

Library Resources, Facilities and Support Services to Distance Learners in Selected Open Universities in India - A Study

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1. Introduction

"It is a truth not yet universally acknowledged that a venture based on information must be in want of a librarian" (Mahraj, 2012, p. 360). As the cornerstone of higher education, academic libraries have long supported the instructional endeavors on college and university campuses across the nation. Academic libraries carry a philosophical mission to provide access to educational resources and services, as well as instruction on locating, accessing, evaluating, and using resources successfully to all its users. "Libraries exist because they add value to teaching, learning, and the production and dissemination of knowledge" (Munde & Marks, 2009,

2. Background of the Study

Due to the growth of the Internet and its budding potential for online communications, institutions of higher education have been witness to a rising momentum in the movement from traditional face-to-face education to online, distance education. Starting with one single course moving online, higher education has transitioned to an entity where entire college programs and degrees are being delivered online. Without the constraints of time and space, today's learners are engaged in unique educational opportunities through online learning environments. Having the affordance of placing educational units into these online learning environments, colleges and universities are able to stretch their reach towards new and diverse bodies of learners.

3. Distance education

A brief overview of the general issues of distance education is necessary, before discussing about library support to distant learners. Distance education is an umbrella term, which includes several, more specific teaching and learning situations. We can define distance education as the learning process in which there is a quasi permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the learning process; it is characterized also by the presence of specific learning materials and student support services and by the use of different communication media (Keegan, 1990). Older literature insist on the difference between teacher-dependent (i.e. face to face) education and teacher-independent (i.e. distance) education: while teacher-independent education is based on the use of didactic and feedback materials on which the student works mostly on his own, in teacher dependent education the learning process takes place in the interaction of teachers and students during the lesson. The opposition of these concepts is no longer useful: the strong "educational interaction" of face-to-face education is now available even at

a distance, through the use of the internet and other technological media.

The history of distance education is usually divided in three periods (Trenton, 1998 and Sumner, 2000), according to the development, production and distribution of communication technologies. Technology has an intimate relationship with distance education, because it mediates the separation between teacher and learner through the use of print, radio, telephone, television, tapes and computers. This relationship, moreover, is taking a heightened importance because of technology's growing accessibility and ease of use

4. The role of libraries in distance learning

The role of the library in distance learning has its ground on two different arguments. The first is that if distant learners must be given the same services and opportunities as the ones offered to traditional learners, than they must receive also full library support. The second reason is a more general remark on the nature of distance learning: the role of information resources is much more relevant in distance learning than in traditional, face to face education.

As interactivity between students and teachers is slower and more difficult, the learner must rely more on the learning material to answer to his questions. This is particularly true for the first two Generations of distance education, but it is still acceptable for the third generation, where, in spite of the facilitated communication between faculty and students, the learning process is still defined as "resource-based".

5. Objectives

1. To evaluate the level of awareness of library services offered to distance learners.
2. To investigate the library services and programmes offered to distance learners.
3. To ascertain whether the information needs of distance learners are adequately provided for.

6. Scope and limitations of the study

The scope of the study is confined to library resources, library facilities and library support services to distance learners in selected open universities in India-a study

7. Statement of the study

"Library resources, library facilities and library support services to distance learners in selected open universities in India-a study"

8. Methodology

Methodology involves various tools, techniques and approaches. In the present study, a survey method has been employed using questionnaire as a tool for data collection to examine the library resources, library facilities and library support services to distance learners in selected open universities in India-a study. The study population and its distribution of questionnaire and respondents is seen from following table.

Distribution of Respondents

Sl. no.	Name of the Institution	Total No. of Questionnaires Distributed	Total No. of Questionnaires Received
1	IGNOU	400	325 (32.00)
2	KSOU	400	250 (31.25)
3	Total	800 (100)	575(63.25)

Distribution of Questionnaires: For the present study, 100 questionnaires were distributed to each study centers of Open and Distance Learners of IGNOU and KSOU. A total of 800 Questionnaires were distributed and received 575 valid Questionnaires. The response rate is 63.25. The details were given below table no.1:

Gender-wise Distribution of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Gender	Respondents	Percentage of respondents
1	Male	365	63.47
2	Female	210	36.52
3	Total	575	(100.00)

Source: Primary Data. *Parentheses in brackets are percentages.

The above table indicates that out of the total sample of 575, majority of the respondents i.e., 365(63.47per cent)

Residential Status of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Nature of Residence	Respondents	Percentage of respondents
1	Urban	378	65.73
2	Rural	154	26.79
3	Semi-Urban	43	7.47
4.	Total	575	100.00

Source: Primary Data

From the above table it is clear that majority of the respondents i.e., 26.79 per cent are from Semi-Urban. This is a healthy sign that the rural people are now recognizing the importance of education and are showing interest in persuing their education under distance mode. It is observed the

were male students while only 210 (36.52 per cent) of the respondents were female. Obviously, in open and distance education system there are more male members, who are taking advantage of pursuing of their educational goals through distance education while female members of the society are lagging behind in this regard. This can be attributed to the prevailing social conditions, family responsibilities, poverty etc., which are probably female sections of the society from making use of the opportunities provided by the open educational system in India.

Age-Wise Group of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Age	Respondents	Percentage of respondents
1	18-25	295	51.30
2	26-35	172	29.91
3	36-45	68	11.82
4	46 and above	40	6.95
5.	Grand Total	575	(100)

Source: Primary Data

A perusal at the above table reveals that majority of the respondents i.e., 51.30 per cent are in the younger age group of 18-25 years. This is, in a way, a good sign wherein the younger generations of students who have for some reason discontinued their studies are coming forward to explore their educational goals through Open University system. About 29.91 per cent of the distance learners are of the age group of 26-35 years. It is also found that only 6.95per cent of respondents are in the age group of 46 years and above. This shows that even the individuals in the higher age group are also interested in persuing education under distance mode through, a small section of them.

Availability of Librarians at Study Centres of IGNOU and KSOU of Bangalore Region

Sl. No.	Librarian	IGNOU	Percentage of respondents	KSOU	Percentage of respondents
1	Available	11	3.38	12	3.89
2	Not available	314	96.61	238	95.20
3	Total	325	100.00	250	575 (100.00)

Source: Primary Data

The above table shows that a large majority of the respondents i.e., 96.61 per cent in both the institutions i.e.,

95.20 per cent in case of IGNOU and 92.54 per cent in the case of KSOU have stated that `No Librarian` is available for

looking after the library activities and services, while only 3.38 per cent (IGNOU) and 3.89 per cent (KSOU) learners have

stated that **Librarian** is available to look after the library.

Availability of Lending Facilities at Study Centres

Sl. No.	Lending Facility	Nature of Respondents				
		IGNOU	Percentage of respondents	KSOU	Percentage of respondents	Total
1	Available	04	0.69	18	3.13	22 (03.82)
2	Not available	321	55.82	232	42.08	553 (96.17)
3	Total	325 (56.52)	100.00	250 (43.47)	100.00	575 (100.00)

Source: Primary Data

It is found from the above table that a large majority of the respondents i.e., 97.17 per cent in both the institutions (i.e. 55.82 in the case of IGNOU and 42.08 in the case of KSOU) have stated that lending facilities are not available in the libraries of Study Centres (SCs), a negligible section of the respondents i.e., while only 0.69 per cent of the respondents of IGNOU and 3.13 per cent of KSOU have stated that lending facilities are available at the study center libraries.

Thus, by and large, the libraries of these two institutions are not providing the lending facilities. It is significant to note that a very important facility of a library lending of books, is not adequately provided by the libraries of both the institutions. It can be said that lack of lending facility in the study center

libraries is a shortcoming not only in the libraries but also for the entire open universities.

Teleconference/ Video Conference: Using in different kinds of media and IT in providing education to the distantly located learners is an essential chrematistics of Open University System.

In this study it has been attempted to find out whether the tele-conferencing, video conferencing facility methods of imparting education facility is available with the study centres for the distance education learners.

Accordingly, the data that has been collected is furnished in the table No.13 below:

Availability of 'Internet' Access Facility at the Study Centres

Sl. No.	Availability of Internet Facility	Nature of Respondents				
		IGNOU	Percentage of respondents	KSOU	Percentage of respondents	Total
1	Available	26	4.52	22	3.82	48 (8.34)
2	Not Available	299	52.00	228	39.65	(91.65)
3	Total	325	56.52	250	43.47	575 (100)

Source: Primary Data

As per the data shown in the above table that a large majority of the respondents i.e., 52.00 per cent (i.e., 91.65 per cent in the case of IGNOU and 39.65 per cent in case of KSOU) have stated that Internet facilities are not available at the study centers, while 4.52 per cent of IGNOU and 3.82 per cent KSOU have stated that 'Internet' facility is available. On the whole, it can be said that Internet, is not yet fully made use of by the distance education institutions in India. In fact, the facilities like Internet are most crucial, and vital for the Distance Educational Institutions, as the learners are scattered and wide spread. It is an effective tool for disseminating the programmes and schedules of Distance Education Institutions, to the learners at their doorsteps.

9. Conclusion

In this study, the researchers have investigated the information services in Saudi academic libraries using the

current literature, document analysis, observation, and from the researchers. experience in the field. Information services in the current academic libraries included in this study were not consistent and faced a number of challenges, especially with regard to supporting DL. In addition to these existing challenges, the newly announced universities in Saudi Arabia will be under pressure to provide information services that can satisfy their users. needs, including the needs of distance learners, in relation to the amount of time needed to provide useful information services, their cost, the IT infrastructure, and the availability of suitable expertise. Moreover, the new methods of education, such as e-learning, which have been announced by the Saudi government, have to be supported with qualified information services and resources in order to offer good quality learning. Therefore, the researchers have presented several theoretical models that would lead to improved information services that would support DL.

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