

## A STUDY OF CURRANT STATUS AND BEST PRACTICES OF OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*Open Learning and Distance Learning are being used almost inter-changeably in present day world. 'Open Learning' and 'Distance Education' are often combined to be known as open and Distance Learning (ODL), Today we call it as ODL System. Open learning is a philosophical concept and Distance Education is the mode used for making the dream come true, as the two are complementary to each other. This paper explores weather the slogan of reaching the unreached has really taken place in disadvantaged, rural belts of Jammu and Kashmir state Indian republic. This paper showcase the work of disseminating knowledge by the educational institutions like IGNOU, MANUU, Jammu University and Kashmir University under ODL system in the trouble torn Jammu and Kashmir and the best practices perpetuated. OPEN AND distance learning has not only provided access to information to the needy areas but has enriched the life of millions of rural poor inhabiting the developing countries of Asia.*

***Keywords:** Open Education, Distance Education, IGNOU, MANUU, Jammu and Kashmir, India.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Open and Distance learning system reaches out to the unreached via open access, open entry, open choice of subjects, flexi-time, etc. Open and Distance Learning Offers a number of advantage to learners and provides opportunities of effective learning (Amareswaran, & Singh, 2011).The phenomenal growth of distance and open learning systems all over the world has drastically changed the educational scenario everywhere today. The conventional notions about teaching-learning are being replaced very fast by new ideas and strategies, thanks to the revolutionary changes continuously taking place in media and communication. Since the concept of education as investment is also steadily gaining ground, even the poorest countries are slowly turning their attention to the educational needs of their respective populations in order to survive and develop. Distance education has been viewed by many as a viable strategy to achieve the national educational goals quickly and at low cost. The

subsidised education at the door steps of students has by and large bridged the gap between rural and urban, conventional and non-conventional university system.

Open Learning and Distance Education has taken rapid strides, are being used almost inter-changeably in present day world. 'Open Learning' and 'Distance Education' are often combined to be known as Open and Distance Learning (ODL), Today we call it as ODL System. Distance Learning is an umbrella term which focuses all the teaching learning landscape in which the learner and the teacher are separated by space and time. The distance and open learning system in other countries, both developed and developing, has established beyond any doubt the fact that this system is going to play a very important role in the 21st century. The success of the British Open University in the seventies, obviously acted as the inspiration for policy makers in many developing countries to establish their own open universities or distance teaching units. In India, for example, the initiative to establish an Open University at the national level had been there for a decade before it actually materialised in 1985, with the establishment of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) (Parthasarthy Committee Report 1974). Although the Andhra Pradesh Open-University (now Dr BR Ambedkar Open University) was established in 1982, the blueprint prepared for a full-fledged Open University was given some kind of practical shape only with the establishment of IGNOU, which is broadly modelled after the Open University, UK. In 1974, i.e five years after the OUUK came into existence, Pakistan established the Allama Iqbal University (AIU) at Islamabad. The AIU has been guided by the consultants from the UK from its inception.

Upto what extent the ODL institutions can play an important role for the dissemination of information in disadvantageous areas? The open and distance learning centres of excellence must identify the needs and priority areas to reach the unreachable populace. The societal need-based courses should be introduced in their curriculum keeping in mind the language as a medium of instruction by the institutions, as far as developing countries other than India are concerned. The Commonwealth of Learning should adapt a mechanism to gauge the need for introducing societal-based courses, keeping in mind the local regional language. The Government of India should adapt such an approach that every village might be brought under the preview of national policies. There is a need to set up a consortium of libraries and book banks even at village level so as to achieve the slogan of democratic governance.

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN J&K STATE:**

Historically, the credit for initiating Distance education goes to the University of Jammu which established an Institute of Correspondence Education on 3rd March 1976. It was designated as The Directorate of Distance Education later.

University of Jammu was established in 1969 vide Kashmir and Jammu University Act following bifurcation of University of Jammu and Kashmir (established in 1948). With the establishment of Directorate of Distance Education, the University of Jammu within 7 years of its establishment became a dual mode university from a conventional University. Directorate of Distance Education of Jammu university is located in 118.78 acre of main New Campus of the University, which houses teaching departments, centres, administration block, examination wing, college development council, department of student welfare, information wing, continuing education, information, computer centre, computer laboratories, internet facilities, post office, bank, book shop, health care, guest house, central library, auditorium, gymnasium, hostel facility, play grounds, cafeteria, canteens, residential quarters and many more facilities. Directorate of Distance Education is located near the Law School and the famous Gen. Zorawar Singh Auditorium Complex.

The Directorate offers Undergraduate and Post Graduate programmes ranging from a conventional B.A degree to a diploma in Business Management. The enrolment has grown from under 100 students in the year of its establishment to more than 16589 students in 2010-11. This multi-faculty institution has 15 permanent teachers with a strong orientation and experience in distance education. The Directorate also uses the services of visiting and contractual faculty.

In order to augment the delivery of the courses being offered latest and updated Self Learning Material is provided to the distance learners by hand and through post. In some courses the Self Learning Material (SLM) has also been put on the website.

The Directorate has adequate infrastructure in the form of halls and rooms for Personal Contact Programmes and Counselling sessions. The Directorate has a well-stocked library with a collection of over 35,000 books and a computer laboratory with internet and Wi-Fi facility.

Directorate of Distance Education of Jammu University has also established a network of study centres at

Rajouri, Kathua, Udhampur, Baderwah, Poonch, Doda and Kishtwar to ensure effective academic and administrative support for distance learners.

The support services and administrative staff of the Directorate are trained and committed to provide cutting edge services to the satisfaction of distance learners.

The University of Kashmir established the Directorate of Distance Education in the year 1976 with the view to impart education in different disciplines through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode. The Directorate of Distance Education has been offering many academic courses/programmes and undertakes a diverse range of activities. The Directorate is housed in a multi-storied building with well-equipped library, excellent student support services, an audio-visual lab, conference hall, well-furnished classrooms, and a computer lab with latest Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

IGNOU Regional Centre Jammu started its operations in the year 1998 in response to an invitation from J&K Govt. to establish a Regional Centre for J&K in Jammu in order to help the downtrodden and unreached populace of the State to take advantage of Open Education through distance mode until a separate Regional Centre was established in Srinagar in the year 1999. Regional Centre Jammu started its journey with one Learner Study Centre and has now established a network of more than 50 Learner Centres spread across the length and breadth of the entire Jammu Region including Doda, Kishtwar, Baderwah, Bhalessa, Surankote, Sunderbani, Rajouri, Gool, Kathua, Samba, R S Pura, Udhampur, Chhatroo, Patnitop, Ramban where some of the Learner Centres are in the remotest parts of Poonch and Doda District as far as 350 kms. We have the privilege of having our Learner Centres in several Jails in our region imparting Education to prisoners free of cost.

IGNOU Regional Centre Srinagar was established in February 1999 with a view to provide the higher education to the masses of Kashmir Division including Leh and Kargil. Regional Centre started its functioning from the campus of Kashmir University with jurisdiction over the valley of Kashmir and the districts of Leh, Kargil and Tangdhar with just four Study Centers, 14 programmes and around a thousand learners. In just 14 years of its existence, Regional Centre Srinagar has enrolled over 1 lac learners and emerged the largest centre among the Regional Centres across the country. During this period Regional Centre Srinagar reached to the masses and became able to impart higher education through ODL mode at the doorsteps of the needy and deprived peoples and to inculcate in them the competency and development skills in today's competitive world and to serve the nation in a better way.

Presently RC Srinagar is offering approximately 250 programmes starting from Certificates, Diplomas, Advance diplomas, PG diplomas, Bachelors and Masters in various disciplines. The professional Programmes being offered include MBA. MCA, MTM, B.Ed. M.Ed, BCA, PG diploma in Hospital Health Management, Geriatric Medicine, Food Science, Information Security, Bachelor and diploma programmes in Nursing etc. We have witnessed the higher enrolments in the programmes like Masters in Sociology, Political Science, Public Administration, Psychology, Management, English, History and technical programmes like MCA and BCA. We are in the process of starting need based programmes for the benefit of people of Kashmir valley. We have started the programme like Panchayati Raj & Rural development, Gandhi and peace studies, Anthropology and Information Security. Learners are showing keen interest in these programmes especially in Panchayati Raj as the strategy of State Govt. is to give more powers to Local bodies.

Maulana Azad National Urdu University is a Central University has made its entry in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in 2004, The University is established by an Act of the Parliament. 'The Maulana Azad National Urdu University Act, 1996' (No. 02 of 1997). As per the Act the Territorial Jurisdiction of the University shall extend to the whole of India.

Hence, MANUU has setup its Regional Centres, Sub-Regional Centres and Study Centres across the country. In Jammu it has a Camp Office and in Srinager a Regional Directorate.

MANUU Directorate of Distance was established in 1998. The DDE operates on the premise of propagating Urdu and reaching the unreached. As urdu being an Official Language of the state, the MANUU Programmes has been approved by the state Government like IGNOU. MANUU at present offers three Post-Graduate, three Under-Graduate, and eight PG Diploma/Diploma/Certificate programmes in the distance mode, apart from the B. Ed. programme. All these programmes have been approved by DEC and the B. Ed. programme is recognized by the NCTE. The total number of students registered in distance education is over 1,00,000 spread over 169 study centers all over India. At present the University's distance education support network has nine Regional Centers one each at New Delhi, Bangalore, Patna, Darbhanga, Kolkata, Mumbai, Bhopal, Srinagar and Ranchi; six Sub-Regional Centres one each at Jammu, Mewat, Lucknow, Sambhal, Hyderabad and Amaravati and an Examination Centre is in Jeddah, (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia).

At present, MANUU is offering 17 programmes through distance mode including 03 PG (M.A. in Urdu, History, English & Islamic Studies), 04 UG (B.A., B.Com., B.Sc. & B.Ed.), 02 PG Diplomas (PG Diploma in Museology, PG Diploma in Tourism Management), 02 Diplomas (Diploma in Journalism & Mass

Communication, Diploma in Teach English) and 04 Certificate programmes (Food & Nutrition, Proficiency in Urdu through English, Proficiency in Urdu through Hindi, Functional English for Urdu Speakers) .

In order to provide education to the Urdu knowing populace of Jammu and Kashmir and keeping in view the Urdu as official language, the University (MANUU) has established its Regional Office at Srinagar and Sub Regional Office Jammu and many study centres in the state. The main reason for the successful of the MANUU Programmes in this region is due to the recognition of it by the local state government. The Study centres of this Institution of national importance has been established in almost all the districts of the region.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. To study about the Status of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Institutions in Jammu and Kashmir
2. To study about the Present status of Learner Support centres in Jammu and Kashmir State.
3. To study the best practices perpetuated for the growth of ODL system in the region.

### **DATA BASE**

The data for the present study was collected from the following institutions:

1. IGNOU Regional Centre Jammu
2. IGNOU Regional Centre Srinagar
3. Camp Office, Maulana Azad National Open University, Jammu
4. Directorate of Distance Education, University of Jammu.
5. Directorate of Distance Education, University of Kashmir.

The investigator also studied various books, Websites, Census handbooks of all the districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

### **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES:**

Monitoring and assessing quality of student support services in Open and distance learning (ODL) is increasingly becoming critical for ODL systems seeking to reach out to more students and maintain high levels of student retention. While many (ODL) systems in the developed world have methods of assessing student service quality in their respective environments, the (ODL) context in the developing world is facing constraints in

defining and determining quality of learner support services that satisfy their students. The following Support Services are provided by the ODL Centres:

At a study centre, the following facilities are extended to students:

- a. Subject-specific counselling by part-time academic counsellors
- b. Audio and video-viewing facilities
- c. Library
- d. Teleconferencing
- e. Information services related to rules, regulations, procedures and schedules of the University
- f. Submission of assignments to tutor for comments, grading and marking a facility for undergoing the term-end exam

### **TYPES OF STUDY CENTRES OPERATING IN THE STATE:**

\*Psc- Programme Study Centres RSC- Regular Study Centres\*SE: Special Education\*EEBB (CENTRES (EDUCATIONALLY AND ECONOMICALLY BACKWARD BLOCKS) \*CNRI: CONFEDERATION OF NGOS OF RURAL INDIA\*RSC- Regular Study Centres, JI- Jail Inmates.

IGNOU Regional centre Jammu comprises 73 Learning centres which include 22 Programme study centres, 21 Regular Study centres. There is found one uniqueness of Special Study Centres in Jammu region established under several capacities for disadvantaged rural belts, educationally and economically backward blocks (EEBBs), CNRI cooperated IGNOU Special Centres, Special Education Centres, Mobile Centres, Special Centres for Jail Inmates. Total 30 Nos of the Special Study Centres (SSCs) has been setup by IGNOU New Delhi in Jammu region which included 12 Centres in rural/ remote areas of the region, 9 Special Centres in educationally and economically backward Blocks (EEBBs), three centres under CNRI- Confederation for NGOs in rural India category.

It is worth to mention here that CNRI is an umbrella organisation of NGOs in India and has signed Memorandum of Cooperation for dissemination of education with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU New Delhi). The University has also setup a Special Centre at MIER College of Education Jammu exclusively for Special Education. The University has reached to the Jail Inmates and has setuo four Special Study centres.



IGNOU Srinagar Comprise 22 Programme Study Centres, 20 Regular Study Centres, Six Special Study Centres (Two in NGO Sector and others in Government Women Colleges. As compared to IGNOU Regional Centre Jammu, It has a less focus on Community involvement through NGOs. IGNOU Srinagar Regional Centre has many areas lacking behind ODL System.

University of Jammu being a Conventional University, has 10 ODL Centres to its credit, most of the places are not covered under the ambit of Directorate of Distance Education.

The University of Kashmir has 15 Information and Counseling Cum Study centres in different locations.

### **INSTITUTION-WISE PROGRAMME COVERAGE:**

IGNOU Jammu comprise of 85 Programmes leading to the Master's Degree in English, Education, Hindi, Economics, Political Science, History, Food services, Tourism management, Sciences at Under Graduate level, However, the University has programmes like BDP the most widely imparted Programme in the region. Computer Applications, Health, Hospitality, Social work covering the wide range of professionals and youth. IGNOU Srinagar has 78 similar Programmes.

Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) has developed Programmes in Urdu Medium that has become a unique feature of the state include Masters Programme in Urdu, MA in English (Collaborated by IGNOU), Masters in History (Urdu Medium), BA, B.Sc, B.Ed, Diploma in Journalism and Mass communication, Diploma in Teaching of English, Certificate of Proficiency in Urdu through English. The unique feature of these programmes is that they are made available in Urdu medium and has a great impact on Urdu populace of the state.

The University of Jammu has B.A - Estb.1976) 2. B.COM 3. M.COM (Estb.1985) 4. PGDBM (Estb.1989) 5. M.A -Dogri (Estb.2010) 6.M.A -Urdu (Estb.2002) 7.M.A -Hindi (Estb.2002) 8. M.A -English (Estb.2003) 9. M.A -Sociology (Estb.2004).

The University of Kashmir has Post Graduate courses in Mathematics, Urdu, English, Economics, and Commerce. The diploma courses include PG Diploma in Computer Applications, Web Designing, Cyber Law, Tourism Management, Business Entrepreneurship, Business Administration, Home Sciences, B.Ed, Diploma in Pre Primary Teachers Training, and Certificate in Kashmiri Language.



**Table 1: Showing the present status of these ODL Institutions during 2016-2017**

SNO	ODL Component	IGNOU RC Jammu	IGNOU Srinagar	MANUU	University of Jammu	University of Kashmir
1	Availability of Experts for Service Delivery of Programmes like Counselling and Evaluation	Yes	Yes	No.	Yes	Yes
2	Audio Visual Aids like TV, EDUSAT, GyanDarshan, GyanWani	Yes, Used Exclusively	Used Exclusively	Used TV	Used	Used
3	Community participation in democratising Education MOU with NGOs	26	02	0	0	0
4	Building	Rented	Rented	Rented	Permanent	Permanent
5	Journals on Distance Education by ODL Institutions of the state	Not at the State/ Regional Level	Not at the State/ Regional Level	Not at the State/ Regional Level.	Yes	Yes

### **AVAILABILITY OF ACADEMIC COUNSELLORS:**

The Academic Counsellors are available in all the ODL Centres prevalent in the state except Maulana Azad National Urdu University.

Best Practices: The best practices include use of Audio Visual Aids like TV, EDUSAT, in IGNOU, MANUU, Jammu University and Kashmir University. GyanDarshan, GyanWaniis exclusively programmes broadcasted by the Indira Gandhi National Open University Jammu as well as Srinagar. The IGNOU has to its credit the e-gyankosh underwhich all the content of the Self Instructional material is online. Awareness is made frequently among the learners for the use of these portals for use.

**FREE EDUCATION FOR SCHEDULED CASTE AND SCHEDULED TRIBE LEARNERS:**

For July 2017 and January 2017 academic sessions, the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) Jammu as well as Srinagar has initiated a awareness to provide free education to Scheduled caste, Scheduled Tribe, and Transgender category students. This has been endorsed by the people and academics at large.

Free Online Felicitation Centres for Online Forms by IGNOU Jammu and Srinagar is made available to provide free services for filling online application, examination forms.

**PUBLICATIONS:**

At Regional Centre level, IGNOU has no publication to its credit, the University of Jammu and University of Kashmir has publications related to ODL named “The Communications” and The Varsity News.

Community Participation: The Community Participation has more in Jammu region as far as IGNOU is concerned, whereas the other ODL centres like University of Jammu, IGNOU Srinagar, and University of Kashmir has not practised, this is the main reason for low growth of learning centres under these ODL institutions. IGNOU Jammu has distinction of community mobilisation with the help of NGOs as more than 26 Special Centres are engaged in providing students support services in Jammu region.

ODL Status in Districts of Jammu and Kashmir: The State of Jammu and Kashmir comprise of 22 Districts, Almost all the districts are covered by IGNOU. Some of the Districts lack centres in Kashmir owing to the turmoil. There are some districts which are scattered in terms of areas in Kashmir, as well as in Jammu. The scattered areas/ blocks of the districts having a huge population are still not covered.

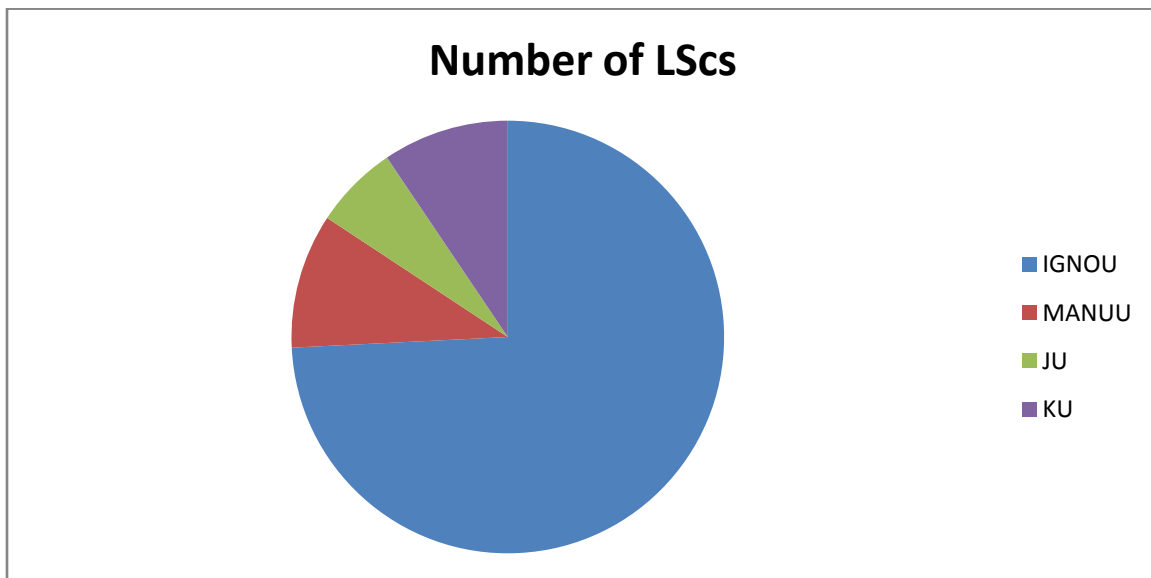
**Table 2: District-Wise Status of Learning Centres:**

SNO	DISTRICTS	IGNOU	MANUU	University of Jammu	University of Kashmir	Total
1	Jammu	35	1	0	1	37
2	Udhampur	8	0	2	0	10
3	Doda	7	1	2	0	10
4	Reasi	3	0	0	0	3
5	Kathua	6	0	2	0	8
6	Samba	2	0	0	0	2
7	Rajouri	2	2	1	0	5

8	Ramban	3	1	1	0	5
9	Poonch	3	2	1	0	6
10	Kishtwar	4	1	1	0	6
11	Srinagar	26	1	0	2	29
12	Baramulla	5	2	0	1	8
13	Anantnag	1	1	0	1	3
14	Kulgam	1	0	0	1	2
15	Shopian	1	1	0	1	3
16	Ganderbal	1	0	0	1	2
17	Kupwara	2	1	0	2	5
18	Leh	1	0	0	1	2
19	Kargil	1	1	0	1	3
20	Pulwama	3	0	0	1	4
21	Bandipora	1	0	0	1	2
22	Budgam	2	1	0	1	4
		118	16	10	15	159

Region	IGNOU	MANUU	JU	KU	Total
Jammu Region	73	8	10	1	92
Kashmir Region	45	8	0	14	67
Total	118	16	10	15	159

**Table 3: Region Wise- Distribution**



**Fig.1: Pie Graph Showing the Status of ODL Learning Centres –Institution-Wise.**

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION:

The present study investigated differed aspects of operation of the ODL Learning centres in J&K state and found the following facts;

In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, total 159 learning centres of different universities are in operation and are disseminating education on at the doorsteps of the students. The study found that some Districts are having less centres. The investigation reveal that Jammu District topped in growth of learning centres, the total learning centres of IGNOU, MANUU, Jammu University and Kashmir University are 37 in number as compared to the Srinager District that is having only 29 ODL learning centres of IGNOU, MANUU and Kashmir University. The study also reveal that in other districts the lowest number of learning centres are in Samba, Kulgam, Ganderbal, Leh and Bandipora. The population of Samba stands as 318611, Kulgam has 423181, Ganderbal has 297003, Leh has 147104, Bandipora stands 385099. There are most of the rural belts having no access to these centres.

At Provincial level, Jammu province has 92 centres where as Kashmir Province has only 67 centres of these ODL Institutions. IGNOU has 118 centres in operation in the state, MANUU has 16 Centres, Jammu University 10 centres and Kashmir University has 15 centres.

The present study reveals that IGNOU Jammu offer more programmes then IGNOU Srinagar, MANUU, Jammu University and Kashmir University. The IGNOU Jammu offer 85 Programmes twice in a year and has a network of study centres in Jammu region. At the second number come IGNOU Regional Centre Srinagar that offer 78 Programmes in Kashmir Province. Maulana Azad national Urdu University (MANUU) offers 11 programmes, Jammu University offer 9 programmes and Kashmir University has developed 14 Programmes. IGNOU Regional Centre Jammu and Srinagar both are offering more programmes as compared to MANUU, Jammu University and Kashmir University. The fact that Jammu University and Kashmir University are state universities and are conventional in nature. IGNOU being an Institution of National importance is getting several resources from the Union Ministry of Human resource Development, Government of India. There is a dire need to increase resources from the sources like Government funds for boasting ODL system under these local Universities besides other Institutions of National importance.

As per the above Table 1, it is evident that IGNOU Jammu regional Centre has more Learning support centres as compared to IGNOU Regional centre Srinagar, MANUU, Jammu University and Kashmir University. The IGNOU Regional centre Jammu topped in growth of learning centres due to the implementation of guidelines and schemes like Centres for Educationally and economically Backward blocks (EEBBs) of the region, Centres

like Special Study Centres (SSCs), and CNRI- Confederation of NGOS of Rural India scheme of IGNOU, Regular Study centres, Programmes study centres, Mobile Study centres etc. This paradigm shift could be due to the increased community participation and collaboration with community organisations in the region. In contrast, the gloomy face of IGNOU Regional centre is due to the lack of PPP Model / Collaborative approach as is being perpetuated in Jammu region.

The study also reveals that the buildings of controlling offices of ODL Institutions like IGNOU and MANUU are rented whereas the building accommodation for local universities seemed permanent.

The journals is published by ODL institutions include Kashmir University DDE Journal “The Communications”.

The use of technology in ODL system is an important aspect to disseminate knowledge among the people hitherto unreached. All the institutions of ODL system including IGNOU, MANUU, Jammu University and Kashmir University has a provision of best practices like TV, EDUSAT, GyanDarshan, GyanWani.

## **COLLABORATION WITH NGOS**

In the present study, the researcher found that there are 26 NGOs in Jammu region having memorandum of understanding with IGNOU under IGNOU Regional centre Jammu and only 2 NGOs in Kashmir adopting collaborative approach. These 26 NGOs under the directions and control of IGNOU Jammu has reached almost all the corners of the state under several schemes initiated by IGNOU. As compared to IGNOU RC Srinagar only two NGOs has being entrusted this task. However, In Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Kashmir University and Jammu University, there is no room for NGOs or PPP model in the state.

The present study reveals that IGNOU is extending educational opportunities in the Jammu region with letter and spirit by adopting a collaborative approach.

## **IMPLICATIONS:**

The distance education in this state of Jammu and Kashmir is crucial to be imparted in far off distant areas of Kashmir region, efforts should be made to establish ODL Centres in majority of Kashmir region by adopting a collaborative approach with NGOs and other educational Institutions. This can prove fruitful for engaging the youth of this region in achieving the higher objectives.

Efforts should be made to establish rural libraries, to provide access to knowledge to the vast population in the districts lacking such ODL Centres. There is a need to have a state regulator to collaborate the programmes at village panchayat level so as to achieve the objective of inclusive growth. Proper buildings be provided to the regional as well as learning support centres at different levels.

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