

INNOVATIONS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Gold Medal for Innovation in Open and Distance Learning for year 2006 was conferred to Dr. Rakesh Chander Sharma, and his team comprising of Dr. Sanjay Jasola and Mr. Virender Chikkara, in the 17th Convocation of the University for their Innovation in integrating systems at all the remote classrooms and made the EDUSAT network fully functional. A brief about this Innovation and the Innovator is given below.

ABOUT THE INNOVATION

In year 2004 a satellite called EDUSAT was sent into space to exclusively serve the educational needs of the nation. The satellite was designed keeping in view the need of "interactivity" essential to imparting education particularly in the distance mode. IGNOU took initiative to launch pilot project by establishing a Teaching End (Studio) at EMPC and 134 receiving centres (Classroom ends) at it's Regional Centres, Study Centres and other Open Universities across the country. The network was to operate through a HUB established at ISRO, Ahmedabad. Each classroom end was installed with a Satellite Interactive Terminals" (SIT) with the help of ISRO Ahmedabad. The Satellite Interactive Terminal establishes a link with the Teaching End through the satellite. The SIT in turn connects to a computer system for receiving video, audio, data etc. and also interacting with the teacher delivering lecture at the Teaching End. In order to keep the project cost low, IGNOU decided to use the existing computer systems available with these remote centres but, for various reasons, the computer systems could not be integrated with the SIT at the time of Installation. Due to non-availability of trained technical manpower at these remote centres, later it was realized that the network is still not operable unless system integration is done. By the time, the installation of the SITs was complete already one year had passed with an unutilized satellite in the space. At that time IGNOU did not have the technical know-how of the new technology being introduced and the task of system integration at remote centres by sending technical teams through private agencies would have been quite expensive and time consuming.

IGNOU had an operational broadcast television channel called "GyanDarshan" being uplinked from EMPC therefore it was decided to learn the new technology and conduct special training sessions using GyanDarshan TV network to orient the non-technical human resource available at individual remote classroom ends and get the systems integrated. In a record time of about three months, Dr. Rakesh Chander Sharma, E-in-C, EMPC and his team comprising of Dr. Sanjay Jasola, Deputy Director, Computer Division and Mr. Virender Chikkara, STA, EMPC, successfully got the systems integrated at all the remote classrooms and made the EDUSAT network fully functional without incurring huge expenditure. The distance learners started reaping early benefits of the new interactive technology. The special efforts made for quickly learning the new technology and the innovative approach of the team in operationalizing an interactive communication network in a time saving manner were recognized by IGNOU and the team members were felicitated in year 2006 with Gold Medals for their Innovation in Distance Education.

ABOUT THE INNOVATORS

