Chapter-II

Review of Literature
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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?" 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"\(^2\) 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"\(^3\) 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 multimedia 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" 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" 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" 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. Me 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" 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" 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" 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" 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” 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" is an attempt by the author to focus on important aspects of distance teaching institutions. The book has
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" 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" 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?" 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” 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” is a 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" 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” 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” 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"22 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" 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, upgrading 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" 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 framework 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 keynote 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” 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) 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" 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" 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” 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" 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"32 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"33 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", 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" 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" 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" 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' 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\textsuperscript{th} 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"\textsuperscript{39} 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 session are also known as contact-cum-counselling session in open and distance learning system. These sessions will play very important role and constitute 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 majority of the study centres have conducted all the counselling sessions prescribed for the year and majority of counsellors following lecture method, though they are not expected to lecture.

Academic problems: The study found that the majority of the counsellors are following lecture method instead of interaction and discussion method, due to 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 distance education system majority of them are resorting to the lecture method.

Administrative problems: The open and distance learning system operates on dependency model. Open University is dependent on host institution for 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" states that the success of open university system is dependant on effectiveness of its student support services, which are again dependent on the organizational structure of open university. 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" 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” 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" 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" 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" 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" 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?" 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 prerequisite 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" 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” 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" 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"\(^{51}\) 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"\(^{52}\) 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"\(^{53}\) 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" 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" 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" 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" 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" 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" 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, full time 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" 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" 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" 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" 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" 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" 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" 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"67 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 faculties 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"68 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 classroom. 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" 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 timetable 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" 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" 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" 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” 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” 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" 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” 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 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" 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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