

A Review on the Role of Distance and Open Learning in Mitigating the Demand of Higher Education in South Salmara Mankachar District of Assam

Dr. Mohammed Ali^{*1}, Dr. Mizanur Rahman², Sanidul Islam³

^{1,2}Department of Chemistry, Hatsingimari College, Hatsingimari, Assam, India

³Department of Political Science, RBP HS School, South Salmara, Assam, India

Email: mali7652@mail.com

Abstract:

Even in this digital era, in many places of India higher education is still not easily accessible and in this article we are studying such a remote, backward and frontier district of India in the state of Assam, the south salmara Mankachar district at Indo-Bangla International boarder where peoples need to travel 300 KM to the capital city of the state for pursuing university education. In such a place Distance and Open Learning (ODL) institutes like Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University KKHSOU) is a ray of hope for the citizen aspiring for pursuing higher education. In this article we have depicted a real life scenario of higher education in the district on the basis of ground level survey based research and present the result in tabular as well as bar diagram format accessible for general people as well the researcher.

Key words: Open and Distance Learning, Open University, correspondence courses

Introduction

Distance learning is gaining high acceptance due to its distinct approach in comparison to traditional methods of learning. Distance learning is the one where learners are not required to be physically present to attend lectures or classes. It has been possible to expand ODL across the globe only through internet. It also referred to as Open and Distance Learning. Distance Education is convenient for the weaker section and people living in the remote area as well as the people who are very busy in their day to day work.

In developing countries like India Open and Distance Learning system is an important modalities to expand education among the adult, working group, women and weaker section. The teacher training program is a critical domain in which Open and Distance Learning has made significant contributions. In underdeveloped countries, distance teacher training can effectively reach a significant amount of trainees and significantly influence the progress of national education.

Importance of distance education in Assam

There had been some significant changes made in higher education in India as well as in Assam after 1947. Previously education was accessible only for the higher class people but the poor and marginalized session of the people remained uneducated. Therefore, people across the country started demanding for the establishment of various schools, colleges and universities to fulfil their educational requirement in India. The pressure made by people resulted in the growth of higher education in India. But the demerit of this development was that it gave more emphasised on quantity rather than quality due to growing demand of it.

Therefore, there was need to think about alternative model or methodology to ensure quality education and success. Distance learning is considered as the best alternative of conventional education system. In the developing countries specially in India education is still a dream for many Indians. As we are living in 21st century where some countries across the globe have high literacy like - Norway (100%), Andorra (100%), Finland(100%), Greenland(100%), Liechtenstin (100%) Luxembourg (100%), etc. (2011 census). India is still facing a lot of challenges in the conventional education system. Keeping all these points in mind, government of Assam decided to start a state open university named as KKHSOU (KKHSOU) in the year 2005 as the first open university in the north eastern region of the country.

Literature Review

Open learning is a famous term. It is rooted in distance learning. It has been observed that distance learning institution converting themselves into open learning institution. If we review the literature we will get certain definition of open learning.

“According to Perraton (2000), the term ‘open learning’, with its ambiguities about the meaning of the term ‘open’, has led some of its protagonists to shy away from defining it, labelling it as a philosophy rather than a method, as such, a usage is a pretext for its vagueness.”

Moore in 1973 defined open and distance learning as “The family of instructional methods in which teaching behaviours are performed apart from learning behaviours, including those that in a contiguous situation would be performed in the learner’s present, so that communication between the teacher and the learner must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanical or other devices.”

The aforementioned definitions have been further simplified to read as "Open learning is a philosophy" and "Distance Education is a method." It is consistently emphasized that Distance Education is a mode: the mode denotes a transactional strategy that employs a variety of methodologies or philosophies.

History and Evolution of Open and Distance Learning:

Historically, distance education has been around for a long time. For example correspondence courses have been around since the 1800s and were originally taught in print format. The first correspondence course was called the school of correspondence in Chicago and was based on business studies. During second world war, study courses were offered to soldiers as part of the training. (Unacademy)

The first open university in world is UK Open University which was established in the year 1969 by Royal Charter. The aim of establishing such open university is to provide high quality degree level learning to people who are not able to attend the traditional universities. Distance learning gaining popularity since 1950s with the growth of Television (TV) 1970s, and 1980s many people used to watch TV for various educational programme offered by TV. This gave a great opportunities to learn without attending the formal classes.

Emergence of Distance Education in India:

Distance education in the form of correspondence education, was established as recommendations made by three delegates sent by the Indian government to east while USSR in the year 1967-1971. The initiation of correspondence courses at the University of Delhi in 1962 with 1112 students at undergraduate level to redress the issues and challenges of Indian higher education of correspondence education was intended to provide further opportunities to those people who were failed to attend formal classes or could know effort it. After Delhi University, many other universities in the north part the country started correspondence courses. In the fifth five year plan (1974-1979) had estimated that 25% of students from the relevant age group will pursue higher education through correspondence mode. But the enrolment in 1976-1979 was only 2.55% of total higher education enrolment. The establishment of first open university in India was Andhra Pradesh University (Dr.B.R Ambedkar University) on August 26,1982 in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. This was remand Dr.B.R Ambedkar Open University in the year 1991, and its motto is "Education for all." But did not change quantitatively in higher education but it started a new era of openness and flexibility. In 1988-1989 enrolment in distance education rose about 10% and which stands at 20% at present. Indira Gandhi National Open University commonly known as IGNOU was established in the year 1985 but it started offering programme since 1987. With the establishment of IGNOU commenced new era of quality higher education and training in distance education. It started using ICT in a large scale for the first time in the country.

In the year 2003 there were only 12 Open Universities and 104 CCIs which stated offered a distance education programme and facilitated 20% higher education students. The National Open Universities in India are mostly providing nonconventional programmes focusing the areas like – human rights, women empowerment, maternal and child health, human resource development and some educational programmes at certificate, diploma, UG, PG and doctoral level courses.

This informal education method gained popularity in India with the establishment of IGNOU as an Open University and regulating agency for distance education in 1985. Currently, the nation is home to numerous open universities, including Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University (KKHSOU), Assam.

Advantages of distance and open education

1. Flexibility: Open and distance learning offers greater flexibility to the students to pursue education from any place, anywhere and anytime as it has PC and web association which allows understudies to work when and where it increasingly helpful for them without planning to attend the regular classes and specially in the hectic schedule of life.
2. Affordable: Another important advantage of the Open and Distance Learning is affordable. The cost of online courses is less expensive. Open and Distance Learning online courses for that you need not to take over stress for driving, moving or any feast plan and some extra advantage to is to gain degrees from home.

3. Learn while working: In the open learning system, most part of its learning can be finished according to your own timetable. Open learning system is simpler are than the conventional educational system while working.
4. Helps in reducing unemployed problem in education sector: Open and Distance Learning reduces unemployment education sector.
5. Professional growth and personal development: Open and Distance Learning is a batter choice for those students who want to grow their professional and personal development.
6. Space and time: Open and Distance Learning gives time and space to the learner to study according to their pace and work conveniently.
7. Promotes higher education: Open and Distance Learning have to promote higher education in developing countries like India having high literacy rate and low literacy rate it also facilitates to access education forward.

Disadvantages

1. Lack of social co-operation: The most this advantage of Open and Distance Learning is lack of social co-operation among the students which can be found in conventional education system. Everything in Open and Distance Learning can be done online which just offers a limited conversation and absence of face-to-face meeting among the students.
2. Arrangement is not suitable: Not all the learners are perfect possibility for web-based learning. The student who does not have technical knowledge they will have to think twice before joining up with and internet learning program.
3. Some managers do not recognise distance or online learning degrees: There are some bosses or managers in some companies who see that there are some shames connected to your online learning despite having everything. They considered that your online learning is not suitable for all activity field.
4. Require flexibility to new innovations: If you have never been one to adore working with innovation, you will most likely get much less out of an online course than your more educated partner. Ensure you feel good working with PC's and with online projects before you pursue a class..

CURRENT TRENDS

GLOBAL TRENDS

Considering some challenges in education and development both developing and developed countries have adopted Open and Distance Learning as a novel technique and strategy to address the issues of access, quality, and equity. When conventional methods and procedures fail to satisfy requirements, it is imperative to seek alternative strategies. There is increasing confidence that Open and Distance Learning constitutes an effective strategy.

Currently, the majority of governments worldwide have embraced this technique. It has been extensively advised that distance education initiatives in nine populous nations (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, Indonesia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, collectively

referred to as E-9 countries) prioritise enhancing efforts for social equity, teacher education, and non-formal education" (UNESCO, 2001 a, p. 61).

Regional Trends

Special focus on some Asian countries

Bangladesh

In 1957, the Education Reform Commission pushed for correspondence schools, sparking the formation of AVEC in 1962 and SBP in 1980. These two merged to become NIEMT, later renamed BIDE, which played a crucial role in founding Bangladesh Open University (BOU). Today, BOU enrolls over 200,000 students, offering various programs, including diplomas, degrees, and informal education in fields like agriculture, business, science, and teacher training.

JAPAN:

Japan had just a few private and correspondence schools as well as University of the Air (UA) until 1985. Programmes and institutions for Japan Open and Distance Learning have grown quickly in recent years. There were ten junior colleges and nineteen four-year Open and Distance Learning Private Universities with more than 254,000 students by 2000. Four of the Open and Distance Learning Universities including UA out of the nineteen universities want to start Post Graduate Programs soon.

CHINA

The expansion of access and opportunities, particularly in the realm of higher education and socioeconomic development, was significantly facilitated by open and distance learning in China. distance and open learning Although programs for in-service adult education and training are also available, China's primary emphasis is on secondary and tertiary education. In general, the media encompasses correspondence, television and radio broadcasts, and state examination self-study (SESS). In 1960, China pioneered the use of radio and television for single-mode distance higher education by creating the Radio and TV University system (RTVU) with centralized planning. Today, the RTVUs are part of the eleven global mega universities.

INDIA

Open and distance learning in India started in 1960s, in 1980s a department was designed to offer correspondence education through 34 universities. The first Open University in India was Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU) in the state of Andhra Pradesh in 1982, followed by IGNOU 1985, later some other open universities started in India were Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat, Karnataka, West Bengal, (Established 1980s and 1990s). The aim of establishing those universities make the education more democratic and make life long. The number of students enrolled in various open and

distance education programmes were 200,000 which accounting for 3% of the higher education enrolment.

Establishment of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU) in Assam

Present study will focus on KKHSOU. It is a State Open University of Assam. It was established under the provision of KKHSOU Act 2005 and started functioning from 2006. Its headquarter in Patgaon, Rani Gate, Guwahati-781017, and a network of study centres spread across the state of Assam. This University offers opportunity to a huge number of people of Assam to reach for higher education. This University offers a range of Undergraduate, Post Graduate, Diploma, and Certificate courses in various fields such as humanities, social studies, commerce, management, science and technology. The University also offers professional courses in fields like law, journalism and mass communication.

The University was established by the Assam Legislative Assembly by Act XXXVII a of 2005 in 2005. The Act received the assent from the Governor on the same year. Its academic programmes were approved by the Distance Education Council, IGNOU and Subsequently by the Distance Education Bureau, UGC from time to time.

The government of Assam recognized all degrees, Diploma's and Certificate of the University for jobs and pursuing higher studies. Currently KKHSOU offers 22 programmes at the graduate and postgraduate levels comprising over 400 courses altogether. Besides, the university also provides M.Phil and Ph.D programmes in selected subjects as per UGC regulations. It has been successful in attracting the students to enrol in large and diverse group of learners i.e. Women, SC, ST,OBC, Tea Tribe besides, learners belonging to char areas. It give more importance on equity. Over the last five year it has been recorded that the university has enrol more than 95 thousands learners out of which more than 53 thousands (more than 50%) belong to disadvantage section-SC, ST, defence personal, women etc.

It functions through three tier system i.e. university headquarter, regional centres and around 301 learners 'supports centres functioning from affiliated colleges across the state of Assam.

The university learners 'support services include an array of web based utilities relating to admission, tutoring, counselling an evaluation besides the specially designed mobile app facility support service to the learners.

Vision:

The main vision of KKHSOU are as follows:

- a) The main vision of this university is in the spirit of reaching out to the unreached and providing higher education the disadvantaged, marginalised people of the society.
- b) Becoming a leading institution of higher education in North East, focusing on social responsibility.
- c) Educate learners with inevitable.

- d) Empower learners for success in their respective field of interest and to live independently.

Mission:

With the motto “Education beyond barriers”, the mission of KKHSOU is to providing visionary learning experience to the learners through excellence in education, research and innovation. The university has formulated the programmes and courses to learners from the different section of the society, nonetheless, it focuses on those vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized. The target group of the KKHSOU to provide quality education, knowledge and training are as the following:-

- Women learners specially to the housewives who aspire to be empowered and enhance professional competencies
- Person with unique abilities
- People who could not get access to higher education in time of their students days
- People who are geographically backward and isolated area
- Employed/self employed persons with the tendency to advancing their educational qualifications
- Persons who could not get access to education due to their financial constraints

PROGRAMME OFFERED BY KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY:

MASTER DEGREE PROGRAMME

Sl. No	Name of Master Degree Course	Master Degree from Recognized University	Duration	Semester
1	Master of Arts Education	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters
2	Master of Social work	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters
3	MBA	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters
4	Masters of Arts in Assamese	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters
5	Master of Arts English	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters
6	Masters of Arts in Political Science	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters
7	Master of Arts in Sociology	Do	2 years	4 Semesters
8	Master of Science in Information (M. Sc IT)	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters
9	Masters of Commerce (M.Com)	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters
10	Master of Arts in Economics	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters
11	Master of Arts in Journalism and mass communication	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters

BACHELOR DEGREE PROGRAMME:

Sl. No	Name of Bachelor Degree Course	Bachelor Degree from Recognized University	Duration	Semester
1	Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com)	Do	4 Years	8 Semesters
2	Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)	Do	4 Years	8 Semesters
3	Bachelor of Computer Application (BCA)	Do	-	-
4	Bachelor of Arts in English (BA)	Do	4 Years	8 Semesters
5	Bachelor of Arts Education (BA)	Do	4 Years	8 Semesters
6	Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy (BA)	Do	4 Years	8 Semesters
7	Bachelor of Arts in History (BA)	Do	4 Years	8 Semesters
8	Bachelor of Arts in Sociology (BA)	Do	4 Years	8 Semesters
9	Bachelor of Arts in Political Science (BA)	Do	4 Years	8 Semesters
10	Bachelor of Arts in Economics (BA)	Do	4 Years	8 Semesters
11	Bachelor of Arts in Assamese (BA)	Do	4 Years	8 Semesters

Diploma Programme:

Sl. No	Diploma Programme for graduate and Post graduate	Recognized by the University	Duration	Semester
1	Diploma (For Graduate) in Business Management	Do	1 Year	2 Semesters
2	Diploma in Journalism and mass communication	Do	1 Year	-
3	Diploma in creative writing in English	Do	1 Year	-
4	Diploma in Library and Information Science	Do	1 Year	-
5	Diploma in Sanskrit learning	Do	-	-
6	Diploma in Parliamentary and Constitutional studies	Do	-	-
7	Diploma in Yoga (Kayayogi)	Do	6 moths	-
8	Diploma (For Graduate) in Human Resource management	Do	1 Year	2 Semesters
9	Diploma in broadcast journalism	Do	1 Year	2 Semesters
10	Diploma (For Graduate) in Mass Communication	Do	1 Year	2 Semesters
11	Diploma (For Graduate) in Sales and Marketing Management	Do	1 Year	2 Semesters
12	Diploma (For Graduate) in Computer Science	Do	1 Year	2 Semesters
13	Diploma in Business Management	Do	1 Year	2 Semesters

14	Diploma in Human Resource Management	Do	1 Year	2 Semesters
15	Diploma (For Graduate) in Broadcast Journalism	Do	1 year	2 Semesters
16	Diploma in Mass Communication	Do	1 Year	2 Semesters
17	Diploma (For Graduate) in Yoga	Do	1 Year	2 Semesters
18	Diploma (For Graduate) in Sales and Marketing Management	Do	1 Year	2 Semesters

Certificate Course:

Sl. No	Name of Certificate Programme	Recognized by the University	Duration
1	Certificate Programme in Early Childhood Education	DO	6 Months
2	Certificate Programme in Electrical House Wiring	Do	-
3	Certificate Courses in Japanese Language and Culture	Do	6 Months
4	Certificate in Counselling Skills	Do	3 Months to 1 Year

Methodology:**Demarcations of study:**

Since the area of distance education is very vast so it is not possible to cover all areas, in this study will cover three (3) study centres of South SalmaraMankachar district.

Methods and Strategies:

The present research is aimed at analysing the importance of open and distance learning programme of KKHSOU to discovered the enrolment trends and usefulness of the courses/programme of distance education institutions in a smallest as well as the backward district of Assam. Keeping in the mind the objective of the present research the following methodology was adopted.

Methods:

To conduct the present study two methods- i) Historical and ii) Descriptive methods where applied for collecting various types of information from different distance learning institutions in South SalmaraMankachar district. Historical method was applied to find out the past event and also to interpret the events and their relevance in the present scenario and what is future prospect of open and distance learning. The main aim of historical research, therefore, is to arrive attend account of the past so as to acquire clear perspective of the present. The data related to enrolment and courses programme offered by distance education institution of KKHSOU in the South SalmaraMankachar district was gathered from multiple sources – official records, books, reports, profiles, journals, newspaper, and books of information's etc of KKHSOU.

Sampling:

When we undertake a research work it is important for us to draw sample from the target area to ensure that the sample is representative of the population and to avoid research biases. On the basis of which generalization are drawn and made applicable to the whole population. The target population in this study covered mass population enrolled in the various courses offered by KKHSOU in specially in the district of South Salmara Mankachar a remote and very backward district of Assam.

Selection of students:

One hundred fifty questionnaires were distributed to students in the various centres of KKHSOU of South Salmara Mankachar district.

Sl No.	Name of the study centre	No. Of students taken
1	South Salmara College, South Salmara	50
2	Hatsingimari College, Hatsingimari	50
3	Mankachar College, Mankachar	50

Table shows the number of study centres and students of the sample.

Research tools: Keeping in the mind the importance of the use of effective tools in data collection, following research tools were designed and developed for getting various types of information.

One questionnaire for students enrolled in the study centres of KKHSOU was formed.

Important aspect in the process of setting up questionnaire: Questionnaire is an important use of gathering different types of data in research, especially in descriptive research as it widely used to get information and know the respondents view and attitude towards certain phenomenon. It is important to note that during the process of framing of questionnaire the investigator gave importance in language, content and structure of questionnaire so that relevant information could be gathered from respondents and could give meaningful information without wasting much of their time. The word and the languages used in the questionnaire were very lucid and simple so that the respondent could understand the questions very easily without much difficulties. Besides the investigator took care in presenting the questions logically to avoid use of annoying and embracing questions. The investigator or researcher earnestly urged the respondents to answer each question without any hesitation and irritation. It was also assured to all the respondents that the information gathered from them would be used for research work. The information supplied by them would not hum in their academic career at all.

Framing of questionnaire for students: A set of questionnaires was prepared. The aim of preparing questionnaire was to know the student's apprehension of open and distance learning. In most of the questions students given four choices for their answer i.e strongly agree, agree, undecided and disagree. So that they could easily answer those questions without any hesitation or doubt.

Some of the questions which were asked are as follows:

- Bio-data of the students.
- Factor effecting their choice join the various open and distance learning programme offered by KKHSOU, Assam.
- Reason for selection procedure.
- Students' opinion and view about the interest of various courses/programme offered by KKHSOU, Assam.
- Significant of the open and distance learning programme.
- Issues and challenges of the students who enrolled open and distance learning programme offered by KKHSOU, Assam.

Accuracy and Authenticity check of the questionnaire: The accuracy and the authenticity of the questionnaire was check by well experienced and experts' teachers of different study centre before finalizing the questionnaire and it was done through circulating the rough draft of the questionnaire to the experts on concern subject. Some modifications were done after getting valuable suggestions from the experts group. Based on the suggestions made by the expert group some questions were finalized and some were deleted.

Techniques and strategies of data collection: For smooth conduction of research there were required to collect data. Data collected for present research were done in two phases- a) historical perspective and

b) descriptive part data for historical perspective of the study regarding the origin and development of ODL challenges and advantages of ODL programme, enrolment trends and courses offered by ODL institution like KKHSOU, Assam were collected from multiple sources like – magazines, articles, journals, books, official reports.

Information for descriptive part of the investigation about the ongoing open and distance learning programme and its importance was gathered via questionnaire sent to the students of KKHSOU. Some of the questionnaire personally delivered to the students of three different study centres of South SalmaraMankachar District some of the doubts were clarified among the students who were embarrassed state of mind about the purpose of the study. Finally, it was assured that the study was conducted only for research purpose.

Special Reference of Open and Distance Learning in the South SalmaraMankachar District of Assam:

KKHSOU network in South Salmara-Mankachar District

Sl.No	Name of the Study Centre	Centre Code of the Study Centre
1	HatsingimariCollege,Hatsingimari	899
2	South Salmara College, South Salmara	821
3	Mankachar College, Mankachar	812

Programme offered by KKHSOU at various study centre of South SalmaraMankachar District:

Master Degree Programme

Sl. No	Name of Master Degree Programme	Master Degree Programme Recognized by University	Duration	Semester
1	Master of Arts in Assamese	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters
2	Master of Arts in Education	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters
3	Master of Arts in Political Science	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters
4	Master of Arts in English	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters
5	Master of Arts in Economics	Do	2 Years	4 Semesters

Bachelor Degree Programme offered

Sl. No	Name of Bachelor Degree Programme	Duration	Semester
1	Bachelor of Arts in Assamese,	3 Years	6 Semesters
2	Bachelor of Arts English	3 Years	6 Semesters
3	Bachelor of Arts Political Science	3 Years	6 Semesters
4	Bachelor of Arts Economics	3 Years	6 Semesters
5	Bachelor of Arts Education	3 Years	6 Semesters
6	Bachelor of Arts History	3 Years	6 Semesters
7	Bachelor of Arts Sanskrit	3Years	6 Semesters

N.B: South salmara college study centre do not have Sanskrit. None of the three centre of the district started diploma course yet.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Method of Analysis:

In every research work, either it is social science research or science research, the most important work is to analyse data after collecting data from the fields. The data gathered from several ongoing studies was evaluated in terms of frequencies. The tabular data was also transformed into percentages. The multidimensional data pertaining to open and distance learning courses has been analyzed with consideration of the objectives of the current inquiry.

Assessment and Interpretation of the Collected Data:

The gathered information or data from multiple sources by different methods were analysed and interpreted in keeping in view of the aims of the ongoing investigation. The gathered data was tabulated, categorized and explored to get meaningful interpretation of result which finally led to relevant outcome of the ongoing investigation.

Factor Effecting Students Choice to Join Various Courses:

Table 1. Students' opinion regarding the factors affecting their choice to join the various courses offered by Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, Assam:

Sl. No.	Reason	No of Students	Percentage (%)
a)	I am unsuccessful in secure a place at other institutions	17	11.33
b)	I aspire to be financially independent	27	18
c)	I went along with my friends	10	6.66
d)	I am searching for job after completing the course	42	28
e)	In service (job)	20	13.32
f)	Geographical backwardness	15	10
g)	Economic crisis	11	7.33
h)	Unspecified factors	08	5.33

Here, the majority of students (28%) chose courses to secure employment promptly upon completion.

Selection Procedure: The students' perspectives on the rationale for picking the procedure are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' views on selection.

Sl. No	Statements	No of Students	Percentage (%)
a)	Based on following a personal assessment	18	12
b)	Based on evaluating past academic accomplishment	97	64.66
c)	Based on evaluating entrance assessment performance	23	15.33
d)	Unspecified factors	12	8

Students views and opinion regarding the interest of various courses:

Students views and opinion regarding the interest of the courses offered by KKHSOU is presented in the table 3.

Table 3. Thoughts a perspective of the students towards the interest of the courses.

Sl. No	Statements	No of Students	Percentage (%)
1	Personally chosen programmes	105	70
2	Choose courses because KKHSOU has limited courses	30	20
3	Number of seats in each course is very limited	15	10

From this, we can say that most of the students have chosen the open and distance learning program on their own.

Significance of the courses:

Views of the respondents who were enrolled in various open distance learning programmes KKHSOU, Assam regarding the significant of the courses offered by above mention institutions.

Table 4. Students opinion about the importance or relevance of the courses.

Sl. No	Courses are significant due to	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
		N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P
1	Courses offered by KKHSOU are need based of the students	45	30	85	56.66	12	8	08	5.33
2	Courses offered by KKHSOU are providing job opportunities	37	24.66	75	50	23	15.33	15	10
3	Courses offered by KKHSOU are important for strengthening for national as well as regional unity	33	22	65	43.33	42	28	10	6.66
4	Course are helpful for acquiring and enriching knowledge	40	26.66	67	44.66	30	20	13	8.66
5	Courses are useful for professional elevation	64	42.66	70	46.66	16	10.66	0	00
6	Courses are helpful in getting promotion in job	27	18	33	22	70	46.66	20	13.33

Here, N= Number P= Percentage

Table 5: views of students about the content of the courses:

Sl. No	Courses are useful because	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
		N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P
1	Do you think that courses offered by KKHSOU are job oriented	55	36.66	73	48.66	18	12	4	2.66

2	This course helps to advance the skills of the learner	39	26	8 1	54	21	14	9	6
3	These courses help to advance the academic qualification of the learner	72	48	4 0	26. 66	28	18. 66	1 0	6.6 6
4	This course delivered education to those people who are unable to pursuing higher studies because of their economy crisis	67	44.6 6	4 3	28. 66	27	18	1 3	8.6 6
5	These courses give education to those people who do not have access to colleges and universities near to their inhabitants	62	41.3 3	6 3	42	18	12	7	4.6 6

Course experience:

Table number (6) presents students' perspectives on their course experiences.

Sl. No	Statements experience of the courses	Agreed		Agreed		Disagreed		Not at all useful	
		N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P
a	Well defined goals	30	13.95	75	20	27	17.30	3	10
b	Independent study choice	40	18.60	64	17.06	13	8.33	7	23
c	There is a lot pressure in me as a student here	49	22.79	40	10.66	37	23.71	3	10
d	I have a clear idea where	39	18.13	45	12	41	26.28	5	16.66
e	The course will increase my future employment opportunities	19	8.83	85	22.66	17	10.89	9	30
f	Courses here are to be precisely specified by vocational requirements.	38	17.67	66	17.6	21	13.46	3	10

Some issues and challenges faced by the students:

Issues and challenges faced by the students who are enrolled in various open and distance learning programmes under Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, in the three study centres of South Salmara Mankachar District.

Table 7: Opinion of the students regarding that issues and challenges:

Sl. No	Issues and challenges	No of students	Percentage(%)
1	Tough academic standards	15	10

2	In sufficient time to arrange	9	6
3	Large no of assignment to be done during pursuing the courses	23	15.33
4	Languages of the courses are difficult to understand	12	8
5	Programmes/courses of KKHSOU are disappointing	9	6
6	The programme is not useful or helpful for any career enrichment	21	14
7	Programmes are not useful to meet the needs of the students	7	4.66
8	Lack of well-trainedinstructors to guide and counsel the students	12	8
9	Materials supplied by the KKHSOU are not sufficient to meet the learning needs of the students	19	12.66
10	Lack of telecommunication facilities	3	2
11	Courses are not designed for the people belonging to different age group	6	4
12	The assignments which are to be done are very difficult	10	6.66
13	Unspecified factors	4	2.66

Institutional Data

This chapter is aimed at analysing and interpreting average institutional data of South salmara Mankachar district related to enrolment trends in three study centres of KKHSOU, a remote and Indo-Bangla frontier district of Assam collected from respective official sources. The present study focused the number of students who enrolled in BA and MA in three study centres of KKHSOU of the district covering the academic year 2022-23 and 2023-24. The data related to enrolment trends three study centres are analysed and interpreted by using statistical measure like frequencies, tabulation, Bar Diagram and Converted into percentage of the Male-Female students enrolled in discipline.

Table 8: Subject wise enrolment in UG programmes in all the three centres in the South salmara Mankachar District for the year 2022

Sl No	Programme	No. of students	Male		Female		Remarks
			No.	%	No.	%	
1	BA Assamese	82	33	40.25	49	59.75	2 nd highest
2	BA English	63	21	33.33	42	66.67	3 rd highest
3	BA Pol. Sc	110	47	42.73	63	57.27	Highest
4	BA Economics	41	31	75.6	10	24.4	
5	BA Education	60	24	40	36	60	
6	BA History	50	26	52	24	48	
7	BA Sanskrit	01	00	00	01	100	
	Total =	407	182	44.7	225	55.3	

Table 8: Reveals that the total number of students who enrolled in various subjects in Bachelor degree under KKHSOU at the three study centre of the District in the academic year 2022 were 407 out of which 182 (44.7%) students were male and 225 (55.3%) students were female. Highest number of students 110 (27%) has ten admission in Political Science. After Political Science second highest 82 number of students (20.15%) get admitted in the subjects of Assamese and third highest 63 number of students get admitted in the subject of English. Lastly, only one student in sanskrit.

Table 9: Subject wise enrolment in PG programmes in all the three centres of the South salmara Mankachar District for the year 2022

Sl No	Programme	No. of students	Male		Female		Remarks
			No.	%	No.	%	
1	MA Assamese	133	72	54.14	61	45.86	2 nd highest
2	MA English	118	53	44.9	65	55.1	3 rd highest
3	MA Pol. Sc	181	96	53.04	85	46.96	Highest
4	MA Economics	102	46	45.1	56	54.9	
5	MA Education	72	46	63.88	26	36.12	
	Total =	606	313	51.65	293	48.35	

Table 9: reveals that out of 606 students 313 (51.65%) students were male and 293 (48.35%) students were female. The highest number of students who enrolled for Master Degree in Political Science in the academic year 2022 were 181 (29.87%) out of which 96 students were male and 85 students were female. Second highest number of students who got admitted for Master Degree in Assamese were 133 (21.95%) out of which 72 students were male and 61 students were female. Thirdly, students who enrolled for Master Degree in English were 118 (19.5%) out of which 53 students were male and 65 students were female.

Hence, it can be concluded that the highest number of students who enrolled for Master Degree in Political Science in the academic year 2022 were 181 (29.87%) and the lowest number of students who enrolled for Master Degree in Education in the academic year 2022 were 72 (11.88%).

Table 10: Subject wise enrolment in UG programmes in all the three centres of the South salmara Mankachar District for the year 2023

Sl No	Programme	No. of students	Male		Female		Remarks
			No.	%	No.	%	
1	BA Assamese	62	29	46.7	33	53.3	2 nd highest

2	BA English	32	16	50	16	50	
3	BA Pol. Sc	92	45	48.9	47	51.1	Highest
4	BA Economics	24	12	50	12	50	
5	BA Education	55	23	41.81	32	58.18	3 rd highest
6	BA History	42	25	59.5	17	40.5	
7	BA Sanskrit	00	00		00		
	Total =	307	150	48.86	157	51.14	

Table No 10 Reveals that total 307 students enrolled for Bachelor Degree in various subjects out of which 150 (48.86%) students were male and 157 students (51.14%) were female. The highest number of students 92 (30%) who enrolled for Bachelor Degree in Political Science, second highest number of students 62 (20.2%) enrolled for the Bachelor Degree in Assamese and third highest number of students 55 (18%) enrolled in Education. Lastly, there were zero enrolment in Sanskrit in the academic year 2023.

Table 11: Subject wise enrolment in PG programmes in all the three centres of the South salmara Mankachar District for the year 2023

Sl No	Programme	No. of students	Male		Female		Remarks
			No.	%	No.	%	
1	MA Assamese	124	55	44.35	69	66.65	
2	MA English	117	57	48.7	60	51.3	
3	MA Pol. Sc	175	85	48.57	90	51.43	Highest
4	MA Economics	34	24	70.6	10	29.4	
5	MA Education	102	51	50	51	50	
	Total =	552	272	49.27	280	50.73	

Table Number 11 reveals that out of 552 students 272 (49.27%) students were male and 280 (50.73%) students were female. The highest number of students enrolled for Master Degree in Political Science in the academic year 2023 were 175 (31.7%) out of which 85 students were male and 90 students were female. Second highest 124 number of students admitted for Master Degree in Assamese and third highest number of students 117 get enrolled in English. Lowest number of students (13) enrolled for Master Degree in Economics.

Table 12: Year wise enrolment in the three centres of KKHSOU of South Salmara Mankachar District

Name of College	Year wise enrolment	Remarks
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	2022			2023			G. Total	
	UG	PG	Total	UG	PG	Total		
Hatsingimari College	162	317	479	79	262	341	820	
South Salmara College	82	100	182	152	151	303	485	
Mankachar College	156	189	345	76	139	215	560	

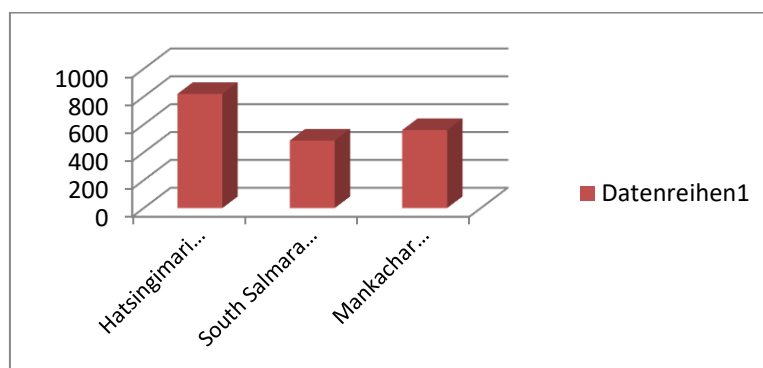


Fig 1: Bar diagram showing enrolment comparison between the centres

Table 12 shows that the enrolment in the Hatsingimari College centre is almost double of the other two centre of the district which can be attributed to the geographical location of the college as it is in the district head quarter of the South Salmara Mankachar district and secondly the full-fledged, dedicated and experienced faculty members of the college.

Conclusion:

From this survey based research work it can be concluded that, the three centers of KKHSOU in a backward and remote district like South Salmara Mankachar catered a lot to the thrust of higher education specially in woman, weaker section of the society and the working individuals of the district tremendously which is revealed from the higher ratio of women learners in an average and will continue to meet the craze of higher education of these deprived sections of the society in future. Few post graduate students have qualified prestigious competitive examinations like NET, SET and even Assam Administrative Service (ACS) also. Some of them get appointed as Post Graduate Teacher (PGT) and Trained Graduate Teacher (TGT) after completing state level Teacher Eligibility Test (TET). The present study will have both practical as well as theoretical value. It can serve as a mirror reflecting KKHSOU specifically and distant education generally. This study will significantly helpful for educational planners, students and public who are interested to improve their skills and advancing their academic career.

Future Research Prospect

This research aimed to assess the significance of open and distant education programs provided by KKHSOU study centers in the remote Indo-Bangla border area of Assam, namely South Salmara Mankachar. Researchers intending to conduct studies in the new and

experimental field of distant education may explore the following themes for future investigation:

- a) The current investigation was confined to the study centres of KKHSOU in South SalmaraMankachar district only. Similar investigation can be conducted on the some other state open university like – GUCDOE (GauhatiUniversiy Centre for Distance and Online Education) or Assam State Open School (ASOS).
- b) The current investigation covered on the small centre that is 150 students. It can extend to 300 or more than that.
- c) A combination of qualitative as well as quantitative analysis is important to acquire a deep knowledge and understanding about the relevance of distance education.

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