India’s Expanding Horizon of Demographic Training, Teaching and Research: Evolution of Population Sciences

Ashish Bose
Honorary Professor, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi 110007
Formerly, President, Indian Association for the Study of Population (IASP), Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow (1990-92)

India’s Expanding Horizon of Demographic Training, Teaching and Research: Evolution of Population Sciences

Ashish Bose

India attained independence in 1947 and in 1950, the Planning Commission was set up under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The need for trained demographers was felt by the Planning Commission while formulating the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) as well as a 25 year perspective plan. Projections had to be made for rural and urban population, the school going population and labour force, apart from the need for five yearly projections for food, housing, health, education, employment and so on.

The first Plan clearly recognized the need for population stabilization. To quote the Plan:

*The recent increase in the population of India and the pressure exercised on the limited resources of the country have brought to the forefront the urgency of the problem of family planning and population control....It is therefore apparent that population control can be achieved only by the reduction of the birth rate to the extent necessary to stabilize the population at a level consistent with the requirements of national economy.* (Bose 1998)

The Planning Commission did not, however, spell out in statistical terms the implications of the goal of population stabilization. In fact, the Plan blundered in making long-term projections for the next three decades by assuming a *constant* growth rate of population of 1.3 per cent per year. It failed to realize that a growth rate of 1.3 per cent was the result of a crude birth rate of 40 per thousand and a crude death rate of 27 per thousand during the 1941-51 decade. Surely, such a high death rate was not expected to continue in a welfare state.

After the Second World War, Demography was just emerging as an independent discipline all over the world, thanks to the key role played by the Population Division of the United Nations and the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP). Interestingly enough, IUSSP’s International Conference on Population was hosted by India in New Delhi in 1951 and inaugurated by Prime Minister Nehru. The next such conference was hosted by the Indian Association for the Study of Population (the author of this paper had the privilege of being the President of IASP and Chairman of the International Organizing Committee) in New Delhi in 1989 and it was inaugurated by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (the grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru).

The year 1951 was notable for another significant event: the first Census after independence was taken in 1951 (in an unbroken series of decennial Censuses during the British Rule, starting from 1881). At the

It was indeed a rare contribution of events - the launching of the First Five Year Plan, the first Census after independence, the IUSSP Conference and Kingsley Davis’ monumental study - all of which took place in 1951. The interest shown by the Prime Minister himself led to India’s expanding horizon on the demographic front in the second half of the Twentieth century.

Now that we are in the Third Millennium, it would be useful to review the past before we project our thoughts for the future.

**Major developments in demographic training and teaching:**

**I. International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai**

In 1956, a new institution called Demographic Training and Research Centre (DTRC) was set up at Bombay (later renamed as Mumbai) by the Government of India, in an area adjacent to the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. JRD Tata, the great philanthropist - industrialist was the first public figure who anticipated the gravity of the population problem which India would face and went out of his way to make people aware of the population problem. He donated land to DTRC. The United Nations also helped by creating fellowships for Asian scholars to study at Mumbai. In 1970, DTRC was renamed as **International Institute for Population Studies** and it continued to serve as an apex institution for training and research in population studies, for scholars in India and in those coming from countries in Asia and the Pacific Region. In 1984, it was again renamed as the **International Institute for Population Sciences** (IIPS) to facilitate expansion of its training and research programs keeping in mind the wider dimensions of population issues. In 1985, it was given the status of a ‘Deemed University’ recognized by the University Grants Commission. It is an autonomous institution under the administrative control of the funding Ministry, namely, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

This institute was established to prepare students for teaching, research and consultancy careers in population. The aim was to help build over a period of years a nucleus of persons in each country of the region who would have sufficient knowledge of population sciences to plan and carry out population studies in the governments and Universities and train other persons in the field. Researches on a variety of topics related to population issues are conducted at the Institute. In addition, the Institute provides consultative services to various governments and other organizations on population programmes and policies.

The Institute’s major academic activities are as follows:

**Teaching programs**
1. Diploma in Population Studies (DPS)
2. Master of Population Studies (MPS)
3. Master of Population Studies (MPS) (through correspondence)
4. Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Population Studies

The Institute also conducts short-term training programs in Population Studies.

Some details about the type of training are given below:

**Diploma in Population Studies (DPS)**

This course is designed to provide a basic understanding of the principles of Population Studies and the inter-relationships between population and various socio-economic factors.

The admission requirement for the Diploma Course is a Bachelor's degree with some experience of handling population data. Generally, three types of students are admitted to this Course viz., (i) United Nations/WHO/other International Organization sponsored fellows, usually from countries of Asia and Pacific region and (ii) Sponsored candidates from various departments of Government of India, States and other Research Organizations and (iii) Self-sponsored candidates from India and abroad.

There are 25 seats available for such sponsored candidates. The duration of the Course is one academic year and is spread over two semesters beginning from second Monday of July every year till mid May of the following year.

**Master of Population Studies (MPS)**

Master's degree course is designed to provide higher level of understanding of the population science for providing indepth understanding of the linkages between population and various socio-economic and environmental factors.

Admission to this course is open to all those with a Master's degree of a recognized University in any of the following disciplines: Statistics, Mathematics, Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Geography and Social Work. Any one with a Master's degree of a recognized University in any other subject with some experience in Population or allied fields is also eligible for admission.

There are 25 seats available with the Government of India fellowship. The duration of the course is one academic year and is spread over two
semesters beginning from first/second week of July every year till mid-May of the following year.

**Master Of Population Studies (through correspondence)**

In view of the growing demand for intensive and need based training in the field of population data analysis and inter-relationship between Population and Development, the Institute has started a Distance Education Program leading towards an MPS degree. The program reaches out to a large number of Government officials involved in health, family planning and other population related programs at various levels, who can be trained without affecting their regular duties. In addition, the program is also devised to cater to the training needs of students and Government officials from various ESCAP and other countries. Persons having a Master's degree in any of the relevant Social Science subjects including Mathematics and Statistics are eligible for the admission. The course lasts a minimum of two years and a maximum of four years.

**Ph.D. Program in Population Studies**

A Ph.D. student is required to undertake original research and submit a thesis based on his/her own work. Each student is required to prepare a detailed research proposal including a critical review of literature, theoretical/conceptual framework, detailed methodology, etc. before being given registration. The research proposal is discussed in a student-faculty seminar held at the Institute.

**Short- term training programs for Indian officials**

At the request of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India and also other concerned organizations, the Institute organizes refresher courses and short term training programs for the personnel working in Population Research Centres, Medical Colleges, Health and Family Welfare Departments, Universities, etc.

In addition, workshops are also arranged for Senior Officials of the Planning Departments of various States of India on request. The participants have to be sponsored for these courses by their employers and the cost of training is met by the sponsoring agencies.

**Short- term training programs for foreign nationals**

At the request of International Agencies such as United Nations Development Program, World Health Organization, International Labour Organization, etc., the Institute organizes special short-term courses in Demography and related subjects for officials of foreign countries. These
officials are sponsored for a duration of 2 weeks to 3 months. The expenses of such training programs are borne by the sponsoring agencies.

**Research activities**

Apart from the teaching activities, the Institute also conducts a large number of research projects on various aspects of population and prepares project reports. Some of the research project reports are published in the IIPS Research Project Series. The Institute also undertakes evaluative Studies and large scale field surveys. The research projects of the Institute are mostly funded by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India and also by the State Governments, World Bank, United Nations Population Fund, World Health Organization, International Labour Organization, Ford Foundation and other Governmental and the Non-Governmental Organizations.

The Institute, being the nodal agency for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, has recently completed a large scale district level Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) project, covering nearly 1000 households in each district from 507 different districts of all the states of the country. Under the same project, a facility survey has also been conducted in about half of the districts in the country. In this survey, all the district hospitals, community health centres, first referral units, post partum centres and primary health centres have been covered.

The Institute conducted the first and second rounds of the National Family Health Survey, (NFHS-I & II), and covered more than 90,000 households from all the states of the country, with financial support from the United States Agency for International Development. Macro International, Washington DC, USA, gave technical support. Additional support came from UNICEF. The survey provides state level estimates of demographic and health parameters as well as data on various socio-economic and programmatic dimensions that are critical for bringing about the desired change in demographic and health parameters. One new feature of NFHS-II was collection of data on nutritional status of women and children by carrying out blood tests for hemoglobin levels, in addition to measurement of their height and weight.

**Population Data Centre**

The Institute has a Population Data Centre, which acquires population information and data through various sources and prepares documents which are made available to researchers. INTERNET facilities are available at the Data Centre. The homepage is updated every year with the cooperation of ESCAP, Bangkok.

**II. National Institute of Health and Family Welfare, (NIHFW), New Delhi**
In 1962, the National Institute of Family Planning was set up by the Ministry of Health and Family Planning, in New Delhi, to give technical and research back up to the Ministry. In 1964, another institute - National Institute of Health Administration and Education was set up in New Delhi with a similar objective. Taking an integrated view of health and family planning, these two institutions were merged in 1977 and the National Institute of Health and Family Welfare (NIHFW) established in New Delhi.

The main objective of the Institute is to serve as an apex technical institution and a ‘think tank’ for the promotion of health and family welfare programs in the country through its various activities. These are: Education and Training, Research, Evaluation, ad hoc Projects, Specialized Services, Consultancy Services, etc.

The Institute has expanded the spectrum of its activities from small pilot projects to cover the entire gamut of national health system. The wide range of work includes in-service training of health personnel, promotion of inter-disciplinary research, as well as establishment of institutional mechanisms for co-operation with health planners and managerial experts.

Different areas like Reproductive Bio-Medicine, Population Genetics, Demography and Statistics, Epidemiology, Medical Care and Hospital Administration, Management, Communication and Social Sciences come under the purview of the activities of NIHFW.

Major Teaching Programs

- Ph.D. program in various disciplines of Health and Family Welfare.
- MD in Community Health Administration
- Diploma in Health Administration
- Distance Learning Program in Health and Family Welfare Management.

Ph. D. Program

This program seeks to promote development of a cadre of health scientists who undertake research in the crucial areas of health care and family welfare. This program is undertaken in collaboration with different universities. Areas of research include Population Genetics, Reproductive Bio-Medicine, Communication and Social Sciences.

MD in Community Health Administration

A three year post-graduate course on MD in Community Health Administration is affiliated to the Faculty of Medicine, University of Delhi. Development of skills in planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation, use of modern management techniques, application of research
data on health indices, deeper understanding of the social and cultural aspects of health care, are some of the important components of the MD program.

**Diploma in Health Administration**

This course is open to medical graduates. It is affiliated to the University of Delhi. The diploma offers a wide choice of subjects in the area of health administration.

**Distance Learning Programs**

**Post-Graduated Certificate Course in Health And Family Welfare Management**

NIHFW was entrusted with the task of developing a distance learning course. The course has been designed for medical officers at the district level. The primary focus of this course is to provide guidelines for dealing with managerial problems in implementing the health programs.

**Major Training Programs**

**A. National**

- Short-term in-service Training Courses for senior level health planners and executives
- Specialized Orientation Courses for senior administrators in central health sector.
- Need-based Specialised Courses in health and allied fields for Government/Non-Government sector personnel.
- Conferences - National and International meetings on health policies and program initiatives.

**B. International**

Tailor made courses in different subject areas in the field of health and family welfare.

The training program has been developed to enhance the skills and knowledge of health care managers. The courses are designed for managers and health professionals in government at national, State and district levels. Selected courses are designed for personnel working in the non-government organisations and voluntary agencies also.

**Funding**

Training courses are conducted as a part of the institutional activity. These training programs are organised in collaboration with other allied institutions, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, State Governments,
International Agencies like UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF or bilateral agencies such as DANIDA, USAID, SIDA.

An idea of the wide range of training programs is given below by the training schedule of NIHFW for the year 2000-2001:

1. Training Course on Hospital Administration for Medical Superintendents of ISM & H Hospitals
2. Training Course on Hospital Administration for Senior Hospital Administrators
3. Training Course for State Level Statisticians, Demographers and Program Officers in Monitoring and Evaluation of RCH
4. Training Course on Logistics, Supplies and Materials Management in Health and Family Welfare
5. Course on Training Technology
6. Training Course on Research Methodology in Reproductive Biomedicine.
7. Orientation Training Course for M. Sc. Students in Reproductive Biomedicine.
8. Meeting-cum-Workshop on Interface Between District Development Officer and Elected Zila Parishad Presidents
9. Training Course on Participatory Learning and Action for the Health Sector
10. Training Course on Application of Modern Information Technologies in Health Science Libraries/Documentation Centres
11. Training Course in Management for Senior Nursing Administrators.
12. Training Course on National Health Programs for Chief Medical Officers/District Health Officers
13. Training Course on Interpersonal Communication for Health Providers.
14. Inter-country Training Course in Reproductive Health
15. All India Seminar on Health Insurance Development: Retrospect - Current and Future Directions
16. Dissemination Workshop for the Study on Willingness and Economic Capacity to Pay for User Charges in Health Care
17. Training Course on Management of Laboratory Services under Primary Health Care Delivery System

Special Training under Reproductive Child Health Program

19. Awareness Generation Training
20. Specialized Management Training Courses for District Level Officers
22. Training Course on RCH Program Management for International Fellows
23. IEC Program Management for District Extension and Media Officers
24. Training Course for Master Trainers on Integrated RCH Skills
III. Population Research Centres (PRCs) at Different Universities and Research Institutions

Soon after independence, the late Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao, India’s leading economist (who, many years later, became the Education Minister of India), had told Prime Minister Nehru that food and population will emerge as major problems in the country. He recommended establishment of Agricultural Economics Research Centres and Demographic Research Centres in different regions of the country. His recommendation was implemented and a chain of Agricultural Research Centres and Demographic Research Centres were established in leading Universities and research institutes. The first three Demographic Research Centres (subsequently renamed as Population Research Centres), fully funded by the Central Ministry of Health and Family Planning were established at the Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University - (subsequently transferred to the Institute of Economic Growth founded by Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao), the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, and the Gokhle Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune. Their mandate was to conduct research on social and economic factors affecting fertility, mortality and migration. Gradually, more and more PRCs were established. Today, there are 18 PRCs spread in the following regions:

**North and Central India**

1. PRC, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi
2. PRC, Department of Sociology, Punjab University, Chandigarh
3. PRC, Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh.
4. PRC, Department of Economics, Himachal University, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh.
5. PRC, Department of Economics, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir
6. PRC, Department of Economics, Lucknow University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
7. PRC, Department of Geography, H. S. Gaur University, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh

**Western India**

8. PRC, Department of Sociology, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, Rajasthan
9. PRC, Department of Statistics, M.S. University, Baroda, Gujarat
10. PRC, Gokhle Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune, Maharashtra

**Eastern India**

11. PRC, Department of Statistics, Guahati University, Guahati, Assam
12. PRC, Department of Statistics, Patna University, Patna, Bihar
It will be seen that a number of disciplines are involved in sponsoring population research, namely, Statistics, Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, Geography and Rural Health. The Universities and research institutes listed here are well-known institutions noted for their contribution in their respective fields. The Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta discontinued its Population Research Centre because of interference from the funding Ministry and established a Demography Unit with its own funds. Benaras Hindu University established a Centre of Population Studies with funds from the University Grants Commission (UGC). There are several other Universities (under UGC) with Department for Population Studies/Demography.

The focus of PRCs is on research and not training though senior members of the faculty are involved in teaching and training programs in demography in their parent Universities as well as in other Universities and institutions. They are also involved in numerous Governmental Expert Committees, Working Groups, Study Teams, etc.

The Population Council of New York has over the years given several fellowships to Indian scholars to study abroad (mostly in USA) and a fairly large number of Indian scholars has been trained in demography. The East-West Centre in Hawaii has also been sponsoring every year a number of Indian scholars for short term training programs, orientation programs, etc. in various fields of demography. The launching of National Family Health Surveys (NFHS-I & II) saw a number of Indian scholars associated with these surveys going to Hawaii for training. There is hardly any Indian demographer who has not been abroad in connection with some training program or other, including a few who did their Ph. D. in Demography abroad. In passing, it may be mentioned that the Census Commissioner for the 2001 Census of India, a civil servant, was doing his Ph. D. in Demography at the London School of Economics, till he was recalled for urgent Census work.

Reference must be made to a UNFPA sponsored training program on ‘Population and Development’ meant basically for government officials from developing countries, which was carried out for several years at the Centre for
Development Studies founded by Professor K. N. Raj at Trivandrum in the state of Kerala. In the absence of financial support from UNFPA, this program was discontinued recently. On the whole, it was a useful training program.

IV. Demographic Teaching in Universities

Kerala University, Trivandrum has a separate Department of Demography giving a Masters level degree. In a number of universities, Demography or Population Studies features as a subject under various disciplines, notably, Statistics, Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, Geography, etc.

In a review of the teaching program in Demography in Indian Universities, Sayeed Unisa of IIPS (Mumbai) gives details about the range of demographic topics covered under various disciplines (Unisa 1995).

V. Population Education: Role of University Grants Commission

The University Grants Commission (UGC) initiated Population Education through Population Education Clubs (PECs) in 1983. This was done to create awareness among college students and, through them, in the community regarding various population issues. The PEC was visualized as an agent to establish inter-linkages between the college, the community and the Departments of Adult Continuing Education, Extension and Field Outreach (ACEE and FO) in Universities. The PEC was meant to generate co-curricular activities in the universities/colleges with an accent on out-reach and extension activities.

In 1989, when the joint project with UNFPA was undertaken by the UGC, Population Education Resource Centres (PERCs) were set up in the Departments of Adult and Continuing Education and Extension in twelve Universities. The PERCs were to provide technical support to the University System in organisational, research, training and monitoring activities.

During the second phase of the project, the institutional structure was built up further with the setting up of the Population Education Unit (PEU) in the UGC in 1994. The program at the end of the second cycle has expanded to 17 PERCs which cover 186 universities and 1400 colleges, distributed over 32 States and Union Territories. These Clubs work through 1400 PECs reported to have a membership of about 300,000 students.

Currently, UNFPA and UGC have launched the third plan of the program under the title: ‘Population and Development Education in Higher Education System’.

India and Sri Lanka were pioneers in promoting population education. In 1999 UNFPA sponsored a study tour of several Indian functionaries of Population and Development Projects in Higher Education, school education
and continuing education. The report on the study tour observes that in Sri Lanka, population education is included in the school education curricula. It recommends, among other things, evaluation of the impact of population education program on other sectors. (UGC report 1999).

Our view is that population education has not made any worthwhile impact on school/college/university education in India, mainly because it is not a mainstream subject. There is a good case for introducing a compulsory paper on Population Dynamics (including statistical techniques for demographic analysis) for all undergraduate students (regardless of the subject of study). Then only Population Education will be taken seriously. The Department of Adult Education is not the best Department to handle this topic.

VI. Expanding Demographic Data Base

In the development of demographic research in India, the Census organization has played a very significant role, and there have been several occasions when the administrator showed his superior expertise over the uninitiated demographer. The 1951 Census was the first Census of free India, and it brought about a number of improvements over past Censuses, perhaps the most important of which was the introduction of rural/urban breakdown in all the tables for the first time in the history of Census operations in India. The 1961 Census was very comprehensive in its scope, especially in regard to the collection of data on housing, industrial establishments, land tenure, etc. This Census introduced two new sub-questions on the place of birth, namely, the rural/urban origin and the duration of residence in the place of enumeration. This resulted in throwing up massive data on internal migration, again for the first time in the history of Census operations in India. It is now possible to analyse the four migration streams: rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to urban and urban to rural.

Another important development in the study of rural-urban migration and urbanization was the launching of socio-economic surveys in a number of cities in India which had shown a very rapid rate of urban growth during the 1941-51 decade. These surveys were sponsored by the Research Programs Committee of the Planning Commission and most of the field work was done by survey teams in University Departments and research institutes around 1955-56. These surveys supplement the Census data and are of considerable value in understanding the mechanics of migration and the process of urbanization.

Another important source of demographic data is the National Sample Survey (NSS). On the advice of the eminent statistician, the late Professor P.C.Mahalanobis, the Government of India initiated the National Sample Survey (NSS) and the first round of field work was undertaken on a sampling basis, during 1950-51. The NSS is continuously engaged in collection of data on different aspects of the economic and social life of the people. Most of the ‘rounds’ of data collection have a demographic content while there have been several reports exclusively devoted to demographic data like birth and death
rates, morbidity, internal migration, fertility and family planning. The NSS continues to be the major source of demographic data during the inter-censal period as also the only source of data on an all-India basis in respect of a number of population characteristics.

Among the other demographic surveys, perhaps the first most significant survey was the Mysore Population Study - a co-operative project of the United Nations and the Government of India. The field work was done in 1951-52. This survey had considerable methodological value for demographers anywhere in the world. Among other important surveys reference must be made to the Rural Population Control Study of Singur undertaken by the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Calcutta, the Harvard-Ludhiana Population Study based on intensive field work in a group of Punjab villages, and several socio-economic and fertility surveys conducted at the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics.

K. Srinivasan, President, IASP, in his address to the 24th Annual Conference (Srinivas 2001) points out that the number of demographic and health surveys that have been undertaken in India since independence is estimated to be between 2000 to 2500. His address was devoted to translating demographic and health survey findings into policies and programs. He was critical of Indian demographers and their futile attempts to link all research findings to policy implications, without realizing the limitations of these surveys and the numerous pitfalls.

One of the earliest rounds of National Sample Surveys (NSS), was devoted to ‘Couple Fertility’ (NSS 1955). Ajit Das Gupta, an outstanding statistician-demographer and his colleagues prepared this a path breaking report giving detailed fertility analysis (Indian Statistical Institute 2000).

The Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) under the leadership of the late Professor P. C. Mahalanobis became internationally famous for the high quality of training in Statistics (including Demography). Official and non-official statisticians from all over the world are trained at ISI, Calcutta. ISI has also produced a galaxy of outstanding statisticians who are spread all over the world.

Reference must also be made to the encouragement given to Indian scholars for training and research in Census analysis by Asok Mitra who was the Census Commissioner for the 1961 Census. His junior colleagues were sent abroad for training (especially to the US Bureau of Census, Washington). He made the 1961 Census data readily available to Indian and foreign scholars and invited them to prepare Census monographs on specific subjects based on Census data. Unfortunately, this practice was not pursued in subsequent decennial Censuses.

Finally, it is worth noting that Indian demographers have made their mark in almost all international conferences, seminars, expert working group meetings, etc. pertaining to Demography. In particular, mention may be made
of the contribution by Indian demographers, economists and statisticians to United Nations/UNFPA sponsored World Population Conferences, the Asian and Pacific Population Conferences and the IUSSP Conferences. Indian demographers have an impressive record of work at the United Nations and specialized agencies, and also with a number of governmental and non-governmental agencies, and in particular, Universities and research centre outside India, notably, in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and USA.

VII. Future of Demography

We have dwelt with two apex institutions in India training demographers, health administrators and persons in allied disciplines which were created to meet the growing requirement of trained demographers and health and family planning administrators in India and other Asian countries. There were three factors which induced the Government to make large funds available to run these institutions, namely, (i) the growing demand from planners and policymakers for analysis of demographic data collected through Census, National Sample Surveys and other surveys which would give the much needed input to planning exercises - we have in mind the five year plans of India starting from 1951 (currently preparations are on for formulating the Tenth Five Year Plan 2002-2007) as well as the long term perspective plan; (ii) the expanding family planning program (renamed as the family welfare program in 1977) and increasing allocation of funds for the program which called for scientific methods of monitoring and evaluation. This in turn called for demographic expertise; and (iii) the growing interest in population issues by donor agencies, the proliferation of NGOs and the funding of numerous ad hoc projects on health, nutrition, family planning etc. which generated a demand for trained demographers. The National Family Health Surveys (1993-94 and 1998-99) funded by USAID and conducted through the Central Ministry of Health and Family Welfare could not find enough trained demographers in Universities and research centres to conduct these surveys and private contractors were invited to take up this work. But as the results of NFHS-II indicate, the field work was not uniformly good, and some of the results cannot stand close scrutiny. The methodology adopted in collecting data on domestic violence is weak, to say the least. In a recent article in *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bose Nov. 25, 2000) we have critically commented on the findings of NFHS-II.

One of the objectives of NFHS-II was to train Indian demographers and strengthen Population Research Centres but it appears to us that these surveys have done more harm than good to academic researchers who have been lured by fat field allowances, consultancy fees and trips to Hawaii, to undertake data collection of a certain type which is of very little practical use to planners, policy makers and health administrators. Because of the sample design, the NFHS-I & II do not give any estimates at the district level. In view of the recent enactment by Parliament introducing effective local self government through panchayats (village councils), Zila parishads (district councils) and nagarpalikas (municipalities) the urgent need today is for ‘block’ and district level data (which
are generated by the Census and not by NFHS). What we need is a decentralised system of demographic data. (Bose 2001)

Regarding the numerous training programs conducted by the National Institute of Health and Family Welfare (NIHFW), one tends to have a second thought about the real utility of such training programs. NIHFW has failed to develop a strong faculty and their output is not matched by the impressive physical infrastructure sustained by enormous funds from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Turning to the International Institute of Population Sciences (IIPS) one may take a less pessimistic view. IIPS has no doubt trained a fairly large number of scholars from diverse academic disciplines in Technical Demography but speaking objectively, this apex institution (with large funds flowing) has failed to make an impact at the national level. It has produced no outstanding demographers. Though it has the status of a deemed University, it is tied to the apron strings of the funding ministry and no Director of IIPS has been able to get out of the clutches of bureaucrats who have a very narrow view of training and research. On the issue of Population and Development, for example, there is very little that IIPS has contributed. As President of the Indian Association for the Study of Population (IASP), I was compelled to speak on ‘Demography Beyond Decimal Points’ and criticize the ‘decimal point demographers’ of India.

The Population Research Centres at various Universities and research institutions have also failed to make any outstanding contribution, mainly because of the constant interference from the bureaucrats in the funding Ministry and their demand for collection of service statistics which could at best be only one element of research. Because the funds came from the Family Welfare Department, the bureaucrats could not visualise anything beyond family planning, rather contraceptive demography. This come in the way of development of Population Sciences.

This raises a fundamental question: Can Demography progress in the Third Millennium if the present trend of confining Demography to tools and techniques continues, notwithstanding calling it by a more respectable term - Population Sciences? Should we go back to standard disciplines like Economics, Sociology, Statistics, Geography, Environmental Science etc. and inject a strong demographic input in these disciplines rather than develop Demography as an independent discipline? We would like to propose that a basic course in Demography be introduced as a compulsory subject at the undergraduate level. Instead of producing ‘demographers’ as such. It may be more worthwhile to produce specialists in Mathematical Demography, Economic Demography, Social Demography, Historical Demography and so on. This will mean strengthening the University system instead of pushing specialised institutes of Demography. Each University should have a Population Research Centre which should be multi-disciplinary in nature, without losing the thrust area of each institution. Much more attention should be given to
methodology of data collection under Indian conditions, modernising the Census, conducting appropriate National Sample Surveys and other ad hoc surveys to meet the requirements of planners and policymakers as well as the need for scientific monitoring and evaluation of ongoing programs not only in the limited field of family welfare but in the overall context of poverty alleviation programs launched by the Government, programs which are faltering because of lack of proper monitoring and failure to check corruption.

In short, in the Third Millennium, we must paint on a broader canvas and envisage real life in its totality and not be content with measurement of demographic change alone, without being able to comment on the process of social transformation and human development. To our mind, the 21st century will be dominated by environmental issues which will vitally affect the quality of life, by gender issues and growing empowerment of women, by the dismal implications of ageing population. Population Sciences must rise to the occasion and make its mark, if demographers want to survive.
References


National Sample Survey No. 7 (1955), Couple Fertility, Published by Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

