AN ANALYSIS OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH STUDENTS USE THE FACILITIES PROVIDED BY THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

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INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale

Universities are giving opportunities students to obtain and enhance their knowledge skills and social status positively. The Open University of Sri Lanka also provides facilities local and foreign students to do get their higher education qualifications. The Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education of the Faculty of Education, Open University of Sri Lanka has been conducting the B.Ed. Hons in primary education program since 2019. The main purposes are to provide opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills in this field, to open avenues to get higher qualifications and professional training to those who are engaged in teaching at Early Childhood and Primary Levels, and to expand opportunities for students who have G.C.E (Advanced Level) qualifications and who have missed the opportunities to enter any other state university. Having considered the above requirements, the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education has decided to introduce Bachelor of Education Honours in Primary Education Programme. This Programme will be offered to Teachers and Principals of primary schools, caregivers in Early Childhood centers and any other interested persons in the field of Early Childhood and Primary Education. The overall aim of the Programme is to improve the quality of Primary Education in Sri Lanka. Educationalists and researchers grasped the importance of using facilities in education and some research pointed out that students can reach a high level of ability level skills if the resources are utilized.

The objectives of the Programme are to:
- Facilitate demonstrating a substantial level of knowledge and understanding in different areas of education.
- Enable teachers to apply techniques related to their professional practices efficiently and effectively.
- Develop confidence in managing diverse issues in Early Childhood and Primary education systematically and creatively by making sound/professional judgments and communicating decisions clearly.
- Facilitate demonstration in self-direction and originality in solving problems in a professional manner.

It we consider the entry requirements of the program are the students who wish to register for courses at Level 3 (First year of the program) of the B. Ed Hons in Primary Education degree Programme should fulfill the following qualification No. 01 and any one of the other qualifications listed below.

1. Applicant should be 18 years or over on the closing date of applications. and,
2. Successfully completed the Advanced Certificate in Pre-School Education Programme conducted by the Open University of Sri Lanka **or**

3. Obtained at least 3 passed at the G.C.E (A/L) examination and pass the G.C.E (O/L) examination with First Language and Mathematics,   **or**
4. Obtained Pass grades in 36 credits or granted exemptions at Level 2 of any Foundation Programme conducted by OUSL and G.C.E (O/L) examination with First Language and Mathematics or equivalent qualifications or
5. Successfully completed the Diploma in teaching Programme offered by the National Colleges of Education **or**
6. Successfully completed the Teacher Training Certificate awarded by Teacher Training Colleges. **or**
7. And any other equivalent or higher qualification acceptable to the Senate.

Based on the highest marks obtained in the selection test based on the above qualifications, this program was launched in 12 regional/study centers in Sri Lanka from last year. Although the program was successfully launched, the world's Covid epidemic was hampered by day school activities. Before the covid epidemic, students actively contributed to the program and submitted their assignments on time. Also, attending to the day schools and participated to the lectures according to the timetables. As well as the facilities provided by the university were used for their study activities.

Weerasinghe & Fernando (2018). have stated about university facilities and student satisfaction in Sri Lanka, Purpose of this study is to explore the impacts of university facilities on student satisfaction at regional state universities in Sri Lanka. Undergraduates four selected regional state universities namely universities of Ruhuna, Rajarata, Wayamba, and Sabaragamuwa were the population in which 650 undergraduates were selected as the sample using the stratified sampling technique. Data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software and a confirmatory factor analysis was applied to ensure the discriminant and convergent validities of the model. Findings The factors identified as the ones that most strongly influence student overall satisfaction were the lecture room facilities, library facilities, accommodation facilities, employment facilities and entertainment facilities at regional state universities. However, computer facilities did not considerably influence student satisfaction in Sri Lankan context.

Also, Kaushamalika , Arachchige, and Weerakoon (2018) stated that Learner Perception on Library Services at Kandy, Matara and Anuradhapura Regional Centers of the Open University of Sri Lanka. The study examines the usage of library and information services provided by selected regional center libraries of the Open University of Sri Lanka. It tries to find out the needs, expectations, and usage of the library by distant learners and their perceptions about library services. Sample of the study was 350 drawn from a population of 1550 students of three selected regional center libraries of the university. The study found out that the users are satisfied with the overall library resources, services, and facilities available, but users are not really getting the full advantages of the library services. The major reasons for these problems are the lack of comprehensiveness of the regional library collections, insufficient space for reading area, inadequate training for users in services and the lack of computers and Internet facilities in the libraries. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the library should order multiple copies of reading material, extend the lending period for a period of one month in regional centers, increase the number of computers for users and provide online access

facilities. It is also recommended that a comprehensive information literacy program should be conducted to promote awareness and use of electronic information resources.

Abdullah (2009). conducted study on Students' Satisfaction Towards the Services Provided by University Utara Malaysia. This study determines the level of satisfaction among the UUM students towards the facilities provided such as the sport facilities, accommodation, and bus transportation out of all the universities' facilities. The study was based on a survey carried out using a questionnaire that was administered involving 51 students and the level of satisfaction among the students towards the facilities provided are examined. The findings show that majority of students are satisfied with the facilities provided by the university. Findings help the company or organization or the university to improve their service provided to the students in achieving the students' satisfaction due to the evaluation of satisfaction level for every variable (facilities). The factor that most strongly influences student satisfaction with university facilities is the quality of its social areas, auditoriums, and libraries. Conversely, it is determined that computer access on campus does not influence student satisfaction.

However, after the Covid pandemic students' direct contact with the university gradually diminished. According to the planned schedule, the university took steps to provide the required learning experience to the students through online learning approaches. This method can be introduced as a new approach that gives new experiences to the students for these undergraduate students. According to the various comments given by the students from time to time many students were satisfied with this new learning approach and a few others expressed difficulties. This research study seeks to determine the extent to which they are satisfied with the facilities provided by the Open University of Sri Lanka.

OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the extent to which the facilities provided by the university are being used.
2. To inquiry students' perception about course delivery methods
3. To examine problems faced by students in the program.
4. To propose solutions to overcome the problems.

MATRIALS AND METHOD

Research design

The survey method was used as the research design in this study.

Population and the Sample of the Study

The total number of students, which are registered in each relevant centre, was considered as the total population for the current study. Colombo, Kandy, Matara, Anuradhapura, Jaffna, Gampaha Kaluthara, Bandarawella, Ampara, Hatton, Ambalantota and Batticaloa. To achieve the above objectives, random sampling method was used to select the sample.

Sample of the Study

Six out of the twelve centres conducting the B.Ed. Hons in primary education 2019/2020 batch were used for the sample. That was Colombo, Kandy, Matara, Gampaham Anuradhapura and Jaffna. Based on the student numbers 100 students were selected considering the center and medium.

Table .1 Student sample of the Study

Centre	Sinhala medium	Tamil medium	English medium	Total
Colombo	15	10	10	32
Kandy	15	08	12	31
Matara	10	-	-	10
Batticaloa	-	05	-	05
Anuradhapura	05	-	-	05
Jaffna	-	-	10	10
Total	45	23	32	100

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected through a questionnaire from students and interviews were done with selected few students and selected lectures using interview schedules. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS and descriptive analysis was adopted with qualitative data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data has been analyzed in line with objectives of the study.

Employment details of the students

**Table 2: Student's status of employment**

	Number of students	Percentage
Employ	57	57
Unemployed	43	43
Total	100	100

Above table 2 revealed that 57% of the sample were employed and 43% of the sample were unemployed. OUSL conducts the programmes in Open and Distance education mode. Therefore, more employed students are following this programme.

Educational qualifications

Following pie chart indicates students' qualifications.
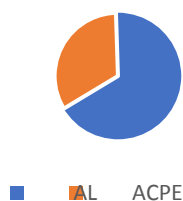
Above pie chart indicates that 73% of the students have GCE (AL) qualifications and 37% of the students have Advanced Certificate in pre-school education certificate. The entry qualification of this programme is three passes in GCE A/L or successfully complete the Advanced Certificate in pre-school education programme.

1. Facilities provided by the University

The university provides facilities for all students those who have currently maintain their studentship, such as main library facilities and regional center library facilities, temporary residential facilities, sports facilities, computer facilities, lab facilities space for reading.

1.1. Library facilities

Table 3. Facilities use in the University.

Why use the library	%
Library is used for obtaining knowledge	33
Finding information through online/internet resources	45
Refer books	67

According to students' opinions most of the students use the library facilities to write assignments. It is revealed that most of the students 67% use the library to refer to books. 33% of the students sample said that the library is used for obtaining knowledge, 45% said that finding information through online/internet resources. Also a few students said, they use the library to get past papers.

1.2. Lecture Halls facilities

Table 4. Details of Lecture

Halls

Adequate of lecture halls	Student number
Lecture halls are adequate	92
Lecture halls are not adequate	08

Majority agreed that lecturer halls and study centers are adequate for studies. However, the research revealed that eight percent were not satisfied with it. Reasons for that lack of ventilation in the lecture room as well as Air Condition and blockage of space.

1.3. Residential facilities and Health care

facilities Table 5. Use the university facilities.

Facilities	Percentage
Temporary residential facilities	21%
University Health care center	18 %

A few students said that they use temporary residential facilities. Most of them were not using this facility. They pointed out that they did not need residential facilities and that many did not need such facilities because most of them were married.

2. Perception about course delivery methods

The students were asked a number of questions and the views of several lecturers were sought. Relevant facts to the program were asked from the students and the selected lectures. Accordingly, the following facts were revealed.

Table 6. Satisfaction of the services

Activities	Satisfactory %
Counselling programme	90
Orientation programme	90

Study materials given on time	60
Conduct day schools in time	75
Contact university	60
Meet the relevant lecturers	65
Return of marked assignments	70
Use university premises to study	50

Students are most satisfied with the counselling programs (90%) and orientation program (90%) conduct by the department. There is a fairly satisfactory situation regarding the timely receipt of modules. 60% agreed that study material was given on time. Use university premises to study as small groups. Although they are happy to contribute to the university premises and to their studies, many are unable to attend the discussions among the groups due to being employed as well as married. Many students agreed that receiving some modules was delayed, but the lecturer covered them in day schools. Lectures explained that even though some modules are not ready but, they try to prepare lessons covering the relevant content.

2.1 Online learning

Table 7 Online learning

	%
Difficult to login Zoom	20
Difficult reading e-materials	50
Difficult courses reading supplementary	50

Most of the students agreed that Easy to follow lectures via zoom. University plan to conduct online day schools it will be benefitted to majority of the students. but 50% of the total sample agreed that they have difficulties reading e-materials reading supplementary.

3. Problems faced by students in the program.

50% said that it was difficult to contact the university and sometimes difficulty to contact relevant lecturers. 20% said that logging problems for lectures. Reading e-learning materials was another problem. As a result of that more than 50% students said it is difficult to write assignments on time, and even if they get marked assignments, they still have a problem getting them before the exam. Also 50% agreed that it is difficult to read supplementary reading materials due to logging problems and inadequate English knowledge.

According to the scheduled timetable there are participation issues for English and ICT.

CONCLUTION

- The findings showed that 57% were employed.
- There is no difference in the facilities provided by the University, either in terms of location or media.
- Considering the facilities provided by the university, the library is used for obtaining knowledge, finding information through online/internet resources, references book,
- Lecture halls and study centers are adequate for studies.
- Counselling program was satisfied.
- Orientation program was useful.
- 60% agreed that study material was given on time.

- Easy to follow lectures via zoom.
- Sometimes difficult to contact the university and meet lecturers.

RECOMMENDATION

Relevant academics need to find solutions for these issues. The university should take the necessary action for the students' needs as well as make plans to help them in their learning. To maintain a good relationship between students and the university.

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