

Need of Library Services for Students in Open Universities: A Study of Assam

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Abstract

Education is a basic human right for every person. Library is the source of education as it is like two sides of coin. Learners who can't afford to go to regular institutions for study due to time and space barrier prefers distance education system which doesn't not require to attend classroom in a definite time, instead can learn from their home. The distance mode learners deprived off getting in touch with the instructor or faculty all the time and hence library can be a solution to this. That is why distance mode learners should be provided equal facilities if not more in comparison to regular mode of students. The main objective of this study is to know the library services offered to the distance mode learners across different study centres established in different places of Assam by IGNOU, IDOL and KKHSOU. This study is done to see whether the distance mode learners are privileged enough to enjoy the benefits using library services as well as scenario of library services of study centres of open universities in Assam

Keywords: Education, Distance Education, Library Services, Open University

1. Introduction

Library and education is like a coin where both the sides are equally important. To provide right document/ information to the right person in right time, library is the right media through which learners can be boosted with information to a maximum extent. The library is going through a process of transformation and library without walls is a recent phenomenon that has caught attention of everyone. Modern libraries deny physical existence of a library and thus the concept of digital library has gained popularity and mass support because of the flexibility of use. Digital library advocates open access to resources from anywhere and anytime. Similarly, distance education system also seeks to provide education to all without time and place

barrier. The learners do not require to classroom in a definite time, instead can learn from their home. The distance education learners should be provided adequate library services just like regular mode learners and open universities should set up libraries in study centres so that learners do not require to come to the campus-based libraries which may discourage the user to go to the library.

2. Statement of the Problem

The degrees offered by open universities are treated equivalent to the degrees pursued under regular mode. Library is important for learners in both formal and informal modes of education. Though open universities offer study materials pertaining to the course pursued by the individual learners but the learners may sometime require other resources. Hitherto open universities have set up different study centres at almost all places for the



convenience of the learners. The open universities has well equipped library in their respective campuses but students from remote study centres may find it difficult to explore the campus based library services of open institutions. Distance education is by and large depending on Information and Communication Technology but learners across remote areas may find it inconvenient to use internet to pursue ICT based library services. Here, an honest attempt has been made to find out whether the study centres set up under different open universities are studded with libraries or not. This study is conducted to find out whether the distant mode learners are privileged enough to enjoy the benefits using library services.

3. Review of Literature

Elizabeth F. Watson (2000) in the article “Library Services to Distance Learners - The New Professional Paradigms” discussed about the issues that professional librarians/information facilitators confront while attempting to deliver quality library and information services to distance learners and the new paradigms that distance librarianship has introduced into the profession of librarianship.

Samuel Owusu-Ansah and Chris K. Bubuama (2015), in their paper “Accessing Academic Library Services by Distance Learners” attempted to investigate the accessibility of academic library services to distance learners, with specific reference to University of Ghana Library System (UGLS).

Ramesh Kumar Tiwari (2011) in his paper “Library Services in Distance Education System: In Indian Context”, has tried to examine the issues related to role of libraries, library professionals in distance education system.

Vasumathy and Jayaraman (2014) in his paper “Outreach Library Services for Distance Learners” made an attempt to analyse the issues relating to design, development, management, and technology of providing access to quality library and information services to distance learners.

4. Scope of the Study

The study is confined to the study centres of three major distance and open learning universities, i.e. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Guwahati Regional Centre; Institute of Distance and Open Learning (IDOL), Gauhati University and Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU), Guwahati due to paucity of space and time.

5. Objective of the study

The main objective of this study is to know the library services offered to the distant mode learners across different study centres established in different places of Assam by IGNOU, IDOL and KKHSOU. To reach out this specific objective, the following objectives have been pursued:

- ❖ To know the library services offered by the libraries of these three open universities at their campuses.
- ❖ To find out whether the competent authority of the three open universities has taken any step towards setting up libraries in respective study centres.
- ❖ To find out learners’ perspective regarding setting up libraries in study centres.
- ❖ To suggest certain measures (if needed) to provide effective library services to the learners at different study centres.

6. Methodology

In this investigation a web-based survey has been done to find out the library services of the three open universities. A random sampling method has been adopted to collect the desired information. A personal visit has been attempted to some of the study centres and interview method has been adopted to collect the information, in some cases where personal visit is not possible due to time constraint, telephonic interview method has been adopted.

7. Distance Education

Open learning and distance education are the two terms often used interchangeably and when the two terms are coined together it becomes open and distance learning. In fact, open learning is a philosophy and distance education is the mode through which this philosophy of open learning transforms into reality.

In distance education specially prepared course oriented materials which are called self-study materials are supplied to the learners. These materials are mostly printed but other media such as television programmes designed for the learners, radio, audio video tapes, CD-ROM are also offered to the learners. It is observed that most of the distance learning universities or institutions have possessed a vibrant website where tutorials videos are also uploaded for the convenient of the learners.

8. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

8.1 Study Centres of three Open Universities in Assam

It is seen from data that the three open universities have their study centres in almost every districts of

Assam. Most of the study centres are set up in the colleges/ educational institutions and no independent study centre is seen. In some cases, one college has accommodated study centres for all the three Universities. KKHSOU is having highest number of study centres (338) in almost all the districts of Assam except Charaideo and DimaHassao. IDOL has 92 study centres basically located in lower Assam. It is to be noted that unlike IDOL, KKHSOU has set up study centres not only in colleges but also in DIETs, B.Ed. colleges and Junior Colleges. On the contrary, IGNOU has lesser number of study centres. IGNOU has set up two Regional Centres, one is in Guwahati and the other is in Jorhat and under these two Regional Centres, 46 study centres have been set up.

8.2 Study Centres with Library Services

It is seen from data that all the three open universities have set up a good number of study centres in different districts of Assam but there is no study centre which facilitates the users by providing physical library services. It has been observed that the three universities have their campuses in Guwahati which comes under Kamrup Metro district. Hence learners residing in Guwahati or near to Guwahati may often visit the libraries of their respective universities. But the learners from remote areas may find inconvenient to visit the campuses of the universities frequently.

8.3 Resources Available in the Study Centre Libraries

Data shows that KKHSOU library has a good collection of 18000 books, IDOL has 7944 books and IGNOU is having only 978 books approximately in their libraries including text and reference books. It is noticed that IGNOU has small number of

collection in comparison to IDOL and KKHSOU as it is the collection for the regional centre. The main library which is in the campus of the main office in New Delhi has a collection of over 1,50,519 books. The libraries of the three universities possess a good number of journals, popular magazines and newspapers. IGNOU has a subscription of 09 printed journals, 10 popular magazines and 04 newspapers; IDOL subscribes 19 printed journals, 12 popular magazines and 16 newspapers whereas KKHSOU has 36 printed journals, 08 popular magazines and 05 newspapers on regular basis for the users. The libraries also make e resources available to the learners.

8.4 Library Staff Pattern

Data reflects the library staff pattern of the three open universities which is very poor. IGNOU has only one semi-professional staff in the library at the regional centre in Guwahati. KKHSOU has one assistant librarian, one semi-professional staff and one supporting staff. IDOL has one semi-professional staff and some supporting staff.

8.5 Opting Distance Mode of Education

As per analysis of reason behind learners going for higher education under distance mode 60 and 66 percent learners are opting IGNOU as they are not getting admission in regular courses due to very poor marks and as there is maximum scope to opt the courses respectively. Whereas in IDOL 56 and 54 percent learners are opting IDOL as they are not getting admission in regular courses due to obtaining very poor marks and also for job related promotions. 62 and 64 percent learners are opting KKHSOU as they are not getting admission in regular courses due to obtaining very poor marks and for job related promotions as well.

8.6 Necessity of Library Services in Study Centres

Data depicts the learners view on getting library services in the study centres. A number of 50 students per university with a total of 150 students have been taken as sample. They have been asked to comment on the necessity of library services in study centres. From the view point of learners under IGNOU, 19.34% learners are positive and while 14% learners are in a position where they can manage without getting library services. 17.34% learners are in support of getting library services whereas 16% of the learners are in the opposite side. Similarly, 18.66% learners of IDOL are in favour of library services in study centres and 14.44% learners are satisfied with even not getting library services. Overall 55.34% learners are looking for library services at the study centres whereas 44.66% learners have no problem with study centres without library facilities. Among the 44.66%, most of the learners are of the view that they are not opposing library services in study centres but somehow satisfied without library services also.

9. Major Findings

- ❖ All the three open universities have set up a good number of study centres in almost all districts of Assam. KKHSOU is leading with 338 nos. of study centres, followed by IDOL with 92 study centres and IGNOU with 46 study centres.
- ❖ The Study Centres of all the three are mostly located at provincialized under graduate colleges. However, KKHSOU has set up study centres at other educational institutes.
- ❖ All the three open universities have set up main library in their respective campuses and till now

no study centre facilitates library services to the learners.

- ❖ The library staff pattern is very poor in all the three Universities. All the three Universities have a good collection of printed and eBooks, printed and e journals, periodicals, thesis, pamphlets etc.
- ❖ As good as 55.34% distance mode learners under these three Open Universities are in favour of providing library services at the study centres.

10. Conclusion

Education is core to everyone and it determines the fate of a society or in a broader sense of a nation. Learners who have opted for higher education in distance mode should get more inspiration because of open and distance learning requires self-learning and self-learning demands high level of motivation on the part of the learners. The distance mode learners deprived off getting in touch with the instructor or faculty all the time and hence library can be a solution to this. That is why distance mode learners should be provided equal facilities if not more in comparison to regular mode of students.

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Further Reading

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