

## Extended Abstract -2

### Role of Learning Resource in Distance Education: Sri Lankan Perspectives

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#### Introduction

Higher education undergoes fundamental changes as a result of increasing globalization, advances in technology, and changing demography of students. In response to these changes, distance mode learning in higher education is growing rapidly. During the last couple of decades, nations around the world have experienced a steep increase in the number of both secondary school graduates desiring to pursue higher education and working adults seeking specialized training to advance their careers and/or to keep up with the rapid changes in their professions. Therefore, the increased demand for educational opportunities and the need to find cost-effective solutions to meet this demand have become the top priority in national educational policy specially in case of developing countries where the population growth is most rapid and a well-trained workforce is most desired.

In Sri Lanka, new policies were drawn in 1970s though correspondence education was started in 1930, to accommodate this demand for increased opportunities and higher education institutions of an off-campus nature to be definitely different from the external degree awarding system. (Sri Lanka, Ministry of Higher Education, 1981) Accordingly, Distance education system was established in the country with the establishment of the Open University of Sri Lanka in 1980.

A characteristic feature of distance mode education is that the institution does not conduct regular teaching sessions within its premises. Instead of which a regular teaching-learning package is given to students to study individually. The distance learners are expected to learn on their own conveniently using the learning package. Individual learners do not meet teachers and peers regularly but they meet at day schools to discuss academic problems and therefore they are always isolated from the institution, from their teachers and peers. As distance learners are self learners they need extra support from the authorities by supplying them Learning Resources (LRs) at the right time, and support services to the right person to enable them to continue their studies at a distance. LRs can be classified as print, non print and human resources. Garrison (1989) classified it as a range of human and non-human resources to guide and facilitate the educational transaction.

Human resources are academic staff, administrative staff, peers, other support staff including technical, library, outside resource persons etc.

Tait (1995) and Sewart (1993) mentioned that provision of LRs should always be based on the needs and experiences of students. Therefore, it is important to identify the most important learning resources that are needed by distance learners as well as critical success factors to provide a satisfactory support service and to create a good learning environment.

### **Statement of the problem**

DE system in SL is still at a developing stage although three decades were past and use multimedia model for teaching. Due to that Sri Lankan distance learners still belong to the second generation while globally the fifth generation has been reached (Taylor, ), the researcher felt it is worthwhile evaluating the current level of utilization, examining the importance and satisfaction of usage of learning resources under five variables based on the CSFs related to three sub systems such as academic, support services and administrative. Due to these factors, it was felt that this research study is pertinent to examine the DE system in Sri Lanka.

There is a belief that better access leads to more appropriate utilization. Utilization of resources depends on the availability, accessibility, acceptability, affordability and accommodation of learning resources.

Due to the physical separation of the teacher and the learner, distance learners need to get learning resources at the right time. But it was observed through the complaints made by the students that Sri Lankan distance learners do not get learning resources at the right time. It is a question whether learning resources are received or not on time by SL distance learners. As a result, students face various difficulties when they continue their academic activities along with the individual difficulties that they face everyday. A correct answer is needed for that question.

### **Aim and objectives of the Study**

The aim of this research study is to examine the current level of importance on utilization and student satisfaction on provision of learning resources to the Sri Lankan distance learners. In an attempt to achieve this purpose, the following research objectives have been formulated:

- To identify importance given to LRs and the satisfaction level of the utilization of learning resources by Sri Lankan distance learners in relation to availability, accessibility, affordability, accommodation, and acceptability of learning resources.
- To review existing national and institutional policies in relation to availability, accessibility, of learning resources.
- To develop a support service model for distance education institutions.

Accordingly, following sub questions were formulated to find answers to achieve the above objectives.

1. What learning resources are mostly important to the Sri Lankan distance learners?
2. What are the perceptions of Sri Lankan distance learners about the level of importance and the level of satisfaction on five dependent variables, availability, accessibility, acceptability, affordability and accommodation with regards to:  
Academic support, Support services, Admin support,
3. What are most important CSFs related to distance education system in Sri Lanka?
4. How existing national and institutional policies support on availability, accessibility of learning resources to the Sri Lankan distance learners.

### The research design

The research design utilized mixed method, both a quantitative and a qualitative dimension, as this appeared as the most appropriate way to achieve the objectives of the study.

### Research process

The research process is based on the 'Onion model' proposed by Saunders et al. (2000) The research was conducted mainly in two phases as phase -1: preliminary study, phase 2; Meeting DE experts and conducting the main survey and different research methods were used to fit the purposes.

### Sample of the study

Samples for the study are as follows:

	Name of the Institution	Programme name	No. of registered stu.	Selected sample	Response rate	Data collection status
1	OUSL	MBA/HRM	44	44	44	Completed
2	Uni. Of Peradeniya	B of Business Administration	40	40	22	Completed
3	University of Jaffna	B of Business Administration	65	60	48	Completed
4	Centre for Study of Human rights – UC	Diploma in Human Rights	22	22	16	Completed
5	Department of Vocational Studies (Ladies College)	Diploma in Teaching Children with Special Learning Difficulties	08	08	08	Completed
6	IDM Computer Studies (Pvt Ltd)	Higher National Diploma in Teacher Education	43	43	22	Continuing
7	University of Rajarata	B.Sc. in Biological Science	22	22	18	Completed
	<b>Total</b>		<b>355</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>178</b>	

### Research method

According to Yang (2003) there are a number of methods for measuring service quality, such as SERVQUAL, customer surveys, customer interviews, internal audits, and customer value workshops. The survey was conducted using questionnaires, interviews and checklists as depicted in 'Onion model'. The research strategy selected was the survey method Further, for this study the customer survey method was used including a document survey to collect the data for the study.

### Research Instruments

- (a) Questionnaire
- (b) Interview schedule

*Method of Data Collection*

## (c) checklist

Questionnaire was selected as the main research tool which was used to collect data from distance learners in the study.

Policy literature such as corporate plans, QAA reports and archival data were used to find answers for research questions and to achieve objectives.

Further, interviews were conducted using an interview schedule with

- Course coordinators
- Service providers (Heads of the Department, Librarians, Bursars, IT Directors, ET Directors, Registrars of selected institutions) to achieve the first and third objectives.

In addition checklists were used to find out the information about the availability of learning resources and to find out whether facilities that are needed to give support services to students are available at each institution/centre. Many researchers (who investigated CSFs) used action research, case studies, literature reviews, and structured interviews (Remus and Wiener, 2009) as data collection methods for their studies. Only a relatively few studies have applied many models to identify CSFs. To address this relative deficiency in the literature, the present study integrates Importance-Performance Model (I-P Model) (Importance-Satisfaction Model) to identify most important LR and CSF to provide a more comprehensive evaluation for the provision of learning resources in the DE field of the country.

The application of the I-P Model was done as described by Lee (1992), with the first step in carrying out I-P analysis which involves generating a fairly comprehensive list of salient job attributes that are relevant to the situation being examined. The list of salient job attributes was prepared by conducting the literature review and in-depth interviews with knowledgeable persons. Once the list of salient job attributes was finalized, importance and satisfaction scales had to be developed on a rating scale.

**Analysis of data**

- i. Descriptive statistical analysis will be used to analyze collected data from the questionnaire, interviews and checklist.
- ii. Validity and reliability of questions will be checked using Cronbach Alpha.

Mean values will be computed for the importance and satisfaction scores associated with each attribute. A two-dimensional graph or action grid, with the importance scale representing the vertical axis and the satisfaction scale constituting the horizontal axis, would be then constructed.

Interview data will be analyzed using content analysis.

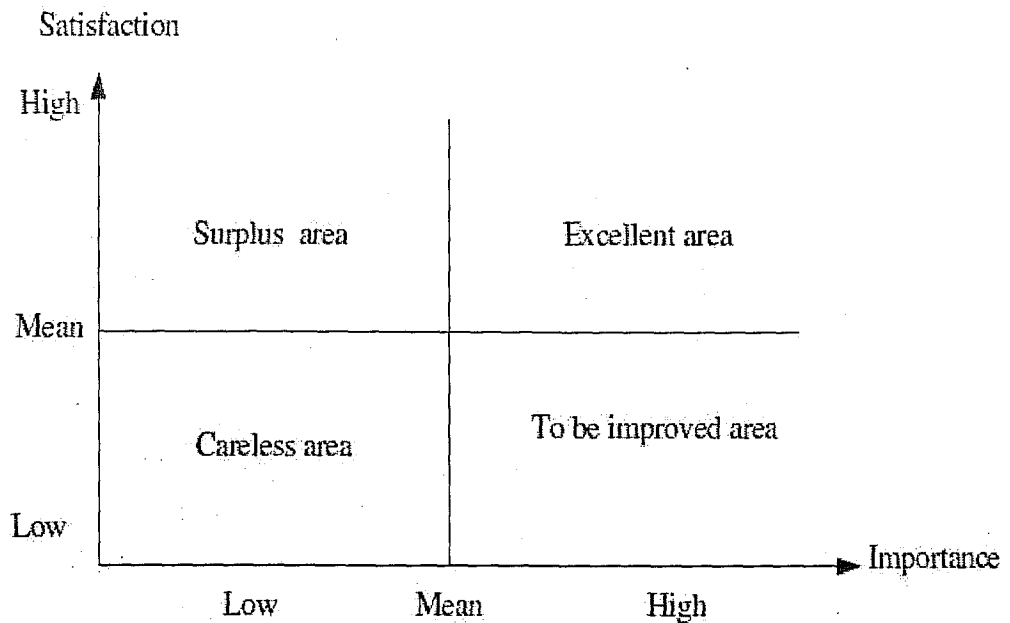


Figure 1. Importance-satisfaction model (I-S Model). Source: Yang (2003a).

Next, the mean importance and satisfaction values for each attributes will be plotted as points on the I-P action grid. Then the position of each attribute on the grid will be indicated against the appropriate strategy for that attribute; surplus area, excellent area, careless area, improved area (as shown in Figure-2 above and as described in empirical literature) As such, the action grid would help the higher authorities to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the service provided to distance learners.

#### Outcomes of the research:

- ▶ To provide a set of guide lines which will be helpful for the policy makers to strengthen the provision of information and learning resources in an appropriate manner for the open/ distance learners in the country. Guide lines will be reviewed by the experts who are in the field.
- ▶ To introduce Distance Education Support Services model (DESS model) which will be useful to all institutions who offer distance mode teaching when arranging support services to their distance learners.

Both outcomes will be evaluated by experts in the DE field.

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### Extended Abstract - 3

## Application of Igor Ansoff's Product – Market Growth Matrix in University Libraries of Sri Lanka

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### Introduction

In the environment of innovative technology the information business has been hugely developed and new entrepreneurs in the field have erupted. Consequently, libraries today have to face challenges of these new businesses and hence a high competition has emerged among the information services providers. As there are many alternatives to the library, users have more options to select and fulfill their information needs. Specially, the Internet and associated sophisticated web tools have grabbed the customer attention. As a result there is a trend to move from borrowing to access purchasing. Users trend to approach Google, commercial database providers, electronic publishers and other information providers instead of the library. In this circumstance university libraries seem gradually losing the user interest due to incompatibility with user expectations in the changing environment.

Therefore the library is required to adopt the market orientation and take strategic measures to face the ongoing changes. Libraries have to compete with new competitors to retain customers. Mostly business organizations adopt marketing strategies and they use Igor Ansoff's Product-Market growth Matrix which for determining strategic decisions. This matrix contains four basic components such as Market Penetration, Product development, Market development and Diversification which are successfully used for the growth potential of the firm. Ansoff's Product-Market growth Matrix can be used in the library settings too to sustain the market orientation.

The purpose of this study is to explore to which extent the university libraries of Sri Lanka have adopted Ansoff's Product-Market growth Matrix to determine the growth strategies of their businesses. The study attempts to achieve following objectives:

1. Determine the core products/services of university libraries of Sri Lanka