

SURVEY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

COUNTRY PROFILE *Iran is an islamic republic located in the southwestern Asia. It has an area of 636,300 square miles (1,648,195 square kilometres) and is bounded on the north by the Armeanian, Azerbaidzhan, Turkmen, and the Caspian Sea, on the east by Pakistan and Afghanistan, on the south by the Persian Gulf and the Oman Sea and on the west by Turkey and Iraq. Iran also controls about a dozen islands in the Persian Gulf. More than 30% of its 4,865 miles boundary is seacoast. The capital is Tehran.*

Economy, Population and Demography: A growing market economy. The population is 58.6 million in 1993 with the growth rate of 2.43%.

Language of Instruction: Persian

Educational System: The educational system comprises of conventional educational system and distance educational system. The conventional educational system consists of general education from pre-school to higher education while the distance education system is presently available in higher education. There are more than 60 national and private universities with 73 higher education institutions which are being established. All universities are under the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education while medical universities, since 1986, have been under the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education.

Communication Infra-structure: Iran has efficient communication media and postal service, but telephone is not yet generalized in the rural areas.

OVERVIEW OF DISTANCE EDUCATION: Distance education in Islamic Republic of Iran started in 1971 with the establishment of a correspondence school at Abooreihane Birooni University and then expanded into two schools. In 1977, the Azad University of Iran was founded as a distance education institution of higher learning. However, in 1980, all scientific activities of the distance education system were terminated. All distance education students were transferred among existing conventional universities and higher educational institutions. In 1987, a distance education university, Payame Noor University (PNU), was established providing programmes leading to Bachelor's degrees.

<i>Factors Leading to Establishment of Distance Education Programmes:</i>	Limited capacities in conventional higher learning institutions to absorb the number of secondary school graduates. In 1993, the national rate of admission to all state and private universities was about 25% of the total applicants who sat for the National Entrance Examination. Of the 7.2 million of population aged 18-24, about 510,000 students are currently enrolled in existing colleges and universities.
<i>Year of Establishment:</i>	1987 by the establishment of Payame Noor University after the Islamic Revolution.
<i>Media for Distance Education:</i>	Printed self-instructional course materials and books, some of them supplemented by videocassette.
<i>Sources of Financial Supports:</i>	Mostly from the national budget (about 60%), students' tuition fees, donations from private firms and individuals, and profits from the sales of teaching materials. In 1993, approximately the annual budget for distance education was approximately US \$22 million (using the floating rate of \$1 = 1,600 Rials).
<i>Trends of Development in Distance Education:</i>	Increasing
<i>Legal Status:</i>	The legal status of distance education in the Islamic Republic of Iran was approved in the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, the 94th Session (November 18, 1986) and the 97th Session (December 16, 1986). For the Payame Noor university, the Fundamental Law of Payame Noor University was enacted by the 99th and 100th joint sessions of the Commissions of the Revolutionary Council of Cultural Revolution on November 22, 1988 and November 29, 1988 respectively.
<i>Aims:</i>	The aims and objectives of the distance education university, are generally: (1) To provide cultural and scientific qualification of the society. (2) To offer a chance to people who live in remote areas and have no way of improving and continuing education. (3) To create opportunity for the people with family and work commitments who are unable to further their studies at conventional universities. (4) To accelerate the economic and social development by means of cultural revolution.
<i>Control and Management:</i>	As a national establishment under the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education, the PNU is controlled by three main bodies: the Board of Trustees presided over by the Minister, the Council of the University, and Chancellor of the University. The Chancellor is nominated by the Minister and approved by the Supreme Council of

Cultural Revolution. The Chancellor is assisted by five Vice-Chancellors for Academic Affairs, Administration and Financial Affairs, Research, Students' Affairs, and Development.

<i>Instructional System:</i>	The PNU employs (1) self-instructional course materials, printed correspondence texts and/or books as references, (2) face-to-face tutoring at study centres, (3) face-to-face counselling at study centres, (4) television programmes and videocassette for basic courses, (5) practical work at study centres or cooperating conventional universities. Students have to sit in mid-term examinations, submit projects and/or take-home assignments, and take the final written examinations.
<i>Geographical coverage:</i>	Nation-wide coverage through currently 87 active study centres.
<i>Research Activities:</i>	Still limited as the PNU is new. However, a Vice-Chancellor for Research was appointed to conduct both academic and institutional research for the University development.
<i>Enrollment and Graduates in Distance Education Programmes:</i>	Since 1988, in 1992-93, approximately 66,458 students have been enrolled at the PNU. The enrollment increased from the initial intake of 8,118 in 1988/89 to 34,175 in 1993/94. There have been about 2,700 graduates from the PNU.
<i>International Affiliation and Cooperation:</i>	The PNU is a member of Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU). The PNU also has a close cooperation with UNESCO for assistance and facilitation of educational and professional resources.
<i>Problems and Constraints:</i>	The need to maintain quality of the delivery system and to overcome the deficiency of the budget and the shortage of faculty staff.

**LIST OF
DISTANCE
EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS:**

*1. Abooreihane Birooni University's Correspondence School (Established in 1971 with 1,779 Associate Degree level graduates and 1,305 Bachelor of Science graduates. The school was closed in 1980)

*2. Azad University of Iran (Established in 1977, also terminated in 1980 without any graduates)

3. Payame Noor University

**Survey data not included*

PAYAME NOOR UNIVERSITY (PNU)
MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

**INSTITUTIONAL
DATA**

*Year of
Establishment:* 1987

Name of Head: **Prof. Hassan Zohoor**
Position: *Chancellor*
Address: Lashkarak Road, P.O. Box 19395-4697
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Telephone: (9821) 280925
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Nature of institution: Distance teaching institution only

**Educational levels
provided for
DE programmes:** Associate Degree level: Associate Degree
First Degree: Bachelor's Degree
Second Degree: Master's Degree*
Third Degree: Doctor's Degree*

* These degrees are only conferred in Persian Literature and in out-of-country programmes.

**Titles
and levels of DE
programmes:**

<i>Title</i>	<i>Level</i>
1. Associate Degree	Associate Degree level
2. Bachelor of Arts	First degree
3. Bachelor of Science	First degree
4. Master of Arts	Second Degree
5. Doctor of Philosophy	Third Degree.

Governance: A national establishment under the Fundamental Law of the Payame Noor University of 1987.

Objectives:

1. National development: For achieving an integrated and coherent nation, enhancing the level of education, and helping to build society.
2. Life-long recurrent education: For providing self-education and a continuous learning opportunity in cultural or technological development for adults after basic education.

3. Expansion of educational opportunity: For expanding educational opportunities for secondary school graduates.
4. Equality of educational opportunity: For ensuring the right to education in all forms for all citizens.
5. Teacher Education and Training: For upgrading school teachers' knowledge and skills in new curricula and teaching methods.
6. Personal development: For developing individual capacities in order to assist the individual reach his/her personal goals.
7. Economic development: For collective economic and technical development.
8. Cost-effectiveness: For providing education at a lower cost than full-time formal education.
9. Compensatory nature: For providing compensatory education and literacy programmes for those who have not received formal basic education.
10. Vocational development: For developing individual career and vocational capacities in order to assist the individual find a place in the economy that he/she desires.

Sources of financial support of DE programmes:

Tuition and Fees:

1. Students are required to pay from US\$12.50 to US\$137.50 in tuition charges per semester and from US\$1.25 to US\$17.19 per credit.
2. Sales profits from teaching materials and income from providing professional services to other institutions support students' fees.
3. Subsidies/donations from private persons, bodies, or foundations.
4. National budget.

Budget:

Approximate annual national budget for distance education of this institution for 1993 was approximately US\$22 million.
(US\$1 = 1,600 Rials approximately)

Trends of development of DE resources and activities:

Expanded:

- Financial provision
- Distance education programmes
- Local study centres
- Telecommunication equipment

Study materials and textbooks
 Teaching force
 Variety of courses offered
 Broadcasting programmes
 Audio-visual media
 Face-to-face sessions
 Library resources

Decreased: None

**Trends of enrollment
 in DE Programmes:**

Increasing

**Number of current
 DE students:**

Approximately 66,458 in 1992-93.

**Number of annual
 intake of DE
 students:**

Approximately 34,175 in 1993-94.
 (26,763 Bachelor's Degree, 20 Associate Degree, and 7,392
 Bachelor's Certificate)

**Number of students
 currently enrolled in
 each DE level:**

<u>Level of Education</u>	<u>Enrollment Figure</u>
First degree	66,458 in 1992-93

**Number of annual
 DE graduates:**

Approximately 2,700 in 1992-93.

**Accumulative
 number of DE
 graduates:**

Approximately 2,700.

**Components of
 personnel in DE:**

All faculty members are full-time employees.
 A mix of full-time and part-time faculty staff. Most of the part-time
 faculty members share their work duties between a conventional
 university and the distance education institution.

**Number of full-time
 staff:**

Academic: 442
 Supporting: 1,962
 Total: 2,404

**Number of part-time
 staff:**

Academic: 1,758
 Non-academic: 53
 Total: 1,811

**Number of courses
 and programmes:**

Number of courses offered: 370 in 1992-93
 Number of programmes offered: 17 (eleven of which also lead to
 teacher training programmes in 1993-94.)

Production of teaching materials/media: Teaching materials and media are produced by the Bureau of Course Production (Academic staffs, illustrators, editors, and educational technologists). Teaching materials are produced by a team of experts. The stages are (1) Develop course syllabus for approval by the High Council of Planning affiliated with the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution; (2) Design of formats and course component by the Bureau of Course Production; and (3) Produce self-instructional materials by academic staff, educational technologists, illustrators, editors, and designers.

Regional/Study Centers: Available

Number of regional and local study centers: 87 in 1993-94.

Operators of these centers: Run by Deans appointed by the Chancellor of the PNU

Sources of financial support: The sources of financial supports are from the National Budget, students' tuition fees, and donations from private firms and individuals.

Major functions of these centers: Major functions of these centers are: Registration, distribution of course materials, running tutorial sessions, examinations, counselling, face-to-face teaching, and administrative affairs.

Overall Student Profile:		<i>Proportion</i>
<i>Age distribution, in 1991-92:</i>	<i>Years:</i>	(%)
	Under 21	8.61
	Between 21-30	64.38
	Between 31-40	25.16
	Between 41-50	1.62
	Between 51-60	0.03
	Over 61	-
	Not indicated	0.20
	<u>Total:</u>	<u>100.00</u>

<i>Gender distribution, in 1992-93:</i>	<i>Sex:</i>	(%)
	Male	65.17
	Female	34.83
	<u>Total:</u>	<u>100.00</u>

Income Level: Data not available

Geographical distribution: Data not available

**Occupational and
Ethnic Composition
of DE Students:**

Ethnic Composition: Out of 87 study centres, 1 is in Arab area, 2 are in Balooch area, 7 are in Kordish area, 4 are in Lor area, 1 is in Torkaman area, and 11 are in Turkish area.

Occupational distribution: In 1991-92, 60.75% of the students are government employees.

Future development:

Possible distance education development in the next 10 years are:
(1) To establish a number of new study centres; (2) To increase the number of degree programmes.

**Major obstacles for
implementing
distance education:**

The shortage of self-study materials.

**Affiliation with
regional and
international DE
organizations:**

AAOU (Asian Association of Open Universities)
UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization)

**PROGRAMMES
OF INSTRUCTION,
MEDIA,
METHODS,
& EVALUATION:**

List of Programmes:
Associate degree programme
First degree programme
Second degree programme*
Third degree programme*
Correspondence teaching system

* These programmes are only implemented in Persian Literature and in out-of-country programmes.

PROGRAMME : FIRST DEGREE PROGRAMME

Level: First Degree.

Titles of programmes offered in this level:

1. Bachelor of Arts.
2. Bachelor of Science.

Courses or programmes of instruction:

Commercial and Management Studies:

Accounting
Public Administration

Languages and Literature:

*English Language
*Persian Literature (M.A. and Ph.D. degrees are also conferred in out-of-country programmes.)

Educational Studies: Education

Humanities: *Islamic Theology
Psychology

Physical Science:

*Chemistry
*Geological Sciences
*Applied Physics
Health Science (Only at Associate Degree level)

Biological Science: *General Biology

Mathematics:

*Mathematical Sciences
Statistics

Social Sciences:

*Geography
*Social Sciences

Physical Education: *Physical Education

* These (eleven) programmes also lead to First Degree in teacher training.

Length of course:	<i>Minimum number of study hours per week per course:</i> 1-4 hours <i>Total number of weeks per course:</i> 17 weeks <i>Total number of courses making up programmes:</i> Approximately 50 courses (142-146 credits)
Media and methods:	<i>Most dominant:</i> Printed texts Face-to-face tutoring Face-to-face counselling Regional services Study centers Weekend schools <i>Dominant:</i> Practical work Television programmes <i>Least dominant:</i> Audio-cassettes Kits
Language of instruction:	Persian
Admission requirements:	Before entering the distance education program, the student must meet the following admission requirements: (1) Holding a high school diploma, and (2) passing a competitive entrance examination and gain a minimum required grade.
Number of students:	66,458 in 1992-93.
Annual intake of DE students:	34,175 in 1993-94.
Evaluation system:	
<i>Continuous assessment:</i>	Written assignments for submission (up to 25%) Written intermediary examinations Attendance of regular lab sessions at the other institution Attendance at the local study centre
<i>Final course assessment:</i>	Written final examinations (at least 75%)

Educational and employment arrangements for graduates:

No educational and employment arrangement but upon completion of their degree programmes, employed students will be promoted by their employers, and those seeking jobs will be employed at a higher position.

Profile of students in this level:

By Educational Background: Proportion
(%)

Secondary/High school leavers:	100.0
<u>Total:</u>	<u>100.0</u>

By Employment, in 1991-92: (%)

Full-time public employees:	61.0
Private employees or non-employees:	39.0
<u>Total:</u>	<u>100.0</u>

By types of career: Data not available

By gender, in 1992-93: (%)

Male:	65.0
Female:	35.0
<u>Total:</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Acceptance of final award, certificate, and degree:

The final degrees awarded by this institution is accepted as equal to a comparable award given by a non-distance education institution.