6.1 Introduction

The modern age is an age of dynamic, active and full of new challenges. It brings new demands for education. The society can face these challenges if the education system is modern, refurbishing, supple and able to reply to the demands of the rapidly changing society. Since the teacher plays a pivotal role in the entire education process, Teacher Education is very essential to meet the demand of such rapidly changing society. It should be aligned to the present needs and emerging changes. Especially at the secondary stage, Teacher Education has assumed special significance as it connects elementary and higher education. The B.Ed degree is the most sought after qualification at the secondary stage. RTE Act, 2009 has also made it mandatory requirement for in-service teachers. Generally there are two modes of Teacher Education. One is conventional and other is the Distance mode. In India, in most of the states B.Ed has been offered as one year course under conventional mode, two years under distance mode and four years integrated course under different Regional
Colleges of Education. The conventional Teacher Education is mostly transacted and supplemented with lectures, seminars, demonstrations, discussions etc. Under this system education takes place in the classroom where the teacher educators and teacher trainees meet regularly at a fixed timing. The distance mode Teacher Education on the other hand has impersonal and irregular contact between the teacher educators and teacher trainees. Here education is transacted by print material, interactive video/satellite TV, teleconferencing and other modern and innovative ways. Distance mode of Teacher Education means the separation of teacher educators and teacher trainees and the consequent use of a large media to enable the training process to take place.

Recognizing the importance of Teacher Education various commissions and committees appointed by the Central and State Govt. have been suggesting various measures for quality Teacher Education. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) and the Chattopadhay Commission (1983-85) had recommended specific suggestions regarding the renewal of knowledge and practice of teachers and increasing the duration of initial Teacher Education. Following the NPE 1986 and Programme of action 1992, in-service Teacher Education received support through Central Government funding.
Accordingly College of Teacher Education (CTE), Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASE) and University Departments through University Grants Commission were established for uplifting the quality of Teacher Education. The establishment of National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) in 1973 is the impetus in the field of Teacher Education in India to insist quality assurance by the teacher training institutions. It had brought out a discussion of document on Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education (1998), (2000) and (2004) to give a new mould to Teacher Education. A special focus is also given by NCFTE, 2009 on reviewing of B.Ed programme to facilitate the choice between a four year integrated model after +2 or a two year model after graduation, based on state requirements and available institutional capacity. This way various plans and actions have been taking place in the field of Teacher Education since last few decades in India. But it is observed that such developments are so lingering that these have not been able to bring comprehensive change in Teacher Education programme and solve the problem of untrained teacher. The National Knowledge Commission has observed that teachers are the single most important element of the school system, and the country is already facing a severe shortage of qualified and motivated school teachers at different levels. It is urgent
to restore the dignity of school teaching as a profession and provide more incentives for qualified and committed teachers (NKC, 2009). It is felt that the conventional mode available in various Govt. and private colleges and Deptt. of Education in universities are not adequate to meet the growing needs of trained teachers. There is a huge backlog of untrained teachers among working teachers in many states including Assam and a great demand for trained teachers for new appointments. Thus in an attempt to find solution to many such situations we have no second opinion today that distance education is the need of the hour. It has come to stay as an alternative strategy not only for liberal courses but also for professional programmes like Teacher Education. The door of distance education was inaugurated by correspondence education. It was first developed in the European countries like Germany, England, Sweden etc. Then U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. developed this system of education in a big way by the middle of 20th century. Subsequently this system accorded with high priority in New Zealand, Japan, Australia and many other countries. Success of distance mode stimulated the educational planners and policy makers to try the same in India. Accordingly the necessary guidelines for establishment of correspondence courses were framed by UGC and circulated to all universities. In 1962 Delhi University
first started such courses as pilot project. Later on due to some drawbacks of CCIs Open University system came up as an improved model of distance education. At present there are 13 state open universities in India which have been offering B.Ed/M.Ed course with a total of 8800 intake capacity and with due recognition of NCTE. Apart from that a few universities of India have also been offering courses for Teacher Education under distance mode with approval from NCTE as per the approved guidelines of the UGC. The establishment of Indira Gandhi National Open University in 19th November, 1985, the concept of open education in distance mode has emerged for the fulfillment of country’s aspiration. Since its inception IGNOU has been offering various professional courses including Teacher Education along with other degree, diploma and certificate courses. In certain states like Assam, there are huge numbers of untrained teachers working in the schools. In Assam the total number of high schools in 27 districts is 5743 where 24438 male and 9224 female teachers are working (UDISE 2013-2014). Assam has 9 Govt. and 45 NCTE recognized B.Ed colleges with a total of 4555 intake capacity. This figure is not adequate looking into the growing demand of B.Ed course at secondary level. A large number of teachers remain out of reach from doing B.Ed. In Assam since 2000 IGNOU has been
offering B.Ed course which has not only preparing quality professionals but also open up a way for solving the problem of untrained teachers. It has been providing a grant for deprived strivers to pursue their professional training comfortably.

6.2 **Statement of the problem**

“A STUDY OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME (B.Ed) UNDER ALTERNATIVE MODE OF EDUCATION WITH REFERENCE TO IGNOU”

6.3 **Significance of the study**

Professional development is felt essential for the wholesome development of a teacher’s personality and his performance at the maximum level. It assumes a special significance at the secondary level as it connects primary and higher education. The RTE Act 2009 has also envisaged the requirement of professional competency of teachers to realize the larger national goals of education. So B.Ed course is considered most essential for secondary level teachers. In Assam a good many numbers of Government and private teacher training institutions are functioning with due recognition of NCTE. But the number is not found sufficient looking into the matter of untrained teachers in the state. In Assam, there are 54 numbers of NCTE
recognized B.Ed colleges of which 9 Govt. and 45 private with total intake capacity of 4555(source: NCTE web site dated 31-1-14). As per the record of Directorate of Secondary Education (statistical branch) upto 2013-14 there are 5743 secondary schools across 27 districts in Assam where 33662 numbers of secondary school teachers are working of which 4332 are trained and 29330 are still untrained. Besides every year only 630 number of in-service teacher can go for deputation in 9 Govt. B.Ed colleges in the state. This has shown that a good number of aspirants remain out of reach of doing B.Ed due to the limitation of intake capacity. Moreover the recent Govt. decision not to send any teachers on deputation has created a problem for the teachers to go for B.Ed. programme in the traditional institutions. Assam Govt. has decided to discontinue the practice of sending in-service teachers on deputation for doing B.Ed. vide Govt. notification no. ASE.383/2011/8, dated 2nd August/11. They can pursue the same from any university offering B.Ed. through “Distance learning mode”. However vide Govt. notification no.ASE.383/2011/pt/21, dated 26th June, 2012 in view of reconsideration of earlier decision of the Govt. withdrawing the provision of deputation of B.Ed., from the session January 2013, 50 seats in Govt. colleges can now be taken on deputation. However while this provision will be helpful to only a few
senior untrained teachers of the schools but there will still problems on provisions of training for untrained teachers. Further B.Ed is mandatory requirement for in-service teacher. The state will have to deal the matter of untrained teacher and complete the backlog within the five years for compliance with RTE Act, 2009.

Moreover those who are working in private and Govt. organizations and want to upgrade themselves find it difficult to avail the opportunity under the existing fulltime course due to the rigidity of the traditional formal institutions. Hence an alternative was sought of to clear the backlog of these untrained teachers. In Assam, the programme of IGNOU for distance mode is found to be an effective alternative mode of professional training. It has been offering in service teacher training for secondary level teachers since 2000 with due recognition from NCTE.

Considering the facts stated above the investigator has decided to take-up the present study to know the professional education (B.Ed) offered by IGNOU, its accessibility and effectiveness for the large number of aspirants for undertaking B.Ed. The investigator hopes that the findings of the present study would not only be helpful in preparing quality professionals but also open up a way for solving the problems of untrained teachers. The results of the study would also be helpful
for incorporating the needed expansion and modification in the programme for the future learners in Assam.

6.4 Objectives of the study

The present study has undertaken the following objectives-

1. To study the organizational status of Teacher Education programme (B.Ed.) as alternative mode under IGNOU.
2. To study the student support facilities provided in alternative mode of Teacher Education programme (B.Ed.) under IGNOU.
3. To study the constraints faced by the student teachers in alternative mode of Teacher Education programme (B.Ed.) under IGNOU.
4. To study the achievement of student teachers in terms of gender studying in alternative mode of Teacher Education programme (B.Ed.) during 2009-2012 under IGNOU.
6.5 Delimitation

The study was subjected to several delimitations-

1. In Assam a good many number of universities are working at distance mode like as-Indira Gandhi National open University(IGNOU), K.K. Handiqui State Open University, Madurai Kamraj Distance University, Sikkim Manipal University, Vinayak Mission University etc. Out of all these the study was confined to Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) operating in the state of Assam only. Further, IGNOU has been offering a number of professional courses. Out of these courses the investigator has delimited the study to secondary level teacher training course i.e.B.Ed.

2. In terms of sample size and location, the study was delimited to two B.Ed study centres of IGNOU located at Jorhat district and Guwahati city, in the state of Assam. Sample of the study was taken from both the above two centres. Hence out come of the study is applicable to IGNOU in the state of Assam only.

3. The study was confined to the secondary school male and female teachers serving at the lower secondary level (i.e. high school).
Hence result may not be applicable for entire secondary level teachers (i.e. higher secondary teachers).

4. The study was confined to four major aspects of B.Ed programme under IGNOU- i) organizational status of secondary Teacher Education programme ii) student support facilities provided by the programme iii) constraints faced by the teacher trainees while under going the programme (if any) iv) gender achievements of the teacher trainees in B.Ed programme during the period 2009-2012. The study is subjected to focus only on the above four variables since they constitute a clear picture of IGNOU B.Ed programme.

6.6 Research Design and Methodology

6.6.1 Method used in the study

The present study was brought under normative survey method. The method was considered appropriate for this research work because no readymade data(except list of enrolment of teacher trainees)which were required for examining different objectives under study such as number of student trainees appeared final examination, attended counselling / workshop sessions, attended practice teaching
classes, submitted assignments, management and infrastructural facilities etc were available. This resulted no alternative to the investigator but to visit sampled centres for collection of data.

### 6.6.2 Sampling technique

For proper representativeness and precision purposive sampling technique had been adopted while selecting study centres under investigation. Two B.Ed study centres of Assam located at Jorhat and Guwahati were selected. Here attention was paid to select only those teacher trainees who were undergoing B.Ed during the period from 2009 to 2012. On the basis of availability they were purposively selected from each study centre. Out of the collected sample male and female sample had been divided accordingly. The total selected sample consists of 260 of which 130 each from Jorhat and Guwahati study centre. Again out of 130, 65 male and 65 female student teachers had been taken from each centre.
6.6.3 Tools used

1. Self structured questionnaire for student teachers

2. Interview schedule for Regional Director and centre PIC, IGNOU, Jorhat and Guwahati, Assam.

3. Centre information schedule for centre PICs, Jorhat and Guwahati centre, IGNOU, Assam.

Apart from the above tools Focus Group Interview (FGI) with the student teachers was also conducted to collect some additional information.

6.6.4 Collection of data

The investigator visited the two B.Ed study centres of IGNOU, Assam ie Post Graduate Training College (Jorhat) and Govt. Banikanta college of Teacher Education (Guwahati) to collect relevant data. The list of the teacher trainees who are the sample of the study, their address, contact number etc were collected from the office of the Regional centre (IGNOU), Guwahati. The result of the teacher trainees and other relevant documents and data were also collected from the Head office of IGNOU, New Delhi. In addition to this the investigator collected the required data with the help of questionnaire and information schedule from the Regional Director, centre PICs, academic counsellors and student teachers. The student teachers were
administered questionnaire during the days of counselling and workshop sessions. The student teachers who attended the counselling/workshop sessions earlier were contacted personally which was the painstaking work for the investigator. All the respondents were requested to give their opinion freely by giving assurance that their information will not have any affect on their result. These would only be used for a research study. Interview schedule and information schedule were administered to Regional Director and centre PICs of IGNOU, Assam respectively to collect relevant data. Apart from this academic counsellor were also interacted during workshop and counselling sessions to share their experiences in respect of the B.Ed course. Their views were recorded in field notes. Focus Group interview with the trainees was organized in both the two study centres and in some convenient places selected by the teacher trainees of 2009 and 2010 who had already completed their workshop and counselling sessions and stay in far off places. In this way with a sustained efforts and hard work, it was possible to collect the data required for studying different objectives under study.
6.6.5 Statistical treatment of data

6.6.5.1 Organizational status of Teacher Education programme (B.Ed) under IGNOU

To gain an idea about the status of IGNOU B.Ed programme, no statistical computation was required. To study this objective data collected from IGNOU Regional office, Head office, Study centre PIC, Academic counsellors, Regional Director by using information schedule, interview schedule, data of B.Ed Handbook and prospectus, Student Teachers’ Handbook, IGNOU website were presented systematically.

6.6.5.2 Computation of student support facilities under the programme

To find out the student support facilities under the programme, the data obtained from questionnaires were analysed by making use of simple percentage. In addition to this, graphical representation was done to bring more clarity in analysed data.

6.6.5.3 Computation of constraints faced by the student teachers under the programme

To know the constraints faced by the IGNOU B.Ed students a number of variables were included in the questionnaire which were administered to the student teachers. The obtained data were analysed
in terms of percentage and presented in both tabular and graphical form.

Some additional programme related information were also collected while conducting Focus Group interview with the student teachers.

6.6.5.4 Computation of achievements of student teachers in terms of gender under the programme

To find out the academic achievements of male and female student teachers who completed B.Ed examination during the session 2009-2012 the Grade Point Average of each Course(CGPC) and Grade Point Average of Programme(CGPA) were taken out. From the successful candidates percentage of male and female candidates, the grade they secured were calculated and presented in table and graph.

6.7 Major findings of the study

1. So far as the governance of IGNOU B.Ed programme is concerned, it is functioning at three levels as per the rule of IGNOU such as Study centre, Regional centre and Head quarter level.

2. In Assam IGNOU B.Ed programme has been conducted by two study centres located at Guwahati and Jorhat since 2000 and
2003 respectively. One more centre has recently been started working at Silchar from 2012.

3. Both the Guwahati and Jorhat study centres were under the jurisdiction of Regional centre Guwahati till 2012. After the establishment of Jorhat Regional centre in March, 2013 Jorhat study centre came under the jurisdiction of it.

4. There are 27 districts in the state of Assam out of which 18 come under the purview of Guwahati Regional centre and remaining 9 under the Jorhat Regional centre.

5. The technological facilities like teleconferencing through Gyan Darshan channel, Gyan Vani for B.Ed programme were not found implementing either in Study centre or Regional centre. Such provisions were not working in Regional centre Guwahati since 4th October 2011 due to some technical defect.

6. It is found that all admission related activities are done by the Regional centre. The study centres remain ignorant about the status of students enrolled till the list comes to the study centres.

7. The B.Ed admission is done on the basis of the result of Entrance test conducted at all India level. The lists of qualified candidates are prepared by the Headquarter of IGNOU and the
final admission is offered by the Regional centre after verification of relevant documents. The study centres are not concerned about the admission and fees related matter of the programme.

8. Enrolment of student teachers for the programme is found increasing since 2009-2012. The total enrolment was 51 in 2009, 93 each in 2010 and 2011 and 199 in 2012.

9. In last four years (2009-2012) the total enrolment of female student teacher including both the study centres was found higher than the male student teachers (It was male 214, female 222).

10. There is no full time staff in both the study centres. The PICs of the study centres opined that due to non availability of approved list of counsellors timely, creates problem in conducting B.Ed counselling/workshop sessions comfortably.

11. There is no scope to know about the final academic achievement of the students in the study centre as it is not made available from the Regional and Head office of IGNOU.

12. There is no provision of advanced payment for conducting workshop and other course related programme at centre by
Regional office. Disbursement of imprest amount process was also found to be time consuming.

13. Due to non-availability of permanent staff, PIC of the study centres are facing problem in allotting invigilators during Term end theory examination. It is also found that sometimes less experienced persons were engaged in invigilation duty.

14. The theoretical guidelines of IGNOU B.Ed programme is found satisfactory but its implementation requires to be strengthened as the study centres are having some hindrances in terms of academic, infrastructural, financial, physical and instructional amenities.

15. Most of the student teachers were found to be satisfied with the SLMs provided by IGNOU as course contents are duly illustrated in simple language and taking care of the latest development in Teacher Education.

16. Some of the students other than English and Hindi medium found the contents difficult to understand as SLMs are not available in regional languages.

17. The counselling sessions of B.Ed programme is not made compulsory by IGNOU course structure, so some of the student teachers do not take this seriously and find problem to get
thorough knowledge about the course and to prepare assignments.

18. Technological facilities provided during counselling/workshop sessions are not sufficient. It was found that traditional method was commonly followed by the Academic counsellors and Resource persons.

19. The responses of B.Ed candidates of Jorhat study centre were found more positive about self learning materials provided by the course and its delivery system than the candidates of Guwahati study centre, whereas the B.Ed candidates of Guwahati centre were found more positive in accepting SLMs as sufficient for independent learning than the B.Ed candidates of Jorhat study centre.

20. The technological facilities used during workshop/counselling sessions were found less in both the study centers, however the Jorhat study centre was found to be higher than the Guwahati study centre in terms of using technological facilities.

21. It was found that workshop sessions were attended by most of the student teachers. As these are made mandatory and organized during summer vacation so all could attend.
22. Sometimes feedback on assignments were not sent timely from the study centres to Head quarter. So the candidates had to face problem receiving result on time as grade on assignments carry weightage to their final theory grade.

23. The process of feedback on assignment is found different in two study centres. Tutor marked assignments are returned with comment more regularly in Jorhat study centre than the Guwahati study centre.

24. Supervision of practice teaching classes is not done properly. Some of the student teachers were of the opinion that the teacher educator did not supervise their classes during practice teaching period.

25. The infrastructural facilities of IGNOU study centres are fully dependent on the host institution. Many times they face problem of proper space or class room to conduct counselling/workshop sessions or even holding Term End theory examination if the host institution is having class or examination.

26. 63.85% of student teachers were found facing problem in receiving admission advertisement and postal delivery of forms on time.
27. A majority of student teachers (72.30%) found fee structure of the B.Ed programme as unaffordable in comparison to conventional B.Ed institutions.

28. It was found that the study materials are not delivered on time. Even some times student teachers do not get full materials at a time.

29. The study centres are not well equipped with ICT facilities such as LCD projector, Digital Voice Recorder, VCR, computer printer or even adequate number of computer. For audio-video presentation, materials are sent from Regional centre which are not in use as there is no proper arrangement of computer room or T.V. room.

30. It was found that the co-ordination between students and IGNOU authorities is very poor. The student teachers found problem to clarify queries as it was difficult to contact officials easily. Besides there is much delay in communication through mail and sometimes not attended from Regional office or Head quarter.

31. The practice teaching system of the programme was found to have constraints. The Mentor of the school where the student teachers do their practice teaching classes found taking the
whole process quite casually since they do not get any financial benefit or other recognition either from the Study centre or Regional centre.

32. Absence of close monitoring and supervision is felt in practice teaching. The student teachers do not take classes seriously hence no skill development and competency is reflected in their teaching.

33. The student teachers of Guwahati study centre are found facing more constraints in respect of feedback on assignments than the Jorhat study centre.

34. It is found that out of 260 student teachers of last four years (2009-2012) only 101 student teachers completed the final B.Ed examination.

35. In Guwahati study centre out of 130 student teachers only 53 numbers of them completed the final examination successfully.

36. Out of the successful candidates of Guwahati centre 23 were male and 30 were female.

37. Under the Guwahati centre 42 numbers of male student teachers and 35 numbers of female student teachers could not complete the final examination.
38. Both the male and female successful candidates of Guwahati study centre passed the final examination securing ‘B’ grade.

39. In Jorhat study centre, out of 130 student teachers, 48 numbers of student teachers completed the final B.Ed examination successfully.

40. Out of the successful B.Ed candidates of Jorhat centre, 21 were male and 27 were female.

41. Under Jorhat study centre 44 numbers of male student teachers and 38 numbers of female were found not completing the final examination.

42. Out of successful male B.Ed candidates only one candidate secured ‘A’ grade and 20 numbers of them secured ‘B’ grade.

43. The 5 numbers of successful female B.Ed candidates of Jorhat study centre secured ‘A’ grade and 22 numbers of them secured ‘B’ grade.

44. It is found that the academic achievement of female candidates is better than the male in both the centre.

45. Out of the successful B.Ed candidate more female candidates found secured ‘A’ grade than male candidates.
6.8 Conclusion

It has rightly been remarked by the former President of America Bill Clinton—“Every community should have a talented and dedicated teacher in every classroom. We have enormous opportunity for ensuring teacher quality well into the 21st century if we recruit promising people into teaching and give them the highest quality preparation and training.”

Professional development of teacher has become increasingly important across all sectors of education. It becomes urgent to boost-up the human resource quality to prepare ourselves to face the challenges of 21st century. The challenge should begin from the teachers as they are the builder of future human resources. Today the aspects of rapid change, challenges, life long learning, flexible routes to learning and the use of technology have a major impact on all the areas of education. Teacher Education is not exception to this. The teacher is to move from traditional to contextual learning, familiar with new equipment, strategies, expectations, skills and roles. Therefore it is very essential to make teachers of all levels professionally trained and competent.
The present study endeavored to scan the status of Teacher Education programme (B.Ed) under IGNOU in the state of Assam. IGNOU has achieved great popularity and success in the field of education all over the world. But how far the university is successful giving its service in the state of Assam is an important consideration. The study reveals that there are hardly any open university in the state offering Teacher Education programme through the distance mode with due recognition of NCTE. The stepping in of IGNOU offering B.Ed programme seems to have opened up a new door in the state for giving professional training to secondary level teachers. The service, IGNOU has been offering since 2000 in this respect is praiseworthy. However the present study shows certain essential areas of the programme where IGNOU needs to give more emphasize and make the programme a best one. Since the study is concerned to the teacher training programme in the state of Assam, it would not only enable the teachers but also every one associated with Teacher Education to know the defects and making needed correction. IGNOU B.Ed programme is to be the alternative way so that whoever has been able to derive the benefit from the programme may get his/her aspiration of professional development fulfilled through it. It is therefore the investigator expects that the expert, educationist, policy
maker, curriculum designer, programme planner or any other concern person would take authentic steps for implementation of the findings of the present study.