

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY:

Education aims for all round development, be it of the individual the society or the nation. The different philosophies and theories and concepts of education have the distinctively set aim of the development of human race. Education is the benchmark of a cultured and progressive society. An educated individual is a nation's pride and the role of education in economic growth and development cannot be ignored. Education has been passed down from generations, with the purpose of transferring knowledge that helps in uplifting the society. Education thus, is the fulcrum of sustainable development, and holds the key to 'social inclusion'<sup>1</sup>.

The trend of education in India was not all inclusive and it did not reach all the classes of the society<sup>2</sup>. This was the case with education in colonial India as well. Hence post-independence India saw the boom in the education sector as the need of the hour was the rapid development of India and it was generally recognised that education was an important agent of dynamic change was fully accepted by the people at the helm of affairs.

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1. Biswal, K. (2011) *Secondary Education in India: Development Policies, Programmes and Challenges*, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi, Retrieved from <http://indiagovernance.gov.in/files/secondaryeducation.pdf> on 10-9-12
  2. Chalam, Kurmana Simha (2011). *Deconstructing Higher Education Reforms in India*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, p. 17

Since the time of Independence, the education sector has always posed a challenge, with growing demand for education and the inadequate and largely insufficient number of institutions, staff, finance etc. Reform in the education sector has been continuing since then with more zeal and enthusiasm. But the approach towards education has been shifting and there has been no even balance.

The education sector in India consists of: 1. Primary Education, 2.Secondary Education, 3.Senior Secondary Education and 4.Higher/Professional and Technical Education.

With just a handful of Universities and Colleges, at the time of Independence, Indian higher education seemed to be grossly inadequate compared to the other developing and developed countries. Hence, the national leaders found that upgrading higher education was the only way to bring prosperity to the nation. Thus, the Higher Education sector was prioritized which led to the growth of many universities and colleges and the number of students growing in great numbers within a couple of decades.

Higher education, however, was monopolized by a particular section and hence the benefits also went to that section leaving the wide masses out. This growing crisis in higher education during the initial years has been highlighted in many research works. The problems within the higher education system related mainly to access, equity and quality. However, in course of time, the planned initiative taken by the Government in higher education has made it more inclusive. According to J.P. Naik, a need for total restructuring of higher education is required<sup>3</sup>.

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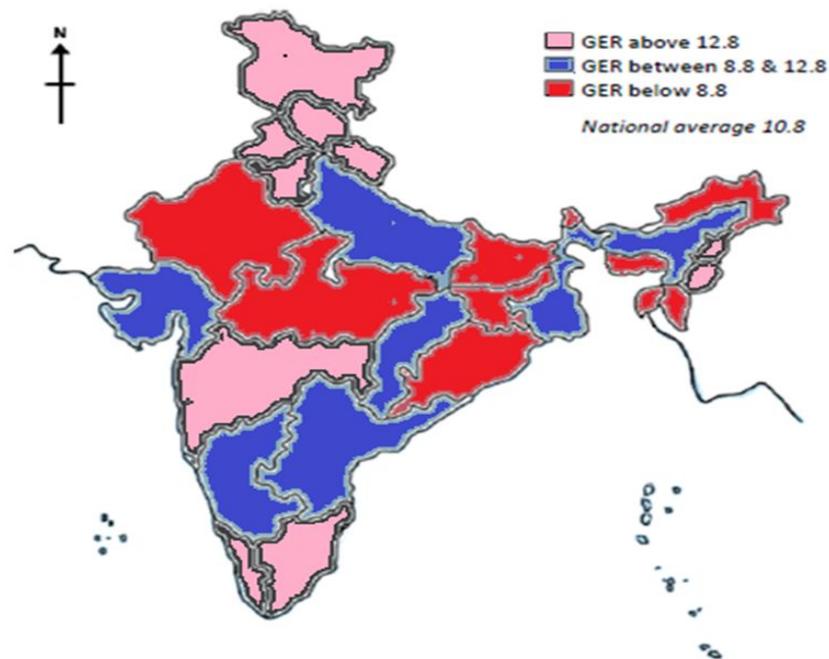
3. Naik, J.P. (1974). *Policy and Performance in Indian Education (1947-74)*. [Available Online]. Accessed on 4-09-12 from <http://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/sites/default/files/userfiles/files/Policy%20and%20performance%20in%20Indian%20Education%20-%20Naik.pdf>

Disparities in higher education whether they are regional disparities, rural urban disparity, or socio-economic disparity are really big barrier in the growth and development of an even and uniform higher education system in India.

Regional disparity implies the difference in the enrolment rates according to the geographical limits. There has been a sharp difference in the enrolment rates in the different states in India. According to the UGC Report of 2008<sup>4</sup>, states like Kerala have higher enrolment rates while Arunachal has a low enrolment rate.

The figure below highlights the regional disparities:

**Fig. 1 GER disparity across Indian states**



Source<sup>5</sup>: Kumar, Rohit (2010).

4. Kumar, Rohit (2010). *Vital Stats: Higher Education in India*. [Available Online]. Accessed from [http://www.prsindia.org/administrator/uploads/general/1289366929\\_Vital%20Stats%20-%20Higher%20education.pdf](http://www.prsindia.org/administrator/uploads/general/1289366929_Vital%20Stats%20-%20Higher%20education.pdf) on 7-09-12

5. Ibid

The above image clearly shows the disparity among the states in the context of educational enrolment. Assam ranks among the states with the GER between 8.7 and 12.8, which is a poor picture.

Considering these aspects, and in order to widen the network of education the Government and policy makers decided to introduce distance education in the correspondence model.

Distance education can be best termed as an “anytime, anywhere” form of education. This offbeat system of education has been given recognition and support by its stakeholders. Distance education is a liberal form of education that highlights certain characteristics which is dynamic. The distance education system claims that- learning should not be about teaching but learning and hence not the teachers but the learners should be the centre of attention in the whole learning process. The important feature is the “freedom of learning”. The learner is free to learn according to his wishes. Learning is not restricted to books and today the use of technology has only made it easier for the learners.

Distance education manifests the undying belief in the power of social justice that is education. Education cannot be a monopoly of a few; rather it should be equally distributed to all. The thrust areas in higher education throughout the Five Year Plans have brought into fore the problems as well as the challenges within it.

Assam is one of the states in the north east India, which has made slow progress. The literacy rate is 64.28% according to the Census report of 2001. There are five universities, four government engineering colleges and three government medical colleges providing higher education. Despite this, there are many youths who are unable to avail of higher education. The enrollment percentage in higher education in Assam is 5.76% which is below the national average i.e., 8.23%. Moreover, there is a large exodus of students from the region to other states. The students are not satisfied with the traditional courses due to which the total number of students in Dibrugarh University, for example, in the streams of Arts, Science and Commerce came down from 93,000 in 1992 to 40,000 in 2002.

Higher education has been facing a lot of stiff competition from national and international institutes. In a nation where the facility for higher education is available to only 8.6% of the eligible group of 17-22, there remains much to be done. In Assam in 2001-2002, the percentage of women enrolment was 40.5% as against the total enrolment of 1, 94,245.

## **1.2. RESEARCH TOPIC:**

The topic for research is “**EMERGENCE AND GROWTH OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN ASSAM**”. The research tries to focus on the non-conventional mode i.e., the distance education mode of education and its origin in Assam. With the growing expansion of distance education all over, there have been many speculations about its progress and impact on higher education in a holistic manner.

The study is aimed at understanding the development of distance education, with reference to socio-economic and political conditions prevalent in Assam. Distance education does not exist in a void and is in fact the outcome of certain socio-historical developments and technological growth: it is indeed a system firmly rooted in social and cultural environments of contemporary times.

## **1.3. OBJECTIVES:**

In the present research, the basic objective is to understand the evolution of the concept of distance education in Assam and its gradual growth through a study of the major distance education institutions that are functioning within the state.

The objectives for the present study are:

- To analyze the causes behind the emergence of distance education in Assam from a historical perspective.
- To assess the growth of distance education in the state from the time of its emergence.

- To analyze the trends that has set within the DE system.
- To analyze the problems of DE in Assam and find solutions if possible.

#### **1.4. LITERATURE REVIEW:**

The aim of literature review is to reorganize the sources that have been chosen in order to build the research framework. The only way to take forward the research is to refer through the past work or research done in the field. This helps in enriching the mind and look for new beginnings with an understanding of the past. It is an important element present in a successful research work done in any subject. It has been defined as:

“The selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic, which contain information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfill certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed”.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the literature review implies a detailed research of the past literatures, both secondary and primary. The review serves the purpose of closing the gap and loopholes of earlier works done. However, every review is written with different perspective, hence it becomes important for a critical analysis of the research works that is to be reviewed.

For the particular research study, the researcher had immense literary sources at disposal, and this made it difficult at times to choose for the most appropriate literature. Hence, to come out of this dilemma, the researcher put together all the sources under different headings. They are

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6. Hart, Chris (1998). *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination*, Sage, London, p. 13

described in details below. Each of the headings would differentiate each from the other, though revolving round the same themes.

The literatures under review have been put under the following heads:

- Books
- Published/ Unpublished Thesis
- Conference/Seminar Papers
- Journals
- Government/Institutional Project Reports

**BOOKS:**

- ❖ Belawati, Tian and Baggaley, Jon (Eds.) (2010). Policy and Practice in Asian Distance Education, Sage Publication, New Delhi

The authors have noted that distance education has evolved with the changing economy in recent times. As a correspondence model in industrial era it transformed into a distance education model in the post-industrial era. For those living in developing countries with limited means and resources, DE comes as a blessing in disguise. The legitimacy which it has earned has been due to its integration with technology and its wide connectivity network system. The South Asian countries have used distance education method as a political and educational issue.

In India convergence media has been used like the Government sponsored educational trains (*Vigyan Rail* [2003-04] and *Science Express* [2009-10]) have carried multi-media information and education to the millions. In case of the use of internet, South Asian countries face difficulties. The major concern in using internet is as a symbol of modernization rather than delve further into its accessibility and coverage through research.

As per the records internet accessibility is scarce, affordability is expensive. Mixed media technology is suggested to be the best for such countries. Online education has definitely failed here.

- ❖ Kember, David (2007). *Reconsidering Open and Distance Learning in the Developing World: Meeting students learning needs*, Routledge, London

The high levels of secondary education and economic boom in the Asian countries have resulted in higher enrolments. Distance education students in developing countries are young. India is an economy with a growing need for graduates. Many Open Universities have high enrolment rates and low completion rates. Connectivity challenges in less developed countries would be met by using low tech solutions.

- ❖ V.P. Matheswaran (2010). *Drop Outs: A Challenge to Distance Education*, Authors Press, New Delhi.

The study was on assessing the reason behind drop outs in three Universities down South, which were Madras University, Madurai Kamaraj University and Bharathidasan University, Trichrappali.

As per the finding, family and economic matters have resulted in high drop-outs besides other factor like institutional factors, occupational related, psychological, health and social related. Falling in the adult group they opined that syllabus was hard for them to understand. They suggested for flexible learning programme and organizing of personal contact programme at different nodal place rather than within the University itself. The drop outs seek friendlier attitude from faculty. A majority of them wanted to continue DE stream. They have also suggested that the University should have some tie up with some nationalized bank for providing educational loans to the needy learners.

- ❖ V.P Matheswaran (2005). *Distance Education: Student support Services*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi.

The study was to assess the attitude of the distance learners towards the support services provided to them. The study was based on the students under IGNOU in Chennai, Coimbatore, Tiruchirapalli and Madurai. As per

the findings of the study, urban areas have superior advantages to access of better student services than those living in rural areas. Those students living in Chennai have a favourable attitude to the self-instructional materials, programmes, counseling sessions and study center. Another interesting feature of the study was the attitude of the learners belonging to the age group from 16-25, which was positive towards the IGNOU programmes. This only implies that the student support services have an influence in the growth of distance education.

- ❖ Aarti Bansal (2004). Distance Education in the 21st Century, Sublime Publications, Jaipur, India.

The author has put a lot of emphasis on the growing needs of a growing democracy for a better education, especially higher education. It was the spread of democracy and industrialization post-independence that led to the expansion of higher education. The author opines that the need to bridge the gap in a democratic society as well as to make use of the growing machine in the post-industrial era will require more educated people. Looking into the examples of the developed nations, the author demonstrates the potential of multimedia in furthering the cause of distance education.

- ❖ Open and Flexible Learning: Issues and Challenges (2006), Viva, New Delhi.

It is a compilation of Prof. G Ram Reddy Memorial Lectures, which is related to the field of distance education. Prof. G. Ram Reddy may as well be called the pioneer in the field of distance education in India. His contribution to the field has only enhanced its smooth functioning. The issues that have been addressed are- quality assurance, access to education, connectivity and networking in distance learning. The possibilities of distance education in different aspects are discussed.

For e.g. N.R. Madhava Menon explores the role of IGNOU in offering legal education to its learners. It will not only ensure professional enhancement

for those engaged in the field but will also develop active citizens who are aware about the laws and create a peaceful society. According to G Madhavan Nair, space based distance education is a possibility today in order to create a connectivity between the main institution and the remote educational center.

- ❖ Encyclopaedia of Distance Education: Growth & Development of Distance Education, Vol. I, Dr. D.P. Rai, Dr. R.P. Bajpai and Dr. Neelam Singh, APH Publishers, New Delhi, 2007

In this book, the authors have indulged on issues in distance education related to the use of technology, concepts and instruction methods, etc. At the same time, it has also brought into attention the fact that in India and other Asian/ developing countries, distance education has not been able to achieve much success. Learning is still accessible to the urban people, with no impact on the disadvantaged groups. Despite the shortcomings, distance education has yielded beneficial results and has much to offer by innovating and bringing new developments within it.

- ❖ Media and Distance Education, M. Hussain (Editor). Anmol Publication, New Delhi, 2004.

The author opines that while choosing the form of media, the most important factor is the learner. Every learner is unique and keeping in mind the diversity of the learners, such media should be chosen to communicate and disseminate information, which can reach every learner. However, media as a mere “vehicle” as an outdated fashion and in the 21st century, media cannot be done away with.

Any media when used in distance education should be used efficiently. The design, pattern should be able to make an impression on the minds of the learner. Flexibility should be an important element of any educational media.

- ❖ Relevance of Distance Education, Shashi Khanna, Maxford Books, New Delhi, 2006.

The two developments that have led to the historical rise of Open Distance Learning are: instructional design and ICT, as the author puts it. The social relevance of distance education has been highlighted by the author and he discusses the need for a holistic development of the country. Economic development should go hand in hand with the development of the human capital. Educational planning as well as manpower planning becomes important with changing times. According to the author, Distance Education has much more to perform on an institutional level as well as pedagogical level.

- ❖ Distance Learning Technologies in Education, Premanand Choudhary, ABD Publishers, Jaipur, 2008.

The author in this book cites certain problems that come with ICT in distance education. According to him, in India, home based distance education has been blessed by the use of ICT. But the problem is rooted deep down, in reality. The lack of infrastructure, trained people and the lack of knowledge of use of technology has hampered many learners from making the most out of what has been provided by the distance education institutes. The use of ICT has restrained and curtailed the learners in certain fields and thus restricted the benefits of it. As per his views, technologies should be flexible and the learner must be able to come up with a plan of making adjustments while using ICT.

- ❖ Perraton, Hilary. Open and Distance learning in the Developing World, 2000, Routledge, New York.

The author has raised critical issues in distance education. According to him, distance education has emerged as a cheap way of containing educational demand, benefiting millions who would otherwise been deprived of it. But even then, it has many more miles to go before it gets proper legitimacy. It can do wonders and hence, the author says with a

positive note that distance education is as good as the conventional system. The author opine that distance education has not been able to contribute much in certain countries, however, in Asia, specially India, it has led to the expansion of higher education. But the author questions the benefits that distance education has brought. The question is if distance education has been able to meet the social-economical needs of the students. Perraton notes that in developing countries where there are a higher number of graduate unemployed youths, distance education has only been used as an emergency need to solve the problem of overflowing students for higher education in the conventional universities rather than focus on escalating the production skill of the learners. Even though the worst critics of distance education would put it as the 'substitute of the real thing', yet none can deny the fact that with enough funding and regular innovational changes, distance education can create a powerful resources.

- ❖ Panda, Santosh (ed.) (2003) Planning and Management in Distance Education, Kogan Page, London.

The book deals with issues in regard to planning of distance education and management of distance education institutions as well as quality assurance in distance education. Otto Peters have mentioned that despite the co-existence of different models from the planning and management perspective yet, distance education remains the core concept and it has proved to be the most flexible of any other model that prevails. Certain concerns have been addressed, like the influence of globalization on distance education and its planning and management. It has been noted that the planning and management of distance education is much influenced by the Government policies and hence, it becomes imperative for the people involved in distance education to address problems that may arise out of it. Institutional management requires efficient strategy, leadership with far sighted vision and skilled staff. Institutions should also be able to make adaptations to changes that may set in. It is also noted

that distance education institutions should be able to balance between the cost and the satisfaction of its consumers adequately. There have been suggestions to cut out certain costs involved in instructional design in both print and media. The learners' assessment should be made flexible as should be the student support services provided to them. In the matters of quality assurance, the aspects of evaluation, accreditation has been discussed wherein it was understood that in order to acquire international standard quality, there must a regulating body at a global level to monitor the advancement of distance education institutions.

- ❖ Bates, A.W. (Tony). (2005) Technology, E-Learning and Distance Education, 2nd edition, RoutledgeFalmer, London

The entire book is on the technology and specially internet and e-Learning in the field of distance learning. The focal point however, is the question as to what type of technology best fits the learners and the cost involved and the novelty which it brings to the ODL system.

In the book, the author has emphasized on the point that no matter what the size of the country, the economic stability, and technology will always be a blessing for all. However, in distance education the application of a particular technology will depend on the needs of the learners and hence it should be kept in mind that the use of ICT in a haphazard manner will lead to wastage. The "local factor" plays an important role in choosing a particular technology for the distance learners. Availability is not equal to accessibility. In a nation like India, internet, mobile is available however, accessibility and its use by the learners has yet to catch a firm ground.

As for the cost of the technology, according to the author the web based learning entails higher costs than the synchronous mode of technology. If a large number of students are to be reached than, an efficient use of technology should be made, keeping in mind the cost revolving round it.

Technology plays an important role in the learning process today. Teaching and Learning is facilitated by the new modes of technology

prevalent. Each medium has its advantages that have the capability of attracting students towards it and it is the role of the institution to make every attempt to make use of such technology.

There are debates surrounding if technology will replace the traditional method of learning, but Bates is of the opinion that a middle course is the best option. Using the traditional methods and delivering it with a new technological edge can bring a huge benefit for the learners as well as the distance education providers.

- ❖ Perraton, Hilary & Lentell Helen (Eds.) 2004. Policy for Open and Distance Learning, RoutledgeFalmer, London.

The authors have taken up the issue of policy structures and governance of distance learning in a global scenario. The expansion of ODL in developing as well industrialized countries make an interesting study. It raises many questions with regard to the economic policy in a neo-liberal world and its effect on institutional policies which has in turn shaped the growth of DE.

The book revolves round the themes of quality, funding, technology, globalization and their impact on policy decision of ODL. It is remarked upon that though every new trend in ODL is studied with careful attention but in matters related to policy and governance there is much silence amongst the academicians and policy makers.

The lack of clarity in the policy and structure of ODL is due to the uncertainty over the concept of distance learning- as a methodology or as a philosophy. The absence of an organized frame of policy reveals the inadequacy of the national policy makers. This may act as a hindrance to the development of the ODL system.

- ❖ Garg, Suresh, V Venkaiah, C Puranik & Panda, Santosh (2006). Four Decades of Distance Education in India: Reflections on Policy and Practice, Viva, New Delhi

The book has been divided into seven sub-divisions under different headings. The first section tries to understand the historical growth of distance learning, the policies and the Government approach towards ODL system in India as well as its management. The second part deals with the role of distance learning in the teaching and learning process and its success in reaching a varied section of learners and target groups. The third section discusses the topic of technology and media in distance learning. The use of media in all its form like teleconference, interactive radio, e-learning, satellite communication etc. is being delved upon in the Indian context. The fourth section is related to the quality issues in distance education. The fifth section concentrates on the research and training aspect of ODL. While the sixth section is on the latest trend that has caught up in ODL, and that is, networking among the ODL institutions for the expansion of distance education system. The last section is on ICT and Open schooling.

- ❖ Reddy, V. Venugopal and Srivastava, Manjulika (Eds.) 2000. The World of Open and Distance Learning, New Delhi: Viva Books

The book points out the current trends in the field of ODL and supporting them with some tables. A study of the situation and practices of distance education in developing world has been discussed. The collected papers have been based on the industrial countries and in it the status of the distance/open education of the related country is discussed. The programmes under the distance education system of the countries are discussed.

Themes like instructional technologies and methodologies, student support systems, staff training and development strategies, finance, quality control approaches and assessment of learners are emphasized in the papers. Similarly certain papers have focused on the development of ODL in the industrial worlds. It is noticed that distance education has advanced at a great pace and making changes for its further growth.

- ❖ Kumar, Mukesh (2006). The Status of Distance Education in Assam, Published PhD Thesis, Mahaveer & Sons, New Delhi.

Kumar analyses the growing sphere of distance education in context of Assam. This thesis is an extensive study of two DE Institutes: PGCS (GU) and IGNOU, Guwahati Regional Center). The study is a look into the existing DE status and its reach to the enthusiastic learners.

His main findings were:

- ❖ The enrolment trend among boys was greater than girls and DE was catering only to the urban students.
- ❖ Most of the learners were between the age of 19-25 years of age and that most of the learners enrolled at the DE Institutes were employed.
- ❖ The reason for enrolment in DE was mainly due to job engagements which left less time to attend colleges for education and secondly because of the failure to secure admission to the regular mode of higher education.
- ❖ The learners took to DE mode for personal development and secondly for job. Majority of the learners felt that education through DE mode would save more time.

#### **THESIS PUBLISHED/UNPUBLISHED:**

- ❖ Medhi, Dulumoni (2005) 'An Evaluative Study of the DE System with special reference to IGNOU and PGCS, Gauhati University', Unpublished M. Ed. Dissertation, Submitted to Gauhati University, Assam

He has made a study of the distance education system in Assam. The objectives of the study were: (i) To study the status of PGCS and IGNOU (ii) To study the progress of DE in Assam (iii) To study the enrolment trends of distance education programme, personal contact program, development of course materials and student support activities based on

the principles of distance mode of learning (iv) To access the role of mass communication system in promoting DE system (v) An evaluative study of DE as alternative to formal education system (vi) To make suggestions for better functioning of the programme.

The study revealed that there was lack of awareness among the people of the state and the learners who were attracted to DE were due to the fact that they found it economical. The learners were satisfied with study materials and support services. The study also threw light on the inadequacy in matters of governance and infra-structural facilities.

- ❖ Mehta, Neelima M (2011). A study of factors governing access and equity in open distance learning programmes: with special reference to distance mode institutes (DEIs) of dual mode universities in Western Maharashtra, PhD Thesis Submitted to Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Maharashtra.

In this study of two dual mode Universities in Western Maharashtra, the researcher concludes that accessibility of ODL is encouraging though it requires lots of variations. According to the researcher, ODL has been able to attract students due to its flexibility and convenience as it suited the socio-economic environment of the learner.

Accessibility in terms of enrolment was increasing but only in the metro areas of Western Maharashtra and this was due to the facilities available, the facilities of medium of transport and communication, academic and administrative support, information technology etc. It is however noticed that marital status of women the employment status of women and the academic qualification affect their access in Distance mode programme.

The researcher opines that a little flexibility in eligibility criteria could result into increasing accessibility as will need based programmes. Majority of the learners were computer literate, hence were aware of the importance of ICT in this knowledge era. Facilities like academic counseling by trained academic counselor, study materials in regional language or mother

tongue, supporting services like broadcast, computer aided packages, CD ROMs; audio cassettes if made available at Study Centers will ensure accessibility as well as equity in ODL.

- ❖ Borgohain, Manashi Gogoi (2009). Distance Education under IGNOU in Assam: Its functioning and Achievements, Unpublished Thesis, Submitted to The Dibrugarh University, Assam

In this study, the researcher aims to study the distance education trend of IGNOU in Assam and hence the entire study revolves round one institution only. The study was look into every detail of the functioning of the distance education system in Assam. The time period for this study was from 2001-2006.

In this study it was revealed that the enrolment in IGNOU was high among married people (82.64%). Most of the learners were also employed and lived in the urban areas. The study also tells us that the learners who have enrolled themselves for courses in IGNOU were 10+2 qualified in 2001 but five years down the line graduates began enrolling themselves in heavy numbers followed by Post Graduates. However, the participation of women has been very low under IGNOU. In 2001 it was 25.62% and in 2006 it dropped down to 24.59%. Programme wise Enrolment under IGNOU increased in all programmes except for CFS and HER. The demand for programmes shows a fluctuating trend. The enrolment rises in one year and falls on the other. There is no stable rise in the demand for any particular programme or courses.

The study has also thrown much light on other aspects of IGNOU and has concluded that despite the good facilities provided, much still needs to be done. It also gives the hint that distance learners do not make demands for amenities. The study marks the status of distance education as positive with more room for changes and development.

Though there have been many research studies done on distance education, however very few have been contextualized in the state of Assam.

#### **CONFERENCE/SEMINAR PAPERS:**

- ❖ Agrawal, Neeti Distance Education: Strategy for Developing Competitive Advantage, ICDE 2005 Conference, November 19-23, 2005, New Delhi, India. Available Online. Accessed from <http://asiapacific-odl.oum.edu.my/C23/F448.pdf> on 21-0912

This paper is an attempt to present an overview of the problems in ODL system and formulate a strategy to deal with it. According to the author, creating more demands and opening different avenues for its learners will help in eliminating some problems of ODL. Another strategy would be performance benchmarking, which is essential to evolve strong with a competitive advantage.

- ❖ Gupta, D. K. (2005). Marketing in Distance Education: Towards Developing a Conceptual Framework, paper presented ICDE 2005 Conference, New Delhi, India.

The concept of marketing has emerged in distance education sector throughout the world. The factors for it are the self-support policies, increasing competitiveness in the marketplace, rising customer expectations, widening access to education etc. The motivation for applying the marketing concept is not just to increase profit, but to achieve high level of customer satisfaction and to enhance the value of the services and products made available. The paper argues that unless everyone believes in the philosophy of the organization, marketing is not possible. Similarly, internal marketing is important

- ❖ Khanam, Shakeela (2005). Marketing and Services: A Case Study of Distance Education Institutions of Andhra Pradesh, paper

presented ICDE 2005 Conference, November 19-23 2005, New Delhi, India.

The main objective of the paper is to compare and contrast marketing and the services 694 of these institutions and the products with a view to develop a model marketing strategy for the institutions of distance learning.

- ❖ Patowari, D. Jyoti, Surabhi Gohain Dowarahand Jay Prakash Ray. Distance Education and Open Learning as a mean of Promoting Higher Education in Rural Areas of North Eastern States, paper presented ICDE 2005 Conference, November 19-23, 2005, New Delhi, India.

Distance education can be defined as organised systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of the established formal system. It has become a popular medium of imparting higher education to the vast majority of people in our country. Like other Universities of India, some of the N.E. Universities have also introduced the distance education system to meet the demands of the higher education. But certain factors have contributed to the underdeveloped conditions of the present system. Since, the N.E. Region is an economically backward area; the people are unable to take higher education due to poor economic condition. Besides, there is a limited number of higher education institutions, for which most of the interested learners fails to take higher education in North-East India. In spite of all this drawbacks, certain steps can be take to brighten the prospects of distance education as well as open learning in N.E. region, viz., creating public awareness about distance education, popularising the present mode of distance education, minimizing the expenditure, increasing the number of study centres in rural areas, etc., people should be made aware about the advantages of the distance education and be encouraged to take up the distance programme, through different electronic means like Radio, Television etc. Study centres should help the learner to take the help of different electronic media like web, e-mail etc.

and ensure that the students receive all study materials for the course.  
<http://www.midasebook.com/dosyalar/ebookmarketing.pdf> dated 21-09-12

- ❖ Md. Sazzad Hussain (2004). Building Learning Communities Among The Unreached: Educational Empowerment among the Marginalized Groups in The Frontiers of North East India, paper presented in PCF3, held in New Zealand. Accessed from [www.col.org/pcf3/papers/pdfs/hussein\\_sazzad.pdf](http://www.col.org/pcf3/papers/pdfs/hussein_sazzad.pdf) on 20-09-12

The present system of ODE learning is insufficient and unable to reach these groups, where the Internet, e-learning services fail to reach them. So, where there are no telephone lines or electricity, how will Internet or satellite television reach the people? That is the problem, which have been hampering Open Distance Education in India which is much visible in these groups of the North East.

Though the famous IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open Universities) has many of its centers in the region, they could not reach them due to many reasons. The first barrier is that of medium of instruction. The IGNOU imparts its education only either in English or Hindi. But these groups have their own languages and dialects. And to begin with the elementary level the language factor is very important. Apart from these the traditional correspondence, mailing and dispatching systems should be followed by the ODE agencies in this area.

- ❖ Dhume, Prof. Sudheer, Raju Gondkar, V. Murgaiyah and M.S. Subhas (2006). Perceptions of Business Education Students towards eLearning: An Empirical Study of North Karnataka region of India, Paper presented in PCF 4. (Available Online) Accessed from <http://pcf4.dec.uwi.edu/viewpaper.php?id=168> on 21-09-12.

The study revealed that generally the students of MBA Institutes of North Karnataka are inclined positively towards Internet as educational delivery tool. This perception was not Basic Degree or MBA Specialization specific. There is weak but positive relationship between the students' basic

knowledge of Computers/Internet and Attitude towards use of Internet for educational delivery.

It is also found that there is general perception of learning environment to be favorable with very small percentage of the sample finding it to be unfavorable for eLearning. Overall scene at the North Karnataka is quite encouraging for the implementation of eLearning initiatives in Management Education.

- ❖ Gaba, Ashok, Santosh Panda and Ashok Sadhwani (2006). Distance Education and Human Resource Development: Undergraduate Learners Perception towards Employability, Paper presented in PCF 4. (Available Online) Accessed from <http://pcf4.dec.uwi.edu/viewpaper.php?id=157> on 21/9/12.

It is observed from the above analysis that most of the respondents joined the DE system because of its flexible characteristics and with the purpose of mainly getting a job. They perceived their degree to be help in continuing education and getting a new job. Holmberg (1985) points out that there is no evidence to indicate that distance learners should be regarded as homogenous group. However, Gibson (1998, 10) indicates that distance learners do share broad demographic and situational similarities that have often provided the basis for profiles of the 'typical' distance learner in higher education. The case will be very different, if the idea is to develop skills of the learners. One has to be careful in using distance education strategies for skill development, because there has to be greater physical participation and involvement of the target groups of the population in skill generation. These types of skills are available in industries, and they can be demonstrated to different target groups of learners through suitable ICT interventions. Using ICT in ODL will help update the existing skills of learners and also generate new skills among them. Further education can raise the employment opportunities in many ways, as it helps develop the necessary skills, attitude and motivation to match opportunities-wage-employment as well as self-employment. In our

study, most of the students perceived that they will utilise their degree in pursuing higher education, and will also eventually get a job.

- ❖ Garg, Suresh, Kapil Kumar, Uma Kanjilal, Pankaj Khare (2006). Use of ICTs for Capacity Building in the ODL System, Paper presented in PCF 4. (Available Online) Accessed from <http://pcf4.dec.uwi.edu/viewpaper.php?id=469> on 21/9/12.

In this paper, the authors have acknowledged that the role of ICT in building human resources for development is profound. The ODL system has an immense role not only in providing education and training to the learners but also to nurture the talent inherent in the learners. Technology has been used by ODL in capacity building, as it has been recognized as the most efficient and fastest medium to reach the maximum number of population at a short time. ICT in ODL has the potential to bring talents under one roof and harnessing their skill, upgrading it and then pushing it forward for its productive use.

- ❖ Biswas, Prabir K. and Mythili, G. (2004). An Analytical study of Student Attrition and Completion of Distance Education programmes of IGNOU, available online from [www.col.org/pcf3/papers/PDFs/Biswas\\_Mythili.pdf](http://www.col.org/pcf3/papers/PDFs/Biswas_Mythili.pdf) on 12-08-10

The researchers have attributed the student attrition to lack of time of the learners due to family and job commitments. They have suggested for proper guidance in time management through their core faculty and part-time academic counsellors. Other steps would be, providing intense pre-entry counselling, monitoring the counselling sessions and evaluated assignments with tutor comments, providing more concrete guidance in writing assignments, introducing different types of assignments besides short answer and long answer types, sending evaluated assignments to the students in time, increasing the number of contacts with the core faculty and coordinators of the courses using various technologies like

phone-in radio counselling, teleconferencing, e-mail, and even cell phone, introducing more hands-on experience for skill development and so on.

### **JOURNAL REVIEW: *National***

#### **UNIVERSITY NEWS:**

Amongst the foremost journals that have captured the pace of higher education in India, the University News is one of them. The relevance of distance education in higher education is well gauged from the increasing articles on the non-traditional mode of education.

The various aspects that have been referred to in the journal are of importance as they explain the growth of distance education in India.

The role of distance education in promoting higher education has been recognized. Now, it has also dawned on the majority that distance education not only provides traditional courses but also programmes that is way beyond it. Ghadei and Jiyawan (2010) pointed to the distance education programme in agricultural practices. The authors have highlighted the roles that Open Universities have played in offering agriculture related courses nation-wide. A reference has been also made to the courses provided under KKHSOU, Assam.

Some of the articles have focused on the system of Open Learning pursued in India. The articles have proposed for innovations and changes so as to make distance education sustainable and creditable enough to be banked upon. Prakash and Rao (2012), have suggested for courses which is global than local in nature so as to offer competitive edge to the learners, the training of faculties, revision of learning materials and its efficient delivery. The Government has made every effort to make ODL system a part of the growing higher education sector. Sukhadeo Thorat (2012), in his convocation address states that inclusive policy in higher education would be meaningless without the inclusion of distance education. The dream of inclusive education is fulfilled by distance

education due to its advantages and this truth cannot be denied. This has been stated in the article by Swamy (2011). In another noteworthy paper of Swamy (2011) he has observed the approach of distance education towards women empowerment. Similarly, in his paper, Verma (2012) writes that the 12th Five Year Plan has focused on distance education, as it is one of the most viable options to achieve the 25% target of Gross Enrolment Ratio and hence the Government has undertaken certain tasks like setting up of evening colleges, funding the state Open Universities, and introducing College Cluster University, etc.

Some articles have addressed the issue of management in ODL system and the inner dynamics that shapes the institutional success. Dikshit, Gupta & Garg (2012), have emphasized the role of innovation and leadership in distance learning system. They exemplified IGNOU, which has earned much recognition due to the visionary leadership of the authorities, and the creation of the National Centre of for Innovation. Krishnapalli (2011) too voices his opinion on the governance structure of ODL institutions. According to him, the growth of an institution depends on the dynamic leadership offered by the head of the institution. He laments the situation of present institution and cites the inefficiency of the leaders that has led to the mess in the governing of the educational institutions.

One of the most of the urgent topics discussed in ODL system is the Quality issues. Srivastava and Pani (2012) have looked into the possibility of using Open Educational Resources (OERs) in order to settle the quality issue. The IGNOU initiative of using E-Gyankosh and the creation of National Gateway to Open Education by DEC are some examples of using OERs for distance education. The other aspect of Quality is similarly studied. Srivastava (2012) in her paper has laid stress on accreditation and assessment which can lend credibility to an institution. ODL system has been always been considered as the 'second best option' for the learners, therefore, accreditation is inevitable.

The next vital issue discussed is the use of ICT in ODL system. ODL as a system which is different from the traditional education has made ample use of technology to reach out to the students. Garg (2012) has cited the role of distance learning specially IGNOU in harnessing the benefits of ICT in enabling the learners. The use of satellite communication and such other mode of technology have made distance education a viable mode of education. In a similar paper, Chaudhary, Garg & Gupta (2011) have brought forth the benefits of EDUSAT in making the dream of 'Education for All' a success. This joint venture of ISRO and IGNOU has opened many doors of opportunity for the both the providers of ODL and the learners. In his paper Pradeep (2009) has discussed in detail (II parts) of the state of ICT used in ODL institutions and the obstacles faced for its smooth functioning. In another paper by Hussain, Alam and Kazmi (2011), the immense support of the Government towards the use of ICT and using blended learning in ODL is worth lauding. The major Government projects under the ICT scheme are Sakshat Portal, E-Gyankosh, N-LIST (national Library and Information Services Infrastructure for Scholarly Content, etc. The Government, both Central and the State have an equal responsibility in enhancing the ICT usage.

**IJOL (*Indian Journal of Open Learning*):**

An IGNOU initiative in carrying research and development activities in the field of Open and Distance Learning in India, IJOL is a recognized peer reviewed journal, nationally and internationally. IJOL is an important journal for literature survey, due to its focus on distance learning in India. Moreover, it has always projected the trends, problems and issues of ODL since its inception since 1990s. The journal has kept pace with national as well as international development in the ODL sector. The researcher in her literature study has focused on the ODL issues limited to the national settings.

Yadav (1993) in his paper has described ODL as having a positive effect in ushering a new era for the deprived learners in every corner of the

country. He suggested certain attributes of ODL, which must be ensured to make distance learning a success. Ansari (2002) in his paper makes an assessment of the best practices that have been prevalent in the ODL system in India. He notes that such practices will help in the development of the ODL system. The practices of networking resources use of technology, targeting specific learners, goes well the philosophy underlying distance education. Dikshit (2003) in his inaugural address at the IDEA Conference expressed his satisfaction at the growth of open learning in India but at the same time he also made it a point to say that there are certain areas of concern. He laid stress on research and use of ICT in distance learning. Menon (1998) in his introspection regarding ODL in India highlights the fact that even though ODL has been a huge success, there is a need for changes and innovations. Nayak (2001) has also tried to highlight the same in his paper. He makes an attempt to look into the crisis of the ODL system and the future it holds.

Koul and Menon (1992) have discussed the role of distance education in providing teacher education. The Government started the programme in order to solve the problem of untrained teachers and distance learning seems the best option to impart training for the teachers. Besides, teacher education, distance learning has also diverged to the field of management education as in Yadav (1996). Sreekumar (1998) has claimed through his paper that distance education is equally effective in providing skill to the learners. The paper was based on the management programme offered to the learners and it was found that the learners could acquire the necessary skills and the use of ICT went well with the programme. Sivaswaroop (2002) in his empirical paper has noted that the enrolment in distance education has varied according to the region as well as courses.

The social impact and benefit of distance learning is well furnished from the following papers. Roy (2002) has marked the role of distance learning as an alternate strategy to empower the marginalized section of the society. Distance Education and its role in uplifting the society has been

well documented in some other papers. Srivastava, Kurup and Nembiakkim (2007) in their paper have tried to focus out on the North East Region and suggested that ODL can best suit such region and with creative ideas, ODL can make a difference in the region. In a paper by Kishore (1999) it was revealed that the learners of IGNOU were mostly urban based and male. The question of equity in ODL thus raises much doubt. Sreekumar (2000) in his paper looks into the role of distance education in developing human resource. The study was based on the IGNOU learners based in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Though there were some problems in academic matters as well some lack in delivery services, yet the learners responded positively to the progress they made in the programme. Thomas (1996) and Sharma (1996) have both delved on the gender aspect of distance education. The papers confide that ODL is expected to bring positive changes for women and hence, efforts have been made for bringing change in related sphere within distance education system to make it gender friendly as well empowering. The problems of female students and the reason for their drop out has also been of concern and in her paper, Taplin, cited socio-cultural factors, lack of motivation, financial difficulties etc. that led to their dropping out of the courses under ODL.

Technology and its use in ODL have also been studied as evident from some papers. Mahajan (2002) emphasized on the challenges faced in matters of technology under distance education. E-learning has been the new trend in distance learning in India as evident from the research study done by Killedar (2001). In his paper, he admits that the use of e-learning has increased enrolment rate in YCMOU particularly in the electronics engineering diploma programme. Interactive Radio and Counseling service is also beckoning new opportunities as it proves to be the most convenient and cheap form of communication. Sukumar (2001), in his study found that the public were more attracted to interactive radio counseling and even females were the most frequent callers and the most asked queries were related to computer science programmes. In another

study by Rao (2008), it was found that even though the students were aware of the multi-media services but they hardly use it. Thus, the paper defies the fact that the existence of media can attract learners but the truth remains that awareness about it is as much required. Pulist (2001) also derived the same inclusion in his study which stated that the learners shifted from internet based study to regular mode printed study materials.

Besides these themes, other topics touched were the student support services. Krishnapalli (2011) raised serious issue regarding the quality of student support services in the state open universities and suggested reforms within the system. Agrawal, Sharma and Ghosh (2007) in their study have noted the best practices endeavored in learner support services under IGNOU. The issue of quality was touched upon by Ramanujam (1993) in which he focused on the problems faced by the learners in regard to the study materials and also the quality concerns of the materials. The paper suggests that there should be an agency to evaluate the quality of the study materials as because the materials are the lifeline of the students under the distance mode of education. The other relevant issue that has been under investigation is management ethics in Open Universities and DE institutions. Ahmmed (2004) makes a comparative study of two Open Universities, Bangladesh Open University and Bhim Rao Ambedkar Open University of India. The study revealed that the Indian Open University showed much flexibility in decision matters, schedule management and workload distributions etc. In another paper by Zhang, Jegede, Tsuj, Ng and Kwok (2002), the management style of management in 12 Asian countries were studied. It was noted that gender disparity was high in India, printed materials still remained the basic mode of delivery, and details like the socio-cultural factors had an impact on the outcome indicator of these Universities.

#### **INTERNATIONAL JOURNALS:**

- ❖ Kumar, L.S., Biplab Jamatia, A.K. Aggarwal and S Kannan (2011).  
Mobile Device Intervention for Student Support Services in Distance

Education Context – FRAME Model Perspective, *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning*. [Available Online]. Accessed on 21-09-12 from [http://www.eurodl.org/materials/contrib/2011/Kumar\\_Jamatia\\_Aggarwal\\_Kannan.pdf](http://www.eurodl.org/materials/contrib/2011/Kumar_Jamatia_Aggarwal_Kannan.pdf)

The aim of the research was to study the effectiveness of mobile device intervention in the distance education programmes under IGNOU. The learners have expressed high level of satisfaction in relation to the use of mobile devices for learner support services through information exchange (device aspect and device usability intersection). Majority of learners expressed confidence in welcoming any possible move in IGNOU for content delivery through mobile device. In terms of Koole's model both the statements bring out the effectiveness of the intervention in terms of the device aspect, device usability intersection and interaction learning. As far as the responses from the PICs are concerned, 60% of them have been utilizing the mobile phones for interaction with the learners while the rest did not feel the need in the light of frequent counselling sessions.

- ❖ Bharat Inder Fozdar, Lalita S. Kumar, and S. Kannan (2006).A Survey of Study on the Reasons Responsible for Student Dropout from the Bachelor of Science Programme at Indira Gandhi National Open University, *The International Review of Research in Distance Learning*, Vol. 7, No.3. [Available Online]. Accessed on 29-09-12 from <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/291/747>

Under different context it was revealed that the mobile technology could be an effective tool to improve the learner support activities and learning and be instrumental in lowering the attrition rate by removing the sense of isolation amongst learners. From this study, nine main reasons for withdrawal have been identified, which were mostly related to the study centers, counseling sessions, time consuming programmes, etc. The authors have suggested that more study centers should be established so that people far and wide can reach it, and that counseling sessions should

be interactive. The paper attempts to reveal the importance of student support services in ODL.

- ❖ Sharma, Hemant Lata (2002). Student Support Services in Distance Learning System- a Case of DDE, Maharshi Dayanand University, *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, Vol.3, No. 4. [Available Online]. Retrieved on 21-09-12 from <http://tojde.anadolu.edu.tr/tojde8/articles/mdu.htm>

The paper illustrates the structure of student support services provided in a dual mode university. The author states that services are provided to the students at a two tier level. First at the headquarter level and then at the study center level. It is noted that in a dual mode University that the major responsibility of offering services rests with the head office or the Distance Education Centre of the University. The study center only acts as the buffer between the Centre and the learner.

- ❖ Jung, Insung (2007). Changing Faces of Open and Distance Learning in Asia, *The International Review of Research in Distance Learning*, Vol. 8 No.1. [Available Online]. Accessed on 21/09/12 from [www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/418/773](http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/418/773)

In his editorial article, Jung writes on the trends that have been noticed in the ODL system in the Asian countries for some time. The quality culture has evolved in the institutions providing distance education in the developing countries. They have also started cross border education and looking not only for national recognition but international certification, which only highlights the fact that distance education has gained much recognition. ICT has been profoundly in use with many institutions trying to reach out to a large population. However, in Asia, though ICT has been in use yet it has not been able to bridge the digital divide.

- ❖ Melinda dela Pena-Bandalaria (2007). Impact of ICTs on Open and Distance Learning in a Developing Country Setting: The Philippine experience, *The International Review of Research in Distance*

*Learning*, Vol.8 No.1. [Available Online], Retrieved on 9.09.12 from [www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/334](http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/334)

The article tends to look into the use and impact of ICT in Philippines. Even though technology has infiltrated in the country of Philippines, yet it must be noted that it has certain shortcomings that have resulted in the slow progress of ODL through ICT. The problems of lack of resources have proved a big hindrance to the development of ICT and its diverse use. Thus, a creative use of ICT and efficient management can definitely mitigate the problem of resources and expand the ODL system.

- ❖ Pierrakeas, Christos, Michalis Xenos, Christos Panagiotakopoulos and Dimitris Vergidis (2004). A Comparative Study of Dropout Rates and Causes for Two Different Distance Education Courses, *The International Review of Research in Distance Learning*, Vol.5 No.2. [Available Online]. Accessed on 9-09-12 from [www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/183](http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/183)

In the paper above, the reason for drop outs in The Hellenic Open University in Greece was studied and it appeared from the empirical data that drop outs in distance learning consisted of learners in the age group of 30-39 and especially those learners who were employed. Professional demands have been the reason. Similarly, other reasons being problem with tutors, communication problem, lack of qualification for higher courses, health and family reasons too were cited in certain cases. But the most important findings were the fact that academic causes led to drop outs and therefore, the authors have suggested for adequate strategies in order to retain the dropout rates.

- ❖ Dadigamuwa, P.R. & Samans Senanayake (2012). Motivating Factors that Affect Enrolment and Student Performance in an ODL Engineering Program, *The International Review of Research in Distance Learning*, Vol. 13 (1). [Available Online]. Accessed on 9-09-12 from [www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1034/2088](http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1034/2088)

The article tries to look into the factors that would motivate students to enroll in distance learning course, especially engineering programs in the Open University of Sri Lanka. According to their findings, it appeared that accreditation played the major role in attracting the students to the distance education system. The students chose the institutions due to the recognition awarded to the programme. The paper highlighted some important drawbacks that students face while enrolling which leads to drop outs. The authors opine that the new learners should be made aware of the distance education system, with more personnel counseling and every 'erroneous' notion of the learner regarding ODL should be removed. Even though distance learning is very student centric, the authors found in their survey that it was equally important for the faculty to provide the courses in time enable for better interaction and mitigate the learners' problems.

- ❖ Singh, Shashi, Ajay Singh & Kiran Singh (2012). Motivation levels among Traditional and Open Learning Undergraduate Students in India, *The International Review of Research in Distance Learning*, Vol. 13 (3). [Available Online]. Accessed on 9-09-12 from [www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1050](http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1050)

In a comparative study of the motivation level between the traditional students and the distance learners, it was revealed that the level of motivation was low amongst the distance learners. And there was marked difference amongst the genders in both the educational system. It was also noted that the academic environment in traditional system raises the motivation level amongst its students. The authors in this paper have suggested for better infrastructure facilities, increasing the credibility of degrees, increasing the roles of tutors, and increasing familiarity with information and communication technology are required in OES to uplift the motivation of its learners.

- ❖ Chandar, Usha and Sharma, Ramesh (2003). Bridges to Effective Learning through Radio, *The International Review of Research in*

*Distance Learning*, Vol. 4 No.1. Accessed on 9-09-12, from [www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/118/198](http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/118/198)

According to the authors, radio has an effective role to play in the lives of the people and especially in education. The survey was done to acquire the feedback regarding the use of radio, or rather GyanVani, by the IGNOU learners. And it was revealed that 83 per cent followed print media. 54% listened to radio regularly, but disturbingly 44% were unaware of FM technology. Interestingly only 25% indicated they primarily used radio for learning purposes. Equally important, respondents were clear that they did not want ads or some 'fancy' anchors to host educational programmes. Instead, they were generally looking programmes that would fulfil both their personal and educational objectives.

- ❖ Gulati, Shalini (2008). Technology-Enhanced Learning in Developing Nations: A review, *The International Review of Research in Distance Learning*, Vol. 9(1). [Available Online]. Accessed from [www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/477/1012](http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/477/1012) on 9-09-12

In her paper, Gulati reiterates that technology in distance education in developing should be made available according to the needs of the learners. Because the availability of new technologies will definitely throw open the door to the world market, but will not help the deprived groups to gain access to educational opportunities. High percentages of people from the deprived section will continue living on the periphery.

- ❖ Hoter, E., Shonfeld, M. & Ganayim, Asmaa (2009). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Service of Multiculturalism, *The International Review of Research in Distance Learning*, Vol. 10(2). [Available Online]. Accessed on 9-09-12 from [www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/601](http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/601)

The paper has been developed within the Israel system of education, yet it has a meaning for every ODL system around the globe. Through this

paper, the authors have pointed out that besides the “digital-divide” we talk so often in matters regarding the use of ICT in distance education it must also be kept in mind that ICT can help in bridging the gap between secular and conflicting minds and maintain a social atmosphere of peace. The OICH model not only helps bridge the gap among cultures but also promotes advanced uses of technology for trainees’ self-improvement and other pedagogical goals. The use of multiple technologies can improve the ICT abilities of the participants and improve participant relationships by reducing bias and stereotyping of other groups.

- ❖ Valk, J.M., Ahmed, T. Rashid and Elder, Laurent (2010). Using Mobile Phones to Improve Educational Outcomes: An Analysis of Evidence from Asia, *The International Review of Research in Distance Learning*, Vol. 11(1). [Available Online]. Accessed on 9-09-12 from [www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/794/1487](http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/794/1487)

The study reveals through the feedback from participants, that the greatest indication of the benefits of mobile phone-assisted distance education is its economic benefit of being cheap and yet accessible to the millions at the press of button. Evaluations have also revealed a high satisfaction with the content and effectiveness of the training program. Trainees particularly valued the distance education approach as it was flexible and independent, thus allowing to stay in touch with their schools and families during that period.

The study is based on m-learning (mobile learning) projects that was conducted in Philippines, Bangladesh, Mongolia, Thailand and India. Thus, the result of the study has a deep implication for the Indian context.

- ❖ Sewart, D. (1993). Student Support Systems in Distance Education in *Open Learning*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 3-12. [Available Online]. Accessed on 9-09-12 from <http://www.c3l.uni-oldenburg.de/cde/support/readings/sewart93.pdf>

Student support services form an important element within the ODL system. It is both a strength and weakness. Strength, it is because it leads to dealing better with the students through the intermediaries and a weakness, because the intermediaries, in acting for the student, can also be seen as acting against the institution as a whole. The management of student support needs to take account of the needs of the students as expressed by themselves or by the intermediaries in a structure which manages the intermediaries within the resource, policy and planning definition of the sub-system. No detailed prescription of student support services in general can be made. Each system must be derived rather from a number of principles.

- ❖ Kumar, Sunil, Chaudhary, Neelam, & Shankar, Girija (2008). Extending Open Distance Learning into Rural North-Eastern India, *Asian Journal of Distance Education*, Vol. 6 (2), pp. 17-31. [Available Online]. Accessed on 9-09-12 from <http://www.asianjde.org/2008v6.2.Kumar.pdf>

The paper throws light on the socio-economic situation of North East with its poor infrastructure and disturbing conflicts. However, the paper sees hope in the ODL systems to reach the un-reached segment of the society by offering quality education. The authors have looked into the role of IGNOU in the region and have suggested for reforms so that education reaches the doorstep of every people in the region.

- ❖ Rao. S. Raja (2008). The Social Basis of Distance Education: Strategies for Inclusive Growth, *Asian Journal of Distance Education*, Vol. 6(2). [Available Online]. Accessed on 9-09-12 from [www.asianjde.org/2008v6.2.RajaRao.pdf](http://www.asianjde.org/2008v6.2.RajaRao.pdf)

Even though facts reveal that social basis in ODL is skewed, yet it cannot be denied that distance education has provided educational opportunities to many disadvantaged students who are otherwise deprived of the chance to improve their educational qualifications and skills. The authors

have provided suggestions for more inclusive education within the ODL system. They are counseling, hostel facility, scholarships, special education funds, etc. The paper stresses the fact that distance education has to fulfill the main objective of reaching out to the large section of the underprivileged person and only then the social base of distance education can be balanced.

- ❖ Shelley, F. E. & Ferdousi, Nahid (2011), Distance Education for Social Development in Bangladesh, *Asian Journal of Distance Education*, Vol. 9(2). [Available Online]. Accessed on 9-09-12 from [www.asianjde.org/2011v9.2.Shelley.pdf](http://www.asianjde.org/2011v9.2.Shelley.pdf)

The paper makes an attempt in bringing into practice the benefits of distance education in a real life situation. The study is based in Bangladesh, wherein for the development of social wellbeing of the people, the paper suggest for the introduction of non-formal legal and health education to create awareness about early marriage through distance mode. The end result of such programme would be the creation of health personnel in the grass root level. More emphasis should be given through distance mode of education as the conventional legal and health education system in developing countries have failed in providing the health education to the large segment of population, particularly for the poor and the deprived people. But since distance mode is less expensive and can reach to the people more easily, the use of distance mode is sure to bring a new change in the social dimension of the developing society.

- ❖ Beesley, Andrea D. and Doyle L. Cavins (2000). Marketing Distance Learning with an Ad Agency, *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, Volume V, Number II, USA. [Available Online]. Accessed on 21-09-12 from [http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/summer52/beesley\\_cavins52.pdf](http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/summer52/beesley_cavins52.pdf)

Marketing is increasingly essential to distance learning programs as we endeavor to survive and compete in a crowded marketplace, where new

providers with large budgets are constantly entering the scene. Skillful marketing strategies can help maintain and increase market share, change or improve a program's image, and create public awareness.

However, the personnel of distance learning programs and their parent institutions are often too busy to give marketing the time and attention it deserves, and frequently lack the necessary expertise to market effectively alone.

#### **GOVERNEMENT/OFFICIAL REPORTS:**

- ❖ Rajagopalan, T. (2007). *A study of the Development of the State Open Universities in India, Consultant's Report*. Available online. [Available Online]. Accessed on 7-09-12 from [http://www.col.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/A\\_study\\_of\\_the\\_Development\\_of\\_the\\_State\\_Open\\_Universities\\_in\\_India.pdf](http://www.col.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/A_study_of_the_Development_of_the_State_Open_Universities_in_India.pdf)

The present study is a report on the status of the State Open Universities in India, in particular and that of ODL in general. The report has made an extensive study of all the 13 state open universities. The reports show that the SOUs in India do not present a uniform picture. The features common in the SOUs of India are: (i) SOUs are merely copying the traditional institutions, (ii) These institutions have shown a hesitant attitude to experimentation with ICT, (iii) Lack of funds from government source and resource generation from oneself and (iv) massive drop-out rates in distance mode.

The traditional campus based universities transformed themselves from a single mode to a dual mode set up, to generate huge revenues by enrolling large numbers of students in these ICEs. Correspondence Institutes under a traditional University was a way of getting more funds and hence, development of distance education was very slow. Quality was not given much priority as it was a novel attempt.

The report points the drawbacks of the SOUs in India. There is a paucity of competent personnel in the system. The faculty strength is inadequate to fulfill the objectives of the OU. Those state OUs which maintain a good equation with the state governments concerned manage to wangle more funds for such components of their work.

The Indian state OUs present a diversified picture with only a few doing really commendable work and the others just carrying on in a pedestrian fashion. There can be no doubt that the faculty and staff deployed for student support services should be people with zeal and a love for working with different groups of learners, the bulk of these being in the category of youth. These include procrastination on the part of the staff to even entertain their queries, delayed responses to even urgent issues, rude behavior and downright rejection.

Relevance of the course offerings to the society at large has claimed attention in a few state Open Universities. Not all the state OUs have proved efficient at this task; very few exceptions do exist. This may be due to the reluctance on the part of the OU administration to depart from the beaten track and try out new techniques.

- ❖ Menon, Prof. N. R. Madhava (*Standards 2010*). *Report of the Committee to Suggest Measures to Regulate the Standards of Education Being Imparted through Distance Mode*. [Available Online]. Retrieved on 9-09-12 from [http://www.teindia.nic.in/Files/TE-Vikram/Madhava\\_Menon\\_committee\\_on\\_ODL.pdf](http://www.teindia.nic.in/Files/TE-Vikram/Madhava_Menon_committee_on_ODL.pdf)

A crucial report, as it is, the Menon Report suggested for an independent regulatory body for recognition and accreditation of Open Universities and DE Institutions. The proposed body should be an autonomous part of NCHER keeping in view special requirements of the distance education system. The existing Distance Education Council (DEC) at IGNOU may become an integral part of the proposed Council for distance education

and subsumed in it. Equivalence of Open and Distance education programmes vis-à-vis same face to face programmes in conventional system is desired to bring ODL degrees at par with conventional degrees. The technical programmes may be allowed to be offered through distance mode under blended mode incorporating ICT technologies, live telecast lectures and virtual lab facilities along with face to face component and laboratories facilities for hands on practice. The norms and guidelines may be developed in this regard. The offering of programmes cannot have territorial jurisdiction. The territorial jurisdiction may be as per the Act/Statutes/MoA etc. of the concerned Institution for offering programmes through distance mode. The proposed Council as an independent regulatory body for distance education may have members from the following areas: (i) One technology expert with good knowledge of ICT (ii) One member from corporate/social sector. (iii) One higher education expert. (iv) One distance education expert One Expert representing stake holders. The M.Phil and Ph.D programmes should be conducted by the Open Universities. Skill oriented and professional vocational Work Integrated Learning programmes may be encouraged to be offered through distance mode to increase the GER from 12% to 30% in next 10 yrs with 30-50% increase of GER through distance mode.

❖ *Report of the Working Group on Higher Education for the XII<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan.* [Available Online]. Accessed on 9-09-12 from [http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/committee/wrkgrp12/hrd/wg\\_hiedu.pdf](http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/committee/wrkgrp12/hrd/wg_hiedu.pdf)

The XII Five Year Plan reiterates the earlier tag of “Access, Equity and Quality” with emphasis on Inclusive Education. The main objective stated is to increase the GER from 15% to 30% by 2020. The UGC report suggests for the establishment of evening colleges, under the “*Rashtriya Uchch Shiksha Abhiyan*” (RUSA) scheme. The report has commended the role of ODL in the expansion of higher education.

- ❖ *Education in India: 2007-08 Participation and Expenditure NSS 64th Round* (July 2007 – June 2008. [Available Online]. Retrieved on 9-09-12 from [http://mospi.nic.in/mospi\\_new/upload/532\\_final.pdf](http://mospi.nic.in/mospi_new/upload/532_final.pdf)

The NSS report is based on the findings of the 64th Round all-India survey on 'Participation and Expenditure in Education'. The report reveals that the attendance ratio has started dropping steadily from 88% in age-group 6-10 and 86% at age 11-13, to 64% for age 14-17, 18% for the age-group 18-24, and finally to only 1% for age 25-29. Rural-urban differences are more pronounced here than male-female differences, especially in the higher age-groups. At post-HS level, the proportion of students in general education was another 4.8%, while only 1.9% was in technical education and 0.3% was in vocational education. The percentage of students pursuing technical education was 4.7% in urban areas (with little difference in the percentage for females and males) and only 0.9% in rural areas (1.2% among rural males and 0.6% among rural females). The proportion receiving vocational education was 0.2% for rural students and 0.3% for urban students.

In the age-group 18-24, the percentage of students was 27% in urban areas but less than 15% in rural areas. The gap between rural and urban percentage of students widens with increase in age, and, to a lesser extent, so does the gap between female and male percentage. It is interesting to note that expenditure on vocational education for females was more than that for males in both rural and urban sectors.

- ❖ *Higher Education in India-Issues related to Expansion, Inclusiveness, Quality and Finance* (2008). UGC Report. [Available Online]. Retrieved on 19-2-11 from <http://www.ugc.ac.in/oldpdf/pub/report/12.pdf>

Although the enrolment rate in higher education is about 11 %, there are significant inter group disparities in access to higher education. The NSS data for 2004-05 (latest year for which the NSS data are available)

indicates significant rural and urban disparities- enrolment rate being 6.73 percent and 19.80 per cent for the rural and the urban areas respectively – the GER in the urban areas being three times higher compared to rural areas. However, inter-caste/tribe disparities are the most prominent. It is, thus, evident that the SCs, the STs, and the OBCs from all religion suffer from lower access to higher education. The 11th plan recognized the issue of quality. It has brought a sharp focus on the promotion of quality and excellence. The Plan recognizes that quality in higher education is critically incumbent on a) physical infrastructure, b) Number and quality of teachers, and c) academic governance in Universities and colleges.

❖ *XIth Plan Document on Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India Report.* [Available Online]. Retrieved on 9-9-12 from [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/XIPlandocument\\_1.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/XIPlandocument_1.pdf)

The Eleventh Plan will support IGNOU, existing SOUs and the States setting up new SOUs. Considering the dismal performance of some of the statutory bodies, in-depth and independent evaluation of these statutory bodies will be undertaken urgently. Consortium for Educational Communication Centre (CEC) will set up a technology enabled system of mass higher education by taking advantage of Vyas24-hours Education Channel for one way communication, EDUSAT network for two-way communication and Internet for 'any time anywhere' education. The thrust areas will include strengthening of the existing media centres, setting up of new media centres in those States where no centres exist, strengthening of the concepts of packaging knowledge in video and e-content form in need-based subject areas, transforming the CEC and media centre into a virtual university system. In the Eleventh Plan, The share of education in the total plan outlay will correspondingly increase from 7.7% to 19.4%. Around 50% of Eleventh Plan outlay is for elementary education and literacy, 20% for secondary education, and 30% for higher education (including technical education).

We should aim to increase the GER to 21% by the end of the Twelfth Plan with an interim target of 15% by 2011–12. To achieve this, the enrolments in Universities/Colleges need to be substantially raised at an annual rate of 8.9% to reach 21 million by 2011–12.

The general trend of higher education and the progress of education have been emphasized in the reports like the Annual Report of UGC (2010-11). Similarly in the report “Higher Education in India at a glance”, 2012 there has been a repeated stress on the problems of higher education related to access and equity. The ‘Report to the people on Education’, 2010-11 specifies the context in which development in higher education is taking place. Most of the reports (Inclusive and Qualitative Expansion of Higher Education the 12 Five-Year Plan, 2012-17) deal with the topic of inclusiveness as it been ingrained in the Government educational policy.

It is not surprising though that all the reports have accepted the role of distance learning in the expansion of higher education. The National Knowledge Commission Report to the nation (2006-09) and the UGC report on higher education (Higher Education in India: Issues, Concerns and New Directions, 2003) have acknowledged that ODL serves the purpose of higher education in the present context and it must be given all possible support.

❖ (Unpublished Research Project) *Access and Performance Mapping of KK Handique State Open University* (2008), Guwahati, Assam

The Project was a minor one under the direction of Akhil Ranjan Dutta et al., sponsored by the State Open University of Assam. The Report is a form of feedback from the stakeholders of ODL, specially the learners, the officials at the study centre and the parents. The Report brings out the relevance of distance education in Assam and the performance of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University in this sphere. The report suggests that courses should have more day to day relevance rather than the same traditional subjects taught years after years. It suggest courses on Patents,

human security, human development, public policy and governance, peace, traditional institutions, entrepreneurship etc.

The Report marks the accessibility of KKHSOU as an ODL institution. While the highest number of learners belong to the age group of 18-25 and mostly belonged to the lower and middle income families. BPP scores high amongst the other courses for high enrolment while Degree Courses comes next in second as the favoured course amongst the KKHSOU learners. The learners have chosen KKHSOU due to its course, reasonable fee structure and the feeling that it is situated locally. Most of the learners have got their desired course in KKHSOU. However, the satisfaction over the study materials was not up to the mark.

The Report also took into consideration the opinion of the officials at the study centre (Coordinators and others) and parents. The report gives a positive feedback on the perception of distance education amongst these groups of people. There is a major consensus about the future prospect of distance education in Assam.

From a thorough literature survey, it was found that though many of the literature dealt with distance education in all its aspect, yet at the regional and state level, the research has been done on the contemporary status of distance education with emphasis on IGNOU and PGCS, Gauhati University. The present study attempts to fill in the gaps that have been found in the earlier research work done in the field of distance education. The study makes an attempt in understanding the growth of distance education in general consisting of all institutions (private excluded) and to redefine distance education through the trends that have set within the system. The study tracks the institutional growth record in the state for more than two decades starting from 1986 (when IGNOU first established its regional centre in Shillong) to 2012 (which marks the end of the Twelfth Five Year Plan).

### **1.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

Qualitative Research Methodology along with a historical approach has been used for the study. This method has been solely used due to the contemporary nature of the issue and in order to justify the findings of the study. The historical approach has been applied in order to widen the socio-economic base behind the rise of distance education. The qualitative research method was used due to the exploratory and descriptive nature of the study. All the three forms of exploratory studies<sup>7</sup> viz, Review of available literature, Expert surveys, Case Studies have been applied to the study.

The interviews with the administrative heads of Madurai Kamaraj University (MKU), study centre at Guwahati, Director of DDE (Directorate of Distance Education), Dibrugarh University, Director of IDOL (Institute of Distance and Open Learning), Gauhati University, Deputy Director of IGNOU Regional Centre, Guwahati, Vice-Chancellor of KKHSOU, Guwahati provided much information and insight into the DE system in Assam.

### **1.6. SAMPLING:**

Sampling in Qualitative research is linked with theory. The sample may be chosen during the time of collecting the data. The most common sampling used in Qualitative Research is snowball sampling or theoretical sampling.

As Berger and Sarantakos<sup>8</sup> puts forward that sampling in qualitative research is directed not towards a large mass of respondents or subjects but only towards some particular cases that can explain the study or research work. It is flexible based on the suitability.

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7. Ahuja, Ram (2001). *Research Methods*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, p. 135-136

8. Ibid., p. 184

Interview Schedule: The set of structure questions in which answers are recorded by the interviewer himself is called interview schedule or simply the schedule<sup>9</sup>.

Interviews bring out the unexplored dimensions of the problem<sup>10</sup>. The interview method also helps to examine the non-verbal communication that can be an added source in a qualitative research.

The semi-structured interview is the most flexible and with no formal obligations on the part of the interviewer or the interviewee. It generally floats like a normal conversation putting the subject at ease and thus pushing the chances of acquiring valued information.

For the study, a semi-structure interview was conducted due to the busy schedule of the interviewees. The interview revolved round some of the most crucial issues in distance education. Direct Observation, the observer plays a passive role without attempting to control or manipulate the situation. The observer merely records what occurs<sup>11</sup>. Observation is a method that employs vision to collect data and information<sup>12</sup>.

### **1.7. RESEARCH APPROACH:**

The particular study being qualitative has made use of the Case Study method approach. Case study as a research strategy has been long used in social science research. It is an in-depth study of particular individual, community, organization or institution etc. Case study proves an important tool in research study as it has advantage of understanding more deeply the particular phenomenon. The case study enables the researcher to probe deep in each case and make a theory. Case study helps to move from particular to the more general and broad area.

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9. Ibid., p. 194

10. Ibid., p. 222

11. Ahuja, Ram (2001). Op.cit. p 222

12. Ibid

The institutions the researcher probed for the study, and which acted as the cases were: Indira Gandhi National Open University, Institute of Distance and Open Learning, Gauhati University, Directorate of Distance Education, Dibrugarh University and Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University.

### **1.8. DATA COLLECTION:**

The data for the study was collected through- (i) Literary Sources, (ii) Oral Testimony and (iii) Direct Observation

#### ***Literary Sources:***

Both primary sources in the form of documents, Institutional Reports/ Newsletter, Annual Reports of the Open Universities/ DEIs, MHRD reports, UGC Reports, DEC Reports, State Government Reports, Prospectus/Course Materials and secondary sources in the form of published books, open access journals available online, research papers and articles from online journals. The researcher actually zeroed on the interviews of the official heads of the key Institutions, which is the focus of the study. This was due to the fact that, these key persons would be able to throw light as well as provide information on the subject in which they gained much experience as well expertise.

#### ***Observation:***

Observation is used in qualitative study. The act of seeing things could reveal a lot about the institution, place, monument etc. The researcher used direct observation in this study. There was no attempt to control the settings or the environment. The researcher recorded the events and happenings as it was.

### **1.9. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:**

The data has been presented in the form of charts and graphs as it was found convenient to arrange the growth trend in a systematic order. In the

present study the researcher has used historical criticism to evaluate the authenticity of the documents collected.

#### **1.10. CONCEPTUAL TERMS:**

1. Correspondence Education: It is a formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; courses are typically self-paced<sup>13</sup>.

2. Distance Education: This term has a wider connotation than correspondence education. It is well organized and in every stage of the process, it is planned and managed. Print medium along with multi-media is used, enabling two way communications between the learners and the teachers.

3. Open Learning: The term “open” has a broad meaning. It aims to facilitate the access of education to every person without any restriction.

Open Learning is mostly associated with single mode Universities, the Open Universities.

4. Globalization: The post 1991 years have been termed as the period of globalization due to the shift in the economic policy of the Indian Government. The term is used globally. Globalization is characterized by privatization and marketization of goods.

5. ICT (Information and Communication Technology): The term ICT has been used in this study. It only means the technologies that are being

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13. Distance and Correspondence Education - Policy Statement (2010), Retrieved from <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/Distance%20and%20correspondence%20policy%20final.pdf> on 11-09-12.

used for education purpose. The ICT thus serves the purpose of dissemination knowledge and information.

### **1.11. NEED OF THE STUDY:**

The study on the “**Emergence and Growth of Distance Education in Assam**” was chosen for its contemporary relevance. The aim is to understand the origin of distance education and its historical settings that preceded it. Furthermore, it investigates the conditions that gave rise to distance education. The importance of the study lies in the fact that it is an attempt at evaluating the growth of DE in different phases.

The study tries to focus on the institutional growth and the trends that have set within it. The research purpose is to analyse the impact of distance education on the state. The study also tries to gauge the attitude of the common man towards distance education through qualitative analysis based on sources. The research also emphasizes on the need of distance education in an economy like Assam and at the same time looks into the problems of distance education.

The study is likely to enable the policy makers, the educators, and those associated in the field of distance education to understand the socio-economic base of distance education and the drawbacks of the system. The suggestions provided will definitely go a long way to take measures in order to bring sustainability to the distance education. It aims to enrich the knowledge base of the society on the various aspects of distance education.

The aim is to explore the various dimensions in distance education and critically analyze the key issues. The issues are basically those that revolve around the learners, the support services and the institutions. Not only does the study bring out the quantitative details of the institutions but also looks into the socio-economic benefits of the ODL system to the learners of the state.

The study makes an attempt to link the development of the state with the growth of higher education, especially distance education.

#### **1.12. SCOPE OF THE STUDY:**

As for the scope of the research, it is an extensive study of the single mode Open Universities and dual mode Universities providing distance education. The study also encompasses some Universities whose parent body is situated outside the state of Assam, some private Institutes involved in distance education. This exhaustive study is intended to bring the different players in the field of distance education to the fore and analyse their growth and achievements.

The study aims to bring out the holistic picture of distance education in the state and hence offers a good scope for further study and formulation of policy measures.

Though the present study has limited itself to document and records, there is immense scope for further research on distance education. Some of the issues that could be taken up for further study or research are:

- Quality Assurance Mechanism (QAM) in ODL (Open and Distance Learning) system
- Management Strategies in the ODL (Open and Distance Learning) system
- ODL (Open and Distance Learning) through the stakeholder's perspective
- Innovation and Creativity in the ODL (Open and Distance Learning) system

#### **1.13. LIMITATIONS:**

Every research topic or study has its definite limitations. These limitations are deliberately set in order to stay focused on a particular theme and not to be led astray. This research study also has certain limitations, so that it enables the researcher to stay focused on the predetermined track.

Distance Education itself engrosses a vast academic horizon and hence to cover all its aspects is a difficult task. Hence, the topic has been chosen with certain limitations. The limitations for this study are given below.

- The study is mostly concentrated in higher education or the tertiary level. Distance Education is offered in all levels of education and hence, it becomes a broad area of study. Therefore the researcher keeping in mind the time frame limits the study only on the tertiary level.
- The study also has geographical limitations. It is basically limited to Assam in North East India.
- The study does not include private distance learning/teaching institute as well as those distant learners who are pursuing their higher studies from a private University.

#### **1.14. CHAPTERISATION:**

The research work has been divided into the following chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction, which highlights in brief the background based on which the entire research has been framed. The chapter gives an account of the current scenario at the national as well as the regional level of distance education. The literature survey is also included within the chapter.

The second chapter throws light on the history of higher education in India. From the ancient period to the present day, higher education has undergone many changes and the approaches towards it have also changed with the growing socio-economic dynamics of the society. The chapter tries to analyse the problems and setbacks that have come to the fore in higher education sector. The status of higher education in Assam has also been studied and analysed critically with a historical perspective.

In the third chapter, distance education is defined and the concepts that revolve round it are discussed. This chapter is on the historical emergence

of distance education, globally, nationally and locally. The rapid growth of distance education has been investigated in the region.

The fourth chapter is the beginning of long journey entailed by distance education in Assam. It highlights the situation of distance education between the years 1986 to 1996. The year 1986 is chosen because it was in this year that IGNOU started its study centre in Assam and this was the beginning of a massive growth of distance education and hence, the researcher has only dealt with initial period.

The fifth chapter deals in detail the role of the centers of distance education in the state. The time period is 1996-2006. The year 1996 marks the growth of distance education and it was in this year that Guwahati became the Regional Centre for IGNOU thus bringing distance education in a big way to the soil of Assam. The institutions to be studied in this chapter are: IGNOU, IDOL (Gauhati University), DDE (Dibrugarh University) and HPU (Shimla)

The sixth chapter is a study of the period from 2006 onwards. This period is the period of renaissance as it was during this period that distance education was transformed from a traditional stage to that of what was newly defined as "Distance or Open Learning". The innovation brought during this period makes a whole new impact on the progress and growth of distance education.

The seventh chapter includes the analysis of the findings reported in the previous three chapters, which studies the growth of distance education from 1986-2011.

The final chapter sums up the entire research study that was conducted. The chapter is a discussion based on the data that were gathered from the literary as well as primary sources and mentioned in the previous chapter and the implication it has on the future of distance education. The chapter also includes problems and the suggestions that may enable the decision

makers to take a deeper look into the state of ODL and make it more relevant and up-to-date.

The chapters have been arranged according to the research theme and the focus has been on periodizing the growing trend in distance education through the case study of DE Institutions.