

## **Conference Proceedings**

### **International Conference on 'Developmental Interventions and Open Learning for Empowering and Transforming Society**

**Venue:** NEDFi Convention Centre, Guwahati

**Dates:** December 16-17, 2017.

**Organised by:** Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, Guwahati

#### **1 Introduction and Objectives**

Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University organised an International Conference on 'Developmental Interventions and Open Learning for Empowering and Transforming Society' in NEDFi Convention Centre, Guwahati on December 16-17, 2017. The guiding objective of the Conference was to develop concrete ideas on the role and status of developmental interventions and open learning in addressing relevant social challenges. The other two objectives of the International conference were as follows.

- i. To explore best practices and innovation on open learning and developmental interventions in improving access to quality of life.
- ii. To explore the issues faced by the developmental service providers across social sectors and open learning institutions in imparting stated benefits to the societies.

#### **2 Theme and Sub Themes**

The International conference on the theme 'Developmental Interventions and Open Learning for Empowering and Transforming Society' was structured around the following Sub Themes

- i. Theoretical framework of open learning and developmental interventions
- ii. Issues concerning open learning and administering developmental processes.
- iii. Redressing socio economic inequalities through open learning and developmental interventions.
- iv. Open education resources and MOOCs: extending its benefits.
- v. Sector specific contribution of open learning towards inclusive growth.
- vi. ICT/ITES: role in developmental interventions

- vii. Case studies of developmental organisations and open learning institutions.

### **3. Papers selected for the Conference**

A total of 114 abstracts were received from various institutions from different states of India and abroad as well. Blind review process was conducted to evaluate the submissions. Finally 62 Full Papers were selected for presentation out of which 44 Full Papers have been published in the edited volume. The selected papers are contributed by authors from India and Bangladesh.

### **4. The Session Plan**

The Inaugural Session of the Conference was graced by Professor Anbahan Ariadurai, Vice Chancellor, Open University of Sri Lanka and Professor V. S. Prasad, Former Director, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), and Former Vice Chancellor Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University as Guests of Honour. The Session was followed by Keynote Address by Prof Asha Kanwar, President and CEO, Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver, Canada. There were four plenary sessions in the Conference in addition to twelve concurrent technical sessions. The Valedictory Session was graced by Dr. BK Bhadri Assistant Educational Adviser of the Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India, New Delhi. The Conference was very well attended by a number of distinguished invitees and honourable VCs of Open Universities in addition to the registered participants, paper presenters and academic/non-academics staff of KKHSOU.

### **5. The Plenary sessions**

The plenary sessions during the two-day conference were as follows.

- i. CEMCA Panel Discussion (Quality Higher Education Opportunities through OER)
  - a. OERs Practices in teaching and learning at higher education
  - b. Addressing present challenges to the creation and utilisation of OERs in higher
- ii. Panel Discussion by Asian MOOCs Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology Interventions in ODL in South and Southeast Asia
- iii. Open learning for empowering and transforming society
- iv. Managerial issues in administering ODL

## **6. The Resource Persons**

The Plenary Sessions were graced by the following among others. They also helped in conducting the technical sessions by rendering the services as Chairpersons and Discussants.

1. Professor K. Seetharama Rao Vice Chancellor, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad, India
2. Prof. M A Mannan Vice Chancellor, Bangladesh Open University, Gazipur, Bangladesh
3. Dr. Pankaj L. Jani, Vice Chancellor, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Gujarat, India
4. Prof. Manjulika Srivastava, IGNOU
5. Professor V. S. Prasad, Former Director, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), and Former Vice Chancellor Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University
6. Prof Nageswar Rao, Vice Chancellor, Uttarakhand Open University
7. Professor Anbahan Ariadurai, Vice Chancellor, Open University of Sri Lanka
8. Prof Subha S Sarkar, VC, NSOU
9. Prof Ravindra R Kanhare, VC, MP B OU,
10. Dr. Dang Hai Dang, Vice Dean of Hanoi Open University, Vietnam
11. Prof Kandarpa Das, Asian MOOCs Steering Committee
12. Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, Programme Officer, CEMCA
13. Dr. Dibyajyoti Mahanta, Dean Study Centre, KKHSOU
14. Prof NN Sarma, Professor, KKHSOU

## **7. Outcomes**

It was widely held in the Conference that the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode needs to be empowered. It was also held that the ODL institutions also need to transform themselves before assuming a role of transforming society. The keynote address of Prof Asha Kanwar was very enriching for the audience as it talked about a promising role of open learning in achieving the developmental objectives. In this regard, she cited several case examples from across the world. The participants got an opportunity to know about the emerging trends in the area of open educational resources and MOOCs as well. The Conference helped in publication of research findings and developing a repository for the KKHSOU and general public as well.

## **8. Photos**

Selected photos may please be accessed at <http://conference.kkhsou.in/gallery.php>

## **9. Key Note Speech**

The Key Note Speech was delivered by Prof Asha Kanwar, President and CEO of Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver, Canada. The Speech can be accessed on the link given below.

<http://dlkksou.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/123456789/188>

## **10. Plenary session on 16.12.17, Time: 14.00 to 15.15**

**Theme: Open learning for empowering and transforming society**

### **Panellists**

1. Prof. K. Seetharama Rao, Vice Chancellor, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad, India
2. Prof. M. A Mannan , Vice Chancellor, Bangladesh Open University, Gazipur, Bangladesh
3. Dr. Pankaj L. Jani, Vice Chancellor, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Gujrat, India
4. Prof Manjulika Srivastava, IGNOU
5. Moderation of the session by Prof. V. S. Prasad, former director, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), and former Vice Chancellor of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University

**Session Coordinator:** Prasenjit Das

**Rapporteurs:** Murchana Kaushik

Tarangini Das

**Prof. K. Seetharama Rao:** Prof. Rao has provided his insights on the system of open and distance learning and its contribution in expanding and democratising the education system in India. He acknowledges that the contribution of the open and distance learning system has been impressive in India in its more than three decades of operations in the country. However, he further highlights that the role of this system and mode of education gains even more significance in the contemporary world marked by the complex dynamics on the social, economic, political and various other aspects. Thus it is the need of the hour to develop the open and distance mode universities to build as socially responsible and more viable entities. He emphasises on the need of an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach in order to be able to make the distance mode of education more inclusive and accessible to people belonging to different social and economic categories. The need of the hour, according to him lies in the recognition of our local needs and specificities, so as to be able to be more efficient and productive in the larger aim of democratisation of education.

**Prof. M. A. Mannan:** He provided a very pragmatic approach towards the idea of attaining knowledge empowerment. According to him, the knowledge empowerment of people is very necessary so as to ensure that they are empowered in the true sense of the term. In order to attain this he has listed out the following novel and practical methods that must be adopted in the process of imparting education: discouragement of rote-learning, adopting methods of study where one's experience serves as the base, avoidance of bulky syllabus. He further illustrates his ideas with schemes and examples from Bangladesh whereby special emphasis is laid on encouraging entrepreneurship, development and spread of vocational trainings, skill development programmes, amongst others. Reiterating the theme of the conference, he argues that transformation of people's lives is possible through upscaling them.

**Prof Manjulika Srivastava:** She has broadly thrown light on the scenario of the Indian higher education system and the on the system of Open and Distance learning in terms of its role, relevance, and the attention that this area demands in contemporary times. While she acknowledges the importance of India as a hub of higher education, however she highlights on the need to train and shape the fresh graduates and the other educated youth of the country in order to make them employable. She provided some significant suggestions to further improve the system of open education in India, as listed below: need to digitalise the entire system of open education, adoption of ICT, provision of flexibility to access materials on screen in tablets, mobiles or other such personalised devices, development of contacts with employers, establishment of functional call centres, development of FAQs for facilitating the learners, building the idea of trans modal education, phasing out of regional centers, facility to attain student's feedback and suggestions, special emphasis on physically challenged students. She further throws light on the two following aspects: a system of assessment and accreditation of the system of open learning, and the development of an international standard benchmark to analyse the open education system.

**Dr. Pankaj L. Jani:** He highlights the affirmative role of the open learning system in India and states that the open learning system in India is empowered both technologically and academically. He rightly asserts that education, when used ethically, serves as the key to human development and progress. The other role of education lies in the endeavour of preparing people to develop skills and attaining employment. Highlighting the benefits of distance learning, he throws light on the following advantages of undergoing education in an open system: it provides flexibility of time to students, flexibility of simultaneous employment engagements, high degree of inclusivity as it easily caters to physically challenged people, the prisoners, the housewives, etc.

**Prof. V. S. Prasad, Moderator:** He highlighted the important observations, suggestions provided by the panelists. He emphasised on the ideas of empowerment and transformation, thus asserting the entire objective of this conference. Emphasising on the need of empowering people, he suggests the following ways to empower people: building capacities of the learners to work towards their goals and desires, bringing out the multidimensionality of the purpose of education. He also highlights the relevance of pedagogy in imparting education through the system of open learning, and argues that every university must develop their own pedagogies in terms of design and development of course, access to and quality of courses. He concluded with the important suggestion that vision and action must go together.

### **11 Panel Discussion on 17.12.17, Time- 14:00-15.15**

(Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia Panel Discussion on Quality Higher Education opportunities through OER)

- a. OER Practices in teaching and learning at higher education
- b. Addressing present challenges to the creation and utilisation of OER in higher education

### **The Panellists**

Md. Mizanoor Rahman, Bangladesh Open University (BOU), Gazipur, Bangladesh

Dr. Anirban Ghosh, Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU), Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Dr. Jayanta Kar Sharma, Odisha State Open University (OSOU), Sambalpur, Odisha, India

Dr. Jeetendra Pande, Uttarakhand Open University (UOU), Haldwani, Uttarakhand, India

Dr. Dibyajyoti Mahanta, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU), Guwahati Assam, India

Barnali Roy Choudhury, Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU), Kolkata, West Bengal, India

**Moderation of the session** by Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, CEMCA

**Rapporteurs :** Gargee Sharma and Dalima Gowami

The session started with an introduction of the topic by Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi. He spoke about the use of open education sources to promote higher education among the masses and also emphasized on the ideology of learning for sustainable development.

The first presentation titled “Open Educational Resources (OER) Policy of Bangladesh Open University (BOU): an Evaluation”, elaborated on the joint initiative of CEMCA and BOU, and its objectives. The presentation also highlighted the OER policy and implementation of Blended Approach for teaching-learning at BOU. Md. Mizanoor Rahman also spoke about the prospects of OER at BOU. He concluded by stating that BOU recognizes heutagogy as a theory for application in distance education.

Dr. Anirban Ghosh started his presentation titled “Multimedia Intervention for increasing Access to Vocational Education”, with a brief introduction to Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU). He talked about the collaborative projects of NSOU with CEMCA. OER and its significance in the growth of inclusive education were also highlighted.

The next presentation was titled “Institutional Development Through Open Educational Resource Interventions: A Case of Odisha State Open University”. Dr. Jayanta Kar Sharma stated that the main objective of his study is to observe the developmental activities taken by higher educational institutions and its impact on the society as a whole.

Dr. Jeetendra Pande presentation was titled “OER Practices at Uttarakhand Open University: From Policies to Implementation. He spoke in length about the OER journey of Uttarakhand Open University, its OER repository, and OER related challenges.

Dr. Dibyajyoti Mahanta, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU) talked about the workshops held in association with CEMCA. He also enlightened the house about the main objectives of OER policy, and its purposes in the context of KKHSOU. He spoke about the rich natural heritage of Assam, and the scope of carrying out meaningful studies on aspects related to the state. He also spoke about the module “ALL ABOUT TEA”, an initiative taken by KKHSOU.

The last presentation was made by Barnali Roy Choudhury which was titled “Glimpses of Netaji Subhas Open University- Open Educational Resources Repository”. She too spoke about open educational resources, and concluded her presentation by stating that focus on technological innovations will bridge the gap between learners and teachers in the distance learning environment.

Towards the end of the session the forum was laid open for discussion in which active participation was witnessed.

## **12. Panel Discussion by Asian MOOCs Steering Committee**

The Introductory speech of the Panel Discussion was given by Dr. Prasenjit Das, Session Coordinator. He introduced the members of the steering committee of Asian MOOCs. Thereafter the session proceeding was handed over to Prof. Ariadurai, VC of SLOU and Chairman of the Plenary session to carry forward.

**Rapporteurs :** Rishi Chakravarty and Dr. Juri Hazarika

**Discussion 1: Professor Kandarpa Das, Professor of Dept. Of Foreign Language G.U. and Member of Asian MOOCs**

Prof. Das had introduced Prof. K.C. Li and he had interacted with the members via video conferencing. Prof. K.C. Li had narrated about the potential of Open Education System and the necessity of all the Open Universities to work collaboratively. Thereafter Prof. Kandarpa Das had narrated about the necessity of promoting MOOCs in Asia and issues of quality and credit transfer. He had highlighted about the two Asian MOOCs projects on Quality Assurance and Credit Transfer mechanism but specifically focused on speaking on Quality issues. He had spoken about the necessity of having a separate MOOC portal for Asia and had highlighted the four imperatives behind the portal. The four imperatives were the Paris message, inclusive lifelong learning goals by United Nations, focus on educational needs in Asia and the General perception of the stake holders. He had further highlighted about the official launch of the Asian MOOCs in the 30<sup>th</sup> AAOU Conference held in Manila in the year 2016. The Integrated hub for providing MOOCs to potential learners, linking up MOOCs of AAOU member institutions to promote and facilitate their MOOCs, promoting the MOOCs courses worldwide are the prime objectives of Asian MOOCs. The Global Practices of Credit Transfer Policy for MOOCs has already been introduced by seven Universities and five Institutions worldwide including the UGC. Moreover, another six Universities had recently adopted the Credit Transfer Policies of MOOCs. With regard to the Credit Transfer of MOOCs (CTM) Assessment, Prof. Das had mentioned the types of MOOCs credentials which are segregated as verified and non-verified. Lastly, he had concluded his presentation by highlighting the values of credits awarded on specific programmes and courses.

**Discussion 2: Dr. Dang Hi Dang, Vice Dean, Hanoi Open University**

Dr. Dang had spoken on the quality assurance mechanism on MOOCs and is specialised in this domain. According to him maintaining the highest quality of education is of prime importance because of the increasing number of enrolments that is happening in this area and the wide scope and flexibility offered. He had further narrated about the UN Sustainable Developmental Goals on Education and the general perception of the people towards MOOCs. However, because of the insufficient availability of literature on MOOCs, not much awareness has been generated in this area till now. He had highlighted on the challenges faced by the Open Universities in comparison to the MOOCs model which clearly highlights the rapid pace of performance by the MOOCs on building a more customised form of learning in comparison to the other Open Universities. Three areas of operation has been highlighted by Dr. Dang on MOOCs model viz, general, specialised and short-topic/concept respectively.

Finally, he had concluded his speech by highlighting the necessity of exchange of ideas and cooperative working by MOOCs and other Open Universities.

### **Discussion 3: Prof. Nripendra Narayan Sarma, HOD Department of Management, KKHSOU**

Prof. Sarma had highlighted on the requirement of targeted specific mass audience in order for the accomplishment of course delivery. A more customised mode of curriculum design is the necessity for effective implementation of the Massive Online Open Courses. He spoke about the rigidity of the conventional mode of learning in contrast to the more flexible mode adopted in the MOOCs. Massive customisation, Standardisation, cross or diverse specialisation policies must be adopted in the learning process. He had further highlighted his own experience while working in different projects of World Bank in procurement education and the innovative models adopted therein. According to him, the selection of learners is an important aspect of education if minimum quality standards are to be maintained. He shared his idea on launching a MOOC course on tea cultivation in Assam as the state is in comparative advantage in this area of exercise. In the current environment, designing the courses in accordance to the need to the people and society can increase the relevance and acceptability in the job market. In this context, he had talked about the several courses of Edx which has been designed in such a manner that encourages a learner to enhance his knowledge and skill. Finally, he concluded by highlighting a few words from the speech of Prof. Asha Kanwar on the necessity of MOOCs in keeping the learners motivated and engaged towards education and learning.

### **Open house discussion**

In this discussion, Prof. V.S. Prasad, Prof. Kandarpa Das, Dr. Dang Hi Dang and Prof. Swaraj Basu had highlighted their own general perception on MOOCs and the UGC Guidelines and regulation as per Government of India. Moreover, a few of the other members had also interacted in a productive way on discussing on the topic.

### **Conclusion**

Prof. Ariadurai, the chairperson of the session had finally concluded the session with Prof. Prasenjit Das, the session coordinator delivering the vote of thanks to all.

## **13. Plenary Session**

### **Theme: Managerial Issues in Administering ODL**

Prof. Nageshwar Rao, the Vice Chancellor of Uttarakhand Open University, began the session by throwing light into a few issues that ODL system of

education is facing today. These issues included topics like obtaining permission from UGC for new courses upon closure of all private study centres, about which he said he was hopeful of getting the same by July, 2018. He then introduced all the speakers to the house and welcomed them to the plenary session.

Prof. Rao then requested Prof. Anbhan Ariadurai, Vice-Chancellor of Open University of Sri Lanka to address the house. Prof. Ariadurai spoke about the existing ODL system in Sri Lanka. Established in 1980, this Open University is the only one of its kind in the entire country. It functions as per the UGC, and the degrees and diplomas awarded are in par with the conventional universities. Regarding conduct of examinations, he said that the University follows a system of continuous assessment, only after which, the final examinations are conducted. Regarding challenges faced, he mentioned the difficulties faced while dealing with the mind-set and attitude of the faculty staff, which is inclined towards the conventional system of education. Other issues included declaration of results, contradiction of opinions with UGC etc.

Prof. Subha S Sarkar, Vice Chancellor of NSOU addressed the house next. He introduced various statistical facts and figures of NSOU to the house. He revealed the fact that the enrolment numbers of NSOU for the current academic session stood at 71000 (as compared to 40,000 in the previous academic session), including graduate and post graduate learners, along with how CBCS system is followed. Regarding challenges faced, he pointed out differences in conventional and ODL mode in ideals and functioning, the difficulty in coping with the changing rules and regulations of UGC, difference in opinion with the Government regarding regulations and coping with the fluctuations in enrolment ratio, year after year. Regarding litigation issues that it is facing, he mentioned the non-equivalence of PhD degrees awarded in OD mode prior to 2009 to the degrees awarded in conventional mode, increasing dependence on study centres for conduct of examinations.

Prof. Ravindra R Kanhare, Vice Chancellor of Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University addressed the house next. He spoke about difference in perceptions of people regarding ODL & conventional mode of education. This university has 11 regional centres, about 1000 examination centres, 120,000 registered learners and 94 academic programmes, as of today. But the issues faced by it are of grave concern as well. They include existence of study centres in Higher Secondary schools, because of which issues of difficulty in maintaining secrecy crop up. Providing technical courses like B.Sc, M.Sc etc and conduct of relevant practical examinations become difficult if evaluation is assigned to schools where only Arts stream is available. Quality of study material, printing & delivery, and clashes of examinations with Higher Secondary examinations are other issues. Moreover, instead of affiliations, MOUs are in place with these

schools, because of which, first priority is given to conduct of Higher Secondary examinations. His observations included need of strict policies to be adopted by the ODL system, full transparency in conducting exam and running the ODL institutions and making ODL institutions corruption free.

Prof. Rao then talked about some of the issues taken up with the Government, like closing down of all private centres, proper mechanism for running education system, need for inherent power to run the ODL courses as per UGC, the 5-year review period in running courses, among others. With special focus on the University, he put forward a few positives, like the elements of CBCS system - Semester, Grading & Options, close relation between the CBCS and ODL system, popularity of a Yoga programme introduced in his University, and growing innovation in ODL sector. Additionally, concerns in this regard include closing down of all study centres except government operated study centres and study centres for which recognition is given by conventional universities, non-acceptance of parameters with respect to NAAC accreditation and restrictions for running courses like agriculture, law, engineering etc.

The house was then made open for discussion to all the participants, which was followed by a vote of thanks by Mrs. Chandrama Goswami, Associate Professor of Economics Department, KKHSOU.

#### **14. TECHNICAL SESSION 1 (Sub Theme 1 and 2)**

**Date 16.12.2016, Time 12.00 - 13.15hrs**

The session started with taking the chair by the Chairperson—Prof. S. S. Sarkar and the Discussant—Prof. P. K. Biswas. In this session the papers under theme 1 and 2 were presented. The first paper was presented by Dr. Azibur Rahman entitled '**Open Learning and Developmental Intervention - Role of Stakeholders**'. The presenter referred to Carl Roger, Dewey, Montessori, Berkeley, etc for discussing about self learning and autonomous learning. The constructivist theory of learning was also referred to in the discussion. Significant points of open and distance learning were mentioned along with special features of open school. While discussing about the challenges of growth of education, problems of illiteracy, low GER, dropouts, low quality of education, equity, higher cost of education, urban rural division, problem in access to education for adults, housewives, disadvantage groups and people in remote areas have been highlighted. Developmental interventions have been suggested through pedagogical approaches like learning by exploration, learning by discovery, learning by activity etc. Technology has been highlighted as one of the important components of ODL through multi- media, digital library etc. Some suggestions were given to improve the existing ODL system like policy partnership, need based course, guidance and

counseling, community radio etc. Prof. P.K. Biswas suggested the presenter for power point presentation. A query was raised regarding the pedagogical approach (situated learning) by one of the members in the audience. Prof S.S. Sarkar raised the issue of providing ODL at par with conventional system.

The second paper was presented by Dr. Bhaskar Sarma entitled **'Delivering quality higher education through ODL - a comparative analysis of quality parameters and framework of UGC vis-a-vis AAOU**. The paper compared between UGC regulation 2017 and the quality assurance framework of AAOU taking 18 quality indicators. Both the regulations were introduced in brief and parameter wise analysis was done between the regulations. Relative merits of the quality assurance framework of AAOU were discussed like emphasis on both formal and informal modes, emphasis on potential impact of media choices and providing training to learners for handling media. Likewise the relative merits of UGC (ODL) regulations were discussed like emphasis on online interaction, emphasis on vocational guidance and systematic and formal mechanism for learner feedback. The paper concluded with a discussion on relevance for SOU's in India. During the interaction session Dr. Sanjeev Raj raised the question of preparing a ranking of the quality parameters. The presenter responded that due to lack of adequate studies it is not possible at present. Prof VS Prasad very explicitly clarified that there are two approaches for quality assurance in education- one is common for both conventional and ODL and another is exclusively for ODL. While the UGC regulation is input oriented the QAF of AAOU is process oriented. It was said that output based parameters are more appropriate and there should be different parameters for different programs. The Chairperson raised the question of skewness towards conventional system in UGC regulation.

The third paper was authored by Dr. Sajeev Raj and Karabi Gowami and presented by Karabi Goswami. The paper was entitled **'Education through ODL mode: An analytical study of students and their perceptions'**. At first the objectives and methodology of research were presented. The paper analyzed the distance learning environment through the study of learners' perception regarding distance learning programs with reference to demographic, social and economic status. It was an exploratory study confined to Guwahati City. It was found that most of the students pursued Post Graduation Courses in Arts stream. The number of females and unemployed learners were found to be highest. The paper also discussed the top five challenges in ODL system. They were guidance for completion of assignments, job orientation of courses, regularity of contact sessions, availability of course related information, timely receipt of study materials/assignments. The statistical data revealed that demographic and socio economic status is not significantly related to the challenges. Recommendations were made like popularizing other streams,

increasing the popularity of other courses apart from PG and more importance to satisfaction level of students. Prof Daisy Bora Talukdar suggested to clarify the term 'PG and above' which was then replied as PG and above denotes master degree in a second subject, PhD etc. Prof VS Prasad added his valuable inputs regarding the findings related to maximum number of learners in PG programs. He also highlighted the necessity of preparing a charter for ODL learner as they are not clear about the self learning mode involved in ODL. Prof S.S. Sarkar asked for more clarification regarding the sampling and data collection procedure. Prof P.K. Biswas suggested for in depth study and including detail of tool preparation and data collection procedure in the paper. The session was concluded by the Chairman on the note that the session included both theoretical and quantitative papers which enriched the learning experience for all.

**Rapporteurs:** Ms. Sikha Rani Baishya

Dr. Krishna Kalita

**15 Technical Session- I** (Sub Theme 2) **Date:** 16. 12. 2017

**Chairperson:** Dr. AB Aich, Director, Study Centre, NSOU

**Discussant:** Prof. Manjullika Srivastava, IGNOU

**Session Coordinator:** Dr. Gautam Sharma

**Rapporteurs:** Ms. Murchana Kaushik

Mrs. Malabika Goswami

Dr. A.B. Aich, Director of NSOU Study Centre, chaired the technical session and discussed the role of open learning system for empowerment of the weaker sections of people through 'reaching the unreached'. While talking about development, he referred to the Nobel Laureate, great economist Dr. Amartya Sen, and stated that development should be understood in a broader perspective such as freedom of mind and freedom from ignorance.

**Runu Biswas and Md. M. Rahman (Bangladesh Open University):**

The paper is entitled "Difficulty level of Mathematics Course of Secondary School Certificate Program of Bangladesh Open University". This paper largely highlighted the difficulties and challenges associated with the system of imparting education in distance mode, with particular reference to the discipline of Mathematics. The study, based on samples from three districts in Bangladesh, reveals that a large number of students face difficulties while undergoing the course in distance mode in the discipline of mathematics. Some of the problems that the paper highlights in this

context are that of inadequate number of classes for learners, inability to use technology efficiently due to high expenses, lack of adequate time required to devote for studies etc. Consequently, the paper states that there is seen a rising trend of private tutors in this context. The paper emphasizes on the following suggestions to solve the mentioned problems: adoption of shadow teaching method, lessening private tutoring, better technological support and social motivation, amongst others.

**Dr. Mreeshi Agarwala and Kamal Mour:** The paper is entitled “Open Learning Framework for finance Professionals: A Case Study”. The paper emphasizes on two important and novel aspects: the significance and performance of the open and distance learning method for professionals of finance disciplines, and the respective challenges associated with it. Empirically, the background of the study is based on Assam, with particular reference to the learners from Guwahati. The paper argues that distance learning is a suitable mode for the discipline of chartered accountancy, as has been revealed by several years of CA education impartment in India. The significant benefit of this approach, as the paper argues, lies in the fact that there is no problem of employment generation in this context. However, the paper highlights the following challenges in this context: inadequate accessibility to technology by all sections of the learners, lack of digital literacy, language and translations barriers, problems regarding bandwidth and connectivity, etc.

**Dr. Sanjiv Kumar Kalita:** The paper is entitled “Distance Education: Challenges from Distance Education to Online Education”. This paper broadly highlights the online and distance education system and the challenges associated with it in India. The paper argues that the objective of distance education is to spread the system of higher education and make it accessible for all and to further upgrade the skills and educational quality. Highlighting on the significance of the system of distance education, the paper states that the needs of the hour in this context lie in improving and examining the system in terms of its role and pedagogy in contemporary times, use of upgraded technology and the popularization of the idea of virtual labs. The paper also focuses on the following challenges of distance education system in India: the issue of big data and its storage, the need of expanding the systems of MOOCs to integrate more and more languages, to upgrade the course design. The paper also points out that the traditional or conventional mode of education is an equally important and essential entity in this context.

## **16 Technical session on Sub theme 3: Redressing socio- economic inequalities through Open Learning and Developmental Interventions (16/12/2017)**

Chairperson: Prof. K. S. Rao

Discussant: Prof. Swaraj Basu

Session Coordinator: Dr. Bhaskar Bhattacharyya

Rapportuers: Ms Moonsoon Borkakati, Dr. Tejasha Kalita

Room coordinator: Ms. Anupama Chetia

### **Redressing socio- economic inequalities through Open Learning and Developmental Interventions by Mr. Rishi Chakravarty**

Right education can uplift the society from darkness and minimized socio-economic inequalities to a considerable extent. Socio-economic inequality covers two broad dimensions- - income and non-income. ODL has played an at most important role in reducing social inequalities. Through its different programme, it has made provisions to reach the areas where enrollment of women. Education is the prime factor along which other factors revolve. ODL in this regard has played an important role in irradiating poverty and controlling the unemployment problem. The curriculum of the ODL is flexible enough to reach the areas where regular mode cannot reach. As for example, it educates the jail inmates and it should have an agenda for the third gender.

### **Education as a lifelong activity: empowering the 'elderly' Indian through Open Distance Learning b Prof. Kajal Dey and Miss Sampurna Goswami**

It is very important to understand the term underprivileged with regard to education. According to the presentator the socialistic approach towards the society is important to eradicate the gap prevents in the society. Population, structure, basically comprises of the rural population, women flow and aged adults. Regarding the benefits of ODL, it could be stated that it is highly flexible, timeless and dependable. It is also a self directed approach. The aim of ODL is to motivate the adults to seek higher education. ICT is a recent development which has been incorporated in the ODL.

### **Slums, Open Learning and its effect on social Upliftment: a case study of Guwahati metropolis by Ms. Krishna Moni Sarma**

Education is a all round development of body and soul. The foundation of education should be introduced in the early years of a child. Elementary education (6-14 yeas) was made a fundamental right by the 86<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment act 2202 under article 21 (a). UDHR,(1948): ICESCR (1976), Conventional Child rights 1989 has made education a child right. She presenter has conducted the case study of Uzan bazaar Jahaj Ghat, L.P. School, Mangal Sandi Hindi Medium school and have shown the pathetic scenario of the education system at the primary level.

### **Distance Education for removing Socio-economic and geographical barriers for learners. Dr. Nabanita Medhi**

ODL has contributed to the developmental process of the nation. In this system, there is no bar of age and it is highly flexible in nature. It provides education beyond barriers and helps in developing human resources of the nation. It also helps in educating population in diversified fields and mitigates education to the remort areas also.

Socio-economic effects of Open and distance learning on Students mental status. Nargis Bano and Nurul Hoda

ODL education system has been growing rapidly. There have been various socio-economic effects of ODL like stress- free life, removal of social barriers, socio-economic status and educational issues, women and education, employment opportunities, cheapest mode of education, time saving learning etc.

### **View of the Discussant:**

Transformation through ODL and empowerment can help a lot in the progress of our society. All the five papers somehow entered round the theme that is transformation through ODL. We should understand that ODL is a mode. It is also necessary to understand the philosophy of ODL. ODL is effectively used to address some of the deprivation that the people are facing. If we are not self confident, we cannot prosper in life.

### **Observations made by the Chairperson:**

ODL system is yet to reach or use its potentialities to transform the society. First we a have to change our mindset. New programme should be introduced in the ODL system to cater the needs of the new generations. We should take up innovative research to deal with problem of unemployment and other areas.

**17 Technical session on Sub Theme 3:** Redressing Socio Economic Inequalities through Open Learning and Development Interventions

**Number of papers:** 5 Papers

**Chairperson:** Dr. Dibyajyoti Mahanta, Dean, KKHSOU

**Discussant:** Prof. CRK Murthy, IGNOU

**Session Coordinator:** Dr. Smritishikha Choudhury

**Rapporteurs:** Ms. Gayatri Baruah and Mr. Sanjib Ghimire

**Names of author/paper:**

1. Dr. Biraj Kanti Mondal: Exploration of Educational Enhancement and Reflective Observation on Distance System through NSOU
2. Dr. Mridusmita Duara , Vinit Ghosh: Enablers for an Inclusive Learning Environment through Socio Work Intervention
3. Dr. Indrani Deka, Dr. Sarmistha Rani Baruah, Chayanika Roy:Socio-economic Background of Women Learners of KKHSOU and Inference There-of
4. Dr. Abhijit Bhuyan, Dr. Dadul Dewri: Role of Open and Distance in the Empowerment of Women in Assam: A case study of KKHSOU
5. Dr. Ishmirekha Handique Konwar: effect of Socio- Economic -Status on Academic Achievement of distance learners in Lakhimpur district of Assam

**Paper 1**

In this paper, the author tries to concentrate on the educational enhancement of Post Graduate Geography students of NSOU and their role towards empowering society. He opines that Distance Education System is a budding network and it attracts learners of various educational backgrounds. He considered various factor to study his sample: age limit, marital status, income profile, regional distribution, gender category, religion category, status of physically handicapped learners. He observed that majority of the learners are unmarried and majority of the learners belonged to poor economical background.

**Paper 2**

The authors, in their paper propose a knowledge enabling model towards creating an inclusive learning framework through social

work education as a distance learning intervention. The authors opine that social work education through open learning framework can bring a positive attitudinal change in the mindsets of diversified tribal groups in N. E region identifying conflicts resolution, building collaborative work environment and creating an entrepreneurial culture. They identified eight factors as enablers for their study. These are-

1. Inclusive University Policies
2. Participatory Rural Appraisal
3. Upgradation of Social Work Curriculum-
4. Design Specific CSR programs
5. Social Work Research on Marginalized Groups
6. Development of Learning Feedback Mechanisms
7. Dedicated Social Work Team
8. Rewards and Recognition

### **Paper 3**

The authors in the paper, make an attempt to emphasize on factors of age distribution, social category, marital status, family type, monthly income, rural-urban character, type of accommodation and other important socio-economic factors related to the women learners of K. K. Handiqui State Open University and situate the emerging significance of distance education. The area of study was confined to study centres of different districts of Assam and both rural and urban areas were taken into consideration. A total of four hundred and thirty three (433) women learners had been taken for the study. The authors observed that majority of the respondents were unmarried (67.67%) and majority of them were from nuclear family (73.21%). The authors also observed that the respondents were comfortable in terms of fee structure, ease of access, learner-friendly study materials, etc. However, they found that the respondents faced certain problems such as lack of proper communication with the study centres and long distance to and from the study centers.

### **Paper 4**

In this paper, the authors make effort to highlight the major challenges faced by the women in Assam in pursuing higher studies and explore the role of the KKHSOU in trying to overcome those challenges through ODL. To understand the condition of women in Assam, the author considered sex ratio, educational status, and work-participation of women as key indicators. Further, the authors informed about the initiative of KKHSOU, such as women empowerment through ODL, equality in education, wide network of study center etc. They found that the university creates a new lease

of hope among the learners, erase physical constraint, promote self-learning style of pedagogy, its cost effective, gainful education, promote gender equality and empower those who are otherwise deprived. The chairperson suggested to the author to collect data from the study center with higher women learners for better statistical observation and talked about importance of introduction of specific courses for women empowerment.

### **Paper 5**

The author in this paper studied the effect of socio-economic status on academic achievement of distance learners in relation to gender, marital status of Lakhimpur district of Assam. She tried to examine whether any relationship exists among the two variables viz., socio economic status and academic achievement of distance learners. The author used the Socio-Economic Status Scale developed by Kuppuswamy. The author found that there is no significant difference between male and female students in respect of Socio-Economic status even though the mean learner showed highest mean score than male learners. Marital status plays no role in pursuing ODL system of learning. The present study could not prove the effect of socio economic status with academic achievement of distance learners. The author opined that most of the distance learners were coming from middle class family and married distance learners were found to be higher in socio economic status than unmarried distance learners. The success of distance education basically depends on the spreading of educational opportunities to all. Lastly, the author suggested the necessity of fees concession and policy makers reframe policy to provide need-based course. She also suggested the importance of supervision of practical work such as field study, project report and dissertation. The chairperson suggested to perform T-test between samples of two districts for better analysis.

## **18 Technical session 2 on**

**Sub theme 4: Open Educational Resources and MOOCS : extending the benefits**

**Sub theme 5: Sector specific contribution of open learning towards inclusive growth**

**(16/12/2017)**

Chairperson: Prof. Ravindra R Kanhare

Discussant: Prof. Prabir K Biswas

Session Coordinator: Dr. Indrani eka

Rapportuers: Mr.Dhruva Sharma, Dr. Tejasha Kalita

Session coordinator: Ms. Chayanika Roy

**Paper presenter: Mr. Sruti Sruba Bharali**

**Name of the paper: A study on perception towards MOOC in traditional educational institutions**

A brief about MOOC terminology is explained and features of MOOC have been discussed, e.g. (i)no entry level requirement, (ii) anyone with internet connection can avail MOOC then, (iii) free of cost. she has reviewed few important books authored by Murray, Chatterjee and Nath and Cole and Timmerman. The goal of study is to understand the perception towards MOOCs. Some of the important findings are 91% of teacher differentiate between traditional and ODL. 61% participants blame media for the discrimination between ODL and conventional learning method. She has finally concluded the paper by saying that poor internet connection, negative role of media and prejudices regarding MOOCs are main challenges regarding the acceptance of MOOCs.

**Paper presenter: Mr. Kishor Mohan Bhattacharyya**

**Name of the paper: Open Learning and rehabilitation education for person with disabilities in India in present times**

The main theme of the paper is given below:

According to the presenter education is the main theme of development of human being through natural approach. Rehabilitation education refers to streamered line of special education for total empowerment of person with disabilities. Qualitative study method was used for the study. RPWD-Section 27 of social security prescribed 19 types of disabilities. Sarva Siksha Abhiyan has stated about the need for ICT. In 1987, IGNOU with NCERT has introduced programmes for PWDs. Few communication barriers were discussed that can be removed using ODL. The said barriers are architectural, emotional and psychological barriers. At the end he concluded his presentation with a remark that disability is a condition and not a disease.

**Dr. Tarali Pathak**

**Name of the paper: A study on the perception of college teachers on MOOCs.**

The main theme of the paper is given below:

In a busy life, we cannot easily avail knowledge. Because of higher cost of education and lack of time, parallel updation of knowledge is required, which can be fulfilled using MOOCs. Objective of the study is two find out a perception of teachers towards MOOCs. 70% of participants' are only partially aware about MOOCs. MOOC is not good enough for promotions in formal organization as it does not provide any degree or certificate.

### **Mr. Mintu Bhattacharyya**

**Name of the paper: Open and digital learning for empowerment of students with disabilities.**

The main theme of the paper is given below:

The presenter has said that according to the Census of India 2011, 26.8 million individuals are found to be PWDs, out of which 14.6 million are literates. Few issues discussed by the presenter with regard to PWDs are online content, printed material, website accessibility and proper examination systems. He further reiterated that OER and ODL can increase the impact of investment in knowledge. He talked about assistive technologies, advanced systems, for example text highlighting, Braille settings and tactile displace. The concept of Sugamya Pustakalaya is milestone in the direction of assisting dispersion of knowledge tp PWDs. He finally concluded the paper with the statement that the journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.

**View of the Discussant:** The discussant has said about that MOOCs are the source of knowledge and it should not be considered as a mean for academic promotion.

**Observation made by the chairperson:** the chairperson was overwhelmed with the presentation given by Mr. Kishor Bhattacharyya. A general statement was made by him regarding the sample size and case studies taken by the participants.

## **19 PAPERS PRESENTED UNDER SUB-THEME V: SECTOR SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION OF OPEN LEARNING TOWARDS INCLUSIVE GROWTH**

### **Women Empowerment through Open and Distance Learning in Kokrajhar District (presented by Dr. Mridula Devi)**

This study intended to examine how education provided through institutes of Open and Distance learning had facilitated in empowering the woman

in the Kokrajhar district. The author had conducted an empirical study to examine the enrolment pattern of woman in the different study centres of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, IDOL and IGNOU located in kokrajhar district. The study had elicited that over years there has been an increase in the number of female learners particularly in humanities and literature subjects. However in technical course like Master of Computer Application, Master of Business Administration the number of Female learner is less.

### **Inclusive Education for Differently Abled Students through Open and Distance Education (Presented by Pallavi Gogoi)**

This study argued that need for creation of special education of specially able learners in the Open and Distance learning system. The study also argued that through careful study the requirements of learners with different kinds of impairments must be first identified to make Open and Distance learning system more inclusive for the learners who are specially able. In this direction towards an inclusive environment, the author pointed the for training teachers who deal with students with special ability along with developing disable friendly infrastructure.

### **Skilling Female Garment Workers through ODL for National Economic Growth: A Study of Bangladesh (Presented by Umasree Dhar and Shahina Akter)**

This study begins by stating that the Ready-Made-Garment sector had a key role to play in Bagladesh's economic growth. But the workers of these industries are poor and disadvantaged, who are mostly woman. Their illiteracy acts as a contributor towards discriminations meted out to them. In this regard the authors of the study argue that the Open and Distance learning system has the potential to enable them to become literate while earning. Moreover apart from basic education the ODL system provide them the requisite skills so that they can perform better in their vocation which not only increase their earning but will lead to the overall growth of the country.

### **Open learning for Banglaeshi Diaspora for Sustainable livelihood: Policy Recommendations (Presented by Md. Abdus Sattar and Abu Nasar Md. Tofail Hossain)**

This study argued that since a major section of the Bangladeshi diaspora is less educated and mostly unskilled, they are mostly engaged in low paying jobs. Therefore, the study tried to focus on the prospects of reaching out the diaspora settled in the middle east countries and provide them education and skills through open and distance learning system which will enable them to find for sustainable jobs.

### **Tourism Education in Assam: Empowering and Transforming Society through Open Learning (Dr. Gnanada Nath)**

This study had argued that though tourism has an immense potential in Assam but there exists a lack of educated, trained, skilled and experienced professionals who can manage the tourism industry by discharging vital responsibility. In this direction the study did comparative examination of the institutes providing tourism courses. It was found that most of the institutes offer diploma programmes. Therefore, the study suggested that at this hour, there is need to promote tourism education more vigorously through the Open and Distance Learning system.

### **20 Concurrent Technical Session II-16.12.17 (15.15 to 16.30 hrs.)**

In this session the first paper titled "QR-Code based Access to OERs and SLMs for ODL Students" mainly focused on the twin aspects regarding how to generate and read QR (Quick Response) coding. An explanation was delivered about the QR code, its basic structure, purpose and relevance in today's world. The QR code was basically discussed in relation to its usage in ODL. Emphasis was given on the usage of mobile devices in order to explain how to generate and read QR code. A brief introduction of a feature of IGNOU - eGyankosh was made before the house.

The second paper titled "A Comparative Study on the Scope of ICT Intervention of Government and Private Schools of Nagaon District", highlighted the importance of ICT. Aim of the study was related to the fact whether ICT has penetrated into government and private schools. A comparative study of private and government school students in the context of ICT was presented.

The next paper titled “A Platform for Women Empowerment by ICT: A special reference to Internet Saathi Scheme by Google and TATA Trust”, mainly focused on the scheme Internet Saathi in reference to the Hajo Development Block. The study concentrated on rural women, and about issues related to their empowerment through the usage of ICT. Benefits of ICT were also discussed in the session.

The last paper of the session titled “Stride in Development of Information and Communication Technology : A Study on Potential Engine for Industrial Development of North East India” focused on two issues- first to assess the present status of IT Enabled Services in North East; second potential of ITES and ICT in the same region.

## **21 TECHNICAL SESSION III (11.45 - 13.00hrs) on 17.12.2016**

### **Sub Theme 6: ICT/ITES: Role in Developmental Interventions**

The session started with taking the chair by the Chairperson—Dr. B. S. Sarmah and the Discussant—Prof. Aniruddha Deka. In this session 5 papers under the Sub Theme 6 were presented. Ms. Pratity Borpujari presented the first paper in the technical session on ICT as a tool for women empowerment. She presented the objectives and the methodology and stated the findings that most of the women in her study area use ICT tools. However, only 7% women have availed ODL using ICT. Some challenges for the women were mentioned like domestic violence, lack of adequate computer skills and lack of freedom. The necessity of using ICT as an advantageous tool for ODL was raised. The women of the remote villages are socially and economically empowered by the use of ICT. 80% of the total women population (both literate and illiterate), are involved in SHGs with the help of ICT. Various observations were made by the chairperson and participants and some suggestions were also given from audience.

The second paper was presented by Dr. Tapashi Kashyap and Dr. Chayanika Senapati. It highlighted how ICT can be used in a cost effective manner for agricultural development. In Assam, farmers follow traditional methods of farming which needs to be ICT-enabled to make it more productive. Most of the agricultural families have access to mobile phones with internet facilities but very few of them use it for agricultural purpose. Suggestions were provided that proper education should be provided through ICT to the farmers regarding agriculture. In this regard, ODL system might be helpful and effective. Suggestions were given regarding use of community radio in ODL for agricultural purpose.

The next paper was presented by Barshneya Talukdar. It discussed how opinion mining/sentiments analysis can help in the field of ODL system. It was an experimental study based on Tweets which analyzed the positive and negative words in the tweets. The paper proposes to use a regular

pattern to examine the tweets under the Hadoop framework. Questions were raised regarding identification of fake accounts and relating the topic to the main theme of the conference. The experts raised the question of compatibility of the tools used.

Dipak Kr. Doley presented a paper highlighting the potentialities of ICT as a powerful tool for teaching English language. Language learner and teachers should adopt and understand various techniques of language teaching and learning and upgrade themselves for the same through ICT. The purpose of this study is to examine the necessity of ICT and emphasize its importance in teaching and learning space in contemporary digitized day-to-day teaching of English language. Through this study, English teachers would take cognizance of other effective and efficient means of teaching to which ICT belongs beside the traditional method. Suggestion for putting updated data, including personal experience of the author as a teacher, etc were given by the discussant and the chairperson.

The last paper of the session was presented by Dr. Bhaskar Sarmah and Dr. Sukmaya Lama on radio as an educational tool in developing countries: Its Evolution and current uses. Radio plays a pivotal role in the field of education in general and distance education in particular. The use of radio as an educational tool in countries like Thailand, India, Mali, Columbia, Nigeria, Mexico, Kenya etc. was highlighted. The paper makes an attempt to trace the evolution and growth of radio as a tool of education, particularly distance education in the developing countries. It also makes an attempt to outline the content of the radio programmes across the developing countries. Impact of community radio in the field of education and other developmental areas were discussed. Suggestions were made from the audience to include the reference for the secondary data in the presentation and to include Ham radio as a popular means of communication among students.

**Rapporteurs:** Priyanka Bhattacharjee

Krishna Kalita

## **22 Technical session on 17.12.17 on Sub theme 7**

**Chairpersons:** Prof. Abu Nasar Sayed Ahmed, Director of Bani Kanta Kakati Research Institute

**Discussant :** Prof. N. N. Sarma, Director of CIQA, KKHSOU

**Session coordinator:** Dr. Indrani Deka

**Rapporteurs:** Murchana Kaushik

Tarangini Das

**Paper presenters:** 1. Dr. Arnab Maiti

2. Diksha Dhar, Ankita Das, Shompy Das

**Dr. Arnab Maiti:** The paper is entitled “Prospect of higher education in the University of Kalyani through Distance Mode”. This paper focuses on the role of Kalyani University in terms of imparting higher education in the distance mode. He highlights that the objectives of the university are to make higher education accessible to all, ensure all round development of learners, and to propagate education in the true sense of the term. He further states that Kalyani University caters to approximately 16000 students, featured by the presence of 40 study centres.

**Diksha Dhar, Ankita Das, Shompy Das:** The paper is entitled “A case study on developmental organisations and open learning institutions with special reference to Indira Gandhi National Open University Centres, Guwahati”. This paper focuses on the methods of imparting education to the underprivileged sections of the society. Further, it highlights the challenges faced by the educational institutions, and also the perceptions of the students. The empirical work for the research paper has been based on the study centres of IGNOU. The paper argues, based on field research, that the preferred method of accessing materials for students is in the print form. It also states that the scarcity of faculty members, the lack of robust infrastructure, and the lack of a good communication system between teachers and students are some of the major problems.

Prof. Ahmed, being the chairperson for this session, not only conducted the entire session smoothly, but also gave his remarks to the presenters. Prof. Sharma, the discussant for the session, discussed the important aspects put forth by the presenters.

**23 Technical Session on Sub Theme 7, Date:** 17. 12. 2017

**Chairperson:** Dr. Daisy Bora Talukdar

**Discussant:** Dr. Jayanta K. Sharma

**Session Coordinator:** Dr. Neeva Rani Phookan

**Rapporteurs:** Ms. Sikha Rani Baishya

Mrs. Malabika Goswami

Dr. Sintu Ganai presented his paper entitled “**Curricular design of Teaching Chemistry through ODL: A case Study of Nataji Subhash Open University**”. The main focus of his study was to discuss the present scenario, the strategies needed for learning chemistry in ODL, compare the Bachelor Degree program in Chemistry in Distance and

Conventional mode and the delivery aspects of the said program at NSOU. He started his discussion by highlighting the present scenario of higher education through ODL in India, where he talked about the present GER in distance education, which is less. The number of open universities offering Bachelors Degree in Chemistry is only seven out of seventeen total open universities. While talking about strategies of learning Chemistry through Distance Education System he mentioned that good quality SLM, enhanced design of the course- curriculum, skill-based practical classes etc are needed. He also talked about the other lab- based science subjects offered by NSOU. He depicted the enrolment pattern in BDP Chemistry at NSOU year-wise which showed an increased trend from 2000-01. He talked about the delivery mode of courses at NSOU like SLM, PCP and also the process through which the university provides quality education like high quality study material and laboratory facility etc. Schedule of the laboratory classes were also discussed. He showed a comparison of the chemistry program of NSOU with the University of Calcutta and found that both the syllabus were at par. He further highlighted the challenges of the existing system at NSOU mainly inappropriate digital facilities. He ended the discussion with a few suggestions like innovative methods of teaching, conduct of online examination etc. A query was raised from a member in the audience regarding conduct of practical classes of chemistry. Prof. P. K. Biswas pointed out that the suggestions given in the paper should be categorized from a specific point of view.

Bijit Saikia presented a paper on **“Impact of Distance Education on Higher Education Scenario in Golaghat District under IGNOU and KKHSOU study centre D. R. College: An Analytical Study”**. He first discussed about the present scenario of higher education in India and how distance education helps the deprived people in fulfilling their educational expectations. The paper mainly highlighted the effect on literacy rate of the region easing finding job facilities, effect on higher education scenario etc. the objectives of the paper were to identify the problems of higher education, study the status of both the open universities and also identify the benefits of distance education and to analyze and provide suggestion for development of quality education in India. The main challenges identified were inadequate infrastructure and facilities, large vacancies in faculty positions and particularly govt. policies which are framed but have their own inadequacies etc. He concluded his paper stating that the number of learner enrolment in B. A. programs are showing an increasing trend in both the universities and mostly young learners are taking admission, whereas the ratio is equal in Masters Degree program for young and aged person. Also the numbers of young learners are increasing under distance education as he stated. Prof. P. K. Biswas suggested that the title of the paper is too broad and that impact cannot be studied if there is no outcome which was missing. Prof. Daisy Bora

Talukdar pointed out that data should be there to support the facts and suggestions.

Dr Shrutidhara Mahanta presented a paper entitled **“Open Learning and Economic Empowerment: a Tracer Study of Professional Programs of the Directorate of Open and Distance Learning, Dibrugarh University, Assam”**. The paper mainly highlighted the various P.G. Diploma Programs and their enrolment trends, reasons of learners joining the program, identify employability of former learners, examine the view of counselors regarding the same. The sample consisted of former learners selected through stratified random sampling and academic counselors through simple random sampling and coordinators and staff from administration. She presented the learners characteristics like, gender and age and also reasons for joining ODL i.e to get job and promotion mainly. In employability status it was seen that learners from PGDMM were more unemployed. She also highlighted the views of counselors and stated that SLMs and syllabus of PGDJMC are up-to-date and PGDCA are not up-to-date. As per coordinator’s view PGDCA is a highly demanding program but practical classes are an issue. She concluded the discussion saying that learners were job oriented and thus DODL should give more emphasis on vocational and professional programs. Some factors of dissatisfaction of the learners were also stated. The main suggestions were launch of skill based online courses by DODL and adopt mechanism to take up SWAYAM course by learners. The chairperson inquired about the reasons for unemployment in PGDMM where she assumed it to be lack of updated course material. Prof. Biswas gave his input that after education in ODL learners should be job-givers rather than being job-seekers.

Poban Gogoi & Pradip Dutta presented a paper entitled **“Attitude towards Teaching profession: A Study among D. El. Ed. Course Learners of KKHSOU, Digboi College Study Centre”**. The paper mainly dealt with the issue that problem can be solved if teachers have a positive attitude towards teaching. He mainly tried to find out the overall attitude of D. El. Ed. Course learners towards teaching and found that they had a positive attitude towards teaching. He also compared the attitude between male and female Course learners and found that there was no significant difference towards teaching profession. He also compared the attitude between TET qualified untrained learners and newly provincialized schools and found that there was no difference. In the study the presenter used ‘attitude scale towards teaching profession’ in order to measure attitude. The chairman gave her valuable input and stated that attitude scale cannot have any positive item and that scale should have

reliability. Prof. Biswas questioned the concept of 'overall attitude' and also added that the sample is also inadequate.

Dr. Prasenjit Das presented a paper on **entitled 'Role of KKHSOU in ensuring sustainable pathways of learning : a case study'**. He started the discussion by drawing a correlation between sustainable development and education and also highlighted the importance of sustainable development. The main focus of the paper was to study how ODL is related to sustainable development in the context of Assam. Then he proceeded with linking ODL with sustainable development and gave his observation that it can lead to eradication of poverty, guiding the youth in the right direction etc. In addition to that the philosophy of life-long learning was also focused. He also referred to Thessaloniki Declaration. He then highlighted the role of KKHSOU by providing equal opportunities of higher education to all, like women , drop outs etc. and talked about how KKHSOU facilitate education through OER's , Audio visual programs, various need based certificate and vocational training programs, community radio service etc. His main findings included that sustainable development included developmental perspectives like quality of life, ensuring long term benefits in personal and social life etc. A specific finding of his study was that young learners were mainly from rural areas and upper age learners were mainly for urban areas as because in rural areas they are unable to have educational facilities. Enrolment trend of KKHSOU shows that females are more in numbers as it increases status, dignity and also helps them in better decision making. The Chairperson raised an issue regarding popularity of ODL mode over conventional mode and whether ODL is selected only when there is no alternative. Mr. Das further added that KKHSOU is like a savior for the learners. Prof. Biswas gave his input regarding study on program evaluation.

#### **24 Concurrent Technical Session III- 17.12.17 (11:45 to 13:00 hrs.) on Sub-Theme VII- Case Studies of Developmental Organisations and Open Learning Institutions**

**Chairperson-** Prof. Kandarpa Das, Department of Foreign Language, Gauhati University, and Ex-Director of IDOL, Gauhati University

**Discussant-** Dr. Manas Panigrahi, CEMCA

**Session Coordinator-** Dr. Tejasha Kalita

**Rapporteurs-** Daalima Goswami, Gargee Sharma

The first paper titled "Transforming Higher Education through ODL with special reference to KKHSOU in Assam", emphasized on the need and importance of higher education. This article also focused on the

significance of ODL in today's world. Several initiatives taken by KKHSOU were discussed, for ex- Community Radio Service "Jnan Taranga", etc.

The second paper of the session "Status and use of Multimedia Learning Materials in Open and distance learning: An analysis among the learners of KKHSOU", talked in length about multimedia in the context of KKHSOU. It also highlighted the multimedia learning materials of KKHSOU. Emphasis was also laid on the YouTube channel of the University.

The third paper titled "Assessing Learners' Expectation and Perceptions on Video Lectures: A Case of BBS Program of Bangladesh Open University", essentially gazed on the usefulness of Video Lectures (VLs). The focus of this paper was on VLs contribution in Open and Distance Learning (ODL).

The last paper of the session was "Redressing Socio-economic Inequalities through Open Learning: A Study on KKHSOU Study Centres of Dibrugarh Town, Assam". The paper concluded with the thought that KKHSOU can be a medium to spread proper awareness about Open Learning among the common people in order to develop the intellectual capacity of individuals in the society.

**25 Concurrent technical session II on 16-12-17 (15.15 to 16.30 hrs.) on SUB THEME: Open Educational Resources and MOOCs: Extending the Benefits**

Chairperson: Prof.S.A. Ariadurai, VC, OUSL.

Discussant: Prof. Daisy Borah Talukdar, KKHSOU

Session Co-ordinator: Dr. Bhaskar Sarma, KKHSOU

Rapporteurs: Dr. Trisha Dowerah Baruah & Sanjeeb Kalita

The first paper presenter for the session was Md. Mizanoor Rahman from Bangladesh Open University who co-authored a paper with Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi from CEMCA, entitled , 'Open Educational Resources (OER) Policy of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) : An evaluation'. The paper was based on a project that was taken up by Bangladesh Open University with support from CEMCA (Centre for Educational Media Commonwealth Asia). The name of the project is 'OER policy and implementation of Blended Approach for teaching - learning at BOU. Mr. Rahman highlighted some of the objectives of the project which included

enhancement of capacity of policy makers, enhancement of capacities of master trainers, development of an OER Repository and launching of an OER based Higher Education programme in the field of Business Studies. The author specifically focused on three 'Gogy' - Pedagogy, Andragogy and Heutagogy whereby a lot of emphasis is given on Heutagogy (which is the study of self-determined learning) in the present context. While explaining the OER initiatives at Bangladesh Open University, BOU Tube (where videos related to different courses under BOU are uploaded), eBook (eg- [ebookbou.edu.bd](http://ebookbou.edu.bd)) etc. are used on a wide scale to cater to the needs of the distance learners. Thus, the paper reviewed the existing OER policies of Bangladesh in general and BOU (Bangladesh Open University) in particular. The presenter had skillfully put OER policies in context, discussing their focus and scope and highlighting challenges and bottlenecks.

The second paper for the session was presented by Ms. Moromi Gogoi from Directorate of Open and Distance Learning, Dibrugarh University on 'Enhancing innovation in ODL : e-learning and e-content'. The main objective of her research paper was to promote and analyse the importance of E-content in teaching-learning process. According to her, any further research on the aforementioned study will lead to an increase in the learning resources and enhance the quality of teaching. Citing that the EMRC Centre of Dibrugarh University has already developed about 24 e-contents, plans are afoot to integrate virtual learning technologies in order to make learning more interesting and interactive. According to her, each of the modules have been prepared in such a way so that the learners/students can follow the instructional material in a systematic way- objectives ,description, summary, assignments, integration of video and audio clips for better presentation etc. As far as post production activities of e-content modules are concerned, monitoring and preview of modules are done by subject experts. Ms. Gogoi further said that the Institute is working on integrating virtual learning technologies into the e-learning modules. In fact, her paper gave an insight on how to make available the E-content to teachers and students through various delivery

modes for formal and non-formal education, for supplementing and complementing the process of teaching and learning in higher education in distance mode.

The third paper for the session was presented by Ms. Rita Sinha who co-authored the paper with Dr. Kandarpa Kumar Sarma . In their paper, 'Effectiveness of Online and ICT resources for strengthening Science Education', Ms. Sinha focused on application of ICT for science education including innovative approaches. It also focused on case studies related to people involved or interested in the planning, development and implementation of science education programmes. Having cited the example of swayam, she said that through this online platform, a learner can choose from hundreds of [courses](#) , virtually every course that is taught at the university / college / school level and which shall be offered by best of the teachers in India and elsewhere. Ms. Sinha also outlined some of the reasons as given below as to why science education not been properly developed as yet-

- Physical isolation
- Lack of development
- Asymmetrical distribution of resources
- Lack of quality teachers

The authors proposed a system model for ICT based science education. The first model revolved around a teacher imparting learning while the second model involved the use of multimedia repository. Thus, the respective authors have skillfully presented the potentiality of distance learning approaches in enhancing the contribution of science education for a fructifying socio-economic policy in India. Science education can be spread in every nook and corners of the Indian society by an effective use of ICT resources and open learning methods.

## **26 The valedictory Session**

The Valedictory Session of the International Conference was graced by Dr. BK Bhadri, Asstt. Educational adviser(DL) Ministry of HRD, Government of

India. Dr. Bhadri in his Valedictory address urged the ODL service providers to design courses and make interventions in the open learning system for empowerment and transformation of society.