Full Length Research Paper

A comparative study of student support services of Allama Iqbal Open University and the Open University of Sri lanka

Aijaz Ahmed Gujjar[1]*, Bushra Naoreen Chaudhry[2] and Amtul Hafeez Chaudhry[3]

[1]Federal College of Education, Department of Education, the Islamia University of Bahhawalpur, Pakistan.
[2]GC University Faisalabad, Department of Education, the Islamia University of Bahhawalpur, Pakistan.
[3]Department of Distance and Non-Formal Education, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad.

This paper attempts to compare the availability, quality, similarities and differences in student support services offered by the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Pakistan and The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL). It also aims to identify and report the deficiencies that students of both the institutions face in the student support services. To achieve the desired end, four hundred students (two hundred from each university) were taken as sample and a thirty eight item questionnaire (Likert scale) was constructed and pilot tested. The reliability of the research tool was found to be 0.84 (Cornbach's Alpha). The questionnaire was divided into seven dimensions that is general services, regional office services, tutorial services, counselling services; media support services and library services. After collecting the data from the respondents from both the countries, independent sample t-test was run by using SPSS XII. The study found out that student support services of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Pakistan and The Open University of Sri Lanka are quantitatively developing rapidly on the same lines. The tutorial services, counselling services, media support services and library services of both the institutions have almost the same status. Student from the Open University of Sri Lanka enjoy better facilities in general services, regional office services and overall services. The conclusion leads to the recommendations that Allama Iqbal Open University (AOIU) Pakistan should improve student support services in all dimensions but more emphasis should be laid on general and regional office services.

Key words: AIOU, OUSL, distance education, student support services.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of student support, as it is commonly under-stood, stresses on a complete view of student learning. There are two important facets of distance education. The first which is more propagated is the one which sees distance education as a cost-effective alternative to face-to-face tuition while the second arises from an apprecia-tion of distance education as a highly individualized mode of learning. Student support services in any distance education programme or institution should focus on both these issues.

Significance of student support services

The rationale of student support services is to provide educational help to the student. No one can deny the importance and pivotal role of student support services in the system of distance education as it helps in the successful completion of the course. The learning pro-cess from a distance requires the student to expose him-self to a wide range of unfamiliar system. Their problems may range from the simple non-receipt of course material or assignment to the best use of the multi-media mix, which is offered by the institution. Students need guidance at every stage that is, in selecting options, how to learn from distance teaching etc.

*Corresponding author. E-mail: seek_to_learn@yahoo.com.

Student support is an essential element of teaching and learning and it is of critical importance in distance learning. In addition, accrediting bodies are concerned about the quality of support services to distance learners and can be expected to carefully examine the areas of admissions, financial aid, academic advising, and delivery of course materials and placement and counseling. Distance students need almost the same services as do resident students, but travelling to campus is inconvenient and often not feasible. The challenge is to find ways to deliver the support services at a distance, just as instruction is delivered at a distance.

According to Mehrotra el al. (2001) "developing the capacity to deliver support services at a distance often has a double payoff. It helps attract and retain dis-tance learners and it can markedly increase convenience and efficiency for an institution's resident students for example, by enabling online admissions and registration systems for all students. Continuing advances in technology have made the internet a versatile tool for support services, as have advances in the use of automated telephone information systems.

Student support services in comparative perspectives

The study centre as a support system in distance education has been used in many parts of the world, including Europe, Asia and the Southern hemisphere. In most cases, the British Open University model has been followed, either directly or indirectly in an adapted form. The Fernuniversitat in Hagan set up a system, similar to that of the British model, with about fifteen-study centers. No evaluative reports have been published on their relative success as a student support system.

Rashid (1998c) describes the Allama Iqbal Open University of Pakistan as having thirty-two regional study centres controlling a network of smaller local centres. This university also has a tutor counselling system based on the British model.

Both Australia and New Zeeland use the study centre as a support system in distance education. In Australia, Deakin University, the University of Queensland, and other tertiary institutions use different types of study centre systems to suit the particular needs of each individual system. Whilst they may have some similarity to the study centre system of the Open University, they have developed independently and owe little to the British system.

Rashid (1998d) comments that the Open University of Great Britain has provided greater impetus toward developing options for higher learning than any other educational movement in the last one hundred years. West Germany, Japan and South Africa have been influenced by the British model. However, Fletcher states that the impact of the Open University has been felt most fully in the United Sates of America. The major learning centres are in Albany, New York city, Long Island, Rochester Sufferm and Buffalor. Every centre has a dean, administrative support staff, and a faculty of thirteen to fifteen full time 'mentors' who assist up to five hundred students in developing individualized programmes of study. A mentor usually supervises about twenty-five to thirty students, meeting each one twice a month and sometimes once a week.

Alama Iqbal Open University, (AIOU) Pakistan

Allama Iqbal Open University was established under an Act of the Parliament in 1974 under the administrative control of Ministry of Education, Pakistan with the name of People's Open University (Act No XXXIX of Parliament of Pakistan, 1974). Its principal seat is at Islamabad with a viable network of Regional Campuses/Centres throughout the country. Its name was changed to Allama Iqbal Open University in 1977 in commemoration of 100th Birth Anniversary of Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal (Research and Evaluation Centre, Triennial Report, AIOU 1972-80, p.9). It was the first distance learning university in Asia and the second to come up in the world. Its slogan is "continuing education and education for all". Its purpose is to impart education to the masses in Pakistan at their door-steps through print and electronic media (books, readers, study guides and radio/TV programmes etc) without any discrimination of age, sex or creed.

Now, taking idea from the success of the UKOU and the AIOU, many Open Universities have been established in different countries like India, Sri Lanka, China, Canada, Korea, Bangladesh, Japan, Thailand, etc. In a sense, Allama Iqbal Open University is the fore-runner of all these open universities.

In 1976, the AIOU started with a few courses of Arabic, a Primary Teachers Orientation Course and Foundation Courses, with nine regional offices in the country. On the request of the government, it started Teacher Education Programmes like PTC/CT/ ATTC for training and orientation of the untrained teachers working in different government schools (Research and Evaluation, AIOU 1999, p.16). Later on, the range of its teacher education programmes was extended upto B.Ed (General), B.Ed (Arabic), M.A. Education, M.Ed (in four disciplines), M.A EPM, Diploma TEFL, M.A TEFL and M.Phil (in four disciplines). To cater to the needs of the businesses community, the university started Bachelor and Master's Degree Programmes in Business Administration (MBA and BBA) through distance learning system, subsidized by the government. Recently, Business Administration and Computer Programmes have been started and face to face instruction/teaching is provided at the approached study centres.

Activities of the university are spread throughout the country (from Gawadar to Gilgit). The number of regional campuses/centres for such a huge number of students/tutors/coordinators spread in the vast area of the country

is just thirty two with forty coordinating officers in small cities (Chaudhry, 2002). The regional campuses and centres face the problem of under-staffing (Chaudhry, 2001) with large enrolment. With such insufficient student support services problems in the regions are bound to arise.

The Government of Pakistan (1998) in the national education policy 1998-2010 took decision to involve AIOU with the collaboration of Prime Minister Literacy Commission to:

i) Develop teacher-training packages, learning materials, teaching aids, etc.
ii) Develop post literacy skill training programmes through distance learning.

In the chapter of Teacher Education, the main role assigned to AIOU is to train teachers at various levels. The policy (1998-2010, p.67) aims "to start a three months intensive orientation programme for providing basic skills of teaching through non-formal education under the umbrella of Allama Iqbal Open University to provide necessary training to a number of non-formal education teachers every year".

The Open University Sri Lanka (OUSL)

The Open University Sri Lanka (OUSL) came into being and enrolled its first batch of students in 1980. Established by the Sri Lankan government, it is an integral part of the university system of the country. The main campus of the university is located on a 16 hectare site at Nawala, about three kilometres south-east of Colombo. The Open University of Sri Lanka consists of three faculties: the Faculty of Engineering Technology, the Faculty of Natural Sciences and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The Faculty of Engineering Technology conducts certificate programme in Apparel Technology and Textile Technology; Diploma programmes in Engineering Technology (Agricultural, Automobile, Civil, Communication, Computer, Electrical, Electronic, Manufacturing and Textile); Postgraduate Diplomas in Agricultural Engineering, Construction Management and Industrial Engineering; Master of Technology in Constructional Management and in Industrial Engineering; M.Phil and Ph.D programmes.

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences conducts certificate programmes in pre-school education, entrepreneurship and small business management, professional English, journalism and tourism operations, advanced certificate in pre-school education; foundation programme in social sciences, degree programme in Law (LLB) in Legal Policy and Social Sciences; Postgraduate Diploma programmes in Education Management and Master Degree programme in Education (M.Ed). The Faculty of Natural Sciences conducts postgraduate degree programmes such as Ph.D and M.Phil, Bachelor degree in Sciences, Education (Natural Science) and Nursing.

Objectives of the study

This study was based on the following objectives:

1. To describe the student support services in distance education.
2. To compare the student support services of AIOU and OUSL.
3. To identify the problems in student support services of AIOU and OUSL.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Population and sampling

The population of the study consisted of all the students of B.Ed level of AIOU and OUSL. Two hundred students from each university were considered as sample for the study.

Research tool development and data collection

Since the study was descriptive in nature, survey approach was considered appropriate to collect the data. For the purpose, questionnaire on five-point (Likert) scale was developed. The questionnaire was validated through pilot testing on 50 students and reliability of the questionnaire was 0.84.

Administration of research tool

The finalized questionnaire was administered to the students personally as well as by mail. All the students responded.

Data analysis

The data collected through questionnaire was coded and analyzed through SPSS XII, mean scores and independent samples t-test were run. Scale values assigned to each of the five responses was as follows;

Level of Agreement	Scale Value
SA (Strongly agree)	5
A (Agree)	4
UNC (Uncertain)	3
DA (Dis agree)	2
SDA (Strongly dis Agree)	1

FINDINGS

Data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed in terms of percentage and mean score. The findings drawn out from the data analysis are given.

It is evident from Table 1 that the mean score of OUSL is significantly better than the mean score of AIOU on the study material was self-explanatory and involved the students into studies, the system of assessment and evaluation was satisfactory, the planning, execution and monitoring of supper services were satisfactory, educational programmes of open university broadcast were valuable, tutors accustomed to give guidance and encouraged comments on assignments and assignments

Table 1. Showing the mean difference on general services of student support services of AIOU and OUSL.

	University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	p-value
The study material was timely received.	OUSL	200	4.05	.909	.064	0.807	0.420
	AIOU	200	3.96	1.289	.091		
The study material was self-explanatory and involved the students into studies.	OUSL	200	4.19	1.063	.075	3.113	0.002
	AIOU	200	3.82	1.302	.092		
Admission forms and related information were easily available to the students.	OUSL	200	3.61	1.459	.103	0.322	0.784
	AIOU	200	3.66	1.332	.094		
The system of assessment and evaluation was satisfactory.	OUSL	200	3.73	1.275	.090	10.2	0.000
	AIOU	200	2.36	1.417	.100		
The planning, execution and monitoring of supper services were satisfactory.	OUSL	200	3.82	1.363	.096	10.889	0.000
	AIOU	200	2.43	1.184	.084		
Educational programmes of open university broadcast were valuable.	OUSL	200	4.18	1.121	.079	5.340	0.000
	AIOU	200	3.53	1.341	.095		
Information about telecast / tele-conferencing was timely provided.	OUSL	200	2.87	1.479	.105	0.892	0.373
	AIOU	200	2.99	1.319	.093		
Workshops were arranged at convenient places.	OUSL	200	3.55	1.322	.093	0.895	0.371
	AIOU	200	3.43	1.246	.088		
The number of tutorial meetings was adequate.	OUSL	200	3.71	1.374	.097	0.861	0.390
	AIOU	200	3.59	1.296	.092		
Students who submit their assignments in time get special advantages.	OUSL	200	4.09	.881	.062	1.30	0.194
	AIOU	200	3.95	1.308	.092		
Tutors accustomed to give guidance and encouraged comments on assignments.	OUSL	200	3.60	1.280	.091	8.881	0.000
	AIOU	200	2.46	1.299	.092		
Assignments returned well in time to the students with detailed instructions.	OUSL	200	3.90	1.203	.085	6.435	0.000
	AIOU	200	3.12	1.237	.087		

Table 2. Showing the difference on overall general services of AIOU and OUSL.

University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	p-value
OUSL	200	3.7737	1.17336	.08297	4.203	0.000
AIOU	200	3.2721	1.21322	.08579		

returned well in time to the students with detailed instructions. It is also an evident that mean score of OUSL is better than AIOU on the study material was timely received; workshops are arranged at convenient places, the number of tutorial meetings was adequate and students who submit their assignments in time get special advantages but this difference is not significant. The mean score of AIOU is better than OUSL on admission forms and related information were easily available to the students and information about telecast/ teleconferencing was timely provided but this difference is not significant.

It is evident from Table 2 that the mean score of OUSL is significantly higher than the mean score of AIOU on overall general services of student support services. So it is concluded from Table 2 that the general services of student support services offered to the students of OUSL are significantly better than the general services of student support services of provided to the students of AIOU at .000 significant level.

It is evident from Table 3 that the mean score of OUSL is significantly better than the mean score of AIOU on admission forms and information were easily available well in time at regional office, regional office fully cooperated to meet students' needs, counselling process was

Table 3. Showing the mean difference on regional office services of student support services of AIOU and OUSL

	University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	p-value
Admission forms and information were easily available well in time at regional office.	OUSL	200	3.92	1.158	.082	5.619	0.000
	AIOU	200	3.18	1.475	.104		
Regional office fully co-operated to meet students' needs.	OUSL	200	3.73	1.283	.091	7.748	0.000
	AIOU	200	2.74	1.286	.091		
Counselling process was helpful to the students in solving their study problems.	OUSL	200	3.23	1.328	.094	6.457	0.000
	AIOU	200	2.34	1.412	.100		
Appropriate mass media (radio, TV and news-paper) was used to provide relevant information by the regional campus.	OUSL	200	2.78	1.216	.086	0.977	0.329
	AIOU	200	2.91	1.436	.102		
Regional office gives instant response to students' queries.	OUSL	200	3.54	1.381	.098	2.056	0.040
	AIOU	200	3.26	1.293	.091		
Regional office helps students in difficulties concerning examinations.	OUSL	200	3.64	1.326	.094	1.739	0.083
	AIOU	200	3.41	1.319	.093		
Supplementary/ additional books and material were available in the regional office	OUSL	200	3.16	1.444	.102	5.038	0.000
	AIOU	200	2.40	1.330	.094		
Group discussions were held to solve students' problem in the study centre.	OUSL	200	3.28	1.326	.094	5.512	0.000
	AIOU	200	2.64	1.212	.086		

Table 4. Showing the difference on overall regional office services of AIOU and OUSL

University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	p-value
OUSL	200	3.4081	1.25779	.08894	4.315	0.000
AIOU	200	2.8575	1.29395	.09150		

helpful to the students in solving their study problems, regional office gives instant response to students' queries, supplementary/additional books and material were available in the regional office and group discussions were held to solve students' problem in the study centre. It is also an evident that mean score of OUSL is better than AIOU on regional office helps students in difficulties concerning examinations but this difference is not significant. The mean score of AIOU is better than OUSL on appropriate mass media (radio, TV and newspaper) was used to provide relevant information by the regional campus but this difference is not significant.

It is evident from Table 4 that the mean score of OUSL is significantly higher than the mean score of AIOU on overall regional office services of student support services. So it is concluded from Table 4 that the regional office services of student support services offered to the students of OUSL are significantly better than the regional office services of student support services provided to the students of AIOU at .000 significant levels. It is evident from Table 5 that the mean score of OUSL is significantly better than the mean score of AIOU on com-

petent persons were appointed as tutors in the related subject and sufficient A.V aids were available at the study centres to meet the student needs. It is also evident from Table 5 that mean score of OUSL is better than AIOU on study centres had an easy access to the students, tutorial sessions were helpful to solve the study problems of students, tutors were punctual in the tutorial meetings and tutors give comments on student assignments but this difference is not significant. The mean score of AIOU is better than OUSL on tutors return the marked assignments well in time with instructions and further guidance and tutorial meetings provided the students to identify their deficiencies and difficulties in their studies but this difference is not significant.

It is evident from Table 6 that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of AIOU and OUSL on tutorial services of student support service provided to the students of the both universities, as the p-value is 0.274 and t-value is 1.095. So it is concluded that on overall tutorial services of student support service both the universities having the same provision, OUSL is slightly better but this difference is not significant.

Table 5. Showing the mean difference on tutorial services of student support services of AIOU and OUSL.

	University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	p-value
Study centres had an easy access to the students.	OUSL	200	3.65	1.239	.088	1.249	0.213
	AIOU	200	3.49	1.322	.094		
Competent persons were appointed as tutors in the related subject.	OUSL	200	3.59	1.241	.088	2.177	0.030
	AIOU	200	3.30	1.417	.100		
Tutorial sessions were helpful to solve the study problems of students.	OUSL	200	3.43	1.409	.100	0.810	0.418
	AIOU	200	3.32	1.305	.092		
Tutors were punctual in the tutorial meetings.	OUSL	200	3.50	1.334	.094	1.183	0.237
	AIOU	200	3.34	1.286	.091		
Tutors give comments on student assignments.	OUSL	200	3.29	1.336	.094	0.419	0.676
	AIOU	200	3.24	1.292	.091		
Tutors return the marked assignments well in time with instructions and further guidance.	OUSL	200	3.42	1.316	.093	0.339	0.735
	AIOU	200	3.46	1.341	.095		
Sufficient A.V aids were available at the study centres to meet the student needs.	OUSL	200	3.05	1.368	.097	4.346	0.000
	AIOU	200	2.48	1.228	.087		
Tutorial meetings provided the students to identify their deficiencies and difficulties in their studies.	OUSL	200	3.11	1.394	.099	1.143	0.274
	AIOU	200	3.27	1.405	.099		

Table 6. Showing the difference on overall tutorial services of AIOU and OUSL.

University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	p-value
OUSL	200	3.3763	1.29801	.09178	1.095	0.274
AIOU	200	3.2350	1.28216	.09066		

It is evident from Table 7 that the mean score of OUSL is significantly better than the mean score of AIOU on guidance and counselling centre established in the university, counsellors helped the students in their course difficulties, computer assisted career guidance facility is available at the regional office. It is also an evident that the mean score of AIOU is significantly better than the mean score of OUSL on the provision of telephone counselling in the university and there is a need of more guidance and counselling provision at the regional office. Table 7 also shows that mean score of AIOU is better than OUSL on guidance and counselling services were provided to the students and advisory process remained active in providing proper guidance to students in selecting courses but this difference is not significant.

It is evident from Table 8 that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of AIOU and OUSL on overall counselling services of student support service provided to the students of the both univer-

sities, as the p-value is 0.563 and t- value is 0.579. So it is concluded that on overall counselling services of student support service in both the universities have the same provision. Though OUSL is slightly better but this difference is not significant.

It is evident from Table 9 that the mean score of OUSL is significantly better than the mean score of AIOU on TV educational programmes are relevant to the studies

It is evident from Table 10 that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of AIOU and OUSL on overall media support services of student support service provided to the students of the both universities, as the p-value is 0.418 and t-value is 0.810. So it is concluded that on overall media support services of student support service of both the universities have the same provision, OUSL is slightly better but their differences is not significant.

It is evident from the Table 11 that the mean score of OUSL is significantly better than the mean score of

Table 7. Showing the mean difference on counselling services of student support services of AIOU and OUSL

	University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	p-value
Guidance and counselling services were provided to the students.	OUSL	200	2.52	1.352	.096		
	AIOU	200	2.54	1.215	.086	0.117	0.907
The student guide was helpful to understand the system and to follow the programme systematically.	OUSL	200	3.12	1.415	.100		
	AIOU	200	3.12	1.406	.099	0.035	0.972
Guidance and counselling centre was established in the university.	OUSL	200	3.29	1.301	.092		
	AIOU	200	2.60	1.300	.092	5.306	0.000
Advisory process remained active in providing proper guidance to students in selecting courses.	OUSL	200	3.11	1.435	.101		
	AIOU	200	3.28	1.371	.097	1.176	0.240
Counsellors helped the students in their course difficulties.	OUSL	200	3.19	1.368	.097		
	AIOU	200	2.58	1.391	.098	4.423	0.000
There was a provision of telephone counselling in the university.	OUSL	200	2.83	1.316	.093		
	AIOU	200	3.15	1.250	.088	2.493	0.013
Computer assisted career guidance facility was available at the regional office.	OUSL	200	2.64	1.312	.093		
	AIOU	200	2.34	1.266	.090	2.289	0.023
There is a need of more guidance and counselling provision at the regional office.	OUSL	200	3.26	1.372	.097		
	AIOU	200	3.76	1.234	.087	3.794	0.000

Table 8. Showing the mean difference on overall counselling services of student support services of AIOU and OUSL.

University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	p-value
OUSL	200	2.9919	1.32080	.09339	0.579	0.563
AIOU	200	2.9175	1.24839	.08827		

Table 9. Showing the mean difference on media support services of student support services of AIOU and OUSL.

	University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	p-value
Open University approach of audio-video and print support was appropriate.	OUSL	200	3.23	1.370	.097		
	AIOU	200	3.21	1.301	.092	0.187	0.852
The time schedule of the media programmes was adequate.	OUSL	200	3.43	1.412	.100		
	AIOU	200	3.40	1.322	.094	0.219	0.827
The schedule of the media programmes was provided in the study package.	OUSL	200	3.77	1.248	.088		
	AIOU	200	3.72	1.293	.091	0.393	0.694
Media programmes were interesting, motivating and helpful for the students.	OUSL	200	3.80	1.249	.088		
	AIOU	200	3.74	1.253	.089	0.440	0.660
TV educational programmes were relevant to your studies.	OUSL	200	3.67	1.304	.092		
	AIOU	200	3.22	1.249	.088	3.525	0.000
Educational programmes broadcasted through video were helpful for you.	OUSL	200	3.44	1.332	.094		
	AIOU	200	3.43	1.380	.098	0.074	0.941

Table 10. Showing the difference on overall media support services of AIOU and OUSL.

University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	p-value
OUSL	200	3.5542	1.28763	.09105	0.810	0.418
AIOU	200	3.4508	1.26387	.08937		

Table 11. Showing the mean difference on library services of student support services of AIOU and OUSL.

	University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	p-value
The facility of library was available at the regional office/ centre.	OUSL	200	2.71	1.294	.091	1.840	0.066
	AIOU	200	2.47	1.314	.093		
Regional library was equipped with sufficient referenced materials to meet student needs.	OUSL	200	2.80	1.414	.100	2.113	0.035
	AIOU	200	2.51	1.378	.097		
The facility of photocopy was available at the regional library.	OUSL	200	2.40	1.330	.094	0.193	0.847
	AIOU	200	2.38	1.254	.089		
Staff of the regional library co-operate well with the students.	OUSL	200	2.42	1.226	.087	1.310	0.191
	AIOU	200	2.27	1.217	.086		
The opportunities were created to involve the students into the discussion on the subject.	OUSL	200	3.24	1.288	.091	1.011	0.313
	AIOU	200	3.37	1.285	.091		
The facility of interaction between student and teacher was provided through correspondence and tele-conferencing.	OUSL	200	3.20	1.336	.094	0.972	0.331
	AIOU	200	3.33	1.337	.095		
There is a provision of interaction between the student learner and tutor through e-mail.	OUSL	200	3.27	1.359	.096	8.175	0.000
	AIOU	200	2.23	1.192	.084		
The student record was well maintained by the tutor.	OUSL	200	3.68	1.267	.090	0.596	0.551
	AIOU	200	3.61	1.248	.088		

Table 12. Showing the difference on overall library services of AIOU and OUSL.

University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	p-value
OUSL	200	2.9650	1.26214	.08925	1.588	0.113
AIOU	200	2.7675	1.22564	.08667		

AIOU on equipment of regional library with sufficient referenced materials to meet the students' needs and there is a provision of interaction between the student learner and tutor through e-mail. Table 11 also shows that the mean score of OUSL is better than AIOU on the facility of library is available at the regional office/ centre. The facility of photocopy is also available at the regional library, the staff of the regional library cooperates well with the students and the student record is well maintained by the tutor but this difference is not significant. On the other hand the mean score of AIOU is better than OUSL on the opportunities created to involve the students into the discussion on the subject and the facility of

interaction between student and teacher is provided through correspondence and teleconferencing but again this difference is not significant.

It is evident from Table 12 that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of AIOU and OUSL on overall library services of student support service provided to the students of the both the universities, as the p-value is 0.113 and t- value is 1.588 So it is concluded that on overall library services of student support services both the universities have the same provision. OUSL is slightly better but their difference is not significant.

It is evident from Table 13 that the mean score of OUSL

Table 13. Showing the difference on overall student support services of AIOU and OUSL.

University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	p-value
OUSL	200	3.3449	1.25368	.08865	2.095	0.037
AIOU	200	3.0834	1.24233	.08785		

is significantly higher than the mean score of AIOU on over student support services. So it is concluded from Table 13 that the student support services offered to the students of OUSL are significantly better than the student support services provided to the students of AIOU at 0.037 significant levels.

DISCUSSION

The results of the general services provided to the students at AIOU and OUSL show that the mean score of OUSL is significantly better than the mean score of AIOU on the nature of study materials provided to the students, assessment and evaluation, relevant educational programmes of open university broadcast, guidance and encouragement by the tutors on assignments and planing and execution of support services. The mean score of OUSL is also better than AIOU on time management for issuing study material, location and organization of workshops, number of tutorial meetings and giving advantages to those students who submit their assignments in time. But this difference is not very much significant. On the other hand the mean score of AIOU is better than OUSL on admission forms and related information is easily available to the students and information about telecast/teleconferencing is timely provided. It can be said that OUSL is significantly better than AIOU in providing most of students support services (Table 1).

The overall mean score of the students on general support services provided at OUSL and AIOU shows that OUSL is significantly better than AIOU in providing almost all types of general support services to its students and the students at OUSL are more satisfied as compared to the students at AIOU (Table 2).

As far as different support services like; availability of admission forms and relevant information, cooperation of regional offices to meet students needs, counselling services to solve students study problems, response to students queries, availability of supplementary material or additional books at regional offices and solution of students problems at study centres are concerned, the mean score of OUSL is significantly better than the mean score of AIOU. Even the mean score of OUSL is better than AIOU on regional office helps students in difficulties concerning examinations but this difference is not significant. The mean score of AIOU is better than OUSL on the use of appropriate mass media (radio, TV and newspaper) to provide relevant information by the regional campus but this difference is not significant. Compara-

tively OUSL also provides these services better than AIOU (Table 3).

The overall mean score on different dimensions of regional office support services shows that regional offices of OUSL provide better services to its students to help them solved their problems and facilitating students in almost all aspects of regional office services. AIOU should activate its regional offices to facilitate students in their studies (Table 4).

Regarding tutorial services provided at OUSL and AIOU, it is evident from the results that the mean score of OUSL is significantly better than the mean score of AIOU on: the appointment of competent persons as tutors in the related subject and the availability of sufficient A.V aids at the study centres to meet the student needs. Mean score of OUSL is also better than AIOU on: the easy access to the study centres for students, the usefulness of tutorial sessions to solve the study problems of students, punctually of tutors in the tutorial meetings and giving comments on student assignments but this difference is not significant. On the other hand the mean score of AIOU is better than OUSL on: tutors return the marked assignments well in time with instructions and further guidance and tutorial meetings provided to the students to identify their deficiencies and difficulties in their studies but this difference is not significant because OUSL is also providing these services.

The overall results show that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the students on tutorial services provided at OUSL and AIOU. On almost all the parameters of tutorial services provided to the students, both the universities are in same condition and provide proper tutorial services to its students (Table 6).

There is a significant difference between the mean score of the students of OUSL and AIOU. The mean score of OUSL is significantly better than the mean score of AIOU on different services regarding guidance and counselling like: establishing guidance and counselling centre in the university, helping the students in their course difficulties, availability of computer assisted career guidance facility at the regional office. It is also evident from the results that the mean score of AIOU is significantly better than the mean score of OUSL on: provision of telephone counselling in the university and need of more guidance and counselling provision at the regional office. AIOU is also better than OUSL on guidance and counselling services provided to the students through advisory process in selecting courses but this difference is not significant as OUSL is also providing this service

comparatively (Table 7).

Regarding overall mean score on guidance and counselling services, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of AIOU and OUSL on overall counselling services of student support service, both the universities have the same provision, OUSL is slightly better but that difference is not significant because both the universities are providing almost same services to their students (Table 8).

As far as media support is concerned, there were six parameters and the mean score on all parameters shows that OUSL is significantly better than AIOU on: relevance of TV educational programmes and the mean score of OUSL is better on open university approach, appropriateness of audio-video and print support, adequacy of the time schedule of the media programmes, provision of the schedule of the media programmes in the study package, nature of media programmes either interesting, motivating or helpful for the students and suitability of educational programmes broadcasted through video but here the difference is not significant. AIOU is also providing these services to its students comparatively (Table 9).

Overall results on media support services provided to the students indicate that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the students of both universities AIOU and OUSL. So it is said that on overall media support services of student support services both the universities have the same provision, OUSL is slightly better than AIOU but that difference is not significant. There is only a need for improving media support services by AIOU (Table 10).

The mean score of OUSL is significantly better than the mean score of AIOU on regional library services provided to the students on having sufficient referenced materials to meet student needs and a provision of interaction between the student learner and tutor through e-mail. Results also show that the mean score of OUSL is better than AIOU on the facility of library at the regional office/centre, the availability of photocopy at the regional library, cooperation of the staff of the regional library with the students and the maintenance of student record by the tutor but this difference is not significant. On the other hand the mean score of AIOU is better than OUSL on the opportunities created to involve the students into the discussion on the subject and the facility of interaction between student and teacher through correspondence and teleconferencing but again this difference is not significant. OUSL is almost in same condition (Table 11).

Overall results on library services provided to the students show that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the students of AIOU and OUSL on overall library services of student support service provided to the students of both universities. OUSL is slightly better than AIOU but that difference is not significant (Table 12).

Overall mean score on overall students support services indicates that that OUSL is significantly better in providing student support services than AIOU. Because the mean score of OUSL is significantly better than AIOU, it can be said that the student at OUSL are more satisfied with the system of OUSL as they are provided with more services by their institution than the students of AIOU. AIOU is required to improve its students support services on the lines of OUSL (Table 13).

Conclusions

i) Almost all types of general support services are provided to the students at OUSL.

ii) Regional offices of AIOU are not fully equipped to facilitate students in their studies.

iii) Both universities are providing almost same tutorial services to their students.

iv) Guidance and counselling services are almost same at both the universities, OUSL is slightly better in providing these services to its students.

v) There is no significant difference between the mean score of students of both the universities on provision of media support services to their students. Both the universities have almost the same provision.

vi) Proper library services are provided to the students of both the universities in almost the same manners.

vii) Almost all types of student support services are provided to the students at OUSL. The standard of AIOU is comparatively low.

Recommendations

i) AIOU should invest in regional offices for provision of all types of resources to meet the students' needs.

ii) Guidance and counselling centres should be available at each campus of the university and in regional offices as well.

iii) Libraries should be fully equipped with resource materials so that the students may take help from them for their studies and research purpose.

iv) There should be more and more interactive sessions between tutor and the students. It can be a good activity to solve students 'problems.

v) AIOU should improve its system of students support services with the help of tutors and regional offices.

vi) Competent tutors should be appointed by AIOU. They can solve many of the students' problems at the spot.

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