

Administration of Student Support Services in  
Distance Education: A Case Study of  
Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Open University

Thesis Submitted for the Award of Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis entitled "**Administration of Student Support Services in Distance Education: A Case Study of Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Open University**" has been carried out by me at the University of Hyderabad under the supervision of **Dr. G. Sudarshanam** and that this is the original work and has not been submitted for a Degree or a Diploma to any other university.

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Mr. S. Raja Rao worked under my supervision for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science. His thesis entitled "**Administration of Student Support Services in Distance Education: A Case Study of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University**" represents his own work at the University of Hyderabad and it has not been submitted for a Degree or Diploma elsewhere.

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## Abbreviations

ADB	:	Asian Development Bank
AP	:	Andhra Pradesh
APOU	:	Andhra Pradesh Open University
BA	:	Bachelor of Arts
BC	:	Backward Caste
BCOM	:	Bachelor of Commerce
BUS	:	Bachelor of Library and Information Science
BSC	:	Bachelor of Science
CAL	:	Computer Aided Learning
CD-ROM	:	Compact Disc - Read Only Memory
CML	:	Computer Mediated Learning
COL	:	Commonwealth of Learning
DE	:	Distance Education
Dr.BRAOU	:	Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University
e. mail	:	Electronic Mail
ET	:	Eligibility Test
ICDE	:	International Council for Distance Education
IDEA	:	Indian Distance Education Association
IGNOU	:	Indira Gandhi National Open University
IJOL	:	Indian Journal of Open Learning
IMM	:	Interactive Multi Media
MA	:	Master of Arts
MBA	:	Master of Business Administration
MLIS	:	Master of Library and Information Science
MPHIL	:	Master of Philosophy
MSC	:	Master of Science
OC	:	Other Caste/Forward Caste
ODL	:	Open and Distance Learning
OL	:	Open Learning
PCP	:	Personal Contact Programme
PG	:	Postgraduation
PHD	:	Doctor of Philosophy
RCC	:	Regional Coordination Centre
SC	:	Scheduled Caste
SC	:	Study Centre
SIM	:	Self-Instructional Material
SSB	:	Student Services Branch
ST	:	Scheduled Tribe
TV	:	Television
<b>UG</b>	:	Undergraduation
UK	:	United Kingdom
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VCP	:	Video Cassette Player
WWW	:	World Wide Web

# Chapter-I

## Introduction:

### Distance Education and Student Support Services

# Chapter - 1

## Introduction: Distance Education and Student Support Services

### **Introduction**

Distance education is a relatively new field of study and gaining prominence off late. However, different terms are used to refer to open and distance learning system. Some of them are: "correspondence education, home study, independent study, external study, continuing education, distance teaching, self instruction, adult education, technology-based or mediated education, learner-centered education, open learning, open access, flexible learning and distributed learning".<sup>1</sup>

"Distance Education is a generic term that includes the range of teaching/ learning strategies variously referred to as correspondence education or correspondence study in both developed and developing countries; as home study or independent study in the Unites States of America; external studies in Australia; 'Tele-Enseignement' in France; 'Femstadium' or 'Fernunterricht' in Germany; education a distance or 'enseñanza a distancia' in Spanish speaking countries and 'teleducacao' in Portuguese".<sup>2</sup>

Given the numerous terms in practice for education imparted in a distance mode in different countries also contributed to lack of clarity or confusion about this form of education and became a topic for debate for some time. However, now distance education has been proposed as a general term for this whole area of education encompassing both distance teaching and distance learning. "Distance teaching refers to the role of educational institution in providing education at a distance, whereas distance learning refers to the role of the student in the learning process of education at a distance".<sup>3</sup>

"Distance education is a fairly new term. It denotes the form of study **not led** by teachers present in class-rooms **but** supported by tutors and an organization **at a distance** from the student".<sup>4</sup>

### **Conventional and Distance Modes of Education: Differences**

The present education system can be broadly divided into two categories. The most prevalent one is conventional / formal system of education. The second one is non formal system of education. The regular schools, colleges and universities fall under conventional / formal system of education, whereas the open universities and directorates of correspondence courses fall under non formal system of education. The differences between the two are better explained by Prof. Kulandai Swamy as, "conventional system caters to the needs of the learners from a specific age group of the primary, secondary and tertiary education system, provided they could become full time students and fulfill certain requirements on-campus preparations. For those in and out side these age groups, unable to fulfill the on-campus requirements and those that need education and training to gain competence in the jobs and those who need to upgrade, update and broaden their skills, the conventional system does not provide opportunities".<sup>5</sup>

Prof. Kulandai Swamy further stated that, "it is in this context that distance education emerged on the horizon. Distance education is neither a supplement nor a complement to the conventional system. It is not even an alternative. It is a new mode in its own right and meets new demands and cater to new target groups. It has very high potential for transcending all barriers-economic, social, cultural and geographical-and reach its clients".<sup>6</sup> The following table very aptly indicates the differences between the conventional system of education and distance system of education.<sup>7</sup>

Table 1.1. Difference between Conventional and Distance Education Systems

<b>Conventional Education System</b>	<b>Distance Education System</b>
Learning is a full time and major activity.	Learning is a part time secondary activity.
The learner remains in one role and continues the membership of a learning institution.	The learner returns to a role he had some time ago.
The learner 'belongs' to an institution.	The learner is a member of many institutions.
The learner is usually young.	The learner is an adult.
The learner is in easy contact with fellow learners.	Contact with fellow learners may not be easy.
The learner has easy access to the institutional resources.	The learner's contact with the institution is infrequent and often takes place across a distance.

Source: B.N.Koul and Anita Bhatt (1989), Academic Counselling, p.6

After knowing the differences between the conventional educational system and distance educational system, an attempt is made to find out the definitions of distance education.

### **Definitions of Distance Education**

The following are some of the important definitions given by eminent thinkers and practioners of distance education system. They have highlighted very important and crucial issues in distance education and helped the growth and development of distance education as an academic subject. The definitions can be classified as one group, which highlighted the separation of teacher and the student while imparting education. The other definitions have emphasized on different aspects of distance education like, division of labor, role of organization, industrial form of education, self study, independent study, learner autonomy, guided didactic conversation and two-way communication.

Moor defined distance education as "the family of instructional methods in which the teaching behaviors are executed apart from **the** learning behaviors, including those that in a contiguous situation would be performed in the learners' presence, so **that** communication between the teacher and the learner must be facilitated by **print**,

electronic, mechanical or other devices." Wedemeyer defined distance education as an "independent study consists of various forms of teaching-learning arrangements in which teachers and learners carry out their essential tools and responsibilities apart from one another, communicating in a variety of ways."<sup>9</sup>

Otto Peters, very eminent thinker of distance education highlighted different aspects of distance education, stated the distance education is "a method of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes which is rationalized by the application of division of labor and organizational principles as well as by the extensive use of technical media, especially for the purpose of reproducing high quality teaching material which makes it possible to instruct great numbers of students at the same time wherever they live. It is an industrialized form of teaching and learning."<sup>10</sup> Important components of his definition are division of labor, role of organization in imparting education, use of technical media and industrial form of education.

According to Holmberg, distance education includes "the various forms of study at all levels which are not under continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or on the same premises, but which nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organization."<sup>11</sup> Dohmne has defined the distance education as a "systematically organized form of self-study in which student counselling, the presentation of learning material and securing and supervising of students, success is carried out by a team of teachers, each of whom has responsibilities. It is made possible at a distance by means of media which can cover long distances."<sup>12</sup>

Some of the practitioners like Perraton, Dodds, Kulandai Swamy and Mehrotra gave much emphasis on the separation of teacher and the student in their simple definitions of distance education. According to Perraton distance education is an "educational process in which a significant proportion of teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and / or time from the learner."<sup>13</sup> Dodds defined distance education as "any system of teaching and learning in which the students are at a distance from their teachers for most of the time they are studying."<sup>14</sup> Kulandai Swamy on the

same lines stated that "distance Education in simple terms is a mode of education where a student is separated from the teaching in space and time."<sup>15</sup> Mehrotra and others defined distance education as "any formal approach to instruction in which the majority of the instruction occurs while educator and learner are not in each other's physical presence."<sup>16</sup>

The above definitions of various exponents of distance education and distance teaching have highlighted many important aspects in their definitions. If we examine each definition the following important aspects can be noticed. Moor in his definition has given central position to the separation of teacher and the learners and use of technical media. Wedemeyer who made efforts to popularize the term independent study for distance education in the United States and also in the world, has highlighted the separation of teacher and the learner and communicating in a variety of ways leading to the individualized learning. Peters has highlighted the use of technical media, mass education of students at a distance and industrialization of teaching process. Holmberg's definition also highlighted the separation of teacher and learner and the role of planning by an educational organization. Dohmen has highlighted organization of self study by an institution and use of media. Perreton has highlighted the use of combination of media like print, broadcast and face-to-face sessions for imparting education. Dodds, Kulandai Swamy and Mehrotra and others have highlighted the separation of teacher and the learner in the education process.

#### A Comprehensive Definition

After studying various definitions given by the proponents of distance education, Keegan has noticed that the definitions are not able to offer any single comprehensive definition for distance education. Hence he proposed and formulated a definition by synthesizing the important elements of definitions given by others. His definition has highlighted all-important elements of distance education. The main elements of Keegan's definition<sup>17</sup> of distance education are:

- ❖ The separation of teacher and learner which distinguish it from face-to-face lecturing.
- ❖ The influence of an educational organization which distinguishes it from private study.
- The use of technical media, usually print, to unite teacher and learner **and** carry the educational content.
- The provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue.
- ❖ The possibility of occasional meetings for both didactic and socialization purposes.
- ❖ The participation in an industrialized form of education which, if accepted, contains the genus of radical separation of distance education from other forms.

### **Distance Education - Phases of Development**

Many exponents have highlighted the various phases of development and growth of distance education system. Prominent among them are James Taylor and Prof. Prasad. Taylor has identified five phases of development of distance education considering the main methodology used for imparting education at a distance. Taylor's generations of distance education are given in the following table.™

Table 1.2. James Taylor Models of Distance Education - A Conceptual Framework

<b>Models of Distance Education and Associated Delivery Technologies</b>
First Generation - The Correspondence Model Print
Second Generation - The Multi-media Model Print Audiotape Videotape Computer-based learning (e.g. CML/CAL/IMM) Interactive video (disk and tape)
Third Generation - The Tele learning Model Audio conferencing Videoconferencing Audio graphic Communication Broadcast TV/Radio and Audio teleconferencing
Fourth Generation - The Flexible Learning Model Interactive multimedia (IMM) online Internet-based access to WWW resources Computer mediated communication
Fifth Generation - The Intelligent Flexible Learning Model Interactive multimedia (IMM) online Internet-based access to WWW resources Computer mediated communication, using automated response systems Campus portal access to institutional processes and resources

Source: Taylor, James.C. (1998), Flexible Delivery: The Globalisation of Lifelong Learning, IJOL, Vol.7, No.1, p.56 & [www.icde.org](http://www.icde.org).

The models identified by Taylor are based on the progressive developments in the field of technology. When the printing press was invented, it helped to print the material and the postal system helped to distribute the material to distance learners in different locations. Similarly video and audio technologies of second generation helped **the** institution to record the lessons for listening at the study centres during the counselling sessions and to broadcast them through radio and television stations. In the **third** generation, the interactive component was added to the existing technologies to bridge the distance between the teacher and the student. In the fourth generation flexibility **in** learning was incorporated adding a new dimension to the learning process through internet, web-based and computer mediated technologies which brought in the interactive online web based resources for the learners. Fifth generation is more advanced having automated responsive systems and providing access to computer portals of the institution to the learners. It contributed greatly for the learner flexibility as these technologies **are**

accessible to learners always. Taylor's frame work helped to understand the different phases of development of distance education.

In this regard it is not out of the context to find out the development of different phases of distance education in India. While tracing out the development of distance education system in India, Prof. Prasad has identified four generations of development in distance education while delivering Fifth Annual Prof.G.Ram Reddy Memorial Lecture.<sup>19</sup>

Table 1.3. Generations of Distance Education in India

<b>Generations of Distance Education</b>	<b>Delivery Model</b>
First Generation	Print based system
Second Generation	Multi-media system
Third Generation	Interactive media system
Fourth Generation	Virtual learning system

Source: Prasad .V.S. (2001), Distance Education in India: Present Scenario and Future Horizons, IDEEA-2001, Warangal, p.4

The first generation is based on printed course materials. In the second generation, multi-media components like audio and video lessons in the form of cassettes are provided at the study centre for students. In the third generation interactive media was introduced in the form of teleconferencing and radio phone-in counselling which gave an opportunity of talk back facility between the students and teachers. In the fourth generation, online support is introduced in the form of virtual learning system wherein web-based resources are made available through internet to the distance learners. Distance education in a short span of time emerged as a major form of education and training to large numbers. There are many factors, which contributed for its growth of distance education.

## Distance Education - Contributing Factors for Growth

Factors contributing for the growth of distance education are explained by many practitioners in open and distance education system. Prof. Dhanarajan, President of Commonwealth of Learning, aptly summarized the major reasons for open and distance learning and its growth and development in developing countries are: "(1) political desire to increase the access, (2) economic desire to reduce the costs, (3) social desire to egalitarian society and (4) educational desire to improve the relevance and quality of curriculum."<sup>20</sup>

According to Mehrotra and others, the factors which contribute for the growth of distance education, are many, however the following are worth noting.<sup>21</sup>

1. The increased requirements for higher education for career advancement
2. The demand for flexible scheduling by potential students whose daily routines are complex and do not mesh with rhythm of the traditional educational day
3. The growing market for personal fulfillment courses driven by increased personal income in some sectors of society
4. The general shift in the public attitude from one that views education as a youthful pursuit to one that values lifelong learning
5. The growing requirement in many professions that members take additional course work every year or two for license renewal (like refresher courses / programmes)
6. The emphasis that many employers today place on specific competencies, rather than degrees, in their working
7. The shift of educators from teacher-centered education to student-centered learning
8. The increasing awareness among educators that students vary greatly in their learning styles

9. The need for greater flexibility in providing education access **to students** with disabilities
10. The variation in students' willingness to participate in class
11. The increased pressure on public institutions of higher learning to develop cost-effective models of collaboration with other institutions of **higher** education

To provide higher educational opportunities, many countries established **open** universities. The first Open University came in to existence in 1969 in the United Kingdom. It has brought recognition and credibility to open and distance education system in the world. Many countries since then continued to establish open universities for the following reasons.

### **Reasons for Establishment of Open Universities**

Distance education became mainstream form of higher education and is no longer a fringe activity in different parts of the world and many countries have established open universities for the following reasons.<sup>22</sup>

1. The need felt in many countries to increase the offer of university education generally
2. A realization that adult people with jobs, family and social commitments constituted a large group of prospective part-time university students
3. A wish to serve both individuals and society by offering study opportunities to adults, among the disadvantaged groups
4. The need found in many professions for further training at an advanced level
5. A wish to support education innovation
6. A belief in the feasibility of an economical use of educational resources by mediated teaching

The above reasons have amply shown why open universities are established to provide distance education to large numbers. Distance education institutions can be broadly categorised as single mode and dual mode institutions.

### **Kinds of Distance Education Institutions**

**There are** two major kinds of open and distance learning systems **that offer** education through open and distance learning mode. They are popularly categorized as single mode institution and dual mode institution depending upon their mode of establishment and nature of functioning.

1. Single mode institutions<sup>23</sup>: Established to provide educational programmes at a distance, but face-to-face interaction also provided which is optimal for the learners. They follow multi-media instructional methods to impart education to the learners which include, print material, audio, video programmes, **radio**, television, teleconferencing etc., Open Universities like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar **Open** University, Indira Gandhi National Open University and United Kingdom Open University fall under this category.
2. Dual mode institution<sup>24</sup>: They are basically conventional educational institutions offering education through traditional class-room based methods as well as imparting education for some programmes through distance methods. Basically for imparting education in distance mode they follow print material only. **The** conventional universities like Andhra University and Osmania University which are offering some of their academic programmes through their Schools / Centres of Distance Education fall under this category. Irrespective of type of institution, distance education in general has many advantages.

### Advantages of Distance Education

Distance education offers many advantages to the providers of educational opportunities as well as the beneficiaries. Problems like distance and time can be easily overcome. It has many advantages, which include:<sup>25</sup> "(1) overcoming physical distances, (2) solving time or scheduling problem, (3) expanding the limited number of places available, (4) accommodating low or dispersed enrolments, (5) making best use of limited number of teachers available and (6) dealing with cultural, religious and political considerations."

Some of the other advantages identified by Perraton include:<sup>40</sup> (1) distance teaching makes it possible for a few teachers to reach a large number of students, (2) it makes it possible for education to be expanded without building extra schools and colleges and use existing buildings when they would otherwise be standing idle, (3) makes it possible for students to learn while they continue to work, (4) distance teaching can achieve economies of scale and (5) once teaching materials have been produced and the system established the cost of enrolling additional students is relatively low". In spite of these advantages distance education has some disadvantages also.

### Disadvantages of Distance Education

Every form of education system has both advantages and disadvantages. According to Perraton the distance education system has some disadvantages which include the following:<sup>27</sup> (1) it can be old, remote, and didactic, (2) it lends itself to rote learning, (3) it has been marked by high drop-out rates and (4) it is more difficult to build a dialogue into distance teaching and stimulate the individual response.

The definitions of distance education have underlined many important aspects of distance education. They are, separation of teacher and the student, role of technical media, importance of organization and industrialization of education. In this connection distance education thinkers and practioners felt the need to provide student support

services to reduce the isolation of the learner and provide channels for communication in the form of face-to-face personal contact programmes and use of media. A brief evolution of distance education system in India is given below.

### **Distance Education System in India**

The present state of distance education in India has its origins in the earlier correspondence education in India. The need for democratization of education and equal opportunities for access to education has been recognized by the founding fathers of Indian republic. The first Five year plan envisaged the provision of education through private study through correspondence courses supported by radio talks organised by universities to allow the students to take examinations privately. But this vision did not materialize till the third Five year plan which realized and recognized growing number of students and thought of providing education through evening colleges and correspondence courses. With the realization of need to provide educational opportunities to the students and to give concrete shape to the correspondence education system, a committee under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S.Kothari was appointed by the Ministry of Education to prepare the blue print for establishment of correspondence education programmes in the country. The Committee recommended, as a pilot project under the University of Delhi, starting of correspondence courses in 1962 with restriction to offer courses only in arts, commerce and social sciences at the undergraduation level. This is how the Correspondence Courses Institution came into existence in the University of Delhi.<sup>28</sup>

The next major step in the evolution of correspondence education was **the** appointment of Education Commission (1966), again under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari, which has studied the pilot project in the University of Delhi and recommended expansion of correspondence education as widely as possible for the courses including sciences and technology at the degree and diploma level. The progress of correspondence education in the University of Delhi and the endorsement by the Education Commission have set the pace for further development and proliferation/expansion of correspondence

education system in India in various universities. The development has influenced many universities like Panjabi University (1968), Meerut University (1969) and Mysore University (1969) to establish correspondence education programmes.<sup>29</sup>

The next phase in the evolution and development of distance education in India was the appointment of working group and a committee, who felt the need to strengthen the gains achieved in correspondence education by giving proper shape to the concept and idea of open university in the country. The Ministry of Education and Social Welfare in collaboration with University Grants Commission and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation organized a seminar on open university in December 1970. The seminar felt that the situation was ripe for establishing an open university and recommended to setting up of a working committee to study the feasibility of cost and other aspects of establishing an open university by the Government of India. A Working Group was constituted under the chairmanship of G.Parthasarathi to study the idea of open university. The Working Group after taking various factors into consideration felt that the demand for higher education is very high, whereas the resources are limited to meet the higher education needs of the different sections of society. It recommended the establishment of an open university by an Act of Parliament as early as possible with national jurisdiction. However, the recommendation was not implemented. Again in 1982, the committee which enquired into the working of Central Universities under the chairpersonship of Dr.(Mrs) Madhuri R.Shah recommended the establishment of a national open university without any delay.<sup>30</sup>

During the same time the Government of Andhra Pradesh took a decision to establish Andhra Pradesh Open University at the state level as per the recommendations of the Prof. G.Ram Reddy Committee in 1982. Presently it is renamed as Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Open University and located at Hyderabad. However, the idea of open university gained momentum with the first public broadcast to the nation by the then Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi as a part of New Education Policy - 1985. Immediately in 1985 the Government of India commissioned the Educational Consultants of India to prepare a Project Report under the chairmanship of Prof. G.Ram Reddy, the

then the Vice-Chancellor of Andhra Pradesh Open University for establishment of a national open university. Armed with the report, the Government of India introduced the Bill in the Parliament to establish Indira Gandhi National Open University and the University came into existence on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1985.<sup>31</sup> It took 15 long years to realize the idea of establishment of a national open university at the national level. It is also interesting to know that it took 20 long years after the establishment of first correspondence courses institution in Delhi University in 1962 to establish first open university in India.

The distance education system is emerging as a strong higher education system in India. The Distance Education Council has been established as a statutory body under IGNOU Act 1985 and to serve an apex body for distance education in India for promotion, maintenance of standards and coordination of open and distance education. According to Prof. Dikshit, the Distance Education Council has "adopted a pro-active approach and initiated measures for development of distance education and overall strengthening of institutions"<sup>32</sup> in India. Regarding the present status of open and distance learning system, Prof. Dikshit commented that it "has now established its credibility, competence, capability and capacity to bring in a very successful revolution and transformation in our country."<sup>33</sup> At present there are ten open universities at the state level and one open university at the national level. In addition, eighty six dual mode conventional universities are offering education through distance mode. Thus distance education is emerging as a credible educational system in India.<sup>34</sup>

#### Distance Education/Teaching System

Distance education/university system consists of many divisions and sub-systems. Rumble stated that distance education system consists of two important sub-systems namely materials sub-system<sup>35</sup> and student services sub-system<sup>36</sup>. In addition to these, there are many other sub-systems or divisions in a distance teaching university such as academic faculties, schools and departments, administration, finance divisions, etc<sup>37</sup>.

Organisational structure of distance education system is basically divided on functional divisions of work among different sub-systems and divisions. The materials sub-system deals with course development<sup>38</sup>, course production<sup>39</sup> and course delivery/distribution<sup>40</sup>. The student support sub-system deals with student admission and allocation<sup>41</sup>, advisory and counselling services<sup>42</sup>, assignment handling and correspondence tuition<sup>43</sup>, face-to-face, telephone and two way radio tuition and residential schools<sup>44</sup> use of technologies for student support services<sup>45</sup>, examinations<sup>46</sup> and local centres<sup>47</sup>.

It can be said that student support sub-system is very important in the organizational structure of open university system which teaches through distance mode. While explaining about the role of student support services in open and distance education system Prof. Koul stated that "the entire gamut of open distance education as an exercise in student support services".<sup>48</sup> Where as Wright felt that student support services are "essential to ensure successful delivery of learning services at a distance"<sup>49</sup>. Some of the definitions of student support services are explained below.

#### Definitions of Student Support Services

The definitions given by various practitioners of open and distance learning have brought some of the crucial and important components of student support services into forefront. According to Marian Craft student support services can be defined as the "services other than actual course material which institution provides to the learners to realize their learning objectives of the programme."<sup>50</sup> Simpson stated that student support services are "all activities beyond the production and delivery of course materials to assist the progress of students in their studies."<sup>51</sup>

Student support services are defined by Alan Tait as a "range of services [both for individuals and for students in groups] which complement the course materials or learning resources that are uniform for all learners, and which are often perceived as major offering of institutions using open and distance learning."<sup>52</sup> Where as Nunan stated

that student support service "is not an 'add on' but 'an all pervasive' component of educational process which ensures that learning and teaching are approached from a learner-centered vision of education."<sup>53</sup>

Thrope felt that the support for learners can be defined as "all those elements capable of responding to a known learner or group of learners, before, during and after the learning process."<sup>54</sup> While Srivastava defined the support services as "the range of activities which complemented the mass produced materials."<sup>55</sup> Mehrotra and others defined support services as "all the institution's interactions with students except those conveying instructional content."<sup>56</sup> Kishore felt that the support extended by the distance learning institution to meet the varied needs of the learners can be called as student support services.<sup>57</sup>

A careful look and critical analysis of above definitions of student support services will bring out some important aspects and components of student support services in distance education into forefront. They can be stated as: (1) they cover wide range of services and activities other than mass produced course materials, (2) essential for successful delivery of programmes, (3) they cover all pervasive areas of educational and learning process, (4) they are continuous exercise and (5) aimed to meet wide variety of learner needs.

Next an attempt is made to find out the different components which constitute part of student support services in distance education. The components identified by different practitioners will provide a frame work for formulating a questionnaire for the research study.

### Components Constituting Student Support Services

Proponents of student support services have deliberated upon different components of student support services provided in distance education. Prominent among them are Sewart, Prof. Kulandai Swamy, Prof. Venkaih, Reid, Tait and Simpson who

highlighted some of the important and essential components invariably provided to the distance learners.

David Sewart has identified some of the student support services consisting of the following: "(1) class teaching at study centres, (2) individual tutorials at study centre or other locations, (3) annual residential schools (compulsory or optional), (4) study or self help groups, (5) social events, (6) counselling sessions at study centres (7) correspondence with tutors and counsellors, (8) telephone contact with tutor and counsellor, (9) group telephone tutorials (10) radio tutorials (11) audio cassette correspondence (12) computer mediated communication and (13) student news papers".<sup>58</sup>

Prof. Kulandai Swamy considered the following as components of student support services in distance education. They are part of a multi-channel instructional system comprising, "(1) specially prepared self-instructional materials (2) audio-video cassettes with emphasis on distance method, (3) telephonic contact with the instruction and teleconferences, (4) interactive radio counselling, radio broadcast and telecast, (5) computer-aided instruction, (6) counselling sessions, (7) student group discussions and (8) hands-on experiences with practical component."<sup>59</sup>

According to Prof. Venkaiah student support services consist of the following areas of support: "(1) record keeping, (2) information provision, (3) admission and registration, (4) library services, (5) placement information, (6) counselling, (7) audio-visual instruction, (8) electronic mail, (9) student news letters, (10) hands-on practicals, (11) mobile learning centres and (12) summer/winter schools."<sup>60</sup>

According to Reid the following aspects or areas are covered by the student support services: "(0) career counselling, (2) academic guidance, (3) student advocacy, (4) learning support (including study and exam skills, seminars, access to formal study groups, and informal groups), (5) personal counselling, (6) support for special needs, (7) specific course and programme information, (8) financial advice, (9) library service and (10) specific one-to-one tutorial assistance."<sup>61</sup>

According to Alain Tait the student support services include the following: "(0 enquiry, admission and pre-study advisory services, (2) tutoring, (3) guidance and counselling services, (4) assessment of prior learning and credit transfer, (5) study and examination centre, (6) residential schools (7) library services, (8) individual correspondence teaching, including in some cases continuous assessment, (9) record keeping, information management and other administrative systems, (10) differentiated services for students with special needs one sort or another, eg. disability, geographical remoteness and prisoners and (11) materials which support the development of study skills, programme planning and career development."<sup>62</sup>

According to Simpson the student support services consisting of the following aspects: "(1) academic support, (2) non-academic support, (3) advising in developmental areas (vocational guidance, course choice, learning skills and general motivation and counselling), (4) problem solving areas (institution related, study, time and personal problems), (5) assessment (giving feed back to the individual on non-academic aptitudes and skills) and (6) action (practical help to promote study)."<sup>63</sup>

The above authors have touched upon wide variety of components, which constitute student support services. There are similarities as well as difference in their perceptions on student support services. It shows that there cannot be one unified approach to student support services. However these authors have provided a broad framework for student support services. Based on their perceptions the following can be considered as components of student support services.

Careful study and analysis of different components of above practioners on student support services will help to identify major components of student support services in distance education. They are (1) information support, (2) guidance support, (3) counselling support, (4) support through personal contact programmes, (5) self-instructional materials, (6) assignments, (7) library support, (8) provision for practicals, (9) study centre support and (10) media support services.

Proper dissemination of correct information, right guidance and positive counselling services are essential prerequisites for any sort of student support services in distance education. Once the student is admitted into a particular programme of study, self instructional materials are to be supplied, face to face personal contact programmes need to be organised and the students have to submit their assignments for evaluation. To meet the library needs of the students, a small library is also provided at the study centres, special arrangements need to be made to conduct practicals. All these support services need to be routed through and provided at the study centres, which are grass-root level organizational structures in distance education system. Media has been extensively utilized for teaching and supporting distance learners. Considering the relevance and importance of the above components in student support services, the research has been undertaken. While commenting about the need for student support services Sewart felt that "it is the richness and variety, the multiplicity of provision, which attracts and sustains our students. Study centres and what is offered in them are part of this richness of provision".<sup>64</sup>

### Classification of Student Support Services

After the identification of different components of student support services it would be my endeavor to classify them into different groups. The broad classification will facilitate in analyzing the student support services. For the convenience of the present research study the components of student support services can be classified in to four groups. They are (0) individual based support services, (2) academic support services, (3) organizational support services and (4) media support services.

Individual based support services consist of components like information support, guidance support and counselling support services. They are basically individual based/targeted support services. Academic support services consist of components like self instructional materials, personal contact programmes and support through assignments. They are both individual and group based support services.

Study centre is the grass-root level organization established to deliver different student support services to the distance learners. Organisational support services consist of all the support services provided through and at study centre for distance learners. They are library support, provision for practicals and the role of study centre in providing the support services. The media is playing very active role in distance education for providing support and teaching. Media support services consists of all the media based support services provided by the institution. They are radio lessons, audio lessons, television lessons, video lessons, teleconferencing and radio counselling. Media support services are provided at study centre and some of them are directly available at the residences of the distance learners. They are both individual and group based support services.

#### Characteristics of Distance Learners

Student support services are provided in distance education system because of the peculiar nature and characteristics of students. The characteristics of distance learners are: "(1) they are isolated learners, (2) they come from diverse backgrounds-educational, economic, social and occupational, (3) they lack study skills and (4) they are highly motivated, committed, mature and responsible."<sup>65</sup>

#### Problems Faced by Distance Learners

Distance learners face a variety of problems while they pursue academic programmes. Common problems faced by distance learners include: "(1) isolation from the institution counsellors and fellow learners/peer group, (2) difficulty in organizing studies and finding sufficient time to study, (3) difficulty in balancing work, study and family responsibilities and commitments. (4) lack of motivation, (5) lack of resources and equipment and (6) lack of study techniques."<sup>66</sup> The problems faced by distance learners can also be classified as: "(1) study techniques, (2) learning difficulties, (3) difficulties arising in dealing with remote and impersonal institution and (4) personal problems."<sup>67</sup>

Typical problems faced by distance learners are identified as: "(0 family pressures, (2) worries about work and money, (3) lack of books and libraries, (4) lack of their own study space, (5) isolation, (6) lack of transport to get to tutorials, (7) lack of confidence, (8) no undisturbed study time, (9) low levels of reading ability and (10) too busy to attend tutorials."<sup>68</sup> Further, an attempt is made to find out the special needs of distance learners.

### Special Needs of Distance Learners

Distance learners have some special needs. They arise due to the problems they face in the open and distance learning system. Some of the special needs of distance learners are: "(1) information about programmes and institutional system, (2) whom to contact when they had academic and administrative problems, (3) dealing with an impersonal institution which is far away from them and (4) advise on how to study and whom to contact for support."<sup>69</sup> The distance learners need support services at different stages of their studies.

### Stages of Student Support Services

Support needs to be provided to the distance learners as per their learning needs at different stages in learning cycle. They are better explained in the following table:<sup>70</sup>

Table 1.4. Stages in the Learning Cycle of Distance Learners

Stages in Learning Cycle	Learning Needs
Pre-enrolment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about the institution and its courses</li> <li>• Advice on which courses to choose</li> <li>• Advice on how to finance studies</li> </ul>
Enrolment and Starting study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More detailed introductory about institution and study procedures</li> <li>• Advice on studying at a distance</li> <li>• Advice on planning studies</li> </ul>
During study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and motivation</li> <li>• Assessment and evolution</li> </ul>
Completion and graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notification of exam results</li> <li>• Career advice</li> <li>• Advice on further studies</li> </ul>

Source: COL & ADB, (1999a), An Overview of Open and Distance Learning, Chapter 5, page-3

According to Dodds the distance learners need four kinds of advice and support at three different stages of their studies. They are, pre course advise<sup>71</sup>, tutorial advise on subject matter<sup>72</sup>, non-subject counselling<sup>73</sup> and follow up counselling<sup>74</sup>. According to Mehrotra and others the distance learners need support services in three phases of their learning, which include before enrollment<sup>75</sup> in a programme, the support in providing information to prospective students, admissions, financial aid, academic advising and registration. While enrolled<sup>76</sup>, support covers the support for book stores and library services, technical support, tutoring and services for students with disabilities. After course or programme completion<sup>77</sup>, support covers the transcript services, alumni association, continuing education opportunities and career services.

Lewis identified the needs of open learning students are in six stages of their studies which include before the course, entry to the course, early days on the course, mid-course, examination/leaving point and after the course.<sup>78</sup> Rowntree stated that open learning's open door can easily become a revolving door that deposits the learners back on the pavement and at three stages the learners need help, before they even begin learning, as well as during and after a learning programme.<sup>79</sup> All of them have emphasized the need to provide student support services at different stages of learning to the distance learners.

#### Justification for Student Support Services

David Swart is one of the very important practitioners who has highlighted the human element/aspects of otherwise industrialized form of education. David Swart<sup>81</sup> believed that the crux of distance teaching is a "continuity of concern for students learning at a distance". The expression "continuity of concern" and "safety net"<sup>82</sup> bring the human element into the forefront. While accepting the role of self-instructional materials in distance education, he couldn't agree with the notion that self-instructional materials could perform all the functions of the teacher in a face-to-face education. He believes that developing a "hypothetically perfect package of teaching materials" is unreliable and argues that just as in most complex bureaucracies an intermediary is

necessary to bridge the gap between the individual and **the** institution. So, in a distance education system an intermediary is necessary between individual student and the teaching package. The intermediary is a part of the system but works for student and individualises their problems when confronted with bureaucracy. Sewart gives more importance to the needs of students learning at a distance and urges for an interactive mode of system to attend the needs of the learners. He believes that the failure to recognize the necessity for support to learner needs has resulted in lack of esteem for distance education systems.

In spite of sophisticated design and versatility of the course material the learner will always need additional human support which alone can match the infinite variety of problems that non-contiguous teaching/learning give rise to. The distance teaching institutions will have to provide this advisory, guidance and counselling support through a human agency which alone can guarantee the continuity of concern for students learning at a distance. The need for human support assumes more importance due to the lack of immediate feedback and near total absence of peer group interaction of distance learners.

Sewart emphasized the role of human element in distance education because the self-instructional materials are not able to solve, (a) the infinite variety of learner problems (b) provide immediate feedback and (c) encourage peer group interaction.<sup>84</sup> Hence Sewart strongly advocates the necessity of student support services. While justifying the need for student support services for students in distance education Perraton felt that "they lack the support from their peers and they lack an easy point of comparison with their peers."<sup>85</sup>

The human element which Sewart has championed has been put into operation in the form of student support services in open universities. These student support services are provided through "a network of regional/ study centres in open universities. The academic programmes are delivered through the study centres and they give face value to

the open universities. Open universities acknowledge that their students need support beyond what is provided through the self instructional materials.

While stressing the need for student support services Prof. Prasad stated **that** because of the provision of student support services the distance education is different from the private appearance.<sup>86</sup> He further felt that there is a need to identify minimum services to be provided to the distance learners.<sup>87</sup> While commenting on development of study skills for distance learners, Prof. Prasad felt that “some distance learners suffer from ‘Abhimanya Syndrome’, i.e. they know how to enter Open University but do not know how to come out successfully. The learners should be clearly informed of what is required from them as distance learners before they join the programme.”<sup>88</sup>

The student support services are provided to the distance learners because of their characteristics, the problems they face with an impersonal educational system and the special needs they have. According to Prof. Venkaiah the student support services are needed for the following reasons: "(1) to minimize the negative effects of isolation and the lack of regular personal contacts, (2) to achieve tangible results with the introduction of specific services to special need/equity groups, (3) to solve administrative and learning/psychological problems of students, (4) to develop autonomy and independence among students and (5) to help students to overcome limitations of print medium."<sup>89</sup>

While strongly advocating the student support services, Sewart expressed that "advise/support function cannot be supplied through the teaching package"<sup>90</sup> in distance education. In this connection it would be interesting to note what Perraton stated about student support services in distance education. He stated that "most of us require some sort of human contact to make our learning come alive, to resolve difficulties with a text, to get encouragement".<sup>91</sup> It is also not out of context to quote what Rowntree stated regarding the need for student support services and the consequences for lacking support. He stated that "learners without support are most liable to delay their completion of a programme or to drop altogether. They simply have no one to turn to when they run into problems".<sup>92</sup> It is also essential to know that the institution also has very vital role to play

in providing student support services. Perraton expressed that "if students are to learn at a distance, they need effective educational and administrative support".<sup>93</sup> Where as Dodds stated that "it is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that whatever support or facilities are needed in the course are available to the students".<sup>94</sup>

The role of bureaucracy in distance education is very much visible for effective functioning. Prof. Prasad commented that "in conventional system the students create problems to the institution, but in distance education institution creates problems to the students".<sup>95</sup> The performance of distance educational institution is dependent on the staff working in them. Prof. Prasad has categorized the staff into four groups as (1) "the competent, but not committed, (2) the committed, but not competent, (3) neither competent nor committed and (4) competent and committed".<sup>96</sup> He further felt that there is a need to recognize and encourage the fourth category, remove the third category, train the second category and motivate the first category.<sup>97</sup>

Tait gave three important reasons for providing student support services in open and distance learning system. They are: (1) the majority students want support, (2) the support services help in reduction of drop out and (3) because of nature of learning at a distance.<sup>98</sup> According to Tait student support in the form of guidance, counselling, tutorial, information and administrative support system contribute for "reinforcing the student sense of confidence, self-esteem and progress"<sup>99</sup> and the support services aim in "assisting students learn successfully."<sup>100</sup>

Sewart's concept of "continuity of concern" and Prof. Prasad's concept of "abhimanya syndrome" will help in understanding the student support services in proper perspective. Sewart's continuity of concern has highlighted the responsibility of the institution towards the distance learners in providing student support services in varied forms. Where as Prof. Prasad's abhimanya syndrome projected the situation of many distance learners who enter the open and distance learning system with enthusiasm and do not know how to come out of it. Here the distance learner needs to be empowered with skills and methods of distance learning. It means student support services should also

play the pro-active role in empowering the distance learner with required skills. Both these concepts are equally emphasizing the importance of student support services in distance education.

The writings of above practitioners of distance education system have amply revealed what should constitute student support services in distance education. These writings have thrown up the need to provide wide variety of student support services to the students in distance education like variety of needs and students. The problems faced by the distance learners also highlighted the need for support services that are to be provided to the students to overcome their difficulties. The different stages identified by different authors also emphasize the need to provide student support services at every stage of their education from pre-admission stage to post-degree awarding stage.

#### Objectives of the Study

The present research study has the following objectives:

1. To study the evolution of distance education in India
2. To highlight the importance of distance education in general and student support services in particular
3. To study the social background of students of open university
4. To identify the important components of student support services
5. To classify the components of student support services
6. To collect and analyse the perceptions of respondents on identified components of student support services
7. To study the levels of satisfaction of respondents on identified components of student support services
8. To critically evaluate the administration and delivery of student support services based on the perceptions of the respondents

## Research Methodology

The research studies on student support services are relatively less when compared to other areas of research in open and distance education. Robinson has identified the following as some of the reasons for lack of much research in student support services. The reasons are: "(1) the area of student support is perceived as a less glamorous activity, (2) it is often regarded as peripheral activity when compared to the real activity of developing course materials, (3) it is vulnerable to financial cuts and (4) it is basically/largely a pragmatic activity based on experience."<sup>101</sup> Lack of many research studies on student support services is also another important reason which forced the researcher to undertake this study.

The research study is conducted by taking Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University as the case study. The reasons for selecting Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University are, it is the first Open University in India. It is a single mode distance education institution. It is also following multi-media methodologies for imparting education and student support services to its students. It has large network of study centres in Andhra Pradesh for providing student support services. It needs comprehensive study to understand various facets of student support services of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University with a learner's perspective. The researcher's experience of working in the delivery of student support services also motivated to undertake this study to get first hand knowledge of how the student support services are provided at the grassroots level. It is an attempt to understand the student support services with learner's perspective. The operational reasons like proximity to the institution for collection of data during the field work and time constraints are some other reasons for selecting Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University for undertaking the present research study.

Two districts are selected for collection of data. One is Hyderabad and the other is Mahaboobnagar. Hyderabad is predominantly developed and urban district. Where as Mahaboobnagar is predominantly under developed and rural district. Discussions were held with the officials of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University before finalising the study area. The researcher had met the then Vice-Chancellor Prof. V.S.Prasad, who suggested

for selection of two districts. The researcher also held discussions with the Director, Student Services Branch and other officials of the branch. In Mahaboobnagar district undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are offered in one study centre. Where as in Hyderabad district undergraduate programmes are offered in one study centre and postgraduate programmes are offered in another study centre. Hence two study centres are selected in Hyderabad district. In all data is collected from three study centres. In Mahaboobnagar district the study centre is located in M.V.S. Government Degree College for undergraduate and postgraduate respondents. In Hyderabad district the study centre for undergraduate programmes is located in New Government College, Khairatabad, where as for postgraduate programmes it is located in Pragathi Maha Vidhyalaya, Koti.

The research methodology followed for undertaking the present study is based on both primary sources and secondary sources. The secondary data was collected from the books, research journals, conference papers, documents, manuals, Acts and Statutes and Vice-Chancellors Convocation Reports. The researcher has visited the library of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University and the library of Indira Gandhi National Open University Regional Centre many times for referring books, journals and other publications. The researcher has made regular visits to offices of Students Services Branch and Computer Centre of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University for data collection.

The primary data was collected with the help of a questionnaire from the respondents. Pre-testing of questionnaire for data collection was done on a pilot study at two study centres in Hyderabad. The sample of the pre-test pilot study was fifty students of final year undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University. The questionnaire used for the pilot study consists of open ended and closed ended questions. The respondents answered closed ended questions without any problem. It was noticed during the pilot study that the respondents are not answering the open ended questions properly. They told the researcher while administering the questionnaire that it would be better if all the possible options or answers for the open ended questions were listed under each question. An option of 'any other' to give their own answer if the respondents do not agree with the opinions or answers can be given for each question.

After the pilot study and collection of data from fifty respondents, the data was thoroughly scrutinised and the answers for each open ended question was listed out and analysed to know all the possible answers to the questions.

Before administering the questionnaire the respondents were explained about the objectives and purpose of the research study and the respondents were asked to give their free and frank opinion on each item in the questionnaire. The respondents were told categorically that their views and opinions will be used only for the research purpose and confidentiality will be maintained.

Considering the feedback received on the pilot study and after noticing several gaps in answers for some questions, it was felt that it is necessary to prepare a close ended questionnaire for final data collection with an option to the respondents to give their own answer if the listed out options are not acceptable to them for each question. Accordingly a structured and closed ended questionnaire was prepared for data collection. Pilot study helped the researcher in estimating the possible alternative answers for each question and the discussions held during the pilot study were found to be very useful in finalizing the questionnaire. Care has been taken to cover all the aspects depending upon the objectives of the present study. While finalizing the questionnaire care has also been taken to avoid ambiguity, duplication and repetition in different items of the questionnaire. Only one aspect has been asked in a question.

As the researcher wanted to study the respondents' perceptions on important components of student support services, the final questionnaire became quite lengthy with more than 150 questions in eleven sections. Each section has different questions specially related to one component of study. The major sections in the questionnaire are related to: (1) personal data, (2) information support, (3) guidance support, (4) counselling support, (5) personal contact programmes, (6) self instructional materials, (7) assignments support, (8) library support, (9) media support, (10) provision for conduct of practicals and (11) study centre support.

Initially it was felt that it is better to collect the data by mailing the questionnaire to the respondents to their correspondence address with a self-addressed stamped envelope of the researcher. When the researcher discussed with other fellow researchers who followed the mailing method for collection of data and came to know about the poor response for them, the idea of mailing the questionnaire was dropped. Alternatively it was decided to collect the data from the respondents who are attending face-to-face personal contact programmes on Sundays at their respective study centres. Another important constraint the researcher faced for data collection was, as the attendance to personal contact programmes was not compulsory, there is no guarantee that the same student will be attending the personal contact programmes on every Sunday or next Sunday. In some cases the students may not attend the study centre except for writing the examination.

Given these reasons, it was decided to collect the data only from the second and final year undergraduates and the second and final year postgraduate students. The reasons for selection of majority (more than 90 percent) respondents from second and third years of study are that they have long experience in availing the student support services and dealing with the institution. They are also better informed when compared to first year students to give their opinion about various components of student support services. Out of the total sample respondents, 53 percent are studying third/final year respondents and 38 percent are second year respondents. However, a few respondents who did their undergraduation from Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University and presently studying first year postgraduation programmes are also covered in the present study because they have long experience in availing the support services and are in a better position to answer the questionnaire. The respondents were asked to give their free and frank opinion on different items of questionnaire. They were promised that the confidentiality of the data will be maintained and the data will be used only for research purpose.

The questionnaire was personally administered to the respondents, in a majority of cases in an informal environment at the selected study centres. The sample size of the

respondents is 343\*. Purposive sampling method was followed for collection of primary data from the respondents of the study centres. Interview method and observation **are also** followed during the field work. Discussions were held with officials of **the** Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University. Care has been taken to collect data from different social status groups, gender and the programmes of study. The detailed profile of **the** respondents is explained in the third chapter.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The present research study has the following limitations.

1. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University has been offering more than twenty five academic programmes of study in different faculties of study. The sample respondents are drawn from the second and third year of B.A., B.Com., and B.Sc, and the second and final year students studying M.B.A and M.A. Hence, the study does not cover all the programmes of the university.
2. The respondents of the study are drawn from Hyderabad and Mahaboobnagar districts only. The first one is predominantly urban district and the second one is predominantly rural district. Hence, the study findings may not be generalized to the whole state of Andhra Pradesh, which is the jurisdiction of the Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University.
3. Though the study centres have large enrollments, due to lack of time and other constraints the sample size is restricted to 343 only. The findings of the study are drawn from the responses of the selected respondents.
4. The present study accorded greater importance to the perceptions of the respondents, as the students constitute the base of the support services in Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University.

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\*In fact the data was collected from 350 respondents. The seven questionnaires were incompletely answered and have deficiencies were deleted from the study. Hence, the effective sample for the study is 343 only.

5. The study is confined to a single mode distance education open university system, and the findings can't be generalised to the dual mode conventional education university system.

### **Chapterisation**

The research study has been organised into eight chapters. The first chapter is about "Introduction: Distance Education and Student Support Services". It deals with the distance education, its definitions, comparison with the conventional form of education, phases of development, factors for its growth, kinds of institution, advantages and disadvantages of distance education. It also covers the role of student support services, definitions of student support services, components of student support services, characteristics and needs and problems of distance learners. A brief account of growth of distance education system in India is also given. At the end, objectives of the study, research methodology, limitations of the study and chapterisation of the study are explained.

The second chapter is about "Review of Literature". It contains extensive review of literature related to the present study. Relevant books, reports, documents, conference documents and research articles published in professional journals are covered.

The third chapter deals with the "Profile of the Study Area" in three parts. First part deals with the profile of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University, covering the circumstances of its establishment, objectives, functions, organizational structure of divisions and branches with special focus on student services branch. It also highlights the learners charter, vision and mission of the university. Instructional methodologies, academic programmes, growth and development of the university in two decades are explained. In the second part, profile of study centres, common support service, common infrastructure and common staff at the study centres are explained. In the last part, the profile of the respondents selected for the study is explained. It highlights the profile of respondents in terms of age, marital status, social status, place of stay, programmes, year

and medium of study, prior educational qualifications, occupation, income if employed, parental occupation and educational background and the reasons for study in the open university.

The fourth chapter is on "Individual Based Support Services: Perceptions of Respondents". It broadly deals with the three important components of student support services, namely information support, guidance support and counselling support. First part is on information support, covering pre and post entry information support, channels of information and problems faced in getting information are explained. The second part is on guidance support, covering need for guidance support, type of guidance required and available at present. The last part is on counselling support, covering need for counselling support, who is providing counselling support at present. The level of satisfaction and the respondent's suggestions for improvement are explained at the end of each part.

The fifth chapter is on "Academic Support Services: Perceptions of Respondents". It is divided into three parts. First part is on face-to-face personal contact programmes. The second part deals with self-instructional materials and the last part is on assignments support. The level of satisfaction for personal contact programmes and assignments are also explained.

The sixth chapter is on "Organisational Support Services: Perceptions of Respondents". The chapter is further divided into three parts. First part deals with library support covering need for library support and reasons for requiring library support. Second part deals with the provision for conduct of science practicals. In the last part the role of study centres in providing support services in terms distance, accessibility, reasons for inconvenience, number of visits made during the last year, problems they face when visited and special facilities to be provided, problems faced by female respondents, advantages for studying are explained. The levels of satisfaction and the suggestions of the respondents are explained for each part.

The seventh chapter is on "Media Support Services: Perceptions of Respondents", which studies the role of media in providing student support services. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University has been using audio and video lessons, radio and television lessons, teleconferencing and radio counselling. In this chapter an attempt is made to find out the awareness about the media support services, availability of media infrastructure at home of the respondents and their knowledge about the availability of media infrastructure at the study centre. It further studies the listening or watching of media lessons and reasons for non listening or watching of media lessons. Finally the levels of satisfaction for media programmes and the respondent's suggestions for improving media lessons are explained.

The eight chapter is on "Conclusions" of the research study.

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## **Chapter-II**

### Review of Literature

# Chapter - II

## Review of Literature

### **Introduction**

The present chapter reviews literature available on the subject. The review encompasses important books, research articles published in professional journals, papers presented in national and international conferences, reports and documents related to the area of research. It is presented in four parts. First part deals with the literature related to distance education, its objectives, characteristics, relevance, growth, promise, potential, challenges, planning, management and the best practices followed in open and distance education. The second part deals with books and articles related to circumstances for establishment of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University, its growth and development, promise and performance and its contribution to democratise higher education.

Third part of the review deals with the literature on student support services, which play a vital role in open and distance education system. This section examines student support services, its objectives, methods, importance, components, need and necessity, problems and role of information and communication technologies. The last part reviews the literature on the role of student support services in the important selected areas like, counselling, contact programmes, assignments, library, media, science practicals and role of study centres. This chapter provides a proper perspective to understand the remaining chapters.

### **Part-I Literature on Distance Education**

The present section covers the books and journal articles published in the area of distance education. The reviews are in the broad areas of distance education, its

objectives, relevance, major issues and challenges, planning and management and best practices followed in distance education.

Prof. G. Ram Reddy, who is the founder of distance education system in India, in his article on "Distance Education: What, Why and How?"<sup>1</sup> has addressed three very important aspects related to distance education. While addressing what is distance education, the author expressed that it is being called in different names in different countries. There is no uniformity. Though the names may be different, the way they teach and impart education is commonly followed in many countries. The author while explaining many definitions given by different people felt that the definition by Desmond Keegan is more comprehensive in identifying the various characteristics of distance education system.

According to the author the distance education system is more suitable to India for the following reasons: increasing inequalities in providing educational opportunities, growing number of people who want higher education and decreasing standards in providing quality education. The education system in India is viewed as elitist oriented and there is a need to give a mass orientation to it by providing socially relevant education to large number of people who are deprived of education for various reasons. To quote the author "the origin of distance education lies basically in the philosophy that the society has a responsibility to provide educational opportunities to those who **for** some reason or the other cannot go to conventional system".

While explaining the mythological story of Ekalavya and Dronacharya, the author says that "today's democratic society cannot afford to overlook the interest of Ekalavya's nor can Dronacharya's say 'no' to them. Distance education and open universities facilitate this. Open University are Universities for the modern Ekalavya's". The author advocates the need to utilise the communication technologies for the benefit of open and distance education, to teach more students and to widen the opportunities and accessibility of higher education with the help of communication technologies. Aristotle can be taken to the students instead of asking the student to come to Aristotle.

Prof. G. Ram Reddy's paper "Open Education System in India: Its place and potential"<sup>2</sup> has highlighted the efforts of University Grants Commission and government to streamline correspondence education system in India. It also highlighted the early 70's attempts to establish National Open University, commitment of political leaders to establish Andhra Pradesh Open University, its objectives, courses, course team methods, study centre, evaluation methods and the need to provide non formal educational opportunities to the working population.

While strongly supporting the need for democratizing higher education, Prof. Ram Reddy commented that "elitism in education and democracy in politics do not go together. For political institutions in the country there is no alternative but to democratize higher and school education with a view to providing access to higher education for any one who is interested in it". While emphasizing present conventional education system, which is costly, and need to be altered by providing mass education to larger numbers with less cost.

Prof. G. Ram Reddy's another article "Perspectives on Distance Education"<sup>3</sup> is an attempt to enlighten the general public and the academics about the distance education, its characteristics, objectives, methods and support services. While explaining the characteristics of distance education, Prof. Ram Reddy stated that, it provides off-campus programmes to adults and mature students of different age groups, dispersed in a wide area and the attendance in personal contact programmes is not compulsory for the students.

According to Prof. Ram Reddy the objectives of distance education system are to bring higher education to those who do not have access to it, to help those who want to improve educational qualification on a part-time basis. Distance education follows multi-media methods like, radio, television, audio and video cassettes in providing education to the students. The study centres are established to provide student support services and act as a meeting place for contact classes, viewing audio and video lessons.

In another article on "Open Universities: The New Temple of Learning"<sup>4</sup> which is an introductory chapter in the book edited by him entitled "Open Universities The Ivory Towers Thrown Open", Prof. Reddy highlighted the important issues that were effecting the correspondence education system in India as lack of credibility and lack of autonomy to the correspondence course institutions. He strongly felt that open university has a social role to play in providing educational opportunities to larger sections who were denied and missed opportunities earlier.

V.C. Kulandai Swamy in his stimulating article entitled "Distance Education in the Indian Context"<sup>5</sup> made a strong case for the relevance of open and distance education system to India. While comparing open universities with that of conventional universities, Prof. Kulandai Swamy felt that "Open Universities respond more readily to the local requirements and seem to adapt themselves more easily to local needs and changing demands". He felt that age old gurukul system and the classroom system are inadequate to meet the educational manpower needs of an industrial society. The open and distance learning systems are more suitable because of the inherent characteristics like, high productivity, increased flexibility and their ability to respond more rapidly to market demands. He also felt that distance education can meet the new challenges posed by the society like, universalisation of education, continuing education and lifelong education. He felt that conventional educational methods and institutions are not able to meet the needs of the nation. Hence there is a strong need to set up one open university in every state as per the Central Advisory Board on Education guidelines.

V.S. Prasad's lecture on "Distance Education in India: Present Scenario and Future Horizons"<sup>6</sup> is thought provoking. Prof. Prasad identified higher education scene at present and the challenges it is facing to provide education for all and efforts to reach the unreached. In this connection, he explored the role of distance education as an intervention mechanism to reach the laudable objectives. He identified different phases of paradigm shifts in education and four generations in the development of distance education in India, such as print based, multi-media system, interactive media and virtual learning system. While commenting on the present phases of development of distance

education system in India, Prof. Prasad highlighted the co-existence of print based correspondence system and online programmes in India.

Prof. Prasad commented that " historically open universities evolved to overcome the institutional limitations of the correspondence institutes. Virtual universities may overtake open universities to overcome the structural limitations of open universities." He felt that the institutional structures are in evolutionary phase to overcome the limitations in each system. Prof. Prasad felt that distance education as a philosophy aims to broaden educational opportunities for the people from disadvantaged sections particularly from rural areas, women, SC and ST. In his address he dealt at length about important issues like access, flexibility and innovativeness, use of technologies, quality concerns and system development. He suggested for wider access to disadvantaged groups, pro-active flexible administration, quality support services and vertical and horizontal integration of open and conventional educational systems. He emphasized programme relevance and community based delivery of support services.

K.B. Powar's paper "Higher education in India Since Independence"<sup>7</sup> traces the growth during the last 50 years in India which transformed from elite system to an egalitarian education system. The author has also identified many problems in terms of access, equity and quality to make the system more responsive. At this juncture, the author feels that, there is a strong need for cooperation and collaboration and networking between conventional universities and open universities to meet the increasing demand for quality higher education. He also stated that establishment of open universities has positively influenced many Correspondence Courses Institutions of conventional universities to reform their teaching and delivery methodologies. Convergence of open and conventional universities will help the nation to develop and provide quality higher education and education system in the country,

Ch. Raja Mouli in his article "Higher Education by Distance Mode in India"<sup>8</sup> took stock of the distance education system in India, its courses, enrollment trends, the factors

that will influence to achieve the economics of scale and the need for networking of open learning institutions in India. The author strongly believes that the networking among various open and distance learning institutions will help to reduce the costs in planning, designing, commissioning and production of course materials and audio and video programmes. He believes that the establishment of Distance Education Council will go a long way in coordinating, monitoring and maintaining standards among distance education institutions in the country.

Manjulika. S and V. Venugopal Reddy's chapter "Open and Distance Learning in Transition"<sup>9</sup> is an introductory chapter in the book edited by both the authors entitled "The World of Open and Distance Learning". The authors have captured the evolution of open and distance learning, role of technology and the current trends in the world and captured the factors that are responsible for establishment of open universities in developing and developed countries. They also visualized the impact of information and communication technology on open and distance learning in providing courses beyond the borders of the originating country.

Gajaraj Dhanarajan's paper on "Distance Education: Promise, performance and potential"<sup>10</sup> took a stock of open and distance learning system in the developing countries of the Commonwealth. Prof. Dhanarajan, President of Commonwealth of Learning, aptly summarized the major issues that open and distance learning is facing and suggested the corrective measure to fully realize the potential of open and distance learning system in developing countries. The reasons for the growth and development of open and distance learning, as aptly and succinctly put by the author are (1) political desire to increase the access (2) economic desire to reduce the costs (3) social desire to establish an egalitarian society and (4) educational desire to improve the relevance and quality of curriculum.

The author has identified major issues in open and distance learning system as (1) lack of access to technology (2) lack of institutional commitment to the learner's needs (3) need for staff training, 4) profit mindedness than quality consciousness (5) cost being transferred to learners than to institution (6) localizing the curriculum, (7) alienation of

academic community (8) need for visionary leadership and (9) sense of equity and equality of opportunity.

The author has suggested some corrective measures for meeting the educational challenges / issues. The stakeholders of open and distance learning have to concentrate on the following ten key issues: access and equity, regulatory barriers, pedagogy, standards and assessment, accreditation and certification, staff training and development, technology trends, technology cost, intellectual property issues and research.

S. Clennell, J. Peters and D. Sewart in their article "Teaching for the Open University"<sup>11</sup> have highlighted various components, structures and methods adopted for teaching in open university. The basic method is the teaching package, however other means and structures for teaching are also widely practiced in Open University. Study centre is the local unit of the Open University to provide an opportunity for the undergraduate students to meet the counsellor/tutor. The attendance at the study centre is not compulsory but they provide a variety of services like audio and video programmes, reference library, etc. to the students. The face-to-face counselling sessions are organized at the study centre only.

The Open University of United Kingdom follows the policy of continuity of concern towards the students by linking each student with the tutor-counselor to bridge the gap between the institution and the isolated student to provide academic support and encouragement. The students in Open University have to deal with impersonal institution, a complex organization, and each student needs help in administrative, academic and vocational areas of study. Tutor-counsellor must be supportive, knowledgeable advisor and involve in every aspect for the students attached to him. This continuity of concern promotes trust, friendly and personal relations between the students and the tutor-counsellor.

N. Jose Chander's book "Management of Distance Education"<sup>12</sup> is an attempt by the author to focus on important aspects of distance teaching institutions. The book has

ten chapters and covers all areas in distance education like concept, policy, planning, course development and presentation, teacher student interaction, role of media, organizational structure, student evaluation and motivation.

The author had defined distance education as "the teaching learning process in which students are separated from the teachers by a physical distance which is often bridged by modern communication media". The author explained the openness of open university in terms of admission, teaching media, space and time and course contents. The author briefly explained the evolution and status, social standing of distance education political policy, and the contribution of distance education for national development. While writing foreword to the book Prof. Ram Reddy stated that distance education is a silent revolution taking place in a conservative world of education, amply suggests how the governments of the day are extending support in establishing and encouraging the distance education system in the country.

Greville Rumble's book "The Planning and Management of Distance Education"<sup>13</sup> is important in the area of planning and management of distance education. It has twelve chapters. It has critically examined the various aspects of distance education. The book starts with the definition of distance education and its models. In the other chapters it deals at length about the political and economic perspectives, rationality and basis of distance education. It critically examines the planning process in establishing distance education systems, organizational structure, staffing pattern, categories of staff, planning and budgeting, management of academic programmes, materials, services, material production, design, student administration, role of technology, various approaches to evaluation and criteria for evaluation.

Greville Rumble's another book "The Management of Distance Learning Systems"<sup>14</sup> is an important book that deals at length with various components of open and distance learning system. The book has seven chapters. They deal with defining of management, need for distance education with a planner's perspective and strategic

planning. It critically examines the sub-systems of distance education like, material sub system, service sub-system and administrative sub-system.

The chapter relevant to our study is about the support services sub-system. It covers the services made available to students and what is expected of them towards their learning? It has explained various activities undertaken by the officials to provide promised services to the learners. Need for advisory and counseling services, student-record keeping, admission, allocation of students to study centres, assignment handling, face-to-face sessions, role of technology in providing support, exams, maintenance of discipline, role of study centres and need for decentralized approaches for support services are explained by the author.

P. Satyanarayana and C. Sesharatnam's book "Distance education: What? Why? How?"<sup>15</sup> is a good source of information on distance education and open learning system. The authors have long experience in open and distance learning system and the book contains seventeen chapters, covering all the major aspects of open and distance learning system. The book contains the concept of distance education, development of distance education, comparison of conventional education and distance education, universities, course preparation, courses in distance teaching institutions, self instructional material, technologies in distance education, assignments, dropouts, staff development, student support services, evaluation of distance teaching system, an epilogue and professional information.

The chapter which is most relevant to this study is 'student support services'. It deals with the role of self-instructional material in learning, problems of learners, various components of student support services, forms of student support services like, information support, guidance support, tutorial support, counseling support, library support and role of local study and regional centres and their functions in delivery of student support services and their characteristics and part time staff at the grass root level. The authors conclude the chapter by stressing the need for a student support charter in open universities.

M.M. Ansari's study on "Best Practices in Open and Distance Learning Systems in India: An Assessment"<sup>16</sup> is an attempt to capture some of the best practices followed in open and distance learning system in the country from the beginning to till date (2002). In his paper, the author traced the various phases of open and distance learning system, its growth, development and present status. He also identified some of the best practices in system design, development of courses, methods and strategies, management and finance of open and distance learning institutions / system in the country. The best practices the author has identified in the area of student support services are (1) counselling services (2) assignment and student feedback (3) contact programmes and (4) library services. The author feels that these services are not provided uniformly in all the open and distance learning institutions in the country and argues for standardizing; these will help to contribute to the success of the open and distance learning system.

The above reviews have highlighted the potential of distance education in democratizing the higher education, its place, potential, relevance critical issues and best practices followed in open and distance education system. The next part is on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, its growth, development and critical issues.

## **Part – II**

### **Studies on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University**

The reviews in this section have traced the circumstances and political will behind the establishment of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University. They also highlight growth, development, contribution and critical areas of concern, promise and performance for democratizing higher education through distance mode in Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University.

G. Ram Reddy's article on "Andhra Pradesh Open University"<sup>17</sup> is very fascinating account of various stages in the establishment of an innovative educational institution. Prof. Ram Reddy who happened to be its founding Vice-Chancellor during 1982-85 has briefly but eloquently and chronologically analysed the early phases in establishment of Andhra Pradesh Open University. Andhra Pradesh Open University is a

full-fledged first open university in India established in August 1982. While explaining the early developments prior to the establishment of Andhra Pradesh Open University, the author feels that establishment of Andhra Pradesh Open University is an accidental one, and the committed political leadership played a crucial and proactive role in establishing it. It got the support from both the government and opposition. In fact it was the uncooperative bureaucracy which tried all means to create trouble to the infant institution. While explaining his experiences with the bureaucracy, Prof. Ram Reddy commented "in Indian administration, the bureaucracy holds the key to power and a hostile bureaucrat has all the tricks in the world to undo a political decision the weapons in his armory being inexhaustible".

While responding to the criticism in a section of press about the need for open university in the state, the then Chief Minister Shri. N.T. Rama Rao commented "if the open university is waste, my chief ministership is also a waste" This attitude of the supportive political leadership has contributed for the smooth footing of open university in its infant stages. It helped in getting the headquarters shifted from Nagarjunasagar to Hyderabad due to lack of infrastructure and also in getting government accommodation.

V. S. Prasad's paper entitled "Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University: A Decennial Perspective" is an attempt to review the growth, progress, achievement, contributions, strengths and limitations of Dr. BRAOU as a University. This article is the first critical review of the university on its completion of a decade in providing higher education. When it was established in the country it had no role model to follow, but over the years it has evolved its own methods and systems. The article has two sections. First section traces the origin, objectives, academic programs and its special features, the student enrolment during the first decade, learning strategies (multi-media methods) adopted by the university, student support network, student evaluation, administrative set-up of the university and the finance of the university.

Second section is much more relevant for our study. It has critically examined **the** experiences of Dr. BRAOU during the first decade. Prof. Prasad has drawn the following critical conclusions:

- ❖ There is a need for clarity of objectives of the university for benchmarking the academic programmes and for serving as a vision and mission statement.
- ❖ There is a need for giving vocational outlook to the present undergraduate programmes and launching of continuity education programmes for working people.
- ❖ Present student profile has more urban and middle class bias. It needs to be changed with more rural focus to attract students from rural areas and weaker sections.
- ❖ Pedagogic standards of self-instructional materials and the quality of print material need to be improved.
- ❖ There is a need to use audio and video programmes and integrating audio and video programme with programmes delivery for effective use by students.
- ❖ There is a need to strengthen the student support services to meet flexible and diverse needs of learners and programmes. More study centres need to be established in rural remote and tribal areas.
- ❖ There is a need for decentralized, responsive and proactive administration which can foster inter-dependence among units and functionaries. As distance education is administrative dependent it needs to be responsive. There is also need for effective planning and monitoring.
- ❖ Many faculty are recruited from conventional universities and did not have much experience in open and distance learning system. Hence, they need to be trained.
- ❖ The staffing pattern in the academic departments need to be examined and standardized with core faculty and contractual faculty. The faculty need to be provided proper research opportunities both in the subject areas and in systemic development. Otherwise the faculty may develop the symptom of alienation with their own areas of research/discipline.

The author concludes that in the absence of any ingenious model University structure and system was developed, , on trial and error method. It has positively contributed to widen the educational opportunities to a larger section of working people, produced quality material, established large network of study centres to provide tutorial and counseling support services to students. The author further felt that, there is a need for the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University to consolidate, diversify and network with proactive administration and socially relevant academic programmes.

Sudershana Rana's book "Open University Education System: Concept-Structure-Management"<sup>19</sup> an outcome of her Ph.D. study is about the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (published in 1995). The first of the seven chapters deals with the educational scene in India followed by a chapter on India's first open university focused on the profile of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, objectives, powers, and functions, organizational structure, the executive council, academic council, planning board and finance committee, board of studies and faculties, course structure features and flexibilities, and preparation of course material. The third chapter is about the learner profile of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, enrolment between 1983-1992, candidates appeared in eligibility test, educational background of passed candidates, social base of learners, male and female enrollment, age wise profile and medium opted by the students.

The fourth chapter deals with student support services. It focuses on the role of study centres, use of media, instructional strategies, merits and demerits of self-instructional material, use of radio and television, potential and constraints, role of counselling, functions of academic counsellors, role of library, conduct of practicals, summer and winter schools. The author felt that student support services helps in personalizing and humanizing distance education system.

The other chapters are on finance and miscellaneous issues. The last chapter entitled "Epilogue" summarizes the findings of the study. The author feels that in the absence of a native model, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University has evolved its own

system over a time by trial and error method, stressed strengthening of student **support** services and extending to remote areas, make efforts to attract SC, ST, BC and **students** from rural areas. It stresses the use of multi-media, training of academic counselors, introduction of comprehensive evaluation system by strengthening assignment component and suggests decentralization and need-based flexibility in administration. The author suggests that for leadership **with** vision, efficient and sensitive administration to work on a project mode and more courses and programmes and cooperation.

Panjala Narasiah and Cherla Raja Mouli in their article on "Promise and Performance of Andhra Pradesh Open University"<sup>20</sup> have studied the promise and performance of Andhra Pradesh Open University and made comparative analysis of its objectives and the progress achieved by the University. They have found that most of the study centres are established at the district headquarters there by denying the opportunity to the people living in villages. The learner is forced to travel long distances from home to the nearest study centre. While analyzing the gender response to the course enrolment in various programmes, they have commented that they are taking up the opportunity to choose open university to do a course because they were denied opportunities earlier due to early marriage and also due to the social taboo that women should not go out of the house. Due to lack of accommodation the audio and video programmes are not used properly at the study centre. Counsellors are following "lecturing" method to a greater extent. In spite of some limitation, according to the authors, the new institution has to a large extent lived up to the expectations and the constraints are largely external and the university has no control on them. It is successful in providing access to higher education to a large numbers who missed the opportunity.

K. Raghunath's book "Management of Distance Education: A Case Study of APOU"<sup>21</sup> is an outcome of the Ph.D. study of the author and is one of the early studies done on Andhra Pradesh Open University, which is later renamed as Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University. The books have nine chapters in all, covering introduction, (definitions of various authors, theoretical basis of distance education, history of distance education and the open university in the world is covered in the introduction chapter). The second

chapter explains the methodology of the study and the third chapter deals with the organization model of distance teaching in the world. Other chapters deal with academic programme, instructional system, learners' profile, student support services, evaluation and conclusions.

The chapter relevant to the present study deals with the importance of solving student problems, and concentrates on providing tutorial, counseling, information, advise and guidance support services to the students and categorises various types of regional centres and study centres prevailing at present. The chapter highlights the functions of headquarters, regional centres and study centres and the environment in which regional and study centres function in an organization. It also covers the teaching methods followed in contact classes, reasons for absence in attending classes, importance of library in open and distance learning, students' opinion on practicals, summer schools and their utility has been explained based on the field data of the study. The study has found that student support services are an essential part in distance education system.

L. Rajya Lakshmi's study "Distance Education for Development: A Study of Andhra Pradesh Open University"<sup>22</sup> is one of the earliest studies on Andhra Pradesh Open University conducted in 1991 for M.Phil. The objectives of the study are how far Andhra Pradesh Open University's objective of extending higher educational opportunities in the state had been fulfilled, what were the variations in enrollment in different districts of AP, and what were the students' perceptions and experiences of distance teaching and learning. Though the study has a few limitations, as stated by the author, the major findings of the study are, most of the students are benefiting from the educational opportunities provided by Andhra Pradesh Open University. The ones opting for the university courses are from backward areas of the state and are economically backward communities. The author has concluded the study with an optimistic note that with the use of media and strong student support services, Andhra Pradesh Open University will 'contribute for providing balanced educational opportunities in Andhra Pradesh.

V.S. Prasad's paper "Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, India"<sup>23</sup> is an attempt by the author to critically re-examine all the spheres of activities of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University. This is an updated version of the article published by the author on completion of its first decade and has two sections. The first section gives the status of the University and second examines important areas of the University. Prof. Prasad called for clarity of organizational objectives, diverse academic programmes by vocationalising to impart skills, aiming to reach the unreached, revision of courses, use of media, learner centered services, proactive administrative system, upgradation of skills of staff by organizing training programmes and by evolving rational staffing pattern in the departments and providing research opportunities to the academic staff.

C. Sesharatnam's book "India's First Open University: Two Decades Journey"<sup>24</sup> is a first comprehensive book on origin, growth, and development of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University. It has documented the institutional growth and development in various areas, in providing opportunities for education to the different sections of society, instructional system, use of media and support services provided by the university in three chapters. The first chapter gives objectives of open universities, openness of open universities, characteristics of mega open universities, multi-media methods, academic programs, self-instructional material, use of technology, student support services in open university and factors contributed for success of open universities. The second chapter gives a ring side view of its establishment, objectives, organizational structure, programmes, enrollment, instructional methods, academic counseling, student support services, staff development, achievements and expectations and tenth plan vision for development.

The third chapter is an appraisal of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University in terms of its achievements and accomplishments, student enrolment, course development, academic programmes, research and quality assurance, use of technology, spread of study centres and enrolment in different districts, and regional issues that are affecting the student support services and different components of student support services provided in the University. The chapter also stresses the importance of research activity in open

university, various projects undertaken by the staff and concludes the chapter by providing a frame work for effective environment for the success of open university in the Indian context. The book is a good source of data on student enrolment, various phases of development of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, its divisions, and progress. It is an important contribution and documents the historical growth and development of India's first open university in twenty years.

The above reviews have highlighted critical aspects of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University, its growth, development, contribution and achievements. The reviews also suggested for clarity of objectives, diversification of programmes and need for reaching out to the neglected groups and fine tuning the administrative system for achieving the objectives of the university. The next part is on student support services and their importance in open and distance education.

### **Part - III**

#### **Studies on Student Support Services**

This section covers important reviews in the broad areas of student support services. The reviews deal with importance of student support services, relevance, need, institutional aspects, planning issues, need for paradigm shift for providing learner-centered services and proactive approach of the staff involved in the student support services. Some studies also highlight the impact of communication technologies on student support services and the need for re-look in the provision of student support services in the changing circumstances of working hours, consumer behavior and living conditions of the students in distance education system.

Prof. V.S. Prasad in his key note address to Indian Distance Education Association (IDEA) held in November 1996 addressed the issue of student support services. In the article entitled "Developing Improved Strategies: Towards Better Student Support Services"<sup>1</sup> felt that the student support services are essential elements in distance education and expressed that Open Universities should provide more direct

services to the students. The paper stated that the support services provided by open universities are structured as a continuous activity and provided through study centres and subject based tutorial services and system based services. Prof. Prasad also gave an overview of a few important features of student support services in India. They are mostly delivered through study centres, more group based than individual based, more subject based than system based and more structured and less flexible.

Prof. Prasad highlighted various dimensions, issues and concerns in student support services which are essential in open and distance education to balance between individual and institution. He urged for flexibility, use of media technology, forging of partnerships, optimum use of facilities, quality in support services, promoting collaboration among institutions, committed staff to provide services, collaboration with national and international agencies. He emphasized the need for experimentation to evolve an appropriate model for student support services. He also states that "in the conventional system the students creates problems to the institution, but in distance education institution creates problems to the students". Prof. Prasad also emphasized the "Abhimanya Syndrome" which means entry into the programmes in open university is very easy and exit is very difficult, and suggested for suitable corrective measures to make entry and exit easy while maintaining the quality in education.

David Sewart's article on "Continuity of Concern for Students in a System of Learning at a Distance" is an attempt to identify the role of the intermediary in the process of student support services to the learners at a distance. As the societies are growing and becoming complex the role of an intermediary assumes significance to bridge the gap between the individual and the institution. This assumes greater significance wherein the education has to be imparted at a distance with the help of course material and other forms of support. The concept of "continuity of concern" aimed to provide support and a "safety net" to the distance learners wherein a wide variety of support services and counselling is provided.

Continuity of concern for students gains importance "because of the educational background of most of its students who are adults returning to the study after a number of years, they would need a local and continuing advice on the problem which they encountered" will be attended by these intermediaries known in different names like, tutors, counsellors, teachers, advisors and academic counselors and coordinators. The counseling function encompasses "all those other areas in which the University and the student 'interact' and all this interaction need not be 'academic'. It means the counselling covers, the general advise on general problems of part-time study". The article is an attempt to put student support services in a perspective with the concept of "continuity of concern". It recognizes the role of "human element" in the form of an intermediary.

Alan Tait in his article on "Planning Student Support for Open and Distance Learning"(ODL)<sup>27</sup> examines the various factors that need to be taken into account in the planning of student support and states that there can be no universal blue print for the design of student support services. The information communication technologies and marketisation of education are two important dimensions that are influencing the planning of student support services in open and distance learning. The former has brought seamless technological media and the later has brought consumer culture in open and distance learning system. Both are strongly influencing the methods and philosophies of student support services in open and distance learning.

According to the author student support services means "range of services both for individuals and for students in groups which complement the course materials or learning resources that are uniform for all learners, and which are often perceived as the major offering of institutions using ODL". Tait says that the student support services covers the following areas of "enquiry, admission and pre-study advisory services, tutoring, guidance and counseling services, assessment of prior learning and credit transfer, study and examination centres, residential schools, library services; individualized correspondence teaching, record keeping, differentiated services for

students with special needs and materials which support the development of study skills, programme planning and career development."

Marian Craft's paper "Student Support Services: An Overview"<sup>28</sup> is an attempt to identify the important issues in the provision of support services and it is prepared as a keynote paper to the round table on student support services. The author believes that the needs of the students are different from institution to institution and vary from country to country. Marian Craft says that "anything other than the actual course material which an institution provided to its students became support services".

The goal of student support services is to minimize the negative effects of isolation by providing counselling to overcome the personal difficulties and identifies the problems faced by students such as, isolation and alienation, lack of place to study, no access to libraries, inconvenient working hours, domestic and personal problems. The paper also addresses the type of support services the students need which include, information support, pre-admission counseling, textbook and library facilities, study skills training, and tutorial assistance. It also explores the methods of communication-telephone, teleconferencing, audio and video cassettes, radio, computer conferencing-through which the support services are provided by humane and pro-active machinery specially to women, minorities and disabled in distance education.

Alan Tait in another article on "Student Support in Open and Distance Learning"<sup>29</sup> defines the student support as "the range of activities which complement the mass produced materials which make up the most well-known element in ODL" and consisting with the elements of tutoring, counseling, interactive teaching through television and radio and other activities. The principles which govern support services are formulated in the form of following questions. Who are your students? What are their needs? How will you meet their needs? How will the services be managed? How much will services cost? How will you evaluate?

According to the author, under each question there will be number of parameters to be considered and acknowledging the identity of the learner is central to the student support system. In operationalising the student support services study centres play a very crucial role. The study centres are the physical locations through which a wide range of services are operationalised and provided to the learners. Proper understanding of above questions are essential for any open and distance learning institution for evolving a model for student support services in open and distance learning system.

V. Venkaiah in his article entitled "Management of Student Support Services: Institutional Perspectives"<sup>30</sup> has examined the institutional perspectives concerning student support services, identified the problems related to the administration and learning support services and suggested suitable strategies to improve the quality of services to distance learners. Prof Venkaiah stated that "student support services need to be provided to the distance learners because of the characteristics of distance students, they are isolated, they come from diverse backgrounds - educational, economic, social, occupational - they lack the study skills; they are highly motivated, committed, mature and responsible." These characteristics prompted the open universities to put suitable student support services in place to meet the distance learner needs and expectations.

Jose Chander, in his article "Towards a Better Student Support System in Distance Education"<sup>31</sup> states that student support services consist of "all those services that are supportive of the learning experiences of the students either individually or collectively." Jose Chander in his article states the objectives of student support services as (1) to motivate the students towards continuous learning (2) to provide all information that students seek to get (3) to encourage students to make full use of all facilities available in the university (4) to stimulate the learners to assimilate what they learn (5) to provide necessary counseling and (6) to create a climate of friendliness among the students, the faculty and the administration. Jose Chander classifies student support services as pre-entry services, post-entry services, support through assignments, personal contact programmes, electronic media, study centres and laboratories for practicals. He identifies some of the problems of student support services as inordinate delays in

dispatch of course material, late information to students, under-utilization of media, less finances and lack of administrative powers.

Bakshish Singh in his article on "Student Support Services"<sup>32</sup> states that student support services play a very vital role in distance teaching institutions. He states that the correspondence course institutions initially depended heavily on printed course material. With a view to promote two-way communications in the system, assignments were incorporated to bring two-way communications between the counsellor and learner. He states the benefits of use of audio cassettes, video cassettes/tapes, telephone, radio program and television lesson will revolutionize the support provided to the learner and stresses the need to use of these new educational technologies for providing support to students. The paper also stresses the importance of study centres, personal contact programmes, assignment responses, library facilities, home kits for practicals, information resource packs and the help / enquiry desk in extending support services to the learners.

Jay Reid in his article on "Managing Learning Support"<sup>33</sup> states that learners support should be a holistic function in open and distance education and forms an integral component. Learner support is dependant on many things like, quality of information, guidance, and advice provided to the prospective students whenever they made their first contact with the institutions. Timely response to student enquiries will give confidence to the learners to pursue the programme with the institution. According to the author the learner support should cover the following areas like, career counseling, academic guidance, student advocacy, personal counseling, support to special needs, financial advise and library service. There should not be any distinction in providing learning support and administrative support for a student, as both are crucial and important. Learner support is essential for any open and distance institution. According to the author "good news about an institution may well be slow to spread, but bad news spread like rash!". Institutional policy should be made explicit and should be sensitive to the needs and expectations of open learners and the regional centres must act as a single gateway to learner support and be pro-active to meet the learner needs in a flexible

manner. Staff development and training are very crucial for the staff working in managing learner support. The learner should be a centre of gravity for all the activities aimed towards the learner support.

Prakash M. Deshpande, in his article "Student Support Services in Dual-Mode Correspondence / Distance Course Institutions",<sup>34</sup> states that student support leads to better performance of distance learners and enhances the quality. Student support services can provide academic skills, complete administrative tasks, provide information to learners and counsellors and promote socialization and interaction among distance learners. Student support services can be provided with the help of postal correspondence, face-to face interaction or contact classes and use of technology-based media. He states that by networking and pooling facilities cost can be reduced and at the same time high quality services can be provided to the distance learners.

K. Murugan in his article "Bettering Student Servicing: Need for a Paradigm Shift"<sup>35</sup> states that the open and distance education system was based on the industrialised form of education because of its assembly line approach for the production and distribution of course material to the distance learners. The author states that there is a need to change the 'control' by top management to the 'control' by the students. He proposes that in industrial age of organization, the customer is the king. He states that the relative absence of dissatisfaction need not be a proof of student satisfaction. The distance education institutions must ensure promoting the client (student) satisfaction. The learner satisfaction should be the criteria for determining the quality of services. The open and distance learning institution's approach should be "bottom up" approach and put the learner first and prepare him to face the challenges of independent learning.

Bernadette Robinson in her article on "Research and Pragmatism in Learner Support"<sup>36</sup> expressed the view that the literature on learner support is more of descriptive and prescriptive than empirical and research based. According to her learner support received less research attention for the following reasons. It is considered as a less glamorous area, is considered as a peripheral activity to the real business of course

development, is vulnerable to financial cuts and is basically a pragmatic activity rooted in experience. There are variations in learner support in each distance teaching institution and the commonality lies in similar goals but with diverse ways of reaching. The learners support is dependent on, requirements of course, infrastructure of a country, distribution of learner, availability of resources and values and philosophy of the institution. Learner support is dependent on local circumstances in which it operates.

Mary Thorpe's paper "Rethinking Learner Support: The Challenge of Collaborative Online Learning"<sup>37</sup> is basically concentrated on online learner support, however it has covered very important common area of student support service, irrespective of mode of offer, (online or offline). Support services facilitate and enable learners to effectively use the institutional and individual services made available to them by open and distance learning system. All these services complement the course materials in their learning.

The author believes that "Learner support in ODL refers to the meeting of needs that all learners have because they are central to quality learning". While reviewing the earlier studies of Sewart and Tait, who highlighted the role of intermediaries, the support structure and various components of student support system, the author has defined learner support as "all those elements capable of responding to a known learner or group of learners, before, during and after the learning process". According to the author "Learner support is essentially about roles, structure and environments and therefore: supportive roles and supportive people, together with support structures and supportive environment".

A. R. Khan's, S. Garg's and S. Gupta's article 'Towards Learner-Centric Delivery in Open Learning: Search for New Initiatives'<sup>38</sup> aims to take a critical look into the various delivery practices presently followed in open and distance learning system to make it more learner centric. Student support services play very crucial role in the delivery of academic programmes of open and distance learning institutions. Open and distance learning system is growing at a rapid scale and aimed to take more number of

student during 10<sup>th</sup> five year plan. Open and distance learning institutions are offering many courses and programs to make people develop "life coping" skills.

The authors mainly concentrated on delivery of programmes, which has undergone significant changes over the years, print based-to-interactive multimedia-to-internet and on line support. All these developments helped the open and distance learning institution to break 'isolation' of the learners in the industrialized form of learning where the teacher-learner interactions are limited and not regular. The authors have studied delivery of programmes as two sub-components, physical delivery and academic delivery. Supporters of distance education have divergent views on provision for interaction-face-to-face counselling/contact programmes and multi-media interaction in the learner support. It is widely believed and supported by research studies that timely extended learner support goes a long way in facilitating two-way interaction between the learners and the counsellor/institution.

The authors dealt with monitoring of academic delivery of programmes through regional centres and study centres, need for keeping academic staff at regional centres for academic monitoring and rotating staff from schools to regional centres and vice-versa, strengthening the role of assignment as a teaching-learning tool and the need for pre-admission counseling to familiarize learner with the open and distance learning system, learning through self instruction material, audio and video and interactive technologies and personal contact programmes. Use of information and communication technologies for strengthening student support services in open and distance learning will help to provide quality learner support services from registration stage to certification stage. Open and distance learning system should work towards making the system more learner-centric.

V. Venkaiah in his article on "Student Support Services in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University"<sup>39</sup> discusses the different key components of student support services in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, which include, (1) study material, (2) face-to-face contact classes /counselling session at centres, (3) audio and video lessons at study

centres, (4) broadcast of radio lessons, (5) summer schools, (6) science practicals, (7) reference library and (8) lectures and seminars on topics of social relevance.

Face-to-face counselling sessions are also known as contact-cum-counselling sessions in open and distance learning systems. These sessions will play a very important role and constitute a very important component of the student support services. Students are intimated individually to attend these sessions. However, the attendance is not compulsory for general courses. But for the science practical courses, 75 percent attendance is prescribed. The study found that a majority of the study centres have conducted all the counselling sessions prescribed for the year and a majority of counsellors follow the lecture method, though they are not expected to lecture.

**Academic problems:** The study found that a majority of the counsellors are following the lecture method instead of interaction and discussion methods, due to a lack of trust in self-instructional material as a tool of learning and non-study of units by the students. As the counsellors are not provided the necessary training in the methodology of counselling in the distance education system, a majority of them are resorting to the lecture method.

**Administrative problems:** The open and distance learning system operates on a dependency model. Open University is dependent on the host institution for the conduct of counselling classes and office accommodation. The Principals of colleges are showing more interest and inclination to allow the premises to be used for the conduct of competitive examinations instead of allowing the study centre to use the rooms for counselling sessions. Periodic meetings with heads of colleges and the coordinators by the university may help to solve the problem.

U. Subba Rao in his paper on "Management of Student Support Services in Open University"<sup>40</sup> states that the success of the open university system is dependent on the effectiveness of its student support services, which are again dependent on the organizational structure of the open university. A majority of the student support services are provided through the study centres. Study centres have facilities to conduct contact-cum

-counselling sessions, reference library, enquiry and information support to public and learners and to provide audio and video lessons to the learners and are headed by the coordinator and supported by other part-time staff drawn from the host institution. The author concludes that a great deal of planning and organization is essential for providing student support service. Recognising the role and importance of student support service by the policy makers and administrators will make them to evolve a long term planning for effective management of student support service in open university.

U. Subba Rao in his article titled "Student Support Services in Open Education: A Case Study"<sup>41</sup> states that within a short span of time and with the large network of study centers for student support and the student intake in Dr. BRAOU has brought legitimacy to the open learning system. He emphasized the need for proper cooperation and coordination among various administrative branches of the university. The role of study centre Coordinator, Staff and the Counsellors is very vital role for the success of student support services in distance education.

Siva Prasad in his article titled "Effectiveness of Student Support Services: As Perceived by the Undergraduate Students of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University"<sup>42</sup> states that the study centre acts as a link/bridge between the institution and the students and plays a crucial role in identifying and solving the student problems. He suggests that student support services should encourage self learning among distance learners and follow different teaching methods to counsel the students and inform the facilities available at the study centre for the students so that these can be used by the distance learners.

G.V. Lakshman Rao in his paper titled "Improving Student Services to Control Dropout Rate in Distance Education"<sup>43</sup> states that the dropouts are basically due to the delays in replying to the queries of the learners by the institution. He further states that the educational institutions are dependent on students and not the vice-a-versa and felt that student support services must sustain the motivation of the students so that they complete the programme of study.

P. Krishna Rao in his article "Effectiveness of Student Support Services- A Case Study"<sup>44</sup> examined the students' perception of self instructional material, use of reference books at the study centre and awareness about the availability of audio and video lessons provided to the students as a part of support to students. The study found that majority felt that the presentation of course material is in self instructional format. Majority are aware of availability of reference library but only two percent utilized it. The study further found that an overwhelming majority are aware of availability of audio and video lessons but only twenty percent and fourteen percent respectively are utilized at the study centre.

P. Sivaswaroop's study "Continuation and Completion Patterns of Management Distance Learners; A Case Study"<sup>45</sup> is aimed to find out how the students are continuing and completing a programme. Successful completion of the registered courses will give them more confidence to face the successive exam. The author based on the continuation and completion data of the present study concludes that the distance learning institution should provide more support to learners during their first year of study so that they can be more confident to face their examination. Timely resolution of student problems will ensure the continuation; otherwise the student drops out of the course.

M. Selvam's study of "Correlation Between Level of Dissatisfaction and Dropout of Distance Learners"<sup>46</sup> aims to establish the relation between dissatisfaction and dropout rate. The author states the problem as "that higher the level of dissatisfaction higher the rate of dropouts. The lower the level of dissatisfaction lower the rate of dropout from distance education system". The reasons for dissatisfaction identified by the author are, psychological, family, social, occupation, health, educational and institutional factors with sub components. These factors contribute for the dropouts. Dissatisfaction is the result of lack of quality support services to the students. Efficient and effective student support services will help to reduce dropout.

Margaret Black's study "Are We All Managers Now?"<sup>47</sup> is a case study to find out the involvement of all the staff, academic, clerical and administrative staff in the

management and administration and delivery of academic programmes. It is widely known that the role of supporting and administrative staff is very limited in traditional education where as in distance education the active involvement of all the staff is the pre requisite for the successful delivery of the academic programmes.

The present case study has strongly supported the argument that all the staff need to be involved and work like a team. Distance learning courses require a far higher level of administrative support than on campus courses, and often it is the support staff who 'interact' with the students by fax, e-mail and telephone. The support services extended by all the staff will, contribute for the success and will get the 'pro-active' image to the centre. The boundaries between the academic, clerical and administrative staff are blurred and all of them are involved in decision-making / power sharing.

The management model most suited to the centre is the team approach model where in all the stake holders are actively involved. Both academic and support staff need to provide "pastoral care" to the learners in distance mode. The image of the institution is dependent on the attitude of the staff. All the staff need to be trained to work in a service sector organization. The author believes that all the staff are acquiring managerial role at some point of time in providing pro-active support to the learners.

David Sewart's article on "The Future for Services to Students"<sup>48</sup> provides a bird's eye view of the operation of support services with the impact of communication technology on provision of services in future. The author proposes three types of models followed presently for providing online education or e-learning. The proposed models are, selling concept model, market concept model and public sector education concept model. The selling concept model is characterized by factory mass production method wherein student support environment is omitted. The market concept model is characterized by the importance of customer in which producers face competition. Public sector education concept is characterized by individualized servicing and proactive support and guidance to the learners. (factory-market-student models). The author proposes extensive use of information and communication technologies for providing

student support services and use of websites for providing information, advising and guidance to the learners. The transition should be aimed at smoothly. The future of services is dependent on e-learning initiatives and strategies.

Allan Tait's article on "Re-Thinking Learner Support in the Open University, U.K."<sup>49</sup> is an attempt to review the factors which are essential for a re-look into the way in which the support is provided to the learners. Support services have brought credibility to the Open University and distance education. Counselling support services, which are developed and got deep rooted in the system, are removed as a part of rationalization of expenditure due to the reduction in the budgetary support of the government.

The author has identified following factors responsible for re-look into the reasons for providing learner support in a changing environment. They are (1) declining retention rate (2) changing characteristics of learners, (3) changing perception of students to customers, (4) lack of time and space for study due to long working hours. Tait basically focused on three important aspects and deliberated upon them. (1) working hours, (2) consumer behavior and (3) living conditions. Life long learning and long working hours have left very limited time at the disposal of individuals. To remain employable people are resorting to life long learning and upgradation of skills and even the employees are also accepting the open and distance learning methods to upgrade their qualification and skills.

In a competitive world educational institutions are competing to attract more and more students by promising good and qualitative services. This has resulted in a qualitative change in the perception of student community. They have started behaving not like students but like consumers and developing 'complaint culture' and viewing education as a commodity, which can be purchased in a competitive market for a price. The educational institutions are changing their work culture, environment and responding to the needs of the students like a service industry. The other important thing is living conditions of a section of student community and suitability of home for study. Many are suffering from lack of sufficient space for study at home and the situation will further

deteriorate in the years to come. In this connection the learner support should take into consideration needs of students in overcrowded homes and in temporary accommodations. With these factors in mind it is imperative for any open and distance learning institution to review the need for learner support and play more proactive role in extending the support services very much required at the moment.

The above studies on student support services have provided, definition of student support services, characteristics of students, need for student support services, planning and management of student support services, academic and administrative problems of student support services, need for team work and learner-centered delivery and role of information and communication technology in providing student support services. An attempt is made to understand the support provided for specific areas like personal contact programmes and support through media in the next part of the chapter.

#### **Part – IV**

#### **Studies on Support for Specific Areas**

The last section of reviews deals with the support services provided for specified aspects of support. Support services are to be provided as per the needs of learners and requirements of the academic programmes. They cover some of the specific areas of information support, face-to-face personal contact programmes, media support services and the role of study centre in providing support services. The available literature is very limited in some specific areas and it is relatively more for other specific areas.

#### **Information Support**

G. Srinivasa Charyulu and K. Sireesha Padmaja in their article entitled "Student Support Services in Open Learning System: Learners' Needs and Expectations"<sup>50</sup> stated that the basic responsibility lies with the institution to provide clear and accurate information to the students through their study centres. The article is an outcome of a primary research study based on the data collected from the students, found that 85

percent of the respondents visit the study centre only to get **information about academic** programmes offered, eligibility, fee and examination schedules.

### **Counselling/Counsellor**

C.G. Naidu in his article entitled "Student Perspectives on **the** Effectiveness of counselling in Distance Education"<sup>51</sup> is the study of student feedback on academic counselling sessions provided through study centres. It has found that majority of the respondents are getting information about counselling sessions but they are not regular in attending counselling session due to lack of time. Those who are attending counselling sessions are coming with preparation and felt that the counselling sessions are interactive. The study also found that the counsellors are supportive and friendly and the counselling sessions are useful.

R. Kishore Kumar in his article on "The Role of the Academic Counsellors' and the Need for Training them"<sup>52</sup> has emphasized the different roles played by **the** conventional teacher whenever he performs the roles in open university as a **course** writer, counsellor and a distance tutor while evaluating assignments. The counsellor is expected to perform wide ranging activities in distance education system.

The counselor has to bridge the gaps in the self-instructional material supplied to the learners by providing them with latest developments on the subject topics and making correction whenever mistakes creep in. As the learners enter the open and distance learning system after a long gap of their earlier studies and must be 'out of touch' with **the** studies. Here the role of a counselor comes into prominence to provide study advise and guidance to comprehend the course material, audio and video programmes and in writing the assignments. To make this transition easy the counsellors need to be trained to perform their multifarious functions effectively.

B. Sukumar's study "Academic Counsellors' Awareness of Distance Education Instructional Concepts and Practices"<sup>53</sup> is an attempt to find out how far **the academic**

counsellors are aware about the distance education, instructional methods, theories, required qualities, items to be covered / discussed in the counselling session, use of media followed in distance education and the type of communication skills required for academic counsellors. The study found that majority of the academic counsellors lack awareness about distance educational concepts, learning theories, motivational techniques and use of media. Majority are not even aware of the difference between distance education and correspondence education. This calls for an intensive training and orientation programmes for the academic counsellors.

### **Personal Contact Programmes**

C. Pushpa Ramakrishna in her article on "Contact-Cum-Counselling Sessions: Their Role and Potential"<sup>54</sup> states that though the face to face contact is not mandatory in distance education system and the independent study expects the teachers and learners to carry out their tasks independently, but this has drawn the attention of thinkers and policy makers to ponder over the methods and means to bridge the distance in distance education and made them to realise the need to provide human support to distance learners in the form of student support services. The important component of student support service is the role of contact-cum-counselling sessions. The author states that the open universities provide opportunities for high degree support through contact programmes and audio and video lessons, where as the external studies of conventional system do not provide any support.

P. Ramaiah & G. Srinivasacharyulu in their article titled "Face-to-face Support Services at APOU: Student Response"<sup>55</sup> aim to find out the attendance of students in the counselling sessions, its utility and the sufficiency of practical sessions provided for science students. The study has found that around 70 percent did not attend the classes and out of the students who attend the contact sessions majority are from the non-formal stream of admission. The study has identified the following difficulties faced by the students which include the problem of understanding the content of missed classes. Students prefer to have individual meetings with the counsellors and the students are

hesitant to seek clarifications for doubts during the class. The study found that **the** practical sessions of science programme are more than sufficient.

Bade A. Agboola's article "Contact Session in Distance Education An Asset As Well As a Burden"<sup>56</sup> examines the need for and usefulness of organizing contact sessions as part of course delivery and aimed to offer personal interaction among participants and contribute towards course completion. The author states that contact sessions give meaning and identity to distance education at a cost and these sessions are both an asset as well as a burden. The contact sessions are indispensable to achieve expected education objectives of distance education programme.

M.D. Ushadevi's article on "Are Contact Sessions Necessary in Distance Education? A Feedback to IGNOU"<sup>57</sup> is an attempt by the author to critically assess the contact sessions. The study found that the overwhelming majority of respondents felt that the contact sessions are necessary for the following reasons - as they 'clarify doubts', 'break isolation' maintain interpersonal relations, help gain deeper insights and helped to understand the subject. Though the respondents feel the need for counselling sessions their attendance in contact sessions is irregular due to the following reasons: (1) distance of study centre (2) personal problems and (3) poor quality of sessions. That majority of those who feel that attendance in contact sessions need not be made compulsory belong to older age group, employed and married reveals their pre-occupation with other responsibilities. Majority of the sample felt that the academic counselors follow lecture-cum-discussion method during contact sessions. The study found that the majority are having access to radio, television and audio cassette player at home. Where as telephone and computers are accessible for them at their work place. The author proposes to form study circles and mobile study centres to reduce isolation and reach remote areas. The respondents of the study have positively reacted for the need and necessity of contact sessions in distance education.

H.C.S.Rathore's study titled "Personal Contact Programmes of Correspondence Institutes in India: An Evaluation"<sup>58</sup> is a major research study conducted to find out **the**

aims, purpose and student perception of personal contact programmes. They felt that personal contact programmes are basically organized for teaching the course material already sent to them, to prepare the students for exam, to remove the isolation and learning difficulties and to provide individualized tutoring and counseling to students. The study found that majority of the students (66.15 percent) want that the participation in personal contact programmes should be made compulsory, which is against the distance education philosophy of flexibility and learner autonomy and freedom. Regarding the academic value of personal contact programmes, large number of students felt that the personal contact programmes are benefiting, worth spending money to attend, help to solve the academic problems and they want to consult the teachers during personal contact programmes for individual consultation. He proposed to divide students of distance education into two groups like part-time and full time students to conduct personal contact programmes separately for them to derive maximum benefit from personal contact programmes.

S. Manjulika, V. Venugopal Reddy and Fulzele's paper "Student Opinion of Counseling: The Experience of Indira Gandhi National Open University"<sup>59</sup> is the study undertaken to find out the pattern of attendance, usefulness, reasons for not attending, activities undertaken and preparations made by students before attending counseling sessions. The study has found that of the total respondents 62.5 percent are attending counselling session, older aged students are attending more counseling sessions than the younger age group. The counselling sessions are found to be useful in many respects by the learners. The major reasons for not attending counseling sessions are, distance of study centre, fulltime employment (lack of time) and poor quality of counselling session. The type of activity undertaken during counselling session is lecturing/ discussion. More than fifty percent stated that they attend the counselling session with prior preparation of reading of course materials.

J. S. Mirza's study entitled "Distance Learners call for Conventional ways of Teaching"<sup>60</sup> is aimed to find out why the distance learners wanted to be taught in conventional ways of teaching i.e. lecturing method. The author, who also wanted to

know whether **the** students attend the contact classes with prior preparation or not, **found** that an overwhelming majority **did** not attend with prior preparation and wanted **the** contact classes to start with a lecture. The author concludes that due to long **working** hours, lack **of** time **for** self study, lack of reading space at home and over dose of contact sessions are contributing reasons for making the distance and open learning students **to** demand conventional methods of lecturing and teaching than interactive academic counselling.

### **Assignments**

H.C.S. Rathore's study "Treatment Given to Assignment-Responses at the Correspondence Institutions: A Study of Students Reactions"<sup>61</sup> found that "submission of assignments is appreciated by the students only when they are received back properly commented on and in time". Majority of the respondents felt that assignments are given without comments by tutors and an overwhelming majority feel that assignments help them in their learning process and for preparing for exams. The author expresses the view that the tutor comments should be constructive, encourage interaction and motivation of the learners, work as a means for two-way communication between students and tutors.

### **Library**

B. Vijaya Lakshmi and APSVVSNL Narashmha Raju in their research study titled "The Library System in an Open University: An Evaluation of Library Facilities, Resources and Services"<sup>62</sup> which is related to Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University, found that the books in the libraries are scanty and not sufficient to meet the users' requirements. Majority of the students do not visit the library regularly and there is no lending of books to learners. They suggested issue of books from study centre, addition of reference books and journals, a separate reading room, xerox facility and proper arrangements for listening and watching of audio and video lessons be made available at the study centre.

## Media Support

K. Kuppuswamy Rao in his article "Between the Intention and the Act lies the Shadow: Technologies in Distance Education"<sup>63</sup> attempts to critically take stock of the utility of technologies in place at the study centres, impact of technologies on learning and support services. The study has found that the students have no information about the radio broadcast schedules, very few are listening to the radio lessons and nobody has viewed video lessons provided at the study centre.

The author states that "technology opens the doors to learning, it can not compel the learners to go to the centre. There is something in the social attitude in developing countries that makes the learner technology shy". The author further comments that in the Indian context, "the ethos which is based on oral tradition and rote learning is not conducive for instantaneous adaptation to high-tech gadgetry". He further points out that the co-existence of traditional (old) and modern (new) technologies in India. It is not possible to drive out or eliminate the old technologies but they may not be used currently.

The author while elaborating on sustainability of technology for distance education states that every technology has its own strengths and weaknesses and the new technologies need not be always better than the old technologies. There is a need on the part of practitioners, learners and administrators to appreciate and assimilate the ethos of technology into cultural fabric. The institutions and the leaders should select the technology based on the needs and requirement and it has to be properly maintained and upgraded as per the developments in the technology,

John Dekkers in his article on "Evolution of Support Systems for Open and Distance Education: The Impact of the Computer and Telecommunication Technologies"<sup>64</sup> gives an account of the evolution of delivery and support systems in Open and distance learning. Every phase of instructional system has a different type of support systems and learning medium. The system has evolved from teacher directed to

the present one of learner-centered instructional approach. Each phase has adopted different methods for interaction and the medium used for carrying out the interaction.

The paper suggested a model for student support services where in the student/learner is centre for all types of activities like study packages, study centres, academic counselling, support through library and computer networks which is highly powered through the technologies like computer networking and each model also gives importance to the interaction between students in the technology mediated support environment.

R.R Rausaria's study "A Programme Delivery Model Based on Use of Interactive Communication Technologies and Associated Quality Assurance Mechanisms"<sup>65</sup> has identified various technologies being used by them for interaction both in open university and some of the select correspondence courses institutions in India. It found that open universities are much ahead when compared to correspondence courses institutions in utilizing interactive communication technologies for distance education and in providing the print material in self instructional format. Out of ten open universities in the country only three open universities are using multi-media mix for delivery of programmes. On the other hand correspondence courses institutions rely mostly on print material and audio and video lessons; and the material provided by some of the correspondence courses institutions is not even in self-instructional format. The author has provided the outline of information communication technology used by open university and some of correspondence course institutions in the country.

Thomas L. Russell's paper on "Bucking the Trend: Low-tech Telecommunications"<sup>66</sup> has highlighted many issues related to the use of television for education in general and distance education in particular. He tried to dispel many strongly held views on television and advocated that television can be effectively utilized specifically for promotion of distance education. With proper planning and integration of television media into programme delivery television can be qualitatively utilized for

promotion of distance education as the students can accept any support, which is affordable, convenient and timely for them.

Sisir Basu's study "Regular Telecast by IGNOU: Feedback from Students"<sup>67</sup> is aimed to find out the media habits, utilization of media infrastructure at study centres, usefulness of telecast of lessons and student reaction on various components of the programmes. The study has found that many students are not aware of telecasts and do not watch them, management students watch television more and undergraduate students listen to radio and vice-versa. Because the former are employed, aged and are in higher income group than the later in all respects. Students are facing some problems in utilizing the media facilities at the study centre. The telecast time is not convenient to many and it would be better if a repeat telecast were arranged. The suggestions given by the students are: broadcasting lessons in mother tongue, undergraduate students prefer audio programmes, because they have access to radio than television, updating of programmes with latest material. He also suggested pre-test and post-test of programmes and close cooperation of media experts with course teams.

S.S. Chaudhry's and Sham Behari's study of "Modasa Experiment: Distance Teaching Through Cable television Network System"<sup>68</sup> is an attempt to highlight, how a low cost technology can be effectively used to provide academic counselling to the local students of a small town by utilizing the available cable television network. The experiment was conducted by converting the cable feeding place as "Studio-Cum-Teaching End" and establishing "Learning End" at the selected locations where resource persons can teach from the studio cum teaching end and the learners can interact with resource persons from the learning end with the help of telephone line. The experiment is conducted as a one way video from teaching end and two way audio from learning end.

The study found that it is very cost effective and the number of participants at learning end varied from 4 to 11. The participants demanded more time for discussion and question and answer session. Though the experiment is organized on a small scale, it has a great potential for future use, if cable television operators are properly integrated

into distance education system to provide academic counselling to local students. Under this experiment each home which has a cable television and a phone can be converted as learning end or a class room. It has a great potential for imparting education and training.

G. Srinivasacharyulu in his paper "Use of Radio and Audio Visual Aids by Students: An Experimental Study"<sup>69</sup> aimed to find out the use of radio and audio and video programmes by the students. The sample size is eighty students who are divided as experimental and control groups of forty students each. The students selected as experimental group under extended delivery model were provided with information about radio lessons time table and were permitted to pre-record audio and video programmes to take home for listening and viewing. The students who were selected have radio and tape recorders and have access to video cassette player. The study found that all the students have listened to the radio lessons with different percentage of listening (32 percent to 71 percent). An overwhelming majority have taken the audio lessons and listened to them selectively at home. All the students viewed video lessons.

The students of control group were not supplied with the time table of radio lessons and were not allowed to take the audio and video lessons home. Due to lack of prior information about radio lessons, timetable to control group students did not listen to the radio and audio lessons and watch video lessons. The study which was conducted for two groups under investigation, control group and experimental group, in two different models of delivery. Traditional delivery model and extended delivery model are a good attempt to know the use of radio and audio and video lessons by the students. The author suggested to give the details of audio and video lesson in the printed course materials so that the students can ask for them at the study centre for use.

Sesharatnam.C, study "Multi Media Instructional System in Distance Education: A Case Study of Dr. BRAOU"<sup>70</sup> is a major study to find out the media instruction in distance education with reference to BRAOU. The objectives among others include, to study the role of audio and video cassettes and integration / non-integration of print **and** non-print media methods followed for instruction in BRAOU. The major findings of **the**

study are, in spite of the high potential of radio broadcasts, majority of the respondents are not able to listen to them and failed to appreciate the supplementary nature of radio counselling. The potential of videocassette is also not fully exploited by the students of the University. The author has suggested the use of electronic media for instruction, integrating the same with print material and equipping the study centre with audio and video infrastructure to enhance the effectiveness of multi-media instruction. The staff involved should be properly trained.

P. K. Sahoo's article on "Teleconferencing in Distance Education: IGNOU Experiment"<sup>71</sup> is one of the initial studies conducted on the teleconference experiment for distance education. The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of teleconferencing as a means for distance education and teleconferencing as a component of delivery. Based on the feedback the researcher concludes that teleconferencing is a successful experiment wherein the students and the counselors have positively reacted and felt that teleconferencing will improve the quality of distance education system wherein it can be used for imparting face-to-face counseling on an intensive scale for a select group of students.

K. Bansal's and S. S. Chaudhary's study of "Interactive Radio for Supporting Distance Education: An Evaluation Study"<sup>72</sup> is a pilot study of interactive phone-in radio counselling programme. Radio as a technology is much more available among masses and is more affordable due to less cost. It can reach remote and hilly terrains, where transportation facilities are limited and cater to the student population who are thinly spread. It is a cost effective technology. The study found that majority (82 percent) are aware of the programme and felt that the programme enables them to seek clarification on academic doubts and seeking of general information while sitting at home. Of the total participants 29 percent have interacted with resource persons. The students of other educational institutions and general public also participated in the programme and posed questions. The respondent's participation in the program is more, when compared to their participation in teleconferencing and face-to-face counselling programmes. The focused group also positively appreciated the programme. The programmes reach is more with

less cost. Rigorous planning and monitoring will help to maintain the quality of the program. The study found that use of radio for distance education and for providing support and counselling is a step in the right direction to harness the advantages of a relatively cost-effective technology for the greater benefit of distance learners.

B. Sukumar's study "IGNOU Interactive Radio Counseling: A Study"<sup>73</sup> is aimed to find out the utilization of interactive radio counselling by the students and general public. Out of the sample majority are male, married, come from urban area and are undergraduate students. The study has found that though the subject topic was announced well in advance for radio counseling, "the number of questions or clarifications asked by the students on the subject matter delivered by experts is very low. Instead the number of questions related to pre-entry qualifications, admission process, fee structure etc, is very high". Majority respondents used the phone from home to contact the radio studios and others got the information about the programme from newspapers followed by study centre. Majority are not aware of topic of the programme prior to the broadcast even though repeated radio announcements are made on radio about the programme topic. Respondents felt that their interaction with resource persons is very limited but the time slot is very appropriate. On the whole the programme is interactive and breaking a new ground in the field of education in the country. The study has shown among many other components of student support services, interactive radio programme seems to be more attractive to the students and general public.

### Science Practicals

Damayanti Devi's article on "Strategies in Preparing Open University Learners for Science Programmes"<sup>74</sup> focuses on effective steps required for successful delivery of science programmes through distance mode in any open university. When Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University decided to offer science programmes many have expressed their reservations and doubts about the quality in the absence of continuous face-to-face counselling. However, the experience has shown that science programme can be offered successfully with effective planning and delivery mechanism. The

programme follows the following activities in delivering science programmes: (1) hands on experiments, (2) visual experiments (3) group experiments and (4) demonstration experiments. The experiments are organized at the selected study centre of the host institution which have the required infrastructure.

The author believes that the theoretical and practical components need to be integrated effectively to achieve the desired objectives of the course. The author proposed the following additional activities to make them more meaningful: (1) preparation of study guides (2) compulsory exercise (3) notes for mental practice (4) strengthening assignment component (5) v-mapping of concepts and activities in theory and practicals (6) sequential presentation (7) video demonstration of experiments, (8) pre and post training discussion (9) personal supervision and (10) other general activities. The experience in offering and delivery of science programmes with practical components, has shown that any programme can be offered through distance mode if proper course planning is done for delivery, evaluation, monitoring and testing from the launch to the final examination.

1. Damayanthi Devi in her article on "Teaching Practical Subjects"<sup>75</sup> states how the printed text and self instructional material can be effectively utilized for imparting science practical education in distance education. The science subjects like botany and zoology are known for their practical component. The author very methodically explains in her article the technique adopted in print material for teaching practical subjects. A step-by-step drawing for each act of dissection followed by explanation at the bottom of each drawing will enhance the learning and understanding skills of the distance learners. Practical work book and manuals are very important in distance science teaching wherein the learner's-counsellor's contact is limited.

## Study Centres

David Kember and John Dekkers' article on "The role of study centres for academic support in distance education"<sup>76</sup> is an outcome of an extensive survey of students about the role of study centre in providing academic support. It also supported the hypothesis of Sewart that the study centres are 'dustbins' wherein the functions which are difficult or expensive are being entrusted to them. The study centres are the locations for lecturing staff to meet students for tutorials, orientation and induction sessions, small library, facilities for private study, informal study groups and examination centres.

The authors define the academic support as "any assistance provided in interpreting and understanding the learning packages, this includes interaction associated with assignments". Administrative support is defined as "the provision of course information or promotion, enrolment and re-enrolment information or the provision of a first point of contact in assisting students to interpret and negotiate administrative requirements of institutions". The study found that only 16.8 percent respondents live outside the area of study centre and over 58 percent are living within 40 minutes of drive time, 26 percent never visited study centres, people in small towns visit study centres more than the people in large<sup>9</sup> towns due to driving time and traffic. Students found the library and computer resource are more useful than the facilities of photocopying and private study. The most desired type of activity was one in which the lecturer helped students who encountered difficulties. Many students found the need for academic support in overcoming difficulties with understanding the instructions provided by learning package.

The authors felt that the distance education is broadening its scope in providing many options to extend academic support to the students in the form of "face-to-face tutorials, telephone tutorials, electronic mail, computer conferencing, out reach visits and on campus study schools as well as the traditional correspondence". The study centres play a very important role in providing teleconferencing and computing facilities to the

students and are **playing very** crucial role in extending academic support to students in distance **education**.

Anil Shukla in his article on "Study Centres - A Wave to Strengthen Student Support Services"<sup>77</sup> talks about the study centres, which are the grassroots level units where the students come for information and support. He highlights the functions and facilities available at the study centres and the need for proper coordination between the Study Centre - Regional Centre - Head Quarters. He has identified the problems faced by the study centres as academic and administrative in nature.

The academic problems he identified are related to the content of lesson, understanding level of students, grasp of teaching methods and need for academic calendar. To overcome some of them he suggested an intensive effort by the counsellors and study centre staff to make the learners to help themselves. They should be encouraged to learn from the course material. Under the administrative problem, the author suggested the need for continuous contact and interaction between the study centre and the regional centre and making the regional centre a functional administrative unit between the study centre and the head office. He suggested for one permanent staff to be provided at the study centre to take care of the infrastructure provided at the study centre.

Student support services are provided through various means and methods in open and distance education. Specific areas cover very important components of student support services. Support extended through counselling, assignments, library, personal contact programmes, use of media for support, conduct of science practicals and role of study centre in providing student support services are examined in the last part of the chapter.

### **Summing up**

The chapter on review of literature consists of four parts that have broadly highlighted important aspects of research study. The first part has highlighted the studies

on importance of distance education, relevance, potential and critical issues in planning and management, access and equity and need for democratizing the higher education through open and distance education system. The second part covered studies on the political support for Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University, its growth and development, achievements and challenges it has faced in democratizing higher education in two decades. The third part covered studies related to the importance of student support services, definition, means and methods, objectives and role in facilitating student learning. Need for learner-centeredness and teamwork, effectiveness of student support services are highlighted. In the last part the studies on the role of student support services in specified areas of counselling, personal contact programmes, media support and role of study centre are explained.

The review of literature has highlighted the relevance of distance education, profile of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University, importance of student support services, characteristics of learners, problems and expectations of learners in open and distance education system. The reviews also help us in understanding various important facets of the present study in remaining chapters of the research study. However, there are some areas where the available literature is very limited and in some cases it is not there. The studies on information support, counselling support, role of assignments and libraries are very limited. The research studies on personal contact programmes and support through media are relatively more than other areas of study.

The review of literature has highlighted the gaps in the literature. Gaps are noticed in the areas of information support, counselling support, guidance support, assignments, library and role of study centre in the provision of student support services. Studies on face to face personal contact programmes and media support services are relatively more when compared to other specific areas of support. Present study aims to fill some of the gaps in the literature. It intends to focus on neglected areas of student support services like information support, guidance support and counselling support. Role of library support services and assignments in the learning process are also covered. Whenever it is noticed that the services are not properly utilized, the study explored to find out the

reasons behind the under utilization of the support services. In the present study efforts are made to find out the student support services from learners' perspective. Present research study intends to cover some of the important areas like information support, guidance support, counselling support, role of assignments and library support services to distance learners.

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## Chapter-III

### Profile of the Study Area

## **Chapter - III**

### **Profile of the Study Area**

#### **Introduction**

The present chapter gives a brief account and the profile of the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University in three parts. It starts with the background and the circumstances, which led to the establishment of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, its objectives, functions, authorities and organisational structure of the university, vision and mission of the university, instructional methodologies, academic programmes, growth and development of the university in terms of study centres, student enrollment and degrees awarded. This part concludes with the contribution of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University for democratization of higher education and the priorities it has set for future.

The second part deals with the administration of student support services with special reference to the Student Services Branch, its objectives, structure, learner charter, support services, infrastructure and staff provided at the study centre. It also highlights the debate on the type of administrative model and the need for learner orientation to administration. Brief profile of the study centres and the students of the selected study centres are explained. In the third part the profile of the respondents selected for the study from the study centres has been explained in detail. Study centre-wise, programme-wise, gender-wise details, social status, age group, marital status, place of stay, pre educational qualifications, parental educational and occupational background of the respondents are explained in this part. At the end, the reasons for their admission into the open university are also elicited as per their order of priority. This socio-economic and educational profile of the respondents will have a bearing on their responses to the questions in the subsequent chapters.

## **Part-I**

### **Profile of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University**

The Andhra Pradesh Open University, which was renamed as Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University was established by an act of Andhra Pradesh State Legislature<sup>1</sup>. It was inaugurated by the then President of India, Mr. Giani Zail Singh on 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1982 at Nagarjuna Sagar in Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh<sup>2</sup>. Prof. G. Ram Reddy was appointed as the first Vice-Chancellor on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1982<sup>3</sup>.

#### **The Background**

The events leading to the establishment of Andhra Pradesh Open University are very interesting and fascinating to know. Prior to establishment of Andhra Pradesh Open University in 1982, many conventional universities were offering correspondence programmes in the state. The initial idea for providing an alternative channel for educational opportunities came in the year 1978 during the course of discussion between the then education minister Bhavanam Venkatram and Prof. Ram Reddy who at that time was working as a Vice-Chancellor of Osmania University. In the meeting the minister expressed the opinion that there was a continuous pressure from different sections for establishment of more and more colleges where as the state is not in a position to provide educational opportunities to people.

At this juncture Prof. Ram Reddy suggested the idea of using distance education through open university system to meet the ever increasing demands on the formal educational system. Though the correspondence educational system was prevailing in the state, it used to be looked down as a poor cousin. Hence, Prof. Ram Reddy suggested distance education mode through open university system and briefed the minister about the Open University of United Kingdom. The minister evinced curiosity about the idea of distance education through open university system.

Later on after some time Prof. Ram Reddy got an opportunity to attend an international seminar in London. When the minister came to know about the visit of

Prof. Ram Reddy to London, he asked Prof. Ram Reddy to visit United Kingdom Open University and present a report about its working, to the government, on his return. During the visit Prof. Ram Reddy stayed at United Kingdom Open University and collected available literature on its system, structure, governance, courses, programmes, etc. Prof. Ram Reddy submitted a report<sup>4</sup> and the minister showed a keen interest in the idea of open university.

Though the United Kingdom Open University was in existence since 1969, the concept of open university was very new to India. The minister discussed the concept of open university both at the government level and at the people level. However, he could not muster enough support to the idea. "It took about two years for the minister to say he was not successful"<sup>5</sup>.

When the state government did not show interest in the setting up of an open university, Prof. Ram Reddy, considering the potential of distance education system, wanted to establish an autonomous college within the Osmania University to provide education to a large number of students. The university syndicate has approved the proposal of the Vice-Chancellor, who in turn requested Mr. Greville Rumble of United Kingdom Open University to prepare a project report. Mr. Rumble has submitted his report in a record time and a committee has examined the report and approved with few changes and submitted a plan of action to the Syndicate which approved it<sup>6</sup>. During this time Prof. Ram Reddy met the education minister and informed about their plans for establishing of an open learning college within Osmania University and requested him to release some funds if required in future. The minister has agreed to the proposal. Osmania University was all set to launch open learning college and looking for a dynamic director to be appointed to the college<sup>7</sup>.

After Bhavanam Venkataram became the Chief Minister he evinced interest in open university and he asked Prof. Ram Reddy to differ the setting up of an autonomous college in Osmania University. He further told that now he being the Chief Minister the establishment of open university may be pursued and told Prof. Ram Reddy that a

committee would be appointed under his chairmanship, to prepare a detailed project report within two to three months.

Soon the committee was appointed on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1982<sup>8</sup> by this time much of the ground work prepared for establishment of open learning college, came handy as a background material. After several meetings and discussions, a detailed project report entitled "Towards an Open Learning System" was prepared and submitted to the government on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1982<sup>9</sup> with a request to take necessary steps expeditiously. Prof. Ram Reddy anticipated a lot of delay. However, to his surprise the government acted very fast and asked him to prepare a draft bill within a week for introduction in the Assembly which was in session. The draft bill was processed by various departments and got the approval from the government of India, as education was in the concurrent list. The bill was introduced and passed by the Legislative Assembly (Lower House) on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1982 and by the Legislative Council (Upper House) on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1982. The bill was passed unanimously with the support of all the political parties". The Andhra Pradesh Open University was inaugurated by the then President of India, Sri Giani Zail Singh on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1982, who was on a state visit to Andhra Pradesh".

While commenting about the interest shown by the Chief Minister and the speed in which the bureaucracy worked to establish Andhra Pradesh Open University Prof. Ram Reddy stated that "all the formalities were completed with lightning speed"<sup>12</sup>. The university was inaugurated without the appointment of even the Vice-Chancellor to the University<sup>13</sup>.

The government was indecisive about the appointment of any official including the Vice-Chancellor, Registrar and the Finance Officer due to pressures from different aspirants to these positions. At this time, two months after inauguration of the Andhra Pradesh Open University, the Chief Minister was replaced by the Shri. K. Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy. The new Chief Minister appointed Prof. G. Ram Reddy as founder Vice-Chancellor of Andhra Pradesh Open University on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1982 nearly three months after the inauguration of the University<sup>14</sup>. Since then the Andhra Pradesh Open

University continuously got the support of the successive governments. Andhra Pradesh emerged as the trend setter and the first state to establish an autonomous, public funded full-fledged open university in the country<sup>15</sup>. Later on the government of India established Indira Gandhi National Open University in 1985 followed by few other states. The Andhra Pradesh Open University was renamed as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1991 during the centenary year of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as a mark of respect and tribute to his memory<sup>16</sup>. Establishment of open university in Andhra Pradesh led to the setting up of open university at the national level in 1985.

### **Objectives and Functions of the University**

Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University has the following objectives and functions as per its Act passed by the State Legislature. They provide broad direction and act as a guiding force to the University.

#### **Objectives**

As per the Act, the University has the following objectives<sup>17</sup>:

1. To provide educational opportunities to those students who could not take advantage of institutions of higher learning
2. To realise equality of educational opportunities for higher education for a large segment of the Population including those in employment, women including housewives and Adults, who wish to upgrade their education or acquire knowledge and studies in various fields through distance education
3. To provide flexibility with regard to eligibility for enrollment, age of entry, choice of courses, methods of learnings conduct of examinations, and operation of the programmes

4. To complement the programmes of the existing universities in the state in the field of higher learning so as to maintain highest standards on par with the best universities in the country
5. To promote integration within the state through its policies and programmes
6. To offer degree courses and non-degree courses for the benefit of the working population in various fields and for the benefit of those who wish to enrich their lives by studying subjects of cultural and aesthetic value
7. To make provision for research and for advancement and dissemination of knowledge
8. To serve as a source of continuing education, consultancy and to provide equal access to knowledge and higher education

#### Functions

According to the Act, the University has following functions<sup>18</sup>:

1. To provide instruction and training through distance education in such branches of learning, technology or vocations as it may deem fit and to make provision for research and advancement and dissemination of knowledge
2. To hold examination, confer degrees, diplomas and other academic distinctions like honorary degrees
3. To establish teaching departments, faculties, laboratories, libraries, museums, workshops, regional and study centres for development of teaching and research
4. To inspect study centres and to take measures to ensure that proper standards of instruction are maintained in them

5. To make special provision for the spread of higher education among educationally backward classes of citizens like women, other people who cannot leave their homes and jobs and to make special provision for study centres and facilities
6. To establish research institutions and to cooperate and collaborate with any other university
7. To make films and cassettes and other audio-visual material and enter into arrangements with All India Radio and Doordarshan and other such organizations

### **The Authorities and Officers of the University**

The authorities of the university<sup>19</sup> are 1) The Executive Council 2) The Academic Council, 3) The planning Board, 4) The Faculties, 5) The Finance Committee 6) The Board of studies.

The officers of the university<sup>20</sup> as per the Act are following: 1) The Chancellor, 2) Vice-Chancellor, 3) The Rector, 4) The Executive Director 5) The Directors 6) The Registrar and 7) The Finance Officer. The Vice-Chancellor is the chief executive officer of the university and the Executive Council is the principal executive body of the university.

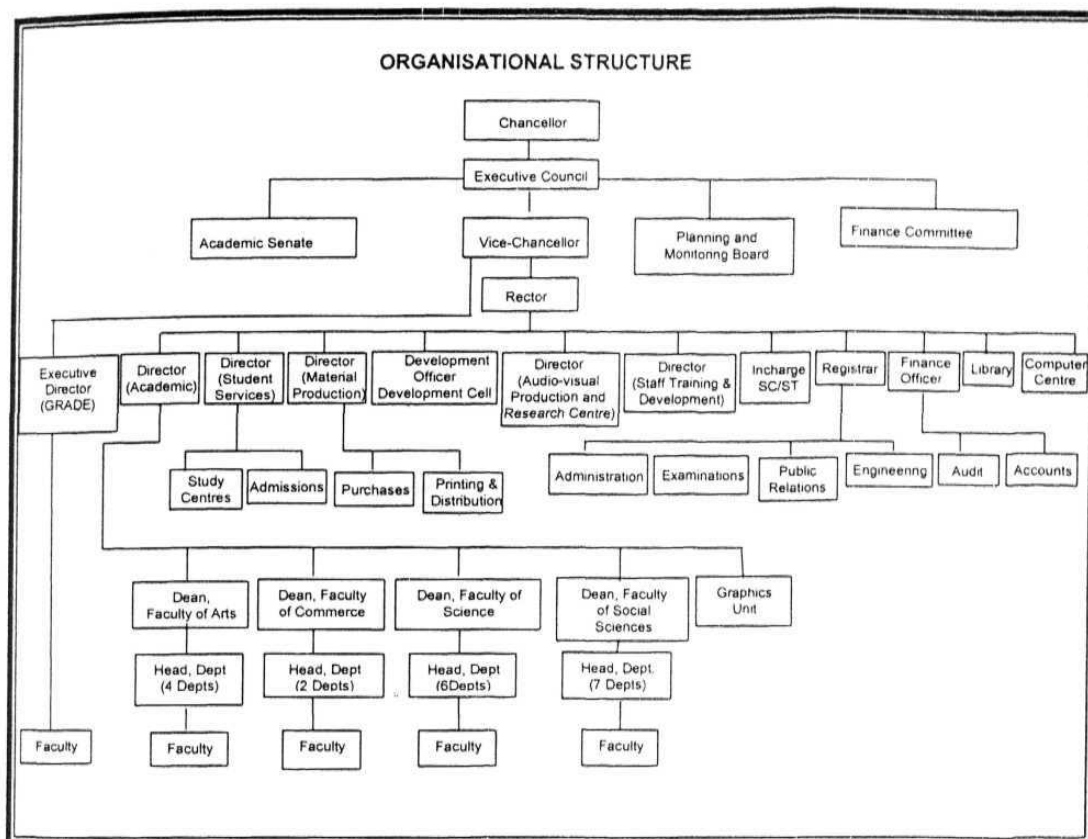
### **Organizational Structure of the University**

The Governor of Andhra Pradesh is the Chancellor of the university. The Vice-Chancellor, Rector, Executive Director of G. Ram Reddy Research Academy of Distance Education\*, Directors, Registrar, Finance Officer, Deans of faculties, Heads of Departments, Librarian and Controller of Examination are some of the important functionaries of the university. Organizational structure of the university is better explained in the following figure.

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\*It was established to undertake research activities in open and distance education on 19th January 2001

## Organisational Structure of the University



Source: Official Dairy of the Dr.BRAOU, 2003.

The major functions of different branches, centres and cells are briefly given below<sup>21</sup>:

1. G. Ram Reddy Research Academy of Distance Education (GRADE): System based research, consultancy, sponsor research fellowships and projects, maintenance of database and quality assurance.
2. Academic Branch: Planning and designing of academic programmes, course development and maintenance, preparation of self-instructional material, monitoring of academic counselling, conduct of summer/winter schools, subject and system-based research and student evaluation.
3. Student Services Branch: Student admissions, management of study centres, providing student support services, organizing face-to-face contact programmes providing information, guidance and counseling services to students.

4. Material Production Branch: Purchase of paper, printing of self-instructional material, storage and dispatch of study material to students and study centres.
5. Audio-visual Production and Research Centre: Use of electric media for distance education, broadcasting of radio lesson, radio, audio, video and television programmes production, radio counseling, teleconferencing, telecast of lessons through Doordarshan and Mana television and media research and training.
6. Women's Development & Extension Centre: Promotion of women enrollment, need assessment of women, organising extension activities in the areas for promotion of women's literacy, health, nutrition, legal rights, empowerment and entrepreneurship.
7. Centre for Staff Training and Development: Training of staff, competency building, training in application of new communication and information technologies organizing workshops and development of training manuals.
8. Development Cell: Coordinate and liaise with funding agencies like Distance Education Council, preparation and maintenance of development plan, research grants, monitoring and utilisation of development grants.
9. Library: Providing library services to staff and students, acquisition of books and other electronic materials like, audio-video cassettes, films, maps, CD-ROMs, maintenance of Narla Endowment Library and Prof. G. Ram Reddy personal collection, documentation and computerization.
10. Examination Branch: Student evaluation, notifying exam dates, conduct of exams, declaration of results and award of degrees, diplomas and certificates during annual convocations.
11. Computer Centre: Maintenance of back-office data processing, web-site maintenance, online access to information about counseling schedules, telecast and broadcast schedules, last dates for admission and fee payment and publication of results on website.

Administration branch looks after governance, establishment and coordination. Engineering branch looks after, construction, maintenance and greenery of the campus. SC/ST cell promotes the enrollment of SC/ST students, and welfare of SC/ST staff and employees. Public Relations Branch provides information services to general public, liaison with media, and printing of information leaflets. Finance Branch maintains the university finances and accounts, prepares and implements budget of the university.

### **Vision and Mission of the University**

To give proper direction for development, Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Open University also prepared vision and mission statement based on its institutional philosophy. The vision and mission statement provides long-term direction for institution goals, ideas and values it cherishes. It synthesizes objectives for which it is established.

#### **The Vision**<sup>22</sup>

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's social philosophy of education as a means of creating an egalitarian society is the vision of this university. Access to relevant quality education and training programmes for diverse sections of society with a focus on hitherto deprived sections at lower costs by using the modern technologies in teaching-learning processes as well as in administrative and support services is the goal of this university. The university programmes aim at making education and training instruments for living and for making a living,

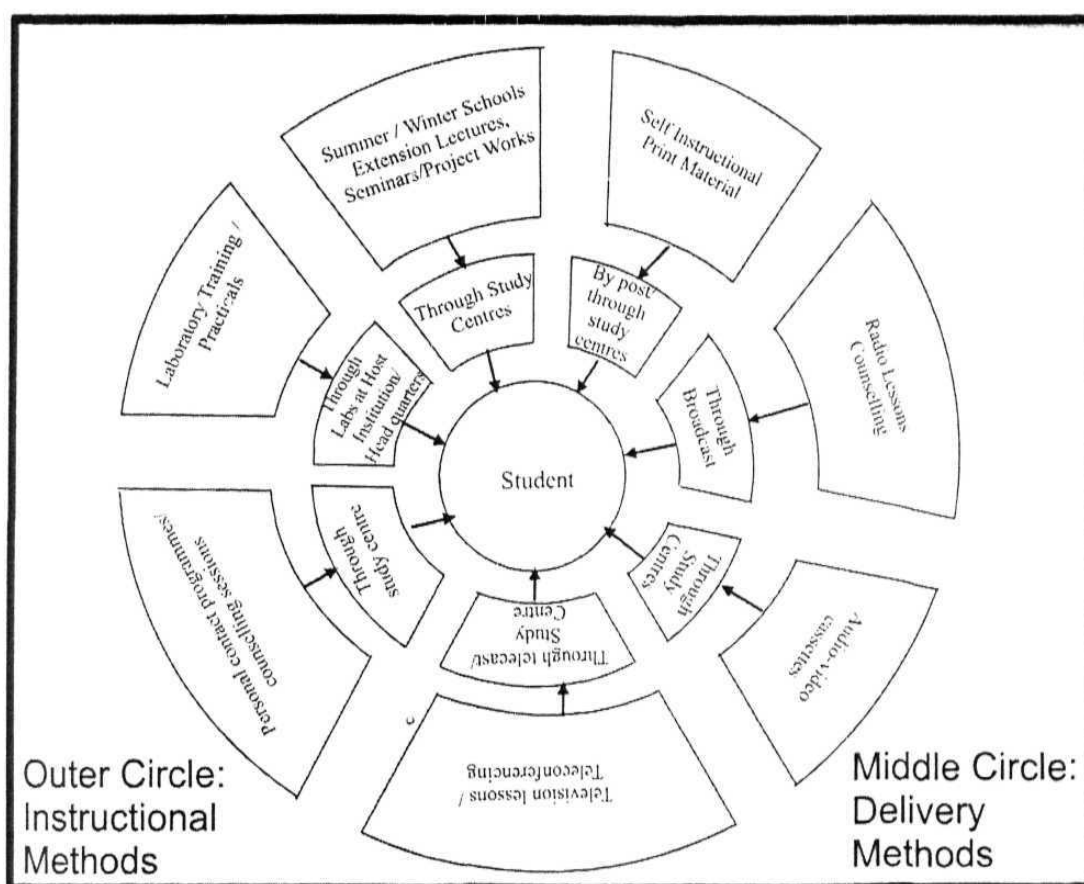
#### **The Mission**<sup>23</sup>

1. Enrichment of on-going academic programmes
2. Competency building through education and training programmes
3. Interactive individual based teaching learning process
4. Reliable and credible student evaluation systems
5. Result oriented, accountable and transparent administrative and logistic support system and
6. Research, innovation, training and networking for system development and staff development.

## Instructional Methodologies

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University follows very comprehensive instructional system and methodologies for imparting education to its students for various programmes. Self-instructional print material form the main stay of the courses. However over the years it added many other multi-media components and live programmes to its instruction methods to impart education. The following diagram gives a total overview of student-centered instructional system.

### Instructional System



In tune with its objectives, vision and mission the university is imparting education through multi-media instructional methods. Like many other distance teaching institutions/open universities, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University follows all available

**means and** methods of media to teach and reach its students. These components **are** provided directly **as** well as through study centres to the learners. The responsibility to provide and utilize these instructional methods lies with both the institution as well as the individual learners. Given of its use of technology as instructional method, distance education is found to be reaching more learners and places with less cost and at the same time providing rich environment for learning,

### **Academic Programmes**

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University is offering wide variety of academic programmes at different levels of research, master degrees, under graduation, post-graduate diplomas, diplomas and certificate programmes in the disciplines of Developmental Studies, Management, Social Sciences, Arts, Commerce, Sciences, Library and Information Sciences and Continuing Education. It started offering academic programmes within one year of its establishment with undergraduate programmes in arts and commerce; and at present it is offering more than 25 academic programmes.

Admission to its undergraduate programmes is through formal and non-formal streams, i.e. one can be admitted in open university programmes after qualifying the eligibility test for admission into various courses or pass in intermediate examination or its equivalent. The fee structure for the under graduate programmes is moderately kept so that it would be accessible to the large number of people and offered in Telugu, English and Urdu media. In addition to its undergraduate programmes it is also offering many professional programmes like B.L.I.S, M.L.I.S M.B.A. and diplomas in the functional areas of marketing, business finance, environmental studies and human rights. The post graduate programmes are offered in the areas of Management, History, Economics, Political Science, Public Administration, Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, English, Sociology and Commerce. It is also offering M.Phil and Ph.D in Developmental Studies in collaboration with Centre for Economic and Social Studies in the areas of Commerce, Developmental Statistics, Economics, Political Science, Public Administration, Geography and Sociology. It is also offering Ph.D in Open Distance Education. There is minimum and maximum duration for each programme to complete.

A majority of post graduation programmes are offered in Telugu medium whereas research programmes are offered in English medium only. The details of the programmes, eligibility conditions, duration, fees and media are given in the annexure.

### **Growth and Development of the University**

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University is the first public funded, autonomous open university in the country established in 1982 by an Act of State Legislature by the Government of Andhra Pradesh is an act of affirmative action to provide educational opportunities to the students who missed the opportunities earlier in their life, housewives and the working people who want to upgrade their knowledge and skills.

#### Growth in Two Decades

During the last twenty years its progress, growth and development are quite remarkable. When it was established it had no role model to follow but over the years it has evolved its own model and methods and got a credible place of its own. With its establishment, the distance education system got credibility and recognition. A comparative statement of facts given below provide an understanding of its growth and development<sup>24</sup>.

Table 3.1. Growth in Two Decades

S.No.	Nature of Activity	1982	2002
1	Programmes on Offer	3	23
2	Courses on Offer	4	307
<b>3</b>	Student Enrollment	6231	125257
4	Study Centres	23	140
5	Regional Coordination Centres	-	<b>23</b>
6	Academic Counselors	354	4912
7	Radio Lessons	137	1731
8	Audio Lessons	-	300
<b>9</b>	Radio Conferencing	-	31
<b>10</b>	Video Lessons	3	506
11	Teleconferencing	-	133
12	Staff Strength	<b>18</b>	606

Source: Vice-Chancellor's Report to Eleventh Convocation 4-12-2002

### Growth in Study Centres

Study centres play very important role in open university. Majority of the support services are provided to the students through the study centres. Study centres are at the bottom of the organizational structure and provide a variety of services to the learners. Over the years Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University has established a number of study centres in the state. Started with 23 study centres and at present it has 144 study centres to provide support services to students<sup>25</sup>, out of which, five are in tribal areas, three are located in central jails for inmates and four are for women students.

Table 3.2. Growth in Study Centres

S.No.	Year	Existing Study Centres	Newly Established Study Centres During the Year	Total study Centres
1	1982-83	-	23	23
2	1983-84	23	3	26
3	1984-85	26	4	30
4	1985-86	57	-	57
5	1986-87	57	-	57
6	1987-88	57	-	57
7	1988-89	57	1	58
8	1989-90	58	2	60
9	1990-91	60	14	74
10	1991-92	74	11	85
11	1992-93	85	5	90
12	1993-94	90	-	90
13	1994-95	90	2	92
14	1995-96	92	14	106
15	1996-97	106	1	107
16	1997-98	107	11	118
17	1998-99	118	13	131
18	1999-00	131	6	137
19	2000-01	137	-	137
20	2001-02	137	3	140
21	2002-03	140	4	144
22	2003-04	144	-	144

Source: Vice-chancellors 10<sup>th</sup> Convocation Report, 25-11-2001 and Prospectus

### Growth in Student Enrollment

The growth in student enrollment is very impressive. When the university offered its first academic programmes in 1983. A total of 6231 students enrolled in three academic programmes. Over the years Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University has diversified into many disciplines and is offering more than 20 academic programmes. Presently the enrollment of the university is more than 1.25 Lakhs<sup>26</sup>. The positive response from the targeted population is the testimony to the acceptance to both distance education and open learning system. The following table gives the enrollment pattern in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University over the years.

Table 3.3. Growth in Student Enrollment

S.No.	Year	Student Enrollment
1	1983-84	6231
2	1984-85	22464
3	1985-86	25407
4	1986-87	35407
5	1987-88	30534
6	1988-89	32773
7	1989-90	35062
8	1990-91	43690
9	1991-92	57144
10	1992-93	58366
11	1993-94	59796
12	1994-95	55018
13	1995-96	79825
14	1996-97	75214
15	1997-98	88341
16	1998-99	94075
17	1999-00	101212
18	2000-01	99517
19	2001-02	90524
20	2002-03	125257
21	2003-04	124788

Source: Vice-Chancellors 11<sup>th</sup> Convocation report, 4-12-2002

### Student Awardees

The credibility of any teaching system can be gauged based on its comprehensive evaluation system. Like any other conventional university, open universities also conducts its annual convocations to award degrees, diplomas and certificates to successfully qualified students. Attending convocation is a solemn occasion for the students. Prof. G. Ram Reddy, the founder Vice-Chancellor of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, once remarked that "in a conventional system, it is the parents and grand parents who cheer the students on their graduation where as in an open system of education it is the children who cheer their parents and grand parents on their success"<sup>27</sup>. The following table gives us the number of students who are awarded degrees, diplomas and certificates during the last eleven convocations held in the university.

Table 3.4. Number of Awardees at Successive Convocations

No. of the Convocation	Date of the Convocation	Number of Awardees
<b>I</b>	29-3-1987	1492
II	30-4-1988	2017
III	05-05-1989	2817
IV	19-05-1990	2092
V	08-05-1991	3647
VI	06-03-1993	3430
VII	23-08-1994	3931
VIII	13-12-1997	7347
IX	12-03-1999	2730
<b>X</b>	25-11-2001	17591
<b>XI</b>	04-12-2002	9547
<b>XII</b>	29-11-2003	7920

Source: Vice-Chancellor's XI th & XII th Convocation Reports

While reviewing its own performance on the occasion of Di-Decennial celebrations of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University concluded that it is "now standing at a critical turning point in its growth and development and is poised to meet the challenges of the knowledge era"<sup>28</sup>. The university has highlighted its major achievements and contributions as follows<sup>29</sup>:

- Access to higher education for large numbers;
- > Innovation in programme design;
- Programmes in basic sciences and professional programmes;
- Quality learning materials;
- > Continuous student support services
- Catalyst for development

The above are not small achievements in the span of 20 years of an educational institution. It has firmly positioned itself and is looking into the future with clear objectives, vision and mission which set for itself during the Tenth Plan. By the end of Tenth Plan (2007) it aims to achieve targets in the following areas<sup>30</sup>:

- Enrichment of ongoing academic programmes;
- Competency building through education and training programmes;
- Reliable and credible student evaluation systems;
- Result-oriented, accountable and transparent administrative and logistic support systems; and
- Research, innovation, training and networking for system development and staff development.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University believes that “institutions exist in a continuum of past, present and future”<sup>31</sup>. While cherishing its past heritage and striving to achieve its future targets, with a strong footing in the present, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University will be guided by the vision and mission set by itself for its future growth and development.

To sum up the part on the profile of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, it can be said that within a span of two decades it has achieved a commendable progress in terms of offering a wide variety of academic programmes in general education like B.A, B.Com and B.Sc as well as professional education programmes like M.B.A. and B.L.I.Sc. It also extended the higher educational opportunities by establishing study centers in

different locations of the state at the district headquarters and below. Establishment of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University has brought credibility to the open and distance education system in the country by providing quality course material. It also became a model institution for the other open universities which came up later in India. The provision of student support services also contributed positively to enhancement of enhancing the quality of open and distance education system. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University is contributing in its own way by facilitating the democratization of higher education to the sections of the society who are deprived of these opportunities earlier.

## **Part-II**

### **Administration of Student Support Services**

Administration of the student support services in Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University is vested with the Student Services Branch, which will supervise and coordinate all the support services to the students. The present study is about the administration of student support services in distance education with reference to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University. Hence, an attempt is made to highlight role of Student Services Branch and its efforts in providing the support services to the students.

#### **Student Services Branch**

Students Services Branch is the nodal agency through which the support services are provided through the network of study centres<sup>32</sup>. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University has a three tier administrative network to provide services to students. Initially it used to be two tier structure- Headquarters and Study Centres. Later on middle tier - Regional Coordination Centres - have been established in each district to coordinate the activities of the study centres working within the districts. At present Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Open University<sup>33</sup> have 23 Regional Coordination Centres and 144 study centres. Some study centres in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University have permanent staff and are headed by Joint Director/ Deputy Director/ Assistant Director<sup>34</sup>. Otherwise

a majority of the study centres are headed by part-time coordinators drawn from the senior faculty of the host institution.

**Objectives of the Student Services Branch:** The student support branch is basically aimed to provide support services to students and information services to the general public. The objectives are as follows<sup>35</sup>;

1. To provide students face-to-face interaction with academic counselors and co-learners through contact-cum-counselling session at study centres on specified Sundays.
2. To reduce the sense of isolation among learners by communicating through different media.
3. To extend all kinds of support to the learners, i.e. academic and advisory.

Some of the important features<sup>36</sup> of student support services are 1) They are mostly study centre-based 2) study centres are organized on the basis of geographical area 3) Subject based tutorials and system based counselling are provided at the study centres through the part-time staff called academic counselors and 4) services are mostly structured and less flexible, targeting the group needs more than the individual needs.

### **Structure of Student Services Branch**

At the university level the Director is the head of the Student Services Branch. He will guide, coordinate and monitor the activities of the branch. It consists of five major units. The four units are with a Unit Officer in the rank of Joint Director/Deputy Director. The Unit Officer of the Unit-V is Deputy Registrar/Assistant Registrar.

Unit-I. Policy and Development Services

Unit-II. Learner Registration

Unit-III. Learner Records and Services

Unit-IV. Management of Regional Coordination Centres and Study Centres

Unit-V. Finance and Administration

### **Year of Learner Services**

In an effort to streamline and provide better student support services Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University declared 2003 as 'Year of Learner Services'<sup>7</sup>. In addition to the existing information and enquiry counters, a new examination services centre and a learner services centre were established to solve all the problems across the counters at the head quarters. Computerisation of examination activities and student services branches were also taken up on a priority basis to provide improved and efficient services to learners. As mentioned earlier twenty three new Regional Coordination Centres were also established in twenty three districts of Andhra Pradesh to coordinate the work in study centre in each of the districts.

### **Learners' Charter**

To sensitize administration and the learners about their respective responsibilities Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University has developed and popularized the concept called "Learners' Charter" in the year 2003. Learners' Charter is an important step in creating awareness and making both the university and the learners proactive towards their responsibilities. The University and Learners' responsibilities are explained below.

University's **Responsibilities** towards Learners <sup>38</sup>:- The University responsibilities highlight the important activities undertaken by it for learners. They are the commitments of University towards its learners and acts as guiding principles.

1. Inform learners and public about the university programmes, systems and activities
2. Preparation of and adherence to academic calendar
3. Curriculum design for education and training programmes
4. Enrollment of learners
5. Development of quality print, electronic and multimedia learning materials
6. Timely distribution of learning materials
7. Providing interactive, technology-enabled learner support services
8. Conduct of examinations for evaluation of student performance

9. Awarding degrees, diplomas and certificates
10. Prompt response to student enquiries and study needs
11. Networking / Collaboration for value addition to learning

**Learners Responsibilities of Learning** <sup>39</sup>:- These are aimed to provide the students with independent learning. In open and distance learning the responsibility of learning lies with the learners. Self-discipline and motivation of the learners are essential to carry out their learning responsibilities.

1. Finding out about the university's programmes, admission regulations and teaching-learning systems
2. Keeping a record of all documents and communications related to study
3. Follow the time schedules, rules and regulations of the university
4. Regular and intense self-study of print, electronic and multi-media learning materials
5. Use the face-to-face academic counselling and other support services optimally
6. Preparing for and writing assignments and year end examinations
7. Receiving the degrees and living as a worthy alumni of the university
8. Giving feedback for system improvement
9. Having faith and ability to pursue the studies through self study method

### **Support Services, Infrastructure and Staff at the Study Centres**

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University study centers provide the following common support services to the students. They are also provided the minimum infrastructure and staff at each study centre. The success and effectiveness of the study centre is largely dependent on the support services it extends to the students with the available infrastructure and staff.

**Support Services** <sup>40</sup>:- The following are the common minimum support services the study centres provides their students in Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University.

1. Providing information to general public and prospective students about academic programmes, eligibility, fees details, age, and schedule of admission process and sale of application forms
2. Provide academic guidance through face-to-face personal contact programmes
3. Reference library facility
4. Audio replay facility
5. Video replay facility
6. Teleconference facility
7. Conducting science practicals
8. Assignment evaluation
9. Project guidance
10. Conduct of annual examinations

**Infrastructure** <sup>41</sup>:- Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University provides minimum infrastructure at its study centres to provide support services. The infrastructure aims to bridge the gap between the institution and the individual learner. They include (1) reference library, (2) radio, (3) tape recorder, (4) audio cassettes, (5) video cassette player, (6) video cassettes, (7) television, (8) teleconference equipment, (10) telephone, (11) type writer, (12) office tables and chairs and (13) book shelves and cupboards.

**Staff** <sup>42</sup>:- The staff at the study centres are mostly drawn from the host institution of the study centre. They are part-time staff and work for Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University. However in very few study centres fulltime staff are provided. They are (1)The Coordinator, (2) Assistant Coordinator, (3) Senior Assistant/ Assistant, (4) Office Attendant and (5) Sweeper. In addition to the common staff many part-time academic counsellors are also appointed and are made available at the study centre to conduct face-to-face personal contact programmes on Sundays for different academic programmes of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University. They also undertake the evaluation of assignments for postgraduation programmes. There are divergent views about the type of administrative model that is in operation for providing student support services in distance education. The support services, infrastructure and staff at the study centre have

given an idea about the administrative system a) the grass root level. Though Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University is providing all possible facilities and infrastructure at the study centre, but for delivering these services it needs active support of the host institution. The prevailing administrative system is often viewed as a system that has inherent limitations.

### **Model of Administration -Need for Learner Orientation**

Many conventional universities, colleges and other educational institutions in government and private sector are involved in providing student support services by hosting study centres in their premises. Open universities in general are utilizing the existing infrastructure in many educational institutions. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University is no exception. The open universities evolved this mechanism of utilizing other institutions in an effort to utilise the infrastructure during idle time for providing educational opportunities to the open university students. This model has been called dependency model<sup>43</sup> by the practioners of distance education. In this model the open universities are dependent on conventional educational institutions for manpower and infrastructure for the administration as well as ibr providing student support services at the study centre. The model is working reasonably well at present. Considering the active cooperation and support between conventional education system and distance education system some practitioners has started calling the administrative model as a convergence model. For them it is not correct to say that distance education is operating under dependency model. They believe that distance education system is sharing the facilities, resources and infrastructure of conventional education system. I fence it can be called as a convergence model because both conventional educational system and distance education system are cooperating and sharing the resources with each other.

The suitability of administrative model assumed significance due to addition of new academic programmes, increase in student enrollment and the study centres over the

period of time during the last twenty years<sup>44</sup>. The study centres have started facing problems. In some of the study centres the number of students enrolled are more than the regular college strength<sup>45</sup> of the host institution. In an effort to provide better support services and coordination Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University has decided to establish the Regional Coordination Centres in each district to coordinate study centres within the district. With the establishment of Regional Coordination Centres the two-tier student support services system has been changed into a three-tier system. Regional Coordination Centres are headed by the Regional Coordinators and the Study Centres are headed by the Coordinators.

The other argument is that the distance education system and conventional educational system have the same objective of meeting educational needs of the people<sup>46</sup>. The two systems need not compete with each other, instead they should cooperate with each other and share the educational infrastructure. It is also stated that by "accommodating open and distance learning institutions (study centres) in conventional colleges is a better utilisation of scarce national resources for the cause of imparting higher education to the distance learners"<sup>47</sup>. This will pave the way for convergence model<sup>48</sup> wherein both the conventional and distance modes work in a mutually beneficial and cooperative manner for widening the educational opportunities to the public. As a step in this direction Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University has entered into an agreement with the Directorate of Collegiate Education, Government of Andhra Pradesh for constructing Regional Coordination Centres in Government Colleges in a phased manner<sup>49</sup>. The Regional Coordination Centres are aimed at providing the student support services more effectively and efficiently in a decentralised setup.

The dependency model and the convergence model have their own relevance at a given point of time. What is more relevant in the present circumstances for both the models is the need for "learner orientation"<sup>50</sup> for the administration and delivery of student support services. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University has realised the need provide learner orientation to its administration. It advocates that "every action shall

either directly or indirectly be oriented to provide better and timely services to the learners. This calls for initiating innovative practices to cut delays and avoid difficulties to the learners"<sup>51</sup>. It further states that "the spirit of the rule rather than the letter of the rule shall be the guiding principle"<sup>52</sup> for the administration. It is this spirit and commitment, which will bring difference to the administrative system involved in student support services.

While commenting about the role of educational institution (administration) in open and distance educational institution, V.S. Prasad felt that "in conventional system the students create problems to the institution, but in distance education the institution create problems to the students"<sup>53</sup>. It is true that the role of administration in conventional education is very limited when compared to the open and distance education. In this connection what Pushpa Ramakrishna felt also assumes much significance about the bureaucracy in the administration of support services. She expressed that "bureaucratic processes baffle the learner who is isolated from the institution and her peers and is unsure of herself"<sup>54</sup>. It is in this context a pro-active, pastoral, caring and learner-oriented administration is necessary and a prerequisite in open and distance education system. After highlighting the prevailing administrative models for providing student support services in Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University an attempt is made to give a brief profile of the districts and study centres selected for undertaking the present study.

### **Profile of the Selected Study Centres**

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University provides the support services through its network of study centers spread in the length and the breadth of the state of Andhra Pradesh. As explained earlier, the total study centers at present are 144, out of which five are in tribal areas, four are for women and three are for jail inmates in central prisons.

For the purpose of field work it was decided to select two districts for an in-depth study of various components of support services extended by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open

University under the over all administration of Student Services Branch. As mentioned earlier the two districts, selected for the specific study are Mahaboobnagar and Hyderabad.

Mahaboobnagar district is having seven study centres of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University. It is the lowest literate district in Andhra Pradesh. Mahaboobnagar is economically underdeveloped and basically a rural district. In Mahaboobnagar district the selected study centre is located in M.V.S. Government Degree College. It offers both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University with largest enrollment in the district. Hence it is selected from Mahaboobnagar district,

Hyderabad district is having 20 study centres of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University. It is the highest literate district in Andhra Pradesh. Hyderabad is a developed in all aspects and it is basically an urban district. In Hyderabad district the undergraduation and postgraduation academic programmes are offered in two different study centres. Hence two study centres are selected for collection of data from the respondents. The first study centre is located in New Government College, Khairatabad and offers undergraduate academic programmes. The second study centre is located in Pragathi Maha Vidhyalaya, Koti offers postgraduate programmes. The two study centres selected from Hyderabad are major study centres. Hence they were selected for collection of data.

#### Profile of Students

The details of students from the selected study centers for undergraduation and postgraduation programmes will help understand the profile of the respondents. Details of undergraduate students of two study centres selected for the current are given in the next table. It gives the student profile in terms of gender, social status and programmes of study of the selected study centres.

Table 3.5. Undergraduate Students in Two Selected Study Centres (2002-03)

Degree	Year	Gender		Social Status				Total
		Male	Female	SC	ST	BC	OC	
<i>Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University Study Centre, Mahaboobnagar</i>								
UG (B.A/B.Com/B.Sc)	I	986	562	312	132	657	447	1548
B.A	II	217	132	23	10	177	139	349
	III	230	120	62	26	141	121	350
B.Com	II	28	9	3	-	13	21	37
	III	28	9	1	-	13	23	37
B.Sc	II	48	29	7	15	23	32	77
	III	28	11	5	8	13	13	38
Total		1565	872	413	191	1037	796	2437
Percentage to totals		64	36	17	8	42	33	100
<i>Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University Study Centre, Hyderabad</i>								
UG (B.A/B.Com/B.Sc)	I	887	224	212	28	459	412	1111
B.A	II	186	67	35	13	114	91	253
	III	94	29	30	3	46	44	123
B.Com	II	228	43	28	5	107	131	271
	III	142	31	24	3	69	77	173
B.Sc	II	173	72	11	5	105	124	245
	III	75	37	12	7	42	51	112
Total		1785	503	352	64	942	930	2288
Percentage to totals		78	22	15.4	3	41	40.6	100

Source: Official records of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, 2002-03

The data in the above table reveals that in both the study centers, the first year students of undergraduate programme students are more than 50 percent and male students are more in number than the female students. In Mahaboobnagar study centre, B.A. students outnumbered all other students in other programmes. In Hyderabad study centre the second year undergraduate students are more than the third year students in all the programmes. When social status is analysed B.C. students such as are more in Mahaboobnagar study centre than O.C. students followed by S.C. and S.T. In case of Hyderabad study centre both B.C. and O.C. students are more or less same followed by S.C. and S.T. students.

The major social categories under different castes are, among other castes/forward castes are Reddy, Kamma, Vysya etc, among backward castes are Yadav, Gouda, Telaga

etc., among scheduled castes are Mala, Madiga etc., and among the scheduled tribes are Banjara, Chenchu, Konda Dora etc., are some of the major caste groups.

The details of postgraduate students from Dr. BRAOU Study Centres located in M.V.S. Government Degree College at Mahaboobnagar and Pragathi Maha Vidhyalaya at Koti, Hyderabad are given below:

Table 3.6. Post Graduate Students in Two Selected Study Centres

Year	M.A Economics	M.A History	M.A Pub.Admn.	M.A Pol.Sc.	M.A Sociology	M.A Maths	M.B.A	Total
<i>Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University Study Centre, Mahaboobnagar</i>								
I	21	4	18	21	12	<b>17</b>	31	124
II	8	1	2	8	-	3	15	37
III	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	11
<i>Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University Study Centre, Hyderabad</i>								
I	-	-	-	-	-	-	595	595
II	48	9	87	46	-	43	270	503
III	-	-	-	-	-	-	113	113

Source: Official records of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, 2002-03

It may be noted that the details of gender and social status of postgraduate students are not available in both the study centres. However, based on the programme wise details, the first year students are more in number in both the study centres than the second and third year students. M.A. students are more in Mahaboobnagar, where as M.B.A. students are more in Hyderabad. M.A. first year is offered in another study centre at Hyderabad. However second year students are considerable in number in public administration, economics, political science and mathematics. It is interesting to know that in Hyderabad study centre more than 75 percent students belong to management studies, because it is the only study centre offering MBA programme in Hyderabad.

In conclusion it is found that the administrative system created for providing student support services in Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University is responding to the

student needs from time to time. It is also making efforts to sensitise and give learner orientation to its administration through 'learner charter' and 'year of learner services'. It is further found that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University is making sincere efforts to strengthen its grass root level administrative system to provide better student support services by establishing Regional Coordination Centres and constructing its own buildings. It is also found that the selected study centres are major study centres and are offering the important academic programmes of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University.

### **Part-III**

## **Profile of the Respondents**

Profile of the respondents is very essential to understand their responses to various components of the present study. An attempt is made to find out the administration and delivery of student support services in a distance education system with the help of a case study of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University. Support services in distance education will contribute for the success of the system. In the distance education mode of learning and the print material plays very vital and important role. To supplement the print material and the learning of students the distance education system provides wide range of student support services to the learners.

To understand the perceptions of the learners on different components of student support services, knowledge about the profile of the learners of the study will be of great help. Under this section many aspects like gender, age, marital status, social status, educational and occupational background of the parents, family income, place of stay, programme of study, year, medium, educational qualifications prior to admission, occupation, income and reasons for study are analysed in the following tables. The analysis of this information forms the basic data and profile of the student respondents of the present study.

Table 3.7. Study Centre wise distribution of respondents.

Study Centre/Degree	Frequency	Percent
Mahaboobnagar Study Centre (Under Graduates)	100	29.2
Hyderabad Study Centre (Under Graduates)	116	33.8
Mahaboobnagar Study Centre (Post Graduates)	47	13.7
Hyderabad Study Centre (Post Graduates)	80	23.3
Total	343	100

The study centers selected for the study are, one from Mahaboobnagar and other from Hyderabad for undergraduate and postgraduate students. Of the total 343 respondents 57 percent are from Hyderabad and 43 percent are from Mahaboobnagar study centres. Out of the total sample the undergraduate students are 63 percent and postgraduate students are 37 percent.

To provide an insight into the sample of the respondents of the present study the following three tables give important details of the composition of the respondents from selected study centres in terms of programmes of study, gender and social status from selected study centres. First the programme wise details of respondents are explained in the next table.

Table 3.8. Programmes of Study of Respondents and Study Centre

Study Centre	Programme of Study					Total
	BA	BCOM	BSC	MBA	MA	
Mahaboobnagar UG	57 (57.0) 68.7	18(18.0) 32.1	25 (25.0) 32.5	-	-	100 (100.0) 29.2
Hyderabad UG	26 (22.4) 31.3	38 (32.8) 67.9	52 (44.8) 67.5	-	-	116 (100.0) 33.8
Mahaboobnagar PG	-	-	-	26 (55.3) 28.6	21 (44.7) 58.3	47(100.0) 13.7
Hyderabad PG	-	-	-	65(81.3) 71.4	15(18.8) 41.7	80(100.0) 23.3
Total	83 (24.2) • 100.0	56(16.3) 100.0	77 (22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36(10.5) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

Note: Figures in parenthesis and below the frequencies indicate the percentages to totals.

The data in the above table reveals that undergraduate and postgraduate respondents are more from the Hyderabad study centre. However, around 40 percent are from Mahaboobnagar study centre. Respondents studying B.A. are more in Mahaboobnagar study centre whereas B.Com and B.Sc respondents are more in Hyderabad study centre. Respondents studying MBA are more in Hyderabad study centre where as M.A. respondents are more in Mahaboobnagar study centre. In the next table gender wise details are explained.

Table 3.9. Gender of Respondents and Study Centre

Study Centre	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Mahaboobnagar UG	60 (60.0) 28.2	40 (40.0) 30.8	100 (100.0) 29.2
Hyderabad UG	81 (69.8) 38.0	35 (30.2) 26.9	116 (100.0) 33.8
Mahaboobnagar PG	32(68.1) 15.0	15(31.9) 11.5	47(100.0) 13.7
Hyderabad PG	40 (50.0) 18.8	40 (50.0) 30.8	80(100.0) 23.3
Total	213(62.1) 100.0	130(37.9) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table reveals that among the undergraduate males 38 percent respondents are from Hyderabad and 28 percent are from Mahaboobnagar. Among the postgraduate males 18 percent and 15 percent are from Hyderabad and Mahaboobnagar respectively. As per the data in the above table the male respondents are more in Hyderabad both in undergraduation and postgraduation programmes than in Mahaboobnagar. Among the undergraduate females, 39 percent are from Mahaboobnagar and 27 percent are from Hyderabad. Among the postgraduate females, 31 percent are from Hyderabad and 11.5 percent from Mahaboobnagar. It means in undergraduation female students are more from Mahaboobnagar where as in postgraduation females are more in Hyderabad. The social status of the respondents is very essential to understand their background, which is explained in the next table.

Table 3.10. Social Status of Respondents and Study Centre

Study Centre	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Mahaboobnagar UG	12(12.0) 27.9	9 (9.0) 52.9	46 (46.0) 36.8	33 (33.0) 21.4	-	100(100.0) 29.2
Hyderabad UG	17(14.7) 39.5	4 (3.4) 23.5	33 (28.4) 26.4	58 (50.0) 37.7	4 (3.4) 100.0	116 (100.0) 33.8
Mahaboobnagar PG	8(17.0) 18.6	1(2.1) 5.9	17(36.2) 13.6	21 (44.7) 13.6	-	47(100.0) 13.7
Hyderabad PG	6(7.5) 14.0	3 (3.8) 17.6	29 (36.3) 23.2	42 (52.5) 27.3	-	80 (100.0) 23.3
Total	43(12.5) 100.0	17(5.0) 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154 (44.9) 100.0	4(1.2) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table reveals the social status of the respondents. Among the undergraduates from Mahaboobnagar B.Cs and O.C's are more than the S.C. and S.T. respondents. Undergraduates from Hyderabad are more in O.C. and B.C. than the S.C. and S.T. respondents. Among the postgraduates from Mahaboobnagar O.C. and B.C. are more when compared to the S.C. and the S.T. who are very negligible. Postgraduates from Hyderabad are more in O.C. and B.C. than the S.C. and S.T. who are very negligible.

Out of the S.C. respondents, majority are doing undergraduation from Hyderabad and Mahaboobnagar and followed by postgraduate students from Mahaboobnagar and Hyderabad. Among the S.T. respondents majority are in undergraduation from Mahaboobnagar and Hyderabad followed by postgraduation students. Out of the B.C respondents, majority are in undergraduation programmes at Mahaboobnagar and Hyderabad whereas in postgraduation they are more in Hyderabad and less in Mahaboobnagar. Among the O.C. respondents majority are in Hyderabad doing undergraduation and postgraduation programmes and less in Mahaboobnagar. The data further suggest that, O.C's are more in urban Hyderabad, B.Cs are more in Mahaboobnagar and Hyderabad doing under graduation and majority of S.C.'s and S.T.'s are doing undergraduation at Mahaboobnagar and Hyderabad.

Table 3.11. Profile of Respondents: Personal Details

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	213	62.1
Female	130	37.9
Total	343	100
<b>Age Group</b>		
Below-25	210	61.2
26-35	105	30.6
36-45	22	6.5
46-55	6	1.7
Total	343	100
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	114	33.2
Unmarried	229	66.8
Total	343	100
<b>Social Status</b>		
SC	43	12.5
ST	17	5.0
BC	125	36.4
OC	154	44.9
Caste not given	4	1.2
Total	343	100
<b>Place of Stay</b>		
Rural (Village)	114	33.2
Urban (Town/City)	229	66.8
Total	343	100

The data in the above table reveals the following. The gender background of the respondents shows that 60 percent of them are male and the rest are female. The age groups of the respondents show that 60 percent are below 25 years of age. About 30 percent belong to 26-35 years age group. The students between 46-55 age group are below 2 percent of the total sample. Thus the respondents predominantly belong to younger age group. The marital status of the respondents reveals that more than 65 percent are unmarried and the rest are married.

When enquired into the social status, it is found that among the total sample 44.9 percent belongs to open category/general students, 36.4 percent belongs to backward classes followed by Scheduled Castes (12.5 percent) and Scheduled Tribes (5 percent). The data in the above table also shows that a majority of the respondents of the sample

are living in urban areas. Only 33 percent are from the rural background and are staying in villages. It shows that the open university has yet to cover the rural areas.

Table 3.12. Profile of Respondents: Educational Details

<b>Programme of Study</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>BA</b>	83	<b>24.2</b>
BCOM	<b>56</b>	16.3
BSC	<b>77</b>	22.5
MBA	91	26.5
MA	36	<b>10.5</b>
Total	343	<b>100</b>
<b>Year/Class of Study</b>		
I	31	9.0
II	131	38.2
III	181	52.8
Total	343	100
<b>Medium of Study</b>		
English	183	53.4
Telugu	158	46.0
Urdu	<b>2</b>	0.6
Total	343	100
<b>Admission through E.T. or Not?</b>		
Yes	208	60.6
No	135	39.4
Total	343	100
<b>Educational Qualifications</b>		
Below 10th class	6	1.8
10th pass	60	17.5
10th fail	2	0.6
Inter pass	105	30.6
Inter fail	43	12.5
Degree (University)	127	37.0
Total	343	100

As per the data in the table 3.12 the respondents are enrolled to different programmes of study, For instance 26.5 percent are M.B.A students, 24.2 percent are B.A. students, 22.5 percent are B.Sc students and the rest are B.Com and M.A. students. More than fifty percent students are in their third year of study and around forty percent are in the second year. Only nine percent are students of first year of study. The reasons

for selecting **more than** ninety percent students from third and second years of study **are** that they have considerable experience in availing student support services of the university and are in a good position to express their opinions on various aspects of student support services offered by the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University.

The first year students are all doing M.A. from the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University and a majority of them have done their undergraduation from the same university. Hence, even the first year M.A students are also in good position to explain their feelings and observations freely and frankly. No student from the undergraduate Programme is selected from the first year of study. More than fifty percent respondents are doing their course in English medium and forty six percent are studying in Telugu medium.

The respondents of the sample are both undergraduates and postgraduate students. They got admission through formal and non-formal scheme. It is found that a majority of them got admission after qualifying the eligibility test under non-formal scheme in the degree programmes and the M.B.A. students got the admission through common entrance test. However, considerable number of students got admission in the university without entrance test because they fulfill the eligibility conditions prescribed by the university for that academic programme.

Prior educational qualification of the respondents revealed that all the post graduate students were having degree qualification. It is testified with the data in the above table, around 32.4 percent are either 10<sup>th</sup> pass or fail and below intermediate. Intermediate pass students are 30 percent. Some of the students who studied 10<sup>th</sup> class and below are also able to study degree programmes after qualifying the eligibility test of the university.

Table 3.13. Profile of Respondents: Occupational and Employment

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Employed	182	53.0
Unemployed	96	28.0
Business	17	<b>5.0</b>
Self employed	28	<b>8.2</b>
House wife	20	<b>5.8</b>
Total	343	100
<b>If employed, income per month</b>		
Less than Rs.3000/-	131	57.7
Rs.3000 - 5000/-	43	18.9
Rs.5001 - 10000/-	38	16.8
Above Rs. 10000/-	15	<b>6.6</b>
Total	227	100

(unemployed-96+housewife-20=116+227=343)

In the study it was found that more than 60 percent are employed both in public and private sector and some are self employed or doing business. Only 28 percent are unemployed and 5.8 percent are housewives. It means majority of them are working and want to improve their qualifications. They think distance education is more suitable to them.

When the study intended to know the income of the respondents who are employed, doing business or self employed, it revealed that a majority of them are earning less than Rs.3,000/- per month followed by less than Rs.5,000/- and Rs. 10,000/- per month. Very few are earning more than Rs. 10,000/- per month . It means distance education target groups belong to lower and middle-income group.

Then the respondents were asked about the family income, means through which they got to know about the Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University and if any body was studying in it. The details are explained in the next table.

Table 3.14. Profile of Respondents: Family Income and Others

<b>Family Income/Per month</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than Rs.3000/-	110	32.0
Rs.3001 -5000/-	<b>99</b>	28.9
Rs.5001 - 10000/-	<b>85</b>	24.8
Above Rs. 10000/-	<b>49</b>	14.3
Total	343	100
<b>Means through which came to know about the University</b>		
News Papers	160	46.6
Friends	146	42.6
Parents	31	9.0
TV	<b>4</b>	1.2
Radio	<b>2</b>	0.6
Total	343	100
<b>Other family members studying in the University</b>		
Yes	<b>74</b>	21.6
No	269	78.4
Total	343	100

The family income of the 32 percent of respondents is less than Rs.3,000/- per month, followed by 28.9 percent below Rs.5000/-, 24.8 percent below Rs. 10,000/-. Very few families are having income above Rs. 10,000/-. That 60 percent respondents belong to income groups below Rs.5,000/- per month, it can be inferred that low income groups are opting for education through open and distance learning system. The rich people whose income is above Rs. 10,000/- are least preferring education through open and distance learning system.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University uses different media to publicize its programmes. When the study intended to find out how the respondent came to know about the university, it was found that 46.6 percent got to know through news papers and 42.6 percent through friends. In nine percent cases parents told their wards about the university. The television and radio are playing very negligible role in popularizing the university though it broadcasts and telecasts lessons on both radio and television. When the study wanted to find out if there is anybody else studied in the university from their family, only 21 percent gave positive response. It means some of them have a long

association with the university and it influenced them to take admission in open university.

Table 3.15. Parental Education and Occupation of the Respondents

Education	Father		Mother	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Illiterate	89	25.9	156	45.5
High School	100	29.1	143	41.7
Intermediate	28	8.2	21	6.1
Degree	87	25.4	18	5.2
Post Graduate	39	11.4	5	1.5
Total	343	100	343	100
Occupation				
Employed	173	50.5	24	7.0
House Wife	-	-	293	85.4
Agriculture	82	23.9	1	0.3
Business	54	15.7	4	1.2
Unemployed	18	5.2	19	5.5
Rural Artisan	7	2.0	-	-
Expired	4	1.2	1	0.3
Retired	3	0.9	1	0.3
Occupation not given	2	0.6	-	-
Total	343	100	343	100

The data in the above table shows the father's education of the respondents. It revealed that more than twenty five percent fathers are illiterates and around thirty percent studied upto high school level. Around twenty five percent are graduates and more than ten percent are postgraduates. When the data is analysed for mother's educational background it is found that more than forty five percent are illiterate and around forty two percent studied up to high school. Others have studied up to intermediate, degree and postgraduation.

It can be inferred from the above table that the respondents' mothers are less educated when compared to fathers. The fathers have more educational qualification in terms of degree and postgraduation. It can be further inferred that due to their poor educational background, the parents are very much interested to see that their children should get higher education.

The data in the above table also reveals the occupational base of respondent's parents. Among the fathers more than 50 percent are white collar employed followed by agriculture and business. Only 5.2 percent are unemployed followed by rural artisan and retired persons. The mother's occupation of respondents reveals that an overwhelming majority (85 percent) are housewives followed by employed, unemployed and business categories. Other occupations are very negligible. It means more than 50 percent who are white collar employed prefer their wards to be educated in open and distance learning system followed by agriculturists and businessmen.

The data prepared for marital and social status found that in all the social categories unmarried are more in comparison to married students.

Table 3.16. Family Income/Per month and Social Status

Family Income/ Per Month	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Less than Rs.3000/-	24 (21.8) 55.8	5 (4.5) 29.4	43 (39.1) 34.4	35 (31.8) 22.7	3 (2.7) 75.0	110 (100.0) 32.1
Rs.3000 - 5000/-	12 (12.1) 27.9	5 (5.1) 29.4	36 (36.4) 28.8	46 (46.5) 29.9	-	99 (100.0) 28.9
Rs.5001 - 10000/-	5 (5.9) 11.6	4 (4.7) 23.5	32 (37.6) 25.6	43 (50.6) 27.9	1 (1.2) 25.0	85 (100.0) 24.8
Above Rs. 10000/-	2 (4.1) 4.7	3 (6.1) 17.6	14 (28.6) 11.2	30 (61.2) 19.5	-	49 (100.0) 14.3
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17(5.0) 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154(44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

An attempt is made in the above table to know the family income of the various social categories studying in the open university. It is realized that S.C and S.T. have lower family income than B.C and O.C categories. Out of the sample only 32 percent are with income less than three thousand rupees and around 29 percent are between rupees three to five thousand. Only 14 percent have a family income more than rupees ten thousand. It means the higher the family income and higher social status. As per the above data lower family income groups and lower social categories are giving higher preference to distance mode of study.

Table 3.17. Programmes of Study and Social Status

Programmes of Study	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
B.A	18 (21.7) 41.9	7 (8.4) 41.2	31 (37.3) 24.8	27 (32.5) 17.5	-	83 (100.0) 24.2
B.Com	7 (12.5) 16.3	1 (1.8) 5.9	20 (35.7) 16.0	26 (46.4) 16.9	2 (3.6) 50.0	56 (100.0) 16.3
B.Sc	4 (5.2) 9.3	5 (6.5) 29.4	28 (36.4) 22.4	38 (49.4) 24.7	2 (2.6) 50.0	77 (100.0) 22.4
M.B.A	4 (4.4) 9.3	2 (2.2) 11.8	34 (37.4) 27.2	51 (56.0) 33.1	-	91 (100.0) 26.5
MA	10 (27.8) 23.3	2 (5.6) 11.8	12 (33.3) 9.6	12 (33.3) 7.8	-	36 (100.0) 10.5
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17(5.0) 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154 (44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

It may be observed from the above table for the relationship between the programmes of study and the social category. It is revealed that the students from general categories are studying more professional and job oriented programmes like M.B.A. and B.Sc than the liberalized programmes like B.A. and M.A. At the same time students from S.C. and S.T. communities are studying liberal programmes like B.A. and M.A. more than the others. However the B.C.'s are doing M.B.A and B.Sc. programmes more when compared to other programmes. It means there is a relationship between programmes of study and social category

After examining their social background, finally an attempt is made to know the reasons for preference for study in open university. The following table analyses the reasons for studying in the open university in the order of preference. There could be more than one reason. When the respondents are asked to give three best reasons in order of priority, the results provided some clues to understand their motivations for pursuing their studies.

Table 3.18. Respondent's Reasons for Study &amp; Admission in Open University System

Reasons for Study and Admission	First Reason		Second Reason		Third Reason	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
To improve education qualification	205	59.8	51	14.9	<b>22</b>	6.4
To get job	35	10.2	60	17.5	<b>38</b>	<b>11.1</b>
Working, cannot go to college regularly	<b>25</b>	<b>7.3</b>	47	13.7	<b>23</b>	6.7
Discontinued studies earlier	<b>19</b>	<b>5.5</b>	38	11.0	14	4.0
To get a degree	<b>14</b>	<b>4.1</b>	16	<b>4.6</b>	76	22.2
To get promotion	<b>9</b>	<b>2.6</b>	24	<b>7.0</b>	22	6.4
Didn't get seat in the regular college	<b>8</b>	2.3	6	<b>1.8</b>	-	-
Out of interest	<b>8</b>	2.3	15	<b>4.4</b>	20	5.8
Less fees	<b>8</b>	2.3	6	<b>1.8</b>	10	2.9
for knowledge	<b>5</b>	<b>1.5</b>	21	<b>6.1</b>	48	14.0
To teach children at home	<b>3</b>	<b>0.9</b>	12	<b>3.5</b>	10	2.9
Because opportunities are available now	<b>2</b>	<b>0.6</b>	24	<b>7.0</b>	16	4.7
Available in Telugu medium	<b>1</b>	0.3	6	<b>1.8</b>	12	3.5
For social status	<b>1</b>	<b>0.3</b>	8	<b>2.3</b>	15	<b>4.4</b>
Since it is availability of study centre	-	-	8	<b>2.3</b>	13	3.8
To get married	-	-	1	0.3	3	0.9
Health Reasons	-	-	-	-	1	0.3
Total	343	100	343	100	343	100

When they were asked to give their first reason, for studying/admission in open university an overwhelming majority (around 60 percent) expressed that they want to improve their educational qualifications. Other major reasons for study are to get a job, working, discontinued studies earlier, and to get the degree. Other reasons though important have lesser number of students who subscribed to them.

When the respondents are asked to give their second reason for study/admission, the responses are, to get job, to improve educational qualifications, working and discontinued studies earlier with 17.5 percent, 14.9 percent, 13.7 percent and 11 percent respectively.

Other reasons, which got between 7 percent and 3.5 percent are to get promotions, for better opportunities, for knowledge, for degree, out of interest and to teach children. The rest of the reasons, which got between 2.3 percent and 0.3 percent are very negligible. The respondents are also asked to give their third reason for study/admission,

the three reasons which got between 22.2 percent and 11.1 percent are for degree, for knowledge and to get a job. All other reasons got below 6.7 percent.

The three reasons for students taking study/admission in the open university are to improve educational qualifications, to get a job and for degree, working can't attend college and for knowledge. All these reasons are broadly related to improve the quality of life of the individual.

In conclusion the profile of the respondents has thrown some important findings. The respondents belong to younger age groups, majority are unmarried, parents are have lower educational qualifications and want their children to get higher education, majority of the fathers are white collared employees where as mothers are housewives, higher income families preferring distance mode of study the least whereas lower income groups prefer it more. Majority of the respondents are studying in English and Telugu media and got admission through eligibility tests. It is noted from the data that because of the open university the respondents with less educational qualifications like below tenth class and who have failed in tenth class are able to fulfill their desire for higher education. Both news papers and friends are responsible for popularizing the open university. Majority of the respondents are employed in low income jobs and want to improve their educational qualifications through open university. Irrespective of the social categories all of them want to improve their educational qualifications is the most important reason for studying in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University.

### **Summing Up**

To sum up it can be said that establishment of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University is an affirmative action of the government of Andhra Pradesh to widen the educational opportunities to the adult population, who are otherwise outside the purview of the present higher educational system. Majority of the adults who missed the opportunities in their young age want to upgrade their educational and professional skills for their development.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University started with undergraduate programmes and expanded to professional studies like management and library sciences. It is making efforts to put proactive administrative machinery with emphasis on student support services. It attracted very good number of students to its academic programmes every year. More than 64 thousand students have qualified so far in different academic programmes of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University from Ph.D to Certificate programmes.

It is found that considering the importance and the role of administration in student support services, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University is making concerted efforts to establish a responsive administrative system at the grass root level to provide student support services. Major initiatives undertaken in this direction are celebration of 'year of learner services', launch of 'learners' charter' and establishment of Regional Coordination Centres. There is a need for a pro-active, pastoral, caring, simple and learner oriented administrative system for providing student support services in distance education.

It is also found from the data on selected study centre that female students doing undergraduate programmes from the rural district (36 percent) are more than urban district (22 percent). It means the educational facilities and opportunities for female in rural areas and district are less. Hence they are preferring open and distance education system when compared to their counter parts in urban district. Out of the total undergraduate students from the under privileged sections of S.T. and S.C, more are from rural districts (25 percent) than the urban districts (18.4 percent).

It is found from the respondents of the study that more than 60 percent are below 25 years of age and 30 percent are between age group of 26-35. The respondents with more than 46 years of age are just less than 2 percent. It means though the open and distance education system is meant for adult population but relatively young age groups are taking advantage of the educational opportunities. Majority of them are living in urban areas. Out of the total respondents around 17.5 percent are from S.C. and S.T.

categories. Around 37 percent are postgraduate respondents and the rest (63 percent) are undergraduate students. Around 50 percent of the undergraduate respondents have got admission through eligibility test conducted by the university. Majority are studying the academic programmes in English medium and are employed. More than 60 percent respondents' family income is below rupees 5000/-. It means the majority respondents are coming from lower income groups. Newspapers and friends are major channels through which the respondents came to know about the university. Out of the total respondents, 21 percent stated that one of their family members is also studying in the open university.

The parental education and occupation also play very important role in deciding their ward's education. The parental educational background of the respondents reveals that 25 percent of fathers and 45 percent of mothers are illiterates. Around 29 percent fathers and 41 percent mothers studied up to high school. It shows that the parents with less educational qualifications want their wards to get university level education. In terms of occupation of the parents more than 50 percent fathers are employed, where as 85 percent mothers are housewives. Agriculture (24 percent) and business (16 percent) are the other major occupations of the respondents\* fathers. Only seven percent mothers are employed. Majority of the respondents felt that the major reason for their studying in open university is to improve educational qualifications.

In a nutshell it can be stated that the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University is catering to the educational needs of younger age groups of below 35 years of age, from lower income groups with less parental educational qualifications.

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## Chapter-IV

### **Individual Based Support Services: Perceptions of Respondents**

## **Chapter - IV**

### **Individual Based Support Services: Perceptions of Respondents**

#### **Introduction**

The chapter deals with the support services provided directly to the individual learners in the distance education. There are three important components of the student support services, namely information support, guidance support and counselling support, which directly deal with the individual learners in the open university system of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University. Perceptions of the respondents towards these components are explained in three parts. Needs related to pre and post entry information, channel for information and problems in getting information are explained in the first part. In the second part the need for guidance, type of guidance required and given at present are explained in relation with gender, social status and programmes of study. The third part is about the importance of counselling, need and awareness about counselling and the people involved in providing counselling support to the respondents are explained. The level of satisfaction is correlated with gender, social status and programmes of study for individual support services and the suggestions for betterment are explained.

The role and importance of student support services in distance education is already explained in the first chapter. It is generally believed that all the support extended beyond the self-instructional material is believed to be part of student support services in distance education. The learner and the institution which imparts education, are separated in time and space in distance education system. To bridge the gap between the learner and the institution the student support services are provided in open universities.

## **Part – I**

### **Information Support to Students**

After explaining the profile and background of the respondents in the previous chapter, here an attempt is made to find out how far the information needs of the students are being met. Information plays very vital role in student's learning process. The type of information students seek, pre-entry and post-entry information needs of students, channel of information to students, problems they face in getting information, suggestions and the level of satisfaction for information support are all examined in this section.

While stressing the role of information in open and distance education system Perraton commented that "the staff of a distance teaching organization cannot do their work unless they have adequate information"<sup>1</sup> about the programmes, eligibility criteria, fees, duration and other rules and regulations.

#### **Awareness and Essentiality of Information Support**

The distance education institution needs to attend the information needs of prospective students as well as general public. Timely reply to the letters and queries is very essential in open and distance learning system. There is a need to fix accountability and need to attend the letters without delays. Today's prospective enquiring public may be tomorrow's students. Hence, the distance system needs to have an efficient mechanism to attend public enquiries and provide information in time.<sup>2</sup>

It is essential to bridge the gap between the learners and the institution by providing timely information at various stages like, pre-entry and post-entry levels. The institution can provide information through study centres, by mailing information to all learners, by preparing a directory of distance learners with their contact addresses to encourage group formation and interaction. The other methods and means to keep the

communication between distance learners and the institution alive are through newspapers, radio, television, telephone, connecting the study centres with computer network and use of satellite channels.<sup>1</sup>

An attempt is made to find out the awareness of the respondents about the availability of information support at the study centre/university.

Table 4.1. Respondents Awareness of Information Support

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Aware	261	76.1
Not Aware	<b>82</b>	23.9
Total	343	100

When the students are asked whether they are aware of the information support available at the study center/university headquarters, more than three-fourths expressed that they are aware. However, less than one-fourth said that they are not aware of information support provided to them. Then the respondents who were aware are asked to give details of information support.

Table 4.2. Details of Awareness about Information Support

<b>Information about:</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Programmes	139	53.3
Admission Procedure	48	18.4
Exam Pattern	47	18.0
Eligibility	27	10.3
Total	261	100

The responses in the above table revealed that the information support means the awareness about the academic programmes (53.3 percent) offered by the university for majority and for others, knowledge about admission procedure (18.4 percent), exam pattern (18 percent) and eligibility conditions for admission (10.3 percent). The essentiality of information support is explained below.

Table 4.3. Essentiality of Information Support

Response	Frequency	Percent
Essential	334	97.4
Not Essential	<b>9</b>	2.6
Total	343	100

When the respondents are asked about whether information support is essential for them, more than 97 percent felt that it is an essential form of support without which it is difficult to perform their studies.

### Pre-Entry Information Support

Information needs are basically two types. One is pre-entry information need and the other is post-entry information need. They are analysed in the next two tables. The pre-entry information will provide all the basic information one should have and requirements one should meet before taking admission into any program of study. The components of pre-entry information include, information about the availability of courses, eligibility conditions, admissions procedure, duration, medium of study, fees, availability of study center, study center timings, facilities and staff at the study center.

Table 4.4. Provision of Pre - Entry Information Support Services at the Study Centre

Pre Entry Information About:	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Courses/Programmes available	313	91.3	<b>30</b>	<b>8.7</b>
Eligibility	325	94.8	<b>18</b>	5.2
Admission procedure	323	94.3	<b>20</b>	<b>5.8</b>
Duration	324	94.5	19	5.5
Medium	328	95.6	15	4.4
Fees	323	94.2	<b>20</b>	5.8
Availability of study centre	320	94.3	23	6.7
Study centre timings	276	80.5	<b>67</b>	19.5
Facilities at the study centre	196	57.1	147	42.9
Availability of staff	226	65.9	117	34.1

An attempt is made to find out from the respondents how the pre-entry information needs are attended at the study center. The responses in the above table 4.4 shows more than 80 percent feel that the pre-entry information is provided to the students

at the study center in all the areas except in two, such as availability of facilities at the study centre (57.1 percent) and staff at the study center (65.9 percent). It means around 42 percent are not aware of the facilities that are provided to the students and 34 percent felt that they are not aware about the availability of staff at the study center.

### Post-Entry Information Support

Post-entry information support means all the aspects that a student would like to know after taking admission into any program of study. Post-entry information support include information about change of program, course, address, validity of registration, procedure of re-registration and all other issues related to examination matters.

Table 4.5. Availability of Post - Entry Information Support Services at the Study Centre

Post-Entry Information About:	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Change of programme*	176	81.5	40	18.5
Change of course*	183	84.7	33	15.3
Change of address	273	79.6	70	20.4
Validity of registration	214	62.4	129	37.6
Procedure for re-registration	141	41.1	202	58.9
Examination pattern	284	82.8	59	17.2
Submission of exam form	314	91.5	29	8.5
Exam form last dates	307	89.5	36	10.5
Exam fees	314	91.5	29	8.5
Late fee details	300	87.5	43	12.5
Examination results	291	84.8	52	15.2

\*Change is not allowed to PG students, the frequencies are for UG students only.

When the respondents are asked whether there is post-entry information support available at the study center on various issues related to admission and examination the above table shows that, the respondents have very good knowledge about many of them except two aspects of post-entry information. The first one is about the validity of registration and the second one is the procedure for re-registration after the expiry of the maximum duration of first registration. More than 37 percent are not aware of the period of validity of their registration. Where as more than 58 percent are not aware of

procedure for re-registration after the expiry of the maximum duration prescribed to complete the programme. It means there is a strong need to provide information and educate the students about validity period of registration and the procedure for re-registration. Next, the channel for information to students is explained.

### Channel of Information to Students

Table 4.6. Channel of Information to Students

Information channel	Frequency	Percent
Study centre	218	63.6
University Head Office	71	20.7
Fellow students	48	14.0
Newspaper	3	0.9
None/No channel	3	0.9
Total	343	100

An attempt is made to find out what is the main channel for flow of information to the students. The study found that the study centers are providing and acting as main channel for flow of information to students followed by the university Head Office and fellow students. Other responses are negligible.

Table 4.7. Gender and Channel for Information

Channel of Information	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
University Head Office	42 (59.2) 19.7	29 (40.8) 22.3	71 (100.0) 20.7
Study centre	143 (65.6) 67.1	75 (34.4) 57.7	218 (100.0) 63.6
Fellow students	23 (47.9) 10.8	25 (52.1) 19.2	48 (100.0) 14.0
Newspaper	2 (66.7) 0.9	1 (33.3) 0.8	3 (100.0) 0.9
None/No channel	3 (100.0) 1.4	-	3 (100.0) 0.9
Total	213(62.1) 100.0	130 (37.9) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

The above table reveals the channel of information among male and female students. The study center is the major channel of information for both male and female

students with 67 percent and 57 percent respectively. The university Head Office and fellow students are the next major channels of information to students. It is interesting to note that female students depend more on fellow students for information than male. Though the university provides information through newspapers with its press releases and advertisements the students who depend on newspaper are very less. Overall both the gender put together, more than 63 percent consider study center as the major channel and source of information. It means the university has to send the latest and all information to the study centers for dissemination.

Table 4.8. Programmes of Study and Channel of Information

Channel of Information	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
University Head Office	17 (23.9) 20.5	18 (25.4) 32.1	14 (19.7) 18.2	13 (18.3) 14.3	9 (12.7) 25.0	71 (100.0) 20.7
Study Centre	58 (26.6) 69.9	30 (13.8) 53.6	43 (19.7) 55.8	65 (29.8) 71.4	22 (10.1) 61.1	218(100.0) 63.6
Fellow students	6 (12.5) 7.2	8 (16.7) 14.3	17 (35.4) 22.1	12 (25.0) 13.2	5 (10.4) 13.9	48 (100.0) 14.0
Newspaper	-	-	3 (100.0) 3.9	-	-	3 (100.0) 0.9
None/No channel	2 (66.7) 2.4	-	-	1 (33.3) 1.1	-	3 (100.0) 0.9
Total	83 (24.2) 100.0	56 (16.3) 100.0	77 (22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36 (10.5) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

When the channel of information is cross tabulated with the students who are pursuing different programs of study it is noticed that again it is the study center, which is the major channel of information for majority of the students. The other channels of information are university Head Office and fellow students. It means like the gender ones, the respondents of different programs also consider study center as the main channel for information.

In spite of efforts to provide all possible information to students through study center, still students face some problems in getting information. Hence, an attempt is made below to find out what type of problems they face in getting information.

### Problems in getting Information

Table 4.9. Problems in getting Information

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No problem	143	41.7
Latest information is not provided/available	<b>75</b>	21.9
They direct us to contact head office	<b>58</b>	16.9
Indifferent attitude of staff	<b>49</b>	14.3
Whenever I went staff are not available	<b>18</b>	5.2
Total	343	100

More than 40 percent felt that they did not have any problem in getting information. However, 21.9 percent felt that latest information is not provided, 16.9 percent expressed that the study center directs them to contact headquarters whenever they seek information from the study centre and 14.3 percent opined that the staff are indifferent to them and they do not bother to give information when contacted. It means though study centre is the main channel of information, around 60 percent have faced some problem or the other in getting information at the study centre. It is further interesting to know that though study center is the major channel of information for respondents, the same study center is also directing around 17 percent respondents to contact Headquarters for information. It means the latest information some times is not available with the staff at the study center.

In the following tables an attempt is made to know how male and female, students of different programmes and students residing at different places (rural and urban) are facing problem in getting information.

Table 4.10. Gender and Problems in getting Information

Problems in getting Information	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Latest information is not provided/available	50 (66.7) 23.5	25 (33.3) 19.2	75 (100.0) 21.9
They direct us to contact head office	29 (50.0) 13.6	29 (50.0) 22.3	58 (100.0) 16.9
Whenever I went staff are not available	8 (44.4) 3.8	10 (55.6) 7.7	18 (100.0) 5.2
Indifferent attitude of staff	34 (69.4) 16.0	15 (30.6) 11.5	49 (100.0) 14.3
No problem	92 (64.3) 43.2	51 (35.7) 39.2	143 (100.0) 41.7
Total	213(62.1) 100.0	130 (37.9) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

When a gender specific analysis is made in the above table with respect to the problem in getting information, it is observed that more number of male students felt that latest information is not provided to them. More number women feel that they are directed to contact Head Office. More female respondents faced the absence of staff during their visit to the study centre than male and more male respondents noticed the indifferent attitude of study centre staff than female. It means gender also played an important role in getting information. Then the same point is examined with data from students of different programmes of study.

Table 4.11. Programme of Study and Problems in getting Information

Problems in getting information	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Latest information is not provided/available	19(25.3) 22.9	10 (13.3) 17.9	8 (10.7) 10.4	30 (40.0) 33.0	8 (10.7) 22.2	75(100.0) 21.9
They direct us to contact head office	9 (15.5) 10.8	11 (19.0) 19.6	19 (32.8) 24.7	11 (19.0) 12.1	8 (13.8) 22.2	58(100.0) 16.9
Whenever I went staff are not available	5 (27.8) 6.0	2 (11.1) 3.6	7 (38.9) 9.1	2 (11.1) 2.2	2 (11.1) 5.6	18 (100.0) 5.2
Indifferent attitude of staff	9 (18.4) 10.8	7 (14.3) 12.5	11 (22.4) 14.3	15 (30.6) 16.5	7 (14.3) 19.4	49(100.0) 14.3
No problem	41 (28.7) 49.4	26 (18.2) 46.4	32 (22.4) 41.6	33 (23.1) 36.3	11 (7.7) 30.6	143(100.0) 41.7
Total	83 (24.2) 100.0	56 (16.3) 100.0	77 (22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36 (10.5) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

Again an attempt is made to find out the problems faced by different students studying different programs in getting information. When the program-wise students and the problems they have faced is analyzed around 50 percent of B.A. students and 46 percent of B.Com students are not facing any problems. B.Sc. students 25 percent, B.Com. students 19 percent and M.A. students 22 percent are directed to contact Head Office for information. M.B.A. (33 percent) and M.A. (22 percent) felt that latest information is not provided when compared to the undergraduate students of B.Sc (10 percent) and B.Com (18 percent). Out of the undergraduate programme students around one-fourth of the B. Sc respondents felt that they were directed to contact Head Office. Around 20 percent of M.A. respondents felt that the staff at the study centre are indifferent but among the B.A. students it was 10 percent only. It means the students in different programs have different experiences in getting information. Next, an attempt is made to find out the difference between rural and urban respondents in getting information.

Table 4.12. Place of Stay and Problems in getting Information

Problems in getting Information	Place of Stay		Total
	Rural (Village)	Urban (Town/City)	
Latest information is not provided/available	22 (29.3) 19.3	53 (70.7) 23.1	75 (100.0) 21.9
They direct us to contact head office	18 (31.0) 15.8	40 (69.0) 17.5	58 (100.0) 16.9
Whenever I went staff are not available	8 (44.4) 7.0	10 (55.6) 4.4	18 (100.0) 5.2
Indifferent attitude of staff	20 (40.8) 17.5	29 (59.2) 12.7	49 (100.0) 14.3
No problem	46 (32.2) 40.4	97 (67.8) 42.4	143 (100.0) 41.7
Total	114 (33.2) 100.0	229 (66.8) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

When an attempt is made to find out the impact of place of stay, i.e. rural and urban in getting information, the following findings are noticed. Of the rural respondents, 40 percent have no problem, 19 percent are not getting latest information and 15 percent are directed to contact head office. However around 25 percent faced the problem of

indifferent attitude and non-availability of staff when they went for information to the study center. Out of the urban students around 42 percent have no problem in getting information, 23 percent are not getting latest information and 17 percent are directed to contact head office. The problems of indifferent attitude and non-availability of staff at the study center are faced by 17 percent and 7 percent respectively by students. It is noticed that indifferent attitude and non-availability staff is experienced more by rural respondents than the urban ones. The reasons for rural respondents facing the problem of more indifferent attitude by the study centre staff could be that the rural respondents may be less demanding and submissive in nature giving scope and opportunity for the staff to be indifferent. They may be less articulate and not clear about the type of information they want. The transport facilities are better in urban areas than in rural places. The respondents from rural places have to travel long distances to reach study centres. Around seven percent of the rural respondents and four percent of the urban respondents felt that the staff were not available when they went to the study centre. If working hours of the study centres were intimated to the respondents well in advance this type of problems can be avoided. At the end of the section the level of satisfaction for information support is elicited.

### **Level of Satisfaction - Information Support**

Table 4.13. Level of Satisfaction - Information Support Services

<b>Level of Satisfaction</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Thoroughly dissatisfied	<b>19</b>	5.5
Not satisfied	<b>66</b>	19.2
Satisfied	91	26.5
Partly satisfied	<b>84</b>	24.4
Fully satisfied	<b>83</b>	24.2
Total	343	100

The respondents are asked to express their views on information support service and rate the services on a five-point scale. The responses given by them are interesting. In providing information support to the students, covering both pre-entry and post-entry information support, the majority of the respondents (around 75 percent) are either satisfied, partly satisfied or fully satisfied. However, one-fourth of the respondents are

either not satisfied or thoroughly dissatisfied. It means the university and the study centers have succeeded in providing information to the students. After analyzing the level of satisfaction with simple frequencies on a five-point scale it is thought of analysing level of satisfaction in relation with gender, social status and programs of study in the following tables.

Table 4.14. Gender and Level of Satisfaction on Information Support Services

Level of Satisfaction	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	13 (68.4) 6.1	6 (31.6) 4.6	19 (100.0) 5.5
Not satisfied	45 (68.2) 21.1	21 (31.8) 16.2	66 (100.0) 19.2
Satisfied	61 (67.0) 28.6	30 (33.0) 23.1	91 (100.0) 26.5
Partly satisfied	43 (51.2) 20.2	41 (48.8) 31.5	84 (100.0) 24.5
Fully satisfied	51 (61.4) 23.9	32 (38.6) 24.6	83 (100.0) 24.2
Total	213(62.1) 100.0	130(37.9) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

In the above table an attempt is made to study the gender and level of satisfaction about information support. Majority of the male and female respondents have positively reacted to information support. Out of the male respondents, 23.9 percent, 28.6 percent and 20.2 percent are fully satisfied, satisfied and partly satisfied respectively. All the three put together, more than three-fourth are positively satisfied. Among thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied male are 27 percent when compared to 20 percent females respondents. Among the satisfied male (28.6 percent) are more in number than the females (23 percent). There is a wide gap among the male and female who are falling under partly satisfied. More number of females (31.5 percent) are partly satisfied than male (20 percent). However, fully satisfied are more or less the same in both the gender. In conclusion it can be said that both male and female have positively reacted and are satisfied about information support. In the next table an attempt is made to see the level

of satisfaction in terms of social category to understand which social category is more satisfied than the others.

Table 4.15. Social Status and Level of Satisfaction -Information Support Services

Level of Satisfaction	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	3(15.8) 7.0	1 (5.3) 5.9	6 (31.6) 4.8	9 (47.4) 5.8	-	19 (100.0) 5.5
Not satisfied	8 (12.1) 18.6	2 (3.0) 11.8	24 (36.4) 19.2	30 (45.5) 19.5	2 (3.0) 50.0	66 (100.0) 19.2
Satisfied	9 ( 9.9) 20.9	6 (6.6) 35.3	29 (31.9) 23.2	46 (50.5) 29.9	1 (1.0) 25.0	91 (100.0) 26.5
Partly satisfied	5 ( 6.0) 11.6	2 (2.4) 11.8	39 (46.4) 31.2	37 (44.0) 24.0	1 (1.2) 25.0	84 (100.0) 24.5
Fully satisfied	18(21.7) 41.9	6 (7.2) 35.3	27 (32.5) 21.6	32 (38.6) 20.8	-	83 (100.0) 24.2
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17(5.0) 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154 (44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table reveals that in all the social categories majority are either satisfied, partly satisfied and fully satisfied with regard to information support provided to them. The number of students who are thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied is though lowest in all individual social categories, when the two categories are clubbed it is 25.6 percent in SCs, 25.3 percent in OCs, 24 percent in BCs and 17.7 percent in STs. It means that the students who are thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied cannot be ignored because their percentage is ranging from 17 percent to 25 percent in different social categories. It is also interesting to note that there is a clear polarization of castes into two social groups - SC and ST as one group and BC and OC as another group. It is observed that among the fully satisfied SC and ST are more than the BC and OC. The gap between SC/ST and BC/OC among the fully satisfied is very much glaring and noticeable. Among the partly satisfied, BC/OC are more when compared to the SC/ST and the gap between the two groups is very high. Among the fully satisfied, SC/ST are more than the BC/OC; where as in partly satisfied, BC/OC are more than SC/ST. The assertiveness and expectations of the caste groups must be the reasons for

variations in the level of satisfaction. It means the caste is also contributing for the level of satisfaction and polarizing them in two groups. In the next table an attempt is made to analyze the level of satisfaction of information support in terms of program of study to find out which program students are more satisfied than the others.

Table 4.16. Programmes of Study and Level of Satisfaction on Information Support Services

Level of Satisfaction	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	6 (31.6) 7.2	2 (10.5) 3.6	3 (15.8) 3.9	5 (26.3) 5.5	3 (15.8) 8.3	19 (100.0) 5.5
Not satisfied	15 (22.7) 18.1	13(19.7) 23.2	20 (30.3) 26.0	12 (18.2) 13.2	6(9.1) 16.7	66 (100.0) 19.2
Satisfied	14 (15.4) 16.9	12 (13.2) 21.4	14 (15.4) 18.2	41 (45.1) 45.1	10 (11.0) 27.8	91 (100.0) 26.5
Partly satisfied	19 (22.6) 22.9	11 (13.1) 19.6	19 (22.6) 24.7	26 (31.0) 28.6	9 (10.7) 25.0	84 (100.0) 24.5
Fully satisfied	29 (34.9) 34.9	18 (21.7) 32.1	21 (25.3) 27.3	7 (8.4) 7.7	8 (9.6) 22.2	83 (100.0) 24.2
Total	83 (24.2) 100.0	56 (16.3) 100.0	77 (22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36 (10.5) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

When program specific analysis is made and the students who are falling under thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied are put together the following percentages are noticed 29.3 in B. Sc, 26.8 in B. Com, 25.3 in B.A., 25 in M.A. and 18.7 in M.B.A. programmes. It is interesting to notice that thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied are more in under graduation programmes (e.g. B.Sc 29.3 percent) than the post graduation programmes (e.g. M.B.A. 18.7 percent) It means B.Sc students are more dissatisfied than the M.B.A. students. Among the satisfied, M.B.A. respondents are highest (45 percent). Among the fully satisfied students B.A. students are highest (34.9 percent) and M.B.A. students are lowest (7.7 percent). There is a clear difference among the fully satisfied. More undergraduates are fully satisfied than the postgraduates respondents. It means there are differences within the level of satisfaction for a given parameter among different programmes of study. The possible reasons could be the postgraduate respondents are more demanding than the undergraduate respondents. Then the

respondents are asked to give suggestions for providing better information support services to them.

### **Suggestions for better Information Support Services**

Table 4.17. Respondents Suggestions for better Information Support Services

<b>Suggestions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Provide information about latest rules and regulations	151	44.0
Provide full time staff at the study centre	<b>78</b>	22.7
Positive attitude of the staff	<b>65</b>	19.0
Study centre staff needs training	<b>42</b>	12.2
Other suggestions	<b>7</b>	2.0
Total	343	100

When the respondents were asked to give suggestions for the improvement of information support services, 44 percent suggested that information should be provided about latest rules and regulations, followed by, suggestions for appointment of full time staff at study centre (22.7 percent), need for positive attitude of staff (19 percent) and the need for training of staff (12.2 percent). In spite of the fact that the three study centers from where the sample respondents are drawn have full time support staff, more than 22 percent students are unaware of that. The reasons could be the part time nature of students, some of them are working and seldom visit the study centre. Other suggestions given by the respondents include, ensuring the staff attendance at the study centre, providing information on phone, web pages and self answering machines and extended evening working hours for study centres.

In conclusion of the section on information support as per the data in the above tables, majority are aware that information support is available at the study centre, details of pre and post entry information is provided, study centre is the main channel of information for both male and female respondents of different programmes of study. Though 40 percent are not facing any problem in getting information, latest information some times is not available for both the genders, different programmes of students at different places of stay. Non availability of and indifferent attitude of the staff at the study centre are felt by the rural respondents than the urban respondents. Though 75

percent of the different respondents are satisfied with the information support categories (of gender, social status and programmes of study), some times the respondents are facing problem in getting correct and latest information. When satisfied, partly satisfied and fully satisfied are put together for information support, irrespective of gender, social status and programmes of study around 75 percent are satisfied. However, not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied are less when compared to the satisfied but they cannot be ignored and efforts should be made to provide satisfactory information support services to all. The major suggestion given by the respondents is for providing latest information about rules and regulations.

## **Part - II**

### **Guidance Support to Students**

After providing pre-entry and post-entry information to the students, guiding the students in the right direction is very essential in the open distance learning system. The students here are isolated, adults, some are working, but all are part-time students and very eager to improve their educational qualifications. To realize this goal the students need to be properly guided. Extending guidance, support to the students assumes very much significance in open distance learning system.

Guidance in open and distance education context has been defined as "a process which both encourages and assists adults to engage in learning and helps the providers to develop appropriate learning opportunities based on the real needs and wishes of potential students".<sup>4</sup> In this context an attempt is made here to find out types of guidance, need for guidance, kind of guidance provided at present and the respondents' suggestions for providing better guidance support service to the students.

### Awareness and Need for Guidance Support

Table 4.18. Awareness of Guidance Support Services

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Aware	208	60.6
Not Aware	135	39.4
Total	343	100

When the respondents were asked whether they were aware about the availability of guidance support to them around 60 percent said they were aware and the rest said that they were not aware. Though the majority are aware of such type of support, however considerable percentage (around 40 percent) are still not aware of guidance support. It was further probed to find out from the respondents who were aware of guidance support by asking them what do they mean by guidance support.

Table 4.19. Perceptions on Guidance Support Services.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Guidance on course selection	<b>95</b>	45.7
Guidance on career/job chances	<b>55</b>	26.4
Guidance about difficulty level of a course	<b>32</b>	15.4
Guidance on selecting course combination	<b>26</b>	12.5
Total	208	100

When it is further probed by asking the students who are aware about guidance support, around 45 percent stated that it is about course selection, and 26 percent stated as guidance on career and job opportunities. Others felt that the guidance is about the difficulty level of a course in terms of content, subject matter and language of the course (15 percent) and guidance in selection of course combination (12 percent) for study. It means guidance support is perceived differently by individual respondents according to their needs and requirements but majority perceive it as guidance in course selection. Then the respondents were asked about the need for guidance support.

Table 4.20. Need for Guidance Support Services.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	325	<b>94.8</b>
No	<b>18</b>	<b>5.2</b>
Total	343	100

**When they** were asked about the need for guidance, an overwhelming majority (more than 90 percent) felt that they needed guidance. Where as a negligible percent felt that they don't need any guidance. Then the respondents who positively reacted are asked about the type of guidance support they need. The responses are explained in the next table.

### **Type of Guidance**

Table 4.21. Type of Guidance Support Services

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Guidance about relevance of courses for career and job	<b>83</b>	25.5
Guidance for selection of courses	<b>68</b>	20.9
Guidance for time and hard work for completion of course	<b>61</b>	18.8
Further opportunities available after completion of course	51	15.7
Guidance in selection in combination of courses	<b>33</b>	10.2
Guidance about difficulty level of a course	<b>29</b>	8.9
Total	325	100

The respondents who felt the overwhelming need for guidance support were further asked what type of guidance support they would like to have through study center. Around 25 percent respondents felt that the guidance support means explaining the relevance of courses for career and job. Around 20 percent want guidance in selection of courses, guidance about the time and hard work required in terms of number of hours to put in for study for completion of courses (18 percent). Other respondents want guidance about availability of further educational opportunities and guidance on combination of courses. Then it was felt to find out the gender differences if any, in relation to the guidance requirement.

Table 4.22. Type of Guidance Required and Gender of Respondents

Response	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Guidance for selection of courses	47 (69.1) 23.5	21 (30.9) <b>16.8</b>	68 (100.0) 20.9
Guidance for selection of combination of courses	20 (60.6) 10.0	13 (39.4) 10.4	33 (100.0) 10.2
Guidance for time and hard work for completion of course	33 (54.1) 16.5	28 (45.9) 22.4	61 (100.0) 18.8
Guidance about difficulty level of a course	16 (55.2) 8.0	13 (44.8) 10.4	29 (100.0) 8.9
Further opportunities available after completion of course	33 (64.7) 16.5	18 (35.3) 14.4	51 (100.0) 15.7
Guidance about relevance of courses for career and job	51 (61.4) 25.5	32 (38.6) 25.6	83 (100.0) 25.5
Total	200 (61.5) 100.0	125 (38.5) 100.0	325 (100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table analyzed the need for guidance in relation to their gender. Highest among the male want guidance for relevance of courses for career and job (25.5 percent), followed by guidance for course selection (23.5 percent), guidance required for time and hard work (16.5 percent) and guidance about availability of further educational opportunities. Among the female respondents, highest number want guidance about relevance of courses for career and job (25.6 percent), followed by hard work required for completion of a course (22.4 percent) and guidance in selection of courses (16.8 percent). The gender variation in guidance requirement show that more men (23.5 percent) want guidance in selection of courses than female (17 percent), where as more females (22.4 percent) want guidance in time and hard work required to be put in for completion of a course. The reasons for variations between female and male could be because of the additional responsibilities the women carry at home may be forcing them to seek guidance in proper management of time for studies and other responsibilities. The differences between gender variations are very high and noticeable. Next the type of guidance required is analyzed with the programmes of study.

Table 4.23. Type of Guidance Required and Programmes of Study

Response	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Guidance for selection of courses	25 (36.8) 32.5	14 (20.6) 25.5	13 (19.1) 17.8	10 (14.7) 11.6	6 (8.8) 17.6	68 (100.0) 20.9
Guidance in selection of combination of courses	10 (30.3) 13.0	5 (15.2) 9.1	7 (21.2) 9.6	10 (30.3) 11.6	1 (3.0) 2.9	33 (100.0) 10.2
Guidance for time and hard work for completion of course	10 (16.4) 13.0	10 (16.4) 18.2	10 (16.4) 13.7	21 (34.4) 24.4	10 (16.4) 29.4	61 (100.0) 18.8
Guidance about difficulty level of a course	8 (27.6) 10.4	3 (10.3) 5.5	6 (20.7) 8.2	6 (20.7) 7.0	6 (20.7) 17.6	29 (100.0) 8.9
Further opportunities available after completion of course	12 (23.5) 15.6	7 (13.7) 12.7	10 (19.6) 13.7	15 (29.4) 17.4	7 (13.7) 20.6	51 (100.0) 15.7
Guidance about relevance of courses for career and job	12 (14.5) 15.6	16 (19.3) 29.1	27 (32.5) 37.0	24 (28.9) 27.9	4 (4.8) 11.8	83 (100.0) 25.5
Total	77 (23.7) 100.0	55 (16.9) 100.0	73 (22.5) 100.0	86 (26.5) 100.0	34 (10.5) 100.0	325 (100.0) 100.0

When the type of guidance required is analyzed in comparison with the programs of study, majority of B.Sc, B.Com, and M.B.A. students felt the need for guidance about relevance of courses to careers and jobs than M.A. and B.A. respondents. The respondents from liberal educational programmes like M.A. majority want guidance about the time required for completion of a course, where as majority of B.A. respondents want guidance in selection of courses. It means many M.A. and B.A. respondents are more worried about the time and hard work required for completion of a course and selection of a courses. Where as B.Com , B. Sc and M.B.A. respondents want guidance in career and job opportunities. It means there is a difference in perception between B.A./M.A. respondents and B.Com/M.B.A. respondents about the type of guidance required for them.

#### Type of Guidance given at present

The respondents were asked about the type of guidance provided presently to them. The responses are given in the next table.

Table 4.24. Type of Guidance Support given at present.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Selection of courses	64	18.7
Availability of further educational opportunities	45	13.1
Career/Job opportunities	44	12.8
Efforts required for completion of courses	39	11.4
Combination of courses	24	7.0
No guidance is provided presently	127	37.0
Total	343	100

An attempt is made to find out the type of guidance given at present at the study center. It is surprising to know that 37 percent felt that no guidance is provided at present at the study center. However, 18 percent felt that guidance is provided on selection of courses, 13 percent felt that guidance is provided on availability of further educational opportunity followed by career and job opportunities, efforts required for completion of course and guidance on combination of courses.

As majority felt that no guidance is provided at present at the study centre, it is further analysed in relation with the gender, social status and the programmes of the study in the next three tables for better understanding.

Table 4.25. Type of Guidance Support given at present and Gender

Response	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Selection of courses	48 (75.0) 22.5	16 (25.0) 12.3	64 (100.0) 18.7
Combination of courses	16 (66.7) 7.5	8 (33.3) 6.2	24 (100.0) 7.0
Efforts required for completion of courses	24 (61.5) 11.3	15 (38.5) 11.5	39 (100.0) 11.4
Availability of further educational opportunities	30 (66.7) 14.1	15 (33.3) 11.5	45 (100.0) 13.1
Career and job opportunities	22 (50.0) 10.3	22 (50.0) 16.9	44 (100.0) 12.8
No guidance is provided presently	73 (57.5) 34.3	54 (42.5) 41.5	127 (100.0) 37.0
Total	213 (62.1) 100.0	130 (37.9) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

The above table revealed that highest number of both male and female respondents felt that no guidance is provided at the moment at the study center. The second group of highest number of males felt that guidance is given in selection of courses followed by guidance about further educational opportunities. Among the female respondents most of them felt that guidance provided for career opportunities is better followed by selection of courses. Though guidance support is not acknowledged by majority of respondents, but guidance in selection of courses, career opportunities and further educational opportunities are provided at present at the study center. When a specific comparison is made between the gender, more number of male (22.5 percent) feel that they are getting guidance for selection of courses than female (12 percent). The gap between male and female is very high. When it comes to career and job guidance more female respondents are getting guidance than males. When the responses to 'no guidance is provided at present' are compared between genders the difference between male (34 percent) and female (41.5 percent) is very high. It means more female respondents feel that no guidance is provided at present than the male.

Table 4.26. Type of Guidance Support given at present and Social Status

Response	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Selection of courses	11 (17.2) 25.6	2 (3.1) 11.8	22 (34.4) 17.6	29 (45.3) 18.8	-	64 (100.0) 18.7
Combination of courses	2 (8.3) 4.7	3 (12.5) 17.6	12 (50.0) 9.6	7 (29.2) 4.5	-	24 (100.0) 7.0
Efforts required for completion of courses	8 (20.5) 18.6	1 (2.6) 5.9	12 (30.8) 9.6	18(46.2) 11.7	-	39 (100.0) 11.4
Availability of further educational opportunities	8 (17.8) 18.6	3 (6.7) 17.6	17 (37.8) 13.6	16 (35.6) 10.4	1 (2.2) 25.0	45 (100.0) 13.1
Career and Job opportunities	3 (6.8) 7.0	2 (4.5) 11.8	19 (43.2) 15.2	20 (45.5) 13.0	-	44 (100.0) 12.8
No guidance is provided presently	11 (8.7) 25.6	6 (4.7) 35.3	43 (33.9) 34.4	64 (50.4) 41.6	3 (2.4) 75.0	127 (100.0) 37.0
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17 (5.0) 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154(44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

When the same data is analyzed in relation to the social status of the respondents, irrespective of the social category, majority of them felt that no guidance is provided at

present at the study center. The reasons for the negative feeling could be part-time nature of the staff and institution which may not be open regularly for providing guidance as and when the respondents visit the study centre. When a specific comparison is made between the social groups for the type of guidance they are getting, the following interesting trends are noticed. More S.Cs. (25.6 percent) are getting guidance in selection of courses than S.T.(12 percent). The variation between the two is more than double. An overwhelming majority of S.T. are getting guidance about combination of courses than all other S.C, O.C. and B.C. More S.Cs. (18.6 percent) are getting guidance in efforts required for course completion than S.T. (6 percent). Again the variation is more than double. Majority of B.Cs. (15 percent) are getting guidance in career and job opportunities than S.C. (7 percent). The difference is more than double. When it comes to no guidance is provided at present, it is the highest (41.6 percent) in O.C. category when compared to the lowest from S.C. (25.6 percent) category. Here as well the variation is very high. It means there are considerable variations in differences of opinion for the type of guidance given at present from the different sections of social groups. The reasons for variations could be the higher level of assertiveness of some social groups when compared to the others. It can be stated that O.Cs are more assertive than others. In the next table the same data is analyzed in terms of programs of study.

Table 4.27. Type of Guidance Support and Programmes of Study

Response	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Selection of courses	24 (37.5) 28.9	9 (14.1) 16.1	13 (20.3) 16.9	11 (17.2) 12.1	7 (10.9) 19.4	64 (100.0) 18.7
Combination of courses	7 (29.2) 8.4	6 (25.0) 10.7	9 (37.5) 11.7	1 (4.2) 1.1	1 (4.2) 2.8	24 (100.0) 7.0
Efforts required for completion of courses	9(23.1) 10.8	3 (7.7) 5.4	4 (10.3) 5.2	14 (35.9) 15.4	9 (23.1) 25.0	39(100.0) 11.4
Availability of further educational opportunities	11(24.4) 13.3	9 (20.0) 16.1	12(26.7) 15.6	6(13.3) 6.6	7 (15.6) 19.4	45(100.0) 13.1
Career/Job opportunities	9 (20.5) 10.8	6 (13.6) 10.7	11 (25.0) 14.3	16(36.4) 17.6	2 (4.5) 5.6	44 (100.0) 12.8
No guidance is provided presently	23(18.1) 27.7	23(18.1) 41.1	28 (22.0) 36.4	43 (33.9) 47.3	10 (7.9) 27.8	127(100.0) 37.0
Total	83 (24.2) 100.0	56(16.3) 100.0	77 (22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36(10.5) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table revealed that majority of respondents irrespective of the programme of study stated that no guidance is provided at present. However, when it is specifically observed, this feeling was felt more by the respondents of M.B.A. (47 percent), B.Com (41 percent) and B.Sc (36 percent) than the B.A. and M.A. respondents. It suggests that professional courses like management, commerce and science respondents need more guidance than the respondents pursuing arts courses. The next highest type of guidance given at present for each of the respondents of study is selection of courses for B.A. respondents (29 percent), guidance for efforts required for completion of courses for M.A. respondents (25 percent), guidance for career and job opportunities for M.B.A. respondents (17.6 percent) and guidance about availability of educational opportunities for B.Com (16 percent) and B.A. respondents (15.6 percent). It means respondents of different programmes view the type of guidance differently. Then the respondents were asked to give their views on guidance support services and rate the service on a five point scale.

#### Level of Satisfaction - Guidance Support Services

Table 4.28. Level of Satisfaction about Guidance Support Services

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Percent
Thoroughly dissatisfied	13	3.8
Not satisfied	116	33.8
Satisfied	101	29.4
Partly satisfied	73	21.3
Fully satisfied	40	11.7
Total	343	100

Guidance support covers important components like guidance in selecting courses, guidance in selection of combination of courses and guidance in clarifying difficult aspects of courses. The analysis of the data in the above table reveals that more than 1/3 (37.6 percent) are not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied. Around 11 percent are fully satisfied where as 29 percent are satisfied with the partly satisfied at 21 percent. It can be inferred from the above table that the students strongly need guidance support and it needs to be provided effectively to the satisfaction of students.

For better understanding of the level of satisfaction for guidance support, the same data is analysed in relation to their gender, social status and programmes of study in the following tables.

Table 4.29. Gender and Level of Satisfaction on Guidance Support Services

Level of Satisfaction	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Thoroughly Dissatisfied	10 (76.9) 4.7	3 (23.1) 2.3	13 (100.0) 3.8
Not satisfied	65 (56.0) 30.5	51 (44.0) 39.2	116 (100.0) 33.8
Satisfied	66 (65.3) 31.0	35 (34.7) 26.9	101 (100.0) 29.4
Partly satisfied	49 (67.1) 23.0	24 (32.9) 18.5	73 (100.0) 21.3
Fully satisfied	23 (57.5) 10.8	17 (42.5) 13.1	40 (100.0) 11.7
Total	213 (62.1) 100.0	130 (37.9) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

When the data is analyzed with gender the following findings are noticed. Among the male 31 percent are satisfied, 30.5 percent are not satisfied, 23 percent are partly satisfied, 10.8 percent are fully satisfied and 4.7 percent are thoroughly dissatisfied. Among the female population 39.2 percent are not satisfied, 26.9 percent are satisfied, 18.5 percent partly satisfied, 13.1 percent are fully satisfied and 2.3 percent are thoroughly dissatisfied. It can be inferred that highest number of female respondents are not satisfied where as highest number of males are satisfied. It is noticed that the difference between the female respondents with highest not satisfied and the satisfied is wide.

Table 4.30. Social Status and Level of Satisfaction on Guidance Support Services

Level of Satisfaction	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	3 (23.1) 7.0	2 (15.4) 11.8	5 (38.5) 4.0	3 (23.1) 1.9	-	13 (100.0) 3.8
Not satisfied	15 (12.9) 34.9	2 (1.7) 11.8	48 (41.4) 38.4	48 (41.4) 31.2	3 (2.6) 75.0	116 (100.0) 33.8
Satisfied	12 (11.9) 27.9	9 (8.9) 52.9	36 (35.6) 28.8	44 (43.6) 28.6	-	101 (100.0) 29.4
Partly satisfied	5 (6.8) 11.6	1 (1.4) 5.9	23(31.5) 18.4	43 (58.9) 27.9	1 (1.4) 25.0	73 (100.0) 21.3
Fully satisfied	8 (20.0) 18.6	3 (7.5) 17.6	13 (32.5) 10.4	16 (40.0) 10.4	-	40 (100.0) 11.7
Total	43 (12.5) 100.(.)	7 (5.0) 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154 (44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

In the above table an attempt is made to find out the level of satisfaction in relation to the social status of the respondents. It is interesting to observe from the above table that out of the satisfied for guidance support service highest are from the social group of ST (53 percent), where as all other are below 30 percent. Among the not satisfied level for guidance support service, highest are from the social groups of B.C. (38 percent), S.C. (35 percent) and O.C. (31 percent), where as it is lowest in S.T. (11.8 percent). It means among the not satisfied, B.C, S.C, and O.C. are predominant when compared to the S.Ts It is further observed that among the satisfied, STs are overwhelmingly high when compared to all others. It is also interesting to know that among thoroughly dissatisfied S.T. are highest with around 12 percent when compared to the lowest from O.C. with 2 percent. The difference between two is more than five times. The highest percentage of satisfied (53 percent) are from S.T. category than all others. Among the thoroughly dissatisfied category of level of satisfaction again S.T. (12 percent) are highest when compared to all others. In the next table level of satisfaction is analyzed in relation to the programs of study.

Table 4.31. Programmes of Study and Level of Satisfaction on Guidance Support Services

Level of Satisfaction	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Thoroughly Dissatisfied	4 (30.8) 4.8	3 (23.1) 5.4	4 (30.8) 5.2	2 (15.4) 2.2	-	13 (100.0) 3.8
Not satisfied	18 (15.5) 21.7	20 (17.2) 35.7	22 (19.0) 28.6	37 (31.9) 40.7	19(16.4) 52.8	116 (100.0) 33.8
Satisfied	34 (33.7) 41.0	14 (13.9) 25.0	22 (21.8) 28.6	24 (23.8) 26.4	7 (6.9) 19.4	101 (100.0) 29.4
Partly satisfied	18 (24.7) 21.7	9 (12.3) 16.1	18 (24.7) 23.4	23 (31.5) 25.3	5 (6.8) 13.9	73 (100.0) 21.3
Fully satisfied	9 (22.5) 10.8	10 (25.0) 17.9	11 (27.5) 14.3	5 (12.5) 5.5	5 (12.5) 13.9	40 (100.0) 11.7
Total	83 (24.2) 100.0	56 (16.3) 100.0	77 (22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36 (10.5) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

When the data in the above table is analyzed, among the B.A students 41 percent are satisfied, 21.7 percent are partly satisfied, followed by not satisfied (21.7 percent), fully satisfied (10.8 percent) and thoroughly dissatisfied (4.8 percent). Among the B.Com students 35.7 percent are not satisfied, 25 percent are satisfied, followed by fully satisfied (17.9 percent), partly satisfied (16.1 percent) and thoroughly dissatisfied (5.4 percent). Out of the B.Sc students, satisfied and not satisfied percentage is at 28 for both, followed by partly satisfied (23.4 percent) and fully satisfied (14.3 percent). However, 5.2 percent of the B.Sc respondents are thoroughly dissatisfied. Out of the M.B.A respondents 40.7 percent are not satisfied, 26.4 percent are satisfied, one-fourth are partly satisfied followed by fully satisfied (5.5 percent) and thoroughly dissatisfied (2.2 percent). Among the M.A respondents majority (52.8 percent) are not satisfied, 19.4 percent are satisfied followed by 13.9 percent each of partly satisfied and fully satisfied.

Over all out of the respondents of different programmes of study, highest number of B.A. respondents (41 percent) are satisfied and highest number of M.A. respondents (53 percent) are not satisfied. Like wise among partly satisfied, highest (25 percent) are from M.B.A. whereas in fully satisfied highest (18 percent) are from B.Com. Variations between undergraduate and postgraduate respondents are noticeable. The reasons for variations could be that the needs of the respondents are different. However, it is

interesting to note that there is no thoroughly dissatisfied respondent from M.A. programme and it is lowest among all other levels of satisfaction.

At the end the respondents are asked to give their suggestions for improving the guidance support to students. The responses are explained in the following table.

### **Suggestions for better Guidance Support**

Table 4.32. Suggestions for providing better Guidance Support Services

<b>Suggestions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Knowledge about academic matters to guide	141	41.1
Well trained staff to provide guidance	121	35.3
Guidance about other ODL institutions and programmes	<b>45</b>	13.1
Need for positive attitude of the staff to guide	<b>36</b>	10.5
Total	343	100

Many suggestions are given to improve guidance support to students at the study centre. The first major suggestion is the staff should have knowledge about academic matters to guide the students (41 percent). The second important suggestion given by the respondents is the need for well trained staff at the study centre to provide guidance to students (35 percent). It means the staff at the study centre should have knowledge in academic matters to guide students. They should be able to guide them in course selection, course combination, guide about educational opportunities available after completion of the present course and provide career guidance. For their effective and efficient functioning training plays very important role (of which the respondents have suggested). Knowledge about programmes offered by other open and distance education institutions and the positive attitude of the staff towards guiding students are some of the other suggestions to provide better guidance support to learners.

In conclusion, the data in the above tables revealed that majority are aware of availability of guidance support at the study centre, want guidance in course selection, career and job guidance and feel the need for guidance support. Irrespective of gender, social status and programmes of study majority feel that no guidance is provided to them at present. The respondents want guidance in academic matters and trained staff at the

study centre to guide them. Though the level of satisfaction is high among gender, social status and different programmes of study, more than 37 percent are either not satisfied and/or thoroughly dissatisfied. Among the gender more females are not satisfied than males. Out of the social groups S.Ts are more satisfied than B.C, S.C and O.C. Among the programmes of study highest percentage of M.A. and M.B.A. respondents are not satisfied where as highest percentage of B.A. respondents are satisfied. The high rate of dissatisfaction is basically corresponding with high rate (37 percent) of respondents who feel that no guidance is provided to them.

### **Part - III**

#### **Counselling Support to Students**

As the students in open distance learning system are isolated, whenever they face any psychological problem they need to be encouraged, motivated and counselled properly at the study center. Counselling support assumes a lot of importance in open distance learning system. Counselling has been defined as “a crucial form of helping, especially in widening access and enfranchising new groups of learners”<sup>5</sup>

Those who are in the open and distance education system feel that conceptually counselling is "aiding, advising and guiding. It is individual specific. It caters to the individual specific needs such as removal of psychological barrier of learners, their orientation towards distance education, overcoming their own status and ego problems in teaching-learning process as an adult learner.”<sup>6</sup>

Counselling constitutes the basic components such as (1) activation of learner motivation, (2) explaining the objectives of learning (3) presenting of material in a clear and systematic way (4) provide sufficient examples and counter examples (5) help the students to combine the concepts in proper order and (6) encourage the students to apply theory in practical context in order to understand better the concepts.<sup>7</sup>

The role of counselling is to help the people to help themselves to learn more effectively. "The counselling is a combination of informing, advising and guiding the learners at appropriate time in an appropriate manner both individually and collectively".<sup>8</sup> It aims to develop individual skills in the learner so that he can take appropriate decisions suitable for his academic improvement. The success of academic programmes of distance education are not solely dependent on good course material, audio and video programmes but also on good academic counsellors who act as a friend, philosopher and guide to the learners. Distance education is learner-centered education and expects that the learners should take their responsibilities very seriously because the success depends upon the "self confidence, motivation, diligence, initiative, involvement to know and punctuality of the schedule"<sup>9</sup> by the learner.

Counselling can also be defined as "a warm relationship in which the counselor, without 'ifs' and 'buts' accepts the clients as a worthy person".<sup>10</sup> Counselling can take place at three levels, pre-course counselling, in-course counselling and post-course counselling. In all the stages and levels the basic role of the counselor is to make the client (student) find a solution to his problem by himself/herself. Counselling is very important component of student support system."

Counsellor in distance education system provides important support services to the students which include counselling, tutoring and evaluating the assignments. They need to be trained in the functional aspects of distance education, counselling, tutoring and writing of tutor comments after evaluating assignments.<sup>12</sup> Counselling can also be provided through timely replies to students' correspondence and letters. As the distance learner lives in isolation they contact the tutor through letters and the replies they receive from the tutors / counsellors assume greater importance to the distance learners.<sup>13</sup> Counselling support is of two forms, one is based on psychological matters and the other is based on academic matters.<sup>14</sup> Counselling support also facilitates the learners to take appropriate decisions at the time of pre and post entry stages of their studies.<sup>15</sup>

In this section an attempt is made to find out the awareness, nature, need and type of counselling support provided to the students at the study centre in the face-to-face setting. It also aims to find out suggestions for improvement and level of satisfaction for counselling support.

### Awareness and Need for Counselling

To begin with, here an attempt is made to know whether the students were aware about the counselling support provided at the study center.

Table 4.32. Awareness of Counselling Support Services

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Aware	218	63.6
Not Aware	125	36.4
Total	343	100

The data in the above table shows that more than 63 percent are aware that counselling support is provided at the study centre. Where as 36 percent are not aware of such support to them. Those who were aware were further asked to give details of nature of counselling support. Then the respondents were asked to give the details of what they mean by the counselling support. The details are explained in the next table.

Table 4.33. If aware , give details about Counselling Support Services.

<b>Nature of Counselling</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Encouragement Counselling	123	56.4
Motivational Counselling	<b>64</b>	29.4
Psychological Counselling	31	14.2
Total	218	100

Out of the respondents who were aware of counselling support majority feel that it is related to encouragement of the isolated learner, 29 percent think motivational counselling is required to cope up with independent learning and 14 percent feel the need for psychological counselling to cope with the stress related problems. It means the

respondents have clear views on counselling support. The respondents are further probed about the need for counselling support services.

Table 4.34. Need for Counselling Support Services.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	322	93.9
No	21	6.1
Total	343	100

In response to the above question more than 93 percent felt that they need counselling support services at the study centre. Those who do not need counselling support are very few. Out of those who need counselling support services were further asked to clarify what type of counselling support services they need.

Table 4.35. The type of Counselling Support needed.

<b>Type of Counselling Support</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Motivational support to improve independent learning and study skills	106	32.9
Encouragement to overcome isolation and exam fear	83	25.8
To develop as an independent and autonomous learner	65	20.2
To enhance self confidence	40	12.4
Psychological support to overcome stress	28	8.7
Total	322	100

When more than 93 percent felt the need for counselling support, it is further probed to find out from them about the type of counselling support they need. Around 32 percent want motivational support to cope up with independent learning and improve study skills, one-fourth of them want encouragement to overcome isolation and examination fear and only 20 percent want counselling support to develop as an independent and autonomous learner. The other responses relate to counselling for self-enhancing confidence and psychological counselling to overcome stress. Then the respondents are asked whether they were getting any counselling support at present or not?

Table 4.36. Whether getting any Counselling Support presently.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	170	49.6
No	173	50.4
Total	343	100

The response is more or less evenly divided. However majority felt that no counseling support is provided at present.

### **Who is providing Counselling Support?**

Different types of functionaries and individuals are available to support students within the open and distance learning system and out side the system. The need to further probe and find out whether there is any functionary or individual who is providing counselling support to learners was felt. The responses are interesting to know and are given in the following table.

Table 4.37. Who is providing Counselling Support to you?

<b>Name</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Nobody	158	46.1
Coordinator / Staff	85	24.8
Academic counselors	65	19.0
Parents	20	5.8
Friends	7	2.0
Headquarter faculty	6	1.7
Spouse	2	0.6
Total	343	100

Around 46 percent felt that nobody is providing counselling support to them, which again substantiates the response given in the above table-36 where in 50.4 percent told that no counselling is provided at present. However, the coordinator of the study centre and his staff are providing counselling support to around 25 percent and academic counsellors are providing support to 19 percent of the students. Others who are providing counselling support to the students from outside the open and distance learning system are parents, friends and spouse in a limited way.

When it is noticed in the table-37 that more than 45 percent have felt that no body is providing any sort of counselling to the students, it was felt necessary to find out why the respondents are feeling like that. An attempt is made in the following tables to understand provision of counselling support to respondents in relation to the gender, social status and programs of study of respondents.

Table 4.38. Gender and Sources of Counselling Support Services

Source of Counselling Support	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Academic Counsellors	41 (63.1) 19.2	24 (36.9) 18.5	65 (100.0) 19.0
Coordinator / Staff	59 (69.4) 27.7	26 (30.6) 20.0	85 (100.0) 24.8
Head quarter faculty	2 (33.3) .9	4 (66.7) 3.1	6 (100.0) 1.7
Parents	11 (55.0) 5.2	9 (45.0) 6.9	20 (100.0) 5.8
Spouse	-	2 (100.0) 1.5	2 (100.0) .6
Friends	7 (100.0) 3.3	-	7 (100.0) 2.0
Nobody	93 (58.9) 43.7	65 (41.1) 50.0	158 (100.0) 46.1
Total	213 (62.1) 100.0	130 (37.9) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

In the above table an attempt is made to find out the relationship between the gender and the source of providing counseling support to students. It is noticed that among the male respondents, more than 43 percent felt that no body is providing any counselling support. However, 27.7 percent felt that coordinator and the staff at the study center are providing counselling support, 19 percent felt that academic counselors are providing counselling support to them. Out of the female respondents 50 percent felt that no body is providing counselling support, 20 percent felt that the coordinator and staff are providing counselling support followed by the academic counselors (18.5 percent). Others who are providing counseling support from out side the open and distance learning system are parents, friends and spouse to a lesser extent. It is very interesting to

note from **the** above table that male are not seeking any counselling support from their spouse or depending upon friends, where as female are seeking counselling support only from their husbands not from friends. Both the genders are sourcing counselling support from their respective parents whenever needed in a very limited way. Among males and females who feel that nobody provides any counselling support to them the variations between the gender are noticeable. More female respondents are feeling that nobody is providing counselling support than males. In the next table the data is analyzed in relation to the social status of respondents.

Table 4.39. Social Status and Source of Counselling Support Services

Sources of Counselling Support	Social Status					Caste not given	Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC			
Academic Counsellors	8 (12.3) 18.6	2 (3.1) 11.8	27 (41.5) 21.6	28 (43.1) 18.2	-	65 (100.0) 19.0	
Coordinator/ Staff	13(15.3) 30.2	4 (4.7) 23.5	25 (29.4) 20.0	40 (47.1) 26.0	3 (3.5) 75.0	85 (100.0) 24.8	
Head quarter faculty	1 (16.7) 2.3	1 (16.7) 5.9	3 (50.0) 2.4	1 (16.7) 0.6	-	6 (100.0) 1.7	
Parents	2 (10.0) 4.7	1 (5.0) 5.9	8 (40.0) 6.4	9 (45.0) 5.8	-	20 (100.0) 5.8	
Spouse	1 (50.0) 2.3	-	1 (50.0) 0.8	-	-	2 (100.0) 0.6	
Friends	-	1 (14.3) 5.9	1 (14.3) .8	5 (71.4) 3.2	-	7 (100.0) 2.0	
Nobody	18 (11.4) 41.9	8 (5.1) 47.1	60 (38.0) 48.0	71 (44.9) 46.1	1 (0.6) 25.0	158 (100.0) 46.1	
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17(5.0) 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154(44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0	

The data in the above table revealed that a majority of all the social categories felt that no body is providing any counseling to them. However, it is interesting to know that more number of OC and BCs feel that nobody provides them counselling support. The variations in opinions between SC/ST and OC/BC are very high. Over all one-fourth of them felt that the coordinator and the staff at the study center are providing counselling followed by the academic counsellors. Specially 30 percent from SC, 26 percent from OC, 23 percent from ST and 20 percent from BC feel that Coordinator and the staff at the

study centre are providing counselling support to them. The counselling support provided by people from outside the open and distance learning system like parents, friends and Spouse though negligible plays a vital role for the seeker of counselling system. In the next table the data is analyzed in relation to the respondents programs-wise.

Table 4.40. Programmes of Study and Providing Counselling Support Services

Sources of Counselling Support	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Academic counsellors	12 (18.5) 14.5	6 (9.2) 10.7	9 (13.8) 11.7	29 (44.6) 31.9	9 (13.8) 25.0	65 (100.0) 19.0
Coordinator/ Staff	21 (24.7) 25.3	19 (22.4) 33.9	21(24.7) 27.3	14 (16.5) 15.4	10 (11.8) 27.8	85 (100.0) 24.8
Head quarter faculty	1 (16.7) 1.2	1 (16.7) 1.8	1 (16.7) 1.3	2 (33.3) 2.2	1 (16.7) 2.8	6 (100.0) 1.7
Parents	8 (40.0) 9.6	3 (15.0) 5.4	3 (15.0) 3.9	5 (25.0) 5.5	1 (5.0) 2.8	20 (100.0) 5.8
Spouse	-	-	-	1 (50.0) 1.1	1 (50.0) 2.8	2 (100.0) .6
Friends	-	2 (28.6) 3.6	2 (28.6) 2.6	3 (42.9) 3.3	-	7 (100.0) 2.0
Nobody	41 (25.9) 49.4	25 (15.8) 44.6	41(25.9) 53.2	37(23.4) 40.7	14 ( 8.9) 38.9	158 (100.0) 46.1
Total	83 (24.2) 100.0	56 (16.3) 100.0	77(22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36 (10.5) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

It is noticed from the data in the above table that on an average around one-fourth of respondents felt that coordinator and the staff and the academic counsellors at the study center are providing counselling support to around 44 percent of respondents. Here it is interesting to notice that more percentage of postgraduate students are sourcing counselling support from the academic counsellors than the undergraduate programme students like B.A, B.Com and B.Sc. Like wise undergraduate students are sourcing the counselling support from the coordinator and the staff at the study centre and parents than the postgraduate students. Out of those who feel that nobody is providing counselling support majority are respondents of undergraduation programmes than those from postgraduate programmes of study.

### Levels of Satisfaction - Counselling Support

Counselling support plays a vital role in distance education. As the distance learners are isolated, adults, working and lack study skills, counselling support provides motivational and psychological support to them in overcoming their personal problems like isolation and stress. The respondents are asked to give their level of satisfaction on a five point scale and rate the counselling support services in distance education. The answers are given below.

Table 4.41. Level of Satisfaction - Counselling Support Services

Level of Satisfaction	Frequency	Percent
Thoroughly dissatisfied	18	5.2
Not satisfied	110	32.1
Satisfied	106	30.9
Partly satisfied	63	18.4
Fully satisfied	46	13.4
Total	343	100

The single highest response came for not satisfied 32 percent, followed by satisfied 31 percent, partly satisfied 18 percent, fully satisfied 13 percent and thoroughly dissatisfied 5 percent. It means more than one-third (37.3 percent) are not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied. The reasons for no satisfaction could be traced to the fact in the tables - 36 & 37 wherein majority felt that they were not getting counselling support and nobody is providing counselling to them. It is naturally resulting in expressing negative feeling of no satisfaction. Though the satisfied and fully satisfied when put together comes very close to fifty percent, the emphasis is on the need for strengthening the counselling support to the students.

It is widely believed that counselling support is very vital in open and distance learning. After knowing the respondents feelings about the level of satisfaction for counselling support, it was decided to prepare cross tables in relationship with the gender, social status and programs of study of respondents for better understanding of counselling support.

Table 4.42. Gender and Level of Satisfaction on Counselling Support

Level of Satisfaction	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	14 (77.8) 6.6	4 (22.2) 3.1	18 (100.0) 5.2
Not satisfied	64 (58.2) 30.0	46 (41.8) 35.4	110 (100.0) 32.1
Satisfied	76 (71.7) 35.7	30 (28.3) 23.1	106 (100.0) 30.9
Partly satisfied	30 (47.6) 14.1	33 (52.4) 25.4	63 (100.0) 18.4
Fully satisfied	29 (63.0) 13.6	17 (37.0) 13.1	46 (100.0) 13.4
Total	213 (62.1) 100.0	130 (37.9) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

It is noticed from the above table that, among the male members the highest (35.7 percent) number felt that they were satisfied where as 30 percent felt that they were not. Other responses are partly satisfied (14.1 percent), fully satisfied (13.6 percent) and thoroughly dissatisfied (6.6 percent). Among the female respondents, highest (35.4 percent) responses are not satisfied where as 25.4 percent are partly satisfied. Other responses are satisfied (23.1 percent), fully satisfied (13.1 percent) and thoroughly dissatisfied. It is interesting to note that among females 35.4 percent are not satisfied while among male 35.7 percent are satisfied. Among those who are satisfied there is a wide gap between male (35.7 percent) and female (23 percent) respondents. Less percentage of female members are satisfied than male members. Again among partly satisfied, female respondents are more than the males and in thoroughly dissatisfied males are more than the female members. It means that there are major differences between two the genders for the levels of satisfaction for counselling support. In both the genders the lowest number are thoroughly dissatisfied. In the next table the data is analyzed with respondents social status.

Table 4.43. Social Status and Level of Satisfaction on Counselling Support

Level of satisfaction	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	<b>1 (5.6)</b> 2.3	-	5 (27.8) 4.0	12 (66.7) 7.8	-	18(100.0) 5.2
Not satisfied	<b>17 (15.5)</b> 39.5	<b>6 (5.5)</b> 35.3	44 (40.0) 35.2	41 (37.3) 26.6	2 (1.8) 50.0	110(100.0) 32.1
Satisfied	<b>15 (14.2)</b> 34.9	5 (4.7) 29.4	32 (30.2) 25.6	54 (50.9) 35.1	-	106(100.0) 30.9
Partly satisfied	<b>4 (6.3)</b> 9.3	2 (3.2) 11.8	25 (39.7) 20.0	31 (49.2) 20.1	<b>1 (1.6)</b> 25.0	63 (100.0) 18.4
Fully satisfied	<b>6 (13.0)</b> 14.0	4 (8.7) 23.5	19 (41.3) 15.2	16 (34.8) <b>10.4</b>	<b>1 (2.2)</b> 25.0	46 (100.0) 13.4
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17 (5.0) 100.0	125 (36.4) 100.0	154(44.9) 100.0	<b>4 (1.2)</b> 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

When the level of satisfaction is analyzed in relation to social status of the respondents, the following interesting issues were noticed. In thoroughly dissatisfied the gap between S.C (23.5 percent) and the O.C (8 percent) is very high. Among the not satisfied, O.C. are the lowest (26.6 percent) when compared to the S.Cs, S.T's and B.C's. respondents whose percentage is ranging from 39.5 percent to 35 percent. It means more number of S.Cs, S.T's and B.Cs are not satisfied when compared to O.Cs. Out of the satisfied, there is a wide gap between O.Cs. (35 percent) and B.Cs. (25 percent). Among partly satisfied the gap between S.Cs. (9 percent) and B.Cs/O.Cs (20 percent), is very much glaring. Like wise in fully satisfied there is a wide difference between O.Cs (10 percent) and S.T's (23.5 percent).

Over all it can be noticed that within the same parameter of level of satisfaction the difference in opinion between social groups is very wide and quite noticeable. It means that though the individual social groups are satisfied their degree of level of satisfaction varying when compared to the other social groups within the same parameter for counselling support. The reasons could be the asseiliveness of a particular social group of respondents when compared to the others. In all the social groups, the lowest

number are thoroughly dissatisfied. In the next table an attempt is made to find out the relationship between level of satisfaction and programs of study.

Table 4.44. Programmes of Study and Level of Satisfaction on Counselling Support

Level of Satisfaction	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Con	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	7 (38.9) 8.4	3 (16.7) 5.4	4 (22.2) 5.2	4 (22.2) 4.4	-	18 (100.0) 5.2
Not satisfied	30 (27.3) 36.1	17 (15.5) 30.4	25 (22.7) 32.5	23 (20.9) 25.3	15(13.6) 41.7	110(100.0) 32.1
Satisfied	25 (23.6) 30.1	16 (15.1) 28.6	22 (20.8) 28.6	33 (31.1) 36.3	10 (9.4) 27.8	106(100.0) 30.9
Partly satisfied	10 (15.9) 12.0	12 (19.0) 21.4	12 (19.0) 15.6	23 (36.5) 25.3	6 (9.5) 16.7	63 (100.0) 18.4
Fully satisfied	11 (23.9) 13.3	8 (17.4) 14.3	14 (30.4) 18.2	8 (17.4) 8.8	5 (10.9) 13.9	46 (100.0) 13.4
Total	83 (24.2) 100.0	56 (16.3) 100.0	77 (22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36(10.5) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

When the level of satisfaction is analyzed with programs of study the following interesting trends are noticed. When specific comparison is made on the thoroughly dissatisfied the difference between B.A. (8.4 percent) and M.B.A. (4.4 percent) is quite noticeable. Like wise in the not satisfied category also there is a wide difference between M.A. (41 percent) and M.B.A. (25.3 percent). Out of the satisfied responses, the gap between M.B.A. (36 percent) and M.A. (28 percent) is also very high. Out of the partly satisfied, the gap between S.C. (12 percent) and M.B.A. (25 percent) is very much glaring. Among the fully satisfied also the difference between M.B.A (9 percent) and B.Sc (18 percent) is very high. It means the level of satisfaction for counselling support service varies from different programmes of study within the same parameter. In all the programs of study, the number of students thoroughly dissatisfied are very less. Then the respondents are asked to give suggestions to improve counseling support service and the suggestions are given below.

### Suggestions for improving Counselling Support

Table 4.45. Suggestions for improving Counselling Support

Suggestions	Frequency	Percent
Need for better understanding of student needs by the staff	176	51.3
Trained staff to motivate & encourage isolated students	109	31.8
Committed staff at the study centre	37	10.8
Positive attitude of the staff is needed	21	6.1
Total	343	100

The important suggestions given by the respondents were, better understanding of student needs by the staff (51 percent) at the study centre and the need for trained and motivated staff to encourage isolated students and providing counselling support (31 percent). The other suggestions include commitment and positive attitude of the staff at the study centre.

In conclusion of the section it can be said that majority are aware of the availability of the counselling support, they want encouraging, motivational and psychological counselling support services. Majority, irrespective of gender, social status and programmes of study feel that nobody provides counselling support to them. Among those who feel that nobody is providing counselling support at present at the study centre, majority are females and undergraduate respondents than postgraduate respondents; and from OC and BC social groups than SC and ST categories. One-fourth feel that Coordinator and the staff at the study centre provide counselling support to them. More than 80 percent of the respondents suggested for better understanding of students needs by the staff and training for staff for improving counselling support to students. Though the difference between not satisfied and satisfied is very marginal. When not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied are put together more than 37 percent fall under the category of dissatisfied. It means that though majority are satisfied, the dissatisfied cannot be ignored, as they constitute more than one-third of the respondents. It is also noticed that within the parameter and level of satisfaction the differences between gender, social

status and programmes of study are quite noticeable and in some cases the difference is very high and visible.

### **Summing Up**

When the perceptions of the respondents on information support, guidance support and counselling support services are analysed the following broad trends are noticed. In case of information support, majority are aware that information is provided to them on admissions, exams and academic programmes. Pre and post entry information needs are attended to and the study centre is the major channel for information to the respondents. Majority of the respondents, irrespective of gender, social status and programmes of study have positively reacted to the information support. However, around one-fourth have negatively reacted and the respondents are basically not aware of validity of their registration and the process for re-registration. The major suggestion given by the respondents is to provide latest information about rules and regulations.

Regarding guidance support majority of the respondents are aware of it and they want guidance in course selection and guidance in career and job opportunities. Majority of the respondents irrespective of gender, social status and programmes of study feel that they are not getting any guidance at present. As they are not getting any guidance support at present more than one-third of the respondents are not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied with the guidance support. The respondents suggested for knowledgeable and trained staff at the study centre to provide guidance to them.

When it comes to the counselling support to respondents, majority of them are aware and want counselling support in the areas of motivational and encouragement aspects of their studies. However, majority of the respondents across gender, social status and programmes of study felt that nobody is providing guidance support to them at present. Out of those respondents who feel that nobody is providing counselling support to them at the study centre, majority are female respondents when compared to the males, undergraduate respondents than postgraduates and belong to OC and BC social groups

than SC and ST categories. Around one-fourth of the respondents **feel that the** Coordinator is providing counselling support. Because the respondents feel that nobody is providing counselling support to them around one-third expressed that they are not satisfied with the level of satisfaction for counselling support.

Over all, more than 75 percent are satisfied with information support to **the** respondents. More than 60 percent are positively satisfied with the guidance support whereas around 60 percent are satisfied with the counselling support provided to them. It should be kept in mind that more than 45 percent felt that nobody is providing any counselling support at present to them but when they gave their over **all level of** satisfaction for counselling support, less than 40 percent reacted negatively. Though the negative level of satisfaction is low, the efforts should be made to provide better information, guidance and counselling support services to increase the level of satisfaction.

No doubt the individual based support services like information support, guidance support and counselling support play a very important role in the learning process of distance education students. Though the support staff at the study centre can extend the information support, the guidance and counselling support need to be handled by higher level functionaries at the study centre. A separate cell may be established under the charge of an Assistant Coordinator or a senior Academic Counsellor to provide effective guidance and counselling support to the individual learners. The cell may help in providing required guidance and counselling support to the individual learners as 37 percent and 46 percent respectively feel that they are not getting any guidance and counselling support from the study centre at present.

While commenting about the distance learner, Prof. Koul, who contributed immensely for the development of distance education discipline in India, states that "most distance education students do not begin their studies as 'independent' learner, yet they must acquire these skills in order to survive. In addition to course packages and general support services ways must be found to inculcate this 'independence' "<sup>16</sup>. The

individual based support services in the form of information support, guidance support and counselling support are aimed to develop the independence of the distance learner by empowering them by providing the correct information, guidance and counselling to acquire the required skills and make them independent learners.

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## Chapter-V

### **Academic Support Services: Perceptions of Respondents**

## **Chapter - V**

### **Academic Support Services: Perceptions of Respondents**

#### **Introduction**

The present chapter covers very important components of student support services in open university system. They are personal contact programmes, self-instructional course material and assignments in three parts. Personal contact programmes play very important role in open and distance education. Awareness, need and reasons for having personal contact programmes, attendance in personal contact programmes in relation to gender and programmes of study, reasons for not attending personal contact programmes, type of activities taking place in personal contact programmes, the benefits in attending personal contact programmes and the respondents suggestions for improvements are explained in the first part of the chapter.

Self-instructional course material is the backbone of learning process in open and distance education. Its receipt, difficulty level, need for revision, reading of books other than course materials and reasons for reading other books are explained in the second part. Assignments are considered to be tools for two way communication in open and distance education. The need for assignments, writing of tutor comments, return of evaluated assignments is explained in the last part of the chapter. The levels of satisfaction and their suggestions for betterment are analysed.

#### **Part – I Personal Contact Programmes**

The students are informed and guided about the provision of contact classes at the study center for the programmes for which they have registered in the university. Contact programmes form the base to provide face-to-face tutorial support to the students. They

provide a unique opportunity to meet fellow students and the academic counsellors. It is here when they attend contact classes they know each other, they socialize, form study groups, exchange notes, discuss difficult topics, share information and learn together. For this reason only open and distance learning system provides contact classes to bring scattered and isolated students together. Though attendance to these sessions is not compulsory, they are advised to make better and optimum use of these sessions with their active participation.

The face-to-face contact is not mandatory in distance education system and the teachers and learners are expected to carry out their tasks apart from one another, but personal contact programmes are provided to bridge the gap between learners and open learning system to provide human support to distance learners in the form of student support services.<sup>1</sup> The role of a teacher in open university setup is different when he performs or acts as a counsellor. Here the teacher "must withdraw from the scene as prime performer, focus on learner needs, bring immense patience and tact, provide global overview of the course, restrain from teaching in order to allow learning to take place, counsel rather than teach"<sup>2</sup>. In this process the counsellors, should make use of the audio and video lessons in the counselling sessions by following the method of stop, start, and replay techniques, so that he could generate a participative discussion by the learners in the counselling sessions.<sup>3</sup>

But the reality is that the students who are not regular in attending classes face the problem of understanding the content of missed classes. The students prefer to have individual meetings with the counsellors which is not available presently. The students are hesitant to seek clarifications for doubts during the class.<sup>4</sup>

The factors which influence the organization of face-to-face contact session are, size of the institution, organizational / management structure as well as nature and requirements of courses offered by institution.<sup>5</sup> The contact sessions are of different types, zero contact session, supplementary contact session and complementary contact

sessions. It has been felt that compulsory attendance helps course completion, enhances success rate and helps to facilitate a high degree of student socialization.<sup>6</sup>

The contact sessions are meant to break isolation and bring students in contact with the academic counselor and the peer group. The purpose of session is to bring some sort of "human element"<sup>7</sup> into the system, otherwise known for its impersonality. The contact sessions are necessary for the following reasons- to 'clarify doubts', 'break isolation' maintain interpersonal relations, gain deeper insights, and help to understand the subject.<sup>8</sup>

Attendance in personal contact programmes has positive impact on performance in examination by the learners in distance education system. It is widely believed that personal contact programmes are aimed to build rapport between students and the institution and reduce dropout and loneliness and contribute positively. During personal contact programmes learners' difficulties, doubts and other problems are discussed and students are encouraged to participate actively in them. Learners who have attended more sessions have always exhibited more chances of passing in the examination and have a positive correlation with pass percentage of students.<sup>9</sup>

In view of the significance attached to personal contact programmes, here an attempt is made to find out, through this study, the awareness of contact programmes, need for contact programmes, reasons for attending contact programmes, sufficiency of contact programmes, views on making contact programmes compulsory, frequency of their attendance, reasons for absence, nature of activity that takes place in contact programmes, benefits they get by attending contact programmes, the level of satisfaction and their suggestion for better organisation of the contact programmes.

#### **Awareness and Need for Personal Contact Programmes (PCPs)**

To begin with awareness about contact programmes is elicited from the respondents.

Table 5.1. Awareness about Personal Contact Programmes

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Aware	310	90.4
Not aware	<b>33</b>	9.6
Total	343	100

When the students are asked about whether they are aware of the provision for contact programmes at the study center and in the university, an overwhelming majority of them expressed positively by stating that they are aware and heard of such support.

When all the respondents who are aware of the personal contact programmes were asked about what do they mean by personal contact programmes, more than 60 percent felt that it is weekly classes and the rest have viewed them as extended contact programmes like summer/winter schools.

Table 5.2. Need for Personal Contact Programmes

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	332	96.8
No	11	3.2
Total	343	100

When an attempt is also made to find out why they need personal contact programmes an overwhelming majority felt that they need personal contact programmes for the following reasons given in the next table.

Table 5.3. Give reasons for having Personal Contact Programmes.

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
To understand difficult concepts/subjects	168	50.6
To get doubts clarified	102	30.7
To learn study skills	<b>29</b>	<b>8.8</b>
To bridge the gap between isolated learners & institution	<b>20</b>	<b>6.0</b>
To meet peer group/fellow students	10	<b>3.0</b>
All the above	<b>3</b>	<b>0.9</b>
Total	332	100

When an attempt is also made to find out why they need personal contact programmes a majority of them felt that they want the contact programmes **for** understanding difficult concepts/subjects and one-third felt that they want contact programmes to get their doubts clarified. Other reasons given are to learn study skills and to bridge the gap between learners and institution. It means majority look forward to the contact programmes to understand difficult concepts and subjects better and to get the doubts clarified.

Table 5.4. Whether satisfied with the number of Personal Contact Programmes

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	172	50.1
No	171	49.9
Total	343	100

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University provides fixed number of contact classes for each program. The respondents are asked whether they are satisfied with the number of contact classes, if not what are the reasons. The response is evenly divided. When the respondents who are not satisfied with the number of contact classes are asked to give reasons, all of them felt that they need more sessions for difficult courses. Next they were asked about the need for making attendance compulsory.

Table 5.5. Need for making attendance compulsory in Personal Contact Programmes

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	245	71.4
No	<b>98</b>	28.6
Total	343	100

Attendance in contact programmes is not compulsory in distance education. When the respondents are posed the question of making attendance compulsory in contact programmes, more than 70 percent felt that it would be better if attendance is made compulsory. Some of the respondents at the time of administering the questionnaire felt that if the university makes attendance compulsory, the attendance in personal contact

programmes will improve. In a study it was found that around 66.15 percent wanted that the participation in personal contact programmes be made compulsory.<sup>10</sup>

### Regularity in Attending PCPs

Table 5.6. Regularity of attendance in Personal Contact Programmes

<b>Attendance in PCPs</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Once in a week	283	82.5
Once in a fortnight	26	7.6
Once in a month	16	4.7
Never	18	5.2
Total	343	100

An attempt is made to find out the regularity in attendance by the respondents in personal contact programmes. Though the attendance is not compulsory in contact programmes the interested students attend classes voluntarily. The data in the above table shows that more than 80 percent of the respondents attend PCPs every week followed by once in fortnight. However, around 10 percent never attend or attend once in a month these weekly contact programs. This shows that even though it is not mandatory, the highly motivated and interested students are making better use of contact programmes by attending every week.

As more than 70 percent said that the attendance be made compulsory, an attempt is made in the following table to find out the regularity of their attendance in PCP. It is noticed that out of the total respondents more than 90 percent are attending contact classes regularly. To understand the pattern of attendance by male and female students and the students of different programs the following cross tables are prepared.

Table 5.7. Gender and Frequency of attendance in PCPs

Attendance in PCPs	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Once in a week	172 (60.8) 80.8	111 (39.2) 85.4	283 (100.0) 82.5
Once in a fortnight	21 (80.8) 9.9	5 (19.2) 3.8	26 (100.0) 7.6
Once in a month	9 (56.3) 4.2	7 (43.8) 5.4	16 (100.0) 4.7
Never	11 (61.1) 5.2	7 (38.9) 5.4	18 (100.0) 5.2
Total	213(62.1) 100.0	130 (37.9) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

In the above table the regularity of attendance and the gender is analyzed. It is noticed that more than 80 percent of the male and 85 percent of female respondents are regular in attending PCPs at the study center. Among those who attend regularly, female are more than the males and it suggests their seriousness and regularity towards their studies. Out of those who attend once in a fortnight, male are around 10 percent when compared to the female who are 4 percent. It shows that there is a wide gap between the genders. However, the respondents who never attend and attend once in a month are less than 10 percent. In the next tables the regularity of attendance is analyzed in relation to place of stay and programmes of study.

Table 5.8. Regularity of attendance in PCPs and Place of Stay

Attendance in PCPs	Place of Stay		Total
	Rural (Village)	Urban (Town/City)	
Once in a week	91 (32.2) 79.8	192(67.8) 83.8	283 (100.0) 82.5
Once in a fortnight	12(46.2) 10.5	14(53.8) 6.1	26(100.0) 7.6
Once in a month	3(18.8) 2.6	13 (81.3) 5.7	16 (100.0) 4.7
Never	8 (44.4) 7.0	10(55.6) 4.4	18 (100.0) 5.2
Total	114 (33.2) 100.0	229 (66.8) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

The above table indicates the regularity of attendance in PCPs by the rural and urban respondents. Around 80 percent from rural and 84 percent from urban areas are attending PCPs once in a week. The attendance rate for both rural and urban areas seems to be very good. Those who are attending once in fortnight are more from rural areas than urban areas. It is reverse in the case of those attend once in a month. It means more from urban areas and less from rural areas. When it comes to those who never attend PCPs more (7 percent) are from rural areas when compared to the attendance from urban areas (4 percent). Marginal variations between rural and urban areas are noticed in attending PCPs at the study centre.

Table 5.9. Programmes of Study and Regularity of attendance in PCPs

Attendance in PCPs	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Once in a week	70 (24.7) 84.3	46 (16.3) 82.1	63 (22.3) 81.8	73 (25.8) 80.2	31 (11.0) 86.1	283 (100.0) 82.5
Once in a fortnight	4 (15.4) 4.8	5 (19.2) 8.9	5 (19.2) 6.5	8 (30.8) 8.8	4 (15.4) 11.1	26 (100.0) 7.6
Once in a month	1 (6.3) 1.2	5 (31.3) 8.9	2 (12.5) 2.6	8 (50.0) 8.8	-	16 (100.0) 4.7
Never	8 (44.4) 9.6	-	7 (38.9) 9.1	2 (11.1) 2.2	1 (5.6) 2.8	18 (100.0) 5.2
Total	83 (24.2) 100.0	56 (16.3) 100.0	77 (22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36 (10.5) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

The data in the table 5.9 reveals that majority of the respondents in all the programmes of study attend the PCP regularly once in a week. The attendance is more than 80 percent in all the programmes. Out of the students who attend PCPs one in a fortnight, the variation between B.A. (5 percent) and M.A.(11 percent) is very much noticeable. It is the lowest in B.A. and the highest in M.A. Among the students who attend PCPs once in a month, it is also the lowest in B.A. (1.2 percent) when compared to the highest in M.B.A. (8.8 percent). Again variation between two programmes of study is very high. The reasons for the high variations between undergraduates and postgraduates could be that the postgraduate respondents are more concerned and interested to attend PCPs when compared to undergraduate respondents. When the respondents who never attend the PCPs are compared, they are lowest in postgraduate

programmes than undergraduate programmes. Over all less than 10 percent in undergraduation and less than 3 percent in postgraduation programmes are never attending the PCPs at the study centre.

After knowing the regularity of attendance in PCP by the **respondents** in **terms of** gender and programs of study, an attempt is made to find out the reasons for not attending PCP from among the respondents who never attend PCPs and those who attend PCPs once in a month. Though only less than 10 percent of the sample fall under this category the reasons for non-attendance are very interesting to know.

### Reasons for Not Attending PCPs

Table 5.10. Reasons for not attending PCPs regularly.

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Working, hence no time	<b>18</b>	52.9
Family responsibilities	<b>10</b>	29.5
Self instructional material is sufficient	<b>3</b>	8.8
Distance of study centre	<b>2</b>	5.9
Traveling is expensive	<b>1</b>	2.9
Total	<b>34</b>	100

The reasons for not attending contact programmes regularly by the students revealed that out of such respondents more than 50 percent are not attending contact programmes, because they are working and around 30 percent are not attending due to family responsibilities. Others who are not attending, stated long distance of study centre and travel being is expensive as the reasons. However, around 9 percent feel that the course material is self sufficient to study hence they are not attending contact programmes at the study center. It is also found that the reasons for not attending personal contact programmes regularly are distance of study centre and personal problems", full time employment and poor quality of contact sessions<sup>12</sup> and **lack of** time<sup>13</sup>. For better understanding, in the next three tables reasons **for** not attending are explained in relation with occupation, type of employer and gender of respondents.

Table 5.11. Occupation and Reasons for not attending PCPs

Reasons	Occupation				Total
	Employed	Un employed	Self employed	House wife	
Working, hence no time	16 (88.9) 84.2	1 (5.6) 9.1	1 (5.6) 100.0	-	18 (100.0) 52.9
Self instructional material is sufficient	-	2 (66.7) 18.2	-	1 (33.3) 33.3	3 (100.0) 8.8
Traveling is expensive	1 (100.0) 5.3	-	-	-	1 (100.0) 2.9
Distance of study centre	-	2 (100.0) 18.2	-	-	2 (100.0) 5.9
Family responsibilities	2 (20.0) 10.5	6 (60.0) 54.5	-	2 (20.0) 66.7	10 (100.0) 29.4
Total	19(55.9) 100.0	11(32.4) 100.0	1 (2.9) 100.0	3 (8.8) 100.0	34 (100.0) 100.0

When an attempt is made to understand the reasons for not attending PCP and the occupation of the respondents, it is noticed that the major reasons for non-attending PCP are majority of them are working (52.9 percent) and around 30 percent have family responsibilities. However, the minor reasons for not attending are sufficiency of self-instructional material (8.8 percent) followed by long distance of study center from home (5.9 percent) and expenditure on traveling. When occupation specific analysis with the reasons for not attending PCPs is made the following interesting trends are noticed. Among the working, majority who are employed (89 percent) are not able to attend the PCPs. One person who is not attending PCPs stated that due to traveling expenditure involved in attending PCPs is in fact working and male, but still not attending PCPs due to expenditure involved in travel. The respondents who are not attending PCPs due to the distance of study centre are in fact unemployed, hence not able to attend PCPs due to financial constraints. Majority of the housewives are not attending due to family responsibilities when compared to the employed who also stated the same reasons for not attending the PCPs. Highest number and percentage of unemployed are also not attending PCPs due to the family responsibilities. On the whole, employment and family responsibilities are main reasons for not attending PCPs. In the next table the data is explained in relation to gender of the respondents.

Table 5.12. Gender and Reasons for not attending PCPs

Reasons	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Working, hence no time	13 (72.2) 65.0	5 (27.8) 35.7	18 (100.0) 52.9
Self-instructional material is sufficient	1 (33.3) 5.0	2 (66.7) 14.3	3 (100.0) 8.8
Traveling is expensive	1 (100.0) 5.0	-	1 (100.0) 2.9
Distance of study centre	2 (100.0) 10.0	-	2 (100.0) 5.9
Family responsibilities	3 (30.0) 15.0	7 (70.0) 50.0	10 (100.0) 29.4
Total	20 (58.8) 100.0	14 (41.2) 100.0	34 (100.0) 100.0

In the above table an attempt is made to find out the relationship between gender and the reasons for not attending PCP. It is noticed that among the male respondents, 65 percent of them are working hence no time to attend PCP, followed by family responsibilities (15 percent) and distance of study center (10 percent). Among the female respondents the major reasons for not attending PCP is family responsibilities (50 percent) and working employed (35.7 percent) hence no time. Overall it is employment and family responsibilities that are major reasons for not attending PCP in case of both male and female respondents.

When a gender comparison is made, the following interesting trends are noticed. Out of the working, male (72 percent) are highest when compared to the lowest female (28 percent). The difference is very high among the working. Among those who felt the self-instructional material is sufficient as the reason for not attending female respondents are the highest (67 percent) and male are the lowest (33 percent). Here too the difference is very high between the genders. There is no female respondent who gave the reason of expenditure involved in traveling and distance of study centre for not attending the PCPs as reasons. Among those who gave family responsibilities as reasons for not attending PCPs female respondents (70 percent) outnumbered the males (30 percent). It means for each reason for not attending PCPs, there is quite a noticeable difference between the gender. Majority of the males are not attending PCPs due to employment where as a

majority of female respondents are not attending PCPs due to family reasons. Then they were asked about the type of activity that takes place in PCPs.

### Type of Activity during PCPs

Table 5.13. Type of activity in PCPs

Response	Frequency	Percent
Lecturing	195	56.9
Discussion initiated by the counsellors	58	16.9
Repeating the course material	30	8.7
Counselling	28	8.2
Discussion initiated by the students	20	5.8
Classes not attended regularly, hence no opinion expressed	9	2.6
Not answered	3	0.9
Total	343	100

When an attempt is made to find out the type of activity that takes place in personal contact programmes, more than 55 percent stated that lectures are being delivered by the academic counsellors during contact programmes. Other types of activity taking place include discussion by counsellors (16 percent), repeating the course material (8.7 percent), counselling (8.2 percent), and discussion by students (5.8 percent). It would be interesting to know that only 8.2 percent stated that counselling activity is taking place in contact programmes. The academic counsellors are expected to counsel the students. Instead majority of the respondents felt that the academic counselors are lecturing. The reasons could be due to lack of training or majority of the academic counsellors are working in conventional colleges and universities and are not exposed to open and distance learning instructional methods. There is also another argument that students want lecturing. It could be because many of them do not read the course material before attending the contact programmes hence they also want the counsellor to deliver a lecture covering all the aspects in a particular lesson. It is found that as majority did not attend counselling sessions with prior preparation, they want the counsellor to start their session with the conventional method of teaching, i.e. lecturing method<sup>14</sup>. In the next table the benefits of attending PCPs are explained.

### Benefits for Attending PCPs

Table 5.14. Benefits for attending PCPs

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Doubts get clarified	<b>92</b>	26.8
Difficult concepts are explained	<b>92</b>	26.8
Got confidence to study and write exams	<b>73</b>	21.3
Helped to improve learning/study skills	<b>64</b>	18.7
Encourages peer/student interaction	<b>4</b>	1.2
Reduces learner / student isolation	<b>3</b>	0.9
No benefit	<b>4</b>	1.2
Not attended classes/no opinion/benefit expressed	11	3.2
Total	343	100

When the respondents are asked what benefit they get by attending contact programmes, they gave a variety of reasons. More than 50 percent stated that doubts get clarified and difficult concepts are explained. Other interesting responses are that they got confidence to study and write exams, their study skills are improved and it helped to facilitate student interaction. However, only 4.4 percent have neither attended any personal contact programmes nor got any benefit by attending contact programmes at the study center. Based on the important responses it could be inferred that for those who are attending the contact programmes are getting benefits such as clarifying their doubts and explaining the difficult concepts. It is also giving confidence in improving their learning skills.

Table 5.15. Need for change in the present practice of weekly PCPs

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
There is a need for change	275	80.2
No need for change	<b>68</b>	19.8
Total	343	100

When students are further asked about the need to change the present practice of organizing weekly contact programmes, more than 80 percent are happy with the present arrangement of weekly classes. However around 20 percent felt the need to change the present method

**Out** of the respondents who wanted to change the practice of weekly contact programmes more than 83 percent wanted that the contact programmes to be organized at a stretch for a week or ten days during vacation. Others felt that more than two sessions might be conducted per week.

### **Level of Satisfaction - Personal Contact Programmes**

Personal contact programmes at the study center are the most visible form of support service provided to the students to facilitate face-to-face contact between students and academic counsellors. Hence the respondents are asked to give their level of satisfaction on PCPs.

Table 5.16. Level of Satisfaction -PCPs

<b>Level of Satisfaction - PCPs</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Thoroughly dissatisfied	15	4.4
Not satisfied	44	12.8
Satisfied	92	26.8
Partly satisfied	83	24.2
Fully satisfied	109	31.8
Total	343	100

The respondents are asked to rate the contact programmes support at the study center on a five point scale. The overwhelming response came in the form of fully satisfied (32 percent), followed by satisfied (27 percent) and partly satisfied (24 percent). However, around 17 percent are not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied. The data in the above table indicates high level of satisfaction for the personal contact programmes organized at the study centre.

When it is noticed that majority respondents are fully satisfied with PCP at the study center, it was thought to find out the level of satisfaction among different social groups and program of study of respondents.

Table 5.17. Social Status and Level of Satisfaction - PCPs

Level of Satisfaction - PCPs	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	-	2 (13.3) 11.8	8 (53.3) 6.4	5 (33.3) 3.2	-	15 (100.0) 4.4
Not satisfied	7 (15.9) 16.3	1 (2.3) 5.9	12 (27.3) 9.6	24 (54.5) 15.6	-	44 (100.0) 12.8
Satisfied	9 (9.8) 20.9	4 (4.3) 23.5	32 (34.8) 25.6	47 (51.1) 30.5	-	92 (100.0) 26.8
Partly satisfied	6 (7.2) 14.0	5 (6.0) 29.4	35 (42.2) 28.0	35 (42.2) 22.7	2 (2.4) 50.0	83 (100.0) 24.2
Fully satisfied	21 (19.3) 48.8	5 (4.6) 29.4	38 (34.9) 30.4	43 (39.4) 27.9	2 (1.8) 50.0	109 (100.0) 31.8
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17(5.0) 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154 (44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

When the level of satisfaction with respect to PCPs is analyzed in relation to the social status of the respondents, it is noticed that a majority of the respondents in all the social categories have positively reacted to the PCPs organized at the study center. The respondents who have fully satisfied are highest in all the social categories. Satisfied and partly satisfied are in the next majority. When not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied are put together, less than 20 percent are falling under this category. Though majority in all the social categories have positively reacted in support of PCPs, when specific comparison is made between the social groups for the given variable of level of satisfaction the following important findings are noticed. Among thoroughly dissatisfied B.C. (53 percent) are highest where as S.T. (13 percent) are the lowest and there is no S.C. respondent in this category. The difference of opinion between B.C. and S.T. is very high. B.C.s are four times thoroughly dissatisfied than S.T.'s. Like wise in the not satisfied, O.C.s are the highest (54.5 percent) and S.T. are the lowest (2.3 percent). Again the difference between them is very high. Among the satisfied, O.C's are 51 percent, where as S.T's are 4.3 percent. Among the partly satisfied, O.C.s and B.C.s are 42 percent each where as S.C's and S.T's are below 8 percent. Out of the fully satisfied, O.C.s are highest with 39 percent and S.T's are the lowest with 5 percent. The gap between two groups is very wide. It means there are major differences in the level of satisfaction between different social groups for a given parameter for the level of

satisfaction. It implies the degree of level of satisfaction varies from caste to caste within the same parameter. Some are more satisfied and some are less satisfied. In the next table the level of satisfaction is analyzed in relation to programs of study of respondents.

Table 5.18. Level of Satisfaction -PCPs and Programmes of Study

Level of Satisfaction - PCPs	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	3 (20.0) 3.6	4 (26.7) 7.1	4 (26.7) 5.2	3 (20.0) 3.3	1 (6.7) 2.8	15 (100.0) 4.4
Not satisfied	6 (13.6) 7.2	6 (13.6) 10.7	12 (27.3) 15.6	14 (31.8) 15.4	6 (13.6) 16.7	44 (100.0) 12.8
Satisfied	23 (25.0) 27.7	11 (12.0) 19.6	17 (18.5) 22.1	33 (35.9) 36.3	8 (8.7) 22.2	92 (100.0) 26.8
Partly satisfied	13 (15.7) 15.7	10 (12.0) 17.9	15 (18.1) 19.5	29 (34.9) 31.9	16 (19.3) 44.4	83 (100.0) 24.2
Fully satisfied	38 (34.9) 45.8	25 (22.9) 44.6	29 (26.6) 37.7	12 (11.0) 13.2	5 (4.6) 13.9	109 (100.0) 31.8
Total	83 (24.2) 100.0	56 (16.3) 100.0	77 (22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36 (10.5) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

When the level of satisfaction is analyzed in comparison to programs of study the following trends are noticed. Out of the thoroughly dissatisfied category B.Com and B.Sc (26.7 percent each) are the highest and the lowest are from M.A. programme with 6.7 percent. There is a high variation between the two programmes of study for thoroughly dissatisfied. Among the not satisfied the highest come from M.B.A. respondents with 32 percent when compared to the lowest from B.A. and B.Com (13.6 percent each) respondents. Here also the gap between M.B.A respondents and B.A. and B.Com respondents is more than double. Among the satisfied category, M.B.A respondents are more with 36 percent when compared to the M.A. respondents of 9 percent. Out of the partly satisfied the highest are from M.B.A. programme (35 percent) and the lowest are from B.Com respondents (12 percent), the gap between the two is more than double. Among the fully satisfied category, the undergraduate respondents are very high when compared with the postgraduate respondents. 35 percent of B.A respondents are fully satisfied when compared to the 5 percent of M.A. respondents. It means when the level of satisfaction is compared with respect to the programmes of study the variations between the different programmes of study within the given parameter are noticed and the gap

between high level of satisfaction and the low level of satisfaction is very much noticeable. The degree of level of satisfaction for PCPs is varying between different programmes of study within a parameter for level of satisfaction. It is also interesting to know that a majority of undergraduation programme respondents are fully satisfied when compared to postgraduation respondents. Then the respondents are asked to give suggestions.

### Suggestions for improving PCPs

Table 5.19. Suggestions for improving PCPs

<b>Suggestions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Classes schedule be intimated well in advance to students	114	33.2
Classes need not be cancelled or postponed	65	19.0
Few sessions are to be provided for imparting study skills	64	18.7
Audio and video lessons must be used	57	16.6
Counsellors attendance must be ensured	39	11.4
Regular classes for 10/15 days during vacation/before exams	4	1.2
Total	343	100

The important suggestions given by the respondents include the need for prior intimation of counseling schedule (33 percent), non-cancellation or non-postponement of classes (19 percent), use of audio and video lessons (16 percent) and ensuring the attendance of counselor (11 percent). Another interesting suggestion is that some students (18 percent) want a few sessions to be used for providing better reading, writing and notes taking skills to them.

In conclusion of the section on personal contact programmes the above data shows that majority are aware of PCPs and more than 95 percent need PCPs for the reasons of understanding difficult concepts and doubts clarification. They are satisfied with the present number of contact sessions and want the attendance be made compulsory in PCPs. More than 80 percent are regular in attending PCPs irrespective of gender and programmes of study. The major reasons for not attending PCPs for male is that they are working and for female respondents it is family responsibilities. Lecturing is the major type of activity followed in PCPs and the benefits they got are: getting doubts clarified

and difficult concepts explained. Irrespective of gender, social status and programmes of study an overwhelming majority are satisfied with PCPs. It is interesting to notice that the degree of level of satisfaction for the PCPs is varying between the social groups and the programmes of study within the given parameter for level of satisfaction for PCPs. However, around 17 percent who are dissatisfied suggested the need for corrective measures to improve the PCPs. The major suggestions given are advance intimation about PCP schedule and non-cancellation or non-postponement of PCPs.

## **Part – II**

### **Self-Instructional Course Material**

Self-instructional course material plays very important role in distance education. Material is sent to all the registered students. Course team consists of course writers, course editors, language editors and format editors who prepare the material. It will be discussed threadbare among the course team members before finally approving the contents and lessons. Open universities generally follow course team approach for preparing course material. Hence it is called as self-instructional materials. The general characteristics of self-instructional materials are self-explanatory, self-contained, self-directed, self-motivating, self-evaluating and self-learning.<sup>15</sup> While commenting about the role of self instructional material Perraton felt that "print is indispensable: students need a permanent record of their work and most of their learning will be done from a printed text".<sup>16</sup>

Through this study, an attempt is made to find out the respondents' views on various aspects such as receipt, delay, difficulty level, need for revision, reading of books other than self instructional course material, type of books they read and the reasons for them to read books other than course materials.

### Receipt, Difficulty level and Revision of Material

To start with they were asked about the receipt of the course material.

Table 5.20. Receipt of Course Material

Received	Frequency	Percent
Yes	271	79.0
No	72	21.0
Total	343	100

When the students are asked about the receipt of self instructional course material by them, 79 percent told that they have received the material and 21 percent told that they did not receive the material. It was cross verified that the students who did not receive the material are mostly belonging to second year of study. When further enquired it was found that due to revision of second year material by the university the delay happened. Then the difficulty level of language of course material is enquired.

Table 5.21. Difficulty level of Language of Material

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Not difficult	126	36.7
Good	101	29.5
Needs improvement	67	19.5
Difficult	49	14.3
Total	343	100

Proper understanding of language of the course material is important in any distance mode of teaching. In this regard the respondents are asked to give their views on difficulty level of the language of the course material. More than 66 percent felt that the learning material is not difficult and it is good while 14 percent feel that the language is difficult and 19 percent feel that it needs to be improved to make it more understandable.

Though more than 66 percent of respondents felt that the language of the course materials is not difficult and good but around 33 percent have felt that it is difficult to understand and needs to be improved. To understand which program students and place

of stay (rural and urban) respondents are feeling the difficulty in understanding the language of the course materials the following cross tables are prepared.

Table 5.22. Programme of Study and Difficulty level of language of Course Material

Opinion	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Not difficult	35 (27.8) 42.2	23 (18.3) 41.1	35 (27.8) 45.5	24 (19.0) 26.4	9 (7.1) 25.0	126(100.0) 36.7
Good	24 (23.8) 28.9	13 (12.9) 23.2	26 (25.7) 33.8	22 (21.8) 24.2	16 (15.8) 44.4	101 (100.0) 29.4
Difficult	18 (36.7) 21.7	7 (14.3) 12.5	6 (12.2) 7.8	12 (24.5) 13.2	6 (12.2) 16.7	49 (100.0) 14.3
Needs improvement	6 (9.0) 7.2	13 (19.4) 23.2	10 (14.9) 13.0	33 (49.3) 36.3	5 (7.5) 13.9	67 (100.0) 19.5
Total	83 (24.2) 100.0	56 (16.3) 100.0	77 (22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36 (10.5) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

It is noticed from the above table that majority of the BA (42.2 percent), B.Com (41.1 percent) and B.Sc (45.5 percent) students felt that the language is not difficult and felt that it is good. Where as when it comes to the M.B.A. (26.4 percent) and M.A. (25 percent) programmes the less number of respondents felt that it is not difficult. The highest are from B.Sc (45.5 percent) programme and the lowest are from B.Com (23.2 percent) programme. In the category who felt that the learning material is difficult the highest are in B.A. (21.7 percent) and the lowest are in the B.Sc (7.8 percent). When it comes to the category who felt that material needs to be revised and improved, the highest are from M.B.A. (36.3 percent) and the lowest are from B.A. (7.2 percent). It means in majority categories there are differences and wide gaps between different programmes of study. The variations between the programmes within the category are very high. The reasons could be the different knowledge levels of undergraduates and postgraduates respondents.

Table 5.23. Difficulty level of language of course material and Place of Stay

Opinion	Place of Stay		Total
	Rural (Village)	Urban (Town/City)	
Not difficult	35 (27.8) 30.7	91 (72.2) 39.7	126(100.0) 36.7
Good	42(41.6) 36.8	59 (58.4) 25.8	101 (100.0) 29.4
Difficult	20 (40.8) 17.5	29 (59.20) 12.7	49(100.0) 14.3
Needs improvement	17(25.4) 14.9	50 (74.6) 21.8	67(100.0) 19.5
Total	114 (33.2) 100.0	229 (66.8) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table has revealed some interesting trends. Those who felt the language is not difficult are around 40 percent from urban areas when compared to the rural respondents (30 percent). The difference of 10 percent between urban and rural areas indicates that for rural respondents language of the course materials seems to be difficult. It is further substantiated because of those who feel that the language is difficult (17.5 percent) are more from rural areas when compared to the respondents of urban areas (12.7 percent). Around five percent variation between two groups indicates that rural respondents are finding it difficult. Majority of the urban respondents suggested for improvement of the language of the material. However, more than one-third rural respondents and one-fourth of urban respondents feel that the language is good. The variation between rural and urban respondents is noticeable.

After knowing the difficulty level of the material the respondents were asked about the need for revision of course material.

Table 5.24. Need for Revision of Course Material

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	228	66.5
No	115	33.5
Total	343	100

The respondents' views on the need for revision of **course** material **reveal that** more than two-thirds feel that the material needs to be revised and one-third feel that there is no need for such revision. The course material supplied by the Open University is called self-instructional material. It means it covers the whole curriculum and gives **all** required matter for understanding of a particular topic or a lesson. However, some students feel that the material is not sufficient and resort to refer books other than course material. Here an attempt is made to find out this aspect.

### Reading of Other Books

Table 5.25. Whether Reading Other Books

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	271	79.0
No	<b>72</b>	21.0
Total	343	100

After considering the difficulty level of language of course material it was decided to find out whether students are reading any other books other than course material, for understanding the subject. It is found that an overwhelming majority of 79 percent respondents in all the programmes of study read other books in addition to the course material.

Table 5.26. Type of other books the respondents read.

<b>Type of Books</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Test Papers	123	45.4
Reference books	<b>83</b>	30.6
Guides	<b>37</b>	13.7
Notes	<b>27</b>	10.0
Internet material	<b>1</b>	0.3
Total	271	100

When an attempt was made to find out the type of books they read, it is found that majority of them are reading test papers, guides or notes. It means the majority of the students who are reading other books are basically interested in passing exams as **only** 30

percent are reading reference books to improve their knowledge. Next the same data is cross tabulated with the programmes of study to find out which programme students are reading what type of books.

Table 5.27. Programmes of Study and Reading of other type of books

Reading of other type of books	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Test Papers	47 (38.2) 71.2	30 (24.4) 69.8	28 (22.8) 47.5	8 (6.5) 11.0	10 (8.1) 33.3	123 (100.0) 45.4
Guides	9 (24.3) 13.6	8 (21.6) 18.6	12 (32.4) 20.3	3 (8.1) 4.1	5 (13.5) 16.7	37 (100.0) 13.7
Notes	7 (25.9) 10.6	1 (3.7) 2.3	8 (29.6) 13.6	8 (29.6) 11.0	3 (11.1) 10.0	27 (100.0) 10.0
Reference books	3 (3.6) 4.5	4 (4.8) 9.3	11 (13.3) 18.6	53 (63.9) 72.6	12 (14.5) 40.0	83 (100.0) 30.6
Internet material	-	-	-	1 (100.0) 1.4	-	1 (100.0) .4
Total	66 (24.4) 100.0	43 (15.9) 100.0	59 (21.8) 100.0	73 (26.9) 100.0	30 (11.1) 100.0	271 (100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table revealed interesting findings. Out of the respondents who read other books only 30.6 percent of them read reference books whereas majority of the respondents read test papers (45 percent) followed by guides (13.7 percent) and notes (10 percent). On the other hand a majority of MBA students (72.6 percent) and MA students (40 percent) read reference books whereas majority of the BA (71.2 percent), B.Com (69.8 percent) and B.Sc (47.5 percent) read test papers. The reasons could be the level of maturity and age for reading the reference books. The MBA and MA students are more matured, aged and employed and may be interested to know more details about the course content. However, the BA, B.Com and B.Sc respondents who read reference books are very less when compared to postgraduate students. Undergraduate students (e.g.B.A. 71.2 percent) are more dependent on test papers, guides and notes whereas postgraduate students (e.g. M.B.A. 11 percent) are more dependent on reference books.

When specifically observed the following issues are noticed. Highest number and percentage of B.Sc respondents are reading guides when compared to the lowest from the M.B.A. Out of those who are reading notes, highest are from B.Sc and M.B.A (30

percent each) programme when compared to the lowest from B.Com (3.7 percent) programme. Out of the respondents who read reference books M.B.A respondents are highest (64 percent) when compared to the lowest B.A. respondents (4 percent). The variations between the respondents of different programmes of study are very high and quite noticeable. The reasons for the variations could be attributed to the differences between postgraduate students and the undergraduate students and their understanding and knowledge levels. It means majority of the undergraduate students read test papers because they are easy to understand, written in question and answer format and are in simple language. The respondents gave the following reasons for reading other books.

Table 5.28. Reasons for reading other books.

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Easy to understand	102	37.6
Question and answer format	88	32.5
Simple language	58	21.4
For knowledge & more information	13	4.8
For solved problems & reference	3	1.1
To score good marks	3	1.1
University material is not received	3	1.1
Time constraints to read SIM	1	0.4
Total	271	100

The reasons given are very interesting. 37.6 percent read because they are easy to understand, 32.5 percent read other books and material because they are in question and answer format and 21.4 percent read other books because they are written in simple language. It means that the students have difficulty in following course material because it is written in difficult language.

Over all it can be said that self-instructional course material has been received by majority respondents, and in some cases the delay is due to the revision of course material. Majority feel that the language used in the course material is not difficult and it is good. More than three-fourths of respondents read other books in addition to the course material. The type of books they read are interesting to know. B.A., B.Com and B.Sc students are mostly reading test papers, guides and notes whereas M.B.A. and M.A

students are mostly reading reference books in addition to the course material. The reasons for reading of test papers and guides are that they are easy to understand, written in question and answer format with simple language.

### **Part –III**

#### **Assignment Support**

Open Universities follow comprehensive evaluation system consisting of continuous assignments and term end examinations to assess the progress of the students. Assignments are used as a part of continuous evaluation to assess the subject knowledge, presentation and writing skills of the student. The assignments are conceived as learning tools and channels for communication in distance education. The assignments facilitate three types of communication between the learner and the distance teacher/academic counsellor. They are academic communication, personal communication and supplemental communication.<sup>17</sup>

Assignments help them in their learning process and help them to prepare for exams. The tutor comments should encourage interaction and work as a means for two-way communication between students and tutors.<sup>18</sup> For the students who do not attend face-to-face session the feedback on assignments is the only way of contact between tutors and learners. The tutor acts as a facilitator and highlights the general strengths and weaknesses of the assignments.<sup>19</sup>

In the light of the above an attempt is made in this study to find out the views of post-graduate students on assignments. In the case of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University assignments are there for post-graduate students only, and they carry 25 percent value in over all examination and successful completion in both assignments and year-end exam is essential to declare the student's result as passed. There are two assignments in each course. When asked about the awareness about the assignment

component in their programmes more than ninety five percent are aware of **them** and all agree that assignments are learning tools.

### Need for Assignments

Table 5.29. Whether Assignments are necessary?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	116	91.3
No	11	8.7
Total	127	100

In the above table the respondents are asked about the necessity of assignments. More than 90 percent feel that assignments are necessary. The rest feel that they are not needed. It means majority feel the need for assignments.

### Sufficiency of time for Writing Assignments

Table 5.30. Whether sufficient time is given for writing assignments

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	76	59.8
No	51	40.2
Total	127	100

Assignment writing takes some time. Generally the university gives them sufficient time to complete the assignments. An attempt is made to find whether the respondents are given sufficient time to write their assignments. Majority feel that they got sufficient time to write assignments; however around 40 percent feel that the time is **not** sufficient. Though the course material is sufficient to write assignments, the students are free to refer other sources to write assignments. An attempt is made to find out what are the materials students refer to write their assignments.

### Material referred for Writing Assignments

Table 5.31. Material referred for writing assignments

Response	Frequency	Percent
Course material	61	48.0
Reference books	62	48.8
Latest journals and magazines	1	0.8
All the above	2	1.6
Internet	1	0.8
Total	127	100

The responses given are course material and reference books are referred by equal number of students. However, the students who are referring latest journal and magazines are very negligible.

### Return of Evaluated Assignments to Students

As stated earlier, assignments in distance education are used as teaching and learning tools. Two-way communication can be made possible by writing tutor's comments on evaluated assignments and returning the evaluated assignments to the students in time. In this context the following question was asked.

Table 5.32. Whether the evaluated assignments are returned back to the students

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	18	14.2
No	106	83.5
Not answered	3	2.3
Total	127	100

When enquired more than 80 percent expressed that they did not get back the evaluated assignments from the study center. Due to this, assignments may not serve as a learning tool. It is noticed during the field work that the evaluated assignments are kept at the study centre. On enquiry it was told that due to operational difficulties they are not able to return them to the students. In another study also it was found that evaluated assignments are not returned to the students.<sup>20</sup>

### Writing of Tutor Comments on Assignments

The academic counsellors are supposed to evaluate and write tutor comments on assignments to initiate two-way communication between the isolated student and the counsellor. The assignments are supposed to play a very important role in the learning process. Hence an attempt is made to find out about the writing of comments on assignments from the respondents who received back the assignments from the study centre. An overwhelming number responded saying that no such tutor comments are written on the assignments. It is also observed during the fieldwork that the academic counsellors who evaluated the assignments are not writing the tutor comments justifying the marks given and blocking the way for two-way communication. Since comments are not written the very purpose of the assignments is defeated. The reasons could be majority of the academic counsellors are not given training in writing tutor comments on assignments. They are working in the conventional colleges and are not used to writing comments on assignments.

### Level of Satisfaction - Assignments

Based on their experience the respondents are asked to give their level of satisfaction on a five-point scale on the role of assignments and tutor comments in the learning process. The responses are analysed in the next table.

Table 5.33. Level of Satisfaction on Assignments Support

<b>Level of Satisfaction</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Thoroughly dissatisfied	<b>12</b>	<b>9.4</b>
Not satisfied	<b>35</b>	27.6
Satisfied	<b>48</b>	37.8
Partly satisfied	<b>25</b>	19.7
Fully satisfied	<b>7</b>	<b>5.5</b>
Total	127	100

When the students are asked to express their opinion and rank the assignment support on a five-point scale, 27 percent are not satisfied and 9 percent are thoroughly dissatisfied. However the rest are satisfied (38 percent), partly satisfied (20 percent) **and** fully satisfied (5 percent). Both thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied put together add to 38 percent. The respondents have felt like this as the evaluated assignments are neither returned nor tutor comments are written on assignments as explained above.

It can be concluded that the respondents belonging to post-graduation programmes feel the need and importance of assignments as tools of learning. Respondents are using course material and reference books for writing assignments. The purpose of assignments is defeated because the evaluated assignments are not returned with tutor comments to the respondents in time. This is the major reason for 38 percent of respondents who are either not satisfied and or thoroughly dissatisfied with assignments.

### **Summing Up**

On the whole it can be said that an overwhelming majority of respondents are aware and expressed the need for personal contact programmes for understanding difficult concepts and clarification of doubts. Respondents are satisfied with number of personal contact programmes and feel that their attendance in personal contact programmes be made compulsory. Majority of the respondents (more than 80 percent) are regular in attending personal contact programmes irrespective of gender, place of stay (rural and urban) and programmes of study. The major reason for males for not attending personal contact programmes is that they are employed and for female respondents the major reason is taking care of household responsibilities. Lecturing is the major method the academic counsellors are following during the personal contact programmes. More than 80 percent are satisfied with personal contact programmes irrespective of gender, social status and programmes of study. However, variations are noticed in different social groups for the levels of satisfaction.

Regarding self-instructional course material, majority of the respondents have received it and the delay in receipt of course material of second year under graduation is due to the revision work taken up by the university. Majority feel that language used in self instructional course material is good and not difficult to understand. However, variations are noticed between programmes of study and place of stay (rural and urban) for difficulty level of language of the course materials. More than 75 percent are reading other materials in addition to the self instructional course material. It is further found that undergraduate respondents are reading test papers and guides where as the postgraduate respondents are mostly reading reference books.

Postgraduate students have assignments as part of their programme and evaluation process in the university. The study shows that the respondents understand the importance of assignments as a tool of learning. However, the very purpose is defeated because the evaluated assignments are not returned with tutor comments by the study centres.

Academic support services comprising personal contact programmes, self-instructional materials and assignments are essential for academic development of the individual learner in distance education. They form the base for all academic support services. They bring credibility to the distance education system. Personal contact programmes promote academic socialization and peer group interaction in distance education. Self-instructional materials need to be written in simple and easy to understand language. Efforts should be made for integrating assignments as a two-way interactive tool for teaching and learning. The study found that respondents are satisfied with the personal contact programmes, there is a need to encourage respondents to read the self instructional materials than other books like test papers and guides and streamline the return of the evaluated assignments with proper tutor comments to the students. Concerted efforts in these areas will help in strengthening the academic support services at the study centres.

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## **Chapter-VI**

### **Organisational Support Services: Perceptions of Respondents**

## Chapter - VI

### Organisational Support Services: Perceptions of Respondents

#### Introduction

Student support services are aimed to bridge the gap between the isolated learner and the distance institution. The role of information support, guidance support, counselling support, personal contact programmes and other aspects are explained in the previous chapters. All these components are part of the wide variety of student support services that are made available to the learners of open university system. They play a very vital role in the learning process for a distance learner.

In open universities student support services are provided through the organisational structures at the grass roots level in a decentralised manner. They are called local centres. 'The local centres are two types—regional centres and study centres'. They provide a wide variety of support services through them to the students. In fact all the support services are routed through the local centres. The study centre represents a local presence and face of the university. It is the lowest organisational unit in the student support services system. Study centre as an organisation delivers the services to the students. In this chapter some of the support services provided at the study centre level are explained in three parts. They include the library support at the study centre, conduct of science practicals and the role of study centre in providing support services to the students.

The chapter is divided into three parts. First part of the chapter deals with the library support to the students in the open university system. Importance, awareness and need for library support are explained. In the second part of the chapter perceptions of the respondents of B.Sc programme are analysed. The respondents' awareness about the role of video lessons for doing practicals, use of practical manual and record book, availability of samples and the problems faced in attending science practicals are

examined. Majority of the student support services are extended through the study centres. The role of study centre is explained in the last part of the chapter. Study centres\* accessibility, convenience to visit study centre, number of visits made during the last year, the relationship between visits and the distance, mode of transport, problems faced when they visited the study centre, problems and the advantages for the female respondents for studying in the open university are explained. The level of satisfaction for library support and science practicals and study centre support are explained in correlation with gender, social status and programmes of study. The respondent's suggestions for improvement are explained at the end of each part of the chapter.

## **Part - I**

### **Library Support for Students**

Libraries play a very important role in the learning process. Open Universities provide course material, which is considered to be self-sufficient for independent learning. They also provide a small reference library to extend library support to the students at the study center. It is expected to provide library services to both students as well as academic counsellors. The library books are not issued to the students. But students are expected to refer them at the study center only. Library support is very essential for the open and distance learners to pursue their studies independently.

Distance learners have very high expectations from the libraries at study centre and when the study centres fail to meet their expectations the distance learners are disappointed<sup>3</sup>. The library facilities provided at regional centres and study centres are mostly under utilised<sup>4</sup> and there is a need to promote public libraries to provide services to distance learners by setting up of library corners for distance learners with a collection of books, course materials secured from open and distance learning institutions<sup>5</sup>.

The need for libraries in distance education and the services they extend to the distance learners can be grouped under three broad categories. They are, (1) need for materials and facilities (2) need for information services and (3) need for user services<sup>6</sup>. The problems faced by the libraries are lack of enough accommodation for stack rooms and reading place, lack of qualified, experienced and regular staff<sup>7</sup>. In a developing country like ours distance learners do not have access to many means of communication technologies like radio, television, tape recorder, video cassette player, video cassette recorder, telephone and computer<sup>8</sup>. In these circumstances the libraries can play very important role in distance education if all the latest communication equipment are provided in the libraries at the study centres.

In this section an attempt is made to find out the awareness and knowledge, need for library services, the level of satisfaction and suggestion for improving library support to the students.

#### Awareness about Library facility

First an attempt is made to find out how many are aware and have knowledge about the existing library facility at the study centre and the responses are surprising.

Table 6.1. Awareness and Knowledge about Library Facility at the Study Centre.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	78	22.7
No	265	77.3
Total	343	100

Though all the study centres have library facilities it is surprising to know that more than 75 percent feel that they *don't* have any library facility at the study center. Around 22 percent feel that they have library at the study center. The reasons for no awareness about the existing library facilities at the study centre could be due to lack of separate reading room and sufficient space at the study centre. The students literally have no access to the books provided there. The books are kept in the bookshelves only. It is

observed during **the** field work that in one of the study centres the books are simply sacked in gunny bags due to lack of space. In these circumstances the respondents **are** asked whether they need the library facility at the study centre.

Table 6.2. Need for Library facility at the Study Centre

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	311	90.7
No	<b>32</b>	9.3
Total	343	100

In response to the above question an overwhelming majority felt that there is a need for a library at the study center. Only around 10 percent feel that they don't need library facility. Though more than ninety percent want the library facility at the study centre, but it is interesting to know that majority did not have knowledge about the existing library at the study centre. The respondents who felt the need for a library facility at the study centre were asked to give reasons for requiring library' facility.

#### Reasons for Library facility

Table 6.3. Reasons for requiring Library facility at the Study Centre.

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
For reference books	149	47.9
To know latest developments about subjects	67	21.5
For old question papers	42	13.5
To prepare notes	42	13.5
To refer old projects	7	2.3
All the above	4	1.3
Total	311	100

The important reasons for library facility requirement at the study centre include the need for reference books (48 percent), to know latest developments in the subjects (21 percent) and to prepare notes and refer to old question papers (27 percent). The other response is to refer old project reports at the library.

### Level of Satisfaction for Library Support

Then students are asked to express their views on library support and rank the support on a five-point scale.

Table 6.4. Level of Satisfaction about Library Support

Level of Satisfaction - Library Support	Frequency	Percent
Thoroughly dissatisfied	134	39.1
Not satisfied	163	47.5
Satisfied	<b>27</b>	7.9
Partly satisfied	15	4.4
Fully satisfied	4	1.2
Total	343	100

The data in the above table revealed that the respondents have negatively reacted. More than 85 percent of the respondents are falling under not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied categories about the library support services. Of the rest 8 percent are satisfied, 4 percent are partly satisfied and 1 percent is fully satisfied for library support services. Though the library is provided at each study center, the students and counsellors rarely utilize it. Many of the respondents are not even aware of the fact that a library is there for them at the study centre. Because of the ignorance and lack of knowledge the highest level of dissatisfaction is prevailing amongst the respondents.

When it is noticed that there is high level of dissatisfaction about library support among respondents, for better understanding the data was analyzed with respect to gender, programs of study and place of stay (rural and urban) in the following three tables.

Table 6.5. Gender and Level of Satisfaction about Library Support Services

Level of Satisfaction	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	80 (59.7) 37.6	54 (40.3) 41.5	134 (100.0) 39.1
Not satisfied	104 (63.8) 48.8	59 (36.2) 45.4	163 (100.0) 47.5
Satisfied	17 (63.0) 8.0	10 (37.0) 7.7	27 (100.0) 7.9
Partly satisfied	11 (73.3) 5.2	4 (26.7) 3.1	15 (100.0) 4.4
Fully satisfied	1 (25.0) 0.5	3 (75.0) 2.3	4 (100.0) 1.2
Total	213 (62.1) 100.0	130 (37.9) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

When a specific comparison is made in the above table between gender the following interesting trends and differences are noticed. Among thoroughly dissatisfied female respondents (41.5 percent) are more than the males (37.6 percent), whereas in the not satisfied category males (49 percent) are more than female (45 percent). However, the level of satisfaction is more or less even among the genders for the satisfied category. Out of the partly satisfied and fully satisfied the differences between the genders are quite noticeable. Out of the fully satisfied 0.5 percent are from males and 2.3 percent are from females. Among the partly satisfied, male respondents (5.2 percent) are more than the females (3.1 percent). It means in partly satisfied category, female respondents are very less and in fully satisfied males are very less.

When the level of satisfaction is analyzed with the social category of the respondents it is noticed that high level of dissatisfaction is prevailing in all the social categories. It means cutting across social categories an overwhelming majority are falling under not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied groups. Next the data is analyzed in relation to programs of study.

Table 6.6. Programmes of Study and Level of Satisfaction about Library Support

Level of Satisfaction	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	35 (26.1) 42.2	30 (22.4) 53.6	38 (28.4) 49.4	21 (15.7) 23.1	10 (7.5) 27.8	134 (100.0) 39.1
Not satisfied	39 (23.9) 47.0	23 (14.1) 41.1	31 (19.0) 40.3	47 (28.8) 51.6	23(14.1) 63.9	163 (100.0) 47.5
Satisfied	<b>4 (14.8)</b> <b>4.8</b>	3 (11.1) 5.4	6 (22.2) 7.8	14 (51.9) 15.4	-	27 (100.0) 7.9
Partly satisfied	<b>5 (33.3)</b> 6.0	-	1 (6.7) 1.3	6 (40.0) 6.6	3 (20.0) 8.3	15 (100.0) 4.4
Fully satisfied	-	-	1 (25.0) 1.3	3 (75.0) 3.3	-	4 (100.0) 1.2
Total	<b>83 (24.2)</b> 100.0	56 (16.3) 100.0	77 (22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36(10.5) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

When the level of satisfaction for library support is analyzed with programs of study of the respondents, it is noticed that the not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied are very high in many programs. Among the not satisfied it is very high among postgraduate respondents with M.A at 63.9 percent and M.B.A at 51.6 percent when compared to the undergraduate respondents from B.A (47 percent), B.Com (41.1 percent) and B.Sc (40.3 percent). It means not satisfied are more among postgraduate respondents than the undergraduate respondents. In thoroughly dissatisfied category 53.6 percent are from B.Com, 49.4 percent from B.Sc. and 42.2 percent B.A. students, whereas among postgraduate students 27.8 percent are from M.A and 23.1 percent from M.B.A students. It means among the thoroughly dissatisfied students the undergraduates are more than the postgraduate students. The differences in level of satisfaction among the postgraduates and undergraduates are quite noticeable. However, the positively responded students are very less. Among the satisfied B.A/B.Com (5 percent each) are the lowest when compared to M.B.A. (15 percent). The difference between B.A/B.Com and M.B.A. is very high. There is no fully satisfied respondent from the programmes of B.A, B.Com and M.A. However, the fully satisfied are the highest in M.B.A. (3.3 percent) and lowest the in B.Sc. (1.3 percent). On the whole, it is noticed that there are differences in the level of satisfaction among the different programmes of study within the parameter of level of satisfaction. Not satisfied are more in postgraduate programmes, where as in thoroughly dissatisfied undergraduates are more. Not satisfied are more in M.A. than in B.Sc. The

reasons for this could be postgraduate students must be feeling the need for library facilities more than the undergraduates. When all satisfied categories are put together, those who reacted positively are just 13.5 percent only. Next an attempt is made to study the level of satisfaction with place of stay (rural and urban) to find out the variations between rural and urban respondents.

Table 6.7. Level of satisfaction -Library' Support and Place of Stay

Level of satisfaction	Place of Stay		Total
	Rural (Village)	Urban (Town/City)	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	48 (35.8) 42.1	86 (64.2) 37.6	134(100.0) 39.1
Not satisfied	56 (34.4) 49.1	107(65.6) 46.7	163(100.0) 47.5
Satisfied	2(7.4) 1.8	25 (92.6) 10.9	27 (100.0) 7.9
Partly satisfied	7 (46.7) 6.1	8 (53.3) 3.5	15(100.0) 4.4
Fully satisfied	1 (25.0) 0.9	3 (75.0) 1.3	4(100.0) 1.2
Total	114 (33.2) 100.0	229 (66.8) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table reveals that the respondents both from rural and urban areas reacted negatively to the library support at the study centre. However, when specific comparison is made the following variations are noticed. Out of the total rural respondents more than 90 percent reacted negatively and fall under the categories of thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied; urban respondents are at around 85 percent. Thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied are more in rural areas than in urban areas. But the variation is ranging between three and five percent. When it comes to satisfied respondents, wide variation is noticed between rural and urban respondents. It is below two percent among rural respondents and more than ten percent in urban respondents. Partly satisfied are more in rural areas than in urban areas. When all positively satisfied respondents are put together for library support at the study centre it is 8.8 percent among rural respondents and 15.7 percent in urban respondents. The difference is noticeable between rural and urban areas. It means urban respondents are getting some library

support when compared to their counter parts in rural areas. However, it should be remembered that an overwhelming majority from both rural and urban areas have negatively reacted to the library support at the study centre.

### **Suggestions for Improving Library Support**

After knowing the general negative level of satisfaction for library support at the study centre, irrespective of gender, programmes of study and place of stay (rural and urban) the respondents are asked to give suggestions for improving library support and what they need to have in the library at the study centre.

Table 6.8. Suggestions for improving Library Support Services

<b>Suggestions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Library should lend books	210	61.2
Provide multi media library	<b>50</b>	14.6
Make sufficient seating arrangements	38	11.1
Provide xerox facility	31	9.0
No time/ Material is sufficient	<b>3</b>	0.9
Above all	2	0.6
Not answered	<b>9</b>	2.6
Total	343	100

**In** response to the above question majority of the respondents suggested for book lending facility at the study center. Around 15 percent suggested provision of multi-media library, 11 percent wanted sufficient seating arrangements and nine percent suggested xerox facility at the library. However, a few did not answer the question.

To conclude the section on library support, based on the data in the above tables it is found that more than three-fourths do not have knowledge about existing library facility. An overwhelming majority felt the need for library support. The respondents wanted the library for reference books and to know latest developments in the subject area cutting across social categories. A majority suggested for lending of books. When the level of satisfaction is analysed with respect to gender and programmes of study, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (85 percent) are falling under not satisfied and

thoroughly dissatisfied category. Only 13.5 percent positively reacted. The high rate of negative dissatisfaction corresponds to the high degree of ignorance about existing library facility and suggestions for lending books to the students.

## **Part - II**

### **Support for B.Sc. Practicals**

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University is the first Open University to offer under-graduation programme in science through distance mode. In the beginning many have expressed reservations about offering practical oriented Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) programme through distance mode. However, the experience of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University proved that with proper planning and design any programme can be offered and delivered through distance mode of learning.

About the offer of science programmes it is stated that, "the demystification of science education and the popularisation of science education through open universities should not be seen as a decline in the standards of science education but rather a right step in the right direction"<sup>9</sup>. Based on the practical manual students can do small practicals at home. During summer schools they will be exposed to a wide variety of instruments and can work on open ended / experiments of problem-solving nature<sup>10</sup>.

The science programme in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University consists of the following activities. They are (1) hands on experiments, (2) visual experiments (3) group experiments and (4) demonstration experiments. The practicals are organized at the selected study centre of the host institutions, which having the required infrastructure. Science programmes offered by the Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University when compared with the syllabus of a conventional university are more comprehensive in coverage of the subject content. The practicals are delivered with the help of video lessons, which have edge over other types of lessons in conveying the subject content more effectively to the

learners due to the convergence of visual and sound effects, which can be recorded, with the help of microscope to magnify small experiments and dissections of the animals<sup>11</sup>,

Dr. BRAOU has 72 hours of laboratory components in each of IInd and IIIrd years of study. While handling the practicals, the teachers face a heterogeneous class with different backgrounds, ages, sex, occupations, and understanding abilities. To overcome the problem of heterogeneous group the counsellors need to be at ease with adult learners and their needs and should be open to new ideas and suggestions. The attendance in practical session is made compulsory to complete the program<sup>12</sup>.

In the light of the above discussion an attempt is made here to find out how the practical component in B.Sc programme is delivered to the students. To teach students various practical experiments Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University has prepared video programs and uses manual and record books. Hence, an attempt is made here to find out students' problems in attending practical classes and their suggestions for better organisation of practicals.

### **Role of Video Programmes on Science Practical**

As stated earlier video programmes are prepared to familiarize the students to do the experiments. The science students are expected to view the video programmes before actually doing the practicals. In this context the respondents were asked whether they watched the video programmes.

Table 6.9. Whether watched video programmes before doing practicals.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Watched	29	37.7
Did not watch	48	62.3
Total	77	100

In response 62 percent of the respondents stated that they did not watch any such programme while 38 percent stated that they did. Though a limited number of them

watched video programmes, they were further asked about the utility of watching video programmes on practicals.

Table 6.10. Opinion on utility of practicals shown on videos

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Helpful for understanding practicals	<b>22</b>	75.9
Quality is not good	<b>5</b>	17.2
Necessary to familiarise before doing practicals	<b>7</b>	6.9
Total	<b>29</b>	100

The above table shows that 75 percent felt that the programmes are helpful in understanding practicals and 7 percent felt that they were helpful in familiarising themselves with the experiments to be carried before doing practicals. However, around 17 percent felt that the quality of the programmes is not good.

Then the respondents who did not watch video programmes were asked for reasons for not viewing the video practical lessons.

Table 6.11. Reasons for not watching practicals shown on video

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not aware of availability of such programmes	<b>28</b>	58.3
Video programmes are not available at the study centre	<b>12</b>	25.0
Counsellors did not show them	<b>7</b>	14.6
Television / Video Cassette Player not working	<b>1</b>	2.1
Total	<b>48</b>	100

The reasons indicated that are about 58 percent are unaware of the availability of video lessons on practicals. one-fourth felt that they are unavailable at the study center, 15 percent feel that counselors did not show them and very few tell that television / video cassette player was not working in their study center, hence they did not watch the programmes. It means that majority are not even aware of availability of such programmes. Then they were asked about the use of practical manual and record book for doing practicals.

### Role of Manual and Record Book

Table 6.12. How do you find the use of Practical Manual & Record Book

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Useful	70	90.9
Not useful	7	9.1
Total	77	100

Manual and record book are used to teach the experiments and drawings in the science courses. More than 90 percent of the B.Sc respondents stated that the manual and record book are useful to them. However, a few stated that they are not useful. Then the students are asked about the availability of samples and equipment in the laboratories.

### Availability of Samples and Equipment

Table 6.13. Availability of samples and equipment in the lab

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Available	55	71.4
Not available	22	28.6
Total	77	100

Availability of samples and equipment to do the practical gives the students an opportunity to have hands on experience in doing various practicals. When asked about their availability more than two-thirds feel that the samples and equipment are available. The rest of the respondents feel that the samples and equipment are not available to them to do the practical. Then the students are asked about any problems they faced in attending practicals. The details are given in the next table.

### Problems in Attending Practical

Table 6.14. Problems in attending B.Sc practicals

<b>Problems</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not able to get leave from the work place	34	44.2
Long gap between organizing practicals and conducting exam	28	36.4
Samples and equipment are not available	8	10.4
Arrangements for stay is a problem	7	9.0
Total	77	100

When the respondents are asked about the problems they faced in attending B.Sc practicals in the lab, around 44 percent expressed that it is not convenient to get leave from their regular jobs for attending practicals continuously. At present there is a long gap between the organization of practicals and conduct of practical examinations. Because of long gap they forget and are unable to do the experiments when the practical examinations are held as a part of year-end examination. Hence, more than one-third felt the long gap between organisation of practical and practical exam is a problem for them. However, around one-fifth stated that non-availability of samples and stay arrangements for out-station students are some of the other problems.

#### Level of Satisfaction for Science Practical

Out of the total respondents of the present study around 22.5 percent are students of B.Sc program wherein the students have to compulsorily attend practicals to successfully complete the program.

Table 6.15. Level of Satisfaction regarding Science Practical

Level of Satisfaction	Frequency	Percent
Thoroughly dissatisfied	4	5.2
Not satisfied	10	13.0
Satisfied	37	48.0
Partly satisfied	6	7.8
Fully satisfied	20	26.0
Total	77	100

When the respondents are asked about their opinions on B.Sc practicals an overwhelming number (80 percent) are satisfied and around 18 percent are either not satisfied or thoroughly dissatisfied with the conduct of practicals. The highest number of positive responses proves that the practical based science education can be successfully delivered and supported through distance mode of learning. When it is noticed that overall around 80 percent are satisfied with the organization of practicals it was decided to prepare cross tables for further understanding of the level of satisfaction with respect to gender, social status and place of stay (rural and urban).

Table 6.16. Gender and Level of Satisfaction -Science Practicals

Level of Satisfaction	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	3 (75.0) 6.8	1 (25.0) 3.0	4 (100.0) 5.2
Not satisfied	4 (40.0) 9.1	6 (60.0) 18.2	10 (100.0) 13.0
Satisfied	23 (62.2) 52.3	14 (37.8) 42.4	37 (100.0) 48.1
Partly satisfied	4 (66.7) 9.1	2 (33.3) 6.1	6 (100.0) 7.8
Fully satisfied	10 (50.0) 22.7	10 (50.0) 30.3	20 (100.0) 26.0
Total	44 (57.1) 100.0	33 (42.9) 100.0	77 (100.0) 100.0

Male and female respondents have positively reacted for organization of practical. Among the male around 52 percent are satisfied 22 percent are fully satisfied and 9 percent are partly satisfied followed by not satisfied (9 percent) and thoroughly dissatisfied. Among the female 42 percent are satisfied, 30 percent are fully satisfied, 18 percent are not satisfied 6 percent are partly satisfied and 3 percent are thoroughly dissatisfied. Among the male thoroughly dissatisfied are more where as not satisfied are the highest in female. There is a 10 percent difference among satisfied between male and female respondents. Fully satisfied are more in female respondents than the male. However, in both the groups majority are satisfied when compared to not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied.

When a gender specific comparison is made for the level of satisfaction within a particular level of satisfaction, the striking differences between the gender are noticed. Among the thoroughly dissatisfied male respondents are more (7 percent) than the females (3 percent). The difference is more than double. Among the not satisfied, female respondents (18 percent) are more than the males (9 percent). Again the difference between satisfied males (52 percent) and the female respondents (42 percent) is noticeable and the males are more satisfied than the females. Out of the fully satisfied, female respondents (30 percent) are more than the males (23 percent). It means though a

majority of both the genders positively reacted for the level of satisfaction for B.Sc practicals, there are differences between them. Next the level of satisfaction is analysed with social status of the respondents.

Table 6.17. Social Status and Level of Satisfaction -Science Practicals

Level of Satisfaction	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	-	-	1 (25.0) 3.6	3 (75.0) 7.9	-	4 (100.0) 5.2
Not satisfied	1 (10.0) 25.0	1 (10.0) 20.0	4 (40.0) 14.3	4 (40.0) 10.5	-	10(100.0) 13.0
Satisfied	1 (2.7) 25.0	3 (8.1) 60.0	13 (35.1) 46.4	19 (51.4) 50.0	1 (2.7) 50.0	37(100.0) 48.1
Partly satisfied	1 (6.7) 25.0	-	4 (66.7) 14.3	1 (16.7) 2.6	-	6 (100.0) 7.8
Fully satisfied	1 (5.0) 25.0	1 (5.0) 20.0	6 (30.0) 21.4	11 (55.0) 28.9	1 (5.0) 50.0	20(100.0) 26.0
Total	4 (5.2) 100.0	5 (6.5) 100.0	28 (36.4) 100.0	38 (49.4) 100.0	2 (2.6) 100.0	77(100.0) 100.0

When the level of satisfaction for conducting of science practicals is analyzed with the social category of the B.Sc respondents, it is noticed that the percentage of satisfied are more among OC and BC and less in SC and ST. Among the fully satisfied OC and SC are more followed by BC and ST. Majority from each social category have positively reacted about organizing science practicals at the study center. It is interesting to note that there are no thoroughly dissatisfied respondents from SC and ST categories. The reasons for this could be less respondents from the particular category.

When a comparative analysis is made between the social categories interesting variations and differences are noticed. Out of the not satisfied the highest are from O.C. and B.C. (40 percent) where as the lowest are from S.C. and ST. (10 percent). Among the satisfied, the highest are from O.C. (50 percent) when compared to the lowest from S.C. (3 percent). In the not satisfied and satisfied O.C's are the highest, where as S.C's. are the lowest. In the partly satisfied category as well B.C are the highest and the S.C. are the lowest. Among the fully satisfied, O.C. are the highest with 55 percent, where as S.C.

and S.T. are the lowest with 5 percent each. However, it is interesting to note that there are no S.C's and S.T's falling under the category of thoroughly dissatisfied while the difference between O.C's and the B.Cs are quite noticeable. It means within the variable for level of satisfaction there is a gap and wide difference between the degree of level of satisfaction among the different social groups. There is a clear division between the OC/BC and SC/ST onr the level of satisfaction for science practicals. OCs/BCs reacted more positively than SC's/ST's. Next the level of satisfaction is analysed with the place of stay (rural and urban) of respondents.

Table 6.18 Level of satisfaction -Science Practical's Support and Place of Stay

Level of satisfaction	Place of Stay		Total
	Rural (Village)	Urban (Town/City)	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	1 (25.0) 3.6	3 (75.0) 6.1	4(100.0) 5.2
Not satisfied	4 (40.0) 14.3	6 (60.0) 12.3	10(100.0) 13.0
Satisfied	13 (35.1) 46.4	24 (64.9) 48.9	37(100.0) 48.0
Partly satisfied	1 (16.7) 3.6	5(83.3) 10.2	6(100.0) 7.8
Fully satisfied	9(45.0) 32.1	11 (55.0) 22.5	20(100.0) 26.0
Total	28 (36.4) 100.0	49 (63.6) 100.0	77(100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table shows that an overwhelming majority of the science respondents from both rural and urban areas have positively reacted to the conduct of science practicals. However, when rural and urban respondents are compared the following trends are noticed. Thoroughly dissatisfied are more in urban areas whereas not satisfied are more in rural areas. Satisfied are more or less evenly distributed. Variations are noticed in partly satisfied and fully satisfied categories. In partly satisfied urban respondents are more whereas in fully satisfied rural respondents are more. In all, more than 80 percent respondents both from rural and urban areas have positively supported the conduct of science practicals. Then the respondents are asked to give suggestion for better organization of practicals.

### Suggestions for Better Organisation of Science Practicals

Table 6.19. Suggestion for better organisation of practicals

Suggestion	Frequency	Percent
May be conducted during vacation period to avoid leave problem	29	37.6
More experiments need to be conducted	26	33.8
Practical home kits may be provided	13	16.9
Practical exam be conducted on the last day of the practicals	6	7.8
Hostel/stay arrangements may be provided for non locals	3	3.9
Total	77	100

The major suggestions given are to conduct practicals during vacation period to avoid leave problems (37 percent), more experiments to be conducted (33 percent) and providing of practical home kits(17 percent) to do some of the practicals on their own at home. The other suggestions are to conduct practical exams on the last day of practicals and to provide hostel accommodation for non-locals. If the practical exam is conducted on the last day of the practicals they can do the experiments very well because they remember the experiments fresh in their memory. The suggestions with respect to occupation are analyses in the next table.

Table 6.20. Occupation and Suggestions for better organisation of Practicals

Suggestions	Occupation					Total
	Employed	Un employed	Business	Self employed	House wife	
May be conducted during vacations to avoid leave problem	22 (75.9) 45.8	2 (6.9) 15.4	2 (6.9) 50.0	2 (6.9) 50.0	1 (3.4) 12.5	29 (100.0) 37.7
Hostel/stay arrangements may be provided for non locals	1 (33.3) 2.1	1 (33.3) 7.7	-	-	1 (33.3) 12.5	3 (100.0) 3.9
More Experiments need to be conducted	15 (57.7) 31.3	7 (26.9) 53.8	1 (3.8) 25.0	1 (3.8) 25.0	2 7.7 25.0	26 (100.0) 33.8
Practical home kits may be provided	5 (38.5) 10.4	2 (15.4) 15.4	1 (7.7) 25.0	1 (7.7) 25.0	4 (30.8) 50.0	13 (100.0) 16.9
Practical exam be conducted on the last day	5 (83.3) 10.4	1 (16.7) 7.7	-	-	-	6 (100.0) 7.8
Total	48 (62.3) 100.0	13(16.9) 100.0	4 (5.2) 100.0	4 (5.2) 100.0	8 (10.4) 100.0	77(100.0) 100.0

Of those who are employed 75 percent want the practicals to be conducted during vacation as getting leave is a problem. Among the employed 31 percent want more experiments to be conducted for understanding the subject. Around 50 percent of the housewives want home based practical kits for doing practicals at home. The responses given by unemployed, businessman, self-employed and housewives are on similar lines except when it is not specified. It means the employees want the practicals be conducted during vacation, as getting long leave is a problem for them.

On the whole the analysis of the above tables reveal that out of the respondents who watch video lessons before doing practicals feel that they are helpful in familiarizing them before doing the actual practicals. Those who have not watched them are unaware of availability of such video lessons. Majority feel that the manual and record books are very much useful and the samples are available for doing practicals. Those employed feel that it is very difficult to get leave for doing practicals and the long time gap between organisation of practicals and conduct of practical examinations are some of the problems faced by the respondents. Hence, majority suggested for conduct of practicals during vacations and also there is a need for conducting more experiments. The majority of B.Sc respondents have positively reacted on the level of satisfaction for organising B.Sc practicals irrespective of gender and social status. Depending on the positive feedback it can be said that if properly planned, practical based science education can be effectively delivered to the students.

### **Part - III**

#### **Support through Study Centre**

Study centers are the lowest units in the organizational structure of the Open University. All the above discussed support services are largely provided to the students through the study centers. It means the success of all the support services is largely dependent on effective functioning and efficiency of the study centers. The successful implementation and delivery of academic programmes rest with the study centres and their effective functioning.<sup>13</sup>

While justifying the need for study centre in distance education it is stated **that** the open universities are establishing study centres for different purposes, as centres **for** viewing audio/video programs, as library resource centre, place for student interaction among self-help groups, and a site for practical experiments.<sup>14</sup>

Sewart stated that study centre is a 'dustbin' of teaching in distance education, where all important functions or too difficult or too expensive functions to carry out are dropped in.<sup>15</sup> The study centres are used from the beginning for different purpose other than the original plan for places of viewing and tutorials.<sup>16</sup> The author also states that the study centre resembles the traditional classroom for the distance learner where an authoritative figure called tutor-counselor is available for individual guidance and support. The study centre acts as a local resource centre to students. According to the author the "students do not use all the facilities which the University provides to them, but they are essential".<sup>17</sup> The support services provided at the study centre and thorough study centres are part of total package of teaching system at a distance. According to Sewart "it is the richness and variety, the multiplicity of provision, which attracts and sustains our students. Study centres and what is offered in them are part of this richness and provision".<sup>18</sup> This statement of the author concludes the arguments and the need for having study centres in the provision of student support services in distance education.

The study centres are conceived as 'viewing centres' of audio and video programmes and provide "facilities for 'study'- even private study, away from the pressures of home"<sup>19</sup> and are established in a place where they can be easily accessible to the student community.

The future depends to a larger extent on the advisory and the counseling role to be played by the study centre. The success of study centres depends on "accessibility, comfort and atmosphere, opening hours and the attitude of care taking staff to the closing time."<sup>20</sup> The role of the tutor-counselor and the philosophy of the host institution of the study centre and the staff will greatly contribute for the success of the study centre.

In the United Kingdom Open University, the study centres, "have provided places where students can see and talk to people, about their academic work and factors hindering it, about their hopes and fears, their disappointments and their success."<sup>21</sup> The future of study centre, depends on the right identification of colleges for study centre and selection and training of tutor- counsellors.

Study centres provide a place for face-to-face tuition, they provide various facilities like, television, radio, audio and video tapes, library for private study • It also has a notice board of detailed tutorial information. To sum up the "study centres are base for a considerable variety of student activity."<sup>22</sup>

The successful study centres have some characteristics like, students are attracted for tuition and counselling and there is, active involvement of students in self-help groups. Students develop a feeling that the study centre is 'theirs' and they will-use the facilities at the study centre.<sup>23</sup>

In the process of academic support, study centre plays very vital and important role. They are the locations for lecturing, staff to meet students for tutorials, orientation and induction sessions, small library, facilities for private study, informal study groups, and examination centres. The study centres play very important role in providing teleconferencing and computing facilities to the students.<sup>25</sup>

According to Prof. Koul the main functions of study centres are: (1) conducting tutorials for students, (2) evaluating assignments, (3) information for potential students and the public on such matters as availability of courses, eligibility conditions, and examination and tutorial schedules and (4) providing feedback to the university with their periodic reports.<sup>26</sup> While discharging their functions they face the following difficulties (1) less attendance in contact programmes, (2) students fall into a cultural trap and expect the tutors to deliver lectures, (3) tutors also prefer to deliver lectures as they are used to it, (4) delay in assignments handling and careless evaluation and grading, (5) non-

functioning of audio-video equipment, (6) lack of space at study centre resulting in overcrowding and (7) indifferent attitude of part-time staff to student problems.<sup>27</sup>

Keeping in mind the significance of study centre, in this section, aspects such as the accessibility of study center in terms of distance and convenience to visit, number of visits made by the students during last year, their mode of transport, problems they faced, special facilities to be provided at the study centre and special advantages and the problem the women face, level of satisfaction for the role and study centre support in relations to gender, social status and programmes of study and their suggestions for improvement have been examined.

#### Accessibility of Study Centre

Table 6.21. Distance between study centre and residence

Distance in Kilometers	Frequency	Percent
Less than 10 kilometers	142	41.4
10 to 20 kilometers	106	30.9
21 to 30 kilometers	33	9.6
31 to 50 kilometers	17	5.0
51 to 100 kilometers	37	10.8
Above 100 kilometers	8	2.3
Total	343	100

Since the respondents come from different places to attend personal contact programmes at the study centre, they are asked about the distance between their residence and study center to assess the accessibility of study centre. It is found that more than three-fourths are living within the radius of 20 kilometers of the study centre. However, 13 percent live beyond 50 kilometers and above includes some of them have to travel more than 100 kilometers to reach the study centre. Their convenience for visiting study centre is also elicited below.

Table 6.22. Distance between study centre and residence and Place of Stay

Distance	Place of Stay		Total
	Rural (Village)	Urban (Town/City)	
Less than 10 kilometers	35 (24.6) 30.7	107(75.4) 46.7	142(100.0) 41.4
10 to 20 kilometers	29 (27.4) 25.4	77 (72.6) 33.6	106(100.0) 30.9
21 to 30 kilometers	12(36.4) 10.5	21 (63.6) 9.2	33(100.0) 9.6
31 to 50 kilometers	12(70.6) 10.5	5 (29.4) 2.2	17(100.0) 5.0
51 to 100 kilometers	21 (56.8) 18.4	16(43.2) 7.0	37(100.0) 10.8
Above 100 kilometers	5 (62.5) 4.4	3 (37.5) 1.3	8(100.0) 2.3
Total	114 (33.2) 100.0	229 (66.8) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table revealed interesting picture. Around 31 percent from rural areas and 47 percent from urban areas are living within 10 kilometers distance of the study centre. It means more percent of urban respondents are living within 10 kilometers distance from study centre. Again out of the 10 to 20 kilometers 25 percent are from rural areas and 33 percent are from urban areas. It means in both the categories of below 10 and between 10 to 20 kilometers distance majority of the urban respondents are residing when compared to rural respondents. It is also interesting to know for the categories above 21 to 30 kilometers and 31 to 50 and 51 and above more percentage of respondents are living in rural areas. It means less percentage of urban respondents are living in far away places than the rural respondents. In the case of rural respondents around one third of the respondents are residing beyond 31 kilometers, whereas in urban areas ten percent are residing beyond 31 kilometers. The reason for the variation and long distance for rural respondents could be the density of population which is less in rural areas and more in urban areas. In this context it can also be inferred that the study centres are more accessible to urban residents than the rural residents. In another study it was found that the accessibility of study centres is more in urban areas than in rural areas.<sup>28</sup>

Table 6.23. Whether it is convenience to visit the study centre.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Convenient	265	77.3
Not convenient	78	22.7
Total	343	100

The respondents are asked about the convenience in visiting the study center. Around 77 percent stated it is convenient. Whereas for 23 percent it is not convenient for them to visit the study center for the following reasons.

Table 6.24. Reasons for inconvenience.

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Due to distance	38	48.7
Expensive and involve traveling	24	30.8
Working hours not convenient	7	9.0
Busy with house hold work	7	9.0
Busy with office/professional activities	2	2.5
Total	78	100

Though visiting study centre is convenient to a large number of the respondents, around 23 percent have expressed that it is inconvenient for them to visit study center. Those students are asked to give reason for the inconvenience. Major reasons for inconvenience are distance (48 percent) and it is expensive and involves traveling (30 percent). Other reasons for inconvenience to visit study centre are inconvenient working hours of study centre and some of them are busy with household work. An attempt is also made to find out how many visits each respondent made during last year.

Table 6.25. Number of visits during last year

Number of visits	Frequency	Percent
Never visited	18	5.2
Less than 5 times	35	10.2
Around 10 times	63	18.4
Around 20 times	103	30.0
Around 30 times	73	21.3
More than 30 times	51	14.9
Total	343	100

Out of the total respondents around 28 percent visited between 5 to 10 times. About half of them visited between 20 to 30 times and 15 percent visited more than 30 times. However a few (5.2 percent) have never visited the study center, not even once during last one year. It is widely believed that accessibility of study center will facilitate more visits by the students. Hence, an attempt is made to find out the relationship between the number of visits and the distance between the study center and the residence of the respondents.

Table 6.26. Number of Visits and Distance between Study Centre and Residence

Number of visits	Distance between study centre <b>and</b> residence						Total
	Less than 10 kms	10 to 20 kms	21 to 30 kms	31 to 50 kms	51 to 100 kms	Above 100 kms	
Never	6 (33.3) 4.2	4 (22.2) 3.8	1 (5.6) 3.0	-	6 (33.3) 16.2	1 (5.6) 12.5	18 (100.0) 5.2
Less than 5times	13 (37.1) 9.2	9 (25.7) 8.5	1 (2.9) 3.0	2 (5.7) 11.8	6 (17.1) 16.2	4 (11.4) 50.0	35 (100.0) 10.2
Around 10 times	19 (30.2) 13.4	23 (36.5) 21.7	9 (14.3) 27.3	6 (9.5) 35.3	4 (6.3) 10.8	2 (3.2) 25.0	63(100.0) 18.4
Around 20 times	42 (40.8) 29.6	29 (28.2) 27.4	12 (11.7) 36.4	4 (3.9) 23.5	16 (15.5) 43.2	-	103(100.0) 30.0
Around 30 times	36 (49.3) 25.4	23 (31.5) 21.7	7 (9.6) 21.2	3 (4.1) 17.6	3 (4.1) 8.1	1 (1.4) 12.5	73 (100.0) 21.3
More than 30 times	26 (51.0) 18.3	18 (35.3) 17.0	3 (5.9) 9.1	2 (3.9) 11.8	2 (3.9) 5.4	-	51 (100.0) 14.9
Total	142 (41.4) 100.0	106(30.9) 100.0	33 (9.6) 100.0	17 (5.0) 100.0	37(10.8) 100.0	8 (2.3) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table showed that the number of visits by the respondents to the study centre and the distance of the study centre have a relationship. It is observed that lesser the distance between the study center and residence more the visits to the study center. It can be observed that the respondents who are living in less than ten kilometers and between 10 to 20 kilometers have made more number of visits to the study center. It is evident from the above table that longer the distance between study center and residence lesser the visits were to the study center by the respondents. Out of those who never visited the study center one-third are living at a distance of less than ten kilometers and another one-third are at a distance of between 51 to 100 kilometers and the rest are

spread in different groups of distances. Similarly majority of those visiting more than 30 times live within the distance of 20 kilometers. In the next table **the mode of transport** used for visiting study centre is explained.

Table 6.27. Number of visits during last year and Place of Stay

Number of visits	Place of Stay		Total
	Rural (Village)	Urban (Town/City)	
Never	7 (38.9)	11 (61.1)	18(100.0)
	6.1	4.8	5.2
Less than 5 times	17(48.6)	18(51.4)	35(100.0)
	14.9	7.9	10.2
Around 10 times	20(31.7)	43 (68.3)	63(100.0)
	17.5	18.8	18.4
Around 20 times	37 (35.9)	66 (64.1)	103(100.0)
	32.5	28.8	30.0
Around 30 times	19(26.0)	54 (74.0)	73(100.0)
	16.7	23.6	21.3
More than 30 times	14(27.5)	37 (72.5)	51 (100.0)
	12.3	16.2	14.9
Total	114 (33.2)	229 (66.8)	343(100.0)
	100.0	100.0	100.0

The data in the above table shows the number of times the rural and the urban respondents visited the study centre during the last year. Comparison between rural and urban respondents shows the following findings. The respondents who never visited study centre during last one year are more in rural areas than in urban areas. **Around 15** percent of rural respondents visited less than five times than eight percent from **the urban** areas. The variation is seven percent. The respondents who visited around 10 times **are** more or less same in both areas. Out of the respondents who visited around 20 times, majority are from rural areas. Those who are visiting study centre around 30 and more than 30 times are more from urban areas (39.8 percent) when compared to the rural respondents (29 percent). The variation is more than 10 percent. It is noticed in the earlier table that majority of the urban respondents (80 percent) are living within the 20 kilometers of distance from their study centre. It implies that as majority of the **urban** respondents are closer to the study centre they visit the study centre more number of times. As the distance is more in rural areas the visits to the study centre are less. It

means the distance of study centre in both rural and **urban** areas influence **the students** visits **to** the study centre.

### **Mode of Transport and Travel Concession**

Table 6.28. Mode of transport for visiting study centre.

<b>Mode of transport</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Own transport	115	33.5
Public transport	228	66.5
Total	343	100

When the respondents are asked how they visit the study centre. Majority use public transport system whereas around one-third use their own transport such as scooter, cycle etc., to visit study center. It is also possible that most of those who use own transport must be living nearer to the study centre. An effort is made to find out if any travel concession is available to them or not.

Table 6.29. Travel concession facility.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Concession provided	38	11.1
Not provided	239	69.7
Not answered	<b>66</b>	19.2
Total	343	100

Generally the state road transport corporation provides travel concession to the students who are not employed to attend their colleges. Here the same facility is also extended to the students who are unemployed and studying in the open university. When the respondents are asked about getting any student travel concession only 11 percent stated that they are getting travel concession in the state run buses in the form of concession bus pass whereas around 70 percent are not getting any concession, and 19 percent did not answer the question. The reasons for majority students not getting concessions to travel in the state run busses could be their employment or majority must

be residing with in the local area. The nature of problems they face when they visit the study centre are explained in the following table.

### Problems faced during their visit to the Study Centre

Table 6.30. Problems faced during their visit to the study centre.

Problems	Frequency	Percent
Latest information not provided / available	159	46.4
They directed us to contact head office	81	23.6
Indifferent attitude of staff	50	14.5
No problem	27	7.9
Whenever I went staff are not available	17	5.0
Not answered	6	1.7
Others	3	0.9
Total	343	100

The respondents are asked about the type of problems they faced when they visited the study center. The main problem they faced are non-availability of latest information (46 percent) and the study center staff mostly direct them to contact university head office (23 percent) instead of solving their problems. Other problems are indifferent attitude of staff (14 percent) and non-availability of stall when the students had gone to enquire.

When it is examined to find out the relationship between the problems the respondents faced when they visited the study centre with gender, social status and programmes of study, cutting across the variables major problems faced by them are non-availability of latest information at the study centre and the study centre staff directing the students to contact the head office for solving their problems.

Table 6.31. Problems faced when ever visited study centre and Place of Stay

Problems	Place of Stay		Total
	Rural (Village)	Urban (Town/City)	
Latest information not provided / available	53 (33.3) 46.5	106(66.7) 46.3	159(100.0) 46.4
They directed me to contact head office	32 (39.5) 28.1	49 (60.5) 21.4	81 (100.0) 23.6
When ever I went staff were not available	6 (35.3) 5.3	11 (64.7) 4.8	17(100.0) 5.0
Indifferent attitude of staff	15 (30.0) 13.2	35 (70.0) 15.3	50(100.0) 14.6
No problem	5(18.5) 4.4	22(81.5) 9.6	27(100.0) 7.9
Not answered	2 (33.3) 1.8	4 (66.7) 1.7	6 (100.0) 1.7
Others	1 (33.3) 0.9	2 (66.7) 0.9	3(100.0) 0.9
Total	114 (33.2) 100.0	229 (66.8) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

In the above table an attempt is made to find out what type of problems the rural and the urban respondents are facing whenever they visit the study centre. More than 45 percent in both areas feel that they are not getting latest information. However, a majority of the rural respondents (28 percent) felt that they were directed to contact headquarters as compared to urban respondents (21 percent). Major variations are not noticed between rural and urban respondents in other types of problems. Hence it is interesting to know that a majority of the rural respondents are directed to contact the headquarters. In fact headquarters is far away place to the rural respondents who are from Mahaboobnagar district. Whereas majority urban respondents are from Hyderabad district, where the university is located. It means special efforts should be initiated to solve the problems of respondents at the study centres which are far away from the headquarters as the rural respondents cannot come to the headquarters for resolving their problems. Next the special facilities to be provided at the study centre are identified.

### Special facilities at the Study Centre

Table 6.32. Special facilities to be provided at the study centre

Special facilities to be provided	Frequency	Percent
Drinking water	148	43.1
Canteen	75	21.9
Waiting hall	52	15.2
Toilets	47	13.7
All of the above	8	2.3
Library	7	2.0
Not answered	6	1.7
Total	343	100

When the respondents are asked whether there is a need for providing special facilities at the study centre, 43 percent of respondents have asked for drinking water, followed by canteen (22 percent), waiting hall (15 percent), and toilets (13 percent). Other responses are negligible. After knowing the special facilities to be provided at the study centre for all the students, it was decided to find out if the female students are facing any special problems at the study centre.

### Female Students - Problems and Advantages

Table 6.33. Problems faced by female students\*

Problems	Frequency	Percent
Lack of toilets	68	52.3
Lack of waiting hall	40	30.8
Transport facility	22	16.9
Total*	130	100

\* Female respondents only

The table shows women students are facing certain specific problems at the study centre. The most important problem is lack of toilets (52 percent) followed by lack of waiting hall (30 percent) and lack of transport (16 percent) facilities. However, the female students felt that there are certain advantages for them for studying in open university system.

Table 6.34. Advantages for female\* students studying in the open university

Advantages	Frequency	Percent
Can be studied while working	61	46.9
Can be studied while staying at home	35	26.9
More suitable for married women and housewives	20	15.4
Useful for those discontinued studies due to lack of college nearby	14	10.8
Total*	130	100

\*Female respondents only

It is often believed that distance education is more suitable and advantages to the girls and women. Majority of the women (47 percent) felt that it is more advantageous for working women to study in open university and 27 percent felt that women can study while staying at home. Others expressed the view that it is more suitable to married women and housewives and suitable for the girls who discontinued their studies due to non availability of colleges nearby. Since it is widely believed that distance education is more suitable for providing education to woman, an attempt is made below to find out the special advantages for women studying in open universities in relation to the marital status.

Table 6.35. Marital Status and advantage for women studying in the open university

Advantages	Marital Status		Total
	Married	Unmarried	
Useful for those who discontinued studies due to lack of college nearby	4 (28.6) 7.8	10 (71.4) 12.7	14 (100.0) 10.8
Can be studied while staying at home	12 (34.3) 23.5	23 (65.7) 29.1	35 (100.0) 26.9
Can be studied while working	23 (37.7) 45.1	38 (62.3) 48.1	61 (100.0) 46.9
More suitable for married and housewives	12 (60.0) 23.5	8 (40.0) 10.1	20 (100.0) 15.4
Total	51 (39.2) 100.0	79 (60.8) 100.0	130 (100.0) 100.0

It is noticed that a majority among married and unmarried felt that through open university they can study while working, study while staying at home as open university doesn't require attendance and they further felt that it is more suitable for married women and housewives to improve their qualifications. When specific comparison is

made between the married and unmarried women certain interesting findings are noticed. Majority of the unmarried women felt that it is more useful for those who discontinued their studies due to lack of college nearby. Even the majority of the unmarried felt that open university is more suitable for those who want to study while staying at home. More than double the percentage of married women (23.5 percent) feel that open university is more suitable for married and housewives when compared to unmarried (10 percent) who expressed the same opinion. When the special advantages for women are tabulated with their occupation the following trends are noticed.

Table 6.36. Occupation and Advantage for women studying in the open university

Advantages	Occupation					Total
	Employed	Un employed	Business	Self employed	House wife	
Useful for those who discontinued studies due to lack of college nearby	7 (50.0) 13.7	5 (35.7) 9.4	2 (14.3) 50.0	-	-	14 (100.0) 10.8
Can be studied while staying at home	5 (14.3) 9.8	21 (60.0) 39.6	-	1 (2.9) 50.0	8 (22.9) 40.0	35 (100.0) 26.9
Can be studied while working	37 (60.7) 72.5	18 (29.5) 34.0	1 (1.6) 25.0	1 (1.6) 50.0	4 (6.6) 20.0	61 (100.0) 46.9
More suitable for married and housewives	2 (10.0) 3.9	9 (45.0) 17.0	1 (5.0) 25.0	-	8 (40.0) 40.0	20 (100.0) 15.4
Total	51 (39.2) 100.0	53 (40.8) 100.0	4 (3.1) 100.0	2 (1.5) 100.0	20(15.4) 100.0	130 (100.0) 100.0

Among the employed, 72 percent felt that they can study while working, 13.7 percent felt that their discontinued studies can be started again, 10 percent felt that they can study while staying at home and 4 percent felt that it is more advantageous for married women and housewives to continue their education. Among the unemployed around 40 percent stated that they can study while staying at home, 34 percent felt that they can study while working and 17 percent felt that open universities provide special advantages because they are more suitable for married and housewives. Among the housewives 40 percent felt that they can study while staying at home, another 40 percent felt that it is more suitable for married and housewives to continue their education and the remaining 20 percent felt that they can study while working.

When occupation specific comparison is made between the occupation of the women and the special advantages for women for studying in the open university the following trends are noticed. Out of those who discontinued their studies due to lack of college nearby, highest percentage are in the business (50 percent) when compared to the employed ((13.7 percent) and unemployed (9 percent). It means open university is more advantages for the women who discontinued studies and are in business when compared to the employed. Out of those who feel that they can study while staying at home, highest of them ( around 40 to 50 percent) are self employed, housewives and unemployed and lowest of them (10 percent) are employed. Among those who felt that they could study while working, the highest numbers of them are working and employed (72.5 percent) when compared to the lowest (20 percent) who are housewives. Majority of the house wife (40 percent) felt that it is more suitable for married and housewives when compared to the lowest (4 percent) who are employed. It means the degree of difference between women from different occupations is noticed within the same advantage given by them. In conclusion women feel that distance education and open university provide special advantages and benefits for continuing their education. Then the level of satisfaction for study centre is explained.

#### Level of Satisfaction for Study Centre Support

The respondents are asked to give their opinion and rank the level of satisfaction about the study center support on a five-point scale. The details are explained in the next table.

Table 6.37. Level of Satisfaction on Study Centre Support

Level of Satisfaction - Study Centre Support	Frequency	Percent
Thoroughly dissatisfied	15	4.5
Not satisfied	68	19.8
Satisfied	134	39.1
Partly satisfied	76	22.1
Fully satisfied	50	14.5
Total	343	100

The respondents were asked to give their level of their satisfaction about **study** center support. The response in the above table revealed that majority **are satisfied with** the study center support. However, around one-fourth of respondents have negatively reacted and are either not satisfied or thoroughly dissatisfied. The specific findings are that 39 percent are satisfied, followed by partly satisfied (22 percent) and fully satisfied (14.5 percent) with respect to the support extended. However, the rest of **the** respondents are either **not** satisfied or thoroughly dissatisfied with the study center support.

For a deeper understanding an attempt is made to see the level of satisfaction on study center support in relation to gender, social status, programs of study and place of stay (rural and urban) of the respondents in the following tables.

Table 6.38. Gender and Level of Satisfaction on Study Centre Support

Level of Satisfaction	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	11 (73.3) 5.2	4 (26.7) 3.1	15 (100.0) 4.4
Not satisfied	38 (55.9) 17.8	30 (44.1) 23.1	68 (100.0) 19.8
Satisfied	86 (64.2) 40.4	48 (35.8) 36.9	134 (100.0) 39.1
Partly satisfied	47 (61.8) 22.1	29 (38.2) 22.3	76 (100.0) 22.2
Fully satisfied	31 (62.0) 14.6	19 (38.0) 14.6	50 (100.0) 14.6
Total	213 (62.1) 100.0	130 (37.9) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

When the level of satisfaction is analyzed with respect to gender of respondents, it is commonly noticed that 40 percent male and 37 percent female respondents are satisfied where as 22 percent each in male and female are partly satisfied followed by 14 percent fully satisfied. Among the not satisfied 23 percent are from female and 18 percent are from male followed by thoroughly dissatisfied with 5 percent are male and 3 percent female respondents. Among the not satisfied, female respondents are more whereas in thoroughly dissatisfied males are more. Out of the total of satisfied respondents, males

are more in number than the females. It can be said on the basis of above data that a majority of male and female respondents are satisfied with the working of study center.

In the following table an attempt is made to find out the relationship between the levels of satisfaction about study center support with respect to the social status of the respondents. It is noticed that the responses are spread among all the levels of satisfaction.

Table 6.39. Social Status and Level of Satisfaction on Study Centre Support

Level of Satisfaction	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	1 (6.7) 2.3	-	7 (46.7) 5.6	6 (40.0) 3.9	1 (6.7) 25.0	15 (100.0) 4.4
Not satisfied	5 (7.4) 11.6	1 (1.5) 5.9	28 (41.2) 22.4	34 (50.0) 22.1	-	68 (100.0) 19.8
Satisfied	19 (14.2) 44.2	10 (7.5) 58.8	47 (35.1) 37.6	57 (42.5) 37.0	1 (0.7) 25.0	134 (100.0) 39.1
Partly satisfied	12 (15.8) 27.9	4 (5.3) 23.5	29 (38.2) 23.2	30 (39.5) 19.5	1 (1.3) 25.0	76 (100.0) 22.2
Fully satisfied	6 (12.0) 14.0	2 (4.0) 11.8	14 (28.0) 11.2	27 (54.0) 17.5	1 (2.0) 25.0	50 (100.0) 14.6
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17 (5.0) 100.0	125 (36.4) 100.0	154 (44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

When specific comparison is made between the social status and the level of satisfaction, the following trends are noticed. Among the thoroughly dissatisfied, B.C.(5.6 percent) are the highest compared to the lowest (2.3 percent) from the S.C. There is no thoroughly dissatisfied from the ST. category. Among the not satisfied the highest are from B.C. and O.C. with 22 percent when compared to the lowest 6 percent from S.T. The difference between the social groups is very high and wide. Among the satisfied, the highest are from S.T. (59 percent) and S.C. (44 percent) when compared to the lowest from B.C. and O.C. with 37 percent each. Again the difference between the social categories is very high among the satisfied. The variations in the level of satisfaction between different social groups could be subscribed to the high expectations and aspirations of the individuals as well as social groups for better services from the

study centre. The high level of satisfaction from ST and SC could be because of extension of educational opportunities to them through the study centres **which** were **not** available earlier. Among the partly satisfied the highest are from S.C. (28 percent) when compared to the lowest from O.C. (19.5 percent). Out of the fully satisfied the highest **are** from O.C. (17.5 percent) when compared to the lowest from B.C. (11 percent) **with** noticeable differences between the social groups.

It means **over all** the differences between different social categories for the same level of satisfaction are noticeable. In some cases the differences are quite high and very much visible. The degree of satisfaction for the study centre support varies **from** social group to social group. However, a majority from different social groups have positively reacted to the study centre support, only one-fourth have **negatively** expressed their opinion on level of satisfaction for study centre support.

Table 6.40. Programmes of Study and Level of Satisfaction on Study Centre Support

Level of Satisfaction	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	2 (13.3) 2.4	2 (13.3) 3.6	1 (6.7) 1.3	7 (46.7) 7.7	3 (20.0) 8.3	15 (100.0) 4.4
Not satisfied	17 (25.0) 20.5	12 (17.6) 21.4	16 (23.5) 20.8	16 (23.5) 17.6	7 (10.3) 19.4	68 (100.0) 19.8
Satisfied	33 (24.6) 39.8	18 (13.4) 32.1	34 (25.4) 44.2	41 (30.6) 45.1	8 (6.0) 22.2	134 (100.0) 39.1
Partly satisfied	22 (28.9) 26.5	14 (18.4) 25.0	11 (14.5) 14.3	19 (25.0) 20.9	10 (13.2) 27.8	76 (100.0) 22.2
Fully satisfied	9 (18.0) 10.8	10 (20.0) 17.9	15 (30.0) 19.5	8 (16.0) 8.8	8 (16.0) 22.2	50 (100.0) 14.6
Total	83 (24.2) 100.0	56 (16.3) 100.0	77 (22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36 (10.5) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

In the above table the same data was analyzed in relation to the programs of study to find out variation in the levels of satisfaction among the respondents of different programs of study. It is noticed that a majority of the respondents **in** all the programs of study are falling under three categories of satisfied, partly satisfied and fully satisfied. When further analysed with the level of satisfaction some of the interesting trends are

noticed. Out of the thoroughly dissatisfied the highest numbers are from M.A. (8.3 percent) programme where as the lowest are from B.Sc. (1.3 percent) programme. Other interesting trend is out of the thoroughly dissatisfied, undergraduate students are very less when compared to the postgraduate students. The gap between them is very high. Out of the not satisfied postgraduate respondents is less when compared to undergraduate respondents. Here M.B.A. respondents are the lowest (17.6 percent) when compared to the highest B.Com respondents (21.4 percent). Among the satisfied highest are M.B.A. (45 percent) respondents when compared to the lowest who are satisfied are from B.Com (32 percent) programme. Out of the partly satisfied highest 28 percent are from M.A. programme when compared to lowest 14 percent from B.Sc programme respondents. Out of the fully satisfied both the highest from M.A. 22 percent and the lowest from M.B.A. 8.8 percent are from postgraduation programmes of study. It is interesting to observe that the difference between the highest and the lowest from different programmes of study for a parameter of level of satisfaction is in a majority cases very high. The degree of level of satisfaction varies within the same level of satisfaction for different programmes of study. There is a clear division between postgraduate and undergraduate respondents. Among the satisfied, postgraduate respondents are more than the undergraduate once. Though a majority have positively reacted that the dissatisfied respondents constitute around one-fourth of the total can not be ignored.

Table 6.41. Level of satisfaction -Study Centre Support and Place of Stay

Level of satisfaction	Place of Stay		Total
	Rural (Village)	Urban (Town/City)	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	3 (20.0) 2.6	12(80.0) 5.2	15(100.0) 4.4
Not satisfied	27 (39.7) 23.7	41 (60.3) 17.9	68(100.0) 19.8
Satisfied	43(32.1) 37.7	91 (67.9) 39.7	134(100.0) 39.1
Partly satisfied	27 (35.5) 23.7	49 (64.5) 21.4	76(100.0) 22.2
Fully satisfied	14(28.0) 12.3	36 (72.0) 15.7	50(100.0) 14.6
Total	114 (33.2) 100.0	229 (66.8) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

The above table reveals the level of satisfaction between the rural and the urban respondents. Though a majority in both the categories positively reacted for the study centre support, some variations are noticed for each level of satisfaction. In some cases the high variation is six percent and the low variation is two percent. When specific comparison is made less percentage of rural respondents are thoroughly dissatisfied than the urban respondents. Out of the not satisfied, the highest (23.7 percent) respondents are from rural areas when compared to the urban (18 percent) respondents. It is noticed that the degree of level of satisfaction varies between rural and urban respondents.

### **Suggestions for Effective Functioning of Study Centre**

In view of their experiences the respondents are also asked to give suggestions for effective functioning of study centre which are explained in the next table.

Table 6.42. Suggestions for effective functioning of study centre

<b>Suggestions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Staff should have the knowledge about latest rules and regulations	126	36.7
Full time staff to be appointed at the study centre	<b>74</b>	21.6
Positive attitude of the staff is needed	<b>65</b>	19.0
Improve the maintenance of study centre infrastructure	<b>39</b>	11.3
Study centre staff need to be trained	35	10.2
Not answered	<b>4</b>	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>100</b>

Considering the problems the respondents have faced, they gave some important suggestions like the staff should have the knowledge about latest rules and regulations (36 percent), appointment of full time staff at study centre (21 percent) and need for positive attitude of the staff (19 percent). Other suggestions include need for proper maintenance of study centre infrastructure, equipment and training of staff at study centre. It may be noted here in the three study centers from where the respondents are drawn for the study have permanent full time office staff at the study centre. But 21 percent of respondents are not aware of the facts and suggested appointment of full time staff at the study centre.

To conclude it can be said on the basis of the data in the above tables **that more** than 70 percent are residing within the radius of twenty kilometers from the study **centre** and expressed that it is convenient for them to visit the study centre regularly. A majority visited the study centre between 20 to 30 times during the last year. The distance between the study centre and the residence is influencing the number of visits to the study centre. It is found that lesser the distance more the visits to the study centre and vice-versa. Majority are using public transport to reach the study centre. A majority of the respondents are facing problems such as not getting latest information and suggested that staff should be trained and have knowledge of latest rules and regulations for effective functioning of study centre. They want the provision of drinking water, canteen and waiting hall to be provided at the study centre. A majority of the female respondents are facing problems of lack of toilets and waiting hall for them. Women specially feel that in open university they can study while staying at home and working. A majority of the respondents irrespective of gender, social status and programmes of study positively reacted to the level of study centre support to the students. However, small variations are noticed in the levels of satisfaction with respect to social status and programmes of study. Over all around one-fourth are falling under not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied category. Effective steps need to be taken for providing latest information on rules and regulations that may help to enhance the level of satisfaction for study centre support to students.

### **Summing Up**

In the present chapter respondents\* perceptions are explained on three important components of student support services. Regarding library support an overwhelming majority expressed the need for reference books in the library and want the books to be issued to the students from the study centre library. It is surprising to know that more than three-fourths have no knowledge about the existing library facility at the study centre. As a result of this more than eighty percent have negatively reacted when they were asked about their level of satisfaction for library support. The high degree of dissatisfaction is corresponding with the high degree of lack of knowledge about the

library facility provided at the study centres. Very few have positively expressed their satisfaction.

Regarding B.Sc practicals it can be said based on the data that more than sixty percent have not watched any video programmes prepared to familiarise the students on doing practicals. Those who watched video programmes on practicals felt that they are helpful in understanding practicals. Those who did not watch the video programmes clarified that they were not aware of such lessons. The respondents felt that manual and record book is very much useful and the samples are made available during practicals. They want the practical exams to be conducted soon after the practicals are conducted at the study centre. Irrespective of gender and social status, a majority of the respondents have positively reacted regarding conduct of B.Sc practicals.

Regarding the support extended by the study centre it can be said that around three-fourths of the respondents are residing within twenty kilometers from the study centre and felt that it is convenient for them to visit the study centre very often. Around two-thirds visited the study centre more than twenty times. It is found that the distance between the study centre and the residence influences the number of visits to the study centre. Respondents are facing problem with regard to getting latest information about rules and regulations, lack of drinking water, canteen and waiting hall are the facilities. Female respondents want the toilet and waiting hall facilities at the study centres. Women staying at home and working felt that open university is suitable for them to study and improve their educational qualifications. The majority of the respondents have positively reacted for the study centre support, irrespective of gender, social category and programmes of study. However, around one-fourth have negatively reacted falling under not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied category.

Study centre is at the base of the organisational structure in the open university system. It acts as a face of the university to the distance learners. The group based academic support services are routed through the study centre. Its role in conducting personal contact programmes, distributing study materials to the first year students,

providing library support services and conduct of science practicals is very much visible. The effective functioning of the study centre will help in providing support services to the distance learners more efficiently.

The organisational structure at the grassroots level is at the moment operating on 'dependency model'<sup>29</sup>. The study centre is dependent on the host institution for office accommodation, manpower in the form of academic counsellors and support staff, classrooms for contact programmes and conduct of examinations and for many other things. The study centres use the host institutions' laboratories during their idle time for conduct of practicals. Due to lack of sufficient space the study centre is not able to provide separate reading room for library. To overcome these difficulties the organisational structure needs to be strengthened at the grass root level.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University's decision to establish Regional Coordination Centres by upgrading the existing study centres at the district headquarters as Regional Coordination Centre for the district is a step in the right direction. With this change in the organisational structure the two-tier support structure is converted into three-tier organisational support structure. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University is also planning to construct Regional Coordination Centres in a phased manner by signing an agreement with the Director, Collegiate Education, Government of Andhra Pradesh. Dependency model is transforming into 'convergent model'<sup>30</sup> where the conventional education system and the open and distance education system are sharing the organisational resources in a mutual and supportive environment for extending the educational opportunities to the people.

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- <sup>24</sup> Kember David and John Dekkers (1987), "The role of study centres for academic support in distance education", *Distance Education*, Vol. 8, No, 1, p.6
- <sup>25</sup> *ibid.* p.17
- <sup>26</sup> Kaul.B.N. (1992), "Development and delivery of distance education: The case of Indira Gandhi Open University, New Delhi-India", in, Ian Muirgridge (Ed.), *Perspectives on Distance Education: Distance Education is single and dual mode universities*, The commonwealth of Learning, Canada, p. 130
- <sup>27</sup> *ibid.* p. 136
- <sup>28</sup> Raja Rao.S (2002), "Study Centres and Demographic Dimensions: An Analysis of Accessibility and Need for Coordination and Networking", *New Frontiers in Education*, Vol.XXXII, No.3, p. 182
- <sup>29</sup> Venkaiah.V (1996), "Management of Student Support Services: Institutional Perspectives", *Kakatiya Journal of Open Learning*, Vol.2, No.2, p.23
- <sup>30</sup> Vijayalakshmi Pandit. P (2004), "Student Support Services in Open and Distance Learning", *Booklinks*, Hyderabad, p. 171

## **Chapter-VII**

### **Media Support for Students: Perceptions of Respondents**

## Chapter - VII

### Media Support for Students: Perceptions of Respondents

#### Introduction

The uniqueness of distance education is use of the media to teach and reach students in the open university system. It adopts all available media to impart education at a distance. This is the major difference between conventional education and distance education. Media has enhanced the reach of open universities and facilitated in **extending** the educational opportunities to the rural and remote places. Non-print media increases the learners' concentration and helps the learners involve in the learning process.

Prof. G. Ram Reddy, pioneer in the field of distance education, stressed the role and relevance of media in distance education and felt that the communication technologies are of great relevance to distance education in reaching more people and places and play a very vital role in democratizing education while maintaining quality.<sup>1</sup>

Prof. Ram Reddy has stressed the need for utilizing all components of media for distance education. Print material, radio, television, video cassettes, video disc, satellites, telephones, computer, audio cassettes and video text. All can be put into operation in distance education for teaching the students at a distance. Proper media mix should be used keeping in view the technological advances in the country as well as **its** availability, accessibility, acceptability, economies and validity.<sup>2</sup>

The distance and open learning system is open for various innovative technologies to impart education to the distance learners. There are various advantages of non-print media like, radio, audio cassettes, television, video cassettes and the satellite technology for reaching distance learners dispersed in a wide area.<sup>3</sup> Distance education

requires a technology which is cheap, reliable, easy to use, accessible and suitable for **the** local conditions and needs.<sup>4</sup>

**There** is a need to supplement audio visual programmes to teach subjects like, agriculture, science and geography. They will enhance learners' ability to **understand the** different concepts and experiments. Television can bring the world into a classroom **and** the classroom to the doorstep of learners. The recorded programmes of best teachers can be made available to a larger group of students with the help of audio and video media<sup>5</sup> which can benefit the semi-literate and literate equally.<sup>6</sup>

The multi-media can be effectively used to overcome the potential problem areas in student support service. There are three major problem areas such as (1) institutional constraints (2) instructional constraints and (3) personal constraints.<sup>7</sup> By following integrated multi-media approach to student support service, the problems of learners can be redressed to a larger extent. Integration of all the media is a pre-requisite for better student support services.<sup>8</sup>

Each medium has its own strong and weak points. There is no standard or ideal combination, and "success depends very largely on the close and effective knitting"<sup>9</sup> of media with programme. The "integration of media components should be planned carefully and thoughtfully to bring coherence to the teaching-learning process".<sup>10</sup> The integration of media with the course material will enhance the motivation of learners. Sometimes there is a lack of awareness, attitudes and access. The strategies of integration of media with distance education should begin with course planning, design, instruction and implementation stages.<sup>11</sup>

Teleconferencing is also a method for two-way interaction and will improve the quality of distance education system wherein it can be used for imparting face-to-face counseling on an intensive scale for a select group of students of a specialized programme or targeted audience.<sup>12</sup> Information and communication technologies are increasingly utilized by distance teaching institutions for interaction. Teleconferencing is

one such way to provide interactivity between learner and the counselor/tutor and institution.<sup>13</sup>

The interactive radio counselling is also another method for providing support and counseling in the right direction to harness the advantages of a relatively cost-effective technology for the greater benefit.<sup>14</sup> Interactive radio counselling is breaking a new ground in the field of education in the country. To provide student support services, interactive radio programme seems to be more attractive to the students as well as general public.<sup>15</sup> It is also found that students are utilizing interactive phone in radio counselling programme for subject specific purpose of counselling and guidance. General public are using this for seeking general information about availability of programmes, eligibility criteria etc.<sup>16</sup>

In the light of the significance of media in distance education, an attempt is made to find out students' awareness of use of different media in Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University, its utility, reasons for non utility or under utilization, the level of satisfaction and their suggestion for betterment and effective use of different components of media in distance education. It is also aimed to find out the access of media facilities like radio and others to the respondents. Knowledge about the available media facilities at the study centre, the reasons for not utilizing the media programmes, level of satisfaction and their suggestions for improvement are examined.

#### **Awareness of Media Support**

First, an attempt is made to find out the awareness among the students about use of media by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University for imparting education.

Table 7.1. Awareness of media support.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Aware	266	77.6
Not aware	77	22.4
Total	343	100

The respondents are asked whether they are aware about media support followed in Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University. In response about two-thirds have stated that they are aware of it and the rest are not aware about such support existing in Dr B.R.Ambedkar Open University. The respondents who are aware of media support were again asked to give details about what they mean by media support. The details are explained in the next table.

Table 7.2. Details of awareness of media support

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Television lessons	133	50.0
Radio lessons	<b>99</b>	37.2
Teleconference	15	5.6
Video lessons	13	4.9
Audio lessons	<b>6</b>	2.3
Total	266	100

In response to the above question, half of them told that it is television lessons that they are aware of, 37 percent felt that they are aware of radio lessons and the rest have said that teleconference, video lessons and audio lessons are part of media support services provided and followed in Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University. It means a majority of the respondents are aware that Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University uses television and radio for teaching its students.

### **Media Infrastructure at Home**

After knowing the respondents' awareness about use of media an attempt is made to find out the availability of media infrastructure or equipment with the respondents at their homes. Accessibility and availability of radio, tape recorder, television, video cassette player, telephone, computer and e-mail provide an opportunity to the respondents to use them for their educational purpose and needs.

Table. 7.3 Availability of Media Infrastructure at Home

Available	Yes	No	Total
Radio	250 (72.9)	93(27.1)	343(100)
Tape recorder	208 (60.6)	135(39.4)	343(100)
Television	268(78.1)	75(21.9)	343(100)
VCP	80 (23.3)	263 (76.7)	343(100)
Telephone	177(51.6)	166(48.4)	343(100)
Computer	49(14.3)	294(85.7)	343(100)
E-mail	62 (18.1)	281 (81.9)	343(100)

The data in the above table reveals that television; radio and tape recorders are widely available with majority of respondents at their home. Computer, e-mail and video cassette player are not widely available with the respondents. Availability of telephone is more or less evenly distributed among the respondents.

For deeper understanding of availability of media infrastructure it is decided better to prepare the cross tables with the social status of the respondents. In the following tables an attempt is made to find out the linkage between the social category and the availability of media infrastructure at their homes.

#### Social Status and Radio at Home

Table. 7. 4. Social Status and Radio at Home

Radio at Home	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Yes	30(12.0) 69.8	13 (5.2) 76.5	83 (33.2) 66.4	121 (48.4) 78.6	3 (1.2) 75.0	250 (100.0) 72.9
No	13 (14.0) 30.2	4 (4.3) 23.5	42 (45.2) 33.6	33 (35.5) 21.4	1 (1.1) 25.0	93 (100.0) 27.1
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17 (5.0) 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154 (44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

When the data is analyzed in relation to the social category of the respondents, it is noticed that radio is widely available among all the social groups of the respondents. Overall around 73 percent have radio and the 27 percent doesn't have radio sets at their homes. When it is analyzed social status wise the following trends are noticed. Among

OCs 78.6 percent have radios where as 21.4 percent have no radios. 76.5 percent of STs, 69.8 percent of SCs and 66.4 percent of BCs have radios at home. **However 23.5 percent** among STs, 30.2 percent among SCs and 33.6 percent among BCs have **no** radio sets at home. In all the social groups the responds who doesn't have radio sets are less **than** those who are having them at home. Next the availability of **tape recorder at home** is analyzed **in** relation to social status of the respondents.

### Social Status and Tape Recorder at Home

Table. 7. 5. Social Status and Tape Recorder at Home

Tape Recorder at Home	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Yes	20 (9.6) 46.5	10 (4.8) 58.8	73 (35.1) 58.4	103 (49.5) 66.9	2 (1.0) 50.0	208(100.0) 60.6
No	23 (17.0) 53.5	7 (5.2) 41.2	52 (38.5) 41.6	51 (37.8) 33.1	2 (1.5) 50.0	135(100.0) 39.4
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17(5.0) 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154(44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table revealed that over all a majority of the respondents except among SCs have tape recorder at home. Availability of tape recorder will facilitate the respondents' listening the audio programmes at home. The students are allowed to copy the audio lessons from the study centre for listening at home. Of the respondents 66.9 percent OCs, 58 percent STs, 58.4 percent BCs and 46.5 percent STs have tape recorder at home. Only among SCs, the respondents who are not having tape recorder are more than those who are having it at home. Those who do not have tape recorder is the lowest (33.1 percent) in OCs followed by STs (41.6 percent) and BCs (41.2 percent). It means higher the social status more the availability of tape recorder at home. Next an attempt is made to find out the availability of television among respondents in relation to their social status.

### Social Status and Television at Home

Table. 7. 6. Social Status and Television at Home

Television at Home	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Yes	29 (10.8) 67.4	15 (5.6) 88.2	96 (35.8) 76.8	126(47.0) 81.8	2 (0.7) 50.0	268 (100.0) 78.1
No	14 (18.7) 32.6	2 (2.7) 11.8	29 (38.7) 23.2	28 (37.3) 18.2	2 (2.7) 50.0	75 (100.0) 21.9
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17 (5.0) 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154(44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

It is noticed from the above table that overall 78 percent have television where as 22 percent don't have television at home. When the data is analyzed social category wise, it is noticed that television is very much widely available among all the social groups, 88.2 percent among STs, 81.2 percent among OCs 76.8 percent among BCs and 67.4 percent among SCs. It means irrespective of the social category television is available with more respondents. It is interesting to know that more than 88 percent among S.T. have televisions at home, which is higher than all other castes.

Table. 7.7. Television at home and Place of Stay

Television at home	Place of Stay		Total
	Rural (Village)	Urban (Town/City)	
Yes	78 (29.1) 68.4	190 (70.9) 83.0	268 (100.0) 78.1
No	36 (48.0) 31.6	39 (52.0) 17.0	75(100.0) 21.9
Total	114 (33.2) 100.0	229 (66.8) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table shows the availability of television with rural and urban respondents. Accessibility of television will facilitate the respondents' watching television lessons and participating in interactive 'live' teleconferencing of Dr.B. R.Ambedkar Open University. It has shown some interesting trends. Out of the total rural respondents 68 percent have television and the rest did not have television. Among

the urban respondents 83 percent have television while the rest do not have television. The variation between rural and urban respondents who are having television and those who do not is evenly distributed. Among those who have television majority are from urban areas. Out of those who do not have television majority are from rural areas. It means place of stay (rural and urban) is influencing the accessibility of television to the respondents. Next availability of VCPs in relation to social status is examined.

### Social Status and Video Cassette Player at Home

Table. 7.8. Social Status and Video Cassette Player at Home

Video Cassette Player at Home	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Yes	10 (12.5) 23.3	3 (3.8) 17.6	23 (28.8) 18.4	44 (55.0) 28.6	-	80 (100.0) 23.3
No	33 (12.5) 76.7	14 (5.3) 82.4	102(38.8) 81.6	110 (41.8) 71.4	4 (1.5) 100.0	263(100.0) 76.7
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17 (5.0) 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154 (44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

VCP is used to show video lessons of the university. When an attempt is made to find out the availability of VCP in relation to their social status, it is found that more than three-fourths do not have VCP at home. The respondents who do not have VCP at home are the highest among STs (82.4 percent) and BCs (81.6 percent) followed by SCs (76.7 percent) and OCs (71.4 percent). Among those who have VCP are the highest in OCs (28.6 percent) followed by SCs (23.3 percent), BCs (18.4 percent) and STs (17.6 percent). It is noticed that those who do not have VCP at home are the highest among all the social categories. Better economic position of the OC is the reason for their having VCP at home. Availability of telephone is examined with social status in the following table.

### Social Status and Telephone at Home

Table. 7. 9. Social Status and Telephone at Home

Telephone at Home	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Yes	17 (9.6) 39.5	4 (2.3) 23.5	62 (35.0) 49.6	91 (51.4) 59.1	3 (1.7) 75.0	177 (100.0) 51.6
No	26 (15.7) 60.5	13 (7.8) 76.5	63 (38.0) 50.4	63 (38.0) 40.9	1 (0.6) 25.0	166 (100.0) 48.4
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17 (5.0) 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154 (44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

These days telephone plays a very vital role in communication. When the data in the above table is analyzed, it is noticed that the respondents who do not have telephone at home are more among STs (76.5 percent), SCs (60.5 percent) and BCs (50.4 percent). In the case of OCs a majority (59.1 percent) have telephones at home followed by BCs, SCs and STs. Here it can also be said that higher the social position more the access to telephone facility at home. Overall availability of telephone is more or less evenly distributed between those who have telephone (51.6 percent) and do not (48.4 percent) at home.

Table. 7.10. Telephone at home and Place of Stay

Telephone at home	Place of Stay		Total
	Rural (Village)	Urban (Town/City)	
Yes	43 (24.3) 37.7	134(75.7) 58.5	177 (100.0) 51.6
No	71 (42.8) 62.3	95 (57.2) 41.5	166(100.0) 48.4
Total	114(33.2) 100.0	229(66.8) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

The above table reveals the availability of telephone with rural and urban respondents. It shows that out of the total rural respondents, 62 percent did not have telephone and 38 percent have access to telephone. Like wise out of the urban respondents, around 58.5 percent have telephone and the rest did not have it. The

percentage variation between rural and urban respondents who have telephone **and** who did not have telephone are the same. It means less percentage from rural and **more** from urban areas have telephone facility at home. Telephone will facilitate respondents' **to** contacting the study centre and headquarters for information. It also helps students **to** interact during teleconferencing and on radio phone in counselling programmes of **the** university. Next access to computer at home is elicited.

### Social Status and Computer at Home

Table. 7. 11. Social Status and Computer at Home

Computer at Home	Social Status				Caste not given	Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC		
Yes	7 (14.3) 16.3	-	12 (24.5) 9.6	30 (61.2) 19.5	-	49 (100.0) 14.3
No	36(12.2) 83.7	17 5.8 100.0	113 (38.4) 90.4	124(42.2) 80.5	4 1.4 100.0	294(100.0) 85.7
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17 5.0 100.0	125(36.4) 100.0	154 (44.9) 100.0	4 1.2 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

Computers are playing an important role in providing information and communication support to learners. When a cross table is prepared, it is found that more than 85 percent do not have computers at home. Only around 15 percent have computers at home. When the data is analyzed social category wise it is noticed that all the STs **do** not have computer. Among those who do not have computers, BCs are at 90.4 percent followed by SC (83.7 percent) and OCs (80.5 percent). Of the respondents who have computers at home are 19.5 percent from OCs followed by 16.3 percent among SCs and 9.6 percent among BCs. It means non-availability of computer at home is very widely prevalent among all the social categories of respondents; only more of OCs have computers than others. This shows computer is still a privilege of a few. Then access to e-mail is explained in the following table.

### Social Status and Access to e-mail/internet

Table. 7.12. Social Status and Access to e-mail/internet

Access to e-mail/ Internet	Social Status					Total
	SC	ST	BC	OC	Caste not given	
Yes	7 (11.3) 16.3	1 (1.6) 5.9	18 (29.0) 14.4	36 (58.1) 23.4	-	62 (100.0) 18.1
No	36 (12.8) 83.7	16 (5.7) 94.1	107(38.1) 85.6	118 (42.0) 76.6	4 (1.4) 100.0	281 (100.0) 81.9
Total	43 (12.5) 100.0	17 (5.0) 100.0	125 (36.4) 100.0	154 (44.9) 100.0	4 (1.2) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

E-mail and internet have revolutionised the personal communication among people, between organization and people and vice - versa. Among the social categories who do not have access to e-mail and internet are more among STs (94 percent) followed by BCs (85.6 percent), SCs (83.7 percent) and OCs (76.6 percent). Overall around 82 percent do not have access to e-mail and internet. The remaining 18 percent have access to it. Among those who have access to email and internet most of them are from OCs (23.4 percent), followed by SCs (16.3 percent), BCs (14.4 percent) and STs (5.9 percent). It means an overwhelming majority of respondents (around 82 percent) from all the social categories together do not have access to e-mail and internet. Among those who have access to e-mail and internet are more from OCs than others.

The above analysis of availability of media equipment and infrastructure available at home revealed that television, radio, tape recorder, and telephone are available with more number of respondents. The less available media are computer, email/internet and VCP. It means new technologies are less accessible to the respondents than the old technologies like radio and tape recorder. Mere again another interesting trend noticed is, higher the social status more the availability of media infrastructure for all types of equipment and lower the social status lesser the access to media infrastructure particularly the new technologies such as computer and internet.

### Availability of Media Infrastructure at the Study Centre

After ascertaining the availability of media at home an attempt is made to know the knowledge about the availability of media equipment and infrastructure at the study center. Study centers are provided with radio, tape recorder, television, video cassette player, telephone and teleconference equipment to provide media support to the students.

Table. 7.13. Availability of Media Infrastructure at the Study Centre

Available	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Radio	32 ( 9.3)	181 (52.8)	130(37.9)	343(100)
Tape recorder	25 ( 7.3)	185(53.9)	133(38.8)	343(100)
Television	87 (25.4)	139(40.5)	117(34.1)	343(100)
VCP	34 ( 9.9)	180(52.5)	129(37.6)	343(100)
Telephone	191 (55.7)	95 (27.7)	57(16.7)	343(100)
Teleconference	29 ( 8.5)	182(53.1)	132(38.5)	343(100)

When asked about their awareness and knowledge about media infrastructure, a majority (55 percent) said that they know about the availability of telephone. The next comes the knowledge about television (25 percent). The knowledge about all other facilities is less than 10 percent. Majority of the respondents have 'no knowledge' and 'don't know' about the availability of such facilities at the study center. High negative response indicates that the facilities are mostly under-utilised or non-utilised at the study centers.

Here an attempt is made to know how the radio lessons, audio lessons, television lessons, video lessons, teleconferencing programmes and phone-in-radio counselling programmes are being utilized, viewed or listened to by the respondents participating in the live programmes.

### Listening of Radio Lessons

Radio has been used for educational purposes for quite some time. Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University has been using radio for broadcasting lessons for four days a week from Hyderabad 'B' station of All India Radio for 30 minutes. Six 30 minutes slot are allotted to Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University three days in the morning between 7.15 A.M. to 7.45 A.M. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, three days during late night between 10.30 P.M. to 11.00 P.M. on Monday, Thursday and Friday.

Table. 7.14. Listening of radio lessons

Response	Frequency	Percent
Listening Regularly	18	5.3
Some times listening	77	22.4
Not at all listening	248	72.3
Total	343	100

Here an attempt is made to find out how many from the respondents are listening to the radio lessons. It was revealed in the above table that only 5 percent are listening to the lessons regularly and 22 percent listen sometimes. However, more than 70 percent never listened to the lessons. It is further probed to find out the reason for their not listening the programmes.

Table. 7.15. Reasons for not listening radio lessons

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
No information	112	34.5
Timings not suitable	93	28.6
No time/busy	62	19.0
Busy with house hold work	28	8.6
Not interested	17	5.3
No radio	13	4.0
Total	325	100

When the respondents who never listened and listened sometimes were asked to give the reasons for not listening radio lessons, around 35 percent did not have any information about the broadcast of radio lessons, for 28 percent the timings are not

suitable and 19 percent have no time and busy with other works. It is true that around 27 percent do not have radios at home, but in the above table only 4 percent have mentioned the non-availability of radio as the reason for not listening to the radio lessons. It means majority of them have either given other reasons which are more relevant to them or some of them must be listening to the radio lessons from neighbors radio set. The above main reasons highlight the fact that the broadcast schedule is not intimated or is not reaching the students in time.

Then an attempt is made for better understanding of the reasons to prepare a cross table of reasons with the occupation of respondents who listened to the radio lessons never and sometime. It is aimed to find out if there is any relation between the occupation and reasons given for not listening to the radio lessons.

Table. 7.16. Occupation and Reasons for not listening to radio lessons

Reasons	Occupation					Total
	Employed	Un employed	Business	Self- employed	House wife	
No information	58(51.8) 33.5	28 (25.0) 31.1	7 (6.3) 43.8	11(9.8) 42.3	8 (7.1) 40.0	112 (100.0) 34.5
Timings not suitable	51 (54.8) 29.5	30 (32.3) 33.3	1 (1.1) 6.3	8 (8.6) 30.8	3 (3.2) 15.0	93 (100.0) 28.6
No time/ Busy	35 (56.5) 20.2	16 (25.8) 17.8	4 (6.5) 25.0	6 (9.7) 23.1	1 (1.6) 5.0	62 (100.0) 19.1
Busy with house hold work	14 (50.0) 8.1	7 (25.0) 7.8	1 (3.6) 6.3	1 (3.6) 3.8	5 (17.9) 25.0	28 (100.0) 8.6
Not interested	8 (47.1) 4.6	5 (29.4) 5.6	2 (11.8) 12.5	-	2 (11.8) 10.0	17 (100.0) 5.2
No radio	7 (53.8) 4.0	4 (30.8) 4.4	1 (7.7) 6.3	-	1 (7.7) 5.0	13 (100.0) 4.0
Total	173 (53.2) 100.0	90 (27.7) 100.0	16(4.9) 100.0	26 (8.0) 100.0	20 (6.2) 100.0	325(100.0) 100.0

It is found from the data in the above table that irrespective of the occupational category - employed, unemployed, business, and self-employed and housewife - on an average around 35 percent of them felt that they did not have information about the broadcast of radio lessons by the university. Among the employed 29.5 percent feel that

timings are not suitable, 20.2 percent felt that they have no time/busy and 8.1 percent feel that they are busy with household work during the time of broadcast. Among the unemployed majority 33.3 percent feel that timings are not suitable, 17.8 percent felt **that** they do not have time and busy followed by 7.8 percent who are busy with household work. Among those who are in business 25 percent have no time /busy and 12.5 **percent** are not interested. Among the self-employed, for 30 percent timings are not suitable followed by no time/busy. Out of the total housewives one-fourth are busy with household work, for 15 percent the timings are not suitable and 10 percent are not interested in radio programs. When the reasons are analysed in relation to occupation majority of the respondents subscribed to three major reasons which are no information, non suitability of timings and no time/busy. For better understanding it would be essential to know who are the major occupational groups largely subscribing to these reasons. The first reason – no information about the broadcast of radio lessons was subscribed by around 35 percent. Out of the respondents who subscribed to this reason are businessmen (44 percent), self-employed (42 percent), housewives (40 percent), employed (33.5 percent) and unemployed (31 percent). Here businessmen, self employed and housewives are the highest, when compared to the lowest from employed and unemployed. The second major reason - non suitability of timings to listen the radio lessons was subscribed by 29 percent of respondents.

When occupation specific comparison is made out of the unemployed (33 percent), self employed (31 percent), employed (29.5 percent) followed by housewives (15 percent) and businessmen (6 percent) felt that the timings are not suitable. Here the occupational group which felt like the timings are not suitable are surprisingly unemployed the highest in number when compared to the lowest from businessmen. The third major reason - no time/busy to listen to the radio lessons was subscribed by 19 percent. Out of which, businessmen (25 percent) and self-employed (23 percent) are the highest, followed by employed (20 percent), unemployed (18 percent) and housewives (5 percent) who are on the lower side. The highest respondents who have no time / busy to listen to the radio lessons are businessmen and the lowest are form the housewives category.

### Listening to Audio Lessons

It seems though 'no information' is the major reason for not listening occupation of the respondents also contributes to not listening to the radio programs. At the same time 'non suitability of timings', 'no time/busy' and 'busy with household work' are some of the other reasons for not listening to the radio lessons. Next they were asked about the listening audio lessons at the study centre.

Table. 7.17. Listening to audio lessons at the study centre

Response	Frequency	Percent
Listening Regularly	6	1.8
Some times listening	21	6.1
Not at all listening	316	92.1
Total	343	100

When the respondents were asked about the listening of audio cassettes at the study centre it was found that more than 90 percent never listened to the audio lessons. Only 1.8 percent listened to regularly where as 6 percent listened sometimes. The reasons for not listening are given below.

Table. 7.18. Reasons for not listening to audio lessons

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
No information	216	64.1
Cassettes are not available	36	10.7
Counsellors not interested to utilize	34	10.1
Not interested	30	8.9
Tape recorder not working	14	4.2
No time & not provided	7	2.0
Total	337	100

The respondents who never listened and who listened some times were asked to give reasons for non-listening of audio programs at the study center. Majority stated that they have no information about the availability of such programs at the study center. Around 10 percent stated that cassettes are not available and another 10 percent felt that

counsellors are not interested to utilize them. Similar to broadcast of radio lessons, here too a majority have no information about availability of such programs at the study center. This leads to underutilisation of facilities available at the study centre.

When it is noticed that less than 8 percent listened to the audio programs at the study center and the major reason is that more than 60 percent have no information about availability of such programs it was thought that a deeper understanding of reasons with the occupation of respondents is necessary.

Table. 7.19. Occupation and Reasons for not listening to audio lessons

Reasons	Occupation					Total
	Employed	Un employed	Business	Self employed	House wife	
No information	114 (52.8) 64.0	59 (27.3) 62.8	10(4.6) 58.8	18(8.3) 64.3	15 (6.9) 75.0	216 (100.0) 64.1
Cassettes are not available	23 (63.9) 12.9	7 (19.4) 7.4	2 (5.6) 11.8	3 (8.3) 10.7	1 (2.8) 5.0	36 (100.0) 10.7
Counsellors not interested to utilize	19(55.9) 10.7	9 (26.5) 9.6	-	3 (8.8) 10.7	3 (8.8) 15.0	34 (100.0) 10.1
Not interested	11 (36.7) 6.2	12 (40.0) 12.8	4(13.3) 23.5	2 (6.7) 7.1	1 (3.3) 5.0	30 (100.0) 8.9
Tape recorder not working	8 (57.1) 4.5	4 (28.6) 4.3	1 (7.1) 5.9	1 (7.1) 3.6	-	14 (100.0) 4.2
No time & not Provided	3 (42.9) 1.7	3 (42.9) 3.2	-	1 (14.3) 3.6	-	7 (100.0) 2.1
Total	178 (52.8) 100.0	94(27.9) 100.0	17(5.0) 100.0	28 (8.3) 100.0	20 (5.9) 100.0	337 (100.0) 100.0

It is noticed from the above table that cutting across all the occupational groups the major reason for non listening of audio lessons at the study center is having no information about availability of such audio lessons. Among the employed 13 percent stated that cassettes are not available, 10.7 percent stated that they are not interested to listen. Among the unemployed 12.8 percent stated that they are not interested followed by reasons such as non-interest shown by counsellors and non-availability of cassettes. Among students who are in business the highest (23.5) percent are not interested to listen to the audio lessons at the study centre, followed by non-availability of cassettes at

**the study centre.** The reasons given by self-employed **and housewives fall under the** above headings. Here as well 'no information', 'non availability of cassettes\* **and** 'less interest shown by the counsellors' are the major reasons for not listening to the program for different occupational groups.

### **Watching of Television Lessons**

Television is an important channel of education. Hence **it was felt to find out how** many of the respondents are watching the television lessons on Doordarshans-DD-8 Channel. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University telecasts its lessons on television from Monday to Friday, five days in a week, between 5.30 and 6.00 in the morning for 30 minutes from Hyderabad Doordarshan Kendra.

Table. 7.20. Watching of T.V. lessons

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Watching Regularly	20	5.9
Some times watching	100	29.1
Not at all watching	223	65.0
Total	343	100

When the respondents are asked to tell how many of them are watching television lessons regularly, it was found that 65 percent never watch television lessons, 6 percent watched regularly where as 29 percent watched sometimes only. The **next question** is to find out the reasons for not watching television lessons.

Table. 7.21. Reasons for not watching T.V. lessons

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No information	123	38.0
Timings not suitable	<b>93</b>	28.8
No time/busy	<b>60</b>	18.6
Busy with house hold work	<b>27</b>	<b>8.4</b>
Not interested	<b>15</b>	<b>4.7</b>
No TV	<b>5</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Total	323	100

Out of the respondents who never watched and sometimes watched, 38 percent have no information about the program being telecast on television, for 29 percent morning timings are not suitable and 18 percent have no time to watch programmes and are busy with their own regular work. It is true that around 22 percent mentioned that they have no television at home. When they have given the reasons for not watching television lessons only 15 percent have mentioned the non availability of television as the reason for not watching the lessons. It means some of them must be watching television lessons with friends and neighbors. Here also like radio and audio programmes, a majority of the respondents have no information about the telecast of television lessons on Doordarshan by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University. The fact is that Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University has been telecasting lessons on television for quite some time. It is interesting to note that 'not having information' is the major reason for audio, video and radio phone-in-counselling programmes. But in the case of television lessons it is not a major reason. It means the information about telecast of lessons by the university is reaching many students.

Table. 7.22. Occupation and Reasons for not watching television lessons

Reasons	Occupation					Total
	Employed	Un employed	Business	Self employed	House wife	
No information	60 (48.8) 34.9	37(30.1) 41.6	7 (5.7) 41.2	13 (10.6) 48.1	<b>6 (4.9)</b> 33.3	123 (100.0) 38.1
Timings not suitable	53 (57.0) 30.8	21 (22.6) 23.6	5 (5.4) 29.4	7 (7.5) 25.9	<b>7 (7.5)</b> 38.9	93 (100.0) 28.8
No time/busy	37 (61.7) 21.5	14 (23.3) 15.7	3 (5.0) 17.6	4 (6.7) 14.8	<b>2 (3.3)</b> 11.1	60 (100.0) 18.6
Busy with domestic work	13 (48.1) 7.6	9 (33.3) 10.1	-	3 (11.1) 11.1	2 (7.4) 11.1	27 (100.0) 8.4
Not interested	6 (40.0) 3.5	7 (46.7) 7.9	1 (6.7) 5.9	-	1 (6.7) 5.6	15 (100.0) 4.6
No Television	3 (60.0) 1.7	1 (20.0) 1.1	1 (20.0) 5.9	-	-	5 (100.0) 1.5
Total	172 (53.3) 100.0	89 (27.6) 100.0	17 (5.3) 100.0	27 (8.4) 100.0	18 (5.6) 100.0	323 (100.0) 100.0

**The** reasons for not watching television lessons are correlated with the occupation of the respondents who are not watching television lessons. The major **reason for not** watching television lessons again is 'no information' with 38 percent cutting across **and** highest in all the occupational groups. The other major reasons for employed are non-suitability of timings (30.8 percent), no time/busy (21.5 percent) followed by domestic work (7.6 percent). For the unemployed category, the major reasons are non-suitability of timings (23.6 percent) no time/busy (15.7 percent) and domestic work. The other occupational groups have given similar reasons. It means the major reasons for not watching television lessons are 'no information', 'non-suitability of timings' and 'no time/busy'. Video lessons play very important role in distance education. Next an attempt is made to find out how many have watched video lessons at the study center.

### Watching Video Lessons

Table. 7.23. Watching video lessons at the study centre

Response	Frequency	Percent
Watching Regularly	<b>1</b>	0.3
Some times watching	<b>26</b>	7.6
Not at all watching	316	92.1
Total	343	100

It was found more than 90 percent never watch any video lesson at the study center. As the overwhelming respondents have never seen the video lessons, they were asked to give reasons for not viewing them.

Table. 7.24. Reasons for not watching of video lessons at the study centre

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
No information	212	62.0
Counsellors not interested to show	<b>44</b>	12.9
Cassettes are not available	33	9.6
Not interested	<b>28</b>	8.1
Television not working	10	2.9
Not shown & provided by study centre	<b>6</b>	1.8
VCP not working	<b>5</b>	1.5
No time	<b>4</b>	1.2
Total	342	100

The major reasons given include 'no information' (62 percent) followed by 'no interest to show by the counselors' (13 percent) and 'non availability of cassettes'. The other reasons are negligible. Here also the major reason is 'no information' similar to radio, television and audio programmes.

When out of the total sample of 343 only one respondent had committed that he had watched the video programs at the study center. It was really a surprise to know. When it was probed for the reasons for not watching, it revealed that 62 percent felt that they have no information about the availability of such video lessons in the study centre. Hence it was decided to prepare a cross table for reasons with the occupation of the respondents. The following trends are noticed and explained in the table given below.

Table. 7.25. Occupation and Reasons for not watching video lessons at the study centre

Reasons	Occupation					Total
	Employed	Un employed	Business	Self employed	House wife	
No information about programmes	114 (53.8) 62.6	55 (25.9) 57.9	12 (5.7) 70.6	17 (8.0) 60.7	14(6.6) 70.0	212 (100.0) 62.0
Counsellors are not interested to show	25 (56.8) 13.7	11 (25.0) 11.6	-	6 (13.6) 21.4	2 (4.5) 10.0	44 (100.0) 12.9
Cassettes are not available	18 (54.5) 9.9	12 (36.4) 12.6	1 (3.0) 5.9	1 (3.0) 3.6	1 (3.0) 5.0	33 (100.0) 9.6
Not interested to watch programmes	10 (35.7) 5.5	10 (35.7) 10.5	3 (10.7) 17.6	2 (7.1) 7.1	3 (10.7) 15.0	28 (100.0) 8.2
Television not working	5 (50.0) 2.7	3 (30.0) 3.2	1 (10.0) 5.9	1 (10.0) 3.6	-	10 (100.0) 2.9
Not shown & not provided by Study Centre	4 (66.7) 2.2	2 (33.3) 2.1	-	-	-	6 (100.0) 1.8
VCP not working	3 (60.0) 1.6	1 (20.0) 1.1	-	1 (20.0) 3.6	-	5 (100.0) 1.5
No time to watch programmes	3 (75.0) 1.6	1 (25.0) 1.1	-	-	-	4 (100.0) 1.2
Total	182 (53.2) 100.0	95 (27.8) 100.0	17 (5.0) 100.0	28 (8.2) 100.0	20 (5.8) 100.0	342 (100.0) 100.0

When the reasons for not watching video lessons at the study centre are analysed with the occupation of the respondents the following trends are noticed. All the occupational respondents state the first major reason of no information about the

availability of video lessons at the study centre. Out of those who stated **that they have** no information, 70 percent are each from businessmen and housewives, 63 percent are from employed, 61 percent are from self-employed and 58 percent are from unemployed. **The** difference between the highest (70 percent) and the lowest (58 percent) is very **much** noticeable. Though every group felt that 'no information' as **the** major reason, **the** differences in degree are noticeable. Out of those who stated that the counsellors **are not** interested to show, highest are from self-employed (21 percent) and the lowest are from housewives (10 percent). Again the difference between the perceptions of two occupational groups is very high, almost double. The third major reason for not watching video lessons at the study centre is non-availability of video cassettes at the study centre. Out of those who expressed this view, the highest are from unemployed (12.6 percent) and the lowest are from self-employed (3.6 percent).

Again here also the difference between the highest and the lowest is more than double. It means though 'no information', 'non interest shown by the counsellors'<sup>1</sup> and 'non availability of cassettes' are the major reasons but the degree of difference between the highest and the lowest among the different occupational groups is very much noticeable. If information is provided to the students they will be able to watch the video lessons.

The reasons given by other occupational groups who are in business, self-employed and housewives are alike the employed and unemployed groups. It means like radio, audio and radio counseling here also the major reason for non watching of video lessons at the study center is 'no information' about the facility of video lessons, followed by 'disinterest of counsellors' and 'non-availability of video cassettes' at the study center. However, other reasons though minor, but are interesting to list out include 'non-working of television and VCP', 'not-provided by study center' and 'no time'. This shows the urgent need for making the information available to the students as also the need to re-orient the counsellors to take interest in giving the information about video lessons.

### Watching of Teleconference

Next an attempt is made to find out how many are watching and participating in teleconference programmes of the university. Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University has been utilizing the teleconferencing programme in a major way for extending support services from Doordarshan's Channel-8 from Hyderabad on every Sunday between 2.00 p.m and 3.00 p. m. It is one way video and two way audio teleconferencing and is a live programme relayed in the state of Andhra Pradesh for the benefit of students of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University.

Table. 7.26. Watching of teleconference

Response	Frequency	Percent
Watching Regularly	11	3.2
Watching some times	81	23.6
Not at all watching	251	73.2
Total	343	100

The respondents are asked about how many of them have watched the teleconference programme on Doordarshan. More than two-thirds stated that they have never watched the teleconferencing programme. Only 3 percent of the respondents watched regularly followed by 23 percent who watch some times. This shows that teleconferencing is not popular among the respondents. It is further explored to find out the reasons for not watching teleconference programme.

Table. 7.27. Reasons for not watching teleconference on Doordarshan

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
No information	142	42.7
Timings are not suitable	62	18.7
No time/busy	49	14.8
Attending classes at the study centre	49	14.8
Not interested	16	<b>4.8</b>
Take rest during that time	10	3.0
Poor quality presentation	4	<b>1.2</b>
Total	332	100

The important reasons for not watching of teleconference are not having information (42.7 percent) about the telecast of teleconference programmes, followed by 'non suitability of timings' (19 percent) and 'no time and busy' (14.8 percent). Some respondents said that they were attending contact classes during that time at the study center (14.8 percent), hence it was not possible to participate in the programme. Here also like other types of media support, lack information about the programme telecast is the main reason for not watching and participating in the teleconference. For further understanding an attempt is made to find out the impact of occupation on their responses.

Table. 7.28. Occupation and Reasons for not watching teleconference on Doordarshn

Reasons	Occupation					Total
	Employed	Un employed	Business	Self employed	House wife	
No information	73 (51.4) 41.5	35 (24.6) 37.6	8 (5.6) 47.1	15 (10.6) 55.6	11 (7.7) 57.9	142(100.0) 42.8
Timings are not suitable	36 (58.1) 20.5	16 (25.8) 17.2	2 (3.2) 11.8	7 (11.3) 25.9	1 (1.6) 5.3	62 (100.0) 18.7
No time/busy	24 (49.0) 13.6	16 (32.7) 17.2	5 (10.2) 29.4	3(6.1) 11.1	1 (2.0) 5.3	49 (100.0) 14.8
Attending classes at the study centre	30 (61.2) 17.0	15 (30.6) 16.1	1 (2.0) 5.9	-	3 (6.1) 15.8	49 (100.0) 14.8
Not interested	6 (37.5) 3.4	6 (37.5) 6.5	1 (6.3) 5.9	1 (6.3) 3.7	2 (12.5) 10.5	16 (100.0) 4.8
Take rest during that time	5 (50.0) 2.8	3 (30.0) 3.2	-	1 (10.0) 3.7	1 (10.0) 5.3	10 (100.0) 3.0
Poor quality presentation	2 (50.0) 1.1	2 (50.0) 2.2	-	-	-	4 (100.0) 1.2
Total	176 (53.0) 100.0	93 (28.0) 100.0	17 (5.1) 100.0	27(8.10) 100.0	19 (5.7) 100.0	332 (100.0) 100.0

When it is specially compared among the different occupational groups the response which include housewives (58 percent), self-employed (55.6 percent), businessmen (47 percent), employed (41.5 percent) and unemployed (37.6 percent) felt that 'no information' is provided to them for watching teleconferencing programme. The highest is from housewives and the lowest is from unemployed. The differences between highest and the lowest are very high. The second major reason of 'non suitability of timings' to watch teleconferencing are the highest among self-employed (26 percent) and

employed (20.5 percent) and the lowest are from businessmen (12 percent) and housewives (5.3 percent). Generally it is believed that housewives and businessmen have no time constraints, but they are feeling it the other way. There is difference of opinion between the occupations. The third major reason of 'no time/busy' category has the highest number from business men (29.4 percent) and the lowest from housewives (5.3 percent). Again the difference between the two occupations is very high. The other reason for not watching teleconferencing programmes is attending counselling classes at the study centre during that time, of which highest felt by employed (17 percent) and the lowest by businessmen (6 percent). It can be said that the occupations are influencing the respondents for not participating in the teleconferencing programmes. However there are degrees of differences, in majority cases wide variations are noticed.

Out of the respondents who watched the teleconference 'regularly' and 'some times' an attempt is made to find out the interaction during the teleconferencing as it is an interactive live programme.

Table. 7.29. Interaction during teleconferencing.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Participated in interaction	30	32.6
Not participated in interaction	62	67.4
Total	92	100

Out of total respondents who are watching teleconferencing majority are not interacting in the programme with only 30 (32.6 percent) interacting during the teleconferencing. The reasons for the low interaction could be non-availability of telephone to interact, busy telephone line and higher telephone charges.

It is further probed from among the 30 respondents who interacted during teleconference to find out the type of interaction they had with the resource persons who participated in the programme.

Table. 7.30. Type of question asked during interaction.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Subject related	15	50.0
General enquiry	15	50.0
Total	30	100

It was found, of the 30 respondents who interacted half of them had subject related interaction whereas the other half had general enquiry related interaction. It was decided to further find out their satisfaction for the questions they have asked the resource persons.

Table. 7.31. Satisfaction with the answer to your questions.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Satisfied	26	86.7
Not satisfied	4	13.3
Total	30	100

Out of the 30 respondents who interacted, a majority are satisfied with the replies given to their questions whereas a few of the participants are not satisfied.

#### Listening of Phone-in-Radio Lessons

The next issue the study explores is about interactive phone-in-radio program. Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University broadcasts live interactive phone-in-radio counselling programme once in a month on ever}' fourth Sunday between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. for one hour duration. It is a live and interactive programme wherein the listener can ask questions; seek clarification on the topic for discussion from the resource persons. An attempt is made to find out how many of the respondents are listening to the interactive radio programme on All India Radio station of Hyderabad.

Table. 7. 32. Listening of phone-in-radio lessons

Response	Frequency	Percent
Listening Regularly	3	0.9
Some times listening	30	8.7
Not at all listening	310	90.4
Total	343	100

Here also more than 90 percent never listened to the programme **and only one** percent listened regularly where as around 9 percent listened to the programme sometimes. In the next table poor listening is further probed to find out the reasons.

Table. 7.33. Reasons for not listening to phone-in-radio lessons

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No information	176	51.8
Timings are not suitable	53	15.6
No time/busy	<b>46</b>	13.5
Attending classes at the study centre	38	11.1
Not interested	<b>16</b>	<b>4.7</b>
Take rest during that time	<b>6</b>	<b>1.8</b>
Poor quality presentation	<b>5</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Total	340	100

The main reasons for poor audience or listenership are again lack of information (51 percent), followed by non-suitability of timings (15 percent), lack of time and being busy (13.5 percent) and attending classes during that time at the study center. Alike reasons given for other programs, it is 'no information' about the programme which is the major reason for not listening. In the next table an attempt is made to find out the reasons for not listening the live interactive phone-in-radio counselling programme in relation with their occupations.

When a cross table is made it is noticed that cutting across the occupational groups the major reason for all of them for not listening to the interactive phone-in-radio counseling program is 'no information' about its broadcast on the radio.

It was decided to find out how many of the respondents who listened 'sometimes' and 'regularly' to the interactive phone in radio programme, interacted with the resource persons.

Table. 7.34. Interaction during phone-in-radio programme

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Participated in interaction	18	54.5
Not participated in interaction	15	45.5
Total	33	100

Among the total of 33, it was found that only 18 (54.5 percent) have interacted during the programme, and the rest (45.5 percent) did not interact in the programme. To know the type of interaction 18 respondents had with the resource persons in the interactive phone-in-radio programme, they were asked to give what type of question they have posed to the resource persons in the radio studios.

Out of 18 respondents who interacted, an overwhelming majority (83 percent) asked subject related questions whereas others asked general questions related to non-subject area. Of the respondents who participated and interacted with the resource persons around 72 percent are satisfied with the answers to their questions and the rest 28 percent are not satisfied with the replies to their question.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University follows six forms of media support, namely radio lessons, audio lessons, television lessons, video lessons, teleconferencing and radio conferencing. It is noticed from the above that Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University is using the media in a big way, but its utilization and interaction is found to be very limited.

#### **Level of Satisfaction - Media Support**

After eliciting respondents opinion on audio and video lessons, television lessons, radio lessons, teleconferencing and radio counselling, here an attempt is made to find out how the respondents viewed the media support as a whole. They are asked to give their opinion on a five-point scale.

Table. 7.35. Level of Satisfaction about the Media Support

<b>Level of Satisfaction</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Thoroughly dissatisfied	164	47.8
Not satisfied	139	40.5
Satisfied	28	<b>8.2</b>
Partly satisfied	9	<b>2.6</b>
Fully satisfied	3	<b>0.9</b>
Total	343	100

The data in the above table reveals that at the grassroot level the respondents have no information about the use of multimedia by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University. An overwhelming majority (88 percent) are thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied. Around eight percent are just satisfied, two percent are partly satisfied and only one percent are fully satisfied. The highest negative opinion indicates that the students are not aware of the efforts undertaken by the university to use media for student support services.

When it is noticed that less than 12 percent are falling under satisfied, partly satisfied and fully satisfied category, it is understood that there is high level of dissatisfaction for media support among respondents. For better understanding of level of satisfaction three cross tables are prepared with gender, social status and programmes of study.

Table. 7. 36. Gender and Level of Satisfaction for Media Support

Level of satisfaction	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	94 (57.3) 44.1	70 (42.7) 53.8	164 (100.0) 47.8
Not satisfied	90 (64.7) 42.3	49 (35.3) 37.7	139 (100.0) 40.5
Satisfied	20 (71.4) 9.4	8 (28.6) 6.2	28 (100.0) 8.2
Partly satisfied	7 (77.8) 3.3	2 (22.2) 1.5	9 (100.0) 2.6
Fully satisfied	2 (66.7) 0.9	1 (33.3) 0.8	3 (100.0) 0.9
Total	213(62.1) 100.0	130 ( 37.9) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

The analysis of level of satisfaction with the gender revealed that there is a high level of dissatisfaction in both the groups. Among the thoroughly dissatisfied, 44.1 percent are from male where as in female it is 53.8 percent, which is more than the male group. Among the not satisfied 42.3 percent are from male and 37.7 percent from female respondents. When both thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied are put together it is more than 88 percent. The satisfied are 8.2 percent partly satisfied are 2.6 percent and

fully satisfied are just one percent only. It means there is an overwhelming level of dissatisfaction in both male and female respondents.

When the level of satisfaction for media support is analyzed with social status of respondents it reveals that the level of dissatisfaction is high among all cutting across all the social (caste) groups. Dissatisfaction is with minor degree of variations. There is a strong negative feeling for media support by the respondents. In the following table the level of satisfaction of media support is analyzed with the programs of study of respondents.

Table. 7. 37. Programmes of Study and Level of Satisfaction for Media Support

Level of Satisfaction - Media Support	Programmes of Study					Total
	B.A	B.Com	B.Sc	M.B.A	M.A	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	49 (29.9) 59.0	33 (20.1) 58.9	42 (25.6) 54.5	26 (15.9) 28.6	14 (8.5) 38.9	164 (100.0) 47.8
Not satisfied	26 (18.7) 31.3	22 (15.8) 39.3	27 (19.4) 35.1	48 (34.5) 52.7	16 (11.5) 44.4	139(100.0) 40.5
Satisfied	6 (21.4) 7.2	1 (3.6) 1.8	4 (14.3) 5.2	14 (50.0) 15.4	3 (10.7) 8.3	28 (100.0) 8.2
Partly satisfied	2 (22.2) 2.4	-	3 (33.3) 3.9	2 (22.2) 2.2	2 (22.2) 5.6	9 (100.0) 2.6
Fully satisfied	-	-	1 (33.3) 1.3	1 (33.3) 1.1	1 (33.3) 2.8	3 (100.0) 0.9
Total	83 (24.2) 100.0	56 (16.3) 100.0	77 (22.4) 100.0	91 (26.5) 100.0	36 (10.5) 100.0	343 (100.0) 100.0

It is noticed that the level of dissatisfaction is very much prevalent among the students of all the programs of study. Thoroughly dissatisfied are more in undergraduate programmes when compared to postgraduate programmes, where as not satisfied are more in postgraduate programmes when compared to undergraduate programmes. The reasons for the differences between undergraduates and postgraduates for thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied could be the lack of information about the various media support components used by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University to provide support to students. Thoroughly dissatisfied are 59 percent each in BA and B.Com, 54.5 percent in B.Sc, 38.9 percent in MA and 28.6 percent in MBA. Not satisfied are 52.7 percent in MBA, 44.4 percent in MA, 39.3 in B.Com, 35.1 percent in B.Sc and 31.3 percent in BA

respondents. Among the satisfied 15.4 percent are from MBA, 8.3 percent from MA and 7.2 percent from BA. Partly satisfied and fully satisfied are though very less spread in all the programs of study except B.Com. Over all, there is a strong negative feeling for the media support among the respondents.

Table. 7.38. Level of satisfaction -Media Support and Place of Stay

Level of satisfaction	Place of Stay		Total
	Rural (Village)	Urban (Town/City)	
Thoroughly dissatisfied	56(34.1) 49.1	108(65.9) 47.2	164 (100.0) 47.8
Not satisfied	48 (34.5) 42.1	91 (65.5) 39.7	139(100.0) 40.5
Satisfied	5 (17.9) 4.4	23(82.1) 10.0	28(100.0) 8.2
Partly satisfied	3 (33.3) 2.6	6 (66.7) 2.6	9(100.0) 2.6
Fully satisfied	2 (66.7) 1.8	1 (33.3) 0.4	3(100.0) 0.9
Total	114 (33.2) 100.0	229(66.8) 100.0	343(100.0) 100.0

The data in the above table shows that an overwhelming majority of respondents from rural as well as urban areas have negatively reacted to the media support services of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University. However, the following specific variations in the level of satisfaction are noticed. Among the satisfied the rural respondents are below 5 percent when compared to the 10 percent urban respondents. The variation is more than double. Likewise for fully satisfied, the rural respondents are around 2 percent whereas urban respondents are just below 0.5 percent. Again the variation is more than double. Out of the thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied categories more percentage of rural respondents have negatively reacted than urban respondents. But the variation is very marginal (below 2.5 percent) between rural and urban respondents. In case of satisfied and fully satisfied, the variation is more than double whereas in thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied categories the variation is very marginal. Next the respondents' suggestions for improving the media support are explained in the following table.

### Suggestions for Improving Media Support

It is revealed through the data in the above tables on media support that the utilization (listening and viewing) of media lessons is low and the major reasons for it is lack of information and awareness about the programmes. In this context, the respondents are asked to give some suggestions for providing effective support through use of media.

Table. 7.39. Suggestions for improving media support to students

Suggestions	Frequency	Percent
Prior intimation to students is necessary	153	44.6
Create awareness about different media used by university	88	25.7
More publicity about programmes	60	17.5
Proper maintenance of infrastructure at the study centre	42	12.2
Total	343	100

The major suggestions given by the respondents include, prior intimation to the students (45 percent), creating awareness about the use of different media by the university (26 percent), more publicity to programmes (17 percent) and proper maintenance of media infrastructure at the study center (12 percent). Intimating students, giving more publicity about the different media lessons will go a long way in broadening the listener base and viewer base to the media lessons.

There are different ways to provide information about the various media programmes. Advanced information of broadcast and telecast schedule could be sent to all the study centres for onward transmission to the students. Presently the university announces its monthly telecast, broadcast, teleconferencing and radio conferencing schedule in its quarterly publication "Opvarsity News". Limited copies are sent to the study centres for distribution among students and counsellors. These copies are not sufficient to reach all the students. Many students are not getting the copy of the newsletter. Hence they are not able to know about schedules of broadcasts and telecasts. To overcome this problem if a copy of the newsletter is sent to each student by post, they will come to know about the relay timings, so that they can watch/listen to the programmes. Through this measure the problem of 'no information' could be solved to some extent, if not completely.

**Another** thing is giving the list of audio and video lessons prepared and available at the study centre in the course material at the end of **each lesson/unit**, so **that the** students can ask for them when they go for the personal contact programmes at the study centres. This will go a long way in disseminating information about various audio and video programmes produced by the university for students.

There is a need for timely information to students, providing of a separate room, giving the details of audio and video programmes in the self instructional material blocks and provision of more audio and video cassettes at the study center to lead to greater utility of non-print media.<sup>17</sup>

### **Summing Up**

Based on the data presented in the above tables the following conclusions can be drawn. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University has been extensively using different media for providing support to its learners. For majority of the respondents media lessons means television lessons and radio lessons. Access and availability of media infrastructure for students at home makes a lot of difference. Radio, tape recorder, television and telephone are available for a majority of respondents whereas VCP, computer and e-mail are not available to them. Social status is influencing the access of media infrastructure at home. Though media infrastructure like radio, tape recorder, television, VCP, telephone and teleconferencing equipment facilities are provided at the study centre, majority have no knowledge and don't know about the availability of these facilities at the study centres.

Though media is extensively used by Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University, its utility is very less because of lack of information and lack of prior intimation to the students about the media programmes. This listener base and viewer base for media lessons is very low, due to this which in turn is contributing for very high **rate** of dissatisfaction regarding media support. Cutting across gender, social status, programmes of study and place of stay, overwhelming majority in each category are thoroughly dissatisfied. Concrete efforts need to be undertaken by the University for effective

utilization of the media support for students. Some of the steps to help enhance the level of satisfaction about media support services could be dissemination of information, prior intimation to students, creating awareness through more publicity about the media lessons and programmes among the target groups.

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## **Chapter-VIII**

### **Conclusions**

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### Conclusions

Distance education is called differently in different places. The most popular names are correspondence education, home study, independent study, external study, distance teaching, technology based education, learner-centered education, open learning, flexible learning, etc. Irrespective of variety of nomenclature used to call in different countries of the world, the fundamental characteristic of distance education is, it is the type of education imparted from a distance. The most striking feature is the separation of teacher and the student in time and space. It assumed significance as many countries are adopting distance education to provide educational opportunities.

Distance education is pursued as part-time activity and does not require regular attendance. The distance education student can continue the studies without disturbing his occupation. The important features found in many definitions of distance education are separation of the teacher and the student and use of print as an important medium for imparting education in addition to support services. However, the definition given by Keegan is considered to be the most comprehensive and accepted by the distance education fraternity across the world. Major elements of distance education given by Keegan are: separation of teacher and the learner, role of an educational organisation, use of media, provision for two-way communication, occasional meetings between teacher and the students and industrialisation of education. It is evident from Keegan's definition that the teacher and the student are separated in time and space in distance education and it is an industrialised form of education. Like any other academic subject distance education also has different phases of development from the print based correspondence model of first generation to the latest internet based intelligent model of fifth generation.

Many factors have contributed for the growth and development of distance education. The prominent factors are to increase access to many individuals **and offering** education at less cost. Because of the inherent strengths and advantages of distance education open universities are established in different parts of the world. The first Open University of the United Kingdom also contributed to the credibility of open and distance education system.

Coming to India, the correspondence education system is in operation since 1962 and the first open university in India was established in 1982. The phases of generations of distance education in India are print based, multi-media, interactive media and virtual learning system. According to practitioners, India is in the fourth generation of distance education. In distance education the teacher and the student are separated and it is considered as an industrialised form of education with many sub-systems. It is widely believed that distance teaching system consists of many sub-systems like material sub-system, services sub-system, schools and faculties, administration and other divisions with specific functions to each sub-system. Among the various sub-systems, support services sub-system assumes greater significance. Since the beginning efforts are made to bridge the gap between the teacher and the student and to provide human element into the industrialised form of education through student support services. This has resulted in the provision of student support services. Student support services are aimed to provide human element into an otherwise impersonal educational system.

It is in this context the present research study is undertaken with the following objectives: to highlight the importance of student support service, to identify the components constituting student support services, to classify its components, to analyse learner perceptions and levels of satisfaction in relation to gender, social status, programmes of study and place of stay. It also aims to critically evaluate the role of administration in the delivery of student support services based on the perceptions of respondents.

By keeping the objectives in mind an attempt is made to study the student support services with Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University as a case study. The scope of the study is confined to Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University with special focus on two districts selected for the collection of data. Mahaboobnagar and Hyderabad are the two districts identified for the following reasons. Mahaboobnagar is the rural based developing district with lowest literacy rate and Hyderabad is the urban and developed district with highest literacy rate in Andhra Pradesh.

Purposive sampling method is followed for collection of data and the sample size of the respondents is 343, which covers around 12.5 percent of the students from the selected study centres. Respondents are drawn from the selected two districts and are mostly doing second and third year of undergraduation and second and final year of postgraduation. However, very few respondents are studying first year of postgraduation in Mahaboobnagar, but they completed their undergraduation from Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University.

Many prominent people have given their definitions about student support services. The important aspects of student support services synthesised from the definitions are (1) they cover wide range of services, (2) essential for successful delivery of academic programmes, (3) they cover all pervasive areas of learning. (4) they are continuous services and (5) they are aimed to meet the variety of student needs.

Based on the extensive and critical analysis of different writers who espoused different components of student support services, the present study is able to identify different components constituting student support services in distance education system. The identified components are information support, guidance support, counselling support, support through face-to-face personal contact programmes, self-instructional material, assignments, library support, provision for conduct of practicals, support through study centre and media support services.

For better understanding and analysis of learner perceptions on identified components they are classified into four broad categories of student support services. They are grouped and classified based on the nature of support. The four categories are, (1) individual based support services, (2) academic support services, (3) organisational support services and (4) media support services. They are briefly explained below.

1. Individual based support services:- They cover all the services aimed directly at individual learner. The components include information support, guidance support and counselling support.
2. Academic support services:- They cover the aspects which are aimed for academic socialisation, peer group interaction and two-way communication. The components included are personal contact programmes, self-instructional materials and assignments.
3. Organisational support services:- It covers the aspects of support services provided at and through the study centre, which is the grassroots level organisational unit in distance teaching system. The components covered in this are library support at the study centre, provision for conduct of practicals at the study centre and the role of study centre in support services.
4. Media support services:- Media plays very crucial role in distance education. Distance education aims to utilise all available media for teaching and supporting students. It covers all media based lessons and support services like audio, video, radio, television lessons, teleconference and radio counselling.

The perceptions of the respondents on different categories and sub-components of student support services help to understand them with learners' point of view. Since the students are the ultimate beneficiaries for whom the student support services are aimed at and provided at the study centre, critical understanding and analysis of their perceptions will enhance our understanding of student support services in distance education.

The students in open and distance education system need student support services at different stages of their learning from pre-admission stage to post-completion stage. Student support services are provided in open and distance education system to bridge the gap between the teacher and the student and to develop different study skills in the students. The limitations of self-instructional materials are also one of the contributing factors for provision of student support services.

The review of literature helped to identify the gaps in presently available literature in different areas. It is found that the studies are not many in the area of individual based support services like information support, guidance support and counselling support. Not many studies are found on role of assignments, library support, conduct of practicals and role of study centre. However, many studies are noticed on face-to-face personal contact programmes and media based support services. The present study aimed to fill some of the gaps in the literature. The current study as mentioned earlier was taken up with Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University as a case study and aimed to find out the administration of student support services in distance education with special emphasis on student perceptions and their level of satisfaction for student support services.

Establishment of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University in 1982 is an affirmative action of the Government of Andhra Pradesh to provide educational opportunities to the working adult population who are not covered under the regular higher education system to improve their educational qualifications, to upgrade their skills and acquire multi skills. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University initially started with conventional degree programmes like B.A. and B.Com and later on added management and professional courses. It is aimed to provide a pro-active administration for providing better student support services and continuously orienting itself to meet the ever increasing educational needs of the students.

To focus on the learner satisfaction Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University made special efforts in the form of announcing 'year of learner services'. It is the first open university in India to develop a learner charter' to promote the responsibilities of the

university and the learner towards their learning. These efforts are clearly aimed to give learner orientation to its administrative system at the headquarters and the study centres.

There are two models that are in practice for administration of student support services at the grassroots level. They are dependency model and convergence model. They have their own relevance and necessity. Yet what is needed for the administrative system is the need for learner orientation which will contribute for the positive image of the student support services. There is a need for pro-active, pastoral, simple, caring and learner oriented administrative system for student support services in distance education irrespective of the model of administration.

For deeper understanding, field study was conducted by interviewing the respondents who are selected from the two selected districts for the present study. The study centres selected for the study are major study centres and are offering important academic programmes of the university. As per the data given by the respondents Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University is catering to the educational needs of younger age groups who are below 35 years of age and belong to lower income groups with lower parental educational backgrounds.

As stated earlier the support services are divided into four major categories, with many sub-components in each category. Based on the field data and the perceptions of the respondents on different categories and components of student support services, the following conclusions are drawn.

#### Individual Based Support Services

The first category is the individual based support services. It is always believed that distance education is learner-centered and allows the individual learner the freedom to study according to his own pace. It is also widely believed that many support services are provided on individual basis to the students. The sub-components of individual based support services are information support, guidance support and counselling support.

These three support services are directly provided to the distance learners on individual basis. Hence, they are all grouped under individual-based support services.

Information is the key for many activities. It assumes great significance in the context open and distance learning. As the institution and the individual learner are **apart**, timely information facilitate the individual learner to take action in time as per the schedule. Otherwise the student will miss opportunities. Hence, information support in open and distance education plays a very vital role. The study found that irrespective of gender, social status and programmes of study a majority of the students are aware of the information support, pre-entry information support and post-entry information support. However, respondents are not aware of the validity of registration and the procedure for re-registration. It is found that study centre is the main channel of information followed by the head office of the University. Overwhelming majority have positively reacted with their level of satisfaction for information support irrespective of gender, social status and programmes of study. One-fourth of the respondents fall under 'thoroughly dissatisfied' and 'not satisfied' categories of levels of satisfaction. The major suggestion given by the respondents is that they want the latest information about various rules and regulations to provided at the study centre.

After providing information support students need proper guidance in the right direction. Guidance support is the key component of individual based support service. A majority of the respondents want guidance in course selection and guidance in career and job opportunities; but a majority of the respondents irrespective of gender, social status and programmes of study feel that they are not getting required guidance support at the study centre. As the majority are not getting guidance support more than one-third are in the category of 'not satisfied' and 'thoroughly dissatisfied' level of satisfaction. However, around 60 percent have positively reacted with the level of satisfaction. The respondents indicated the need for knowledgeable and trained staff to be provided at the study centre.

Another important component of individual-based support services is the counselling support service. The study found that majority of the respondents are aware of the counselling support and want it in the specialised areas of motivation and encouragement counselling. Though the respondents are aware of counselling support, majority among them feel that nobody is providing counselling support to them. However variations are noticed among them. A majority from female undergraduates and O.C/B.C feel that nobody is providing counselling support to them at the study centre. One-third of the respondents are not satisfied with the counselling support and expressed a high negative feeling.

Though a majority have positively expressed their level of satisfaction about individual-based support services like information support, guidance support and counselling support, around one-fourth to one-third have negative respondents about the individual-based support services as a whole. It means efforts should be made to provide correct information, proper guidance and right counselling support services for enhancing the level of satisfaction. In this regard some corrective steps are to be taken up. The support staff at the study centre can provide information support. To provide guidance and counselling to the students, a better-qualified person may be required. Hence, it would be better if a guidance and counselling cell is established under the charge of an Assistant Coordinator or a senior academic counsellor at the study centre. The guidance and the counselling cell will help the distance learners to acquire the skills required for independent learning. The cell will also help to reach out to the individual learners and contribute to strengthening of individual-based support services at the study centre.

#### Academic Support Services

After the individual based support services, the second category of student support services is the academic support services which assume much significance in open and distance education system. Academic support services consist of face-to-face personal contact programmes, self-instructional materials and assignments. They form the basis for academic support and bring credibility to the distance education system.

Academic support services promote academic socialization, peer group interaction among students and two-way communication between teacher and the student.

Personal contact programmes are important sub-component of academic support services. The study found that majority of the respondents are aware of the personal contact programmes and they needed them to understand difficult concepts and to clarify doubts. Instead of counselling method the lecturing method is followed in the personal contact programmes. Majority of the respondents irrespective of gender, place of stay (rural and urban) and programmes of study are attending personal contact programmes at the study centre. When specific comparison is made between attendance in personal contact programmes with respect to gender, place of stay and programmes of study, the following interesting trends and variations are found.

Female respondents are more and regular in attending personal contact programmes held once in a week than the male respondents. It shows that female respondents are more committed towards their studies. Minor variations are noticed among rural and urban respondents in attending personal contact programmes. Those who never attend personal contact programmes are more from rural areas than urban areas. Distance of study centre is the major reason for rural respondents to either attend or not attend the personal contact programmes at the study centre. Among those who attend personal contact programmes once in a fortnight, major variations are noticed between undergraduates and postgraduates. Postgraduates are very high in attendance in the category of once in a fortnight than undergraduates. When occupation and reason for attending personal contact programmes are compared employment (53 percent) and family responsibilities (30 percent) are found to be major occupational reasons for not attending personal contact programmes. Male respondents are not attending because of their employment and female respondents are not attending personal contact programmes because of their house hold responsibilities at home.

The level of satisfaction for personal contact programmes is as high as 80 percent. When the level of satisfaction is cross tabulated with social status and programmes of

study very interesting trends and variations are noticed between different categories of levels of satisfaction. Among 'thoroughly dissatisfied' B.Cs. are the highest and S.Ts are the lowest. Out of the 'fully satisfied' O.Cs. are the highest and the S.Ts. are the lowest. In both the categories and levels of satisfaction S.Ts. are the lowest and the variation between them is very high. The reasons for high variations could be high expectations of social groups. When the level of satisfaction is analysed with programmes of study the variations between levels of satisfaction among undergraduation and postgraduation respondents are very much visible and the variations are very high for 'thoroughly dissatisfied' and 'fully satisfied' categories of satisfaction. More number of undergraduate programme respondents are fully satisfied than the postgraduates. The reasons could be the majority of the undergraduate respondents get the admission through eligibility test under non-formal stream after discontinuing their studies in the formal stream. They might be feeling that personal contact programmes are an opportunity and resemble a conventional college class room.

Open universities consider the self-instructional material as a part of student support services. Self-instructional material is the backbone of learning and another important sub-component of academic support services. The study found that majority have received the self-instructional material and the delay in dispatching self-instructional material for undergraduate second year students is due to the revision of the materials. Majority of the respondents consider the language used in self-instructional material is good and not difficult. When difficulty level of language is cross-tabulated with programmes of study the variations between undergraduate and postgraduate respondents are noticed. Majority of the rural respondents feel that the language in self-instructional materials is difficult when compared to the urban respondents. The variation between different categories of difficulty level for rural and urban area respondents are very much visible. The reasons for variations could be rural respondents mostly have their previous education in the regional language. Undergraduate respondents are reading test papers and guides whereas postgraduates are reading reference books in addition to course materials. The undergraduate respondents are reading test papers and guides

because they are easy to understand, written in 'question and answer' format with simple language.

Assignments are aimed and introduced in open and distance education system to promote two-way academic communication between teacher and student. The postgraduate respondents understand the importance and role of assignments as a learning tool. It is found that the evaluated assignments are not returned to the students. It is also noticed that tutor comments are not written on the assignments by the academic counsellors. Because of the two major lapses the assignments have failed to achieve the intended academic purpose in distance education.

The intended purpose of academic socialisation is achieved with personal contact programmes in distance education. Material should be easy to understand. It should be in simple language and the students are to be encouraged to read the materials than the test papers and guides. Efforts are to be made to strengthen the assignment sub-component and the return of evaluated assignments with tutor comments to the respondents. Constructive measures in preparing materials and assignment handling will help to strengthen the academic support services at the study centre.

#### Organisational Support Services

The third important category of student support services is organisational support services, which are provided at the study centre. The components of organisational support services are library support, provision for conduct of practicals and the role of study centre in extending support services. Student support services in open universities are operationalised through the organisational structure called study centre at the grassroots level. Here the study centre as an organisational unit of administration at the bottom plays a crucial role in materialising and operationalising the support services for distance learners. They are part-time structures administered by the part-time staff. Study centre represents the local face of the open university. Efficient administration and

functioning of the study centre is a pre-requisite for the effective delivery of student support services.

Out of the services provided through the study centre, library support services assumes greater significance. Though the course material is considered to be self-sufficient in distance education, open universities provide library support to students by supplementing the study material with relevant books suggested in the course material. The library at the study centre is meant for students and academic counsellors. Books are not issued to the students at present. They have to refer them at the study centre only. It is found from the study that the majority of the respondents are not aware of the availability of library at the study centre and more than 90 percent want the library facility at the study centre. It shows the ignorance of the respondents about the existence of library at the study centre. The reasons for high ignorance of library at the study centre could be lack of space, library is not provided in a separate room and kept in the same rooms where the study centre staff sit for their daily work. The students have no access to the library books. Around 48 percent want library for reference purpose and 20 percent want to know the latest developments in the subjects.

Given the high level of ignorance, more than 85 percent have negatively reacted to the level of satisfaction for library support service at the study centre while below 15 percent positively responded. When specific gender comparison is made to find out the level of satisfaction, minor variations are noticed between male and female. Among 'thoroughly dissatisfied', female respondents are more (41.5 percent) whereas in not satisfied category males are more (48.8 percent). Variations are observed in each category of 'level of satisfaction'. High level of dissatisfaction is noticed across all social categories. When the level of satisfaction is analysed with the programmes of study, major variations in different categories of level of satisfaction are noticed between undergraduation and postgraduation respondents. The high rate of dissatisfaction among the postgraduate respondents reveals that they feel the need of library support services more than the undergraduate respondents.

When rural and urban respondents views are compared the level of satisfaction with respect to library support services it is noticed in the study that more percentage of rural respondents have negatively reacted. Variation in the level of satisfaction could be because of lack of access to library for rural population. The total positive responses regarding the library support services is nine percent in rural areas and fifteen percent in urban areas. It means urban area respondents are getting some library support services when compared to their counter parts in rural areas. More than 85 percent have negative opinion about library support at the study centre. The major suggestion they gave for improving library support services is to issue library books from the study centre library.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University is the first open university to offer practical based science programmes through distance mode of learning. People expressed doubts about it and the experience Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University shows that with proper planning and course design any course can be offered through distance mode of learning. As a part of course design to familiarise the students about doing practicals video based practical lessons and record book and manual are incorporated in the programme structure. The students are supposed to watch the video practical lessons before actually doing the practicals. It was found from the respondents of the study, more than 62 percent did not watch video lessons while 38 percent did. Those who watched felt that the quality is good and helpful for understanding practicals. Out of those who did not watch them around 58 percent are unaware of the availability of such facility and 25 percent felt that these facilities are unavailable at their study centre for watching them.

It is found that more than 90 percent felt record book and manual are very useful. More than two-thirds told that the samples required for conducting experiments are available. The major problems faced by those who are employed are getting leave to attend practicals and for others it is the long gap between organising practicals and conduct of practical examination causing problem to them. Over all more than 80 percent are satisfied with conduct of science practicals.

When the level of satisfaction for science practicals is analysed with respect to gender, striking differences and variations are noticed for each category of **level of satisfaction**. In 'thoroughly dissatisfied\* male respondents are double the percentage of females. Among 'not satisfied" category female respondents are double the percentage of males. It means though majority among both the gender have positively reacted for conduct of practicals variations in the level of satisfaction are noticed.

When specific comparison is made on the level of satisfaction for science practicals with respect to social status some interesting trends are observed. Out of the not satisfied O.C/B.Cs are highest (40 percent each) and the S.C/STs are the lowest (10 percent each). Among the satisfied O.C's are the highest and S.C's are the lowest. These types of variations are noticed in all the categories of levels of satisfaction. It is also found that there is a clear division with O.C/B.Cs on the positive and S.C/S.Ts on the negative. When the rural and the urban respondents' views are compared for science practicals and the level of satisfaction, it is found those 'thoroughly dissatisfied' are more in urban areas with 'not satisfied' more in rural areas. The reasons could be that the urban respondents high expectations than their rural counterparts. Those who responded as satisfied are evenly distributed. The major suggestion given by the employed category for better organisation of practicals is that they want the practicals conducted during vacations covering more experiments.

Though variations are noticed between gender, social status and rural and urban categories, majority have positively reacted towards conducting of science practicals. It means practical based science programmes can be effectively delivered if proper planning and course design are integrated in the course development process.

Effective functioning of study centre will determine the success of student support services in distance education. Though it is the lowest unit in the organisational structure its importance in the provision of student support services is very high. They are charged with wide variety of functions. Study centre is the place where the students meet counsellors and fellow students during the personal contact programmes. It acts as the

place for academic socialisation and interaction in addition to viewing video, television and teleconferencing sessions and listening of audio, radio and radio counselling sessions. Students feel that study centre is their local office of the open university and resembles the conventional college for the students.

The present study found that the selected study centres are accessible to majority of the respondents. More than 40 percent live within 10 kilometers of distance and 30 percent between 10 to 20 kilometers of distance from the study center. Those who live beyond 31 kilometers and above are below 20 percent of the respondents. When the distance between study centre and residence is compared for rural and urban respondents it is found that more number of urban respondents (47 percent) are living within 10 kilometers from the study centre, whereas in rural areas around 30 percent are living within 10 kilometers distance. Variations between different categories of distance for rural and urban areas are found. From rural areas more percentage of respondents are living beyond 31 kilometers when compared to their counterparts in urban areas. It means study centres are more accessible to urban respondents than the rural respondents.

When asked a majority of the respondents felt that it is convenient for them to visit the study centre. Out of those (22 percent) who felt it is not convenient to visit the study centre, most of them said it is because of the long distance and the high expenditure involved in traveling to the study centre. More than 65 percent have visited the study centre more than 20 times during the last one year. Only five percent never visited the study centre and 10 percent visited five times. When the number of visits and the distance between study centre and residence are analysed very interesting findings are observed. It is established that lesser the distance between study centre and residence more are the number of visits to the study centre and vice versa. It means there is a correlation between number of visits and the distance. Out of those who never visited study centre around one-third of them are living beyond 51 kilometers. Majority of those who visited more than 30 times are living within 20 kilometers distance. It is also found that those who never visited study centre for the last one year are mostly from rural areas. Of those who visited 30 times and above, majority are from urban areas (40 percent), when

compared to the rural respondents (29 percent). It means **the study centres are more** accessible to urban respondents than the rural respondents as majority **are** living within 20 kilometers distance from the study centre. Regarding the mode of **transport, it is found** that, around two-thirds are using public transport system and **one-fourth use their own** transport to go to study centre. Around 11 percent told that they are given travel concession for visiting study centre.

The major problem the respondents face during their visit to the study centre **are** non-availability of latest information (46 percent), officials directing them to contact headquarters (24 percent) and indifferent attitude of the staff at the study centre (14.5 percent). When it is analysed with gender, social status and programmes of study, cutting across the variables they faced the same type of problem. Variations are very less. However, with respect to the problems faced in the case of respondents from rural and urban areas major differences are noticed in terms of the percentage of rural respondents who are directed to contact headquarters than the urban respondents. The headquarters are far away for the rural respondents. In fact all the latest information should be provided at the study centres both in urban areas and rural areas. It is problematic and difficult for rural respondents to contact headquarters.

Drinking water (43 percent), canteen (22 percent), waiting hall (15 percent) and toilets (14 percent) are the special facilities the respondents wanted to be provided at the study centre. When the female respondents are specially asked for the type of problems they face at the study centre and advantages they have for studying in open university, more than fifty percent told the lack of toilets and thirty percent told about the lack of waiting hall. Majority of the female respondents felt that the major advantage is that they can study while working (47 percent) and staying at home (27 percent). When advantages are compared with the marital status of women, it is found that highest percentage from both married and unmarried stated that they can study while working followed by those who said that, they can study while staying at home. Around one-fourth of the married women found it more suitable for them, whereas fifteen percent of unmarried women who discontinued their studies due to lack of college nearby found **it more useful for**

them. When advantages are cross tabulated with occupation, more than 70 percent of **the** employed women found it advantageous to continue their studies while working. Degree of difference between various occupations of women is found within the same category of advantage. Women feel that distance education provides special advantages and flexibility for them to continue their studies.

The level of satisfaction for study centre support is very positively expressed. Around one-fourth fall under thoroughly dissatisfied and not satisfied categories in levels of satisfaction. When the level of satisfaction is analysed with respect to gender, social status, programmes of study and place of stay (rural and urban) very interesting findings are observed. When the level of satisfaction is analysed gender-wise variations are noticed in 'not satisfied', 'thoroughly dissatisfied' and 'satisfied' categories. In percentage terms male respondents are more in 'thoroughly dissatisfied' and 'satisfied' categories whereas females are more in 'not satisfied' category.

When the level of satisfaction is analysed with social status variations are observed. In the 'not satisfied' level of satisfaction the variation between S.C/S.Ts and B.C/O.Cs are quite noticeable and B.C/O.Cs are on the higher side. In 'satisfied' category the variations between S.T/S.Cs and O.C/B.Cs are very high, S.T/S.Cs are on the higher side. It means the degree of satisfaction varies from one social group to another social group. In some cases the variations are quite high and much visible.

The programme specific analysis with levels of satisfaction for study centre support found variations between undergraduation and postgraduation respondents. In 'thoroughly dissatisfied' category the postgraduates are more (8.3 percent) than the undergraduates (1.3 percent). The variation is very much noticeable. In 'not satisfied' category undergraduates are more (21.4 percent) than the postgraduate respondents (17.6 percent). Like this in each level of satisfaction the variation in responses from different programmes of study are noticed; and in a majority of cases the variation is very high. It means the needs of respondents from the study centre must be the reason for variations in the level of satisfaction. It is noticed that more percentage of rural respondents are 'not

satisfied' than the urban respondents. The reason could be the study centre is less accessible to rural respondents when compared to the urban respondents. Minor variations between rural and urban respondents are noticed in different categories of levels of satisfaction.

Over all majority in gender, social status, programmes of study and place of stay (rural and urban) have positively responded with respect to the level of satisfaction of study centre support. However variations are noticed within the category of satisfaction. The majority respondents indicated the need for knowledgeable and full time staff with positive attitude to be appointed at the study centre. The suggestions are basically to deal with staff training and development aspects. It means the staff at the study centre needs to be trained.

Open universities have established study centres as organisational units at the grassroots level and individual and academic support services are routed through them to the distance learners. It means the study centre as an organisational unit assumes great significance. When explored into its establishment and functioning it can be noticed that these units are operating on dependency model for providing support services to distance learners. They are dependent on host institution for space and manpower to carry out administration. Given the dependence on host institution, some study centres are not able to function and deliver the support services effectively. To overcome the limitations of the present organisation model Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University is taking some corrective steps to strengthen the organisational model at the grassroots level. Recent decision to establish Regional Coordination Centres in each district and construction of Regional Coordination Centre buildings are major initiatives of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University to strengthen the administrative system at the grassroots level. The memorandum of understanding signed between Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University and the Directorate of Collegiate Education, Government of Andhra Pradesh have brought the open and distance education system much closer to the conventional education system. It is assumed that the pro-active cooperation between two systems of education will lead to sharing of scarce national resources for the common objective of educating people. The

dependency model will lead to convergence model where both the systems work together and share the infrastructure together.

### **Media Support Services**

The fourth important category of student support service is media support. **Open** universities use multi-media methods to teach and reach students. Use of media enhanced the reach of educational support services to rural and remote places. Availability **and** accessibility are very important factors in media technologies to teach and support **the** students. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University has been utilizing six types of media support services. They are audio, radio, video, television, teleconferencing and radio counselling.

The study found that more than three-fourth are aware of availability of media support services. Majority (50 percent) of the respondents feel that media support means television lessons and for more than one-third they are radio lessons followed by teleconference, video and audio lessons. It is found from the respondents that television, radio and tape recorder are widely available with a majority of the respondents at their homes. Computer, internet/e.mail and video cassette player are not widely available with the respondents. When the availability of media facilities are analysed based on social status of respondents it is found that television, radio, tape recorder and telephone are available with more respondents of all social groups. It is also found that higher the social status more the availability of media facilities at home and vice versa.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University provided all the media infrastructure at the study centre; and the awareness about them is very low among the respondents. Majority of the respondents are aware of telephone facility only. Out of six major media support services those who are listening and viewing media lessons regularly are very less. The highest percentage of viewer ship is six for television lessons and lowest is 0.3 percent for video lessons. Above five percent listen to /watch regularly the radio and television lessons. Out of the respondents who listen to/watch 'sometimes', 29 percent watch

television lessons, 24 percent watch teleconferencing and 22 percent listen to radio lessons and the rest are below 10 percent. Those who 'never listen to or watch' media lessons are bewildering. Those who 'never listened to and watched' audio and video lessons are above 92 percent followed by radio counselling (90 percent), radio lessons (77 percent), teleconferencing (73 percent) and television lessons (65 percent). These figures are negating all the efforts of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University, which is aggressively aiming to utilise all the available media to teach and reach the students. Over all it shows in each category of media support a majority never listen to/watch the programmes. Around one-fourth listen to 'some times' and below six percent 'listen to/watch regularly'.

When an attempt is made to find out the reasons for high rate of 'never listening and watching' media lessons it is found that 'no information' about the programmes is the single major reason with percentage variation ranging from 35 to 65 for different types of media lessons of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University. The second major reason is the 'non-suitability of timings' for radio, television, teleconferencing and radio counselling programmes. The third major reason is 'no time/busy' to listen/watch media lessons. When the reasons for not listening and watching are analysed with respect to occupation of the respondents, irrespective of occupation 'no information', 'non-suitability of timings' and 'no time/busy' emerged as the major reasons for not listening to radio and radio counselling programmes and not watching television and teleconferencing programmes. For audio and video lessons 'no information', 'non availability of cassettes' and 'non interest shown by the academic counsellor' are the major reasons.

It is aimed to find out the interaction during the teleconferencing and radio counselling programmes. Out of the respondents who watched teleconferencing 'regularly' and 'some times', only 33 percent have interacted during the teleconferencing with subject related questions and majority of them are satisfied with the answer to their question. In the radio counselling programme out of those who 'listened regularly' and

'some times', majority have participated in the interaction and asked subject related questions and are satisfied with the answers to their question.

When the level of satisfaction is analysed for media support services, it is noticed that high level of negative satisfaction is expressed by the respondents for media support services. Around 48 percent are 'thoroughly dissatisfied' and 40 percent are 'not satisfied'. The positive respondents all put together aggregates to less than 12 percent. The high level of negative satisfaction is the result of many reasons. It is because majority of the respondents have no knowledge or don't know about the available media infrastructure at the study centre. High degree of 'no information' about the media lessons among respondents have also contributed to high level of negative satisfaction.

When the level of satisfaction is analysed in relation to the gender, social status and programmes of study, an overwhelming majority of the respondents have negatively responded. Minor variations between the variables are noticed within various categories of level of satisfaction. Major variations in the level of satisfaction between the responses of rural and urban respondents are noticed for 'satisfied' and 'fully satisfied' categories of level of satisfaction. Overall there is a high degree of negative satisfaction found for media support services. The major suggestion for improving media support services are need for supplying more information to students (45 percent), creating awareness about the media lessons used by Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University (26 percent) and more publicity to be given about the programmes (17.5 percent). These suggestions if implemented will go a long way in increasing the listener base and viewer base to media lessons. Sending "Opvarsity News" letter directly to all the students, providing list of media lessons in the course material and providing separate room for listening and watching media lessons are some other suggestions worth considering.

Based on the level of satisfaction for various components of student support services from the present study, the following major conclusions can be drawn. The respondents are not getting proper guidance support and counselling support services. The respondents are very critical about the library, assignments and media support

services. The respondents have positively reacted for information support, personal contact programmes, conduct of science practicals and role of study centre. The present study is able to collect and analyse the perceptions of learners on different components of student support services which are classified into four categories. It also studied the **level** of satisfaction, in relation to gender, social status, programmes of study, place of stay and occupation of respondents with regard to different components and categories of student support services in distance education system. The present study has critically examined the prevailing models of administration for student support services in Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University and recognized the importance and need for learner orientation to the administration in distance education.

When the role of administration and organisational structure in the process are examined it can be said that because of the organisational limitations of the present system, the administration is not able to meet the expectations of the respondents. When the organisation structure and staff are operating on a part-time basis it is not possible for it to deliver the student support services as per the expectations of the students. Hence, the administration is transforming into a convergence model. In the convergence model Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University aims to overcome the limitations of the dependency model by having permanent Regional Coordination Centres with full time staff to attend to the needs of the distance learners.

The administration of student support services is still in the evolving process. There is a great scope for experimentation and convergence. Another interesting trend is the transforming nature of students. Presently the student body is also undergoing transformation and behaving like consumers of education. In the process education became a commodity. In this process the administration needs to transform itself to meet the needs of the students. It means, irrespective of the model of administration, it should have learner orientation and aim to maximize learner satisfaction. It implies that the distance education system has to re-orient itself on the lines of service sector. The service sector always aims to maximize customer satisfaction.

The distance education student is transforming as a consumer and even demanding better and efficient services. The administrative system at the university head quarters and study centre level need to change according to the changing nature of students and should aim to provide better and efficient student support services. Otherwise it will be considered as an administrative system which creates problems to the students and as a bureaucracy which baffles the isolated learner. Learner orientation to the administration will strengthen the student support services and contribute to learner satisfaction. The role of administration in distance education system is very crucial. The distance education system is dependent on its administration for effectively delivering student support services. Hence, there is a need to put in place a pro-active, pastoral, caring, simple and learner oriented administration for providing student support services in distance education.

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## **Annexure**

Annexure: 1. Academic Programmes (2003)

S.No.	Name of the Programme	Eligibility	Programme Duration (in years)		Tuition Fee (Per Annum)	Media/Year of first offer
			(4) Min.	(5) Max.		
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1	Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)	a. Pass in Eligibility Test (E.T) Minimum Age: 18 years (OR) b. Pass in Intermediate or its equivalent	3	9	I Year Rs. 900/- II Year Rs. 1100/- III Year Rs. 1100/-	English (1983) Telugu (1983) Urdu (1995)
2	Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com)	-do-	3	9	-do-	English (1983) Telugu (1983)
3	Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.)	1. Intermediate with Science (OR) 1. One year work experience in any Science & Technology Organisation	3	9	-do- Plus- (Science Practical Fee for each subject per annum Rs.500/-)	English (1983) Telugu (1983) Urdu (1996)
4	Bachelor's Degree in Library & Information Science (BLISc)	1. Bachelor's Degree in any subject b. Work experience in Library	1	3	Rs. 2,000/-	English (1985)
5	Bachelor's Degree in Library Public Relations (BPR)	a. Bachelor's Degree in any subject b. Preference to PROs, Journalists, Media unit of State / Central Govt., Advertising Agencies, etc	1	3	Rs. 2,000/-	English (1993)
6	P.G. Diploma in Marketing Management (PGDMM)	Bachelor's Degree in any subject	1	3	Rs. 2,200/-	English (1996)
7	P.G. Diploma in Business Finance (PGDBF)	Bachelor's Degree in any subject	1	3	Rs. 2,200/-	English (1996)
8	P.G. Diploma in Environmental Studies (PGDES)	Bachelor's Degree in any subject	1	3	Rs. 2,000/-	English (2001)
9	P.G. Diploma in Writing for Mass Media in Telugu (PGDWMT)	a. Bachelor's Degree in any subject (OR) b. Intermediate with 3 years experience in Mass Media	1	3	Rs. 2,000/-	Telugu (1996)
10	P.G. Diploma in Human Rights (PGDHR)	Bachelor's Degree in any subject	1	3	Rs. 1,500/-	Telugu (2000)
11	P.G. Diploma in Women's Studies (PGDWS)	Bachelor's Degree in any subject	1	3	Rs. 1,500/-	English (2001)
12	Certificate Programme in Food & Nutrition (CPFN)	a. No Formal academic requirement b. Minimum age: 18 years	6 months	18 months	Rs. 500/-	Telugu (1989) Urdu (1993)

13	Master's Degree in Business Administration (MBA)	Admission through ICET (Common Entrance Test)	3	9	Rs. 4,500/- per year	English (1993)
14	Master's Degree in Library and Information Sciences (MLISc)	BLISc Degree (40percent and above)	1	3	Rs. 4,500/- per year	English (1998)
15	Master of Arts M.A. (History)	Bachelor's Degree in any subject	2	6	Rs.2,500/- per year	Telugu (1995)
16	Master of Arts M.A. (Economics)	Bachelor's Degree in Economics	2	6	Rs. 2,500/- per year	Telugu (1994)
17	Master of Arts M.A. (Political Science)	Bachelor's Degree in any subject	2	6	Rs. 2,500/- per year	Telugu (1993)
18	Master of Arts M.A. (Public Administration)	Bachelor's Degree in any subject	2	6	Rs. 2,500/- per year	Telugu (1993)
19	Master of Arts M.A. (Sociology)	Bachelor's Degree in any subject	2	6	Rs.2,500/- per year	Telugu (1993)
20	Master of Sciences M.Sc. (Mathematics)	Bachelor's Degree with Mathematics	2	6	Rs. 2,500/- per year	English (2003)
21	Master of Arts M.A. (English)	Bachelor's Degree in any subject	2	6	Rs.2,500/- per year	English (2003)
22	Master of Commerce (M.Com)	Bachelor's Degree in Commerce/ BBA/BBM/B.A(Commerce)	2	6	Rs.3,000/- per year	English (2003)
23	M.Phil. in Development Studies (Commerce, Development Statistics, Economics, Pub. Admn. & Pol. Science, Geography, Sociology)	a. Pass in Entrance Test b. Master's Degree with Second division in Social Sciences or Allied disciplines	1 ½ Years (Course work & Dissertation)		Rs.4,000/-	English (1984)
24	Ph.D. in Development Studies (Commerce, Development Statistics, Economics, Pub. Admin., & Pol. Science, Geography, Sociology)	a. M.Phil. Degree or 60percent marks in M.Phil Part-I (OR) b. Master's Degree in 2 <sup>nd</sup> Division with atleast two Research Publications	2	6	Rs.3,000/-	English (1990)
25	Ph.D. in Open Distance Education	a. Candidates with M.Phil. or Ph.D. Degree in any subject (OR) b. A high second class Master Degree in any subject & securing not less than 55 percent marks and with at least two research publications in Distance Education (OR) c. A high second class Masters Degree in any subject securing not less than 55 percent marks, with one research publication in Distance Education and having put in at least 3 years experience in any distance education institution	2	6	Rs. 3,000/-	English (2003)

Source: Public Relations Branch, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar University, Hyderabad (2003)

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