



Transnational Collaboration for a German Language Teaching through the Distance Learning System (DLS) in India

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ABSTRACT :

Teaching a Language through a Distance Teaching Institution (DTI) is one of the modes to reach out to the clientele. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in collaboration with the Goethe Institut (German Embassy) in Chennai offers the Certificate Programme in German Language (CGL) to reach out to the aspirants of learning German through the Distance Teaching/Learning mode. This collaboration paved the way for those aspirants - who were denied, for one reason or another, access to face-to-face learning - to pursue learning German amidst other commitments. The present paper describes the profile of the first batch of learners of the CGL Programme (in terms of Age group, Spread of the learners, Urban and Semi-urban divide, Learner access to ICT Facilities for support, Payment of Fees, Qualification etc of the Learners) and draw implications there from the Profile of the first batch of Learners for the providers Collaborators vis-a-vis for Goethe Institut and for the diversified delivery mode of IGNOU.

1. INTRODUCTION :

Language is essential for communication. Proficiency in a language other than the mother tongue of a person is essential in the ever shrinking world, literally turning into a "Global village". In addition, as Graddol (2006) opines the world language system is being transformed, as the relationship between 'big' languages change and many smaller languages are disappearing.

In a world where a language is not earmarked for the native-speakers alone, mastery of a local language (that too with the accent as that of a native-speaker) enables an individual to get across the global thoughts with relevance to the local populace through the means easily understandable. In addition, speaking in the language of the local populace facilitates a sense of belonging and easily

accustom the alien to the local populace.

The importance of knowing a foreign language other than the mother tongue of an individual adds to the credibility of using such individual for translation purposes, location in other territory than the motherland for employment purposes.

2. GERMAN AS A LANGUAGE IN THE WORLD:

The status of German as a Language has been given in

<http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~tphillip/important-german.html>. According to this resource, the German language is

- ❖ one of the very most important languages for communication in Europe. Around 100 million people use German as their native language. German is spoken not

only in Germany but also in Austria, in large parts of Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg as well as areas of Northern Italy, Eastern Belgium and Eastern France. There are native speakers of German throughout Eastern Europe all the way into the Ukraine.

- ❖ alongside Russian, the most frequently spoken native language in Europe
- ❖ one of the ten most frequently spoken languages in the World.
- ❖ one of the primary literary languages of the world. 18% of books published world-wide are in German. Over 60,000 new books are published in Germany each year. The German language boasts the third largest number of published books in the world.
- ❖ second only to English in the field of scientific publications. 40% of scientists in the USA recommend that their students learn German. In Poland and Hungary the figure is over 70%
- ❖ the second most widely used language on the Internet.
- ❖ the language of some of the most influential people in history such as Goethe, Nietzsche, Kafka, Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Freud and Einstein
- ❖ gaining a high place because of the economic position of Germany. Germany is the most important trade partner for almost all European and many non-European countries and is the third largest industrial nation in the world. It is the second largest export nation in the world after the US and the third leading trade partner with the US after Canada

and Mexico.

3. INDO-GERMAN RELATIONSHIP:

The Two nations-Republic of India and the Federal Republic of Germany have good bilateral relations between each other. The strong commercial, cultural and strategic cooperation of a long history has strengthened the bilateral relations between these two nations.

India and Germany have enjoyed long-standing historic and cultural ties. Following World War II, India was the first country to end the state of war with Germany. India was also among the first to grant diplomatic recognition to the Federal Republic of Germany. India and Germany have been important partners on the international stage – from combatting terrorism via the reform of the United Nations to the international protection of the environment (Wikipedia).

The Nazi Germany helped to organize the Indian National Army along with Japan against the British Colonial rule by supporting the Indian Political Leader Subash Chandra Bose. India maintained diplomatic relations with both West Germany and East Germany but supported their reunification in 1990 (Sharma, 2007). In 2008, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel made a high-profile official visit to India that led to the signing of several agreements expanding bilateral cooperation in commerce, science, technology and defence (http://www.mumbai.diplo.de/Vertretung/mumbai/en/03/Bilaterale_Beziehungen/Germany_and_India.html).

Germany has extensively supported education and cultural development in India. Germany helped to establish the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras (Tamil Nadu) after both governments signed an agreement in 1956 and increased its cooperation and supply

of technology and resources over the decades to help expand the institution (IIT, 2008). In 2008, both nations established the Indo-German Science and Technology Centre in New Delhi to promote joint research and development in energy, environment, coal and water technologies (Newstrack, 2008). Germany is India's largest European trading partner. Germany's Ambassador to India (2006), Bernd M'tzelburg, was formerly the Foreign and Security Policy Adviser to the former Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and served as Ambassador (at-large) before coming to India in March 2006. On the eve of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Germany in 2006, Ambassador M'tzelburg opined that the two nations 'are not only natural partners but also important countries in an increasingly globalised world' (<http://in.rediff.com/news/2006/apr/19inter2.html>).

India is very high on Germany's agenda. The year 2006 has been the 'Year of India in Germany' with India being the partner country of the Hanover Fair, the world's largest technology fair and the partner country of the Frankfurt Book Fair, again the world's largest book fair.

In recent years, the political bilateral relations between India and Germany have intensified considerably. In May 2000, both countries adopted an "Agenda for the Indo-German Partnership in the 21st Century". The heads of government have agreed to meet regularly and, the foreign ministers endeavour to meet annually. Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee visited Germany in May 2003. The first official visit to Germany by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh took place in April 2006. Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder came to India in October 2001 and again – after the change of

government in India – in October 2004. In addition, Federal President Johannes Rau travelled to India in March 2003 (http://www.mumbai.diplo.de/Vertretung/mumbai/en/03/BilateraleBeziehungen/Germany_and_India.html).

These and many other visits by leading politicians from government and parliament have filled the bilateral Agenda with life. The intensity of contacts reflects the high standard of relations in all fields and notably in the field of international politics. India and Germany – both democratic countries with a federal structure – share a broad range of common values as well as common views on international issues. The bilateral Agenda mentions explicitly the commitment to the aim of global disarmament and non-proliferation as well as the cooperation in the fight against terrorism and organized crime in all its forms. The two governments are working closely together with respect to the reform of the United Nations system, including their joint initiatives as G4 with Brazil and Japan. The high mutual esteem of both countries reflects itself in the mutual support of the candidature of India and Germany for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council (http://www.mumbai.diplo.de/Vertretung/mumbai/en/03/BilateraleBeziehungen/Germany_and_India.html).

In short, the bilateral relations between India and German are cordial and knowledge of the German language for an Indian is sure to throw an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the cordial relationships between the two countries.

In India, the Consulates of Germany are located in four places (all being metros) namely Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi.

4. GERMAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN INDIA:

German (*Deutsch*) is one of the world's prominently used major languages and is related to and classified together with English and Dutch. Around the world, German is spoken by approximately 100 million native speakers and also by about 80 million non-native speakers (Wikipedia). German is the most widely spoken mother tongue in the European Union (EU). German is generally considered as a global language. Standard German is widely taught in schools, universities, and Goethe Institutes worldwide.

When it comes to usage of a language, Native-speaker numbers may matter less than they used to in providing a world language status-the number of second language speakers are of growing importance (Graddol, 2006). In India, German is being offered as the second language in School and College education and at Master's level in University education. Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages offers facilities to do research in German Language.

5. INSTITUTIONS BEHIND THE CGL PROGRAMME OF IGNOU:

Three Institutions namely the Goethe Institut (Chennai), Regional Centre Chennai and the School of Humanities, IGNOU are the stakeholders for the launch of the Certificate in German language Programme in the State of Tamil Nadu.

5.1 Goethe-Institut India

It is also called as Max Mueller Bhavan named after Max Mueller (1823-1900), the eminent scholar of comparative religion and co-founder of modern Indian studies. It is the cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany with a global reach. The Institute promotes knowledge of the

German language across the world and fosters international cultural cooperation through the network of Goethe-Institutes, Goethe Centres, cultural societies and reading rooms, alongside the examination and language learning centres. It is a renowned centre for German language courses.

5.2 Regional Centre, (Chennai), IGNOU

It is one of the Regional Centres (Second-tier Administrative structure of the Indira Gandhi National Open University) in the State of Tamil Nadu (the other being Regional Centre Madurai), which was given the responsibility to finalise the admission process for the first batch of learners for the CGL programme in the year 2007. The monitoring of the implementation of the programme in the Study Centres was done by the Regional Centre Chennai and Madurai in their respective jurisdiction.

5.3 School of Humanities, IGNOU

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is the Single mode Distance Teaching Institution with its headquarters at New Delhi and its Regional Centres and Study Centres spread all over India. The School of Humanities, is one of the Schools of IGNOU, which was the nodal agency to implement the CGL Programme in collaboration with Goethe-Institut. The responsibility has since been handed over to the newly established 'School of Foreign Languages' in 2008.

6. A BRIEF ABOUT THE CGL OF IGNOU:

On a Pilot basis, this Programme was offered in the State of Tamil Nadu. The information as available to the public by means of the Prospectus is given below to give a brief about the CGL Programme of IGNOU.

6.1 Recognition

The Programme is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages formulated by the Council of Europe for all European Languages.

“The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment”, abbreviated as CEFR, is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across the Continent of Europe. It was put together by the Council of Europe as the main part of the project "Language Learning for European Citizenship" between 1989 and 1996. Its main aim is to provide a method of assessing and teaching which applies to all languages in Europe. In November 2001 a European Union Council Resolution recommended using the CEFR to set up systems of validation of language ability.

The Common European Framework divides learners into three broad divisions which can be divided into six levels:

Division	Level
A (Basic User)	A1 Breakthrough A2 Waystage
B (Independent User)	B1 Threshold B2 Vantage
C (Proficient User)	C1 Effective Operational Proficiency C2 Mastery

The CEFR describes what a learner is supposed to be able to do in reading, listening, speaking and writing at each level. The six reference levels are becoming widely accepted as the European standard for grading an individual's language proficiency (Wikipedia).

A Candidate who successfully completes the course requirements will be awarded a Certificate by IGNOU. The Candidate can opt for the award of the A Division from

the Council of Europe for all European Languages by sitting for the corresponding test.

6.2 Coverage

The Programme aims at introducing the basics of the German Language and gradually builds skills in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, besides enabling cultural understanding. The components of the Programme include bilingual radio/video sessions, German work book with two AudioCDs with an additional supplement in English, Worksheets and video films and Face-to-face counselling at selected study centres.

6.3 Eligibility Criteria

Anyone who has successfully completed 10+2 or equivalent with working knowledge of English is eligible to get admitted into this programme.

6.4 Duration of the Programme

The learner has been given the flexibility to complete the programme either within a minimum period of six months or within the maximum period of two years. If a learner fails to complete the programme within the maximum time period, then readmission into the programme has to be sought after paying the requisite fee to the University.

6.5 Number of Courses

The CGL Programme comprises three courses, namely 1.German Language Course1 (BGL001) 2.German Language Course2 (BGL002) and 3.German Language Course3 (BGL003). The Course BGL001 and BGL002 are of 4 Credits each and BGL003 is of 6 Credits. Hence the CGL Programme is a 14 Credit Programme. (A Credit in IGNOU signifies the quantum of study-input in terms of student-hours spent in carrying out different learning activities, such as reading course material, working through

the worksheets, viewing/listening related CDs, responding to assignments, etc., One Credit is equated with 30 hours of study input.

6.6 Evaluation

The evaluation for the Certificate in German language consists of two parts namely Continuous assessment (Theory and Practical Assignment) and Term-end Examination. Each component is given a weight of fifty percent (50%).

7. PROFILE OF THE LEARNERS:

7.1 Method of collection of data

Primary data given in the application form by the learners at the time of admission into the Programme was retrieved to arrive at the profile of the learners. MS Excel was used to do the statistics. A total of 443 learners were admitted into this Programme for the first time in the year 2007.

7.2 Age

The age of the learners at the time of admission ranged from 19 to 72 years. The Average age was 30 years with the Standard Deviation being 10. Individual data analysis (age wise) revealed that the largest cohort of learners were born in the year 1986 (n=40; 9.02%).

The chronological split of learners in terms of years of birth (decade wise) is given in Table 1 and represented diagrammatically in Figure 1.

From Table 1 and Figure 1, it is evident that the majority of the learners were born in the 1980s (57.11%) followed by those born in the 1970s (25.73%). These facts imply that this programme is favoured by those in their twenties and followed by those in the thirties.

The oldest Learner was born in the year 1936. This confirms that human yearning for Learning persists irrespective of the age of an individual.

7.3 Spread of the Learners

The admitted learners were attached to the Eight Study Centres located in the State of Tamil Nadu. The distribution to the Study Centres is guided by the address for communication given by the students. Each Study Centre is identified by a code number. There were three Study Centres in Chennai and one each in Coimbatore, Madurai, Trichy, Salem and Tuticorin.

7.3.1 Urban and Semi-urban divide

The Spread of the learners is given in Table 2 and is represented diagrammatically in Figure 2.

Table 1 : Chronological split of the years of the learners

S.No	Age (years)	Years Covered	Number	Percentage (rounded off)
1.	72	1936	1	0.23
2.	63-59	1945,46,47,48,49	11	2.48
3.	49-58	1950 to 1959	21	4.74
4.	39-48	1960 to 1969	43	9.71
5.	29-38	1970 to 1979	114	25.73
6.	19-28	1980 to 1989	253	57.11
			443	100

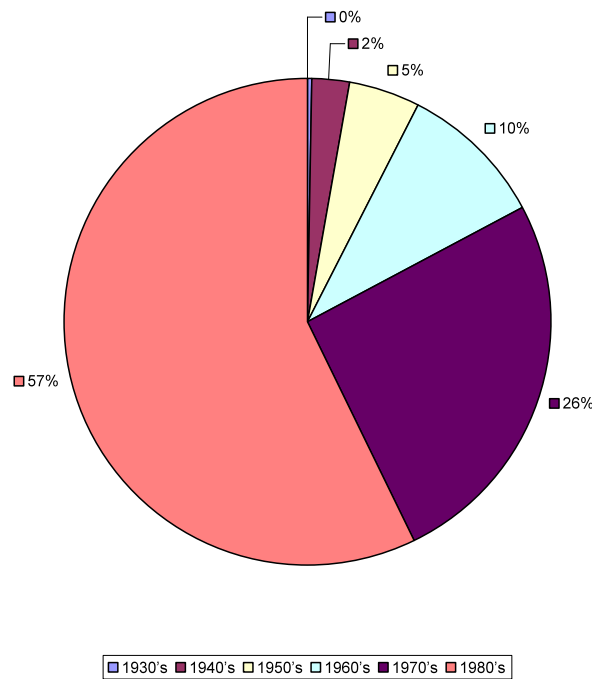


Figure 1 Chronological split of the years of the learners

Table 2: Spread of the learners

S.No	Location of the Study Centre	Study Centre Code	Number of Learners	Percentage of Learners (rounded off)
1.	Chennai	2500	120	27.09
2.	Chennai	2501	116	26.19
3.	Chennai	2578	87	19.64
4.	Coimbatore	2502	30	6.77
5.	Madurai	2503	31	7.00
6.	Trichy	2504	34	7.67
7.	Salem	2506	11	2.48
8.	Tuiticorin	2507	14	3.16
			443	100

From Table 2 and Figure 2, it is evident that a large majority of the learners (n=353, 79.68%) were attached to the three Study Centres in Chennai, the Capital city of the State of Tamil Nadu. Chennai is a metropolitan city and the other places where the Study Centre is located are semi-urban areas with a municipal corporation as the local administrative body. The presence of a high number of learners in Chennai

implies that the Urbanites are fully aware of the usefulness of a foreign language and have made use of the opportunity to enroll into the CGL Programme of IGNOU. In addition, this may be attributed to the presence of a large population of young up-coming IT professionals. However, a very narrow difference was noted in the enrolment in Madurai, Coimbatore and Trichy, which

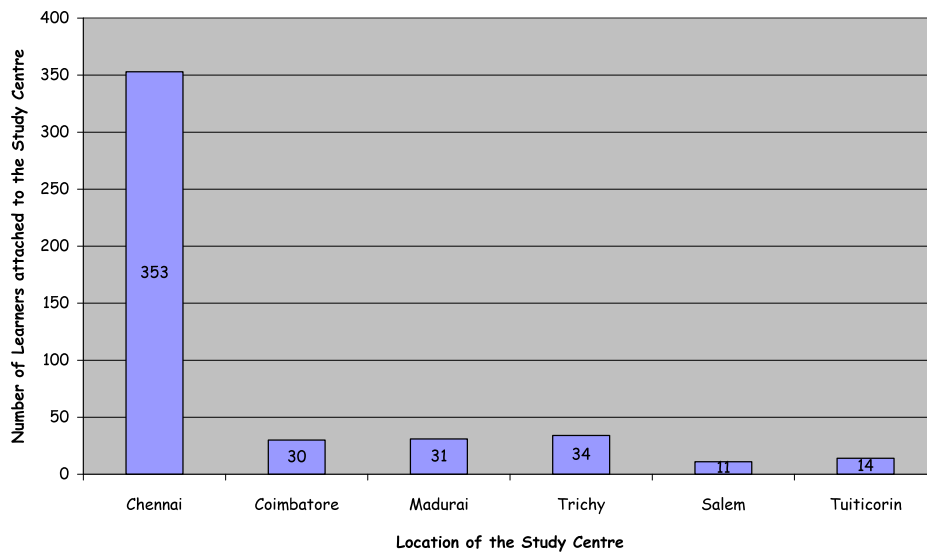


Figure 2 Spread of the learners

are semiurban places. This is corroborated by the facts tabulated below as in Table 3.

Individual data analysis about the place of stay in the location of the Study Centre revealed a wide geographical spread as evident from the Postal pincode in the address. This wide spread makes the authors suggest that technology mediated organization of self-help groups amongst the learners should be encouraged to overcome the absence of physical presence of individual learners in places other than the contact sessions- to help each other academically and to have mutual moral support.

7.4 Learner access to ICT Facilities for Support

Generally a sense of reservation is expressed, whenever use of technology for student support is recommended. It is because of general apprehension that a large section of community is deprived of access to such facilities.

7.4.1 Access to Email facility: Electronic mail has boosted the communication process by making the exchange of information faster, yet with a lower expenditure. In spite of the availability of Internet kiosk in Tamil Nadu, the accessibility to the general public is still debatable. This study revealed that 70 number of learners (15.80%) do not have an email address,

Table 3: Place-wise spread of the learners

Particulars \ Place	Chennai	Coimbatore	Madurai	Tiruchy
Enrolment for CGL	353	30	31	34
Population	4343645	4271856	2578201	2418366
Area (Sq.km)	178.2	7649	3846	4404
Literacy	80.14	76.97	78.7	79.16

while the rest of the learners (n=373; 84.20%) have the email address. This implies that information dissemination through this mode can be resorted to facilitate frequent updates. It is suggested (mainly because most of the email address can be created without any initial payment) that all the learners can be encouraged to have an email address and that self-help email groups be created to facilitate the learners to extend mutual help to one another, even without meeting each other and going from a place to the other.

7.4.2 Access to Landline/Mobile facility: A new thrust in the Telecommunication sector has created a boom in the usage of modern telecommunication devices like the Mobile technology. The Number of Learners with mobile telephone access was 258 (58%). Only landline Telephone numbers were available to 185 Learners (42%). The availability of Landline/Mobile Facility amongst the learners is of concern to a Distance Education Provider. This is because that the distance learners are distributed in wide geographical terrain and accessibility of information disseminated by the DTI in the right time is a major concern. Keeping in view the geographical spread of the learners in and around the place where the study centre is located, information dissemination through mobile technology by means of SMS service and standardised message along with callcost after a call can become handy to disseminate information to distance learners. As this study reveals that 42% of learners do not have a mobile telephone number, it is suggested that a SIM Card under the group link scheme at a competitive concession price may be given as a mandatory item to all the learners at the time of enrolment.

7.5 Payment of Fees

The total programme fee is Rs.1500/-. The Last date for the submission of the application form was end of September in

2007. Provision was there to make the payment either through a Demand Draft or through Cash Challan. The University has a MOU with the Indian Bank (a nationalised Bank) and IDBI (a Private bank) to issue Demand Draft as an instrument for paying Fees to IGNOU, at par without any Bank Charges. This facility has been utilised from Indian Bank by 24.60% (n=109) and from IDBI by 1.80% (n=8) of the learners.

Money spent on education is both an investment and consumption. Many a times, the money is spent on education by differing on other expenditures, which can be delayed for some more time. The Date given in a bank instrument signifies the day on which the money was earmarked for this specific cause. From the Date in the Demand Draft, it was found that 86 learners (19.41%) have made the Demand Draft in the month of August, a month before the last date for submission of the application form for admission into the programme. This implies that investment in the expenditure towards the education programme is being planned by the learners ahead of time. The fact that the remaining learners have taken the Demand Draft in the month of September reiterates the fact of holding/mobilising money for an investment (here it is education) which is also a consumption. Among the learners only two (0.45%) have availed of a fee concession as admissible to the employees of the University.

7.5 Qualification of the Learners:

The educational qualification of the learners is given in Table 4 and represented in Figure 3.

Table 4: Qualification of the learners

S.No	Qualification	Number	Percentage (rounded off)
1.	10+2	111	25.06
2.	Diploma	8	1.80
3.	Graduation	179	40.41
4.	Post Graduation	129	29.12
5.	Doctoral	16	3.61
		443	100

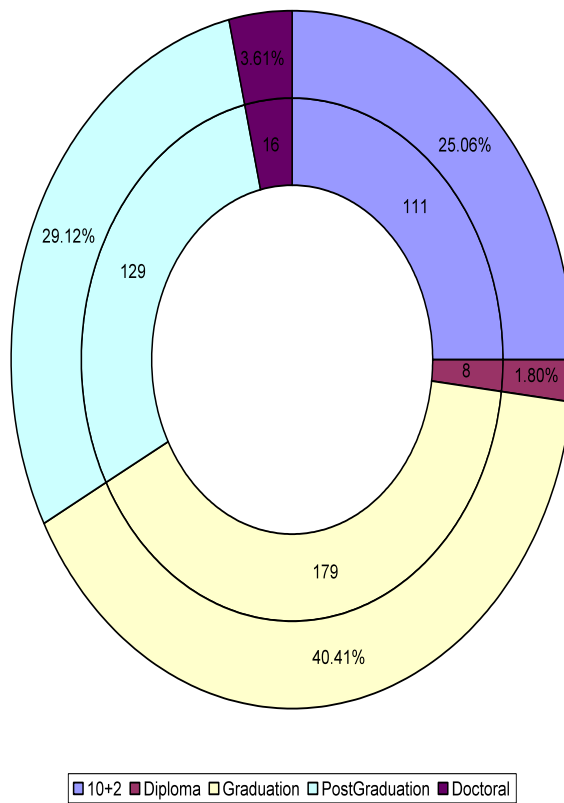


Figure 3 Qualification of the learners

Among the Learners 40.41% (n=179) have completed their graduation; 29.12% (n=129) have completed their Postgraduation; 3.61% (n=16) have completed their Doctoral Studies; 1.80% (n=8) have completed their studies in Diploma; and 25.06% (n=111) have completed their Schooling at 10+2 level, the minimum prescribed eligibility criteria to enroll into the CGL programme.

8. IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROFILE OF THE FIRST BATCH OF LEARNERS FOR THE COLLABORATORS:

From the profile of the first batch of Learners documented so far, the following are the implications for the Collaborators-both Goethe Institut and IGNOU.

8.1 For Goethe Institut

1. Learner friendly method to suit both the Geriatric adults and the budding adults in the late teens need to be focussed in their approach to instructional design.
2. Specialists in Andragogy and Distance Education System be engaged for review of the curriculum to check for any necessary change for improvement.
3. Language Learning Techniques be seen in line with Life Long Learning (LLL) rather than the mere Teaching of a Foreign Language to Indians.

8.2 For IGNOU

S.No	Profile of the Learner	Implication on the Diversified Delivery Mode of IGNOU
1.	Age (Notable finding is the heterogeneity of Age amidst the learners)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Separate Self-help groups on the basis of age. Simultaneous association across the age groups to ensure symbiotic association for academic transaction 2. Separate counseling timings to optimise the effort put in by the Geriatric and the young adults trying to establish themselves in the work front
2.	Location of the Study Centre	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To strengthen the availability of the Teaching Professional in areas where the learner resides through the network of the Study Centre, so as to ensure possibility of activation of the CGL Programme at all Study Centres 2. To reach the message about the opportunities for learning German and about its prospects to the technical and professional institutions of higher learning in the semi-urban areas where enrolment is less as per the study 3. Ensure accessibility through the email and Telephone for learners not residing in the place of the Study Centre 4. Formation of e-group of all learners to share information, participate in learning activities and exchange notes irrespective of the Study Centres they are attached to
3.	Learner Access to Email facility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compulsory creation of email IDs for all learners so that a e-self-help group is formed 2. Dissemination of information through emails 3. Sharing of email ids of the Academic Counsellors to with students for academic queries 4. Sharing of email ids of the officials of the Learner Support Centres (LSC) and Regional Centre (RC) to solve/redress problems (if any) encountered
5.	Learner Access landline/Mobile facility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issue of SIM Card under the group linked Scheme to all the learners along with study materials 2. Dissemination of information through Short Mail Service (SMS) 3. Provision for Counselling over Telephone
6.	Payment of Fees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provision to pay through electronic clearing services into the Bank Account of the University either by the learner or the sponsor

9. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

From the profile of the first batch of
The following are the suggestions for further research:

1. A study depicting the profile of the successfully completed Learners of this programme be done as a sequel to this study.
2. Individual case studies depicting success stories for others to follow can be done.
3. The influence of prior knowledge about Germany/German Language and employed in the job associated with the firms in Germany can be studied after eliciting information about their employment profile.
4. According to <http://www.properonlinedegree.com/learn-another-language/learn-german.html>, German has linguistic affiliation with English and Dutch languages and in spite of a difficult pronunciation and spelling pattern, German as a language is learnt with great enthusiasm all over the world. It is suggested that the interference of other languages known to the learner in learning German language and the impact of the mother tongue of an individual on the process of studying German language can be studied in depth and documented.
5. Agewise segregation of the Enrollees after the Assessment of Prior Learning/Exposure to the Language before selection may facilitate freshers to be benefited on par with those who have earlier learnt the language informally. As a sequel, a Comparative study can be done on the performance of the freshers and those exposed to the language in one way or the other.

10. CONCLUSION :

The Certificate Programme in German Language was launched in the year 2007, an year after the year (2006) which was declared as the 'Year of India in Germany'. This paper has given the profile of the first batch of learners who have enrolled into this programme. This paper has also touched upon the implications of the Profile of the first batch of Learners for the Collaborators-for Goethe Institut and IGNOU. Suggestions for further research is also given in this paper.

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