1. Critically examine the status of social work education through Open and Distance Learning in India.

Ans: The objective of any professional curriculum has to be to prepare the type and quality of manpower capable of performing the task and functions to achieve the goals of the profession in the context of that particular society which it seeks to serve. Thus a profession prepares its members to practice what is clearly defined. Curriculum design is circumscribed by time, place and the prevailing social, political, economic and cultural context of the country. Curriculum development for social work education is a process of inter-relating and integrating the basic constituents of professional education, namely, context, purpose, structure, content, practice and process.

According to the second UGC review committee (1980), existing syllabi for social work training were not relevant to the profile of the country and hardly had any scope for practice. Social work curricula of that time lacked response to the Indian realities and over emphasized the remedial, rehabilitative, residual model which focused on problems of the individual, families and communities at micro level rather than problems of individual and society in the context of development. The social work experts suggested that in order to be useful, the professional education must have an effective linkage with practice to respond to current social realities. Therefore, a critical appraisal of all these aspects of professional training was felt necessary.

Considering the fact that the task of curriculum designing is a specialized task, the UGC started Curriculum Development Centers (CDC) for all subjects to evolve a standard outline of a subject curriculum to be followed nationally with some modifications. The CDC for social work education submitted its report in 1980. This report published by the UGC after ten years in 1990 focused on the need for establishing a well-equipped library in each college, and for translating core literature in local language to strengthen social work training. It was suggested to include the following broad areas in social work curriculum at postgraduate level.

1. Social work Profession: Philosophy and Concepts
2. Social Work Interventions: Methods and Strategies
3. Social Work Research
4. Social Science Concepts for Social Workers
5. Human Development and Health
6. Social Systems and Social Conflict
7. Social Development, Policy and Planning
8. Social Work Practicum including fieldwork (file visits; structured experience laboratory; study tour; rural camp; workshops; concurrent field work; block fieldwork)
9. Optional courses

A Cell for Social Work Education and Practice (SWEPC) sanctioned by the UGC was set up at the TISS in 1992. This Cell was an outcome of the project on Curriculum Development for Social Work Education (CDSWE). The goals of the cell were the development of curriculum for social work education through (a) development and maintenance of a data bank; (b) development of curriculum and training/learning tools; (c) faculty training through various programs and distance modes; (d) research and dissemination; (e) support and consultation (Desai 2004). In this background, the Social Work Education: UGC Model Curriculum (2001) has been designed by the senior most, experienced social work educators and circumscribed in the Indian context.

The three domains prescribed in the UGC Model Curriculum (2001) are the Core Domain, the Supportive Domain, and the Interdisciplinary Domain. The fourth cluster is the Elective Content. The Core Domain of social work education focuses on the profession’s philosophy, ideology, practice, values, ethics, theory and concepts. The Supportive Domain focuses on knowledge and skills to assist the Core Domain. The Interdisciplinary Domain has relevant theories, concepts and perspectives from other sciences to help understand the social situation. Elective courses have the required theory base of the specific field. UGC Curriculum Report (2001) model was expected to be used by all social work educational institutions to ensure some uniform standards and relevance of social work practice to social work education.

It was noticed that in the regional meeting organized by the NNSSW (2012) some of the ISWE representatives mentioned that the curriculum for social work requires upgradation in changing situation focusing on the knowledge, skills and ideology of social work. The challenges faced by the schools of social work include extreme variation in the social work curriculum in different schools. Meenai (2012) pointed out that most of the curricula were being influenced heavily by the market and the availability of jobs. It was suggested to strategize the curriculum with respect to providing a rural exposure to the students in their training and also look at specializations in accordance with the local context. The strategy should be such that certain minimum standards and uniformity are maintained and at the same time scope for creativity and innovation with respect to the local context, due to the dynamic nature of social work practice is maintained.

The professionals suggested introducing electives focusing on specializations covering the knowledge component areas such as culture, social structure, human psychology, planning and administration, and the current trends such as globalization, feminism, post-modernism, multiculturalism, models of social development, and fields of social work. The skills component should look at those skills which are helpful in application of methods of social work and are also useful in new emerging areas for social work such as project management. Ideologies should include Humanistic Perspectives, Empowerment Thought, Liberation Ideas, Human Rights and Ambedkar’s Thoughts. The participants of the regional meeting of NNSWE (2012) asserted that the national network should ensure uniform curriculum for all the schools of social work in the country but at the same time certain degree of flexibility should be allowed to meet the regional differences looking at the skills component of social work training certain strategies should be made to rethink at the pedagogy in terms of more innovation. An area which needs more attention in social work education to develop a sound