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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