

Problems and Prospects of Distance Education

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Abstract

Education, a life-long process, does not stop at any age. The conventional system of education was proved to accommodate the growing needs of the Indian Society. Hence the system of distance education has emerged as an alternate to the conventional system of education. It caters to the need of those who cannot pursue formal college education and wish to improve their knowledge and skills in humanities, social sciences, physical and natural sciences and professional/technical disciplines in Post-Graduate and Under-Graduate, Diploma and certificate courses.

INTRODUCTION

Education, a life-long process, does not stop at any age. The conventional system of education was proved to accommodate the growing needs of the Indian Society. Hence the system of distance education has emerged as an alternate to the conventional system of education. It caters to the need of those who cannot pursue formal college education and wish to improve their knowledge and skills in humanities, social sciences, physical and natural sciences and professional/technical disciplines in Post-Graduate and Under-Graduate, Diploma and certificate courses. Indira Gandhi National Open University, 13 State Open Universities including Dr.B.R.Ambedkhar Open University, A.P. and 126 Distance Education Centres have established 8,130 study/regional centres to offer distance education programmes and provide access to nearly 19 lakh students.

Statement of the problem

The income and expenditure of DEC's have been registering a significant growth. The primary source of their income is fees charged to students. The basic expenditure comprises establishment charges, cost of infrastructure, development of courses and course material, student support services, staff development and training. These institutions contribute their surplus revenues to Universities since they are treated as profit centres. An in-depth analysis of the sources and uses of funds of DEC's facilitates the researcher to understand the policy directions and implications.

The mean enrolment of total students is highest at 75866 in SDE of AU, followed by 40773 in CDE of OU. The high enrolment in SDE of AU was due to reason that more job opportunities on the one hand and the Andhra is considered to be economically rich region on the other. The advantage of CDE of OU is location in the state capital and increased job potential due to number of industries, organizations, Universities, and institutions of state and national level. But owing to establishment of DEC's of other Universities in Hyderabad, the enrolment has been gradually decreasing. The incomes generated through these sources are administered by the respective University. The expenditure is met from the generated income only after prior approval from the University administration. In other words, the Director obtains permission from the University to incur the expenditure out of income generated. The

expenditure incurred towards above items is debited from block grant, capital section and development grant in all DECs. Open University accounts in the case of DDE of SVU are debited. If there is no sufficient money to meet any untoward expenditure, the expenditure can be met from development accounts. The reimbursement is made whenever grants are released under that particular account. Good governance is of paramount importance in the times of for reaching changes. In this context, the basic good governance models like good PCP, prompt and efficient administrative services, dedicated and knowledgeable faculty, effective feedback system and the like shall be given due weightage to promote the good governance for students in distance education system.

Need for the study

There is a rapid growth in student enrolment in higher education and Open and Distance Learning system provides access to 25 per cent of the total population. Hitherto no empirically evaluative study on DECs of conventional universities has been undertaken.

Objective

The objectives of the study are

1. to examine the financial administration in the DECs of select universities
2. to evaluate the income and expenditure pattern of DECs and their contribution to the finances of universities

Sample design

The DECs of three conventional universities in AP, i.e., Andhra University, Sri Venkateswara University and Osmania University are purposely selected each one from Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telengana regions of the state. The study uses secondary data collected from annual budgets, administrative and audit reports, Journals, periodicals and magazines on finance and higher education. The study is restricted to issues concerning problems and prospects of sources, utilization of funds, income, unit cost of education, expenditure on DECs and contribution to their parent universities are primarily taken up.

Year-Wise Expenditure of DECs of Select Universities (Rs. in lakhs)

Year	AU	SVU	OU	Total
1999-2k	536.73	66.13	82.14	685.00
2000-01	1251.15	73.41	102.55	1427.11
2001-02	1500.35	83.16	122.51	1706.02
2002-03	1213.31	104.48	155.72	1473.51
2003-04	2016.09	96.67	172.55	2285.31
2004-05	1366.49	105.13	122.55	1594.17
2005-06	1950.67	116.52	134.07	2201.26
2006-07	1244.34	148.92	185.42	1578.68
2007-08	2492.23	341.60	161.35	2995.18
2008-09	2491.76	490.96	192.24	3174.96
Mean	1606.31	162.70	143.11	
CV	38.71	86.14	25.36	

CGR	12.03 ^{NS}	21.50*	7.61*	
t-cal	3.30	5.72	3.95	

Source: Budget books of DEC's of select Universities

- Notes: (i) * Indicates significant at five per cent level
(ii) NS: Not significant

Mean annual average aggregate expenditure is Rs.1606.31 lakhs at constant prices C.V. values for annual aggregate expenditure are 38.71 at constant prices. These high magnitudes of C.V. reveal that there are wide annual variations in the aggregate expenditure of SDE of AU. C.G.R of aggregate annual expenditure is 12.03 per cent at constant prices which is not significant. Data relating to aggregate expenditure of DDE of SVU is presented with constant prices for 10 year period. The constant price yearly change was highest at 129.38 per cent in 2007-08 and lowest at -7.48 in 2003-04 in respect of changes in aggregate expenditure. At current prices, the annual percentage change was 141.81 per cent in 2007-08 and lowest 4.81 per cent 2003-04. Yearly mean value of aggregate expenditure was Rs.162.70 lakhs. The annual Mean expenditure for the ten years reference period worked out to be 143.11 lakhs. The CV value of 25.36 per cent indicates that there is considerable variation in year to year aggregate expenditure. During this period, the aggregate expenditure's CGR registered at 7.61 per cent which is statistically significant at five per cent level.

Category-wise Expenditure

Table 3.1 preside statistical information pertaining to Category-wise Expenditure. It is evident that, In SDE of AU, mean annual expenditures are Rs.1177.45 lakhs, Rs.67.11 lakhs and Rs.361.73 lakhs under general charges, development fund and 'others' respectively. Annual mean general charges are Rs. 17.5 lakhs are higher than development fund and others respectively.C.V. value is highest at 91.80 for development fund followed by 46.28 per cent for general charges and 34.76 per cent for others. CGR. is highest at 12.62 per cent for general charges followed by 12.34 for 'others' and 5.80 per cent for development fund. CGRs is found significant for others, whereas C.G.R. is not significant for general charges and development fund at five per cent level.

Table. 3.1
Category-wise Expenditure of select Universities

Name of the University	Statistical tools	General Charges	Development fund	Others
AU	Mean	1177.45	67.11	361.73
	CV (%)	46.28	91.80	34.76
	C.G.R (%)	12.62 ^{NS}	5.80 ^{NS}	12.34*
	t-cal	2.73	0.57	7.94
SVU	Mean	17.75	0.49	2.36
	C.V (%)	35.44	24.37	70.20
	CGR (%)	9.30*	0.16 ^{NS}	4.35 ^{NS}
	t-cal	4.56	0.04	0.41
OU	Mean	74.48	39.10	25.16
	C.V (%)	60.47	58.94	35.88
	CGR (%)	2.51 ^{NS}	16.84 ^{NS}	1.56 ^{NS}

	t-cal	0.40	3.15	0.28
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Source: Records of DEC's of select Universities.

Notes: (i) * Indicates significant at five per cent level

(ii) NS: Not significant

In DDE of SVU, annual mean expenditure registered at Rs.17.75 lakhs, Rs.0.49 lakhs and Rs.2.36 lakhs on remuneration staff, advertising and others respectively. Based on CV values, the variation in yearly expenditure is highest at 70.20 per cent in 'others' followed by 35.44 per cent on remuneration to staff, 24.37 per cent on advertising. Remuneration to staff registered CGR of 9.3 per cent which is statistically significant at five per cent level followed by CGR of 4.35 per cent with the regard to other expenditure, of 0.16 per cent with regard to advertising

In DDE of OU, annul mean expenditure is highest at Rs.74.48 lakhs, on general charges followed by Rs.39.10 lakhs on development fund, Rs.29.16 lakhs on other items. Year to year variations in items of expenditure are wide as CV values are 60.47, 58.94 and 35.88 per cent for general charges, development fund and other expenditure respectively. CGRs of general charges, development fund and other expenditure are 2.51, 6.84 and 1.56 per cent respectively. All of these are statistically non-significant at five per cent level.

Conclusion

The mean enrolment of total students is highest at 75866 in SDE of AU, followed by 40773 in CDE of OU. The high enrolment in SDE of AU was due to reason that more job opportunities on the one hand and the Andhra is considered to be economically rich region on the other. The advantage of CDE of OU is location in the state capital and increased job potential due to number of industries, organizations, Universities, and institutions of state and national level. But owing to establishment of DEC's of other Universities in Hyderabad, the enrolment has been gradually decreasing.

The mean is only 10317 in DDE of SVU. The enrolment in DDE of SVU has been gradually increasing due to establishment of its study centers all over AP and now overall awareness on the importance of education. There is rapid growth in the enrolment of students in DDE of SVU when compared to other DEC's of AU and OU. But the variation in percentage is highest at 72.34 in SVU, 9.97 in AU and 7.79 in OU. In other words, variations in enrolment are more pronounced in DDE of SVU. The fluctuations in SDE of AU and CDE of OU are more or less similar.

The incomes generated through these sources are administered by the respective University. The expenditure is met from the generated income only after prior approval from the University administration. In other words, the Director obtains permission from the University to incur the expenditure out of income generated.

In five out of 10 years, yearly income was higher than the Mean income in SDE of AU. The growth rate of income is significant at medium level. On the whole, the consolidated income depicts a rise and fall trend. The consolidated income did not report a gradual increase. The receipts from various courses contributed more relatively when compared to rest of the categories of income. It may be noted from the CV values yearly variations are moderate in receipts from University and various courses while wide and wild in examination fee and 'others'. The growth in incomes of different categories depict mixed trend.

In DDE of SVU the average consolidated income neither high nor low. In other words, it reports at moderate level. The variations in consolidated income from year to year are more pronounced. Further, the growth in consolidated income is at satisfactory level.

The average income from Open University mode is moderate while that of distance mode is high. Yearly variations in income from both the modes are greater. Growth in income is also considerable and significant in both the modes of income. The average income from P.G courses and diploma courses is high when compared to graduate courses wherein a moderate. The yearly variations in income are not too wild in graduate courses and diploma courses. Yearly variations in income are wild in the case of P.G courses.

In CDE of OU, the mean value of consolidated income is registered at high magnitude. Yearly variations in consolidated income are wild and wide but the growth rate in income is moderate.

The average income from examination and 'others' is moderate. While average income from University is low, it reported high in the case of income from courses. The yearly variations in income are more pronounced in the case of courses and examinations while moderate trend is noticed in the case of income from University and 'others'. The growth rate in income is not even in all these categories.

The quality assurance mechanisms and procedures shall be designed by DEC's so as to provide high graded distance education to the needy people as a paradigm shift in higher education has witnessed particularly 'teacher centre' to 'learner centre' education. To this end, the adequate infrastructure shall be provided in DEC's and study centres to assure the quality distance education.

The enrolment of students for all the courses shall be increased in DDE of SVU through offering special concessions to the students since the University is located in a backward region.

The income from PCP classes shall be improved by increasing the frequency of conducting these classes with enhanced the fees structure.

The income from diploma courses shall be improved by introducing job oriented and innovative programmes to suit to the present day requirement.

Geography course through distance mode shall be introduced since no DEC is offering this course in Andhra Pradesh. Moreover, civil service aspirants choose geography as one of their optionals. The more revenue can be generated by introducing demand based courses.

The variations in expenditure of various levels, courses and items shall be reduced by the sample DEC's. Disorderly growth in various items of expenditures in select DEC's shall be controlled through scientific methods.

Expenditure on general charges shall be condensed in the case of SDE of AU and CDE of OU while remuneration to staff shall be reduced by downsizing the excess staff in DDE of SVU.

Good governance is of paramount importance in the times of for reaching changes. In this context, the basic good governance models like good PCP, prompt and efficient administrative services, dedicated and knowledgeable faculty, effective feedback system and the like shall be given due weightage to promote the good governance for students in distance education system.

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