



HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA AND UTTARAKHAND: ROLE OF CONVENTIONAL VS OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING SYSTEMS

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Abstract

This research study aimed to review the status of higher education in India and in depth analysis of higher education particularly ODL in one of its State – Uttarakhand. As far as the GER of India is concerned, it is still below the global average and it is a major issue of concern for a country having second largest population load in the world. Although, the gross enrolment as well as male-female enrolment increased continuously during the study period (2012 to 2020) but the contribution of female to gross enrolment is still lower than the males. Similar was the case with the weaker sections. Among weaker sections, highest contribution was of OBCs followed by SCs and STs, respectively. Muslim minorities that has share 14.2 percent in the population of the country, there share in gross enrolment was only more or less 7 % during the study period. Therefore, if India has to reach a target of 50% GER by the year 2035 as laid down in the National Education Policy, then the weaker sections, minority groups and far-flung remote regions need to be focused and here the role of ODL can be crucial. In order to understand the role of ODL, a case of Uttarakhand State was analyzed in depth. It was found that the contribution of ODL in gross enrollment has increased significantly from 7.27 % in 2015-16 academic session to 16.52 % in 2020-21 session and male to female enrolment ratio for ODL system in Uttarakhand is <1 which is indicative of presence of more female participant in ODL system. Uttarakhand Open University, the only State Open University in the State of Uttarakhand, has established its LSCs in distant remote locations and this has helped to an extent in meeting its mission towards taking 'education to the doorsteps of learners'. The study also highlighted the problematic and prospective areas in terms of enrolment and in terms of regions with poor performance. Hilly regions of the state need comparatively more attention. This way ODL has definitely played a significant role in making it easy for marginalized population to be able to pursue their higher studies. If the country has to achieve the target of 50% GER by 2035 as reflected in National Education Policy (2020), then the potentials of ODL should be utilized to its fullest.

Keywords: Status, Education, Higher education, ODL, Uttarakhand, India

Introduction

India has third largest education system in the world but it is accessed only by 12 per cent of the youth and it is deprived to large section of the society particularly women (Shetty M. Sowjanya S. and Salian Ramesh). Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development, and higher education significantly contributes towards sustainable livelihoods and economic development of the nation (MHRD). If we wish to bring about significant and effective changes in our society, State or Nation then education should be at the top priority areas as it helps in shaping out human resource in the desired direction and, when we talk about higher education then it has the potential to bring about qualitative changes in one's life. Thus, a sound education system results in competent and quality human resource for academia, research and industries. The global education development agenda as reflected in SDG4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India in 2015 - seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030 (MHRD). Although, the enrolment in India has increased notably during the last two decades but it is still very low (Khalid Khan) and a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 26.3% is reported for the year 2018 which is still low than global average (29.0). It has been clearly mentioned in NEP 2020 (MHRD) that the aim of increasing GER in higher education will be up to 50% by 2035.

At present, there are only two modes of education systems officially permissible in India i.e., Conventional mode and ODL (Open and Distance Learning mode). Conventional (or Regular) mode of education is the one in which a learner has to attend classes as per defined schedule and time so that s/he may have direct face to face interaction with teachers of the concerned discipline. This mode is very common. The access to education or opportunity to education, at times, becomes limited due to geographical conditions or economic barriers particularly to the people living below poverty line or to the ones that are residing in far-flung geographically difficult terrains. The limitations can also be due to a person's early engagement in some or other kind of activity or due to full time employment or due to family obligations or other responsibilities particularly for women where they cannot afford to avail conventional mode of education either due to early marriages or due to overburdened load in agriculture or related activities. It is a well-recognized fact that conventional mode of education has the capacity to meet the requirements of only a meager proportion of educational aspirants (A.) (R.). Second kind of system is ODL mode of education, in which the teachers and learners remain separated in most cases and for most part of the academic session. Therefore, teacher-learner interaction is comparatively less and a learner has to study own his own through SILM (Self Instructional Learning Material), Audio-Video lectures or online face to face- counselling through ZOOM or Google-meet or through OER (Open Educational resources) available. 'Education for all' an important goal of UN's Millennium Development Goals, is possible only when both system of education are optimally utilized. ODL system has supposed to have broken the limitations or barriers to some extent and the concept of "education at your doorsteps" has been possible due to this mode of learning. According to Lou (Lou), ODL system has definitely played an important role in society's lifelong learning environments which make it possible for the learners to learn independent of place and time, at their own pace and non-linearly. There are

four distinct attributes of distance education in Encyclopaedia Britannica, namely being offered by an institution, separation of the learners and instructors, interactivity, and forming a learning group (Simpson) (Yapar O.E.) "Distance learning which was once a poor and often unwelcome stepchild within the academic community is becoming increasingly more visible as a part of the higher education family" (Phipps, R. & Merisotis).

ODL, at present, has received recognition and acceptance worldwide. In India too, ODL has attained a significant place in academia. Under Indian conditions where there is great geographical and cultural diversity, it is very appropriate that potentials of ODL system are utilized to its fullest and ODL may prove to be very important in raising the GER above than global average. Further, SDGs (sustainable development goals) include a set of 17 global goals set by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 for the year 2030 and one among these goals is Quality Education (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) and Gender Equality (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) (United Nations). Wider acceptance and recognition of ODL throughout the world may prove to be key towards meeting quality education. Realizing the potential of ODL, India has started promoting ODL education through establishment of ODL based Institutions. At present, there are fifteen ODL based Government institutions of which one (01) is Central University and fourteen (14) are State Open Universities. Apart from this, now we have distinct regulatory body i.e. DEB (Distance Education Bureau) under UGC and separate ODL regulations in place for regulating ODL.

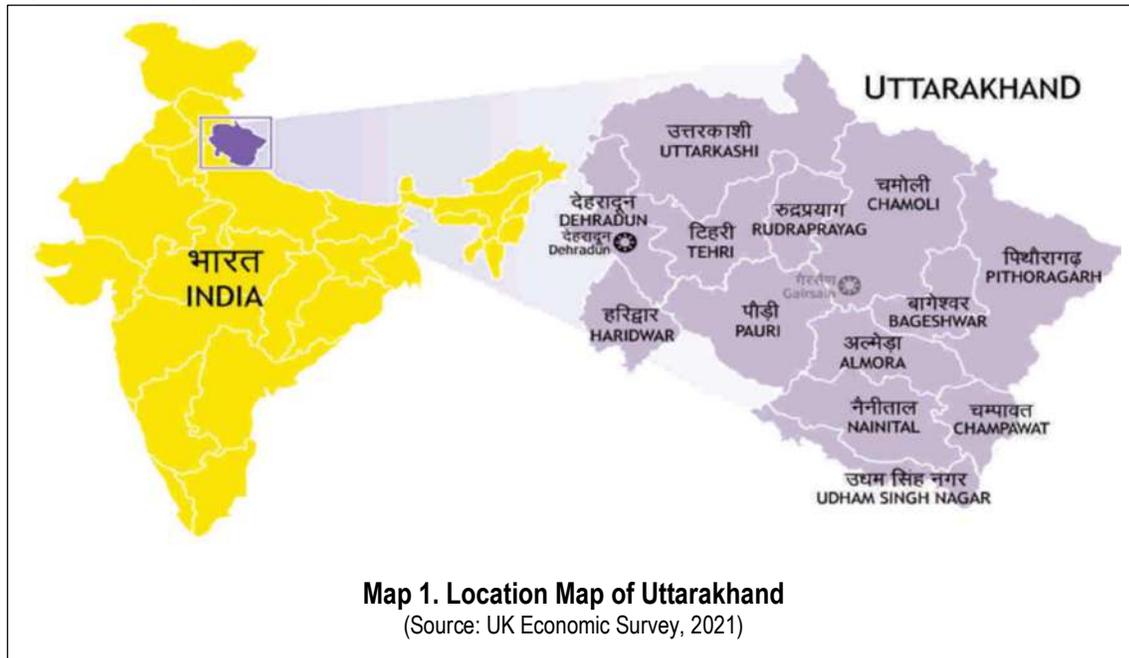
Through this paper, authors have highlighted the status of higher education in India and attempted to study the role of ODL in taking higher education at the doorsteps of learners with particular reference Uttarakhand, a unique state known for its unique topography and cultural heterogeneity. Thus, the purpose of the current study is to evaluate the status of education in India and Uttarakhand; and to analyze the potentials and prospects of ODL in reaching to unreached

Methodology

i) Study Area

The current study is mainly focused on "education to your doorsteps" in India and with particular reference to one of its State - Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand, a Himalayan State, came into existence as the 27th State of India in November 2000. The state was originated from Uttar Pradesh based on its typical hilly geography and thus, comparatively weak and backward position. It has its origin in order to address hill specific planning and development issues in the region (Map 1). The State is located in northern part of India between 28°43'N - 31°27'N latitude and 77°34'E - 81°02'E longitude and covers an area of 53483 km² (Manish). It has two main divisions i.e., Kumaun and Garhwal. There are a total of 13 districts with 82 tehsils and 95 developmental blocks. Of these thirteen (13) districts, nine (09) districts have mountainous terrain with 86.08 per cent area whereas the remaining four (04) districts have fully or partially plain terrain with 13.92 per cent area. Total population of the state is 8489349 with a population density of 159 persons/km². Of the total population 51.95 per cent are males and 49.04 per cent are females (Government of India). There is a great geographical diversity in the State, which has resulted into clearly marked regions like plains region and hilly region. The former being comparatively more developed than the latter. About 70% of the population is living in rural

areas and depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Studies have shown that the gap between male and female literacy is 18% which is less in comparison to 2001 census but still significantly high (Manish).



ii) Collection of data

This study is based on the data from secondary sources. Country level data on enrolment in higher education is based on the data available on Government of India website – AISHE (All India Survey on Higher Education) <https://aishe.gov.in/aishe/home> whereas data on learners enrolment in ODL in Uttarakhand Open University is accessed from the website www.uou.ac.in. AISHE is responsible for generating database on higher education at country level and has continuously been conducting surveys on the status of higher education since 2010-11. Most of the Institutions (91.68%) have participated in the survey except 9.08 per cent (Ministry of Education). Authors have been associated with Uttarakhand Open University; therefore, some data is also based on their personal observation and long working experience with the organization.

iii) Analysis of data

Country level is analyzed for gross enrolment, male-female and social groups wise for both in conventional and in ODL modes for the last nine years from 2011-12 to 2019-20 academic sessions. In order to evaluate the 'reaching to unreach' institutional data and learner's enrolment data collected from www.uou.ac.in is analyzed. In order to analyze this data, LSCs (Learner Support Centres) were categorized based on Regional Centre (RC) wise, District wise and Altitude wise. Altitude wise Location map of Regional centers was created by using GIS software (Arc-GIS and Google Earth). Distance from nearest railway station is taken as a measure of remoteness of a LSC.

iv) Calculation of Enrolment Index (EI) and Growth Rate in Enrolment

Enrolment index helps in identifying the progress of education in different regions/ district of the State. It is derived following Dimension Index (DI) of Human Development Index (HDI). The formula used for the purpose is as follows:

$$EI = \frac{\text{Actual value of Enrolment} - \text{minimum value of enrolment}}{\text{Maximum value of Enrolment} - \text{Minimum value of Enrolment}}$$

The growth rate in enrolment is calculated by using formula for compound growth rate on eight year data from 2012-13 to 2019-20.

Results and Discussion

i) Status of Higher Education in India

There are 55165 institutions in India that are engaged in imparting higher education either through one or both the mode at various educational levels from Diploma, Degree, Post Graduate Degrees and Doctorates (Ministry of Education). Majority of the Institutions (98.47 %) have their focus on conventional mode of education whereas only 1.53 per cent institutions have their focus on ODL mode. Although many of the institutions of first category have also started offering ODL based programmes in order to cater to larger sections of the society, yet the overall contribution of ODL in India is comparatively very low. The reason behind this is perhaps the unawareness regarding OLD and recent recognition of ODL in the country. Although, the first Open university in India (a State Open University- Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar Open University), was established in the year 1983, yet it has taken almost 30 years in evolving a full-fledged well-regulated ODL system in India for which there is now separate cell under UGC (University Grant Commission) known as DEB (Distance Education Bureau). UGC-DEB is the body, which is responsible for regulating the ODL education in India so that degrees awarded in ODL mode do not have their quality lower than the same degree in conventional mode, so that degrees from both the modes are treated at par throughout the world.

Although the gross enrolment (conventional and ODL taken together) as well as male and female enrolment continuously increased during the study period but still the female contribution to gross enrolment remained lower than the males as M/F ratio was always remained above 1 for these years (Figure 1 & Table 1). Among the weaker sections, contribution (per cent) in enrolment was highest for other backward categories (OBCs) followed by Scheduled Casts (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), respectively, however, contribution of socially backward categories together was greater than the contribution of general category (Table 3 a, b). Enrolment of minorities was comparatively low and it ranged from 6.02 to 7.76 per cent, however, the enrolment continuously increased during the period. At the same time when we see the population increase, it is found that the population of Muslim minorities has also increased continuously. Muslims, now form the largest minority community in India. Between 1961 to 2001, the share of Hindus in gross population had fallen by to 3% and that of Muslims had risen by 2.7% (Sachar). They constitute about 14.2 per cent of the India's total population and the second largest religious group followed by Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains (Ahmad and Akhter)

Table 1. Male to Female Enrolment Ratio in India

All	SCs	STs	OBCs	Muslims	Other Minorities	PWDS
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2012-13	1.23	1.23	1.24	1.18	1.14	0.81	1.11
2013-14	1.18	1.18	1.19	1.15	1.16	0.85	1.52
2014-15	1.18	1.19	1.20	1.15	1.15	0.84	1.18
2015-16	1.16	1.18	1.16	1.15	1.14	0.87	1.14
2016-17	1.13	1.16	1.13	1.13	1.11	0.85	1.36
2017-18	1.10	1.11	1.10	1.09	1.05	0.80	1.35
2018-19	1.06	1.04	1.04	1.03	1.03	0.84	1.28
2019-20	1.04	1.02	0.99	1.02	0.99	0.84	1.06

Enrolment of females was comparatively less than the males in all categories except other minorities (Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains) where male to female enrolment ratio was less than 1 indicating higher enrolment of female candidates, however, for the academic session 2019-20, the M/F ratio was 0.99 for Muslim minorities also (Table 1). This is indicative of improvement in education status and awareness of towards female education. Although Muslims being the second largest population group in India (14.88%) as per Census of 2011, it is reported that the socio- economic conditions and education of Indian Muslims is of serious concern and their status is even below the conditions of Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes (Sachar). Therefore, Muslim minorities may be the one who has potential to contribute in GER, if adequately planned so by 2035 and this will also result in improvement in socio-economic conditions of such groups.

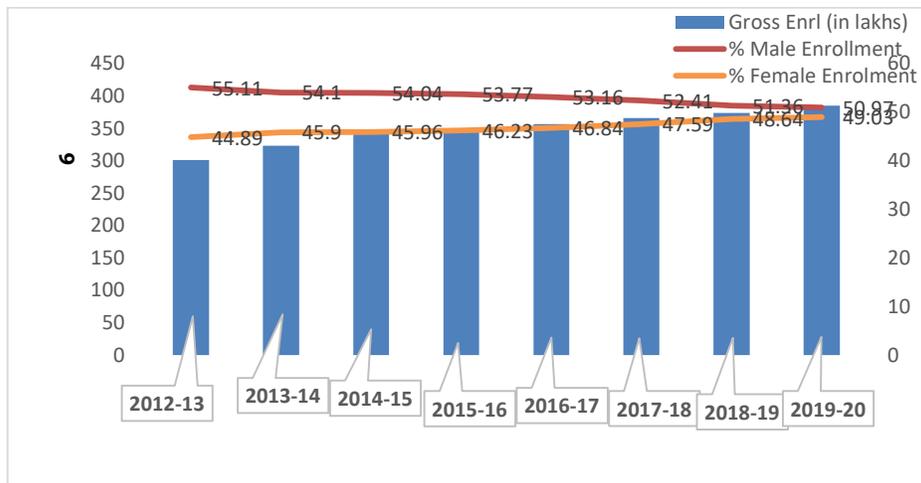


Figure 1. Gross Enrolment of India from 2013 to 2020

Source: AISHE, 2020

ii) Conventional vs ODL in India

Table 3 shows a comparative view of enrolment in conventional and ODL mode. The contribution of ODL mode is still quite low near to <<11 per cent. The GER in higher education for India is very low (26.3 %) as compared to global average (29.0%). It is very low when compared with developed countries like USA (88.2), Germany (70.3), United Kingdom (60.0). It is also low even in comparison with other emerging economies such as Brazil and China,

where its 49.1 and 51.3 per cent, respectively (Mittal Pankaj and Patwardhan Bhushan). It is evident from the gross enrolment that conventional mode of education is significantly high (>88 per cent) throughout from 2015-2020 whereas ODL has <11 per cent share only (Table 3).

Table 3. Percent contribution of ODL and Regular mode in total enrollment in India

Academic sessions	Total Enrollment	Per cent Contribution	
		Regular	ODL
2012-13	30152417	89.04	10.96
2013-14	32336234	88.77	11.23
2014-15	34211637	89.60	10.40
2015-16	34584781	89.57	10.43
2016-17	35705905	88.55	11.45
2017-18	36642378	89.00	11.00
2018-19	37399388	89.38	10.62
2019-20	38536359	88.88	11.12

Source: AISHE, 2020

This indicates that the potential of ODL is still under-utilized even though it has tremendous possibilities. If India has to reach a target of 50% GER by the year 2035 as laid down in the National Education Policy (MHRD), then the role of ODL can be crucial in achieving the projected GER. One reason for this is that nearly 70% of the populace is still from rural areas that cannot afford the expenses involved in conventional mode of education. Further, ODL may prove to be very useful for Muslim minorities that have second largest share in population load in the country next to Hindus whereas their contribution to total GER is only more or less 7 per cent (Table 4).

Table 4. Per cent enrolment of Minorities in India

Session	Total - Minorities (Muslims + Other Minorities)	PWDs
2012-13	6.02 (4.15+1.87)	0.29
2013-14	6.27 (4.32+1.95)	0.16
2014-15	6.38 (4.48+1.90)	0.19
2015-16	6.64 (4.67+1.97)	0.22
2016-17	7.09 (4.87+2.22)	0.2
2017-18	7.22 (5.01+2.20)	0.2
2018-19	7.56 (5.24+2.32)	0.23
2019-20	7.76 (5.45+2.30)	0.24

Source: AISHE, 2020

iii) Social groups and higher education in India and Uttarakhand

Contribution of different social groups to gross enrolment at country level and at the level of State of Uttarakhand is presented in figure 2. Enrolment status of SCs, STs and OBCs is quite encouraging and their percent contribution (SCs, STs, OBCs altogether) in gross enrolment was higher in all the five academic sessions under study then the general categories. It has continuously increased from 52.50% in 2015-16 to 57.25 in 2019-20 sessions. Whereas when

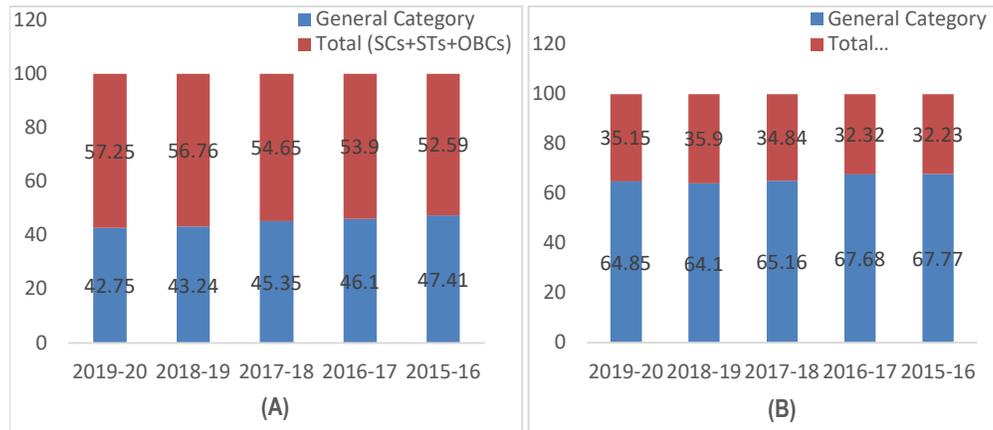


Figure 2. Per cent enrollment according to different social groups
A) In India B) In Uttarakhand

Source: www.uou.ac.in

we analyzed the same parameters for the State of Uttarakhand, it was observed that percent contribution of SCs, STs, and OBCs altogether to gross enrolment in the State was comparatively low. Although, data indicate that enrolment of these groups continuously increased from 32.23 per cent in 2015-16 to 35.9 in 2018-19 then 35.15 per cent in 2019-20 sessions. Whereas the contribution of minority categories and PWDs categories together in gross enrolment at country level (6.99% in 2015-16 session to 7.99% in 2019-20 session) as well as in Uttarakhand State was comparatively low (2.74 %) in 2015-16 session to 4.74% in 2019-20 session.

As far as higher education in Uttarakhand is concerned, there are thirty six (36) higher education Institutions (Figure 3) which have their mandate for imparting higher education through conventional or ODL mode. A major stake in this is of Universities or colleges operating on conventional mode (97%) whereas only one University (3%) is fully devoted to ODL based education system i.e, Uttarakhand Open University (UOU).

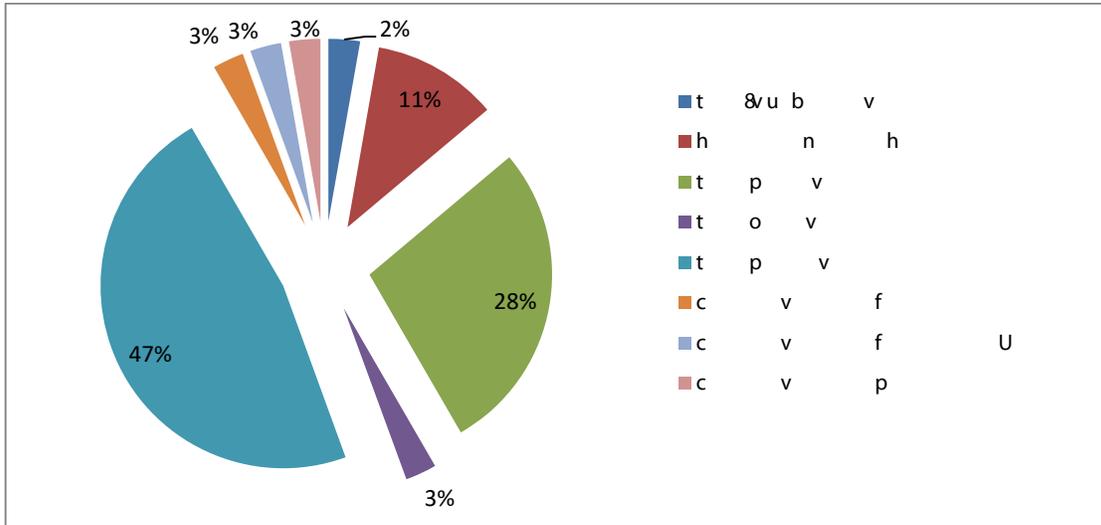
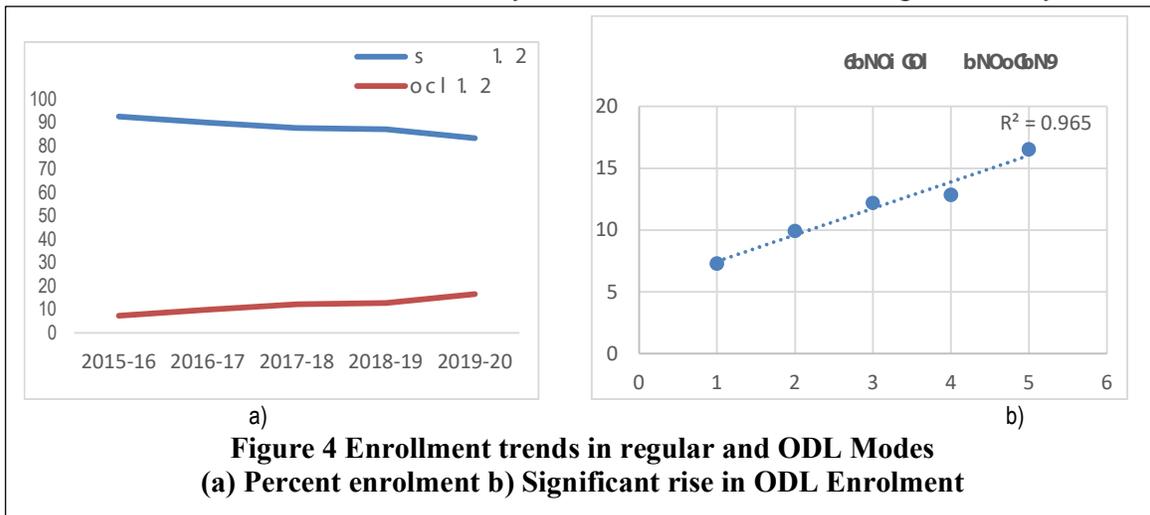


Figure 3. HEIs in Uttarakhand

Source: AISHE, 2020

The data indicate that over the past five years, there is continuous rise in enrolment in ODL mode. Contribution of ODL system in gross enrolment in Uttarakhand has significantly increased from 7.27 % in 2015-16 academic session to 16.52 % in 2020-21 session (Figure 4 a, b). This is because of increased acceptability of ODL among the various stakeholder over the past few years. Indian Government has also developed transparent policy for ODL education by evolving ODL regulation and by declaring equivalence of degrees awarded through conventional mode and distance mode coupled with increased awareness among the general mass, has resulted into this increase in enrolment. One other possible reason is flexibility in new rules and regulations. Now a learner is able to pursue two degrees together at a time, one from conventional and other from ODL mode. As far as enrolment ratio of male to female learners / students is concerned, the ratio in ODL system decreased from 1.08 in 2015-16 to 0.92 in 2020-21 whereas in conventional system it remained above 1 throughout these years.



This indicates that ODL mode is preferred over conventional mode by female learners, thus, larger participation in ODL over conventional mode (Table 4). Most of the females in India are overburdened due to household and other domestic and agricultural activities, and they don't have enough time to pursue education in conventional mode. With increase in awareness and declaration of equivalence of degrees, their participation has increased which is reflected in data (Table 4). Further, it is more difficult from Muslim women to pursue higher education in conventional mode due to one or other reasons, but ODL has given them opportunity to acquire higher degrees through their places of work or from home.

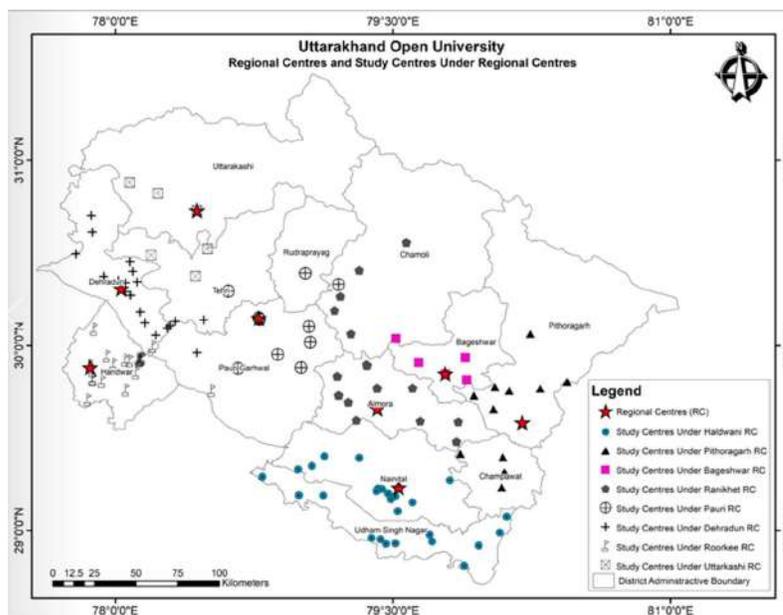
Table 4. Male to Female enrolment ratio in Uttarakhand

Year wise	ODL	Regular
2015-16	1.08	1.07
2016-17	1.15	1.07
2017-18	1.15	1.04
2018-19	0.99	1.07
2019-20	0.92	1.04

Source: AISHE, 2020

Access to Education “Education at your doorstep”: A case of Uttarakhand Open University

Uttarakhand Open University (UOU) was established in the year 2005 with an objective to take higher education to the doorsteps of learners particularly to the ones who come from far-flung geographically remote locations of the State. Through this paper, authors have tried to evaluate



Map 2. RCs and LSCs of UOU

how far University is successful in catering to the needs and aspiration of the people of the State after seventeen years of its establishment. At present, University has eight (08) RCs (Regional Centers) and 122 LSCs (Learner Support Centres) spread all across the state in all the thirteen (13) districts of the State (Prospectus, 2022-23). RC wise LSCs are presented in Figure 5 and Map 2.

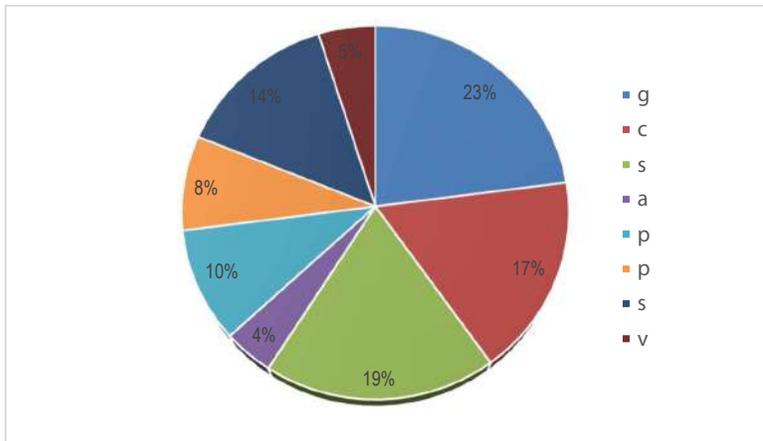


Figure 5. RCs wise LSCs of Uttarakhand Open University

Attitudinally, LSCs are established upto an altitude of 2500 m amsl (Figure 6). LSCs located in hills (considering hills as having more than 500m altitude) are sixty six (66) whereas in plains regions (less than 500m) region, fifty six (56) LSCs are established.

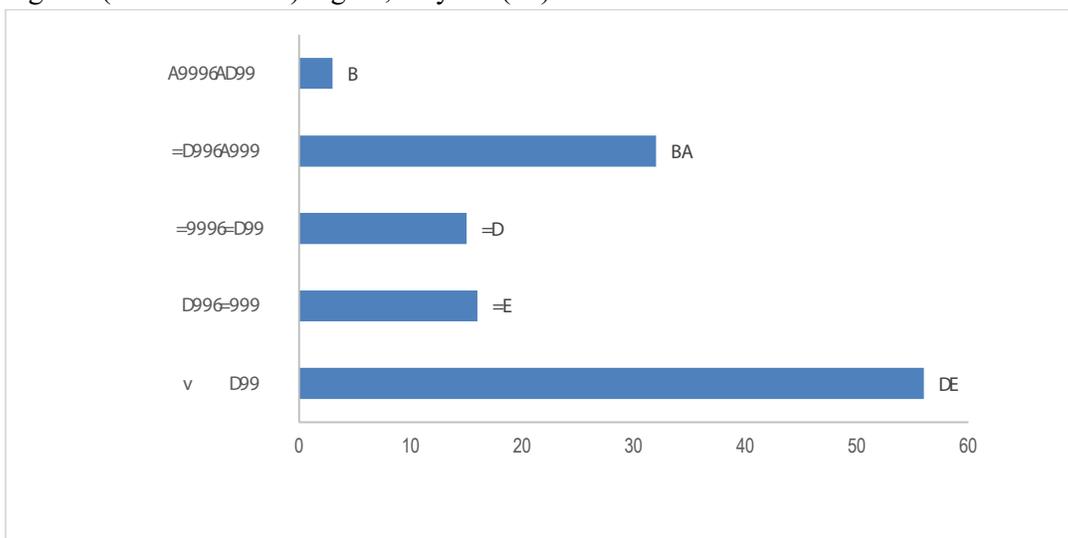


Figure 6. Altitude wise LSCs of UOU

LSCs established in the plains region cater to higher percentage of population than in hills as the population density in the hills is comparatively less than plains region. In order to cater to far-flung geographical distant places, University has covered more or less all the districts in the State (Figure 7). The gross enrolment in the University has increased continuously year after year after it's established in 2005. Enrolment trend in ODL from 2012 to 2020 is presented (Figure 8). It clearly indicates that the enrolment in hills as well as plains region has increased significantly from 2010-11 to 2020-21 period. Low enrolment in the initial phase of establishment of UOU until 2011-12 may be attributed to lesser acceptability of ODL.

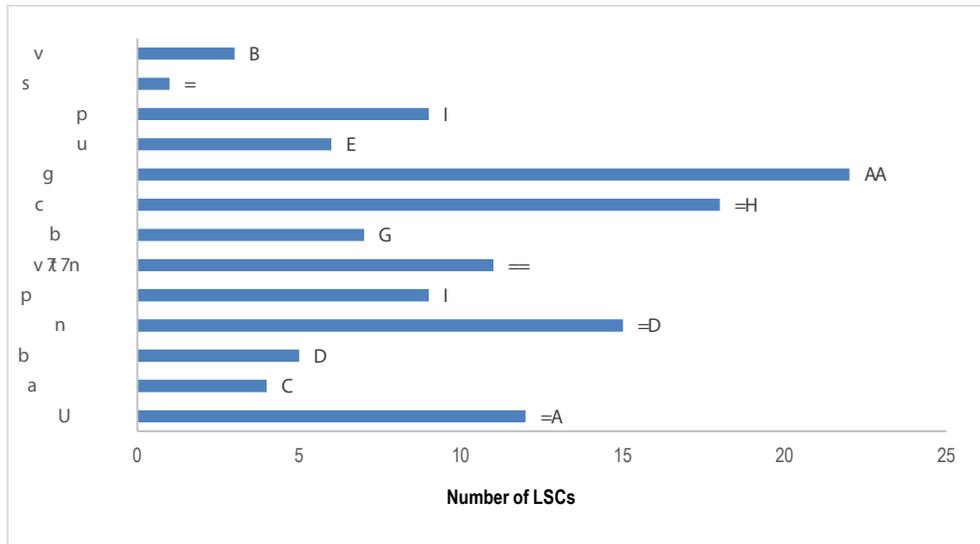


Figure 7. District wise no. of LSCs

In the course of time, Government of India took adequate measures towards improvement of quality of ODL by formulating ODL regulations and in the course of time ODL degrees have been declared at par with degrees of conventional mode. Recently, UGC-GOI has issued a circular regarding permission of pursuing more than one degree a time. This has also affected the overall increment in enrolment in ODL.

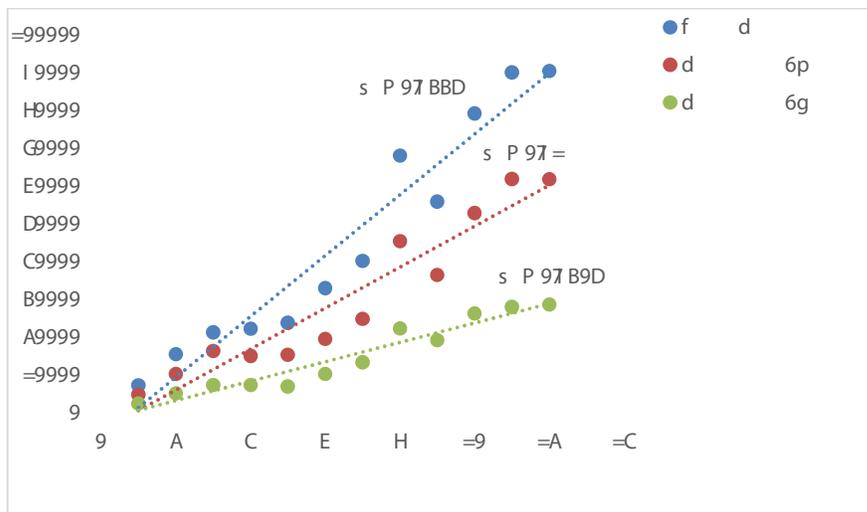
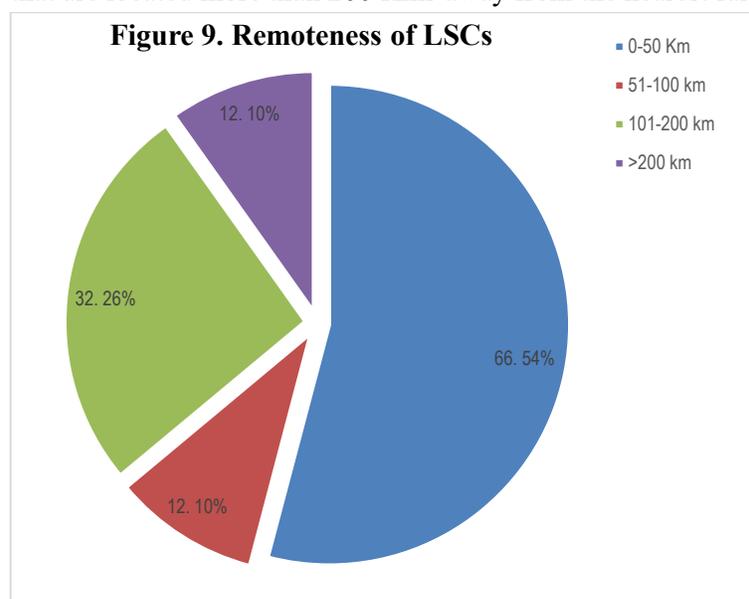


Figure 8. Enrolment status since 2010-11 to 2021-22 in ODL in UOU

Earlier, before 2015, there was a system of education known as 'Private Mode' was also operational in Uttarakhand in which a student was allowed to enroll in a programme with 'Private mode' and requirement of attending classes was relaxed. Such students were allowed to appear in examination 'as private students' along with conventional (Regular) students. Such students required only to attend examination and after passing the examination, degree used to be awarded. However, the system was abolished in 2015 by Govt. of Uttarakhand in order to promote ODL education and Since then enrolment in ODL has increased significantly and

helped University to reach horizontally and vertically in the State. As far as enrolment in plains region and hilly regions are concerned, it was significantly high for plains region then from the hilly region. This is mainly because the population density in plains regions is very high than the hills. Further, in hilly regions, the population density has reduced over the past few decades because of outmigration and limited scope for employment opportunities. Further, tough geographic and climatic conditions, coupled with low per capita income has forced the native population to move and settle down in plains regions of the State and Country.

In order to study 'Reaching to unreached', one of the indicator was presence of LSCs in remote locations. It was considered as a measure of reach and penetration in far-flung areas of the state. The analysis shows that 66.54 per cent LSCs are located in easily accessible locations having 0 to 50 kilometers distance from nearest Railway Station, however, there are 12.10 per cent LSCs that are located more than 200 Kms away from the nearest railway station (Figure 9).



Presence of LSCs in such distant remote locations is an indication of the University's mission towards taking 'education to your doorsteps' and this way ODL has definitely played a role in availing marginalized population to be able to pursue their higher studies. If India has to achieve the target of 50% GER by 2035 as reflected in National Education Policy (2020), then the potentials of ODL must be utilized to its maxima.

Gap Analysis: Identification of Problematic areas and Prospective areas

At country level, the gap analysis for various social categories with regard to the enrolment growth is presented in table (Table 5). Green areas are those where enrolment growth is appreciable whereas the red areas represent the areas where poor enrolment growth was observed during the study periods. Accordingly, the red areas are those areas where there is much scope for enrolment increment and special planning can be done for these groups. Since conventional mode of education has certain limitations, therefore, ODL must be promoted and encouraged in order to have high enrolment in the red zone categories.

Table 5. Education in various social categories in India: Problematic and Prospective areas

CAT	ODL Mode			Conventional Mode		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
SCs	PB	PB	PB	PR	PR	PR
STs	PB	PB	PB	PR	PR	PR
OBCs	PR	PB	PB	PB	PR	PR
GEN	PR	PR	PR	PB	PB	PB

Abbreviations used: CAT= Social categories; GEN=General; SC= Schedule Caste; ST=Schedule Tribe; OBC=Other Backward Category; PB=Problematic; PR=Prospective

At the level of State, the problematic and prospective areas are concerned, it is presented in Figure 10. Among the eight regions, Bageshwar region received the lowest score (0) in the Index throughout the study period whereas regions of plains such as Dehradun, Roorkee and Haldwani ranked among the regions that received highest scores. The regions which are placed towards the Center of the radar diagram needs to be looked upon with high attention so that they may contribute more in gross enrolment in future whereas those at the periphery have contributed well during the study period.

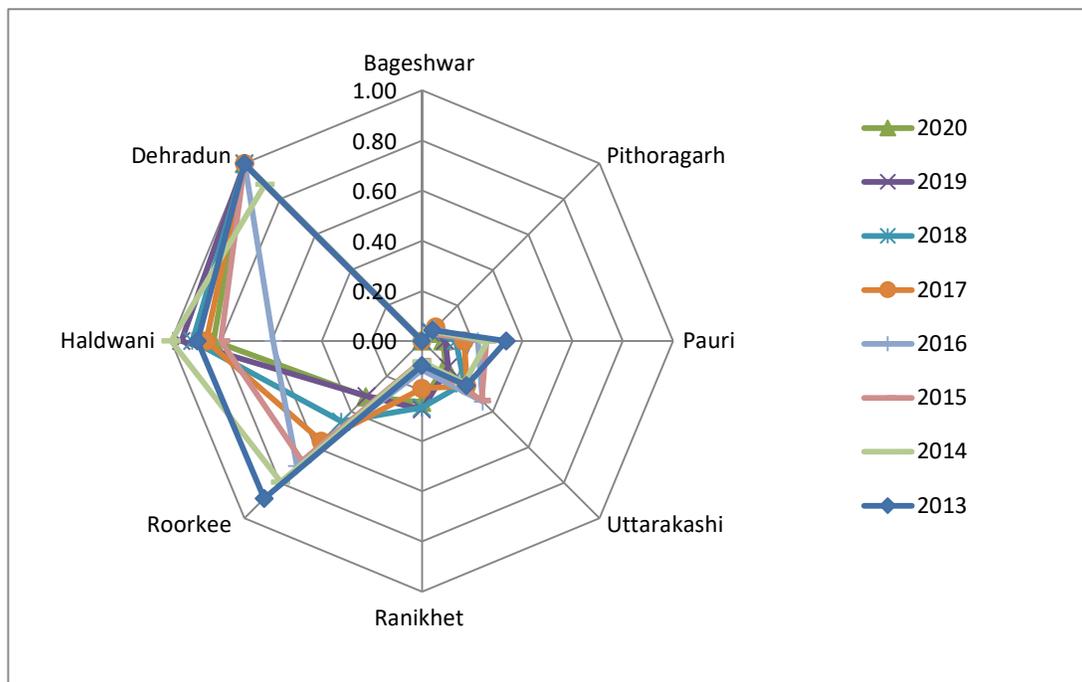


Figure 10. Area wise access /concentration

Table 6. Enrolment Index of Uttarakhand based on ODL Enrolment

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2019-2020	0.00	0.04	0.08	0.13	0.24	0.32	0.83	1.00
2018-2019	0.00	0.05	0.09	0.15	0.27	0.31	0.96	1.00
2017-2018	0.00	0.05	0.13	0.24	0.27	0.45	0.91	1.00
2016-2017	0.00	0.08	0.17	0.25	0.19	0.57	0.86	1.00

2015-2016	0.00	0.07	0.22	0.34	0.12	0.70	0.59	1.00
2014-2015	0.00	0.04	0.26	0.34	0.08	0.68	0.80	1.00
2013-2014	0.00	0.06	0.26	0.24	0.08	0.80	1.00	0.88
2012-2013	0.00	0.06	0.34	0.25	0.10	0.89	0.89	1.00
1= Bageshwar, 2= Pithoragarh, 3= Pauri, 4= Uttarakashi, 5= Ranikhet; 6= Roorkee, 7= Haldwani, 8= Dehradun								

Conclusion

Countries like India where there is great population pressure, diversity of religions and geographical limitations, GER may be attained to global equivalent through the optimum utilization of ODL potentials. The conventional systems of education has many limitations i.e., infrastructure, limitation of seats, availability of teachers etc., and due to these limitations, the GER of India is below global average. ODL, due to its flexibility, has tremendous scope and opportunities in raising GER in higher education in nations like India. Further, ODL may bring about better options for those who are marginalized geographically and economically. Thus, realizing the many limitations associated with conventional system of education, the role of ODL institutions can be crucial in taking education to the doorsteps of learners and thus, to enhance the GER to a global standard.

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