

Class No.	378.03072 D54
--------------	---------------

**AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF STUDENT
SUPPORT SERVICES OF THE TWO
OPEN UNIVERSITIES: INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL
OPEN UNIVERSITY**

**AND
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA**

Thesis Submitted to IGNOU
for
the Award of Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Distance Education

by
**DOLUWARAWATHTHA GAMAGE SANDHYA KANTHI
DOLUWEERA**

Enrollment No. 093754457



Indira Gandhi National Open University

New Delhi

India

72225

JULY, 2013



72225

ABSTRACT

The distance education or a form of distance learning way back to the eighteenth century and during the past thirty decades a tremendous growth has taken place in Open and distance education. With the advancement of information and communication technology, the Open Universities and other Distance Learning Institutes were able to enroll a large number of learners into their open and distance learning system. Though, the number of programmes/courses offered by the universities/institutes also varies to a large extent, all Open Universities have one goal in common in provision of various types of support to the distance learners.

A variety of student support services are provided by the open distance learning institutes to the students include counseling, tutoring developing learning/study skills, peer group support, feedback concerning assignment and progress, language support, career guidance, administrative problem solving. The strengths and weaknesses of the support system of an open learning institution predetermine the sustainability of the institution and need an extensive investigation and evaluation of the support services provided by the open universities to various categories of learners.

The main objective of the present study was to explore the student support services provided by the Indira Gandhi National Open University and Open University of Sri Lanka by examining the existing support service models, studying the learner's perception, opinions of academic counsellor/academic staff and opinion of academic support staff.

The survey method structural interviews were conducted during the collection of information. Questionnaires were developed to include the demographic information of the responder and the areas of support services. A questionnaire was piloted and validated using pilot sample 100 from each institution. The reliability coefficients proved the internal consistency of the questionnaires (Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.96).

The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Moran table. Random sampling methods were used to choose the responders and 3000 learners representing for IGNOU and OUSL respectively. Sample of 110 and 117 academic counselors/academic staff members representing IGNOU and OUSL respectively and 34 non-academics from IGNOU and 100 support staff from OUSL was chosen at random. Data collection was accomplished by administering the questionnaire by hand, by mail and employing research scholar and the staff of the study centers in India and in Sri Lanka. Of each university The responses of academic counselors of IGNOU were collected by hand and online. The return rate of the questionnaire for the students were vary from 33% for IGNOU and 41% for OUSL and staff of IGNOU were 61% and 50% for the Academic staff of the OUSL. Non academic support staff.

Included in the study for the IGNOU were 34% and 50% support staff from OUSL. The student population of both universities surpassed by female students and dominated by the age group 18-30 years and unmarried students. Unemployed students The usage of ICT in IGNOU for teaching purposes is to be improved. Student perception on the teaching and counseling in IGNOU and OUSL were similar. 80% of the students have appreciated this aspect. Meanwhile, the lab facilities available at OUSL were highly rated. The use of ICT in both institutes were poorly rated. by the students reflected that ICT related teaching needs to be improved, Perception of support staff of the IGNOU on remunerations and conveyance of the staff is far beyond the satisfaction and poor communication between RC and SC, led poor coordination. The heavy work load and insufficient number of staff at IGNOU and OUSL had grievances. So some problems in other support services. Based on the findings of the study two learner support models were developed. For both IGNOU and OUSL. For the best practices of support services. The results of the study reflect that there are avenues for mutual exchange of the human resources management between the two institutions are of importance in sustainability and development both institutions.
