



LIBRARY RESOURCES AND FACILITIES TO DISTANCE LEARNERS IN SELECTED OPEN UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA

A. G. Kotreshappa¹ and Dr. M. Anjaiah²
¹Research Scholar Dept. of Library and Information Science Dravidian University-Kuppam, A.P.
² Asst.Professor Dept.of Library and Information Science Dravidian University-Kuppam, A.P.



ABSTRACT:

The success of the Open University of the United Kingdom encouraged Indian Universities to adopt the concept to make education more accessible and innovative. A major break through in the mode of higher education in the form of imparting distance education through correspondence courses and Open University system took place in sixties. This mode of higher education attempted to open up the higher education facilities to those who are at home; in the service; those who wanted to pursue higher education at their own place.

KEYWORDS: Indian Universities, accessible and innovative.

INTRODUCTION

In our country, it is known by the phrases, viz., 'External Appearance' or 'Private Appearance', "Correspondence Education". In this mode of education, a University permits a student to take the examination as a private candidate and if he passes, he is given the degree. What is being done under external appearance can best be called as 'Private Study' but not distance education. The second, Correspondence Education, has been quite popular in India. Of late, some of the institutions have labeled themselves as Distance Education and Open University. Thus, in India, two terms are being used: Correspondence Education and Distance Education

Distance Education is admirably suited to offer short time and tailor-made academic courses and programmes in several of the new and emerging disciplines and trades. For the educationally disadvantaged sections, such as the jobless, those residing in remote and inaccessible rural regions, those in-service who are unable to attend the regular educational institutions housewives confined to their homes and to other similar groups, it offers a soul-satisfying opportunity of empowerment. It serves as an ideal instrument of democratization of education

• OBJECTIVES

- ✓ To find out the nature of Library Support Services offered to the learners of distance education system in India.
- ✓ To analyse the provision of IT based Library Support Services in Distance Education Institutions in India.
- ✓ To find out the status of libraries of study centers, regional centers and headquarters of Dr. BRAOU and IGNOU.

- **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

- **STATEMENT OF THE STUDY:**

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

- **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.

**The Availability of Library Resources at Regional Centre Libraries (RCLs)
Of IGNOU & KSOU (Up to 2018)**

Sl. No.	Type of Library Resources	IGNOU	KSOU
1	Print Resources: Text Books	3,000(26.48)	4800(25.84)
2	Reference Books	2031(17.92)	3205 (17.25)
3	Journals/ Magazines	02(0.017)	100(0.05)
4	Gift books	234(2.06)	1422(7.65)
5	Ph.D. Theses/MPhil. dissertations	50(0.04)	321 (1.72)
6	Technical Reports/Project Reports	300(2.64)	649(3.49)
	E-Resources		
7	E-Books/E-Journals	250 (2.20)	532(2.86)
8	CDs/DVDs	3000(24.48)	5018(27.01)
9	Audio-Visual Material	1500(13.24)	1528(8.22)
10	Open Access Resources (OAR)	1211(10.69)	<1000(5.38)
11	Total	11,32(100.00)	18,575(100.00)

The above table reveals that most of the books i.e. **52.32%** per centage (i.e. 26.48 and 25.84 per cent) are text books that are available in the libraries of the regional centers of IGNOU & KSOU, while only 35.17 per cent of the books are reference books. It is note that only 0.67 per cent of the collection of the libraries at the regional centres are Magazines/Journals, which are useful for acquiring the current knowledge on subjects for updating the information of the learners. The E-resources such as 5.86% per centage of e-books and e-journals and having 16.07 per centage are Open Access Resources (OARs). This is indication that the libraries of distance education institutes are yet to be developed in the matter of providing the modern teaching and learning material. On the whole, these two Open Universes' RCs having good library resources which is good sign for ODLs academic growth and development as well as personal development.

Availability of Lending Facilities at Study Centers

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)

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.

Availability of Tele/ Video Conference facility at Study Centers

Sl. No.	Tele/ Video Conference Facility	Nature of Respondents				
		IGNOU	%	KSOU	%	Total
1	Available	280	48.69	175	30.43	455(79.13)
2	Not Available	45	7.82	75	13.04	120(20.86)
3	Total	325	56.52	250	43.47	575 (100)

Source: Primary Data

As per the data shown in the above table, the majority of the respondents (455) (79.13%) have stated that the Tele-conference / Video conference facility is available to the students at the study centres of IGNOU and KSOU and 120 respondents (20.86%) stated that the study centers do not have Tele-conference / Video conference facility in both Open Universities.

Among two open universities, out of 325 respondents, 280 (48.69%) from IGNOU and 175 respondents (30.43%) from KSOU opined that they have Tele-conference / Video conference facility,

45 respondents (7.82%) from IGNOU and 75 respondents (13.04%) from KSOU said there is no such kind of facilities available at SCs.

This indicates that the two leading Distance Education Institutions i.e., IGNOU and KSOU have been making use of the technology for providing better student services to the learners who are geographically scattered and have no opportunity for interaction with the institution for clarifying their doubts.

Availability of 'Internet' Access Facility at the Study Centers

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	527 (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 of 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.

Availability of Photocopying Facility at Study Centres

Sl. No.	Availability of photocopying service	Nature of Respondents				
		IGNOU	Percentage of respondents	KSOU	Percentage of respondents	Total
1	Available	18	(3.13)	29	(5.04)	47 (8.17)
2	Not available	307	(53.39)	221	(38.43)	528 (91.82)
3	Total	325	(56.52)	250	(43.47)	575 (100)

*Parentheses in brackets are percentages. Source: Primary data

The above table reveals that a large majority of the respondents i.e., 91.82 per cent (i.e., 53.39 per cent of IGNOU and 38.43 per cent of KSOU) have stated that photocopying (i.e., Xerox facility) facility is not available at Study Centres. Photocopying facility is yet another important component of student support services, which will enable the interested learners to obtain the photocopies of useful material for their studies. Thus, on the whole photocopying facility is not available at study centres.

Library Services Cell Facility at the Study Centers

Sl. No.	Library Service Cell	Nature of Respondents				
		IGNOU	Percentage of respondents	KSOU	Percentage of respondents	Total
1	Available	09	1.56	03	1.2	12 2.08%
2	Not Available	316	54.95	247	42.95	563 97.90
	Total	325	100.00	250	100.00	575 100.00

The above table explains that a large majority of the respondents 563 (i.e., 97.90 per cent (i.e., 54.95 per cent of IGNOU and 42.95 per cent of KSOU have stated that there is no "Library Services Cell" (LSC) facility at the Study Centres, while only 8.79 per cent of IGNOU, 2.61 per cent of KSOU of the respondents have stated that "Library Services Cell" is available at Study Centre level but not well organized to meet the learners information requirements. Lack of such useful service at the study center will definitely create a wide gap between the learner and the institution, wherein the learner feels still more isolated from the institution.

Availability of Telephone Tutoring Facility

Sl. No.	Telephone tutoring facility	Respondents				
		IGNOU	Percentage of respondents	KSOU	Percentage of respondents	Total
1	Yes	05	(2.75)	20	(7.46)	25 (5.55%)
2	No	177	(97.25)	248	(92.54)	425 (94.45%)
3	Total	182	(100)	268	(100)	450 (100%)

From the above table, it becomes clear that most of the respondents i.e. 94.45 per cent (i.e., 97.25 per cent of IGNOU and 92.54 per cent of KSOU have stated that Telephone Tutoring Facility (TTF) is not available at the Study Centres. Telephone Tutoring Facility, is an advanced tool of communication yet to be used in India in the Distance Education Institutions. It is significant to note that Telephone Tutoring Facility is a well practiced system of communication by the Distance Education Institutions of West like United Kingdom Open University (UKOU).

Use of Library Resources by the Respondents at SCs

Sl. No.	Library Resources	Respondents				Total
		IGNOU	%	KSOU	%	
1	Subject Books	73	22.46	56	22.4	129 (22.43)
2	Reference Books	136	41.84	123	49.2	259 (45.04)
3	General Books	116	20.17	71	21.84	187 (32.52)
4	Total	325	(100)	250	(100)	575 (100%)

Source: Primary Data

The above table (No.) shows that a considerable number of respondents (22.43 per cent) which include 22.46 per cent of IGNOU and 22.4 per cent of KSOU have stated that they have been making use of the subject books in the library. This is followed by use of reference books, as indicated by 41.84 per cent of respondents of IGNOU and 49.2 per cent of respondents of KSOU. This means that fairly good number of respondents are also making use of the reference books, apart from the subject books. It is interesting to note that 20.17 per cent in the case of IGNOU and 21.84 per cent in the case of KSOU learners, who are also showing interest in general books in addition to subject related books.

On the whole, it can be said that majority of the learners (45.04%) are using the library for reference books. The responses of the learners/ respondents in using the library facilities and library material/ resources clearly indicates the growing need for strengthening of the libraries by the Distance Education Institutions.

Visiting Study Centers Libraries during contact programmers

Sl. No.	Visiting to Library	IGNOU	%	KSOU	%	Total
1	Visiting	138	(75.82)	157	(58.58)	295 (65.65%)
2	Not visiting	44	(24.18)	111	(41.42)	155 (34.35)
3	Total	325	(100)	250	(100)	575 (100%)

The above table shows that more respondents i.e. 65.65 per cent (i.e., 75.82 per cent in the case of IGNOU, 58.58 per cent in the case of KSOU) have stated that they are visiting the library during the contact programmed, while only 24.18 per cent of the respondents of IGNOU and 41.42 per cent of KSOU have stated they are not visiting the library during the contact programmers. On the whole it can be said that large majority (59 per cent) of the respondents are making use of the library services at the study center, which is a good sign. It is to significant to note that the percentage of learners who are visiting the library is high 75.82 per cent in IGNOU, when compared to the learners of KSOU which is only 58.58 per cent. It can be said that the importance of the library in Distance Education Institution is not only growing but it is also being recognized as one of the effective tools of Distance Education Institutions in imparting education to the learners under distance mode.

CONCLUSION

The growing population of distance learners will increasingly expect university and library services to be delivered to their desktops. Therefore, there is a need for academics and librarians to venture into distance learning systems and recognize the special demands and problems of newly emerging group of learners and to make reciprocal arrangements to ensure that these students are not disadvantaged. They need to collaborate and take necessary policy decisions in order to expand the pedagogical boundaries of distance learning, ensuring that electronic developments are integrated with traditional concerns for wide reading, student autonomy and independent thinking.

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