

Quality of the Practices Applied for the Facilitation of the Completion of the Research Project in Undergraduate Degree Programmes

**D.V.M. De Silva, B.G.H. Anuruddhika, R.N.P. Rathnayake, K.A.C. Alwis, S. Kugamoorthy,
K. Ketheeswaran, D.D.I. Deepthini, Dilini Chathurika, W.M.S. Weerakoon**

Faculty of Education, The Open University of Sri Lanka

Abstract

The Open University of Sri Lanka conducts its programmes through open and distance (ODL) mode. It is very important to identify numerous ways that can be implemented within ODL environment to support students continuously especially when doing research because research, by its nature, is a critical challenging task. This study attempted to reconnoitre the quality of the practices applied for the facilitation of the completion of the research project in undergraduate degree programmes offered by the Faculty of Education. The survey design was employed in this study. The sample comprised all the undergraduates (100) in the final year in B.Ed Honours Degree programmes, two programme coordinators and all the supervisors of B.Ed research projects. Online survey questionnaire for students, interviews for programme coordinators and focus group discussions for supervisors were used to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Data were analyzed statistically and descriptively. The findings revealed that, assigning supervisors, having communication through email- Whats -App, Viber, maintaining contact sessions and providing project manuals as key facilitating factors in the existing practice. Difficulties in identifying the research problem (45%); difficulties in finding relevant literature in the mother language (42%); difficulties in academic writing (52.1%); limited amount of library facilities in the regional and study centers (43.6%); problems related to meet the supervisors (84.6%); difficulties in managing work due to family and work related commitments (86%); problems with time management (47.9%); difficulties faced due to geographical distance (49.3%); less support from the school community and lack of resources (67.6%) are the common problems encountered by the students. Further the findings revealed that Lack of commitment of students, inadequate referencing of literature, difficulties of students in academic writing, lack of punctuality of the students, poor interactions between students and supervisors and the heavy workload of the supervisors are the major challenges faced by the supervisors. Based on the findings it was suggested that to facilitate the students through Zoom; Learner management system (LMS); and other modes which are suitable to ODL environment; enhance library facilities; provide more practice in academic writing; provide supervisor-student meeting schedules at the beginning of the research to facilitate the completion of the research projects. Further it was suggested to conduct an action research as the second phase of this study to explore the ways to improve the quality of the practices and quality of the research project component through open and distance mode.

Key words: *Research project; undergraduate degree programmes; ODL environment; Quality of the Practices*