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*Editor*

**Dr. D. Suresh**



**SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC WELFARE AND INITIATIVES**  
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## SPWI JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL WELFARE

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# HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN TELANGANA – A SUB-REGIONAL STUDY



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**Abstract:** Education is the most important tool to change the lives of human beings. To embody this destiny, the central and state government are preparing various policies and implementing various programs to endeavour education to all at their doorsteps. Open and distance education cater to the need of people who have an innerquest to grow academically, despite various constraints Open and distant learners, can be understood as more sophisticated learners, who are, despite several challenges, trying to cope with regular learners, as far as academic development is concerned. While regular students have a lot of facilities available and people around are concerned with their academic activities and grow continuously, Open and distant learners are always struggling hard for the same. For the past few years, it has come to be seen that the distant learners, though they have enrolled for the course willingly, leave the course in the middle. Despite their utmost urge they, somehow, are forced to drop the course. There are several reasons behind this unwanted result. A major reason for this drop-out may be found in the in-depth study of the students undergoing distance learning courses. Whatever the reasons, it is a challenge for the system of open distance learning. One has to take up all these issues and challenge them with concern if we want to strengthen open distance learning. Distant learners face a variety of problems with the system, as a whole, of open distance learning. These problems, in turn, compel them to drop the course in the middle. As a consequence, this becomes a challenge for open-distance learners. So, it is the need of the hour, that the various problems faced by open and distant learners should be studied with due concern to overcome the challenge and hence the betterment of the open and distance learning system. In Telangana also various universities are offering different

*types of courses in distance mode. In the background of the above discussion, the present study has assumed the distance education system in the Telangana region particularly with special reference to SDLCE Kakatiya University. Thus, the present study has an in-depth look at these problems and suggests some solutions for the benefit of the students and hence enabling the open and distance learning system to cope with the challenges and possible threats ahead.*

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**Keywords:** *Open Distance Education, History, Policies, Programs, Implementation, Distance Learners, Problems, SDLCE, Warangal, Kakatiya University*

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## **Introduction**

Distance Education (DE) is a branch of education where teachers and students are separated in terms of place and time. They communicate at times of their choosing by exchanging printed or electronic media, or through technology that allows them to communicate in realtime and through other online ways. Distance education has noticed drastic changes in the last few centuries. Its length and breadth have noticed both quantitative and qualitative changes. DE has been described as “a process to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both. In other words, distance learning (DL) is the process of creating an educational experience of equal quality for the learner to best suit their needs outside the classroom. Distance education courses that require a physical on site presence for any reason (including taking examinations) are considered a hybrid or blended course of study. This emerging technology is becoming widely used in universities and institutions around the globe. With the recent trend of technological advances, DL is becoming more recognized for its potential in providing individualized attention and communication with students internationally. Initially, developed countries were practising DE but of late developing countries have also gone for distance education in a big way. India has emerged as one of the biggest centres of DE in the world.

## **Distance Education System in India**

The origin of the DES in India has been traced to 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 the Indian republic. The first Five-year plan envisaged the provision of education through private study through correspondence courses supported by radio talks organized 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 the growing number of students and thought of providing education through evening colleges and correspondence courses. With the realization of the need to provide educational opportunities to the students and to give concrete shape to the correspondence education system, a committee under the chairmanship of Kothari was appointed by the Ministry of Education to prepare the blueprint for the establishment of correspondence education

programs in the country. The Committee recommended, as a pilot project under the University of Delhi, starting correspondence courses in 1962 with the restriction to offer courses only in arts, commerce and social sciences at the under-graduation level. This is how the Correspondence Courses Institution came into existence at the University of Delhi.

The next major step in the evolution of correspondence education was the appointment of the Education Commission (1966), again under the chairmanship of Kothari, which studied the pilot project at the University of Delhi and recommended the 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 at the University of Delhi and the endorsement by the Education Commission have set the pace for further development and proliferation/expansion of the 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 programs (Kulandai Swamy V.C.: 2002: 26).

The next phase in the evolution and development of DE in India was the appointment of the 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 an Open University in the country. The Ministry of Education and Social Welfare in collaboration with the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) organized a seminar on Open University in December 1970. The seminar felt that the situation was ripe for establishing an Open University and recommended setting up 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 an Open University. The Working Group after considering various factors 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 enquired into the working of Central Universities under the chairpersonship of Dr. Madhuri R. Shah and recommended the establishment of a national open university without any delay (Ram Reddy, G: 1988: 111-112).

### **Distance Education in Telangana**

During the same time, the Government of Andhra Pradesh (undivided Andhra Pradesh State) decided to establish the 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 Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University and is located in Hyderabad.

However, the idea of an Open University gained momentum with the first public broadcast to the nation by the then Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi as a part of the 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 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 September 1985. It took 15 long years to realize the idea of the 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 the first correspondence courses institution in Delhi University in 1962 to establish the first Open University in India.

The DES is emerging as a strong higher education system (HES) in India. The Distance Education Council (DEC) has been established as a statutory body under IGNOU Act 1985 and to serve as an apex body for DE in India for promotion, maintenance of standards and coordination of open and DE. According to Dikshit, the DEC has "adopted a pro-active approach and initiated measures for the development of DE and overall strengthening of institutions" (Dikshit H.P.:2003: 1, 6) in India. Regarding the present status of ODLs, 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" (Dikshit H.P.: 2003: VII). 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, DE is emerging as a credible educational system in India.

India has one of the largest systems of university education that covers 15 major states and 15 major languages. At present, there are around 220 universities including those institutions having university status, and nearly 8,000 colleges with an enrolment of nearly 6 million. With 242 universities in dual mode, 17 OU in single mode and 256 Distance Education Institutions with 700 thousand enrolments, the ODE has already formed a major component of the university education system of India

### **Profile of the SDLCE**

The SDLCE of Kakatiya University has come into existence in 1989-90 and dedicated itself to removing all barriers that traditionally restrict access to university-level studies while offering several DEO and other non-conventional courses. Presently there are 123 UG and 42 PG study centres running under the SDLCE. Out of these 58 UG study centres and 24 PG study centres are working under a Memorandum of Understanding.

### **Hypothesis**

Distance education is an opportunity for persons who are educationally discontinued or so far away from education with unavoidable circumstances. Regard

to this world countries are established distance/open learning systems according to their way, India also established a distance education system and provides distance open learning to the learners through the various open universities and distance institutions. The SDLCE is a pioneer institution which is working under the Kakatiya University, in the Warangal district of Telangana state since 1989-90. Since the inception of (the School of Distance Learning and Continuing Education (SDLCE), it was providing various student support services by the various regional study centres (SCs) and it succeeded to provide better student support services.

### **Objectives of the Study**

In the light of the above discussion present study is confined to the following objectives:

- To Study the origin, history and importance of the DE.
- To examine the policies, programs and process of implementation of the DES in Andhra Pradesh.
- To examine the impact and opportunities created for students of the DE by the SDLCE, Kakatiya University in Warangal District of Telangana.
- To study the perception of the OL and DE by SDLCE, Kakatiya University in Warangal District of Telangana.
- To study the problems faced by distance learners
- To find out problems associated with DE.
- To trace out the hindrances and made appropriate suggestions for the betterment of the DES at the university level.

### **Methodology of the Study**

The research study is conducted by taking SDLCE, Kakatiya University as the case study. The reason for selecting SDLCE, it is the next DE provider after the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University in Telangana. It is also following multi-media methodologies for imparting education to its students. It has a large network of SCs in Telangana for providing the DE to students. It needs a comprehensive study to understand various facets of SSSs of SDLCE from a learner's perspective. The researcher's experience of working in the delivery of SSSs also motivated me to undertake this study to get firsthand knowledge of how SSSs are provided at the grassroots level. It is an attempt to understand the SSSs from the learner's perspective. The operational reasons like proximity to the institution for the collection of data during the fieldwork and time constraints are some other reasons for selecting SDLCE, Kakatiya University for undertaking the present research study.

The research methodology followed for undertaking the present study is based on both primary sources and secondary sources. The secondary data was collected



from books, research journals, conference papers, documents, manuals, Acts and Statutes and Vice-Chancellors Convocation Report. The researcher has visited the library of SDLCE, Kakatiya University and the library of IGNOU Regional Centre many times for reference books, journals and other publications. The researcher has made regular visits to the offices of the Students Services Branch (SSB) and Computer Centre of SDLCE, Kakatiya University for data collection.

The primary data was collected with the help of a questionnaire from the respondents. The respondents answered closed-ended questions without any problem. Before administering the questionnaire, the respondents were explained 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.

The study covered the respondents' perceptions of important components of student support services, the final questionnaire became quite lengthy with more than 73 questions in 11 sections. Each section has different questions especially related to one component of the 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 programs,
6. Attendance
7. Self-instructional course materials,
8. Assignments support,
9. Media support,
10. Library support,
11. SC support includes a suggestion for each section.

The questionnaire was personally administered to the respondents, in a majority of cases in an informal environment at the selected SCs. The sample size of the respondents is 190 (145 undergraduate learners + 45 Postgraduate learners) from 29 UG and 7 PG SCs. The purposive sampling method was followed for the collection of primary data from the respondents of the SCs. Interview and observation methods are also followed during the fieldwork. Discussions were held with officials of the SDLCE, Kakatiya University. Care has been taken to collect data from different social status groups, gender and the programs 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.

- ❖ SDLCE, Kakatiya University has been offering more than twenty academic programs of study in different faculties of study. The sample respondents are drawn from the second and third years of UG., and PG, students
- ❖ The respondents of the study are drawn from Warangal, Karimnagar, Khammam and Adilabad districts only. Hence, the study findings may not be generalized to the whole state of Telangana, which is the jurisdiction of the SDLCE, Kakatiya University.
- ❖ Though the SCs have large enrollments, due to lack of time and other constraints the sample size is restricted to 190 (145 undergraduate learners + 45 Postgraduate learners) distance learners and 29 coordinators of the SCs only. The findings of the study are drawn from the responses of the selected respondents.
- ❖ The present study accorded greater importance to the perceptions of the respondents, as the students constitute the base of the support services in SDLCE, Kakatiya University.

**Table 1: Sampling Size**

District	Study Center Total		Distance Learners (Under graduation)			Distance Learners (post-graduation)			Total
	UG	PG	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	
Warangal	13	1	65	39	26	15	9	6	80
Karimnagar	7	2	35	21	14	10	6	4	45
Adilabad	6	3	30	18	12	15	9	6	45
Khammam	3	1	15	9	6	5	3	2	20
Total	29	7	145	87	58	45	27	18	190
	36								

**Note:** Based on the no. of district-wise study centres

### Findings

The first category is individual-based support services. It is always believed that DE is learner-centred 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 an 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 distance learners on an individual basis. Hence, they are all grouped under individual-based support services.

The information support observed that the majority are aware that information support is available at the SC, details of pre- and post-entry information is provided, and SC is the main channel of information for both male and female respondents of different programs of study. Though the majority are not facing any problem in getting information, the latest information sometimes is not available for both genders, different programs of students at different places of stay. Non-availability of an indifferent attitude of the staff at the SC is felt by the rural respondents more than the urban respondents. Although the age of the different respondents is not satisfied with the information support categories (of gender, and programs of study), sometimes the respondents are facing problems in getting the correct and latest information. When satisfied, partly satisfied and fully satisfied are put together for information support, irrespective of gender, and programs of study 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 and support services to all.

The study revealed that the majority are aware of the availability of guidance support at the SC; want guidance in course selection, career and job guidance and feel the need for guidance support. Irrespective of gender, social status and programs of study majority feel that no guidance is provided to them at present. Though the level of satisfaction is high among gender, social status and different programs of study, more than 38% are either not satisfied and/or thoroughly dissatisfied. Among the gender more females are not satisfied than males. Among the programs of study, the highest percentage of BA and MA respondents are not satisfied whereas the highest percentage of MA respondents are not satisfied. The high rate of dissatisfaction is corresponding with a high rate of respondents who feel that no guidance is provided to them.

The perceptions of the respondents on information support, guidance support and counselling support services are analyzed the following broad trends are noticed. In the case of information support, the majority are aware that information is provided to them on admissions, exams and academic programs. Pre- and post-entry information needs are attended to and the SCs, fellow students and university headquarter is the major channel for information to the respondents. The majority of the respondents, irrespective of gender and programs of study have positively reacted to the information support. However, around one-fourth have negatively reacted and the respondents are not aware of the validity of their registration and the process for re-registration.

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. The majority of the respondents irrespective of gender, social status and programs of the 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.

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

Overall, more than 50% are not satisfied with the information support by the respondents. More than 64% are not satisfied with the guidance support whereas around 87% are not getting any counselling support provided to them. It should be kept in mind that nobody is providing any counselling support at present to them but when they gave their overall level of satisfaction for counselling support. Though the negative level of satisfaction is low, efforts should be made to provide better information, guidance and counselling support services to increase the level of satisfaction.

No doubt individual-based support services like information support, guidance support and counselling support play a very important role in the learning process of DE students. Though the support staff at the SC can extend the information support, the guidance and counselling support need to be handled by higher-level functionaries at the SC. A separate cell may be established under the charge of an Assistant Coordinator or a senior Academic Counselor 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 who feel that they are not getting any guidance and counselling support from the SC at present.

While it can be observed that most DE students do not begin their studies as independent learners, they must acquire these skills to survive. In addition to course packages and general support services ways must be found to inculcate this 'independence 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.

After the individual-based support services, the second category of SSSs is the academic support services which assume much significance in ODES. Academic support services consist of face-to-face PCPs, self-instructional materials and assignments. They form the basis for academic support and bring credibility to the DES. Academic support services promote academic socialization, peer group interaction among students and two-way communication between teacher and the student.

Personal contact programs are an important sub-component of academic support services. The study found that the majority of the respondents are aware of the PCPs and they needed them to understand difficult concepts and to clarify doubts. Instead of the counselling method, the lecturing method is followed by the PCPs. The majority of the respondents irrespective of gender, place of stay (rural and urban) and programs of study are attending personal contact programs at the SC. When a specific comparison is made between attendance in personal contact programs concerning gender, place of stay and programs of study, the following interesting trends and variations are found.

In personal contact programs, the above data shows that the majority are aware of PCPs and more than 95% need PCPs for the reasons of understanding difficult concepts and doubts clarification. They are satisfied with the present number of contact sessions and want attendance to be made compulsory in PCPs. More than 80% are regular in attending PCPs irrespective of gender and programs of study. The major reasons for not attending PCPs for males are that they are working and for female respondents, it is a family responsibility. 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 programs 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 programs of study within the given parameter for the level of satisfaction for PCPs. However, around 17% who are dissatisfied suggested the need for corrective measures to improve the PCPs.

It is considered the Self-instructional material as a part of SSSs. Self-instructional material is the backbone of learning and another important sub-component of academic support services. Self-instructional course material plays a very important role in DE. Material is sent to all the registered students. The 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 a course team approach for preparing course material. Hence it is called self-instructional materials. The general characteristics of self-instructional materials are self-explanatory, self-contained, self-directed, self-motivating, self-evaluating and self-learning. While commenting on the role of self-instructional material as print is indispensable: students need a permanent record of their work and most of their learning will be done from a printed text.

The study found that the 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. The majority of the respondents consider the language used in self-instructional material is good and not difficult. When the difficulty level of language is cross-tabulated with programs of study the variations between undergraduate and postgraduate respondents are noticed. The 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 levels for rural and urban area respondents is very much visible. The reasons for variations could be rural respondents mostly have their previous education in the regional language. Undergraduate and postgraduate respondents are reading test papers and guides in addition to course materials, because the 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 the open and DE system to promote two-way academic communication between teacher and student. The respondents understand the importance and role of assignments as a learning tool. But unfortunately, the SDLCE is not following these support services, other than SDLCE Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University has also followed this method at the post-graduation level.

The uniqueness of DE is the 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 DE. Media has enhanced the reach of Open Universities and facilitated extending educational opportunities to rural and remote places. Non-print media increases the learners' concentration and helps the learners involve in the learning process. But the SDLCE is not utilizing this tool at the SCs. The media infrastructure is not available at the SCs. Only the radio classes are provided by the SDLCE but the radio facility is not available in their homes.

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 SC. 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 to the SC only. Library support is very essential for open and distance learners to pursue their studies independently. The study found that more than three-fourths do not know existing library facilities. An overwhelming majority felt the need for library support.

Effective functioning of SC will determine the success of SSSs in DE. Though it is the lowest unit in the organizational structure its importance in the provision of SSSs is very high. They are charged with a wide variety of functions. SC is the place where the students meet counsellors and fellow students during the PCPs. It acts as the place for academic socialization and interaction in addition to viewing video, television and teleconferencing sessions and listening to audio, radio and radio counselling sessions. Students feel that SC is their local office of the Open University and resembles the conventional college for the students.

Study centres are the lowest units in the organizational structure of the SDLCE. All the above-discussed support services are largely provided to the students through

the SCs. It means the success of all the support services is largely dependent on the effective functioning and efficiency of the SCs. The successful implementation and delivery of academic programs rest with the SCs and their effective functioning. Keeping in mind the significance of SC, in this section, aspects such as the accessibility of the SC in terms of distance and convenience to visit, several visits made by the students during last year, their mode of transport, and problems they faced, special facilities to be provided at the SC and special advantages and the problem the women face, level of satisfaction for the role and SC support in relations to gender, social status and programs of study have been examined.

The study found that more than 28% are living within a radius of 20 Kms of the SC. However, 11% live beyond 50 Kms and above includes some of them have to travel more than 100 Kms to reach the SC (4.21%), their convenience for visiting SC is also elicited below. It means less percentage of urban respondents are living in faraway places than the rural respondents. 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 SCs are more accessible to urban residents than the rural residents.

The major problem the respondents face during their visit to the SC is the non-availability of the latest information (26%), officials directing them to contact headquarters (22%) and the indifferent attitude of the staff at the SC (12.10%). When it is analyzed with gender, and programs of study, cutting across the variables they faced the same type of problem. Variations are very less. However, concerning 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. All the latest information should be provided at the SCs both in urban areas and rural areas. It is problematic and difficult for rural respondents to contact headquarters.

More than 40% of the female students are facing various problems due to lack of toilets and 16% of lack of waiting for hall and drinking water. However, the majority of the female respondents have the flexibility when they can study while working (41%) and staying at home (22.36%). When advantages are compared with the marital status of women (22.36%), it is found that the highest percentage of 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 89.47% of the married women found it more suitable for them, whereas 10.52% of unmarried women who discontinued their studies due to a lack of college nearby found it more useful for them. When advantages are cross-tabulated with occupation, more than 67% of the employed both men and women found it advantageous to continue their studies while working. The degree of difference between various occupations of women is found within the same category of advantage. Women feel that DE provides special advantages and flexibility for them to continue their studies.

The level of satisfaction with SC support is very positively expressed. In providing SC support to the students, out of the total percentage the majority of the respondents (around 31.05%) are either satisfied, partly satisfied (16.84%) or fully satisfied (8.42%). However, 33.68% of the respondents are not satisfied and 10% were thoroughly dissatisfied. It means the university and the SCs have not succeeded in providing proper support to the students.

When the level of satisfaction is analyzed concerning the gender of respondents, it is commonly noticed that 21.05% of male and 10% of female respondents are satisfied whereas 18.42% each male and 14.47% of females are partly satisfied followed by 8.77% and 7.89% fully satisfied. Among the not satisfied 34.21% are female and 33.33% are male followed by thoroughly dissatisfied with 7.89% male and 13.15% female respondents. Out of the total of satisfied respondents, males are more in number than females. It can be said based on the above data that a majority of male and female respondents are not satisfied with the work of the SC.

When further analyzing the level of satisfaction some interesting trends are noticed. Out of the thoroughly dissatisfied, the highest numbers are from B.Com. (15.15%) a program whereas the lowest is from M.Com. (6.25%) program. Another interesting trend is out of the thoroughly dissatisfied, postgraduate students are very less when compared to the undergraduate students. The gap between them is very high. Out of the not satisfied postgraduate respondents is less when compared to undergraduate respondents. Out of the partly satisfied highest 20.25% are from BA program when compared to the lowest 13.63% from B.Com program respondents, while in post-graduation program M.Com program respondents are highest (18.75%) and MA students are low (13.79%). Out of the fully satisfied both the highest from M.A. 13.79% and the lowest from B.A. 6.32% are from under-graduation programs of study. It is interesting to observe that the difference between the highest and the lowest from different programs of study for a parameter of the level of satisfaction is in a majority of cases very high. The degree of level of satisfaction varies within the same level of satisfaction for different programs of study. There is a clear division between postgraduate and undergraduate respondents. Among the satisfied, postgraduate respondents are more than the undergraduate ones. Though a majority have positively reacted that the dissatisfied respondents constitute around one-fourth of the total cannot be ignored.

On the whole, it can be said that an overwhelming majority of respondents are aware of and expressed the need for PCPs for understanding difficult concepts and clarification of doubts. Respondents are satisfied with the number of PCPs and feel that their attendance in personal contact programs is made compulsory. The majority of the respondents (more than 41%) are regular in attending PCPs irrespective of gender, place of stay (rural and urban) and programs of study. The major reason for males not attending PCPs 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 programs. More than 57.74% are not satisfied with PCPs irrespective of gender, and programs of study.

Regarding self-instructional course material, the majority of the respondents have received it and the delay in receipt of course material for second-year under-graduation is due to the revision work taken up by the university. The majority feel that the language used in the self-instructional course material is good and not difficult to understand. However, variations are noticed between programs of study and places of stay (rural and urban) for the difficulty level of language of the course materials. More than 75% are reading other materials in addition to the self-instructional course material. It is further found that undergraduate respondents arc read test papers and guides whereas the postgraduate respondents are mostly reading reference books. Postgraduate students have assignments as part of their program and evaluation process at 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 SCs.

Academic support services comprising PCP, self-instructional materials and assignments are essential for the academic development of the individual learner in DE. They form the base for all academic support services. They bring credibility to the DE system. Personal contact programs promote academic socialization and peer group interaction in DE. 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 not satisfied with the PCPs; 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 SCs.

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 SC library. The high degree of dissatisfaction is corresponding with the high degree of lack of knowledge about the library facility provided at the SCs. Very few have positively expressed their satisfaction.

Regarding the support extended by the SC, it can be said that around three-fourths of the respondents residing within 25 Kms of the SC felt that it is convenient for them to visit the SC very often. Around two-thirds visited the SC more than twenty times. It is found that the distance between the SC and the residence influences the number of visits to the SC. Female respondents want the toilet and wait for hall facilities at the SCs. 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 to the SC support, irrespective of gender and

programs of study. However, around one-fourth have negatively reacted falling under the not satisfied and thoroughly dissatisfied category.

The organizational structure at the grassroots level is at the movement operating on the 'dependency model'. The SC is dependent on the host institution for office accommodation, manpower in the form of academic counsellors and support staff, classrooms for contact programs and conduct of examinations and many other things. Due to a lack of sufficient space, the SC is not able to provide a separate reading room for the library. To overcome these difficulties the organizational structure needs to be strengthened at the grass root level.

Based on the level of satisfaction for various components of SSSs 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 of the library, assignments and media support services. The respondents have positively reacted to information support and PCPs. The present study can collect and analyze the perceptions of learners on different components of SSSs which are classified into four categories. It also studied the level of satisfaction, gender, programs of study, place of stay and occupation of respondents concerning different components and categories of SSSs in DES. The present study has critically examined the prevailing models of administration for SSSs in SDLCE and recognized the importance and need for learner orientation in the administration in DE.

When the role of administration and organizational structure in the process are examined, it can be said that because of the organizational limitations of the present system, the administration is not able to meet the expectations of the respondents. When the organization structure and staff are operating on a part-time basis it can't deliver the SSSs as per the expectations of the students. Hence, the administration is transforming into a convergence model. In the convergence model SDLCE aims to overcome the limitations of the dependency model by having permanent SCs with full-time staff to attend to the needs of the distance learners.

The administration of SSSs 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 transforming 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 DES has to re-orient itself on the lines of the service sector. The service sector always aims to maximize customer satisfaction.

The DE student is transforming as a consumer and even demanding better and more efficient services. The administrative system at the SDLCE headquarters and SC level needs to change according to the changing nature of students and should aim to

provide better and more efficient SSSs. Otherwise, it will be considered an administrative system which creates problems for the students and a bureaucracy which baffles the isolated learner. Learner orientation to the administration will strengthen the SSSs and contribute to learner satisfaction. The role of administration in the DE system is very crucial. The DE system is dependent on its administration to effectively deliver SSSs. Hence, there is a need to put in place a proactive, pastoral, caring, simple and learner-oriented administration for providing SSSs in DE.

### **Suggestions**

Keeping the above finding in view, the following suggestion is made for the betterment of the OL and DE:

1. Information should be provided about the latest rules and regulations.
2. Establish the Regional SCs in Telangana State district-wise.
3. Appointment of full-time staff at Regional Study Centre.
4. Trained the Coordinators and Counselors to provide better SSSs to students.
5. Appoint the Academic Assistants at Head Quarter and SCs for all programs and subjects.
6. Introduce all programs through distance mode.
7. Update and improve the standard of the Printed Material.
8. Provide the Audio and Video lessons to the students at Study Centre.
9. Provide the program-wise Audio and Video lessons to the studies at the time of their admission.
10. Provide the study material in Telugu/English /Hindi and Urdu medium.
11. Revise the syllabus according to the desire of the learners or as per the competition world.
12. Revise the syllabus according to the assignment or examinations and it should help the students to avoid the test papers and guides.
13. Establish the library at Regional Centres and SCs.
14. Develop the informatics services from the SC/regional centre/headquarter to the study through information technology such as MMS, Audio alert, Press, TV and teleconference in the local language.
15. Provide the minimum amenities at SCs /regional centres such as toilets, waiting forthe hall, dining hall and drinking water.
16. Arrange all types of practicals at their examination centres.
17. Fix the PCPs for an academic year.

18. Enhance the PCPs days/periods/classes according to the difficulty of the subject irrespective of the no. of admissions.
19. Trained the counsellor towards the counselling, not for the lecturing.
20. The academic year should be followed equally by the regular UG and PG programs.
21. There is a need to introduce the assignment system at UG and PG programs
22. There is a need to be flexible and simplify the course material and syllabus according to learners.
23. Provide free education for unemployed students and economically backward families irrespective of gender and community.
24. A chart should be prepared or printed in the program-wise perspective/guide/booklet to guide regarding career/job chances.
25. Flexible the selecting the course combination like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University.
26. Appoint the well-trained staff at the SC to guide students in learning.
27. Guide them in course selection, and course combination, guide them about educational opportunities available after completion of the present course and provide career guidance.
28. There is a need to take regular attendance and make it too as mandatory.
29. In every academic year, there is a need to conduct regular classes for one to two months.
30. Provide better reading, writing and notes taking skills to the students.
31. The pass percentage should be hiked; it secured the enrollment ratio.
32. Avoid the delay or red-tapism in conducting the examinations, announcement of the result and issuing the certificates.
33. Provide the information to students in their application/broacher about the working days and holidays of the SDLCE.
34. Enhance the remuneration of the counsellors.
35. Provide the subject textbooks to the counsellors.

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