechanisms need to be student-centred, course and study materials are of primary importance for the achievement of this purpose.

The quality of course materials at IGNOU was confirmed to be fairly good by the MoE and HERQA participants. The provision of quality study materials to support distance students was felt to be of an acceptable standards and useful in ensuring IGNOU's success in its efforts to provide quality postgraduate distance education. However, the general view was that there is a need to supplement the printed materials, adopted by IGNOU as the main teaching media, with audio and video tapes. There were also a few students and officials who commented on the content of the course materials and suggested that there was room for further improvement. This was mainly from comments made that the course materials and content, which

were dominated by the Indian context, would need to be changed to be more relevant in the Ethiopian context.

### **9.1.2.2 Quality of student support services**

In principle, according to Kishore (1998) and Mills (2006), ensuring access to, and quality of, student support services is part of the educational institution's major responsibilities. The majority of the student participant's rated the services rendered by the administrative staff at IGNOU, especially at the local level, as generally satisfactory. However, there were some students who commented that the support they received from headquarters in New Delhi was not to their satisfaction and this was something which needs greater attention and improvement by the institution. At IGNOU the student support services are organised from head office in conjunction with the partner institution.

However, at the time of gathering this data IGNOU did not have a single branch office in any of the regional centres outside Addis Ababa. In this regard, the institution seems to be more interested making a profit. It had no branches or centres to make the student services more accessible, even in highly populated regions, which call for improvement. In practice, however, the support services which remain at the central level should be further improved by being decentralised, as some participants suggested, and expanded to different regional centres. The lack of regional centres gives the impression that IGNOU is more interested in making money rather than spending it on supporting their students in the regions.

If IGNOU wants to satisfy the educational needs of the people who are looking for alternative means of access to higher education, it should, arguably, do more to establish branches of learning centres, at least in the bigger regional centres where many distance education students are living and working. The success of distance education to provide required and relevant levels of student support services, in terms of administration and academic supports are, therefore, vital.

### 9.1.2.3 Quality of assessment and evaluation

Assessment is recognized as a key motivator of learning and an integral part of teaching and learning. Monitoring the performance of distance education is more relevant as this mode of education is learner-based. This study examined how distance education provides access to quality postgraduate studies in terms of three quality indicators, namely: coherence, efficiency and impact. A focus was placed on defining the term 'quality' and its benefits for society in relation to drawing the government's attention to producing a relevant workforces for the country's further development was adequately highlighted.

In Chapter 5, from the findings from the analysis of the available documents at IGNOU (2008), it was explained that the assessment methods used were sub-divided into three parts. As described above, the learner's assessment methods were: self-assessment, formative and summative evaluation. In terms of the IGNOU learners' assessment methods, all assignments and projects that are seen as formative assessment techniques comprise 30% of the total or semester results and the remaining final end of term examination makes up 70% of the final semester result.

However, the majority of students confirmed that the formative and summative assessment methods of evaluation at IGNOU were very rigid and strict. The student participants said they had to complete four to six assignments by pre-specified due dates before they were allowed to write their term-end examinations. In relation to this, some students indicated that their results from the host faculty took an average of two to three months to reach them which they felt was a weakness and suggested that this be an issue that should be given further attention. Therefore, the institution needs to look into this matter as it also, partially, affects the quality of distance education. Furthermore, it was suggested that IGNOU's and HERQA's assessment methods should include the practice of collecting feedback from the labour market through tracer studies to catalogue employers' perspectives as well as comments from professional organizations. It is also suggested that further research and improvement in this area is needed.

### **9.1.3 PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS OF THE QUALITY OF POSTGRADUATE LEVEL DISTANCE EDUCATION**

In this category other key players were students and officials at different levels of the institution, including tutors and general decision-making bodies at IGNOU. This study revealed that there was a general consensus among graduates and faculty members regarding the achievements of the MARD programme and the acceptance of its graduates in the workplace. This was analysed in relation to the alternative access to postgraduate studies provided by the cross-border distance institution. The findings indicate an acceptance of the graduates in the workplace in terms of their successful completion of this programme.

However, there were suggestions from some participants that IGNOU needs to establish assessment systems whereby it could receive feedback on the employers' perspectives regarding the performance of the graduates. Furthermore, IGNOU's and HERQA's assessment methods should include the practice of collecting feedback from the labour market through tracer studies by cataloguing employers' perspectives as well as comments from professional organisations. It was also suggested that IGNOU should know more about their graduates' performance in the workplace and that further research and assessment in this area is needed. As has been witnessed by the MoE and HERQA participants and explained in the preceding chapter, it seems that, in general, the MoE acknowledged IGNOU for its postgraduate programme teaching and learning as well as its positive contribution to increasing alternative access to higher education.

There is a sense that increasing access to higher education, in itself, may be perceived as important and equivalent to quality in higher education. Some participants did not fully agree that quality postgraduate education was being provided by IGNOU. Rather, there were comments that the MoE should seriously follow-up and monitor the relevance and quality of this sector. This simply shows that all participants were not of the same opinion with regard to the quality of postgraduate distance education provided by IGNOU. The researcher agrees with some of the comments made by participants who said that the cross-border distance



education providing institutions' motives and the relevance of their programmes should be investigated by the relevant bodies before any conclusions could be reached regarding the quality of their programmes. Furthermore, to ensure the quality of cross-border distance education programmes in the country, an adequate policy framework for a quality assurance system needs to be established.

The researcher wishes to draw attention to the conceptual framework adopted for this study in relation to the quality indicators and the concept of quality. The framework adopted is based on aspects of the quality assessment of open and distance education developed by Lockhart and Lacy (2002), Latchem and Jung (2007) and Perraton (2000) which, in turn, are based on the assessment practices of assuring quality in Asian open and distance learning. Their initial attempt was, mainly, to examine the various quality assurance approaches employed in Asian open and distance learning universities and US higher distance education context which have a relevant to the Ethiopian context at IGNOU.

Latchem and Jung (2007) and Perraton (2000) made some important suggestions on how to encourage and achieve a culture of quality in distance education which are relevant to all developing countries, including Ethiopia. Therefore, the conceptual framework has shaped the study and its results with regard to assessing the quality of postgraduate distance education provided by the cross-border host institution in Ethiopia.

Even though quality in education theory is for general higher education, the researcher felt that it was appropriate to use the notion of quality, mainly in relation to distance education, for the following reasons:

- Firstly, this study focused mainly on distance education as a mode of delivery, and distance education needs to be integrated with conventional higher education in a policy framework as they both serve similar purposes.
- Secondly, the theory provides the determining factors for the quality of delivery methods which can be applied, specifically, to distance education teaching and learning and with further systematic moves to conventional face-to-face approaches.

- Thirdly, the programme relies on a paper-based mode of delivery. However, it may also include aspects of face-to-face education but needs the further support of technology in the development of distance education.
- Fourthly, the researcher is of the opinion that this theory inevitably and systematically brings together the three quality indicators chosen for this study, namely: coherence, efficiency and impact. This is because the access to quality distance education provided for students would be reflected in the quality of the delivery of teaching and learning which may, eventually, affect the quality of the outcomes of producing quality human resources for the further development of the country.

Access to higher education through the traditional face-to-face method is no longer the only means; an alternative means has been devised in response to a demand for access. An ever-growing world population; an increase in the complexity of all aspects of life; increasingly higher education requirements for almost all types of jobs; accelerating change in nearly all occupations and jobs; and the special educational needs of disadvantaged and minority groups have all put pressure on the pursuit of an alternative means of access to higher education. All these factors have contributed to the emergence and relevance of distance education (Grant, 2010; Cabuk, 2013). The economic strength of a nation depends on how many of its citizens have access to higher education and through distance education there is the promise of social change and cohesion by implementing distance education programmes at different educational levels ( Morley, 2000).

The literature review in this study, related to access to quality postgraduate distance education, was discussed in Chapter 2. The relevant literature was carefully analysed in conjunction with the practical evidence of the findings and the following important points need to be underlined:

- Distance education, now taken as revolutionary and related to justice and equity, allows for access to higher education opportunities of previously disadvantaged groups of people, including women (Nuan, 1996), which was the case for many African countries, including Ethiopia.
- According to Roper and Shaw (1993), quality in distance education is seen as meeting the requirements and expectations of the clients who, in the case of this study, are the students and employers. It is possible to arrive at an

explicit and realistic set of quality requirements which can be guaranteed to be achievable.

- Quality is judged by assessing the degree to which the intended outcomes are being achieved. Higher education institutions, both traditional and distance ones, have the responsibility for achieving and maintaining the quality of their own educational programmes as well as an assurance of the quality. Quality in higher education embraces three main elements, namely: input, process and outcomes (Dare, 2005). As these three important elements expressed themselves in education, input includes the key players, learners and academics and administrative staff with the necessary facilities for teaching and learning; process is the teaching and learning of various activities; and the outcomes are the graduates and acquired skills and trainings.
- In quality teaching and learning, unlike other services and industries, the quality of the product and the learner outcome is not wholly within the control of the educational institution as only the process can be controlled.
- The learner's contribution is vital and, therefore, it should form part of the stated quality requirements. Through negotiation, the educational institution will arrive at a quality contract or quality entitlement owned by the learner and the provider institution. Quality in teaching and learning, according to Roper and Shaw (1993), is about perfection, inspiration, conforming to requirements, fitness for purpose, improving customer or client satisfaction and empowering the customer (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4).
- Satisfying the learner's needs and requirements by providing quality higher education can help to bring about the desired economic and social development of the country by producing a quality workforce.

#### **9.1.4 QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

According to Harman (2001), quality assurance is defined in terms of the systematic management and assessment procedures adopted by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in order to monitor performance against set objectives. The main purpose of quality assurance is to promote public confidence that the quality of provision and standard in higher education are being protected and enhanced (Brown, 2000).

However, Ashcroft (2002) argues that higher education in Ethiopia does not yet have the proper quality assurance systems or policies that are able to meet international standards which would assure its stakeholders that the education provided is relevant and appropriate. Both public and private universities in the country have no mechanisms to assure themselves or their stakeholders that their students, teaching, learning and assessment processes and facilities meet institutional, national or international standards. From the data analyses it was shown that HERQA, as a quality assurance agency, needs to put a policy framework in place. It is, therefore, recommended that quality assurance policies be established to best serve HERQA in gaining more autonomy and strength in its function to control and ensure the quality of both the public and private higher education.

There is a clear implication that it is difficult to recognise the quality standard of distance education in Ethiopia as the MoE and HERQA do not have quality assurance policies for distance education, i.e., national mechanisms to assure quality. It further means that IGNOU's pursuit of quality is not governed or directed by tangible policies, but rather that it is based on its international policies regarding quality. However, in the Ethiopian context, IGNOU's policies have been found to be wanting, as exemplified by the poor communication systems; the lack of sufficient student supports services at the regional centres; and a slow turnaround time for assignments. However, there are some positives that can be gleaned from the services that IGNOU provides, namely, facilitation of access to higher education; production of quality course materials; and graduates who have improved chances of promotion and upward mobility in the workplace.

## **9.2 CONCLUSIONS**

There is increasing recognition among scholars regarding the contributions of distance education in providing wider access to higher education for marginalised people. It also improves the quality of the existing education system and maintains equity by democratising higher education. However, the debate around distance education calls for further improvement within this sector. Furthermore, there is almost no research work done on postgraduate level distance education in Ethiopia

but within the limitations of this study, it is possible to draw certain conclusions based on the analysis of the data of the study.

In the preceding chapters, a summary of the findings of the student participants were highlighted and conclusion were reached. The following points need to be taken into consideration by IGNOU for further improvements in its programmes. The student support services which remain centralised need to be decentralised as many postgraduate distance education students come from far regional areas. This was suggested by the student participants as part of the improvement plan for the institution. In addition, they also considered the fact that their final results took an average of two or three months to be returned to them to be a weakness and called for a change and improvement in this activity.

Furthermore, it can be argued in this study that developing distance education in Ethiopia as an alternative mode of delivery in order to reach those who are marginalised and living in rural areas requires greater input by different stakeholders, including the private sector. Therefore, quality higher education, in general, and distance education, in particular, can be achieved through the collaboration of government, universities and the private sector.

To summarise, according to the participants of this study, collectively and individually, there are many factors that hinder the effective development of quality distance education. Some of the problems in developing distance education relate to the institution as well as to stakeholders' perceptions of distance education. Furthermore, the policies of national education in the country impacts on the development of distance education and cannot be ignored; they influence the narrow perception of distance education. A significant number of participants who were interviewed were aware of the importance of policy integration into distance education programmes. Therefore, it was recommended by the majority of the participants that national education policy should, more effectively, include distance education as well as the non-formal education sector. Furthermore, it was suggested that HERQA should have a clear policy framework with more autonomy and authority to be an external quality control agency for conventional and distance higher education.

Finally, as described elsewhere in this study, the concept quality in education is difficult to define. However, according to the working definition of this study, quality in higher education means 'fitness for purpose'. Quality is judged by assessing the extent to which the intended outcomes are achieved. The relevant literature also concluded, for example, that any definition related to quality must take the stakeholders into account (Vroeijenstijn, 2006). Cheng and Tam (1997) further describe quality as a system that is comprised of all the important elements of an educational system that meets the educational needs of the stakeholders. This means that the provision of distance education must meet the purpose of its participants who have a desire to learn to, eventually, satisfy their desired needs. Furthermore, the fact that many working people demand quality distance education needs to be considered in conjunction with fulfilling and developing the necessary infrastructure for student support services and the provision of quality course materials. Moreover, establishing more decentralised student support services can also best lead to the achievement of quality distance education and, thereby, respond to the human resource development needs of the country. This will empower the institution to maintain its integrity and acceptance as a quality distance education provider in the developing world, including Ethiopia. It will also allow the institution to meet its stakeholders' diverse needs by making postgraduate distance education programmes effective and relevant for the production of a quality workforce for the economic development of the country. Above all, the findings of this study were complemented by the results of the three chosen indices of assessment of this study, namely: coherence, efficiency and the impact of quality distance education. The three indicators have been identified as major themes, from which other themes were developed with corresponding sub-themes being further discussed and systematically analysed.

As far as the summary of the indicators is concerned, the first part of the quality indicator of the study, known as 'coherence', was systematically analysed as it relates to the national education policies with regard to distance education development and the private sector, especially to the response of the cross-border distance education providing institution, IGNOU, to the country's national higher education policy. This part of the discussion, as elaborated elsewhere in this study,

included HERQA's and IGNOU's quality enhancement strategies and guidelines. Furthermore, it was found that, IGNOU followed the country's higher education policy guidelines. That is in order to operate in the country in partnership with local private higher institution, SMUC.

Since IGNOU and HERQA are following foreign influenced quality assurance guidelines they share same values which need improvement to adjust to the Ethiopian context. 'Efficiency' is the second quality indicator used to assess the institution's various activities, including the quality of course materials; student support services; and learner's assessment methods. It has been commented on and analysed systematically in Chapter 5. With regard to the third quality indicator, 'impact' is concerned with the assessment function of the various stakeholders: the MoE, HERQA and the main key players of the study, the graduates of MARD as well as prospective students and staff members. In terms of the quality of IGNOU's postgraduate studies all participants were not in agreement. However, they all agreed and acknowledged that IGNOU's provision of access to postgraduate studies had positive aspects.

According to the researcher's view of, and observations at, IGNOU, there is an acknowledgment of the MARD programme in terms of the fulfilment of certain quality elements; this is attested to by upward mobility of, and promotion opportunities for graduates of the programmes. The MoE is also positive about IGNOU's role in increasing access to higher education in Ethiopia. Despite some of the positive elements that were noted about IGNOU, there are some areas for improvement in certain aspects of policy and pedagogy. However, the general provision of alternative access to postgraduate education and the quality indicators or elements observed at IGNOU with regard to certain student support services at the local partner institution level as well as the quality of course materials and assessment methods are all clear evidence of quality enhancement and efforts made by the institution for improvement; they are aspects which, according to the participants, can be regarded as positive, especially the graduates in terms of the promotions they received after completing of their Master's degrees. Besides this, the MoE participants' acceptance of IGNOU's provision of increased access to higher



education seems positive. However, to say that the quality of distance education at this level is at the desired quality standard seems to be unrealistic.

Some participants recommended that there should be improvements in certain aspects of policies and pedagogical issues. However, the general provision of alternative access to postgraduate education and the quality indicators or elements observed at IGNOU with regard to certain student support services at the local level as well as the quality of course materials and assessment methods are all clear evidence of quality enhancement and efforts for improvement made by the institution aspects that can, therefore, be regarded as positive.

To conclude, given the constraints of resources that many governments face in meeting the demand for higher education, distance education is seen as an alternative mode of delivery in providing access to quality higher education. In particular, for developing countries, including Ethiopia, that have learners in remote rural areas, distance education universities such as IGNOU, offer educational opportunities, for rural-based communities and marginalised groups who would, otherwise, not have been able to access higher education.

The overall findings of this study demonstrate that distance education can provide access to higher education in the Ethiopian context. However, it is difficult to determine whether the quality issues are up to the required standard. Rather, there is a need to encourage the institute to fulfil the quality indicators proposed by the participants' indifferent categories of the study for further development. This study should be taken as timely and relevant in the Ethiopian context. It is further recommended that government should make a greater effort to utilise the full potential of distance education and, thereby, meet the various human resource development needs of the country, as suggested by the participants of the study.

### **9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of the data, in general, indicate that distance education is not responsive and effectively incorporated into the national education policy of Ethiopia. The study shows that the major problems are related to policy frameworks and the



lack of adequate experience and willingness from the relevant bodies, while the contribution of the cross-border distance education is vividly obvious. These facts further imply the need for greater effort by the concerned bodies to improve quality and to lay a steady foundation for future distance education development in the country.

Chapter 4 has clearly discussed education policy in Ethiopia and how it addresses issues of access and quality. It has provided an overview of the policy frameworks on quality distance higher education in Ethiopia and their relevance and application to private providers and to distance education. It highlighted the fact that distance education's contribution to providing access to higher education has been overlooked by the national education policy. There is, therefore, a need for policy-makers to be strongly advised to integrate distance education into the national higher education policy of the country in conjunction with conventional higher education. Therefore, on the basis of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

Firstly, it is recommended that national policy on higher education needs to incorporate distance education as an alternative means of access. There was general consensus among the respondents that the Ethiopian government needs to come up with a clear policy on distance education programmes. Therefore, the study recommends that for the further development of distance education a clear policy statement related to this sector is required by policy-makers to integrate distance education into the national higher education policy of the country, in conjunction with conventional higher education.

Secondly, this study has further found a lack of tracer studies at HERQA and IGNOU for feedback of the views of employers of graduates concerning the programme. Based on evidence in Chapter 6 the researcher recommends that further research should to be undertaken to determine the perceptions of the employers concerning the achievement and performance of the graduates. Thus, IGNOU and HERQA should receive feedback from employers of IGNOU graduates in conjunction with their assessment of the performance of the graduates in order to appropriately adjust the curriculum as well as design and produce quality course materials.

Thirdly, although programmes which are organised through IGNOU's headquarters in Delhi, India, are offered in partnership with a local private university college, namely, St Mary's University College (SMUC) which is based in Addis Ababa can be taken as having a positive impact, this study recommends that there should be more coordination and collaboration to guarantee the success of distance education in terms of knowledge and expertise exchange and resources utilizations. IGNOU in Addis Ababa should, therefore, identify more potential partners from public universities and enter into partnership with conventional HEIs, such as Addis Ababa University (AAU).

Fourthly, the study recommends that further study be undertaken regarding the need to make the content of curriculum more relevant to the Ethiopian context and the human resource development needs of the country in the future development of graduates who will be produced by the specific programme. The content of the course material which is dominated by an Indian context should be revised in terms of the Ethiopian context.

Fifthly, as part of IGNOU's organisational commitment which includes the establishment of workable policies, procedures, and infrastructure for continuous improvement to achieve and maintain a high quality of teaching and learning it is recommended that library and student support services should be decentralised and that branches where many distance education students live and work should be established. A sixth recommendation is that distance education institution should employ an adequate number of well-qualified and trained tutors who are willing to travel to different education centres to give the required assistance to the learners.

Finally, the study recommends that the university should utilise ICTs suited for the development of distance education in Ethiopia, both within the institution and in the whole country. IGNOU, in particular, needs to create a vision and proceed rapidly in setting up a proactive policy management and build infrastructure and academic staff capacities. It is further recommended that the quality assurance practices which are foreign-oriented need to be adjusted according to the country's specific human resource development context.

## 9.4 SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The phenomenon of access to quality postgraduate education through distance is a relatively new one in the Ethiopian context. Therefore, there is a need for further research to be conducted in this area. Future research could focus on comparative case studies regarding the provision of quality higher education at conventional and distance educational institutions. This recommendation is based on the fact that case studies in conventional and distance higher education quality issues are important to bring together these sectors in order to address the need for quality higher education that is responsive to human resources development needs of the countries.

Secondly, a number of previous studies, such as the study conducted in 2013 on Capacity Development in Higher Education Public Universities in Ethiopia which focuses on the Ethiopian situation and aims at describing how the Ethiopian higher education system has been able to realize growth and what its future ambitions are, have been conducted in Ethiopia on public higher education and have focused, predominantly, on academic and administrative staff and students and characteristics and challenges of the higher education system, with a minimal involvement of private higher institutions. Therefore, it is recommended that a repeat of this study be done on a larger scale involving a greater number of cross-border institutions in Ethiopia, using the quantitative method. However, in order to obtain both a well-balanced picture and an analytical understanding of the consequences of the private and public higher education quality issues, future tracer research is needed that focuses exclusively on employers perceptions of the graduates from these programmes

It is also recommended that further research be undertaken on how universities in Ethiopia establish cooperation between conventional and distance education to widening their scope to encompass private and public sectors in order to find ways and means to better utilize human and material resources.

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## APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Ethical Certificate
- Appendix 2: The final ethical clearance
- Appendix 3: Access for Research MOE
- Appendix 4: Authorization by IGNOU Addis Ababa
- Appendix 5-A: Requested Letter for Access to MoE
- Appendix B: HERQA Letter for Access
- Appendix C: IGNOU's Letter for Access
- Appendix D: Master's Students at IGNOU
- Appendix D1: Informed Consent MARD Graduate Participant 2
- Appendix E: Document Analysis Guide
- Appendix F: Interview protocol for the MoE
- Appendix G: Interview Protocol for IGNOU
- Appendix H: Interview Protocol for IGNOU Academics  
Interview Schedule for Lecturers or  
Tutors from Selected Postgraduate Programs (IGNOU)
- Appendix I: Interview Protocol for HERQA
- Appendix J: Interview Protocol for Master's Student Participants
- Appendix K: Declaration of originality
- Appendix L: Declaration of language edits and technical formatting
- Appendix M: Ethiopia Political Administration Map & Ethiopia in Africa

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## Appendix 1

### Ethical Certificate



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA  
Faculty of Education

Faculty of Education  
Ethics Committee  
11<sup>th</sup> April 2012

Dear Mr. Woldeyes,

REFERENCE: EM 12/03/02

Your application was carefully considered and the final decision of the Ethics Committee is:

Your application is approved on the following condition:

1. Kindly correct the typing/spelling errors (e.g. p.4 & p.7) and edit language in the letters of informed consent.

This letter serves as notification that you may continue with your research. You do not have to re-submit an application. The above-mentioned issues can be addressed in consultation with your supervisor who will take final responsibility. Please note that this is **not a clearance certificate**. Upon completion of your research you need to submit the following documentation to the Ethics Committee:

1. Integrated Declarations form that you adhered to conditions stipulated in this letter – Form D08

**Please Note:**

- **Any** amendment to this conditionally approved protocol needs to be submitted to the Ethics Committee for review prior to data collection. Non-compliance implies that approval will be null and void.
- Final data collection protocols and supporting evidence (e.g.: questionnaires, interview schedules, observation schedules) have to be submitted to the Ethics Committee before they are used for data collection.
- On receipt of the above-mentioned documents you will be issued a clearance certificate. Please quote the reference number EM 12/03/02 in any communication with the Ethics Committee.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liesel Ebersohn'.

Prof Liesel Ebersohn  
Chair: Ethics Committee  
Faculty of Education

## Appendix 2

### The Final Ethical Clearance



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA  
Faculty of Education

#### RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

**CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**CLEARANCE NUMBER: EM12/03/02**

**DEGREE AND PROJECT** PhD

Title: Access to quality postgraduate education through distance education in Ethiopia

**INVESTIGATOR(S)** Melese Mekasha Woldeyes

**DEPARTMENT:** Educational Management and Policy Studies

**DATE CONSIDERED:** 23 April 2014

**DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE** APPROVED

Please note:

*For Masters Applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years*

*For PhD applications, ethical clearance is valid for 3 years.*

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE**

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Liesel Ebersöhn', written over a horizontal line.

Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

---

DATE

23 April 2014

---

CC: Jeannie Beukes

Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

Prof MT Sehoole

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following condition:

1. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed Consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries

### Appendix 3

### Access for Research MOE

## Research Authorization by The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Education Addis Ababa.



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The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia  
Ministry of Education

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No.  
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አዲስ አበባ  
ADDIS ABABA

Ato Melese Mekasha  
University of Pretoria  
South Africa

We acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated March 5, 2012 which requests the Ministry of Education of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to conduct a research in the Ministry. The Ministry has accepted your request and is ready to facilitate and make arrangements for the research you intend to do. Therefore, the Ministry advises you to appear at any time convenient to you.



Best Regards

**Mitiku Berecha Hunde**  
Head, Foreign Relations & Scholarships  
Office

Cc.

- State Minister's Office (Higher Education)
- Foreign Relations and Scholarships Department

Ministry of Education

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In replying, please quote our Ref. No.

## Appendix 4

### Authorization by IGNOU Addis Ababa

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St. Mary's University College

+251-11-554-6669 ☒1211,Fax +251-11-554 8780, e-mail: smcignou@ethionet.et, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Ref.No. smucignou/948/11

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Date May 06, 2011

University of Pretoria  
Department of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies  
South Africa

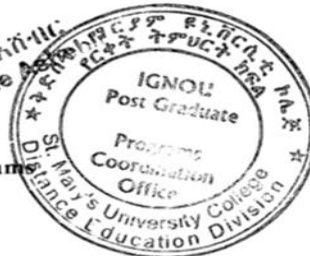
**Mr. Melese Mekasha** , our former student of **Master of Arts in Public Administration (MPA)**, offered in our University College in partnership with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), and a Phd Candidate at your esteemed university, has requested me for a confirmation letter with regard to our willingness to assist him with his dissertation research.

This is therefore to confirm that St. Mary's University College, IGNOU Post Graduate Programs Office is willing to assist him in his research by providing all the necessary and relevant data so long as the data he requires doesn't intrude the confidentiality norms of SMUC.

With Kind Regards

Director,  
IGNOU Post Graduate Programs

አሌሙ ገሳዢ  
Alemu Gashie



## Appendix 5-A

### Requested Letter for Access to MoE

Ministry of Education, FDRE  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Dear Sir/Madam,

#### **RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR AGENCY**

I am a PhD student at the University of Pretoria, Department of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies. I am conducting a research study on the *“Role of Indira Gandhi National Open University in delivering postgraduate level distance education in Ethiopia: A critical Review of the Masters in Rural Development Programme.* “The purpose of the study is, therefore, to explore and analyse the role of distance education offered through an international provider can play in meeting the demands for access to postgraduate studies and thereby responding to the human resource needs of the country.

The findings of the study may help higher education managers, policy makers, researchers, academicians and government to gain a better understanding on strategies to incorporate distance education programmes into university programmes and improve distance education based teaching and learning within universities, as an alternative delivery mode of higher education.

I am writing to humbly request your support for this study to interview some relevant members in your Headquarters. I also need access to relevant policy documents and strategic plans.

The research is conducted under the guidelines of the University of Pretoria's ethical guidelines with regards to issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Your positive consideration and a written feedback of this request will be highly appreciated.

Yours, Sincerely,

MeleseMekashaWoldeyes,

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

PhD student (Education Management and Policy studies)

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

0002

Republic of South Africa

Mobile: 0785995040

Email: [melese\\_mekasha@yahoo.com](mailto:melese_mekasha@yahoo.com)

Prof. Chika M.T. Sehoole

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor

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Department of Education Management and Policy studies)

Tel: + 27 (0) 12 420-2327

Email: [chika.sehoole@up.ac.za](mailto:chika.sehoole@up.ac.za)

## Appendix B

## HERQA Letter for Access

Higher Education Relevance and quality Assurance Agency (HERQAA)  
Addis Ababa  
Ethiopia.

### **RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN YOUR REGIONAL EDUCATION BUREAU**

Dear Sirs/Madam,

I am a PhD student at the University of Pretoria, Department of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies. I am conducting a research study on the *“Access to Quality Postgraduate education through distance education in Ethiopia: the case of Indira Gandhi National Open University”*. The purpose of the study is, therefore, to explore and analyse the role of distance education offered through an international provider can play in meeting the demands for access to postgraduate studies and thereby responding to the human resource needs of the country.

The findings of the study may help higher education managers, policy makers, researchers, academicians and government to gain a better understanding on strategies to incorporate distance education programmes into university curriculum and improve distance education based teaching and learning within universities, as an alternative delivery mode of higher education.

I am writing to humbly request your support for this study to interview some relevant members in your Regional ministry office. I also need access to relevant policy documents and strategic plans. The research is conducted under the guidelines of the University of Pretoria’s ethical guidelines with regards to issues of confidentiality and anonymity.

Your positive consideration and a written feedback of this request will be highly appreciated.



Yours Sincerely,

MeleseMekashaWoldeyes

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

PhD student (Education Management, Law and Policy studies)

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

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Republic of South Africa

Mobile: 0785995040

Email: melese\_mekasha@yahoo.com

Prof. Chika M.T. Sehoole

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Tel:+ 27 (0) 12 420-2327

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## Appendix C

### IGNOU's Letter for Access

St. Mary's University College and Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)  
Postgraduate Distance Education Program division,  
Addis Ababa  
Ethiopia.

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN YOUR GRADUATES DISTANCE  
EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND ASSOCIATED AFFRAS**

I am a PhD student at the University of Pretoria, Department of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies. I am conducting a research study on the *“Role of Indira Gandhi National Open University in delivering postgraduate level distance education in Ethiopia: A critical Review of the Masters in Rural Development Programme.* “The purpose of the study is, therefore, to explore and analyse the role of distance education offered through an international provider can play in meeting the demands for access to postgraduate studies and thereby responding to the human resource needs of the country.

The findings of the study may help higher education managers, policy makers, researchers, academicians and government to gain a better understanding on strategies to incorporate distance education programmes into university programmes and improve distance education based teaching and learning within universities, as an alternative delivery mode of higher education.

I am writing to humbly request your support for this study to have questionnaires to your postgraduate students and interview some relevant members in your division and associated higher decision making members. I also need access to relevant policy documents and strategic plans, student profiles. The research is conducted under the guidelines of the University of Pretoria's ethical guidelines with regards to

issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Your positive consideration and a written feedback confirmation letters of this request will be highly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

MeleseMekashaWoldeyes

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

PhD student (Education Management, Law and Policy studies)

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

0002

Republic of South Africa

Mobile: 0785995040

Email: melese\_mekasha@yahoo.com

Prof. Chika M.T. Sehoole

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor

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## Appendix D

### Master's Students at IGNOU

#### INFORMED CONSENT STUDENTPARTICIPANT ONE

##### INTRODUCTION

I am a PhD student at the University of Pretoria, Department of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies. I am conducting a research study on the *“Role of Indira Gandhi National Open University in delivering postgraduate level distance education in Ethiopia: A critical Review of the Masters in Rural Development Programme.”*The purpose of the study is, therefore, to explore and analyse the role of distance education offered through an international provider can play in meeting the demands for access to postgraduate studies and thereby responding to the human resource needs of the country.

I am grateful to invite you to participate in this study as you may be able to assist with your understanding and experience on postgraduate distance education. This letter serves to provide you with information about the study and what is required should you agree to participate so that you can make an informed decision on whether or not you wish to contribute to the study. I humbly ask you to read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

#### RESEARCH PROCEDURE

##### THE STUDY

**1. Title:** *The role of Indira Gandhi National Open University in delivering postgraduate level distance education in Ethiopia: A critical Review of the Masters in Rural Development Programme.*

**2. Purpose of the study:** The aim of the study is to explore and analyse the role of distance education offered through an international provider can play a role in meeting the demands for access to postgraduate studies and thereby responding to the human resource needs of the country.

**3. Procedures:** The information will be explored using a questionnaire to be filled in, which should take no longer than one hour to complete. You are allowed to voluntarily withdraw from participation at any time and you don't have to explain something that you think you do not like or feel to talk about. All the information is confidential and your name will not be mentioned in the document or to any other participant. With your permission, I would like you to fill in questionnaire and note down every suggestion you feel appropriate for this study.

**4. Risks and discomfort:** There may be some discomfort associated with your perception of distance education as a stakeholder. The context and purpose of my study have been clarified.

**5. Benefits:** The findings of the study may help higher education managers, policy makers, researchers, academics and government to gain a better understanding on the importance of distance education programme into university curriculum, and then improve higher distance education programmes and do further research. The study may also point out some opportunities how to strengthen and build a better postgraduate level distance education programmes. Knowledge generated by the study may again highlight new and relevant opportunities of distance education ideas in various disciplines in which its utilization may contribute in improving our human resources development needs.

## CONSENT FORM

I (Name) -----, (Addis Ababa) declare to participate in the study mentioned above. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from participating in the study, if I am uncomfortable during questionnaire fill in process.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
---	-----------------------------

I understand that the information will be kept confidential as it will not be released without my authority.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
---	-----------------------------

I understand that there are no risks associated with this study.

✓ YES	NO
-------	----

Respondent's name Seboka Hordofa.....Date.....

Postgraduate MARD student/Department/Section/Unit

MeleseMekashaWoldeyes, Signature \_\_\_\_\_

PhD student (Education Management and Policy studies)

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

0002

Republic of South Africa

Mobile: 0785995040

Email:melese\_mekasha@yahoo.com

Prof. Chika M.T. Sehoole, Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

0002

Republic of South Africa

Department of (Education Management and Policy studies)

Tel: + 27 (0) 12 420-2327

Email: chika.sehoole@up.ac.za

## Appendix D1

### Informed Consent MARD Graduate Participant 2

#### INTRODUCTION

I am a PhD student at the University of Pretoria, Department of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies. I am conducting a research study on the *“Role of Indira Gandhi National Open University in delivering postgraduate level distance education in Ethiopia: A critical Review of the Masters in Rural Development Programme.”* The purpose of the study is, therefore, to explore and analyse the role of distance education offered through an international provider can play in meeting the demands for access to postgraduate studies and thereby responding to the human resource needs of the country.

I am grateful to invite you to participate in this study as you may be able to assist with your understanding and experience on postgraduate distance education. This letter serves to provide you with information about the study and what is required should you agree to participate so that you can make an informed decision on whether or not you wish to contribute to the study. I humbly ask you to read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

#### RESEARCH PROCEDURE

##### THE STUDY

**1. Title:** *The role of Indira Gandhi National Open University in delivering postgraduate level distance education in Ethiopia: A critical Review of the Masters in Rural Development Programme.*

**2. Purpose of the study:** The aim of the study is to explore and analyse the role of distance education offered through an international provider can play a role in meeting the demands for access to postgraduate studies and thereby responding to the human resource needs of the country.

**3. Procedures:** The information will be explored using questionnaire to be filled in, which should take no longer than one hour to complete. You are allowed to voluntarily withdraw from participation at any time and you may not explain something that you think you do not like or feel to talk about. All the information is confidential and your name will not be mentioned in the document or to any other participant. With your permission, I would like you to fill in questionnaire and note down every suggestion you feel appropriate for this study.

**4. Risks and discomfort:** There may be some discomfort associated with your perception of distance education as a stakeholder. The context and purpose of my study have been clarified.

**5. Benefits:** The findings of the study may help higher education managers, policy makers, researchers, academics and government to gain a better understanding on the importance of distance education programmes into university curriculum, and then improve higher distance education programmes and do further research. The study may also point out some opportunities how to strengthen and build a better postgraduate level distance education programs. Knowledge generated by the study may again highlight new and relevant opportunities of distance education ideas in various disciplines in which its utilization may contribute in improving our human resources development needs.

**CONSENT FORM**

I (Name) -----, (Addis Ababa) declare to participate in the study mentioned above. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from participating in the study, if I am uncomfortable during questionnaire fill in process.

✓ YES	NO
-------	----

I understand that the information will be kept confidential as it will not be released without my authority.

✓ YES	NO
-------	----



I understand that there are no risks associated with this study.

✓ YES	NO
-------	----

Respondent's name Seboka Hordofa.....Date.....

Postgraduate MARD student/Department/Section/Unit

MeleseMekashaWoldeyes, Signature \_\_\_\_\_

PhD student (Education Management and Policy studies)

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

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Prof. Chika M.T. Sehoole, Signature \_\_\_\_\_.

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## **Data collection protocols (instruments)**

### **Data collection instruments for different categories of respondents.**

## Appendix E

### Document Analysis Guide

*Documentary evidence is important in this study because they will enable me to explore the quality assurance issues and strategic plans, efforts, approaches, and role that various stakeholders play in providing quality distance education within the selected university. It will also be possible to understand the possible challenges related to policy framework quality and of the implementation of the programmes relevant to international postgraduate level distance education programmes. Various opportunities may also be explored in various publications from Addis Ababa Regional MoE offices and National MoE offices; The following documents will be explored to obtain relevant information;*

- Prospectuses
- National education policy documents
- Higher education Proclamation documents
- HERQA's policy documents
- Publications/Manuals
- Papers
- Reports/Student records and documents
- Procedures
- Advertisements papers and procedures

The following criteria will be followed in summarising the documents;

- Writer of the document
- Role of the writer
- Time/Year in which it was written
- The audience for whom the document was written
- Main objectives of the document in terms of quality assurance
- Evidence in the document help know why it was written
- The central arguments of the document
- Relationship of the document with distance education programmes,
- Mainly postgraduate level Universities, setups
- Emerging themes in relation to the document
- Why this document was mainly written for the purpose of the policy identification

## Appendix F

### Interview protocol for the MoE

#### Interview schedule for higher ministry of education officials

*The purpose of this interview schedule is to explore information about the perspectives of the national policies and strategies with regard to quality distance education and the quality assurance in higher educational institutions and to explore their experiences with distance teaching university education. The interview will also elicit the role that they can play and the available opportunities that universities may utilize from them. The information will be inquired from relevant ministry officials and institution leaders.*

*Ministry/agency:*

*Name of the agency or office:*

*Working experience in the ministry/agency:*

*Position: / Status-----*

*Department/Section/Centre/Unit:*

#### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (1):**

##### **Coherence:**

1. Does the Ministry of Education have policy on quality assurance in higher education? If yes, how does it implemented in the provision of distance education? Are there procedures on how to implement quality assurance strategies on the ground for effective provision of postgraduate distance education programmes?
2. What is your understanding of quality assurance policy of postgraduate level distance education programmes in Ethiopia?
3. What monitoring procedures are in place to ensure quality higher distance education in terms of how the policy is :

- (a) Implemented
- (b) Evaluated
- (c) Amended as and when necessary? Please, explain further

4. To what extent are the quality enhancement and assurance policies of IGNOU linked with quality of higher education policies of the country?

**Efficiency:**

5. How do you ensure that the communication lines between IGNOU, as a cross-border distance education provider and MoE, adhere to the country's higher education policy?
6. In your opinion, what is the quality of teaching and learning process of the international distance education providers, including IGNOU in Ethiopia?
7. What mechanisms are there in the ministry to ensure quality of higher education delivery in the context of growing student number in the country?
8. What is your comment on the feedback system of IGNOU's programmes in relation to the MoE quality assurance policy of the country?

**Impact:**

9. What changes have been encountered by the international distance education providers in terms of postgraduate studies expansion?
10. What is your evaluation of MARD IGNOU's postgraduate level distance education students' achievements in relation to the MoE quality higher education policy implementation?
11. How do you evaluate the acceptance of IGNOU's MARD programme graduates by different stakeholders, including your Ministry of Education?
12. What is your general perception towards learning and teaching quality of IGNOU's postgraduate level distance education programmes?

## Appendix G

### Interview Protocol for IGNOU

#### Interview Schedule for University Top Management

*The aim of this schedule is to understand the university policy context with reference to quality higher distance education and to elicit their experiences, and perceptions towards providing postgraduate quality distance education programmes at the university. The interview also aims to explore the challenges and opportunities that the university has in promoting quality postgraduate distance education*

*Name of the official:*

*Position:*

*Background disciplines in ascending order:*

*Experience in teaching:*

*Experience in the position:*

*What are your roles in the university?*

*Other positions in organizations/governing bodies:*

*Experience in other positions:*

*What are your roles in other positions?*

#### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

##### **Coherence:**

1. What is IGNOU's vision on quality education? Kindly explain the process in place for ensuring this in postgraduate level distance education in Ethiopia.
2. Does IGNOU have the quality assurance policy on distance education? Please, explain how it is implemented in this institution.
3. What policies and practices are in place to ensure that IGNOU provides quality student support services for postgraduate learners?

4. Are learners, lecturers and administrators aware of IGNOU's policy on Quality Assurance and how is each made aware of this? In what ways are staff and learners involved in Quality review?

**Efficiency:**

5. How efficient are the channels of communication between students/staff and administration in IGNOU's postgraduate distance programmes?
6. What are the learners' assessment methods in this postgraduate programme? And how it implemented?
7. What is the policy of IGNOU's MARD programme on assignments for postgraduate distance education? Are assignments in the learning materials often reviewed for distance education mode of delivery?
8. What measures are there to ensure the quality of course materials in postgraduate distance education MARD programme?

**Impact:**

9. What is the acceptance of IGNOU's MARD programme graduates by different stakeholders?
10. What technology is available to learners enrolled for this programme? What is the yardstick for determining this and who do you ensure to the learners?
11. What is your evaluation of the student satisfaction in the MARD postgraduate study?
12. What role do you play as international distance education provider in meeting the quality educational needs of the country in terms of providing access to quality higher education?

## Appendix H

### Interview Protocol for IGNOU Academics

#### Interview schedule for programme coordinator, deans/college principals/ heads of relevant programmes – IGNOU

*The purpose of this schedule is to evoke the experience and perceptions of the programme Dean, coordinator and Principals towards quality distance education in the selected university. The schedule also aims to understand the status of distance education from different units, directorates and programme coordinators as well as IGNOU's vision of quality, opportunities and challenges that they have in providing quality distance education in Ethiopia.*

*Name of the program coordinator Dean/Principal:*

*Name of the University:*

*How old is the university?*

*Position:*

*Gender:*

*Age:*

*Experience in the position:*

*Experience in teaching:*

*Background discipline in ascending order:*

*What are your roles in the school/college?*

*Other positions/posts outside the university:*

*Experience in outside posts:*

#### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (3):**

##### **Coherence:**

1. How long have you been working at this University?
2. How did you become a leader? Did you apply for the position? Were you appointed or elected?

3. Are you informed about the national policies related to quality higher education in general and distance education in particular?
4. What is the quality assurance policy of IGNOU's postgraduates level distance programme?
5. What kind communication lines exist at this university between staff, students, and management bodies?

**Efficiency:**

6. How efficient are the channels of communication between students/staff and administration in IGNOU's postgraduate distance education?
7. To what extent does the MARD programme assessment and course materials relate to the quality of the IGNOU's vision?
8. What student support services are in place and what information is available to learners on these?
9. What instructional technology do you use for the MARD programme? How is this integrated into the course design?

**Impact:**

10. What are the learners' assessment methods at this postgraduate programme and how is it implemented?
11. What student support services provided at IGNOU? What is your sense of the impact of these services?
12. How do you evaluate the satisfaction of student's achievement, particularly in the MARD program?
13. What is your sense of the acceptance of MARD graduates by different stakeholders?



## Interview Schedule for Lecturers or Tutors from Selected Postgraduate Programs (IGNOU)

*The aim of this schedule is to provoke and understand the perceptions of instructors/tutors about the quality of their teaching in the specific selected department. The interview also aims to explore how teaching learning of distance education is carried out in the MARD department. This will include the way they perceive the importance of quality of distance education in Masters of the rural development programme, objectives and activities in IGNOU.*

*Name of the instructor/optional:*

*Name of the department:*

*Position:*

*Background discipline in ascending order:*

*Experience in teaching:*

*Engagement in Distance education tutorial activities:*

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (4):**

#### **Coherence:**

1. How were you selected to become a lecturer or a tutor?
2. What pre-training programme did you undergo before starting the job? Is there further training for you?
3. How do you see your role? Is your work limited only to the academic life of the learners? Please explain.
4. What instructional technology do you use for this programme (MARD), and how is this integrated into the course materials designed?
5. What is your understanding of quality assurance policy of IGNOU in distance education and how will you assess the quality of this programme?

**Efficiency:**

6. How efficient are the channels of communication between students/staff and administration in IGNOU's postgraduate distance education?
7. What are the teaching approaches do you bring to ensure in Masters of Arts in rural development programme?
8. What is your sense of the role of IGNOU in providing quality student support services for higher education needs of the country?

**Impact:**

9. What do you think is the best approach to quality postgraduate distance education with reference to Masters in rural development programme?
10. How do you see your role? Is your work limited only to the academic life of the learners? Please explain.
11. Is there any form of feedback? How does this reflect in the learning materials or on the learners' assessment of performances?
12. How is the acceptance of IGNOU's MARD programme graduates by different stakeholders?

## Appendix I

### Interview Protocol for HERQA

#### Interview Schedule for Quality Assurance Officers Selected for Interview in Relation to Access to Quality Postgraduate Level Distance Education

*The aim of this schedule is to provoke and understand the perceptions of quality assurance leaders. The interview also aims to explore how teaching learning quality of distance education in IGNOU postgraduate programmes, especially carried out in MARD department. This will include the way they perceive the importance of distance education and its quality in Masters of Arts in rural development programme at IGNOU.*

*Name of the Agency leader/Dean/Principal/director*

*Name of the institution:*

*How old is the unit?*

*Position:*

*Gender:*

*Age:*

*Experience in the position:*

*Experience in teaching:*

*Background discipline in ascending order:*

*What are your roles in the school/college?*

*Other positions/posts outside the university:*

*Experience in outside posts:*

#### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (5):**

##### **Coherence:**

1. How long have you been working at this Agency?
2. How long have you been working in this position? As an Administrator/ Manager or director of this programme.

3. What is the quality assurance policy of postgraduate level distance education programmes in Ethiopia?
4. How do you explain the national higher education policy related to quality distance education?
5. How do you evaluate IGNOU's MARD programme in terms of its teaching and learning quality in general?
6. What is your general evaluation of IGNOU as cross-border distance education provider in meeting the quality assurance requirements of HERQA in the country?

**Efficiency:**

7. How do you evaluate the communication lines between IGNOU as a cross-border distance education provider and MoE in adhering the country's quality higher education policy?
8. To what extent does IGNOU's Masters in rural development programme provides access to quality education, in terms of its specific quality aspects:
  - On the course materials,
  - On the student support services?
9. How do you evaluate the assessment methods of Master of Arts in rural development programme and student support services quality?

**Impact:**

10. What is your general perception towards quality of Masters in rural development programme offered by IGNOU?
11. How do you evaluate the teaching approaches in Masters of Arts in rural development programme in terms of meeting the criteria for quality assurance policy of distance education?
12. To what extent you are assessing or evaluating the relevance of the course materials and subjects offered in IGNOU's Masters in Rural development programme accordingly?

## Appendix J

### Interview Protocol for Master's Student Participants

#### Interview Schedule for Students/Graduates to Investigate their Understanding and Perceptions Regarding the Quality of IGNOU Postgraduate Studies

##### Cohesio

1. What was your main reason for commencing your studies with the Indri Gandhi National Open University in Addis Ababa?
2. Are you aware of IGNOU's distance education quality assurance policy? Please explain.
3. How do you evaluate the quality of teaching and learning process of IGNOU's MARD programme?
4. How often are you expected to be assessed – in the tutorial assignments/exams /projects sessions?

##### Efficiency:

5. How efficient are the channels of communication between students/staff and administration in IGNOU's MARD postgraduate distance education?
6. As a postgraduate student, have you ever completed a learning style assessment questionnaire?
7. How do you evaluate the quality of the assessment methods of IGNOU's postgraduate students?

## Impact

8. Are you satisfied with the student support service provided by IGNOU for academic and administrative purpose? Please explain.
9. What is your opinion on the status of IGNOU's student achievements in Masters of Arts in rural development programme?
10. What is your evaluation on the quality of course materials and the distribution of the readers and study guides?
11. Do you have the opportunity of evaluating your learning in terms of your specific capacity building?
12. What is your opinion on the status of IGNOU's students' enrolment in Masters of Arts in rural development programme?

## Appendix K

### Declaration of Originality



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

#### UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This document must be signed and submitted with every essay, report, project, assignment, dissertation and/or thesis.

Full names *of* student: **Melese Mekasha Woldeyes**

Student number: **11048141**

#### Declaration

1. I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the University's policy in this regard.
2. I declare that this Dissertation (e.g... essay, report, project, assignment, dissertation, thesis, Etc...) Is my own original work. Where other people's work's has been used (either from a printed source, Internet or any other source, this has been properly acknowledged and referenced *in* accordance with departmental requirements.
3. I have not used work previously produced by another student or any other parson to hand in as my *own*.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the Intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT:.....

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR:.....

## Appendix L

### Declaration of Language Editing and Technical Formatting

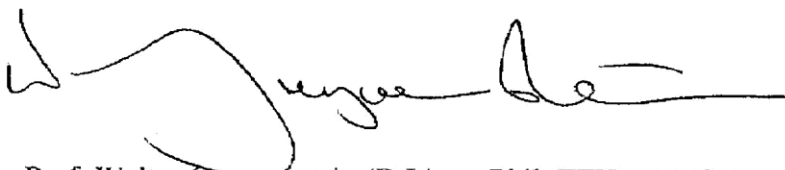
#### DECLARATION OF FURTHER LANGUAGE EDITING

08 August 2014

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I have completed further language editing of the thesis, **Access to Quality Postgraduate Education through Distance Education in Ethiopia**, by Melese Mekasha Woldeyes, particularly Chapters 2, 3 and 4, and I have proof-read the complete work again which is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR (PhD) in Education Management, Law and Policy Studies in the Department of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies at Pretoria University.

The language editing process included the checking of spelling, punctuation, syntax and expression. An attempt was made to simplify complex sentences and, where necessary, combine short sentences to clarify meaning. Attention was given to the use of various language elements, particularly prepositions, consistency in language usage and formatting as well as tenses and capital letters.



Prof. Walter Greyvenstein (D Litt et Phil; TTHD; LTCL)

44 Second Street  
Linden  
Johannesburg  
2195

Tel, No.: 011 782 6174  
E-mail: [wgreyven@lantic.net](mailto:wgreyven@lantic.net)



## DECLARATION OF TECHNICAL EDITING

11 August 2014

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I have edited the complete thesis titled: ***Access to Quality Postgraduate Education through Distance Education in Ethiopia*** by **Melese Mekasha Woldeyes** from the Department of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria.

The technical editing process included the formatting of the document – checking and correcting front pages, paragraph numbering and Tables / Figures, creating a Table of Content, List of Reference and Appendices etc.

Mrs Adrie van Dyk  
082 518 7093  
[A3.vandyk@gmail.com](mailto:A3.vandyk@gmail.com)

## Appendix M

### Ethiopia Political Administration Map & Ethiopia in Africa

