

**INFLUENCE OF LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES ON ENROLMENT OF
LEARNERS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI. A CASE OF BACHELOR OF EDUCATION
(ARTS) FROM BORABU DISTRICT .**

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BY


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**A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE
IN MASTERS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.**

2012

DECLARATION

This research project report is my original work and has not been submitted to any other examining body.

SIGNATURE 

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This Research project report has been submitted with my approval as the Supervisor from the University of Nairobi

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DEDICATION

This research project report is dedicated to my husband Leonard for his tireless support, encouragement and understanding during the period of my study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am most grateful to my course lecturers for their guidance and advice in the preparation of this research project report. In a special way, I recognize my supervisor Juliana who has been offering guidance in preparation of this research project report.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my sister Liz together with my in-law Osoro and his entire family who provided accommodation and all the support in many ways during the period that I used to come for the studies in Nairobi. I would also appreciate the role played by my mother-in law Alexina and my sister Esther in taking care of my daughter Biyaki during the residential periods while in Nairobi.

Special thanks to Jackline and her husband Nyabaga for their assistance in ensuring that I got the study materials required. I wish to thank my colleagues in Distance Education class for their assistance and support throughout the period of my study.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the entire University of Nairobi fraternity for giving me a conducive atmosphere and environment that enabled me to reach this particular point in the quest for knowledge.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of Learner Support services in the enrolment of learners in Distance Education programmes at the University of Nairobi. The case of learners from Borabu District. The study had three research objectives namely; The extent to which administrative learner support services influence enrolment of learners in DE programmes at the UON from Borabu District, to assess how technological learner support services influences enrolment of learners in DE programmes at the UON from Borabu District, and to establish the influence of guidance and counseling and peer learner support services on the enrolment of learners in DE programmes at the UON from Borabu District. The study used research survey design which involved a quantitative design. It targeted a population of three hundred and twelve students (312) and a sample size of thirty one (31). Stratified random sampling was used. The research instruments used were questionnaires. Data collection began once permission was sought from the University of Nairobi. A pilot study was done on a selected group of the target population after which the questionnaires were then given to the target population. The data was then analyzed using descriptive statistical analyses and the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) The study established that there was no much difference in gender with regards to enrolment. The majority of the respondents were aged between 31 and 40 years of age and were married. From the study findings dispatch of examinations, requirement of courses, and registration were some of the administrative learner support services that were highly rated crucial for enrolment while on the other hand dispatch of course materials, orientation, record keeping and advertisement of courses were lowly rated. It was observed that all the respondents had mobile phones. More than half of the respondents accessed learning materials from the Internet and had e-mail addresses. Fax services were not considered as technological learner support services as none of the respondents indicated its utilization as a learner support service. The study revealed that less than half of the respondents owned computers and knew how to use them. In regard to guidance and counseling support services, the study revealed that encouragement services, motivation and time management services were fully provided. The least provided guidance and counseling support services were giving directions and career choice. The study recommended that the university to consider setting up sub regional centers at each district provide an expert in guidance and counseling, set up a computer lab at the regional centres and provide learning materials in soft copy. The study suggested that further research to be carried out on the influence of learner support services in the enrolment of learners in other districts to find out whether they have similar experiences or impact on learners.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CCI	Correspondence courses institute
DDE	Directorate of Distance Education
DE	Distance education
LSS	Learner support services
OEF	Open Education Faculty
PCP	Personal Contact Programme
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
STRIDE	Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education
UNISA	University of South Africa
UON	University of Nairobi

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
ABSTRACT	v
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background Information of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Purpose of the Study	5
1.4 Objectives of the study.....	5
1.5 Research Questions.....	6
1.6 Significance of the Study	6
1.7 Limitations of the Study.....	7
1.8 Delimitations of the Study.....	8
1.9 Basic Assumptions of the Study	8
1.10 Definition of Significant Terms as used in the Study.....	9
1.11 Organization of the Study	10
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1 Introduction.....	11
2.2 Types of Learner Support Services.....	13
2.3 Administrative Learner Support Services.....	14
2.4 Technological Learner Support Services.....	20
2.5 Guidance and Counselling and Peer Learner Support Services.....	22

2.6	Conceptual Framework.....	27
2.7	Summary of chapter two.....	29
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....		30
3.1	Introduction.....	30
3.2	Research Design.....	30
3.3	Target Population.....	30
3.4	Sample size and sampling procedure.....	31
3.5	Research Instruments.....	32
3.6	Reliability of the research instruments	32
3.6	Validity of the research instruments	33
3.7	Data Collection Procedures	33
3.8	Data Analysis Methods.....	34
3.9	Operational Definition of Variables	34
3.10	Summary of chapter three.....	36
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION...37		
4.1	Introduction.....	37
4.2	Questionnaire return rate.....	37
4.3	General information of respondents.	38
4.4	Analysis on provision of Administrative learner support services	41
4.5	Analysis of Technological learner support services.....	42
4.6	Analysis of Guidance and counseling learner support services.....	43
4.7	Analysis of Peer Learner support services	45
4.8	Challenges faced in obtaining learner support services	45
4.9	Suggested solutions to the challenges.....	46
4.10	Summary of chapter four	47

CHAPTER FIVE:SUMMARY OF FINDINGS,DISCUSSIONS,CONCLUSIONS AND	
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	48
5.1 Introduction.....	48
5.2 Summary of findings	49
5.3 Discussions.....	50
5.4 Conclusion	50
5.5 Recommendations.....	51
5.6 Suggestions for Further Research.....	52
5.7 Summary of chapter five.....	52
REFERENCES	53
APPENDICES	57
APPENDIX I LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO RESPONDENTS.....	57
APPENDIX II RESEARCH INSTRUMENT FOR DISTANCE LEARNERS.....	58
APPENDIX III AUTHORIZATION LETTER FROM UNIVERSITY.....	.63

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Staffing Level in Borabu District Currently.....	3
Table 1.2	Statistics on the Enrolment of Learners in Distance Education Programmes in Borabu District - 2008-2011	4
Table 2.1	Channels and media for reaching out DE information to potential Learners	21
Table 3.1	Education Levels for Distance Education Learners.....	31
Table 3.2	Target Population and Sample size.....	31
Table 3.3	Operationalization of Variables	35
Table 4.1	Return Rate of the Questionnaires	37
Table 4.2	Gender distribution of respondents	38
Table 4.3	Age distribution of male respondents.....	39
Table 4.4	Age distribution of female respondents.....	39
Table 4.5	Marital status of the respondents.....	40
Table 4.6	Respondents level of study.....	41
Table 4.7	Provision of administrative learner support services to the respondents	41
Table 4.8	Response on technological learner support services.....	42
Table 4.9	Mode of communication to the University by the respondents	43
Table 4.10	Availability of Guidance and counseling learners support services	44
Table 4.11	Providers of guidance and counseling services.....	44
Table 4.12	Frequency of meetings by peers.....	45

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework28

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information of the Study

Distance Education (DE) has been defined differently by different scholars. According to Perraton (1998), it is the separation of the learner in space and time. It is the volitional control of learning by a student rather than the distance instructor (Johassen, 1992). It is a non continuous communication between a student and the teacher mediated by print or form of technology (Kuhn, 1997). It is the separation of an instructor and the learner in space or time where communication between a student and the teacher is mediated by prints or form of technology, (Keegan, 1986). It is providing education opportunities to large numbers of people who had previously been denied and geographically isolated (Hipp, 1997). According to Lewis et al (1992), DE is a form of education delivered to locations through print, audio-video or computer technologies.

In summary from the definitions, distance education is a planned teaching or learning experience in which a teacher and the student are separated by physical distance. DE is now recognized all over the world as the mode of education which helps large numbers of learners to access quality education (Kember, 1997). Through this mode, quality education is made accessible at very low costs to persons whose work and family responsibilities or even personal preferences would bar them from attending college on a full time basis More et al, (1990). It also provides opportunities to design flexible curricular for a wider spectra of clientele who may take courses at their own time depending on their abilities and conveniences (Bowa, 2008). The learner is connected to the instructor by media or technology .It involves student – instructor interaction which may be delivered in any synchronous or asynchronous mode over a wide spectrum of existing and evolving media. The delivery of DE depends on information

technology namely; print correspondences, telephone, audio conferencing and radio, audio tapes, video and computer-based technology (Moore et al., 1990). It also depends on the provision of learner support services which complement the mass produced materials which make up the most well known element in distance education (Tait, 1995). According to Garrison and Baynton (1997), DE requires resources that learners can access in order to carry out their learning process effectively. Learner Support Services (LSS) are designed to help an individual student learn from the teaching materials which may be academic, administrative or personal (Tait, 2003). According to Tait and Mills (2003), the role of learner support is to enable the distance learning institutions to widen its students participation, recruitment of students and retention of the students and add value to open and DE system (McGivney, 2004). According to Tait (1996), Learner Support service is one of the critical subsystems of open and distance learning. In most educational institutions, the LSS are regarded as less central and moral peripheral than provision of teaching. In open and DE, teaching tend to take precedence over learning and learner support.

According to Garrison (1997), the amount of LSS an institution can offer largely depends on that particular institution's capacity and resources available. Garrison and Baynton (1997) support services are of two categories namely; academic and administrative. Academic supports are tutorials, advising and counseling services; Administrative support services are enrolment, admission, information provision, delivery of study materials and library services. Learner support services according to Dillon (1999) should be related to learner needs, content, technology and institutional context. The effective LSS and systems are important elements of DE programmes. Learner support that address learner needs depend on unique needs and characteristics of learners. In the University of Nairobi (UON), LSS are in the form of face to face tutorial sessions conducted for all groups of students, thrice per semester, guidance and

counseling, administrative and centralized library support. Counseling and administrative support services are provided throughout the semester at the central campus and Regional Study centers across the country. It is important to note that the UON has been offering DE in the School of Continuing and Distance Education since 1986 (University Calendar 2011).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

High enrolment in various cohorts of students in the faculty of Distance and External Studies of the University of Nairobi creates a great concern. The distance education student's needs for a variety of student support services can be well justified. In the literature on student support, many researchers Sewart et al, (2003) express the conviction that student support services can personalize and humanize distance education systems. While course-materials writing and development tends to focus more on content, support services tend to focus towards facilitating each student's full development.

Table 1.1 Staffing Level in Borabu District Currently

CATEGORY	NO.OF SCHOOLS	STAFFING LEVEL
Public primary schools	65	674
Private primary schools	18	144
Public secondary schools	23	235
Private secondary schools	6	75
TOTAL	112	1128

Source: Borabu District Education Office, 2012.

Table 1.1 indicates the total number of teachers in the District. It shows that public schools have high staffing than private schools because they are sponsored by the government.

Table 1.2 Statistics on the Enrolment of Learners in Distance Education Programmes in Borabu District - Year 2008-2011

ZONE	2008	2009	2010	2011
ESISE	14	26	28	33
NYANSIONGO	28	27	31	38
MEKENENE	18	30	29	28
TOTAL	60	83	88	99

Source: Borabu District Education Office, 2012

Table 1.2 shows the number of student teachers who are undergoing or have undergone Bachelors of Education through distance education in Borabu District between 2008 to 2011. It therefore shows clearly that there is an increasing trend in the total number of distance education students from the year 2008 to 2011 from Borabu District. It was also observed that enrolment of students in distance Education programmes vary from year to year and from zone to zone in Borabu District. It is for this reason that the researcher sought to investigate the role of the Learner Support Services in DE programmes from Borabu District.

Researches which have been carried out in the past has mainly dwelt on influence of learner support services on academic performance. For instance Bowa's study (2008) was on learner support services on academic performance. The target population was students in the Bachelors of Education (Arts) programme of the UON's School of Continuing and Distance Education. The population size was two hundred and twelve students .The research design was a cross sectional survey research design. The findings were that most of cognitive, affective and systemic learner support services did not contribute significantly to academic performance of the learners because the services were either not adequately provided or because learners lacked easy access to the services. Muthima, (2007) carried out research on factors influencing students' enrolment in the external degree programme of the University of Nairobi. The target

1.5 Research Questions

1. How does administrative learner support services influence enrolment of learners in distance education programmes at the UON from Borabu District?
2. How does technological learner support service influence enrolment of learners in distance education programmes at the UON from Borabu District?
3. How does guidance and counseling and peer learner support services influence the enrolment of learners in distance education programmes at the UON from Borabu District?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The present study may provide a systematic view and information to administrators of the University of Nairobi about the use and utilities of learner support services.

It may also assess the availability, quality, similarity and differences of the learner support services.

The study may be useful to the University of Nairobi to look into the quality of its learner support services and in highlighting the strengths and weaknesses in the learner support services.

It may enable the University of Nairobi to overcome weaknesses and fulfill learner needs and also provide guidelines for the rest of other State and private universities.

It may be helpful for policy makers in the government to make sound and relevant policies in the provision of learner support services in distance learning sector.

The study may be significant to many researchers who would wish to conduct a similar study on how the provision of learner support services may influence learners' enrolment in institutions where distance education is offered by showing their relationship.

The study may also be significant to the Teachers' Service Commission to enhance staff development through distance education basing on the recommendations of the findings.

The study may also be significant to the Government of Kenya through the higher education loans board in order to consider the possibility of extending loans to distance learners.

The study may also be significant to Borabu District in that learner support services may be adopted to reduce school dropouts. It may also have expert teachers with high qualifications who will be offering learner support services and in turn contribute to raising the academic performance of the District.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The researcher travelled from one school to another hence the distance implication as target population was spread all over the district. The study dealt with a case of the UON and therefore the research findings cannot be generalized to other universities. Unavailability of the target population when I was collecting data as some of them were absent due to personal commitments. Accessibility during rainy season was not easy because of the flooded areas and poor infrastructure. There was a likelihood some respondents might not have given accurate information because of unwillingness to disclose their status. Some of these limitations were reduced through personal contacts and telephone call to the target group.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

Borabu District was created towards the end of 2007, having been hived from the larger Masaba District. It borders Bomet District to the South, Kisii Central District to the West, Manga District to the North and Buret District to the East. The District has three divisions and three zones namely: Nyansiongo, Mekenene and Esise. It has twenty three (23) Public Secondary schools and six private ones, while in the primary sector; it has sixty -five (65) public schools and eighteen (18) private primary schools. (Human Resource Officer Borabu Educational Office, 2011).The target population was undergraduate learners in Distance Education in Bachelor of Education (Arts).

The research was delimited to Borabu District and further more the research targeted the students who have gone through the UON under the DE mode between the years 2008 to 2011 only.

1.9 Basic Assumptions of the Study

The study was based on the assumption that the respondents would candidly respond to the various items of the study. The study was also based on the assumption that high enrolment of learners is influenced by effective learner support services.

1.10 Definition of Significant Terms as used in the Study

Counseling: A process where a counselor tries to assist a client.

Distance Education: a planned and well organized teaching /learning experience in which the learner and instructor are separated by physical distance and mediated by the technology such as print or electronics.

Distance Learner: A student who studies away from fellow learners, instructors and institution.

Distance Learning: A mode of study where the learners and instructors are separated in space and time.

Enrolment: To put one's name on the official list or to register.

Guidance: Is giving advice or suggesting directions or instructions to people who have problems. It involves personal assistance .This help is designed to assist people in deciding where they want to go, what they want to do, how to get to their destination and how to solve problems arising in their life.

Learner Support Services: Refers to services provided to distance learners by distance learning institutions.

Library: A place where reading materials for distance learners are kept.

Population: A set of data having the same characteristics

Programme: A system of learning using a series of graded self test units.

Technology: Refers to a media instructing distance learners .This would be either electronic or print.

1.11 Organization of the Study

The study is organized in five chapters: Chapter one consists of the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, delimitations of the study, basic assumptions of the study and definition of terms used in the study. Chapter two consists of literature review on types of learner support services; administrative, technological, guidance and counseling, peer learner support services and the conceptual framework. Chapter three consists of the research methodology which comprises of research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedure, research instruments, reliability and validity of the research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis method and operational definition of variables Chapter four consists of data presentation, analysis and interpretation. Chapter five consists of introduction, summary of findings, discussion of the study, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction.

In recent years, higher education has continued to be characterized by a relatively high level of participation among students, attracting the attention of the majority of distance education learners (Mills, 1996). “The question of why some students successfully study through distance education and others do not is becoming increasingly important as distance education moves from a marginal to an integral role in the overall educational provision” (Ross, 1990).

Distance learning opportunities for students have skyrocketed in popularity. Every year, more universities are starting distance education programmes. Much of this increase is due to the demands of the learner audience who are intrigued by distance education, mostly because they face a number of obstacles that make conventional, brick-and-mortar educational options unviable: They live in remote geographic areas, conveniently located institutions offer limited program options, their work schedules conflict with campus-bound course schedules. This includes people who work shifts, travel frequently on business, work long hours, and/ or are in the armed forces, personal and family commitments conflict with campus-bound course schedules. This includes having children at home and taking care of aging parents.

Furthermore, with emerging arguments that demands for higher education are increasing, while educational resources are scarce, open and distance learning has the potential to address some of society’s current problems and to contribute to the enhancement of human development (Wood 1999). It is necessary to learn more about how this mode of education can be made more accessible to more people. Success in distance learning is a complex matter. Isolating specific

variables that will guarantee student success may not be possible, but developing an educational environment that will contribute to student success is possible. In this context (Tait, 2003) argues that: While it is very difficult to isolate the variables in an educational system and identify a simple causal relationship of student support with student success, the University of South Africa (UNISA) example provides the clearest case for the importance of student support in a distance education institution. For many students, especially from the majority population who were excluded from the best universities in South Africa, the opportunity offered by distance education was not a real one. UNISA provides us with the best-documented case hitherto of the dangers of developing distance education without adequate student support. The complexity of this situation is further described by Lebwitz (1997), who notes that distance education must be serious about its social role as well as about the integration of delivery mechanisms with the content and the student. It is through the provision of high quality instructional and institutional support services and through institutional understanding of the characteristics of the distance education student, that students will be supported to experience success in the educational environment and attain goals toward which they are striving. In this respect, Tait (1996) argues for the expansion of Holmberg's (1995) guided didactic conversation model, to include institutional support services in addition to instructional support services. Holmberg (1995) contends that if a distance education course consistently represents a communication process felt to have the character of a conversation, then the students will be more motivated and more successful than if the course studied has an impersonal textbook character. He further notes that this also concerns the use of assignments for submission. If used as a means to stimulate and facilitate conversation-type communication, they are assumed to contribute considerably more to motivation and success than if used as a means to examine and evaluate students. Holmberg (1995). Holmberg developed this thinking into a formal theory which generated the following

hypothesis: The stronger the characteristics of guided didactic conversation, the stronger the students' feelings of personal relationship between them and the supporting organization; The stronger the students' feelings that the supporting organization is interested in making the study matter personally relevant to them, the greater their personal involvement; and the stronger the students' feelings of personal relations to the supporting organization and of being personally involved with the study matter, the stronger the motivation and the more effective the learning

In an attempt to shed some further light on the factors that can affect learner success in distance learning, the following sections will present a closer examination of recent literature with particular reference to the provision of student support services as an integral part of the delivery of distance learning programmes.

2.2 Types of Learner Support Services

Garrison and Baynton (2007) define learner support as the resources that learners can access in order to carry out the learning processes. Garrison (2003) observes that in distance education "support is concerned with a range of human and non-human resources to guide and facilitate the educational transaction". Dillon and Blanchard (1999) describe four types of support systems namely: Learner support that addresses learner needs, learner support and the needs of the content, learner support related to the institutional context, and learner support and technology. Dillon (1992), provides a useful framework for designing learner support systems and criteria that needs to be considered for each type of support. The Turkish distance education system is provided under the Open Education Faculty (OEF); Learner support that addresses learner needs will depend on the unique needs and characteristics of the learner. Dillon (1999) observes that one important factor that contributes to success is the motivation

or confidence of the learner. Less motivated students may benefit from interaction with the teacher or tutor. Less confident learners may need more group support than more confident learners. Older learners may need more support in testing environments. Learner support that addresses needs of the content will depend on the content and the learning environment. The Turkish Open Education Faculty (OEF) integrates printed materials with broadcast media (Murphy, 2002). Technologies used to deliver distance education programs in Turkey are typically one-way and Turkey integrates technologies in distance education primarily by combining the one-way technologies of text and television. Learner-content interaction in Turkey is therefore designed to occur through self-instruction with textbooks and optional television and radio broadcast (Murphy et al, 2002).

2.3 Administrative Learner Support Services

Learner support services related to institutional context will depend on the type of distance teaching institution delivering the instruction. Distance learning universities usually have a network of study centers and emphasize student-tutor interactions and flexible pacing. Institutional policies may also affect access to media and libraries and can be problematic in mixed mode institutions that may treat distance learners differently from traditional on-campus learners. There are several factors to be taken into account while designing and managing the learner support services. Though it is titled as learner support services, the service actually begins before an individual becomes a student in a distance learning system. Since the goal of distance education is to reach the unreached, the first service that is offered by a distance learning institution is to reach out with information about the programmes, courses and other details to the prospective learner. Once this prospective learner's attention has been turned towards the distance learning the next stage begins. The services provided to the

students include access to information about the programmes the enrolment procedure, where to collect the learning material, whom to contact for the tutorial sessions, from where to get the audio/video programmes and so on. The basic objective of these services is to help students choose the right kind of courses and learn better once the courses are properly chosen. Thus, Learner Support Services comprise the following components: Dissemination of Information, Enrolment Information, Delivery of Course Material, Personal Contact Programmes, and, Counseling. The above listed components of LSS are dealt with focusing on issues in management (.Wright,1991)

2.3.1 Dissemination of Information

The first component of the learner support services is to disseminate the information. This means informing the prospective students about the programmes, teaching learning methods used in the open learning institutions, methods of registration, implications of undertaking a distance learning programme, etc. This requires carefully planned publicity about various aspects of the programme; quality of information given to the learners in the beginning significantly influences learners choice of programmes time of registration and methods of evaluation. This is particularly important since large number of potential learners live in rural areas. There are different methods for providing information to the learners. These methods can vary as the learners are geographically scattered. Some of the ways through which learners can be reached out with relevant and quality information are shown in Table 2.1

2.3.2 Enrolment and registration of learners

The second component of the student support services is the enrolment and registration of the learners. According to Fung (2000), the purpose of enrolment is four fold in any

institution. These are: To create a contact between the organization and the learner, to collect information that the organization requires to meet the learners needs, to provide learners with the information that they need between the time of enrolment and starting the course, and to collect information needed for **management and funding purpose**.

For enrolment in any programme, the learners need to fill in an enrolment form. The enrolment form prescribed by various open universities varies in structure and content. Such forms are reviewed from time to time. There is however, certain basic information that must be sought for enrolling the student. Accordingly, the form should ask for the following minimum information: Personal Details Contact Address Programme to be taken Educational Background Learners Photograph and Learners Signature(Tait,2003).

The prospectus of the distance learning contains this form. The prospectus provides additional information to the learners, which the learners require between the time of enrolment and the starting of the course. The information is about the programme objectives, advice on the course details what and when the course materials will arrive, contact point for the learners the list of the study centers where the learners can contact for any information etc. The prospectus also gives some pre enrolment information. This information helps the learners to decide in choosing a course through distance mode. Learners also know about the process of study, requirement of previous qualifications (if any), and the cost of the course. Thus, designing and drafting of the prospectus containing all the relevant information is an important management task. However, just being comprehensive in terms of coverage of information will not necessarily make a good prospectus.

The prospectus is the first contact of the prospective learners with a distance learning institution. The quality of the prospectus presents the personality of the institution. A shabbily produced prospectus as compared to a well-designed and well produced prospectus

sends altogether different signals to the prospective learner. It is important to recognize that the prospectus is sold; hence, cost of the prospectus is paid for by the prospective learner himself/herself. The record obtained from the enrolment forms becomes a central resource for the subsequent administrative processes. The information obtained helps in providing reminders to the learners on various issues.(McLoughlin,2000).

2.3.3 Delivery of Material

Delivery of material is probably the most important component of student support services. The success of the distance learning system depends upon the learning material, their distribution and timely availability to the learners. There are several approaches which open universities adopt in the distribution of material to their students. Some of distance education institutions mail the materials by registered parcel or by Express Parcel service to the learners. This helps the learners to get the material at their doorstep.

2.3.4 Personal Contact Programmes

An important component of student support services is the Personal Contact Programme (PCP). In PCPs, open learners come together to share their learning experiences and seek clarifications from the tutors. The purpose of conducting personal contact programmes in open system is to solve the problems of the learners, provide opportunity for peer group interaction, seek guidance from the counselors, get feedback on the assignments, Use audio and video programmes, conduct practical, help in the preparation for examination, sharing each other's experiences etc .The needs of the distance learners are different as compared to the students of conventional system. Usually, these contact programmes are replica of conventional classroom lectures, though needs of distance learners are different. The

counselors should use other interactive group learning techniques like problem solving, tutorials, cooperative learning, games, etc. In the PCP sessions, an opportunity is given to each one to interact among them. In these sessions the counselor is not teaching. Learners must identify the problems, they cannot solve themselves. These problems can be broken into smaller problems to make them more specific. The learners must form groups to help each other. These groups can organize various activities which will strengthen their learning.(Mills,1996).

In India ,the staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) regional and study centers maintain a library. The learners must make use of this. Additional reading will help to enrich the learning. Another aim of the personal contact programmes is to organize practical's especially in science courses. Personal contact programmes also help in preparing the learners for the examination. One of the major innovative approaches to provide academic support to the student learning is the tele-conferencing by STRIDE. In many of its programmes it offers, tutorial support through interactive television where expert faculty interact with participants assembled in different regional centers. Participants are able to listen and observe the faculty at the STRIDE end through television; they can interact by raising questions or comments through telephone or fax. STRIDE is now installing computer communication mode as well to support the interactivity.(Wood,1999).

In India, distance learning and correspondence courses institutes conduct personal contact programmes on Saturdays, Sundays or on holidays. Also, some of the correspondence courses institute and open universities conduct two to three weeks of personal contact programmes in the form of a short-term course or workshop. These PCPs are compulsory or optional depending upon the courses. The attendance regulations are different in all the CCIs. These sessions are held at the study centers. The duration of the PCPs also varies among the various distance learning institutions. For example, Kurekshetra

University offers PCPs of one to three weeks duration depending upon the course. Directorate of Distance Education, Pondichery University arranges personal contact programmes classes every year for duration of five days. Personal contact programmes in Jammu University is of 20 days duration in each course per semester. Directorate of Distance Education of Annamalai University conducts personal contact programmes twice a year in the different study centers in the country, though these are not compulsory. This means that there is no hard and fast rule for organizing the personal contact programmes among the various Correspondence courses institutes .All the above components of student support services are interdependent and require integrated implementation. The success of any Personal contact programmes will depend upon how it is planned and managed.

The major issues in planning and management are: Identifying the number of classes that are required to provide the tutorial support in a particular course; these can be achieved by critically analyzing the course and identifying the difficult use and topics; also through the analysis of examination scripts and feedback from the students. Ensuring that personal contact programmes are used for the purpose for which they are designed namely tutorial and providing learning support to the student rather than conducting classes in conventional fashion; this would require serious programmes of orientation of the counselors involved in the open learning institutions.(Taylor,1998).

Developing a research programme on the effect of personal contact programmes on student learning; this can be easily achieved by comparing the performance of students who participated in personal contact programmes with those who did not. This would lead to further exploration about the quality of personal contact programmes which either contributed or otherwise to learning of the participants. The personal contact programmes should be evaluated by the participants at the end of the programme, be it a week-long or

longer. This evaluation should be carried out by the participants so that the managers of the personal contact programme receive relevant feedback from the user of the program.

2.4 Technological Learner Support Services

Learner support related to technology will depend on the type of technologies used in the distance education system. Garrison, (1997) describes the development of distance education by noting three generations of technology. The first generation uses primarily correspondence, delivered through the regular mail system. In this system, the availability of interaction becomes critical. Thus, the provision for interaction between the student and the tutor is important. The second generation of technologies provides for real time interaction and is exemplified by audio, audio graphics and video teleconferencing. Because these systems provide for real time interaction, what is critical is the quality of interaction. The third generation technologies are microprocessor-based technologies such as computer conferencing.

In these systems, the quality of interaction with the group becomes important and support systems must facilitate the collaborative learning process. In some studies, technologies that deliver instruction to distance learners are often classified as two-way interactive or one-way non-interactive Bates (2004). In India distance education institutions reach out to large number of students in large geographical areas. They work through the network of regional and study centers. Distance education institutions establish their own regional centers and study centers. These regional centers and study centers form the backbone of student's student support services of any distance education institution. For example, the Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) has established a regional center in every state of the Indian Union.

The importance of the regional centers is indicated by the fact that regional centers are headed by a regional director at the rank of a full professor. STRIDE has also established 1081 study centers in India and has 23 overseas centers. Students in distance learning system are spread geographically within the county. Students are also enrolled from other countries. In STRIDE students are enrolled from Ethiopia, Dubai, Seychelles, Mauritius, etc. Some of the Correspondence course institutes of dual mode universities also enroll students from abroad for example, Annamalai University enroll students particularly, for its teacher training programme in the middle east countries.

Table 2.1 Channels and media for reaching out DE information to potential Learners

Means	Areas
National and Local Newspaper	Urban and Rural
Meeting with students / fellow learners	Urban and Rural
Brochures and other Related Material	Urban and Rural
Telephone Conversation	Urban and Rural
Radio and TV Broadcast	Urban and Rural
Internet	Wherever available

Source: Prajapati(2008)

From the table it is clear that all the means and channels reach out to both rural and urban area distance learners Internet is being increasingly seen as a viable mode of dissemination of information. Large majority of the institutions maintain websites. Those who do not, it is advisable for them to develop a web site. It is neither expensive, nor complicated. With the telecom revolution, the cyber cafes have spread out in every corner of the country. As a result the large majority of people even in rural areas have access to Internet through cyber cafes, laptops, Personal computers and mobile handsets. The management issue here is what kind of information should be disseminated so that learners are able to take a decision whether they want to enroll in the open and distance education system or not. There are number of

information which the learners need to know before they enroll in the open system. The questions can be of the following nature: Types of Programmes and Courses, Programme/Course outline, Prerequisites of studying a programme/course, study time, credit hours, study activities, examination fees of the programme, learning material. Dissemination of information is an important management task. In designing and managing this task, the distance learning institutions should consider the following points: Information on various services change frequently hence, it should be updated regularly. Since the distance learners are scattered all over, the method of dissemination of information should be appropriate.

2.5 Guidance and Counselling and Peer Learner Support Services

One of the important components of learner support services is guidance and counseling of the learners. Counseling is a learning process in which individuals learn about themselves, their interpersonal relationships and behavior that advance their personal development. Guidance is giving advice or suggesting directions or instructions to people who have problems. It involves personal assistance (Bowa, 2011). In distance education; counseling is used to explore the student's problems, to facilitate in the identification of needs of learners and to work towards a solution. Counseling is done at the study centers, which are local educational institutions. Counseling in the distance learning system should be given at the following stages: pre-course stage, in-course stage and post-course stage. Counseling is of two kinds, individual and group Counseling. It is important to understand how to manage the counseling sessions. (Tait, 2003).

The following are some of the steps in management of counseling. The environment of the counseling sessions must be warm and comfortable. This includes the physical

environment. The counselors must talk to the students directly and there must not be any interruption. Counselors must be active listeners listen to the problems of the learners. For this he/she should display enough patience. After listening, the counselor must check whether the problem has been interpreted correctly. Counselors must make an effort to understand the problem of the learners from their point of view and not presume the problems of the learners. Counselors should also seek periodically clarification of what the learners are communicating. Pause in between the discussions. The counselors must ask the learners to sit back and think about what they have discussed. The counselors must generate new ideas and possibilities by encouraging the learners. Once the ideas are generated in the sessions, the best solution must be taken out while evaluating all of them. Counseling techniques vary from individual to individual, specially, when the counselor gets the learners from different age groups, background, characteristics, etc. Counselors must manage the sessions with patience. Counseling is based on the experience and expertise of the counselor.(Kumar,2005).

As mentioned earlier, student support services is the heart of distance learning system. The students' reaction to the distance education programme as well as, the institution, including dropout is largely the function of student support services. Hence, very significant effort in the distance learning and the Correspondence courses institutes improve the student support services. Some universities have tried to improve their preadmission services; others have changed their style of counseling. Lot of attention is being paid by the managers of open system on the student support services. There is, however, a long way to go to optimize the effectiveness of student support services.(Tait,1996).

Peer learner support service can be understood to be the objective of peer group assessment or its parallel concept. In peer learner support, the learner will receive aid, guidance, recognition

and encouragement from his/her peer(s). As a parallel concept peer learner support does not include assessment or direct feedback. rather it means that learners share issues and ideas. This is not sufficient because students require constructive, confidential peer-to-peer feedback and assessment that will aid mutual learning and growth into expertise. Peer learner involves many processes and can be discussed as follows. During peer group supervision process, there is exchange of experiences and interactive communication between peers who are at the same stage in their studies and who are struggling with the same types of problems.

Peer group supervision is doing things together, exchange of innovations, proposing ideas and different alternatives improving Chandra (2001). During the supervision session peers can experience togetherness, succeed and encourage each other. The significance of an issue to be learnt is more easily understood by listening the personal story of a peer. Peer group supervision also improves social skills and relations, trust and fellowship, social capital. Peer group supervision can be seen as a process that includes different consecutive stages. Peer group supervision can be seen as a process that includes different consecutive stages.

During the preparatory studies for the distance learning, the progress of the learning process is discussed, as well as the roles of the learner, working life and the teacher. There is also discussion on why peer learner supervision is useful to us now and where it is specifically needed. This forms the basis for future discussions with possible future peer learners. Learners learn together with their peers can come up with new ideas and solutions by getting to grips with solutions suggested by peer learner and by making own suggestions Peer learner supervision needs the following: The willingness and skill to share own ideas, successes and failures the willingness to consider oneself as a learner. Positive feelings that support learning are an aid to learning from others. Such a discussion can form in itself the best way to analyze an issue and is an excellent learning tool. The willingness and skill to participate in equal

discussion. This is the best way to receive new or different ways of thinking while working. The amount of peer partner supervision used depends on how you plan your supervision session

Peer learner supervision sessions vary and include different objectives, for example, the ideas seminar, sessions arranged because a learner needs supervision and support from his/her peer learner. Many of these sessions are timetabled but usually learners arrange the sessions themselves. An external representative or the teacher supervisor can also attend such sessions, and this should be taken into account when preparing for the sessions (criteria, list of questions, or send thesis to them in advance). The supervision session can take place in different types of learning environments. The supervision session should be organized so that enough time will remain for mutual assessment. This will provide the student with more information to help him/her develop his/her learning .What happens during a peer partner supervision session? Firstly, the aim, progression and schedule of the session should be examined by everyone present the peer learner(s) and external. Discuss, question and observe issues linked to their study topic according to a list of items to be discussed, questions or criteria drawn up in advance. Record all observations. At the end of the session the peer learner and anyone else present should provide the peer learner with feedback: After the peer learner supervision session each participant should consider the feedback and other ideas that they have received.

A successful exchange of feedback provides positive opportunities for development for all parties involved (Coldway,2000) In order to achieve good results learners require a variety of experiences involving positive feelings and feedback is one way to accomplish such feelings. The effect of feedback depends very much upon how the recipient interprets and accepts it. In order to receive feedback learners must first allow themselves to be evaluated and they must also be prepared to reveal their own weaknesses and strengths and to take risks. It must be

pointed out that the basis of a successful feedback session is the acceptance of the objectives and evaluation criteria for all related activities by all parties involved. These ensure fair and relevant feedback. Peer learners reflect upon the supervision sessions on a personal level in his/her learning diary. By analyzing the meetings with representatives from working life, teachers etc. and by writing about them in the learning diary learners can apply what they have learnt. Keeping such a diary also helps learners to organize their thoughts and to avoid getting things out of proportion. The peer learner also benefits from peer learner supervision sessions and is also able to reflect upon issues discussed and to apply them to his/her own learning. Keeping a learning diary also helps to clarify and deepen understanding of a given topic and leads to the discovery of new sources of information.(Coldway,2000).

Growing and developing professional expertise is part of personal development. During the learning process learners learn to deal with the interaction between factual knowledge, experience based knowledge and meta-cognitive knowledge. Professional development also requires the recognition and understanding of the meaning contained in different interpretations. When learners understand the basis of their knowledge and activities in a new way (e.g. through self-assessment, peer learner feedback, feedback from a work place representative) they are then able to change how they work and redefine themselves in this context. This new definition in turn produces a new element that adds to their professional development while widening and deepening their ability to complete a work-oriented profile in collaboration with others (Keegan, 2006).

2.6 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a research tool intended to develop awareness and understanding of the situation under scrutiny and to communicate how variables are related in the research. A system can be defined as defined or conceptualized in many ways. “Complexes of elements standing in interaction” .An organized collection of interrelated elements characterized by a boundary and a functional unity”,(Bleecher,2003). “A set of elements that functions as a whole to achieve a common purpose” (Bates, 2004). A common trend emerges from these concepts, namely that interaction, interrelatedness, functional unity and functioning as a whole are key elements of conceptualizing a system. For this study the conceptual framework which sets out to explain how learner support services fit into the Distance Education System is the systems approach framework.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

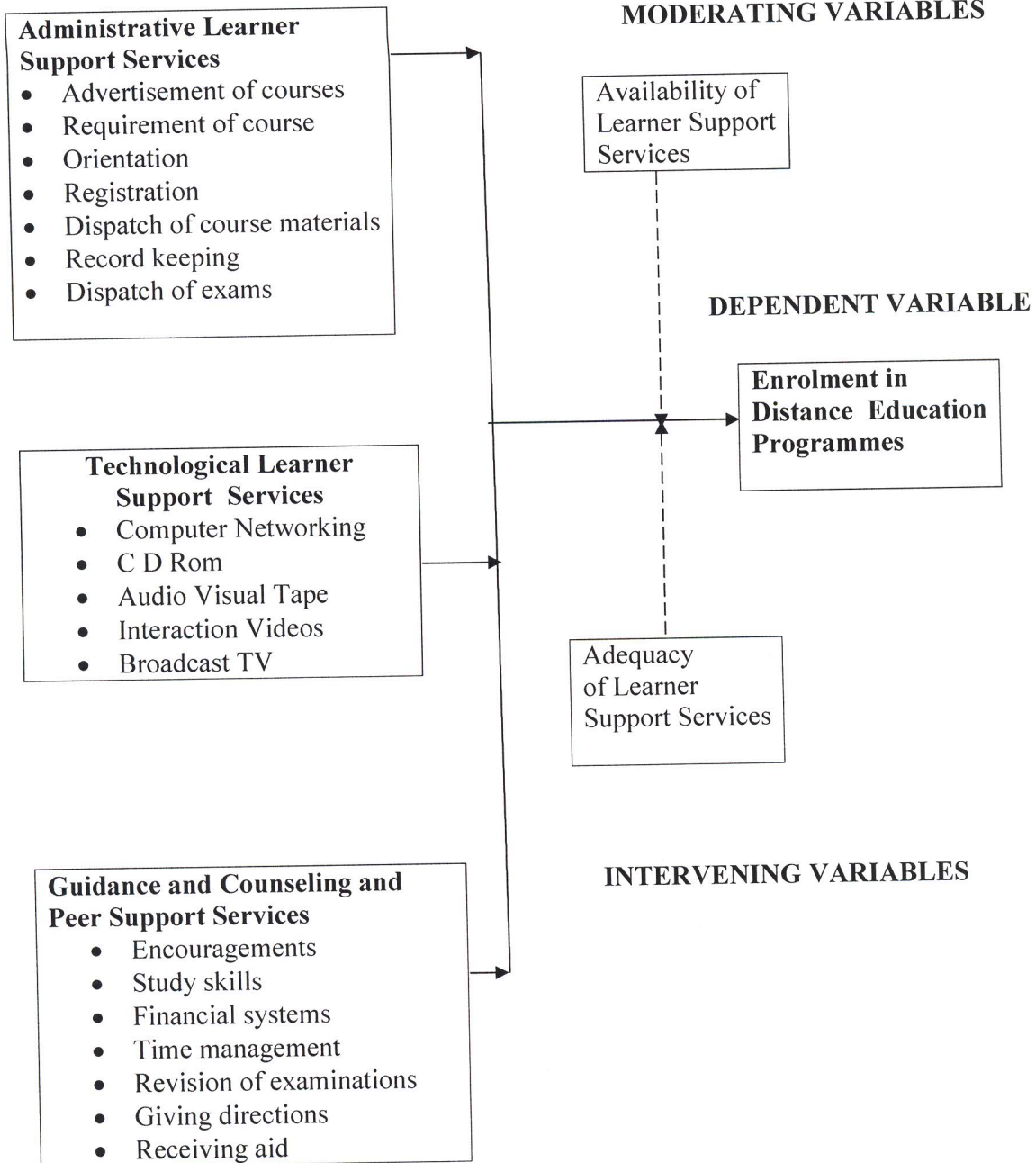


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework contains three independent variables, one dependent variable, one moderating variable and one intervening variable. The study was to establish how the independent variables influence the dependent variable.

2.7 Summary of chapter two

In this chapter attention has been given to the various aspects of learner support services specifically, the need to establish the influence of learner support services in the enrolment of learners in distance education. Learner support services are therefore not just a liberal notion. Key issues related to the provision of student support services were also put forward by concentrating on the specific learner support services needed by learners in distance education. The chapter also provides administrative support services needed by learners to learn effectively. The administrative information for example advertisement of courses application, the dispatch of course materials in complete and timely fashion, timely assignment turn around. The dispatch of the right examination to the right location at the right time and accurate and complete records keeping besides technological, guidance and counseling and peer learner support services.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the research methodology that was used. It contains the research design for the study, target population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection instruments, validity and reliability of the research instruments, data collection and data analysis procedures.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is the plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions. For the purpose of this study, a quantitative and qualitative design techniques were used .A descriptive research design is a technique where detailed information concerning social phenomena is collected by posing questions to respondents such that it becomes possible to find explanation of social phenomena in question (Jacobs et al,1996). Findings of a survey design help researchers to explain phenomena with confidence and authenticity.

3.3 Target Population.

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) defines population as a group of individuals for which the study is intended to apply and the population to which the researcher wants to generalize the results of the study. A target population is defined as that which a researcher wants to generalize the results of a study. The research targeted a population of all 312 students of both gender from Borabu district who had enroled in the distance education programmes for undergraduate degree in Bachelor of Education from the School of Continuing and Distance Education levels, at the University of Nairobi between the years 2008 to 2011from Borabu

District. It targeted the undergraduates and those who had completed Bachelors of Education Arts

Table 3.1 Education Levels for Distance Education Learners

GENDER	PART I	PART II	PART III	PART IV	PART V	PART VI	COMPLETED	TOTAL
MALE	10	9	13	9	10	9	101	161
FEMALE	9	12	6	11	10	9	94	151
TOTAL	19	21	19	20	20	18	195	312

Source: Borabu District Education office (2012)

3.4 Sample size and sampling procedure

Mugenda (1999) defines sample as a smaller group obtained from the accessible population. Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals selected represent the large group from which they were selected. For the purpose of this study, stratified random sampling was used .This involved identifying groups in the study and then random sampling of each group. This was because it was not possible to involve everybody in the study. So what was done was to randomly select samples from each group. According to Mugenda (1999) a target population of 10 % of the total population is sufficient for the purpose of the study .A sample of 30 respondents (10%) of 312 distance learners in Bachelors was of both gender.

Table 3.2 Target Population and Sample size

Category	Target Population	Sample Size
MALE	161	16
FEMALE	151	15
TOTAL	312	31

Source: Borabu District Education office(2011)

The study comprised of a target population of 312 whereby 161 of the population were male with a sample size of 16 and a female population of 151 with a sample size of 15.

3.5 Research Instruments.

The researcher used questionnaires. Relevant data was collected through structured forms with close ended questions and open ended questions that were easy and easy to interpret. Open ended questions were used to allow students to make additional comments, to collect qualitative data and to obtain data supplementary to that obtained by items from the questionnaire. In addition, the open-ended questions were used to administer whether students' expectations and needs were met. The questionnaire was structured in such a manner that all the sections covered the research objectives.

3.6 Reliability of the research instruments

Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results after repeated trials. This implies that the instruments used in the research were consistent with the research objectives. Tromp (2009). In this research study, reliability was ensured by the use of split half method whereby the respondents were split into two halves (odd and even) then Spearman's Brown formula was obtained

$$r^2 = 2r / (1+r)$$

where r^2 is the adjusted Correlation

and r is the Pearson's value obtained from the correlation between the two split halves

items within the questionnaire. This enabled the researcher to identify misunderstandings, ambiguities and inadequate items in the research instruments and to make necessary

adjustments so that the data collected is more reliable. As a result relevant adjustments were made to the questionnaire before they were administered to the sample population.

3.6 Validity of the research instruments

Validity refers to the extent to which the research instrument measures what it appears to measure according to researcher's subjective assessment (Kumar, 2005). It is the degree to which results from the analysis of the data collected represent the situation under study (Mugenda, 2003). To ensure content validity, the questionnaires were constructed in a way that all the required domains were captured. To test whether this happened, the piloted questionnaires were studied, to ensure the questions captured all the domains. Content validity was confirmed by the researcher discussing the questionnaire with research experts and the supervisor.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

After pilot testing and adapting the research instrument, the researcher and research assistants (who were adequately trained and made aware of the requirements of DE), administered the questionnaires to each member in the sample to ensure a high response rate. The schedule for data collection was drawn once the proposal was approved by the supervisor. Permission to carry out data collection was sought from the Chairman of the Department of Distance Studies, University of Nairobi and a copy of the letter was presented to the District Education Office, Borabu. The same letter was produced during field visits when collecting data.

3.8 Data Analysis Methods

Klinger (1996) defines data analysis techniques as statistical method used to analyze data so that it can be interpreted .Research analysis breaks down data into constituent parts to obtain answers to research questions. The independent variable for the study was learner support services. The dependent variable was learner enrolment. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentages, were used to analyze demographic and personal information. In the interpretation of open ended questions, answers were compared for various responses analyzed qualitatively. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data.

3.9 Operational Definition of Variables

Table 3.3 highlights the objectives of the study, specifying their variables, indicators, measurements, scale, and data collection methods and data analysis.

Table 3.3 Operationalization of Variables

OBJECTIVES	VARIABLES	INDICATORS	MEASUREMENT	MEASUREMENT SCALE	DATA COLLECTION METHOD	ANALYSIS
To find out the extent to which administrative support services influences enrolment of learners in DE programmes at the UON from Borabu District	Independent- Administrative Support Services Dependent- Enrolment of learners	Availability of administrative support services Adequacy of administrative support services Operational services	Usage of administrative services by the UON for instance advertisement of courses and provision of detailed requirements. Processing of applications, enrolment, admission and registration.	Ordinal	Questionnaire	Quantitative Qualitative
To assess the use of technological support services in the enrolment of learners in DE programmes at the UON from Borabu District	Independent- Technological Support Services Dependent Enrolment of learners	Availability of technological services such as emails, and telephoning. Adequacy and use of technological services. Timeliness in communication	Usage of technological set up e.g. telephones, audio-visual tapes, interactive videos, broadcast tv, CD – ROM, computer networking, e-mail, internet	Ordinal	Questionnaire	Qualitative Quantitative
To establish whether guidance and counseling and peer learner support services influence enrolment of learners in distance education programmes at the UON from Borabu District	Independent- Guidance and counseling Dependent Enrolment of learners	Availability of Guidance and counseling services.	Provision of Guidance and counseling services by the tutors on academic issues and psycho-social issues	Ordinal	Questionnaire	Qualitative Quantitative

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3.10 Summary of chapter three

The chapter dealt with research methodology giving detailed description of how the research was conducted. The chapter contained research design sampling design, sampling procedures, data collection methods, validity and reliability of research instruments and methods of data analysis. It also contained a table showing the operation definition of variables .The study focused on enrolment of distance learners in distance education programmes in Borabu district .Sampling was done in such a way so has to have equal representation in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the analysis of data collected and presents them in form of tables for ease of presentation and interpretation following the three objectives of the study.

4.2 Questionnaire return rate

The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Table 4.1 shows the response rate of each category.

Table 4.1 Return Rate of the Questionnaires

CATEGORY	Frequency	Percentage
Undergraduate Part I	4	13.3
Undergraduate Part II	4	13.3
Undergraduate Part III	4	13.3
Undergraduate Part IV	3	10.0
Undergraduate Part V	4	13.3
Undergraduate Part VI	4	13.3
Bachelor Degree Holders	7	23.3
TOTALS	30	100

Forty two questionnaires were distributed whereby thirty five responses were received out of which five of them were discarded while editing and coding hence thirty responses remained which was equivalent to 71.41 % of the return rate which was considered as appropriate.

4.3 General information of respondents.

This section describes the demographic characteristics of respondents who participated in the study. These characteristics include distance learners' gender age, marital status, level of their study and their professional qualifications.

4.3.1 Gender distribution of the respondents

The respondents were asked to indicate their gender. Table 4.2 shows their gender distribution.

Table 4.2 Gender distribution of respondents

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Male	16	53
Female	14	47
TOTAL	30	100

From the gender distribution table, both gender was relatively balanced (male at 53% and females at 47%) indicating that neither gender is marginalized. Though males are the majority

4.3.2 Age distribution of the respondents

Question 2 of the research instrument sought to find out the age brackets of the male and female respondents. Tables 4.3 and 4.4 give the age brackets within which the male respondents and the female respondents fall respectively

Table 4.3 Age distribution of male respondents

Age Category	Frequency	Percentage
20-30	1	3
31-40	7	24
41-50	4	13
51-60	4	13
TOTAL	16	53

From Table 4.3, majority of male respondents representing 24% are in the age bracket of 31 - 40 years, while those aged 41 years and above constituted 26% of the male respondents. Very few (3%) of male respondents are in the age bracket of 20 – 30 years. This indicates that this programme attracts male students in the middle age of 31 years and above

Table 4.4 Age distribution of female respondents

Age Category	Frequency	Percentage
20-30	1	3
31-40	8	27
41-50	5	17
51-60	0	-
TOTAL	14	47

The female respondents depicted in table 4.4 shows that majority (27% of the total population) are in the age bracket 31 – 40 years. Seventeen percent of the female respondents are in the age bracket 41-50 years. There were no respondents aged above 51 years. This implies that majority of the female students are middle aged.

4.3.3 Marital status of the respondents

The respondents were asked to indicate their marital status. Table 4.5 below shows the marital status of the respondents.

Table 4.5 Marital status of the respondents

MARITAL STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Single	8	27
Married	20	67
Widowed	2	7
TOTAL	30	100

From table 4.5 the study revealed that 67% of the respondents are married. 27% of the respondents are single while the widowed are 7%. An implication of this is that the majority of distant learners are married and have family responsibilities thus distance learning becomes the best mode for their study.

4.3.4 Level of study of the respondents

Question 4 of the study instrument required respondents to state their level study. Table .4.6 presents the distribution of study levels of the respondents.

Table 4.6 Respondents level of study

CATEGORY	Respondents	Percentage
Undergraduate Part I	4	13
Undergraduate Part II	4	13
Undergraduate Part III	4	13
Undergraduate Part IV	3	10
Undergraduate Part V	4	13
Undergraduate Part VI	4	13
Bachelor Degree Holders	7	23
TOTALS	30	100

From table 4.6 it can be observed that the enrolment of learners who are in parts I, II, III, V and VI comprise of 13% of each part, 23% of the respondents are degree holders while those in part IV comprises of 10% of the respondents

4.4 Analysis on provision of Administrative learner support services

Question 5 required the respondents to state the type of administrative support services provided to them. The distribution of the types of administrative support services provided is expressed in

Table 4.7

Table 4.7 Provision of administrative learner support services to the respondents

Administrative Learner Support Services	Frequency	Percentage
Advertisement of courses	14	47
Requirement of courses	21	70
Orientation	12	40
Registration	18	60
Dispatch of course materials	9	30
Record keeping	13	43
Dispatch of examinations	23	77

From table 4.7, dispatch of examinations (77%), requirement of courses (70%) and registration (60%) are some of the administrative learner support services that are highly rated and are therefore crucial for enrolment while on the other hand dispatch of course materials (30%), orientation (40%), record keeping (43%) and advertisement of course (47%) are rated low as far as they influence enrolment.

4.5 Analysis of Technological learner support services

Questions 8 to 15 sought to determine technological learner support services used. The respondents were required to indicate the technological learner support services conversant with them. Table 4.8 gives an analysis of the study findings.

Table 4.8 Response on technological learner support service

Technological Services	Frequency	Percentage
Has a computer	10	33
Knows how to use a computer	11	37
Accesses the internet	17	57
Access learning materials from Internet	23	77
Fax Services	0	0
Has an e-mail address	22	73
Has a mobile phone	30	100

Table 4.8 shows that all the respondents (100%) had mobile phones. Majority of the respondents (77%) accesses learning materials from the internet with most of them (73%) having an e-mail address. Less than 40% of the respondents own computers and know how to use them. Fax services are not considered technological learner support services as none of the respondents indicated its utilization as a support service.

4.5.1 Mode of Communication of the Respondents

In order to establish modes of communication, question 14 of the study instrument asked the respondents to indicate the mode of communication frequently used. Table 4.8 shows the communication modes the respondents use.

Table 4.9 Mode of communication to the University by the respondents

Mode of communication	Frequency	Percentage
Mobile	24	80
E-mail	9	30
Face to face	30	100
Post office	2	6.7
Fax	0	0

From table 4.9 the mode of communication frequently used by all the respondents was face –to face contact that is 100%, 80% use mobile phones, 30 % use e-mail while only 6.67% use post office. A fax was not used. The majority preferred communicating through face to face and mobile phones implying the need for immediate feedback.

4.6 Analysis of Guidance and counseling learner support services.

Question 16 of the study instrument sought to assess the types of guidance and counseling services available to the learners. Table 4.10 gives the ratings of frequently used types of guidance and counseling by the surveyed respondents.

Table 4.10 Availability of Guidance and counseling learners support services

Guidance and counseling service	Frequency	Percentage
Encouragement services	30	100
Motivation	30	100
Giving Directions	10	33
Time management services	30	100
Career choice	9	30
Study Skills	15	50
Financial Assistance	21	70

From table 4.10, the study revealed that encouragement services, motivation and time management services are fully (100%) provided. 70% of the financial assistance services is provided, 50% of study skills services is provided, 33% of giving directions services is provided while career choice services which is 30% is the least guidance and counseling learner support service provided. The interpretation is that guidance and counseling learner support services are considered as key to enrolment.

Table 4.11 Providers of guidance and counseling services

Guidance and counseling Providers	Frequency	Percentage
Tutors	14	47
Peers	13	43
Faculty	2	7
Administration	1	3
TOTALS	30	100

From table 4.11 most of the guidance and counseling learner support services is provided by the tutors 47%. Peers provide 43%, the faculty and administration were the least providers and only posted 7% and 3% respectively. This implies that the provision of guidance and counseling by administrators (3%) has little effect on enrolment.

4.7 Analysis of Peer Learner support services

Question 19 required the respondents to state the frequency of their peer review meetings. Table 4.12 shows the frequencies of their meetings.

Table 4.12 Frequency of meetings by peers

Number of times of meetings	Frequency	Percentage
Every weekend	9	30
After two weeks	21	70
Once a month	27	90
Once a term	10	33
Twice in a Term	12	40
Regional meetings	24	80
Adhoc Meetings	26	87

From table 4.12 the majority of the respondents that is 90% meet once a month possibly due to commitments and lack of time. Weekly meetings were the least held returning only 30% of the respondents. Other preferred review meeting were Adhoc, regional and bi –weekly get together all returning over 70%.

4.8 Challenges faced in obtaining learner support services

In question 24 the respondents were asked to state challenges faced in obtaining the learner support services. They stated the various challenges.

In administrative learner support services the respondents stated the following challenges in the given attributes: 50% of the respondents were not satisfied with the dispatch of examination

results, examination timetables and vacation school timetables. 50% of the respondents said that there was inaccessibility of administrators at the regional centre. 80% of the respondents claimed that study material and tutorial material were not available upon registration. 6% of the respondents felt that there was a communication problem between administrative staff and students. 3% of the respondents felt that there was need to improve record keeping especially as examination results got lost.

Under technological learner support services, the following percentages of respondents stated the following as challenges: 67% of the respondents said they did not have a computer or laptop and hence this hindered their learning process. 60% of the respondents indicated that the problem they experienced with Internet and e-mail services was that they did not know how to use it.

Concerning guidance and counseling and peer learner support services, the respondents rating on challenges was as follows: 70% of the respondents said guidance and counseling services were not readily available when needed. 3% of the respondents felt that they did not have enough time to commit to guidance and counseling services 80 % of the respondents indicated that they did not consider their peers as very helpful in their distance education study programmes.

4.9 Suggested solutions to the challenges.

When asked to give the probable solutions to the above challenges faced in obtaining learner support services, the respondents gave varying reasons. Sixty percent the respondents said that examination timetables should be released early enough to enable them prepare well. 70% of the respondents said that Administrators should be available at all times at the regional study center. 80% of the respondents said that they would like to have study material and tutorial material to be available upon registration. 3% one of the respondents said that they wanted improvement in

communication between administrative staff and students. 7% of the respondents said they would like to see improved record keeping avoiding especially examination results getting lost. 100% of the respondents said that the university should consider providing computers at the regional study center. 60% of the respondents indicated that they wanted the university to provide a contact person to train them in the use of Internet and e-mail services and especially when accessing the learning materials. 20% of the respondents said orientation seminars should be provided immediately upon registration. 70% respondents indicated that they could like their peers to sacrifice their time schedules for efficiency purposes. 70% of the respondents said they could like the university to post guidance and counseling expert at the regional study centers.

4.10 Summary of chapter four

Chapter four presented the data analysis, presentation and interpretation of the study. The data was presented in tables and formulated in frequencies and percentages. Analysis was done and interpretations drawn from the analyzed data.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, findings, discussions, conclusions and recommendations based on those findings of the study. The purpose of this study was to find out the influence of learner support services in the enrolment of learners in distance Education programmes at the University of Nairobi (the case of Borabu District). Three main research objectives were formulated to guide the study. Namely:-

- i) To find out the extent to which administrative learner support services influence enrolment of learners in distance Education programmes at the UON from Borabu District.
- ii) To assess how technological learner support services influence enrolment of learners in DE programmes at the UON from Borabu District
- iii) To establish the influence of guidance and counseling and peer learner support services on the enrolment of learners in DE programmes at the UON from Borabu District

In this chapter a summary of the findings of the study is made. On the basis of the findings, recommendations and suggestions for further research are also made with a view of providing solutions to the study problem.

5.2 Summary of findings

Based on the data and other information obtained and analyzed as regards the research question of study, a number of research findings were presented in chapter four and their findings are summarized in this section.

The study showed that there was no much difference in gender with regards to enrolment. Respondents equivalent to 53.33% were male while 46.67% were female respondents. The majority of the respondents were aged between 31 and 40 50%. The study also revealed that 67% of the respondents were married. From the findings of the study, dispatch of examinations, requirement of courses, dispatch of examinations and registration are some of the administrative learner support services that were highly rated crucial for enrolment while on the other hand dispatch of course materials, orientation, record keeping and advertisement of course were lowly rated as far as they influence enrolment. From the study findings, it was observed that 100% of the respondents had mobile phones. More than 50% of the respondent's accessed learning materials from the Internet, accessed the internet and had e-mail addresses. Fax services were not a considered technological learner support services as none of the respondents indicated its utilization as support service. Less than 40% of the respondents owned computers and knew how to use them. In regard to guidance and counseling and peer support services, the study revealed that encouragement services, motivation and time management services were fully provided. The least provided guidance and counseling support services were giving directions and career choice.

5.3 Discussions

Learner Support Services are defined as the cognitive, affective and systemic support provided through tutoring, modern information communication technology (ICT), counseling and administrative support. These services are provided to distance learners by distance learning institutions. Administrative learner support services are crucial to distant learners and provided by the university. It entails the following attributes: advertisement of courses, requirements of the available courses, admission and registration, orientation, dispatch of exams, course materials, record keeping, dispatch of examinations and tutoring services. Table 4.7 yielded results indicating that 100% of the respondents had mobile phones while only 37 % of the respondents knew how to use a computer and 33 % of the respondents had computers, indicating that the majority of the students did not own a computer or had regular access to a computer or internet and e-mail services. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of the respondents reported that they did not know how to use a computer. 100% of the respondents did not consider Fax services as a technological learner support services as none of the respondents indicated its utilization as support service. Guidance and counseling and peer learner support services were regarded as not very effective learner support services. The findings revealed that the least of the guidance and counseling learner support services provided to the learners were career choice and provision of directions respectively.

5.4 Conclusion

In view of the literature and findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn. The main objective of any distance education provider is to design and offer distance educational studies that encourages qualitative learning. In that regard distance learning providers need to

understand that their educational products and services are to serve the distance education learners and to provide an encouraging educational experience for the learners. The ever-growing number of distance learners at the University of Nairobi gives the institution a challenge to transform their policies and procedures to accommodate the growing number of distance learners. In that regard the fundamental challenge of the institution is the provision of adequate, accessible and effective learner support services.

5.5 Recommendations

From the study the following recommendations can be made:

- (a) Learning materials to be provided in soft copy in order to alleviate the problem of ineffectiveness in the dispatch of learning materials.
- (b) The university should consider setting up sub regional centers at each district to allow ease of access of learning to the distance education learners.
- (c) The university should consider posting guidance and counseling expert at the regional center. This would assist the distance learners in getting guidance and counseling services when required.
- (d) The university should consider setting up a computer lab at the regional centre for provision of technological learner support services.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

From the findings of this research, it is suggested that further research on the influence of learner support services in the enrolment of learners should be conducted in other districts to find out whether they have similar experiences or impact on learners.

5.7 Summary of chapter five

Chapter five dealt with summary of the findings, discussions, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO RESPONDENTS

Mary Mabuti Getuba
University of Nairobi
Department of Education,
Distance Education,
P.O. BOX 92.
KIKUYU.

Dear respondent,

I am a post graduate student at the University of Nairobi pursuing a Masters degree in Distance Education (MDE).I am conducting a study on the “The influence of Learner Support Services in the enrolment of learners in Distance Education programmes at the University of Nairobi from Borabu District”.

I hereby request you to respond to the questionnaire items as honestly as possible to the best of your knowledge. The attached questionnaires are designed for this research purpose. Therefore the responses shall be absolutely confidential .Please do not write your name or institution.

Thank you in advance,

Sincerely,

Mary Getuba-

MDE student, University of Nairobi

APPENDIX II

Questionnaire for Learners Who Have Undergone or are going through Distance Education Mode for Bachelor of Education at the University of Nairobi from Borabu District.

This questionnaire is intended to collect data on the influence of learner support services in the enrolment of learners in distance education programmes .The information you give will be treated as confidential and will be used for academic purpose only. Kindly respond to all the questions in the questionnaire as honestly as possible.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. Write your responses in the space provided. Explanations where applicable should be precise, clear and detailed. Please put a tick where appropriate.

SECTION I

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The questions in this section are aimed at getting your background information.

1 Gender Male Female

2 What is your age bracket? 20-30 31-40
41-50 51-60

3 What is your marital status?

Single Married Widowed Others (specify)

4 What is your level of study?

Undergraduate Part I Undergraduate Part II Completed B.ED
Undergraduate Part II I Undergraduate Part IV
Undergraduate Part V Undergraduate Part VI

SECTION II

ADMINISTRATIVE LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES

5 Which of the following administrative learner support services are provided to you?

Administrative services	Available	Not available
Advertisement of courses		
Requirement of courses		
Orientation		
Registration		
Dispatch of course materials		
Record keeping		
Dispatch of examinations		

6. Which service(s) from the above table are adequately offered?

.....

7 Which is the least administrative support services offered?

.....

SECTION III

TECHNOLOGICAL LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES

Say 'Yes' or 'No' to the following questions.

8 Do you have a computer /laptop? Yes No

9 Do you know how to use a computer? Yes No

10 Do you have access to the internet? Yes No

11 Do you access learning materials on the internet? Yes No

12 Do you have an e-mail address? Yes No

13 Do you have a mobile phone? Yes No

14 Indicate by a tick the mode of communication you use to communicate to the university.

Mode of communication	
Mobile/Telephone	
E-mail	
Post office	
Face to face contact	
Fax	
Others (specify)	

15 Which mode of communication do you often use and why?

.....

.....

SECTION IV

GUIDANCE AND COUSELING AND PEER LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES

16 Indicate by a tick the guidance and counseling learner support services available to you.

Guidance and counseling services	
Encouragement services	
Motivation services	
Direct services	
Time management services	
Others (specify)	

17 Who mostly provides guidance and counseling services to you?

Tutors Administrators

Faculty Peers

18 Which one of the above guidance and counseling services is offered to you most?

.....
Please indicate by a tick.

19 How often do you meet at the regional centre?

Every weekend	<input type="checkbox"/>	After two weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
Once a month	<input type="checkbox"/>	Once a term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Twice in a Term	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adhoc Meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	Others (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

20 Do you share or exchange some learning materials with your fellow students?
.....

21 Do you share the challenges that you face in the process of undertaking your course with your counterparts?.....

22 Have you formed a study group for discussion.....

23 If yes, how often do you meet?.....

SECTION V

The following questions are aimed at getting your overall opinion regarding the quality of learner support services provided by the college of education and external studies at the University of Nairobi.

24 What challenges do you face in obtaining the following learner support services?

- (i) Administrative learner support services

.....
.....

(ii) Technological learner support services

.....
.....

(iii) Guidance and counseling and Peer learner support services

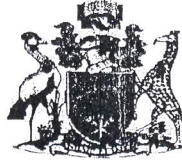
.....
.....

Suggest probable solutions to the above challenges.

.....
.....

THANK YOU

APPENDIX III



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND EXTERNAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF CONTINUING AND DISTANCE EDUCATION**

Telegram: "CEES"
Telephone: KARURI 32117/32021/9
Fax: 254 066 33135

P.O. Box30197, NAIROBI
or P.O. Box 92, KIKUYU KENYA
Email: info_cees@uonbi.ac.ke

23 rd April 2012

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: MARY MABUTI GETUBA – L45/66214/2010

This is to confirm that the above named person is a bonafide student of the University of Nairobi, School of Continuing and Distance Education, Department of Distance Studies, where she is pursuing Masters in Distance Education.

She is undertaking a research project on **“Influence of Learner Support Services in the Enrolment of Learners in Distance Education Programmes at the University of Nairobi, the Case of Borabu District.**

Any assistance given to her in the process of collecting data will be highly appreciated.

A handwritten signature in black ink is written over a rectangular official stamp. The stamp contains the text 'DEPARTMENT OF DISTANCE STUDIES' and 'UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI' along with some illegible details.

**PROF. DAVID MACHARIA EBS,
CHAIRMAN
DEPARTMENT OF DISTANCE STUDIES**