

SUPPORTING DISTANCE LEARNERS' FOR SUCCESS AT UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST, GHANA: LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The study was titled Supporting Distance Learners' for Success at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana: Learners Perspective. One hundred and seventy DE learners were used from nine out of ten study centers in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. The proportional, purposive, stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample. The instrument was a structured questionnaire of six sections based on various support services. The survey research design was used for the study. Frequencies, percentages, logistic regression analysis, Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) IBM version 21 and Excel were used in the analysis. Findings revealed that majority of the students are aware of some of the support services put in place by CoDE for them while others are not aware of some of the services. It also came out that most of the support services are appropriate and that students are satisfied with services such as Face-to-Face, modules or learning materials whereas they are not satisfied with the administrative support, guidance and Counselling as well as library services given to them. It was again revealed that the support services bring about success in the programme. Based on the findings the study recommends that professional guidance and counselling coordinators be employed in all the regional capitals. Library facilities, particularly E-Learning libraries should be provided for students to access.

Key Words: Support Services, Face-To-Face sessions, Interaction and Communication

1. Background

Distance education is learning undertaken in a transactional relationship with educational programmes and institutions, but entered into by the choice of the learner on the basis of his or her own needs, concerns and aspirations (Wedemeyer, 1983).

Each distance learner has a profile which may be similar to or different from that of others. Dzakiria (2005) quoting Homberg (1995) points out that there is no evidence to indicate that distance learners (DLs) should be regarded as a homogeneous group. They may have demographic and situational similarities, but the fact still remains that they are still heterogeneous in terms of their educational background, experiences,

preferences and coping strategies. Researches indicate that the assumption that adult learners could be largely self-sufficient may not be correct. For the majority of adult learners, the concept of open distance learning is a totally new experience and a large proportion of them may lack the ability to adopt readily to such a system (Coldeway, 1982).

In most cases, distance learners are studying part time and have to accommodate their studies within the demands of their families, jobs and established social life. Sharing the same view, Reddy (1988) added that most adult learners have been away from any kind of educational environment for some time, so their study habits may either be rusty or even non-existent. He said further that coming into a distance education system, the potential for conflict between the demands of their studies and those in other areas of their lives is great. To combat such conflict, support systems must be out in place. A distance context represents learners with different learning challenges and opportunities compared to those experienced in conventional classrooms. Distance learners are involved in continuous management of their learning environment and are faced with numerous decisions and roles (White, 1997, 2003). Distance learning students face challenges which range from immediate demands of their distance learning context and conditions such as isolated study context, maintaining initial motivation and limited access to real-time interactions to the availability of teacher mediation and learner awareness of the rate and direction of their learning (Moore, 1990). Lack of these create distance education deficit. Many distance institutions recognized that the distance education deficit required some other forms of provision or buck-up apart from a text. This buck-up is generally called 'student support' (Simpson; 2015). OSUN (2004) in citing Garrison and Baynton (1987) define leaning support as the resources that learners can access in order to carry out the learning process. Students support services in distance learning may also refer to all activities beyond the delivery of course materials that assist in the progress of students in their studies. Students support services are any system of procedures that are purposefully created and effectively utilized by a distance education institution to support and or facilitate teaching and learning at a distance (Molefi; 1988, p.1). Tong (1994) regards support services as essential in helping students overcome difficulties that affect the quality of their academic work. This gives students the confidence, that they are not being left on their own but the institution is interested in their progress and success. In an experiment by Ronich, Seagull, Ahmad, Peebles and Strecker (2003) it came out that the most influential factors in the provision of quality education are the quality of the learner and the student support systems. Lea and Farbus (2000) also posit that support services for distance students are "an educational necessity". Conceptually, in the distance education system, it is generally argued that frequent faculty-learner contact is desirable on the assumption that such experiences contribute to the growth and development of the learners. Reddy (1988) explained that the objective behind setting up the student support system is to minimize the potentials for conflict and help learners to proceed with their academic work in a systematic way to achieve success. At the University of Cape Coast, learner support include face-to-face sessions or interactive facilitation, learning materials, administrative, guidance and counselling and library services support. The College of Distance Education (CoDE), UCC has put in place a whole unit to give support services to students. Coordinators have been appointed for each study centre to help learners in all areas of conflict. In the view of Lewis and Spencer (1986) one of the key features of open learning is a commitment to helping the learner to acquire

independence and autonomy. They explained that learners may need help of various kinds. They may need help before they even begin learning as well as during and after a learning programme. Before they begin, learners may need to be helped or supported to recognize that they need to learn, decide what they want from learning and the best way of achieving it. Distance learners who are actively engaged in the learning process and sufficiently supported will be more likely to achieve success. Those who are dynamically occupied in their own learning will begin to feel empowered. They will be able to take charge of their learning and as a result, their individual achievement and self-direction will rise. On the other hand, the opposite will be true for learners who do not have the 'right' skills, mind- set, and perspectives on distance learning, and whose problems may be worsened by lack of support from their respective distance teachers and institutions (Dzakiria, 2005).

Rowntree (1992) thinks that support services need to be planned at least as rigorously as the packaged materials. Learners without support are most liable to delay their completion of a programme or drop out altogether.

Galusha (1997a) asserts that student support services should be given the necessary attention when planning Distance Education (DE) programmes because it resolves issues arising out of isolation of the student from the teacher. These student support systems which may include face-to-face tutorial sessions, administrative support, learning materials, guidance and counselling as well as library services are supposed to benefit distance learners and improve their success rate. This study therefore intends to find the perception that CoDE students have about the support systems that CoDE has put in place for them and how appropriate they are, to what extent learners are satisfied with these support services and the perception they have on the support services in relation to their success.

The research is guided by four research questions:

What support services are available at College of Distance Education, University of Cape Coast (CoDE, UCC), for students?

- 1) How appropriate are these support services at your study centre?
- 2) To what extent are students satisfied with these support services?
- 3) How do the support services help you to achieve success?

After the study, the knowledge that will come out of the findings will add up to existing literature on distance education which in turn will help to re-design support services for distance learners or improve on the existing ones. It will also encourage distance education students who take such support services for granted to access them since it will help them to be successful on their programmes to reduce the rate of attrition or churn rate.

The study concerned itself with the availability, appropriateness, satisfaction and success of support services at the College of Distance Education, University of Cape Coast (CoDE, UCC). It was confined to Greater Accra Region of Ghana so all the study centres in the said region numbering 10 were used. Nine of the centres were used for the main study and one for pilot test.

The fact that the study was confined to only the study centres in the Greater Accra Region may affect generalisation. Again, out of the two hundred instruments sent out, one hundred and seventy representing 85% respondents were retrieved.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The role of student support services in distance education is largely seen by many scholars as an interactive mechanism that seeks to simulate the nature of conventional education because it presents to the distant student similar opportunities and assistance as that of conventional students. This study was guided by the framework on isolation and control in distance education as espoused by Badu-Nyarko (2010). Badu-Nyarko's frame work stresses the role of the teacher and faculty. (At the University of Cape Coast we talk of course facilitators and College of Distance Education instead of teacher and faculty). He is of the view that the distance student should not be left in isolation but rather, should be contacted and supported physically, psychologically and emotionally. This can be done through the establishment of good rapport or relationship by the student with the institution and facilitators. Badu-Nyarko (2010) therefore outlined two strategies based on communication and interaction.

In connection with communication, he said students require more assistance from faculty or CoDE for that matter at the beginning of their learning. Distance Education institutions therefore have to be in regular communication with students to understand their needs in order to meet them adequately to make learning much easier. He suggests the formation of study groups where students can communicate and share ideas. In distance education, the technology for communication varies from one institution to the other and more advanced institutions tend usually to use more advanced communication tools (Sekyi, 2013).

On the part of interaction, Badu-Nyarko cites the two types of interaction namely 'social' and 'instructional' interaction mentioned by Gilbert and Moore (1998) which deal with the problem of isolation in distance education. Gilbert and Moore (1998), Badu-Nyarko (2010) and Sekyi (2013) are of the view that 'social interaction' may not be considered as directly contributing to the learning process but is important in making learning more effective. Some of the social factors according to Sekyi (2013) are: body language, greetings, exchanging personal information, and class management which are usually common during face-to-face tutorial sessions. A simulated real-time interaction between the distance education institution and the distance learner is advantageous to distance education and is presumed to produce good results.

'Instructional' interaction include communication of content, setting objectives, questioning, answering, pacing, sequencing, adapting, evaluating, handling responses and confirmation of learning among others. Based on this, Badu-Nyarko (2010) emphasises that instructors have the ability to either help students excel or fail in their academics. He asserts that instructors with warm, positive attitudes are particularly necessary for students who have often endorsed hostility and alienation in previous educational experiences.

Moore and Thompson (1990), also concur that frequent interaction between teacher and student such as feedback and tutorials from instructors and group studies on the part of students are desirable for academic excellence. Moore (1994) is of the opinion that effective interaction enhances the effective level of students and this results in a sense of enthusiasm in learning. Interaction also enhances students level of understanding especially when they are directly involved in face-to-face tutorial sessions and other activities at study centres.

Mason (1994) further advocates for teacher-student interaction because according to her, "opportunities for learners to express their own points of view, explaining the issues in their own words and formulate

opposing or different arguments, have always been related to deep-level learning and the development of critical thinking”.

The above positions espoused by various scholars bring to fore the indispensable nature of students support services in distance education because it creates the needed interactivity between students, tutors and the institution, thereby enhancing teaching and learning as well as learner success. In effect, support services are important in overcoming challenges of distance students including the absence of dialogue and isolation. When distance education institutions effectively use support services, they tend to put the student at the centre of learning rather than the institution.

2. Support Services at CoDE

2.1 Face-to-face tutorial sessions

This is organized at CoDE to enable students to meet course facilitators who respond to their questions, offer further explanation and or clarification to learning materials provided. At such sessions, facilitators are expected to establish a cordial relationship with students in order to help them learn and overcome all other challenges that may affect their academic life.

2.2 Learning Material Support

In Distance Education, study materials serve as the primary source of knowledge to students. They are usually printed and designed in such a way that they can be understood easily. At the College of Distance Education, University of Cape Coast, modules in various subject areas written interactively by professors, lecturers and other senior members of the university are supplied to students at the beginning of each semester. The interactive nature of the modules is a special design or in house style to help students learn as if a teacher was present (du _ Plooy, 2007).

2.3 Administrative Support Services

Welch and Reed (2005) are of the view that administrative support in DE aim at providing adequate facilities and learning resources to distance students. Administrative support includes all information on admissions, registration, examination and timetables. It also includes the availability of academic progress report to students upon request (COL, 2003). In effect, any assistance provided by academic and administrative staff to students and teachers contribute to the overall well-being of the institution. The University of Birmingham Code of Practice for Distance Learning (2012-13: 9) stipulates that prospective students should have a direct access to information about admission and registration requirements as well as anything that will help the distance learner to succeed on his programme. For effective supply of information the College of Distance Education (CoDE), University of Cape Coast sends out teams of staff to each of its study centres to send information and also to monitor the activities at the centres.

2.4 Guidance and Counselling Support

Guidance and counselling for distance students is meant to take care of critical issues that affect aspects of their lives which may have impact on their status as students. Guidance and counselling services for

distance education students therefore usually target the academic, social, personal, occupational, health, family and spiritual aspects of their lives though some may be more pronounced than others.

CoDE-UCC has set up a counselling unit at the headquarters to help students solve their problems. Study centre coordinators are also trained as counsellors to give counselling services to students who may need that support service.

2.5 Library Services Support

By virtue of the independent learning concept of the Distance Education System, library facilities occupy a prominent place in the learners' learning process and form an essential part of support services (Kaman and Selepeng-Tau, 1998). Library service provides students the opportunity to select, acquire, and refer to books and other printed and electronic materials. It is therefore imperative to innovate ways of reaching out to distance education students with the relevant library services.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Research design deals with a logical problem and not a logistical problem (Yin, 1989). The survey research design was used for this study because of the low cost and easy accessible information. The survey research design is a very valuable tool for assessing opinions and trends. Even on a small scale, judging opinions with a carefully designed survey can dramatically change strategies.

3.2 Population

The target population for the study was made up of all Diploma in Basic Education (DBE), Psychology and Foundations of Education (DPF), Mathematics and Science Education (DMSE). Diploma in commerce (DCO) and Management studies (DMS). Post Diploma in Basic Education (PDE), Bachelor of Psychology and Foundations of Education (BPF), and Mathematics and Science Education (BMSE). Bachelor in Commerce (BCOM), and Management Studies (BMS) students of College of Distance Education (CoDE), UCC, in nine out of the ten study centres in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana numbering 2,744. The accessible population was made up of all the education students comprising DBE, DPF, DMSE, PDE, BPF, BMSE and final year DCO, DMS, BCOM, BMS students numbering 1,950. This forms 72% of the total population. The sample size was taken from the accessible population.

3.3 Sample

The proportional sampling method was used to sample two hundred (200) male and female distance education students from the nine centres used for the main study after Greater Accra Region had been purposefully selected based on proximity and the fact that all the various programmes can be located in region. The females were 104(52%) and the males were 96(48%). The proportional sampling method was used because the number of students in each study centre differed from the others. It was also used for fair representation of respondents. The simple random sampling technique was used to sample the respondents

from the various levels in the centres after the students had been stratified into male and female. The responded questionnaires retrieved were one hundred and seventy representing 85% of the total number. A sample size of 170 respondents made up of 80(47%) males and 90(53%) females was finally used for the study.

3.4 Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire comprising six sections was used for the study. Each section was based on one of the support services. The questions were close ended and open ended but there were some likert-scale type questions too. In the view of Mason and Bramble, (1997) close ended questions help to facilitate coding, analysis and cross tabulation. Open ended questions were used to remove restriction and to enable the researchers get in-depth answers from respondents. Reliability and validity were achieved after colleagues had read through the questionnaire. This can be referred to as content validity and is meant to find out whether the questionnaire was representative enough of all the other probable questions that could have been asked concerning the subject under study (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (2008). The instrument was also pilot tested in the remaining centre in the Greater Accra Region. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Data collected was coded, analyzed, and interpreted.

3.5 Results and Discussion

Table 1 talks of the levels of respondents for the study. In all one hundred and seventy (170) respondents were considered.

Table 1: Level of Respondents

Level	Frequency	Percentage
100	35	20.6
200	32	18.8
300	35	20.6
400	54	31.8
500	14	8.2
Total	170	100.0

Source: Field work, 2018

Respondents were sampled from level 100 through to level 500 of the various programmes. Majority 54 (31.8%) of the respondents were in level 400 with 35 (20.6%) being in level 300 and 14(8.2) in level 500. Therefore, most of the respondents 103(60.6%) were familiar with the system of education by College of Distance Education (CoDE). Experience is indeed the best teacher.

Research Question 1:

Table 2: Available Support Services at CoDE

	No		Yes	
	N	%	N	%
Face to face	22	12.9	148	87.1
Modules/other learning materials	30	17.6	140	82.4
Administrative support services	85	50.0	85	50.0
Guidance and counselling support	135	79.4	35	20.6
Library Support Services	141	82.9	29	17.1

Statistics in Table 2 indicate that most respondents 148(87.1%) said CoDE runs face-to-face (tutorials) sessions for students, while 140(82.4%) said modules and other learning materials are made available to students at CoDE. In addition, 85(50%) of the respondents observed that CoDE supports them in their administrative issues. The table also indicates that 135(79.4%) respondents were not aware that CoDE runs guidance and counselling services to its students whereas 141(82.9%) were also not aware of the library services run at CoDE for students. The table again depicts that only 35(20.6%) and 29(17.1%) were aware of the guidance and counselling and library services respectively that CoDE runs. Since some students were aware that CoDE runs these services to students, it can be concluded that all the services listed in the table are available at CoDE.

This goes to support Badu Nyarko’s (2010) assertion that distance learners should not be left in isolation but should be supported physically, psychologically and emotional

Research Question 2: Students satisfaction with support services

Table 3: Satisfaction with Face-to-Face Support

	Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Face to Face schedules	64	37.6	88	51.8	16	9.4	2	1.2
Attitude of tutors towards students	49	28.8	107	62.9	11	6.5	3	1.8
Opportunity to ask questions in class	91	53.5	70	41.2	7	4.1	2	1.2
Answers given by tutors to questions are satisfactory	61	35.9	93	54.7	14	8.2	2	1.2
Further explanation of learning materials by tutors	37	21.8	83	48.8	43	25.3	7	4.1
Class size	60	35.3	78	45.9	20	11.8	12	7.1
Duration of face to face	50	29.4	77	45.3	35	20.6	8	4.7

Students’ satisfaction with face- to- face sessions was tied to what transpires during tutorials face in the classroom. Data under very satisfied and satisfied were added. The same was done for very dissatisfied and dissatisfied.

Interestingly, many respondents 152(89.4%) were satisfied with the face-to-face schedules while 156(91.7), were satisfied with the attitude of tutors towards them. Also, 161(94.7) indicated that they were given the opportunity to ask questions in class, 154 (90.6) said answers from tutors were satisfactory whereas 120(70.6) were satisfied with explanations further given by tutors on learning materials. One hundred and thirty eight representing 81.2% respondents were satisfied with their class size and 127(74.7%) were fine with the face- to- face duration. This implies that generally students are satisfied with the tutorial sessions.

Table 4: Satisfaction with Learning Materials Support

	Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Learning materials contain relevant information	79	46.5	74	43.5	12	7.1	5	2.9
Objectives stated in the modules match the information	87	51.2	64	37.6	14	8.2	5	2.9
The self-evaluation activities helped me assess my understanding of the modules	90	52.9	61	35.9	13	7.6	6	3.5
The tables, charts and diagrams that were used helped in simplifying information	58	34.1	70	41.2	27	15.9	15	8.8
The summaries helped me review what I should have learnt	89	52.4	64	37.6	11	6.5	6	3.5
The volume of materials was sufficient	67	39.4	77	45.3	15	8.8	11	6.5

Adding very satisfied and satisfied together, data in Table 4 reveals that 153(90.0) respondents indicated that the learning materials contain relevant information with 151(88.8%) saying the objectives stated in the modules matches the information. Again, another 151(88.8%) said they were satisfied with the self-evaluation activities provided in the modules. In addition, tables, charts, and summaries provided in the module were seen to be very helpful in information assimilation by 128(75.3%) respondents. Furthermore, majority 144(84.7%) indicated the volume of the material was sufficient.

4. Satisfaction with Administrative Support Service

Administrative support service is essential in the operation of any institution. The District Education Council (DEC) India’s guidelines for regulating the establishment and the operation of distance education institutions’ academic and administrative support are to be available in every study centre. According to the guidelines, this will provide the necessary information to students and make them feel part of the parent

institution (DEC, 2006). This section of the study explored the administrative support service provided by CoDE. Figure 1 present the regularity of passage of information to the student body.

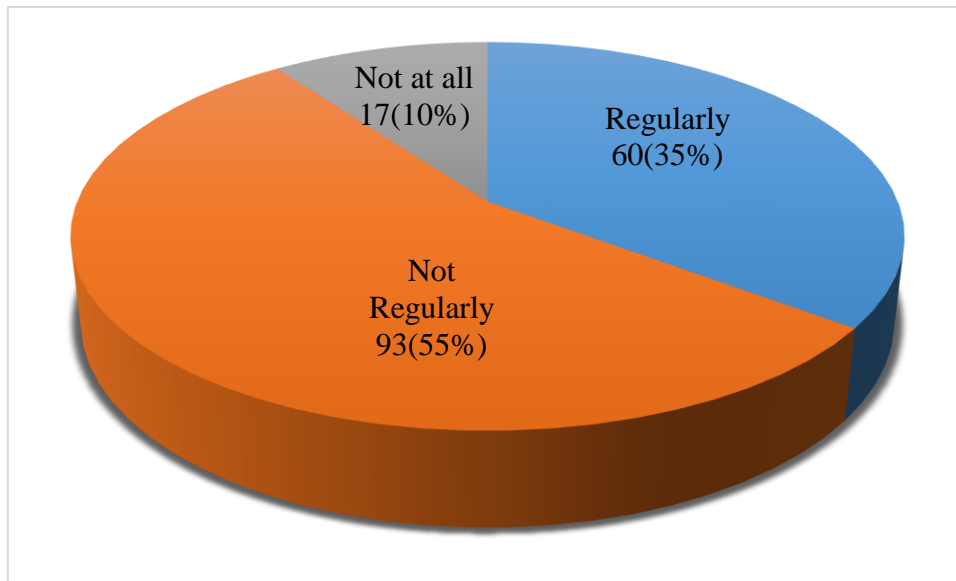


Figure 1: Regularity of Receiving Information

In Figure 1, majority 93(55%) respondents indicated that passage of information was not regular while 17(10%) indicated that they do not receive information from CoDE at all. The rest 60(35%) said information was received regularly. The medium through which information was mostly received by students is presented in Figure 2.

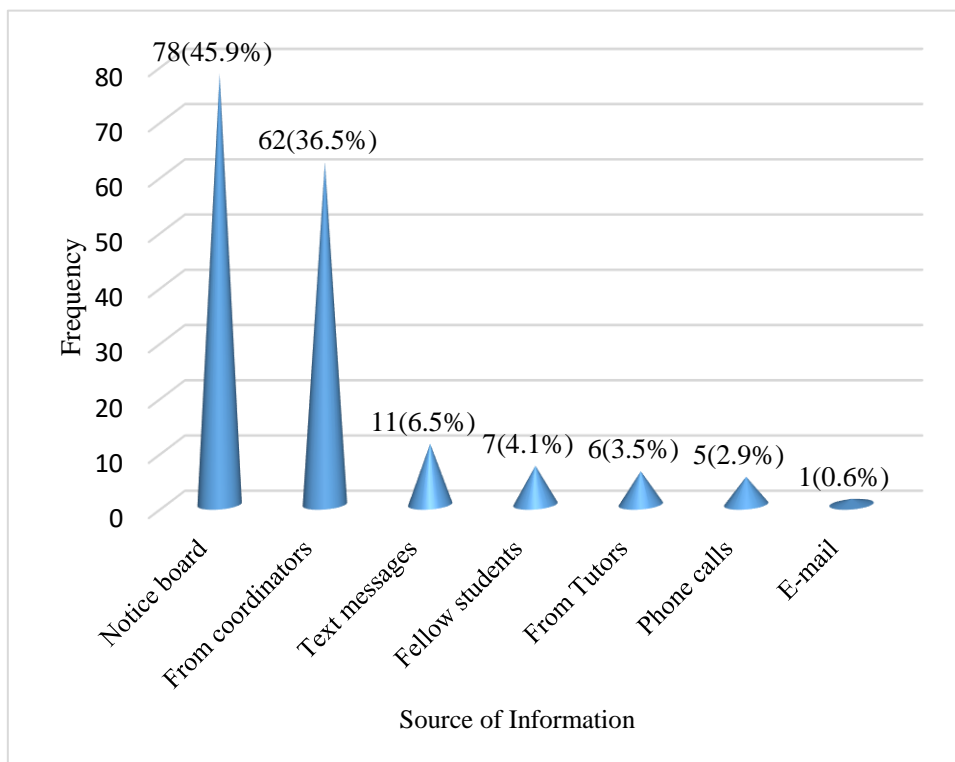


Figure 2: Source of Information

Notice board 78(45.9%) and coordinators 62(36.5%) were observed to be the key sources of information to students. Also, text messages 11(6.5%), colleagues 7(4.1%), and tutors 6(3.5%), phone calls 5(2.9%) were other observed sources of information to the students.

Badu-Nyarko (2010) is of the view that distance education institutions have to be in regular communication with students so as to understand their needs well to be able to meet them adequately.

Table 5: Satisfaction with Guidance and Counselling Support services

	Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Academics	132	77.6	26	15.3	5	2.9	7	4.1
Social	68	40.0	79	46.5	17	10.0	6	3.5
Personal	18	10.6	8	3.7	82	48.2	62	36.5
Occupational	55	32.4	14	8.2	55	32.4	92	54.1
Health	10	5.9	19	11.2	59	34.7	82	48.2
Family	19	11.2	29	17.1	62	36.5	60	35.3
Spiritual	55	32.4	62	36.5	26	15.3	55	32.4

Satisfaction with guidance and counselling services was tied to academic, social, personal, occupational, health, family and spiritual issues.

Majority 158(92.9%) said they were satisfied with the academic guidance and counselling they receive in their centres, while 147(86.5%) were satisfied with what they received under social issues. On the contrary, most of the respondents indicated they were not satisfied with guidance and counselling services given to them under personal 144(84.4%); occupational 147(86.5%); health 141(82.9%); family 122(71.8%); and spiritual 117(68).

Table 6: Satisfaction with Library Support Services

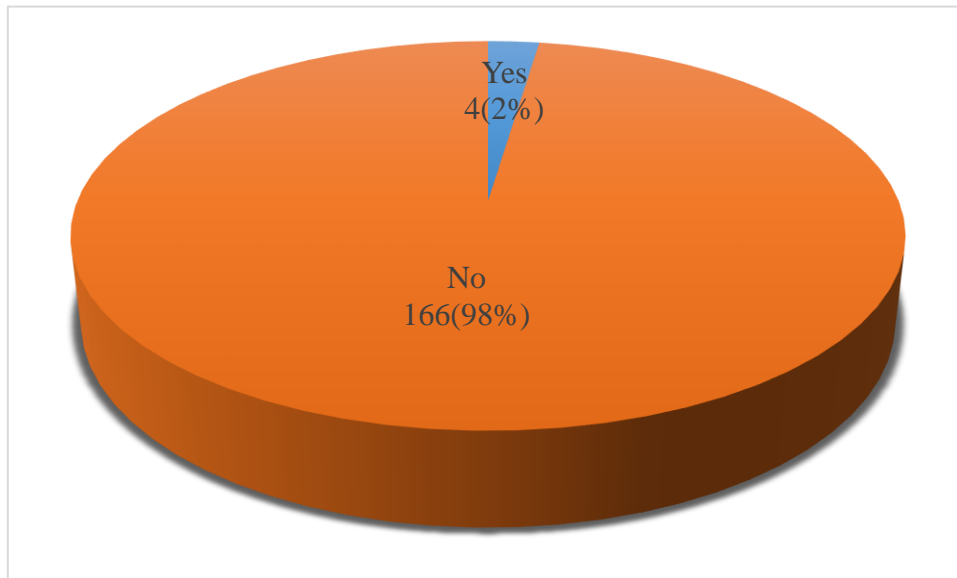
	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Photocopying from the library materials	29	17.1	141	82.9
Book loans	7	4.1	163	95.9
Access to electronic database	16	9.4	154	90.6
Inter library loans	2	1.2	168	98.8
Mobile library service	18	10.6	152	89.4

Satisfaction with library services was based what the library is expected to provide.

Unfortunately, most of the students 141(82.9%) indicated that there was no photocopying service with 163(95.9%) indicating they not given book loans. One hundred and fifty four representing 90.6% said they

do not have access to electronic database while 168(98.8%) complained of not having inter library loans with the rest 152(89.4%) talking of non-availability of mobile library service. In addition, figure 3 indicate access to library services.

Most 166 (98%) of the student indicated that CoDE do not run library services at their centres and 4 (2%) said they do have.



Source: Figure 3: Access to Library Service

The data discussed so far indicate that students were satisfied with the face-to face sessions, and learning materials. With administrative support service provided at CoDE students mentioned that it was not regular. CoDE sends out information to students at the various study centres at very regular intervals. Academic calendars, time tables, reading materials are sent to students from the beginning of the semester through several sources as indicated in Figure 2. The problem here is terminology. It is believed that most students do not know that all these services fall under administrative support.

Students also said they were not satisfied with guidance and counselling services given to them when it comes to personal, occupational, health, family and spiritual issues. It should be note that CoDE students are adults and until they themselves come out with their challenges it will be difficult to counsel them. Counselling can only be given when one realizes he or she has a challenges and approaches the counselor. It is also a fact that CoDE has no furnished room for counselling so this may push students away from seeking the services of the counsellor.

According to Gladding (1988) and Sekye (2010) it is incumbent upon counsellors to make their services known to students since students usually intend looking out for them. The students also registered their dissatisfaction on the non-availability of library support service. It is worth mentioning that CoDE has no library facilities at their study centres with the exception of a small one at the headquarters and the main library at the University of Cape Coast. Since students located all over the country, it will not be prudent for the institution to ask them to come to the main campus and use the library facility there.

Students are therefore justified if they indicate that they are not satisfied with these services.

Academic institutions have a responsibility to provide off-campus students with resources that commensurate with those found on campus (Appleton, 1994). About 90% of the study centres used by CoDE are rented premises so it is difficult to provide library facilities except On-line. All the same the library seems misplaced, ignored or forgotten in many distance education programmes (Mirtz, 2010).

Research Question 3:

Table 7: Appropriateness of Support Services

	Agree		Disagree	
	N	%	N	%
The services are appropriate	119	70.0	51	30.0
There are challenges in the services	55	32.4	115	67.6
The services are adequate to me as a student	87	51.2	83	48.8

The extent of the services appropriateness for learning was explored through binary logistic regression presented in Table 7. Here, the dependent variable was “appropriate for learning” while the regressors were the services available. B is the estimate of the model parameters with its associated standard error of estimate (S.E) and significance (p – value) which is also assessed by the Wald statistic. Exp(B) is the exponentiation of the B coefficient, which is an odds ratio. The Exp(B) column presents the extent to which raising the corresponding measures by one unit influences the odds ratio.

Table 8: Variables in the Equation

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	P-value	Exp(B)
Face-to-Face	0.920	0.591	2.428	1	0.019	2.510
Modules and other Materials	0.529	0.399	1.757	1	0.085	0.589
Guidance and Counselling	0.632	0.552	1.313	1	0.252	0.531
Administrative Support Service	0.845	0.460	3.384	1	0.066	0.429
Library Service	0.437	0.641	0.464	1	0.496	0.646

From Table 8, the availability of face-to-face support service was a significant predictor ($p - value = 0.019 < \alpha = 0.05$) to students’ academic achievement, thus appropriate for learning. That tells us that the model predicts that the odds of a student improving in his/her academic performance is 2.51 times higher due to the availability of the face-to-face support service. In other words, the availability of the service will increase student academic performance by about 151%. Aside Transit service which was a significant predictor to student academic achievement, the rest of the services were not significant predictors (all p – values greater than significance level of 5%). Also, the odds ratio associated with these services were less than one. This implies that these services are less likely to impact on their academic achievement. Thus, not appropriate towards their academic achievement. Therefore, there should be an improvement in these areas.

Research Question 4:

Table 9: Support Services to achieve Success

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Face-to-Face brings understanding and insight into what I learn.	79	46.5	74	43.5	12	7.1	5	2.9
Course tutors explain issues to me informally and this goes a long way to enhance my performance	87	51.2	64	37.6	14	8.2	5	2.9
Modules written interactively brings me closer to the lecturer.	90	52.9	61	35.9	13	7.6	6	3.5
CoDE staff, supplies me with academic calendar, quizzes and end of semester examinations time tables	58	34.1	70	41.2	27	15.9	15	8.8
CODE Staff help me to solve some academic, social, personal, family and spiritual challenges	89	52.4	64	37.6	11	6.5	6	3.5
Support services rendered by CoDE enhance my performance leading to success	67	39.4	77	45.3	15	8.8	11	6.5

From Table 9, 153(90%) said face- to- face facilitation gives them greater understanding, 151(88.8) indicated that informal explanations given to them by course tutors enhances their performance, while another 151(88.8%) of the students indicated that the interactive nature of the modules bring them closer to the lecturer. Furthermore, 128(75.3%) agreed that they are supplied with academic calendars, quizzes and end of semester time tables which went a long way to help with their performance. In relation to addressing academic, social, physical, family and spiritual challenges, 153 representing (90%) of the total respondents agreed that course tutors usually help them to solve such challenges while 144(84.7%) agreed that support services at CoDE enhances performance leading to success in their various programmes even though some of the services are not appropriate as indicated under table 8. Tait (2003) opined that student support services play three major roles. First, it encourages cognitive or learning development of students, secondly, it enhances the self-esteem of students therefore building their confidence. Thirdly, it helps students meet the required standard expected of them so that they do not fall behind or redraw from the programme. Tait’s assertion implies that provision of support services in DE can bring about success if only they are appropriate.

From this discussion, it is realized that there are five major support services rendered by CoDE to its students. However, some of them are not appropriate in the sense that students cannot access them fully with the exception of the tutorial sessions and the interactive nature of the modules.

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