EVALUATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING, ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND PERSONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS ON LEARNER SUPPORT IN OPEN, DISTANCE AND E-LEARNING PROGRAMME IN SELECTED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

BY

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E55/CE/11291/07

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION (EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY) IN THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

MAY 2017
DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented in any other university or any other institution for certification.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife Esther and sons, Ryan and Terrence for their moral and spiritual support, mom and my late dad who taught me to work hard. They have been a source of inspiration and encouragement and to God for His heavenly blessings during my study period.
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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

**Adequate learner support**: This is where more than fifty percent of the respondents feel and agree that the service offered is satisfactory.

**Administrators**: Refers to directors and coordinators of institutions offering open, distance and e-learning programmes.

**Distance education**: Way of disseminating knowledge and skills where the learner and the tutor are separated by distance and time.

**E-learning**: Refer to use of electronic applications and processes in the teaching and learning process.

**Evaluation**: An assessment of opinion of students, coordinators and directors pertaining the quality of learner support services offered to open, distance and e-learning students.

**Learner Support Services**: Any service given whether academic, administrative or social to facilitate the teaching and learning process of learners in open, distance and e-learning programme.

**Open learning**: This is the mode of learning that gives students flexibility and choice over when to learn, where to learn from and how they will learn.

**Student**: Anyone enrolled in the open, distance and e-learning programme to undertake a bachelors’ degree course.
### ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>CODL</td>
<td>Centre of Open and Distance Learning</td>
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<td>CODL</td>
<td>College of Open and Distance Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUE</td>
<td>Commission for University Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISVOL</td>
<td>Digital School of Virtual and Open Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELB</td>
<td>Higher Education Loans Board</td>
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<td>JAB</td>
<td>Joint Admissions Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>KCSE</td>
<td>Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>KNOU</td>
<td>Kota National Open University</td>
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<tr>
<td>KSOU</td>
<td>Karnataka State Open University</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>Mauritius College of Air</td>
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<td>SAIDE</td>
<td>South African Institute of Distance Education</td>
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<td>SCDE</td>
<td>School of Continuing and Distance Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Programme for Social Sciences</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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ABSTRACT
The study investigated the nature of learner support services in open, distance and e-learning programme in three public universities in Kenya. Specifically, the study set out to ascertain the types of learner support services offered to open, distance and e-learning students as well as identify learner support services that the students and the administrators felt were essential for effective learning. The study also intended to establish the attitudes of the users of open, distance and e-learning programmes on the learner support services offered and identify the factors that influence learner support services offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya. The study limited itself to fourth year students undertaking a bachelor’s degree programme only. This study was guided by the systems approach model whereby the types of learner support services offered by an institution enhances the success of open, distance and e-learning programmes through provision of adequate learner support services. Literature reviewed on the categories of services such as teaching and learning needs, access of information and personal and social needs (independent variables) showed that they determine the overall satisfaction of learner support services (dependent variable) offered. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Purposive sampling was used to select three public universities offering open, distance and e-learning programmes, namely Egerton University, Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi. Further, purposive sampling method was also used to select three study regions where each of the three universities had a study centre. A sample size of 329 fourth year students in the selected universities was arrived at using tables instituted by Morgan and Krejcie (1970). Stratified sampling technique was used to get a representation of students from each university while convenience sampling was used to select the students at each study centre from each university. All the administrators (directors and coordinators) were used in the study. The study instruments (interview schedules and questionnaires) were constructed to help in data collection. The data collected was coded, analysed and tabulated using the SPSS version 20 programme. Results were presented in form of frequency distribution tables and graphs. The study established that students rated majority of learner support services offered by their institutions across the three universities as poor while the administrators indicated that the services offered were good. However, the students and the administrators were of the opinion that there were essential learner support services that were very necessary to open, distance and e-learning students. Further, there was a consensus by the students and the administrators that the services offered were necessary though they needed to be improved. Lastly, the study found out that the administrators were aware of the essential learner support services but were limited by other factors that were beyond their control. The study recommends that; institutions offering open, distance and e-learning programmes should constantly assess the value of learner support services offered by constantly seeking the students’ opinion and offer few but essential learner support services that are of high quality, adequate, of good quality and satisfactory to the students.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions and significance of the study. It also discusses the scope of the study, limitations and delimitations, assumptions of the study, theoretical framework, conceptual framework and the operational definition of terms.

1.1 Background to the study

The rapid technological changes in education today have become paramount towards meeting our educational demands for the 21st century. The emerging trend in the use of Information Communication Technology has helped in bringing down the traditional barriers of access to higher education leading to access of quality education and training. This has provided learners with opportunities for lifelong learning and meaningful participation in the world of work and society as productive citizens through distance learning. In its earliest form, distance learning meant study by correspondence which dates back to 1728 (Tait, 1995), when Caleb Phillips started offering students weekly lessons. However, distance education mode of learning did not attain a marked progress until the University of London, which was the first to offer distance learning degrees through an external programme in 1828, was established (Bates, 2003). Later, Isaac Pitman taught shorthand through correspondence in Britain in 1840s where he communicated with his students through mail.
This mode of learning was revolutionized by the emergence of open universities. As such, Britain’s Open University was opened in 1965 and by 1971 it had 25,000 student against 130,000 students in conventional universities across the United Kingdom. According to Moore et al (2005), this inspired the opening up of other institutions across other countries like America and Japan. Thus the Open University has become a leader in the use of new technology in teaching as well as bringing respect and confidence in the distance education programme across the world. Therefore, through Britain’s Open University (Siaciwena, 1996), students have been able to overcome not only the barriers of place and time, but also access education beyond political boundaries and across nationalities. Today, these developments have given birth to modern distance education where students learn without any physical contact with tutors.

Distance education in USA started with Anna Ticknor who wanted the marginalised and especially women to acquire education (De Salvo, 2002). Like Pitman, she adopted the use of printed materials through mail as the main medium of communication with her students. This led to the official recognition of Chautauqua College of Liberal Arts that offered education through correspondence though the National University Extension Association (NUEA) insisted that this form of education had to be conducted on an experimental basis. Through innovations and research, new education delivery technologies such as lantern slides, motion pictures and instructional radio supplemented the printed materials (Allen & Seaman, 2008). Although this form of education was not acceptable to many scholars in USA, the high cost of resident
education coupled with the growing interest in non-traditional education and the success of Britain’s Open University in United Kingdom led to the growth of distance education.

Indian distance education has a short history. This mode of education was established after independence when the government realized that there was need to make education available to the masses to fulfil its constitutional obligations. Cheng et al (1993) indicated that there was need for radical changes into the system of education to change the traditional education that was restricting and inaccessible to many. Therefore distance education was embraced and a school for correspondence studies was established in 1962. By 1968, Punjab University that taught using the regional language (Punjab) besides English was established. The establishment of Andhra Pradesh Open University in 1982 as the first Open University in India brought a new dimension in education (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000). This brought a total shift in instructional process where institutions adopted innovation and flexibility in the teaching and learning processes. Today, India has the most number of established open universities that are networked to enhance accessibility of quality learning materials while eliminating duplication of efforts done by other universities.

Although the evolution of distance education is more than a century old in the Western world, in Africa it is a more recent phenomenon with the University of South Africa (UNISA) having been established in 1946 to offer distance education programmes. With time, other open and distance universities started and as of today, there are a number of private and public profit and non-profit institutions offering a large number of degree
programmes through distance education in South Africa (SAIDE, 1999). In East Africa, the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) was established by an Act of Parliament in 1992 as a single-mode institution offering certificate, diploma and degree courses through distance learning. Later an E-learning Centre was set up to focus on the capacity building of staff and students from OUT and other universities and colleges. Accordingly, Makerere University of Uganda was established in 1922 as a technical school and grew to become the University of East Africa in 1963 offering degrees from the University of London. Later in 1970 it was split into three and became an Independent National University in Uganda and in Kenya, University of Nairobi was created while in Tanzania, the University of Dar es Salaam was born, (https://www.mak.ug/about-makerere). These days Makerere houses the main African Virtual University facility for Uganda and has a thriving Centre for Continuing Education.

In Kenya, as in Uganda, distance education activities date back to 1953 when the first Department of Extra Mural Studies was founded in Makerere with a resident tutor for Kenya. However, the need for degree courses by distance teaching was first expressed in 1966 when an Act of Parliament established the Board of Adult Education (Juma, 2006). The Institute of Adult Studies was established in 1973 and moved to the Adult Studies Centre at Kikuyu. A course under the auspices of the College of Adult and Distance Education, Faculty of External Degree Studies was launched in the mid-1980s with financial support from the British Council which made it possible for the development of course programmes and simplified students’ handbooks. As such,
Bachelor of Education programme was started at University of Nairobi based on the course units (Republic of Kenya, 1998). Later, in 1983, the Kenyan government agreed that the external degree programme be started at the University of Nairobi and the then Kenyatta University College to provide learning opportunities for those aspiring Kenyans who could not secure university admission (Juma, 2006). This was to provide the much needed high level manpower, an opportunity for adults to learn at their own pace, and also provide an opportunity to maximize the use of the limited educational resources both human and material by making university education available beyond the lecture halls (Jowi, 2003).

Thereafter the African Virtual University (AVU) was established in 1997 in Kenya as a project of the World Bank whereby Kenyatta and Egerton Universities were identified as pilot sites with Kenyatta University starting the School of Continuing Education in 1998 to offer education programmes for the bachelor of Education in Primary, Secondary and Master of Education for Primary Teacher Education, (Republic of Kenya, 1998). E-Learning as a mode of delivery was adopted in 2005 with the aim of reaching out to the wide clientele of students enrolled in both regular and distance learning programmes within the Main Campus, Constituent Campuses and Regional Centres both within Kenya and other countries across continents. Later in 2006, an e-Learning Coordinating Centre (eLCC) to coordinate all e-Learning programmes in the university was established and was rebranded to become the Institute of Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODeL) (www.ku.ac.ke, 11/1/2009). Today distance education is offered through Digital School of Virtual and Open Learning (Kenyatta University,
Egerton University was established in 1939 as College of Agriculture and later started offering a Diploma in Agriculture in 1949. The college was elevated to become a constituent college of University of Nairobi in 1986. In 1987, the college was granted full university status by an Act of Parliament (Sifuna, 1998). The College of Open and Distance Learning (CODL) was launched in April 2002 under the Faculty of Education and Human Resources as a response not only to market demands and challenges of access and equity, but also opportunities provided by technological developments (Egerton University, 2013).

Through open, distance and e-learning, students who cannot or do not want to take part in classroom teaching at a particular institution on a full-time basis are able to pursue education. However, studies show that open, distance and e-learning can only succeed if learners are offered adequate learner support services (Harry, 1993). This is an indicator that learner support services are paramount to open, distance and e-learning students. These learner support services can be categorized into three broad categories: services related to teaching and learning needs, access and information needs and social and personal needs. As such, learner support services offered ought to be accessible and available, easy to use and adequate, of benefit and convenient to the distance learner (Allen & Seaman 2008).

The development in technology and its adoption to offer learner support services has enabled distance students to access the classroom, improve access of resources, and ensure that the experiences of a distance students are comparable to those of a
traditional learner. Tait (1995) noted that this has been made possible through recent innovations in hardware, software, and internet technologies that have made distance education systems more available, easier to use, and less costly. This mode of study has been adopted for better job performance and advancement in the job market (Bates, 2003). For instance, in USA, emphasis in learner support services has been placed on educational resources and training for students and teachers and continuous counselling to actualize the students’ aspirations. By 2006, 3.5 million students were participating in open learning at institutions in the USA through open, distance and e-learning and in 2009 44% of post-secondary students were expected to take some or all of their courses online with a projection that the figure would rise to 81 per cent by 2014 (Allen & Seaman 2008). To achieve this, expansion and diversification of education via different avenues in the dissemination of the needed skills and knowledge had to be adopted (Jowi, 2003). This can only be possible through the provision of learner support service which is

‘….the entire range of methods and strategies employed in the presentation and delivery of courses aimed at assisting and enabling learners to comprehend fully, assimilate and master the skills and knowledge needed to achieve success in their studies … (SAIDE, 1999, p. 14).

This implies that any support offered to a distance learner, however little is very vital. Accordingly, Brawer (1996) acknowledged that learner support services creates optimum conditions for the success of the students and enhances the quality of educational provision. This support, according to Tait (1995) is the backbone of
distance education because in teaching and learning systems characterised by distance and part-time study, learners develop feelings of confidence and self-esteem, and are energised when they are supported persistently to complete their studies and realize their dreams (Moore et al, 2005).

In Kenya since independence, the number of people in need of education is increasing at all levels which can be traced in the country’s education policies that have been advocated through a number of educational commissions such as the Ominde Commission of 1964/65, the Gachathi Report of 1976 (Republic of Kenya, 1985), and the Koech Report of 2000 among others which noted that distance learning was essential in Kenya while in Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005, the Kenya government recommended the establishment of an open university that would increase and develop human resource at all levels. Lately, the government policy to offer free primary education and waive tuition fees in day secondary schools as well as supplement fees for secondary boarding schools has led to increase in demand for university education which is already experiencing problems of overstretched facilities and overcrowding. Further, the increase in demand for continued education while working coupled with other social responsibilities has made open, distance and e-learning mode of study as an appealing option as institutions are not expected to invest heavily in entirely new physical facilities to provide opportunities for continued learning.

Therefore, open, distance and e-learning mode of education can be explored to ensure that students who are eligible and willing can access higher education anywhere since it
can provide instructionally effective, highly interactive learning experiences that are flexible, equitable, and responsive to individual needs. As such, institutions must provide learner support services depending on the learners’ needs since learners exposed to educational opportunities without proper learner support may not complete their courses despite enrolment (De Salvo, 2002).

Carr (2000) observed that dropout rate for online students ranges from 20% to 50% and that e-learning student’s dropout rate in some institutions exceeded 40% though it is estimated to be 10% - 20% higher than for traditional on-campus students. In South Africa, it was noted that a large number of learners fail in their academic work possibly for lack of learner support from their respective institutions (SAIDE, 1999), thus indicating that learner support services are critical components to the success of an open, distance and e-learning student.

While most of the studies concerning learner support service had been done in Europe and America, little had been done in Africa. Most of the studies conducted were in reference to South Africa where we find the oldest distance education teaching institution, UNISA. Secondly, some studies done have looked at very limited aspects of learner support services. For instance, Bhalalusesa (1998) looked at education facilities and learning resources in general while Kissassi (2011) examined the accessibility of face to face sessions to the Open University of Tanzania students and its effects on learning. Further, studies done in Kenya were mostly concerned with infrastructural development at the expense of learner support services. Chacha (2004) noted that
though learner support services are important to open, distance and e-learners, the national and institutional decision-makers had ignored it. Juma (2006) also noted that most studies were concerned with the challenges of distance learning to the decision-makers and not the learners. Moreover, Anyona (2009) clearly analyzed the efforts by providers of open and distance learning in Kenya and the challenges they experienced in Kenya’s public universities. Therefore, this indicates that learner support services which are referred to as the backbone to open, distance and e-learning mode of study has not been emphasized in Kenya which forms the basis of this study.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Stakeholders, policy and decision-makers are concerned with the large number of students who are qualifying to join the universities but are missing the chance because of the limited resources available. The opening up of private universities has not been able to absorb all these students either. This leaves many eligible people to exploit open, distance and e-learning mode of study. Besides, there has been an accumulation of students who had joined other tertiary colleges hoping that doors would be opened up for them to pursue careers of their dreams. Therefore open, distance and e-learning mode of study remains one of the best available options which is bound to increase access to higher education through the establishment of adequate learner support service. However, studies done in this area such as by Juma (2006) and Anyona (2009) were mainly concerned with the challenges of distance learning to the decision-makers and not the students. Further, Chacha (2004) noted that major decision-makers had ignored learners support services which are essential to distance learners. Though this
mode of education is supported by Kenya’s education policy, it has not been fully exploited as learner support services have been put at the periphery thus the need to ascertain the nature of learner support services that had been put in place by selected public universities in Kenya, identify the essential learner support services, the attitude of the users of learner support services as well as the factors affecting the learner support services that are offered in the institutions under the study.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the status of teaching, learning and social needs and their effects on learner support in open, distance and e-learning programme in selected public universities in Kenya.

1.4 Objectives of the study

Specifically, this study sought to;

1. To ascertain the types of learner support services offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya.

2. To identify learner support services that the students and the administrators felt were essential to be offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya.

3. Establish the attitudes of the users of open, distance and e-learning programmes on the learner support services offered in selected public universities in Kenya.
4. Identify the factors that influence learner support services offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya.

1.5 Research questions

The following were the research questions to the study:

1. What types of learner support services are offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya?

2. Which were the essential learner support services that the students and the administrators felt were essential to be offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya?

3. What was the attitude of the users of open, distance and e-learning programmes on the learner support services offered in selected public universities in Kenya?

4. What factors influenced learner support services offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya?

1.6 Significance of the study

The study may help open, distance and e-learning programme developers to incorporate more responsive and effective learner support services as they develop programmes as well as re-evaluate the learner support services being offered in their institutions. Secondly, the Commission for University Education (CUE) may use the findings from the study to ensure that essential learner support services are put in place before
approving proposals for courses of study submitted by institutions of higher learning offering open, distance and e-learning programmes. Thirdly, the information and knowledge gained from the study may help the learners to know the type of learner support services they expect as they enrol for courses in open, distance and e-learning and lastly, the study may create ground for further research.

1.7 Scope of the study

The study dealt with the nature of learner support services offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes only and therefore the findings of this study may not be generalized to students enrolled in other modes of study. Further, only the then current administrators were involved in the study as they are presently involved in the programme and therefore they are aware of the current learner support services being offered. The research was also confined to fourth year undergraduate students who had been in the programme long enough and were expected to give more reliable and informed opinion.

1.8 Limitations and delimitations of the study

There was lack of adequate literature on learner support services offered in open, distance and e-learning distance learning programmes in Kenya. This was challenging as the researcher relied on few recent studies done and information found in the institutions brochures or websites. The administrators who were the pioneers of the programme were not included as it would have been difficult to trace them. The study was done in three public universities, Egerton University, Kenyatta University and
University of Nairobi. This does not mean that they were the only universities offering open, distance and e-learning programmes. Other private and public universities offer open, distance and e-learning which differ in terms of administration and operations thus the study results may not adequately represent their experiences.

1.9 Assumptions of the study

The following assumptions were made:

1. It was assumed that all the respondents gave reliable responses for the benefit of the study.

2. That the institutions under the study were better positioned to provide adequate learner support services and would appreciate the need to provide learner support services to all their students.

3. That the knowledge and information gained on learner support services would be used to improve of open, distance and e-learning programme in Kenya and other countries.

1.10 Theoretical framework

The study was guided by the systems approach model developed by Ayot& Patel (1987) whereby a system is made up of components which have sub-systems that merge to make the supra system (Richey, 1986). Romiszoski (1981) asserts that the components in a system must work in harmony in order to achieve a common goal. These components are the input and the output (Were, 2003). Every system must have a goal which it has set out to achieve as well as a provision of feedback that assesses the
system success level. Once a system starts working, its output is guaranteed in quantity and quality whereby the feedback ensures that the system is rectified in time in case of a problem (Ayot & Patel, 1987). This approach comes in handy in that it is scientifically based in reference to its design, hence improving the instruction of a programme (Gagne, 1987).

In this study, every institution offering open, distance and e-learning must have input which include the teaching and learning needs, access of information needs and social and personal needs. All the three categories of learner support services are incorporated by institutions to assist the learners through the programme. The expected output is adequate learner support service whereby 50% and above of the students are expected to be satisfied with any learner support service offered by their respective institutions. Where the learner support service does not meet the 50% threshold then there is need to re-evaluate the essence of offering the specific learner support service and make interventions to improve on the particular learner support service to make it more helpful to the learners.

1.11 Conceptual framework
Open, distance and e-learning programme has the characteristics of a system. It has input components such as teaching and learning needs, access of information needs and social and personal needs. The output is the performance of the institution in developing adequate learner support services by allocating the necessary resources as well providing services that enhance learners’ satisfaction. The feedback is supposed to help
the programme developers to make corrections where possible so as to get the expected outcome, that is, increased learner satisfaction through provision of adequate learner support services. Where the output is not the desired one, then, there is a need to go back to the drawing board to identify and make changes to the specific learner support service that is not satisfactory to the learners. The conceptual framework is as represented in figure 1.1 below

**Fig 1.1: A conceptual framework of learner support system**

As shown in the diagram above, the adequacy of leaner support services offered in an institution are determined by the nature of teaching and learning needs offered by institutions, the accessibility of information needs by the learners as well as how social and personal needs of individual learners are met by their specific institutions. Whenever the leaner support services (output) is not adequate, there is a need establish
the specific learner support service that is not helpful to the learners and make changes (interventions) to make the service better for the sake of the learners as well as achieve the set goals of the institution, that is to come up with and offer learner support services that are beneficial to open, distance and e-learning learners.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will cover an overview of open, distance and e-learning, learner support services, services related to teaching and learning needs, services related to access of information needs, services related to social and personal needs and summary of literature review.

2.1 An overview of Open and Distance and E-learning

Open and distance learning has been identified as an important teaching and learning approach and strategy which could make a significant contribution towards increasing access and equity of quality education. It has been identified as the most appropriate way of expanding education access which different countries across the continents have developed confidence and have great prospect as an effective vessel for providing education across the world due of its flexibility (Robert & Associates, 1998). Therefore the demand for access to higher education has opened opportunities for universities to develop distance education programmes that are emerging as dependable alternatives to traditional educational delivery methods. This mode of learning is a formal instruction conducted at a distance by a teacher who plans, guides and evaluates the learning process via different communication technologies. It was designed to access education for those who are interested in attaining higher education but are not able to attend traditional fulltime courses due to obligations such as employment, marital status, family responsibilities, distance from the institution as well as the expenses incurred
with traditional education (Parker, 1999). Thus, the nature of open, distance and e-learning programmes lie beneath the premise that, students are aware of how to study, where to study, when to study and what to study (Keegan, 1990). Through this assumption, students face a lot of challenges leading to low learning motivation. Therefore open, distance and e-learning programmes requires different teaching and learning techniques that distinguish a distance learner and a conventional learner (Moore et al, 2005) to ensure two way communication between the tutor and the learner by utilising various information technologies.

Distance education started in 1844 with Isaac Pitman’s short hand course delivered by correspondence using the postal system enabled by the rail system. The students work would be collected and sent to Pitman who would correct and return them to the students with the required comments on them (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Correspondence, 30/5/2010). This opened education opportunities to women, working people and regions that had no schools. In 1858, University of London was opened to offer degrees to external students although they followed the regular full time student’s curriculum. This was the first Open University (De Salvo, 2002). The invention of radio system in 1920 and the television in 1940s helped to broadcast education to many. The telephone helped distance educators to meet more students though it was not highly used until the new teleconferencing technologies in 1980s and 1990s which made it possible for teachers to talk with, hear and see their students without delays wherever they were located.
The existence of distance education in the first years was faced with a lot of difficulties. To start with, distance accreditation was not accepted, the correspondence image was rejected and the university professors criticised education at a distance. This went on up to 1970s when perception towards open and distance learning began to change in that although the course materials produced by the Open University of the United Kingdom, the Fern Universität in Hagen in Germany and the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia in Madrid, Spain were highly praised, it was the student support services and feedback provided by these universities that enabled distance education to come of age (Tait, 1995). Therefore, learner support services and feedback on learning endeavours have always been seen as an integral part of the learning process. As such, better open and distance education institutions have continued to provide interpersonal communication and feedback, as well as course content via range of facilities known as learner support services (Court & Ghai, 1974). By 1887, learner support services was offered to those in the University of London at a distance as an initiative by William Briggs who started correspondence tuition by post, face to face tuition, day and evening teaching in London and Cambridge, short residential schools, and production and sale of specially written texts to help the students. The Open University of Sri Lanka which started in 1980 with collaboration with the Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka had the sole purpose of providing professional training for graduate teachers employed in government schools, community schools, private schools, and teachers training colleges. Like the University of London, it offered learner support services such as printed materials, tutorials and a few audio and video programmes to its students (Carr, 2000). Lately, studies have been carried out by the Open University of Sri Lanka
academics with the view of improving the quality of developed instruction materials so as to reduce drop-out rates and increase the effectiveness of the programme by putting in place quality learner support services (Brawer, 1996).

In North America, open and distance learning is more than one hundred years in Canada and the USA. It was intended to act as an outreach to remote population groups, provide education and training opportunities for adults and military training. Distance education evolved from the use first generation learner support such as the use of postal services to fifth generation technologies such as Web-based instruction, computer-mediated communication and video teleconferencing. Conversely, in Australia, open and distance learning was established in dual mode institutions that provided similar curriculum for on and off campus students. Just like in North America, its open and distance education was intended to improve access and outcomes for disadvantaged and disenfranchised populations, including the aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. On the other hand, in the Arab states open and distance education programme is more recent due to the constant political instability that has disrupted the education in the region as compared to other regions of the world though of late, it has grown and expanded rapidly (Moore, 2003). For instance, the Palestinian Al-Quds Open University opened its doors in 1991 to meet the needs of Palestinian students in Gaza and the West Bank who had missed education due to constant fight in the region. More recently, the Arab Open University was established with its headquarters in Kuwait to offer open and distance education programmes in Arab countries such as Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia.
In Africa, University of South Africa (UNISA), the exclusively distance teaching university that started way back in 1946 has grown in time and set precedent to other distance universities that were set thereafter. Being a pioneer in distance education in Africa, its success had been limited by low success in terms of completion, high dropout rate and inadequate learner support. However the trend started to register good progress in 2005 after inculcating more learner support services into the programme (SAIDE, 1999). Further, this problem has affected other African countries offering open, distance and e-learning programmes as they have not put in place national policies for guidance leading to haphazard implementation of open, distance and e-learning programmes at the whims of each institution. No wonder, Sikwibele & Mungoo (2009) noted that inadequate learner support service were the greatest challenge facing open, distance and e-learning programme in Botswana. Nonetheless, this issue can be navigated through a network of various support services and connections between the institutions and the students and more so with individual tutors (Macintyre & Macdonald, 2011).

Distance education spread through West Africa as can be seen at the University of Papua New Guinea where it started in 1974 with the establishment of the Department of Extension Studies. Two decades later it was rebranded to become the Institute of Distance and Continuing Education. The programme involved students from upper high school, the Diploma in Commerce Programme, the Bachelor of Education In-service Programme, and the Non-credit Programme in Mathematics and English. By 1996 there were approximately 16,000 students which was a 400% growth rate up from 4,000 students in 1997 (Kerka, 1995). Just like the Open University of Sri Lanka, the courses
were offered based almost entirely on the printed modules and face to face interaction with few audio and video cassettes that had been prepared to supplement the printed modules.

Additionally, the University of Botswana started as a constituent college of the University of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland and became an autonomous national university in 1982 as a dual mode institution offering off-campus programmes through the Centre for Continuing Education where the Distance Education Unit is based. It conducted most of its distance education programmes through the print medium geared towards the provision of certificate, diploma, degree, and post-graduate levels raising the standards and quality of education at the grassroots level while planning to launch more educational programmes. Zimbabwe Open University (Carr, 2000) started as the Centre for Distance Education of the University of Zimbabwe in 1993 and by 1996 it became the University College of Distance Education of the University of Zimbabwe. Finally in 1999, the Zimbabwe Open University was established by an Act of Parliament 25/20. However, during the first enrolled students, it was realized that the open and distance learning students required other assistance to strengthen their studentship. As such, learners support services started with the establishment of study centres where students met and got advice from tutors on how to answer and structure assignment according to university’s expectations. Later, material development became the focus of learner support by ensuring that materials interacted with the learners cognitively.
Within East Africa, The Open University of Tanzania, which is currently the only single mode distance learning university in the region, was established in 1992 and offers undergraduate and postgraduate studies in a wide range of disciplines is grounded in the interest of providing students with affordable high quality education. The institution has grown tremendously in that currently it has eight faculties and operates through 29 regional centres and about 70 study sites within Tanzania. It has established learning sites in Kenya at Egerton University in Nakuru and KCA University in Nairobi, Kibungo in Rwanda and by 2013, the university had set out to open study sites in Burundi and Uganda. Further, it has extended collaborations beyond East Africa to The Zimbabwe Open University, The Open University of United Kingdom, The Southern New Hampshire University, United States of America, The National Open University of Nigeria, The University of South Africa and The Indira Gandhi National Open University. Secondly, the University of Dar-es-Salaam has also in the past few years established several open, distance and e-learning centres in different towns as part of expanding its recent distance education provision with the primary objective of transforming and adapting various residential academic programmes to digital content that is suitable for distant learners (Chadamoyo & Ngwarai, 2012).

In Uganda, Makerere University is offering several external degree programmes in education, business and sciences from its School of Distance and Lifelong Learning. Although most distance education programmes in East Africa are driven by print media, Makerere is developing mobile phone applications that can be used to support students wishing to pursue university education. Presently, the Uganda Communications
Commission is funding an m-learning project at the university that is aimed at enhancing communication in distance learning which heavily borrowed from M-Pesa e-banking application in Kenya (Kangai et al, 2011). The institution is trying to develop several m-learning solutions that will include a virtual mobile learning notice board, collaborative virtual mobile learning and cooperative virtual mobile learning systems to enhance distance learning. This mode of learning has been adopted at Kampala International University which has established one of the largest open and distance learning programmes in East Africa with more than twenty undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and diplomas that are taught through printed media modules and limited e-learning.

In Kenya, distance learning can be traced from independence when the new government stressed on the need for education to promote economic and social development as well as manpower for the growing economy and administrative institutions (Sifuna, 1998). To achieve this, education institutions were expanded and as such Royal Technical College which had all along been a constituent college of University of East Africa became the University College of Nairobi. In 1970, it became an autonomous institution. Throughout the 1970s, University of Nairobi expanded to accommodate the growing number of students who were destined to the public and private sectors. While some distance learning existed at the University of Nairobi as early as 1967, it took serious steps in the mid-1980s when a Bachelor of Education degree was launched with funding from the British Government whereby the materials developed for the programme were used to establish similar distance learning degree courses at the Open
University of Tanzania and Open University of Zimbabwe. Currently, the University of Nairobi offers several undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses in education, social sciences and commerce through distance learning.

The School of Continuing and Distance Education which was an initiative of the University of Nairobi decided to use its provincial extra-mural centres as study centres for providing and maintaining equitable opportunity for Accessing Quality University Education to Kenyans and beyond using open and distance learning modes. It was and still is committed to being a centre of excellence in open and distance learning. Today open, distance and e-learning is offered through the Centre of Open and Distance Learning (CODL) (University of Nairobi, 2013).

The African Virtual University which is based in Nairobi was founded in 1997 as a World Bank-funded project to address the need for quality tertiary education in Sub-Saharan Africa with the expectation that by 2002 it would facilitate the award of quality degree programmes, an idea that had not worked as 2006. This put the partner universities into financial constraints that led them to stop delivering programmes to AVU and the initiative was finally scrapped in 2007 (Anyona, 2009). However, AVU is trying to prevail with African universities to use open, distance and e-learning methodologies to increase education access. It has purposed to provide technical assistance to universities on the use of open educational resources, implementation of programmes as well as educate lecturers and professors on the development and management of e-learning programmes.
Kenyatta University was born out of the expansion of the University of Nairobi in 1972 as a constituent college of the University of Nairobi (Chacha, 2004). The Mackay Report of 1981 recommended the need for a second university as many students were qualifying for higher education but the University of Nairobi could not accommodate all of them. Moi University, which was to be technologically based, was therefore established in 1984. Thereafter, Kenyatta and Egerton Universities followed in 1985 and 1988 respectively, (Juma, 2006). It is notable that open, distance and e-learning has been going on at Kenyatta University for almost two decades offering several undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. The School of Continuing Education (SCDE) of Kenyatta University was started to offer mainly education programmes for the B.Ed. in Primary, Secondary and M.Ed. for Primary Teacher Education (PTE). These programmes were started in August 1998 so as to upgrade both primary and secondary school teachers in the country and to generate income for the university (Juma, 2003). Later in 2002, Open learning was launched with eight regional centres and an e-Learning centre started in 2006. The two components (Open learning and e-Learning) operated as independent institutions until 2009 when they were re-branded and became Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODeL) and today it is operating as Digitak School of Virtual and Open Learning (DISVOL). Open learning incorporates learning at a distance by the use of different instructional modes in that the institution adopted a practical approach to enhance distance learning through the use of e-learning tool-kits, computer-mediated learning and libraries. Further, an interactive e-platform was put in place to enable students and lecturers to hold discussions in the form of e-debates, e-tutorials, e-workshops and e-conferencing. This has developed to the extent that open,
distance and e-learning students at Kenyatta University are able to submit their assignments online and get feedback from their facilitators (Kenyatta University, 2014).

The College of Open and Distance Learning (CODL) of Egerton University launched in April 2002 under the Faculty of Education and Human Resources was a response not only to market demands and challenges of access and equity, but also opportunities provided by technological developments. This CODL therefore was a precursor to the College of Distance Education. Following the restructuring of the University in late 2005, the College of Open and Distance Education was merged with the School of Continuing Education to form the College of Open and Distance Learning (CODL) which is currently headed by a director (Egerton University, 2013). Therefore the necessity for higher education and the rise of the number of qualified students led to the provision of parallel degree programmes. This catered for the full-time students and those residing near the institutions of higher learning who would attend evening classes. Therefore, the people who were located far away from the institutions of higher learning, and those whose nature of their work could not get time to attend classes were left out. Open, distance and e-learning was adopted to enable such people to access education, continue working and live within their localities (Chacha, 2004). This mode of learning has been able to eliminate barriers to formal education. Today, open and distance learning has been adopted in the world’s highly populated nations; Pakistan, Nigeria, Egypt, Mexico, China, India, Brazil, Bangladesh and Indonesia (UNESCO, 2001). It is seen as the best new approach and strategy which would significantly
resolve the problem of access, quality and equity of educational opportunities since the full-time mode of learning is being strained (Bagwaandeen, 1999).

Open, distance and e-learning opportunities for students have skyrocketed in popularity. Every year, more universities are starting online programmes due to the increase in the demands of the learner audience who face a number of obstacles such as living in remote geographic areas, work schedules that conflict with course schedules as well as personal and family commitments thus making open, distance and e-learning attractive. However, dropout rates associated with open and distance learning range from 20 to 50 percent (Kerka, 1995; Parker, 1999) which is a higher rate as compared to fulltime programmes. Therefore, the challenge for open and distance education providers has gone beyond recruitment to retaining the students once they enrol into the programme making learner support service a critical component if open, distance and e-learning the programme is to succeed. Thus it is important to offer significant support in the distance learning environment and therefore a need to critically interrogate the nature of learner support services offered to learners.

Different countries have tailored learner support services to suit their specific students learning needs. However, what is notable is that students ought to be brought on board as services initiated by any institution are used by the students. As such, their views concerning learner support services to be offered are critical. For instance, Mapolisa (2012) noted that the relevance of learners support services in USA and realised that students learned significantly better in groups than as individuals. In India, there was
need to totally change the open and distance education learner support services so as to improve their quality. As such institutions needed to strengthen as well as expand the learner support services to conform to the technological changes that are happening across the world leading to formulation of a national policy for standards in open and distance learning programmes and specifically the learner support services offered by the open and distance learning institutions.

While many institutions offering open and distance learning in the developed world have put in place mechanisms of assessing the quality of learner support services, it has not been possible in the developing world. Actually many institutions have not been able determine the quality of learner support services that would satisfy their students (Tait, 2003). Thus institutions must analytically and carefully observe and assess the quality of learner support services from time to time. For instance, from 1994 the socio-political changes in South Africa made UNISA to explore ways in which learner support service would encompass the wide range of activities, structures and infrastructure as more black students wanted to access higher education (Sweet, 1994). This led to the establishment of Department of Student Support that adopted an integrated learner support service system which included face to face interaction, online interaction, online library facilities, academic advise, guidance and counselling and a financial aid bureau to support the academically deserving students. However, it is notable that though UNISA has put in many learner support services in place, most of the students are not able to access them. Therefore, there is need to monitor and continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the learner support services offered and the
learners satisfaction levels in reference to each and every learner support service offered.

In Zimbabwe Open University, the Centre for Student Management is responsible for the learner support services offered to its students. However studies conducted on the same indicate that the current learner support services are deficient and inadequate in meeting the needs of their distance learners and therefore due to the diverse nature of the learners’ characteristics, backgrounds, and learning contexts, proper and serious planning should be embraced so as to provide adequate and satisfactory learner support services (Dowling, 2000). Further, a number of researches on learner support carried out in Zimbabwe Open University such as those of Kangai et al (2011); Mapolisa (2012); Chadamoyo & Dumbu (2012), indicate that learner support services that are currently being offered to open and distance students are negatively affecting their academic performance. No wonder the students noted that they wanted learner support services that were accessible, affordable, available and flexible, meaning they wanted services to be taken as close to them as possible. In Uganda and specifically Makerere University, learner support services are very critical factors influencing effective teaching and learning in open and distance learning programmes (Gil-Jaurena, 2014; Nabushawo, 2014). Though this has been brought to the institution administrators, a study done by Juliana Bbuye (undated) showed that learner support services for distance learners was not sufficient in universities and in some instances they were missing or absent altogether. Therefore, regardless of the importance of learner support services, they are often overlooked in most open and distance education institutions (Sheer &
Locke, 2003). The literature reviewed indicate that there is abundant need of provision of learner support services to open, distance and e-learning students and as such there is need to identify specific learner support services offered by various institution and the learners perception of the services offered by their institutions.

2.2 Learner Support

Governments the world over have invested a lot in the establishment of open and distance learning institutions with the realization that the countries need a lot of educated manpower. While the benefits of this mode of learning are there to see in many countries, this mode learning may not succeed if the students are deprived of the much needed learner support services (Chi-hung Ng, 2000). According to Ipaye (2004), regardless of how strong or problem-free one is, at one time or another, one will require assistance. As such, learner support service in open, distance and e-learning programme is not only concerned with learners who are faced with problems, neither does it focus on solving learners problems or assisting those with difficulties in their academic work, but on addressing all those issues that in one way impede the success of the learner. While only a few learners may have specific problems, it is true that all learners have particular needs. Thus, learner support service is a major area of concern for distance education and is one of the most important subsystems in open, distance and e-learning programme and an important component of educational processes which ensures that teaching and learning are approached from a learner centred vision of education. Therefore, it is mandatory for open, distance and e-learning institutions to carefully consider the scope and nature of the learner support services offered to their students by
critically considering the characteristics of the target audience, the mode of delivery as well as their likely benefits to the learners.

Learner support services encompasses a collection of facilities and undertakings that are intended to support and facilitate teaching and learning process making it easier and more interesting for the learners (Simpson, 2000). It refers to any form of support provided by an institution to its learners for the sole purpose of helping them to achieve their academic goals (Mahai, 2005). According to Izuagie (2000), the services are designed as prevention and intervention measures that remove barriers of learning in open, distance and e-learning mode of study while ensuring that learning tasks are performed successfully (Chadamoyo & Ngwarai, 2012). It is through adequate learner support service that learners are able to achieve their academic goals, services that many scholars agree they motivate learners to learn which can be clearly understood by identifying the pertinent learner’s needs so as to come up with strategies that would determine how to meet those needs (Rae, 1989). The service is expected to enhance and improve learning and starts from the time a student registers in an institution, through to the teaching and learning process all the way to the completion of the course (Moore, 2003). They inspire students to learn and develop affirmative attitude towards open, distance and e-learning mode of education provision (Kishore, 1998). Thus institutions offering open, distance and e-learning programmes should recognize the basic needs of the learners and try to fulfil them to the best of their abilities and understand their effects to the learners when the needs are not fulfilled (Nicholas & Tomeo, 2010).
Therefore, these services are vital to overcome learning difficulties and to achieve satisfactory academic standards in open, distance and e-learning programme.

Adequate and effective learner support services are beneficial to the students as well as the institution. They ensure that the students adjust to the programme smoothly and without stress guaranteeing that students’ learning is not interrupted thereby increasing their retention and completion rates. This can only be achievable by deliberately increasing digital technology to diminish the distance between the students and the institutions by embracing sustainable learner support service and putting emphasis on the quality of learner support services provided by open, distance and e-learning institutions that have been recognized as integral and essential components of open, distance and e-learning system as recognized by scholars across the globe (Agboola, 1993). Accordingly, Kishore (1998) noted that the success or failure and the overall image of the open, distance and e-learning institution is determined by the strength and weakness of the learner support services offered by any institution offering programmes in open, distance and e-learning mode of learning. Therefore, learner support services that are offered to any distance learner are expected to create an environment that is conducive to distance learning, transform an educational programme into a complete educational experience, and motivate learners to continue with their education by promoting independent learning, secure learners’ satisfaction and to remove isolation. Furthermore, good, effective and adequate learner support service should provide feedback on the progress of the students, encourage socialization by promoting
teamwork and team spirit as well as develop adequate infrastructural facilities to support the learners (Rumble, 1992).

Distance learners are mostly separated from their tutors, consequently; their academic progress is dependent on how well they handle their other prevailing responsibilities that interfere with their learning schedules. Therefore the learners’ support provided by various institutions to students must be learner-focused to meet their expectations and needs (Bates, 2003). As such, learners are better positioned to identify the kind of support they need to achieve their educational and personal goals since the quality of distance education is based on the students’ satisfaction by their institutes. According to Simonson Michael, a professor in instructional technology and distance learning at Nova South Eastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, distance education should embrace different media linked together to enable learners to benefit from each other strengths. For instance, a student can watch an instructor’s video monitor, respond to questions through e-mail and then participate in class discussions through telephone audio conferencing (Harry, 1993).

Against this background, institutions have come up with intervening strategies for dealing with issues that may hinder learners from achieving their educational desires. Through this, learner support has been given much emphasis by successful Open and Distance Learning institutions (Haasbroek, 1995). Thus many institutions have shown increased awareness towards the provision of learner support services even though the
nature of learner support services offered varies from one institution to other due to the institutions’ capacity and the resources it has at its disposal.

Learner support can be categorized into three broad categories. There are services related to teaching and learning needs which include supply of learning materials, networking of learner support centres, residential sessions and tutorials, library services, pre-course study skills training and examination administration and evaluation (Nonyongo & Ngengebule, 1998). Secondly, learner support services related to access and information needs include access to information technologies, information on fees and financial support and information on registration (Cheng et al, 1993), and thirdly, there are learner support services related to social and personal needs such as peer group/study groups, career/academic guidance and counselling, disabilities support, minorities support, adult learner support and social events (Siaciwena 1996).

The CODL of the University of Nairobi has offered learner support ranging from requirements on admission and registration, the programmes that are offered by the institute, the duration that each programme takes, when and where to take examinations as well as offering guidance and counselling to the learners (University of Nairobi, 2013). DISVOL has offered learner support ranging from information on admissions requirements, registration, programmes offered and duration, examinations, guidance and counselling as well as different instructional methods (Kenyatta University, 2014). Learner support services at CODL of Egerton University includes requirement for admission into a programme, registration, the number of units one can undertake in a
session and the various modes of instruction that are available (Egerton University, 2013).

2.3 Services related to teaching and learning needs

These are services offered to students to assist them during the instructional process or when learning on their own. They guide students through their academic work from the moment they receive teaching and learning materials up to the time they write their examinations. They include face to face interaction, supply of e-learning materials, printed materials, online library services, pre-course study skills training and examination administration procedure.

2.3.1 Face to face interaction

Face to face tutorials for students have become an effective tool for distance education students. It has been rated as very important to distance students. In fact, Bates (2003) noted that 80% of the learners felt that face to face interaction was important while 83% indicated that they were able to interact with the instructor always during class time. This shows that face to face interaction is valuable to distance learners. In the Open University of United Kingdom, face to face interaction tutorials has been provided although it is not mandatory to all students while Payame Noor University offers individual and group face to face residential sessions. However, in the Open University of Netherland, face to face interaction sessions act as seminars for orientation and they are mandatory, and in China, tutorials are conducted in the study centres (Harry, 1993).
In UNISA students are requested to register for face to face tutorial classes that are held at the regional offices and in rural towns. The minimal interaction between the lecturers and tutors was identified as having a negative impact in supporting the students and therefore tutors were expected to go a step further and encourage students to register for tutorial classes. The tutors felt that face to face interaction was a good medium of learner support service even though it had challenges of unpreparedness of learners and lack of accessibility of technology by both students and tutors. It was during face to face interaction tutorials that learners are reminded of the telecentres, mobile libraries and technologies provided so as to improve communication between the tutors and the students (UNISA, 1995). Further, open and distance learners felt that they needed face to face interaction tutorials as through them, they were able to establish partnerships with the tutors as they guided them to do that which they were not be able to do while at their homes. They also requested for one on one discussion with their tutors whenever they were free as time and work commitment may not necessarily permit each and everyone to attend all the tutorial classes.

The Zimbabwe Open University face to face interaction tutorials are expected to compliment the printed modules whereby they are delivered in three two hour tutorial sessions. To a large extent, tutors become the only instructional contact for distance learners. According to Ndeya-Ndereya et al, (2003) tutors have many responsibilities that include but not limited to: helping students to comprehend the course materials through discussions, helping them in planning their work and giving feedback on course materials and their problems to course coordinator or counsellor. The same can be said
of the Open University of Tanzania where studies have shown that face-to-face interaction sessions are vital to a distance learner and they have lasting positive (Kissassi, 2011). However, in Swaziland, face to face tutorials cover one third of contact hours and are conducted at the main campus (Harry, 1993) whereby tutors go through the challenging areas and topics being taken by the students at the regional centres. The Mauritius College of Air offer residential sessions which are not compulsory though learners are encouraged to attend. Other institutions like the University of Botswana offer weekend studies at the regional centres and sometimes at the mushrooming district centres. In fact three sessions are held yearly lasting two (2) weeks at the main campus (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000).

Tutorials at the CODL of the University of Nairobi are held thrice in each semester at the extra mural/regional centres to introduce students to the units that they have registered for at the beginning of the semester, give explanation and clarifications on issues raised by the students at mid-semester and finally to assist students with revision before they sit for examinations (University of Nairobi, 2013). The DISVOL offers tutorials on all the units once a semester. During this period, the tutors go through the difficult areas as in some instances, students have had time to go through the learning materials (modules) given to them at the regional centres. Tutorials take place at the main campus whereby they are accommodated at a fee. This session is very important though it is not compulsory (Kenyatta University, 2014). The CODL of Egerton University offers tutorials at the regional centres once every semester and occasionally thereafter as per the demands of the students as well as the unit being undertaken.
However, this is usually planned in advance with the students to ensure that all the regional centres are put into consideration (Egerton University, 2013).

2.3.2 Supply of e-learning materials

According to Allen & Seaman (2008), e-Learning materials provide high quality learning and support to distance learner’s equivalent to that provided to on campus students, increase the flexibility, accessibility and personalization of provision of resources for distance students and enhance the capacity for integration of study with home, leisure, social and working lives. In India, all universities and education institutions offering distance education are encouraged to adopt Information and Communication Technology to deliver their programmes, manage students and university affairs through a web portal or any other such platform (Cheng et al, 1993). As such, distance education institutions must use e-learning contents for their programmes.

Multimedia approach is used and more so video and audios. In China, Television Transmission for programmes run into 33 hours per week (Harry, 1993). Audio cassettes comprising lectures, discussions and debates on topics and personal contact programmes have also been incorporated in KSOU. Fourth generation educational materials are being used in the Open University of Netherland, as well as satellite lectures and radio broadcasts in KNOU. In most cases, they are used to supplement the fourth generation educational materials (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000). In Australia, e-learning materials have increasingly developed and have become necessary due to high
accessibility and use of computers and the Internet at 66% and 50% of adults with up to 83% of Australian Internet users being able to use Internet regularly for about two years (Red Sheriff, 2001; Centeno, 2001). Further, 95% of the Australian university students are able to access e-learning materials. According to Simpson, (2000) the growth for e-learning materials has been accelerated by the expansion of various online services, increase and demand for skills and ongoing education, the changing global market in education and the acceptance by scholars of the value of e-learning as a teaching method. As such, Universities that are experienced in open, distance and e-learning such as Charles Sturt University, Deakin University and the University of Southern Queensland among other upcoming universities have adopted the use of e-learning materials in the teaching and learning process by joining a number of international consortia such as the International Network of Universities and the Global University Alliance to avoid duplication in the development of e-learning materials.

Students at the Open University of Tanzania are provided with e-learning reading materials. However, it has been noted that students tend to be over dependent on them. Once they get the materials, they become complacent searching for materials from other sources and instead wait for the institution to provide more reading materials to them. Tucker (2003) insisted that institutions need to encourage learners to use books, journals, and pamphlets in learning. Therefore, the Open University of Tanzania has put into place mechanisms to direct students to seek information from various sources instead of depending on the institution to provide them. According to Chadamoyo & Dumbu, (2011), students get sufficient and up-to-date e-learning resources through the
adoption of ICTs such as computer and internet on time. This has been supported by some students who indicated that they were satisfied with the e-learning materials that they were accessing from the Open University of Tanzania library though were inadequate to support all the learners.

The CODL of the University of Nairobi provides learners with audio and visual materials, Computer and Satellite Mediated strategies and limited face to face interaction for introducing modules. Kenyatta University Institute of DISVOL offers learners with recorded audio and video tapes, television broadcasts, radio broadcasts, occasional face-to-face contact sessions, internet (online and email) and computer mediated learning (Kenyatta University). The CODL of Egerton University has ensured that there is adequate production of distance learning materials in the form of audio and video tapes, computer mediated learning and occasional face-to-face sessions.

2.3.3 Printed materials (Modules)

The basic principle of open and distance education is to provide students with opportunities to study according to their own learning pace or speed (Keegan, 1990). In this regard therefore, students are expected to have access to all the relevant course materials at the beginning of the programme. This has been made possible by first developing learning materials and especially printed materials which are also referred to as modules that are interactive in that they are able to talk to the student in a manner that the teacher talks to a student in the class (Chadamoyo & Ngwarai, 2012). They are the most preferred mode of disseminating information in distance learning as it is
universally accepted by many, reliable and cost-effective in its production. Further, printed material stimulates learning in that it is easy to handle, adapt, issue and hoard and also offers content. It also supplements group discussions and face to face teaching. As such, accessible printed material availed to the students are critical components to distance learning programme. Therefore, institutions such as the University College of Education of Winneba of in Ghana has embarked in the process of speeding up the preparation of printed course materials to avoid a situation where students enrolled in the programme have to wait long periods for study materials to be delivered and eventually frustrating and demotivating them. However, though the Zimbabwe Open University used the printed materials throughout their distance learning programmes, the changes in technology have proven that to be inadequate leading to the adoption of various delivery methods to instruction such as the use of face to face interaction infused with information communication technology (Roberts and Associates, 1998). Further, a study conducted in Zimbabwe Open University to establish the correlation of printed modules to distant learners showed a high positive correlation of 0.85 in satisfaction of their quality implying that they are an important element in determining the quality of the learners’ support system (SAIDE, 1999). According to Bagwandeen (1999), 91% of distance learners using print modules are either satisfied or very satisfied with only 9% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied though they noted that it was challenging to obtain the recommended printed materials in time. In the School of Distance Education (SDE), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), printed materials were documented as key determinant to the satisfaction of the quality of the learner’s support system (Tait, 1995).
The learners in the universities under study were issued with printed modules after paying the fees for the required units. Further, the learners were expected to go through the modules before going for residential sessions so that they may consult the tutors on the problematic areas. It is also expected that the modules assist the learners to conceptualize the subject matter beforehand (University of Nairobi, 2013).

2.3.4 Online library services

Access to library is very important for distance learning students as many of them feel that their success in course is dependent to the use of the library. The library has gone through transformations to adapt to the wider changes underlying the e-learning strategy. Libraries provide access to high quality information to learners, evaluate and manage information. They also have e-link to provide access to the full texts of electronic journals as well as access the materials wherever students are (Carr, 2000). Online library is important since tutors may not provide all the information needed by their students. At times accessing online resources become complex and frustrating for students and therefore, all the stakeholders in distance learning must collaborate to provide access to a variety of online resources to maintain equity of library services to all users no matter their location (De Salvo, 2002).

Open, distance and e-learning students are entitled to online library services and resources just like the on-campus students though traditional library services and especially in dual mode universities do not adapt to the needs of open, distance and e-learning students (Brawer, 1996). Accordingly, Burgstahler (2002) noted that the
effectiveness of open, distance and e-learning is measured by the availability and accessibility of specially designed learning materials whereby learners have adequate time to use them to avoid surface and rote learning. As such, having in mind the evolution of open and distance learning from first generation to the current fifth generation that is technologically mediated, institutions have tried to put in place online libraries which are accessible to the students wherever they are. Therefore, online libraries have helped the open, distance and e-learning students to navigate the barriers of timeframes in matters of the time one can borrow a book and frequent visits to the main library to borrow as well as return the borrowed resources. This has ensured that students residing in far flung and remote areas who initially relied on the printed modules are now able to access more study materials for their academic growth. Online library can be better offered to open, distance and e-learning through inter-library cooperation a phenomenon that Morrissett and Baker (1993) indicated as the backbone of open, distance and e-learning. It is embedded in cooperation of libraries at a local, national and international level. Therefore there is a dire need to form a consortia to share online library resources within and without institutions to improve the learner support services by reaching out to many open, distance and e-learning students (Nicholas & Tomeo, 2005).

In order to support open and distance learners, UNISA has invested in a well-equipped online library which is one of the largest and best-equipped research libraries in the southern Africa region and is at the disposal of students and staff providing essential support for tutors in the quest for better study materials for their learners (UNISA,
It helps them to meet their learning needs and supplement the notes given to them by their tutors. Nearer home, the Makerere University has adopted a book bank system where core textbooks are acquired by university specifically for open and distance learners (Mayende & Obura, 2013) with an estimated collection of 350 titles of study materials, with 28,000 copies in collaborating libraries. The provision and access to online library services by the open and distance students is therefore central to ensuring quality education (Gil-Jaurena, 2014). At National Open University of Nigeria library access is available to students who are allocated codes which they use to access the virtual library and therefore can take advantage of more than 500,000 e-books which the University has subscribed to or bought (Ipaye, 2004).

Library Services in the Open University of Tanzania and the University of Madras are offered in conjunction with the Tanzania Library Services whereby the institution stocks some books for students to use in the public libraries (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000). The CODL of the University of Nairobi, DISVOL of Kenyatta University and Egerton University CODL main libraries are accessible to the open and distance learners. However, regional centres stock reference books which learners can use. Recently, the institutions have connected the computers in the extra mural/regional centres to the main libraries to access online materials. Further, students are given access codes to access the materials through their personal computers (Egerton University, 2013).
2.3.5 Pre-course Study Skills Training

Pre-course study skills training is a key learner support service to any student enrolled under open, distance and e-learning mode of study. Stewart (1993) noted that students entering the programme without having pre-course study skills experience anxiety, frustration, and often fail in their academic work. An indicator that in order to succeed, learners need to have pre-course study skills required for effective teaching and learning which must be well taught and supported. Therefore, institutions offering open, distance and e-learning must ensure that pre-course study skills are offered to students during orientation on how to access electronic resources such as course outlines, study materials and other related resources that are useful in their learning (Nonyongo & Ngengebule, 1998) to do away with the feelings of isolation that are aggravated if learners are not well prepared and equipped to deal with the demands of open and distance learning. Further, it has been widely noted that most learners do not follow instructions. For instance, it was established that in the Open University of Netherland, 58% of the learners do not watch television programmes while 78% watch programmes without studying the course unit related to the lesson of programme thus making it difficult to understand the concepts in the programme. During the study skill training, students are directed on how to take short notes during face to face interactions, and also record lectures for referral during workshops at study centres (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000). Further, studies have shown that students who think they are information literate are not aware of library-related resources that might be more relevant and authoritative or better represent various points of view on their areas of interest (Moore, 2003). As
such learners need help as technical proficiency is more vital to information literacy which is only possible through pre-course study skills training.

At the Blue Ridge Community College, open and distance learners are expected to have prior basic minimum computer operation and basic internet skills such as; connecting to the Internet through an Internet Service Provider, access and use resources on the World Wide Web, navigating specific websites, sending, opening, replying to and forwarding messages and be able to participate in online discussions and forums. The Mauritius College of Air offers an induction session where learners meet tutors and peers (Harry, 1993). It is during this time when learners are oriented and directed on personalized good study skills. Workshops on topics such as academic skills are held and at times students are sent motivational brochures. Learning support desk has been started which helps learners on writing, mathematics and study skills. Good study skills and the use of library are emphasized (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000). The Open University of Tanzania has compulsory and mandatory pre-course study skills such as an introduction to basic computing that are part and parcel of all courses for new students at the institution. This introduction is expected to ensure that learners become familiar with the use of computers. The CODL of the University of Nairobi, DISVOL of Kenyatta University and CODL of Egerton University give guidance to the learners on good study habits during orientation which is conducted at the extra mural/regional centres during the registration exercise. The same is done during the residential period (Kenyatta University, 2014).
2.3.6 Examination administration procedure

Formative assessments are designed to provide information to both the instructor and students concerning students' understanding of small segments of course material. Learners are evaluated through assignments or periodic tests and semester end examinations taken in extra mural/regional centres. Assignments are usually marked and returned to learners for transparency (SAIDE, 1999). Also, learners provide a real life project as in the case of Karnata State Open University. Kota Open University has a provision for computer marked examinations. Hands on practical skills are also tested as in Mauritius College of Air. Examinations in many institutions are taken on specified dates. However, in Netherlands Open University; they are taken upon demand by the student. Learners who fail examinations are allowed to retake them after extensive counselling and if one fails the second time, they are supposed to retake the unit bearing the full cost (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000). According to Simpson (2000), course evaluation surveys are carried out every semester to get feedback of services provided and support services and as such, some institutions use e-surveillance technology in order to conduct clean, fair and transparent examinations.

The Tribhuvan University take assessment seriously and is done by course tutors and course professors. Students are always updated on the status of their assignments as they are not allowed to sit for their final examinations without completing all the assignments given. The final examinations are always conducted by the central examination of Tribhuvan University as a written examination (Nabushawe, 2014). In the National Open University of India, two assignments are given and they account for
25% of the final examination. At the end of first and second years, external examinations are conducted by the respective State Open University while the study centres conduct examination of practice teaching and work experience components by appointing internal and external examiners (Chi-hung Ng, 2000).

Students of UNISA take their examinations at about 475 centres in South Africa and internationally. This is done from mid-October to mid-November and the results are released by mid-December. Retakes and supplementary examinations are taken in January of the following year. The academic cycle of any given year is complete by March. The university is commended for having one of the most efficient administrative systems for the management and distribution of the examinations in the world. To ensure smooth administration of examinations, timetable is prepared in advance and the students are able to access it through the SMS broadcast systems and voice telephone calls and where need be raise queries for any changes long before the examination period. This ensures that students are informed in time of the examination venues and scheduled time (UNISA, 1995). Just like UNISA, the Zimbabwe Open University been able to provide regular communications to students through the SMS broadcast systems and telephone calls. However, their examinations are only taken by the students at the main campus. At the University of Lusaka, students are required to take two assignments and one test in a semester for their continuous assessment. The two assignments are weighted ten marks each totalling to twenty marks. The test is also scored at a total of twenty marks which together with the two assignments total to forty marks for the continuous assessment. The examinations are weighted at sixty marks.
which are then added to the continuous assessment mark to give a cumulated score of a hundred marks. The pass mark is fifty marks (Mapolisa, 2012).

The institutions under study communicate the evaluation procedures to students well in advance. Since it is possible for students to get academic assistance on assignments done, course grade examinations are always administered by institutions at their various regional centres under strict supervision (Kenyatta University, 2014). The CODL of the University of Nairobi, DISVOL of Kenyatta University and CODL of Egerton University take examinations very seriously. All of them offer examinations at the end of every semester. Each unit is marked out of 100. Continuous Assessment Tests and assignments contribute to 30% whereas the end of semester examination contributes to the other 70%. For practical oriented units, students must attain 15/30 to pass and in this category of a unit, C.A.T usually has 10% and the end semester examination has 60%. Failure to take Continuous Assessment Tests (C.A.T) without a good reason leads to failure in the unit. Learners who fail examinations are allowed to retake them, and if one fails the second time, they are supposed to retake the unit bearing the full cost (University of Nairobi, 2013).

2.4 Services related to access of information needs

These services are expected to create awareness and sensitize students on what is expected of them as open, distance and e-learning students. They help them to understand their rights to contact, use and enter any facility within the institution to get
the desired information. They include; information on registration requirements, access of examination results and access to institutional rules and regulations.

2.4.1 Information on registration requirements

Distance learners expect their respective institutions to support them from the time of registering for a programme until completion. During registration, students are provided with vital information about distance learning courses and the registration requirements. The learning modes are communicated to students exhaustively to prepare them before registration through the institutions websites. More so, according to Allen & Seaman (2008), the institutions websites provide students with course information and tutors contact details to assist the learners as well as review a course before registration to establish its appropriateness. The website can also be customized to respond to the student’s queries before the start of the semester. Further, students can consult via e-mail or telephone about the registration procedures and can also register through the same in the Open University of Netherland where easy registration procedures which are timely have been put in place (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000). In the Republic of Philippines, admission to open and distance education requirements are a replica of other academic policies and requirements in all Higher Education Institutions and post-secondary schools offering higher education programmes as set by the Commission for Higher Education Department. To be admitted to the Blue Ridge Community College, students undertaking courses under the open, and distance learning must have minimum computer specifications as well as a computer with required software, and web browser, internet, and e-mail specifications.
In South Africa, the study that examined the situation of learners’ support in distance education found out that provision of learners support services lowered drop-out rate and increased pass rate (Roberts & Associates, 1998). From students’ views, the study listed norms and standards for learners support services that were necessary for their distance learning. Bagwandeon (1999) noted that UNISA had to ensure that registration and administration of the open and distance learners was effective. Further, at the University of Lusaka, open and distance students are required to register for units and examinations online every semester. Further, they are expected to download the calendar of events from the university website which has all the academic activities of the university such as dates and the deadlines for the assignments, tutorials and the examination dates. However, a student registration can only be successful if one has paid over 50% of the expected total fees, (Sikwibele & Mungoo, 2009). At Makerere University, students are provided with information about open and distance mode of study and timely responses to all inquiries from interested parties. The institution make a follow up of the applicants who were not admitted advising them on the way forward (Sweet, 1994).

Learners of open, distance and e-learning of Nairobi, Kenyatta, and Egerton Universities get information from their respective extra mural/regional centres and it is in these extra mural/regional centres that registration is done. At the start of every semester, every learner is supposed to register for the units they are taking in their respective regional centres. Registration is only possible once the learner pays all the required fees. Once registration is completed, every learner is given a copy of the
college rules and regulations which they are supposed to adhere to (Kenyatta University, 2014).

2.4.2 Access to examination results

Examination results are the determinants of a learner’s progress in any academic work. As such, timely results are necessary to show the students’ progress. Further, distance learners get the motivation and promote learning pleasure when they receive good examination grades (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000). The achieved examination results also inform the students if they are on the right track as they pursue their academic goals. Besides, according to Allen & Seaman (2008), the examination results may be used to promote learners to the next level and as such they act as indicators to the learners on their expectations.

Students at the Zimbabwe Open University take their examinations twice per year; that is at the end of each semester in June and December respectively. Izuagie (2000) noted that the institution has had challenges in marking of assignments and processing examinations results in time. As such, he criticized the Zimbabwe Open University for failing to effectively manage student academic records such as Continuous Assessment Tests and the examination results. However, strategies have been put in place to give feedback on any assignment given at least five weeks before examinations are taken. Further, the tutors are expected to return assignment scripts to students in time so that they may understand where they went wrong as well as make corrections as they prepare for their examinations.
The students at Egerton University, Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi get their results online and on time as they must pass all their examinations before proceeding to the following academic year. Further, timely results assist the learners to prepare for retakes before the start of the following academic year. Besides, learners are not allowed to proceed to the following academic year unless they have passed in all the units offered in the previous year (Egerton University, 2013).

2.4.3 Access to institutional rules and regulations

The rules and regulations are set to guide the students as they pursue their academic aspirations though the institutions are expected to do their part as enshrined in their charters (Cheng et al, 1993). According to Tait (1995) students must understand the important rules and guidelines to their respective institutions as individual institutions have different rules. For instance, there are institutions that may require their learners to physically attend classes, while others have put strict limits to the amount of online interaction one should have been involved in before taking their end of semester examinations.

Students are expected to follow all the instructions given by their respective institutions of study. At the University of Lusaka, students are anticipated to access academic materials early enough. Additionally, they must go through the materials made available to them before attending face to face tutorials. Further, it is mandatory for open and distance students at the University of Lusaka to attend a two week residential tutorial session where they have full contact with their lecturers and immediately thereafter,
write examinations on the units that they registered for. Failure to download the academic materials and assignments on time cannot be accepted as an excuse for late submission of assignments or poor academic performance at the University of Lusaka. All the assignments given by the tutors have specific dates for submission which must be handed in on or before the scheduled deadlines. Failure to submit within the specified period leaves a student at the prerogative of the lecturer to either penalize or reject the assignment altogether. Further, a student is expected to mail a soft copy and hard copy to the lecturer before the deadline (Nabushawe, 2014).

The learners are expected to fulfil their obligations as they proceed with their studies as they are expected to attend residential sessions as well as take CATS and hand in assignments before sitting for their final examinations. In Egerton University and University of Nairobi, students are expected to observe the college rules and regulations just like the regular learners. However, in Kenyatta University, some rules are relaxed to take care of the distance learners. For instance, distance learners are allowed to borrow library books for a little longer period as compared to regular learners (University of Nairobi, 2013).

2.5 Services related to social and personal needs

Services related to social and personal needs are expected deal with issues that are common but affect a group of students. The issues may be private, special or individual problems among students. They include: online interaction, academic advice and guidance and counselling.
2.5.1 Online interaction

Online interactions are the driving elements to high quality online programmes. Moore (2003) noted that the interaction between students and tutors reduces the physical separation that results in a psychological and communicative gap. As such, increased interaction between the students and instructors lead to increased student course satisfaction and learning outcomes. However, in as much as online interaction increases the quality of online education, many institutions have not fully adopted it (SAIDE, 1999), since the stakeholders may not familiar with technology or how to make use of the said online interactions. Thus, online interaction can only be possible if learners know how to handle, manipulate and operate technological gadgets or technology. This can be actualized through group study settings, chat-rooms or in teleconferencing. However, it is not easy to adopt online interactions due to faculty limitations in technical skills and financial constrains though it is timely and cost-effective. Further, online interaction mediates the role that the tutor performs in relation to teaching and content and also ensures that online students connect with their tutors and peers and ask questions about their studies. This is beneficial in that learners have a sense of community rather than feeling like an isolated person tapping away at a computer (Allen & Seaman, 2008). This support is visualized through online forums, email exchanges, phone conversations and Skype. This therefore assists the students to learn as much from other students as from the instructors.

The Open University of United Kingdom ensures that students meet for group tutorials and also encourage them to form informal groups (Harry, 1993). Also, it has provided a non mandatory access for all its students to a personal tutor in a group of not more than
25 students in order to allow personal knowledge, support and understanding to go through the course. Gauhati University has established an e-learning portal through which students can consult the faculties, hold group discussion with other students as well as download selected study materials (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000). In USA, students pointed out that they regarded online interaction as the best support in distance education as they share their learning experiences and encourage each other while the tutors are able to come in and guide them whenever they have challenges (Simpson, 2000).

Online interaction in UNISA is expected to supplement other learner support systems provided by institutions offering open, distance and e-learning programmes. According to studies done in UNISA, online interaction gives the students an opportunity to learn from one another unlike if they are lonely in their own homes. At the Open University of Tanzania, online interaction is done through e-mail among students and between students and tutors. Students are able and are encouraged to use e-mail to forward their inquiries to the respective offices (Mahai, 2005). It has been established that students communicate and interact with their tutors for about three to six times in a week. Further, to increase online interaction, the Open University of Tanzania has set out to enhance the use of ICT as a main interaction platform between students and tutors by installing computers in all regional centres (Chadamoyo & Ngwarai, 2012) to improve students’ access to ICT and thus increase online interaction. In Nairobi, Kenyatta and Egerton Universities, learners are encouraged to form their own groups for discussions (Kenyatta University, 2014).
2.5.2 Academic advice

Academic advice is intended to assist students to identify and achieve their maximum educational potential through building meaningful connections early in their academic careers to offer comprehensive orientation as well as being as proactive as possible with their questions and concerns (Haasbroek, 1995). It helps in synthesizing and contextualizing the students’ educational experiences, aspirations and abilities so that they may extend learning beyond their institutions (Siaciwena, 1996). Saint Joseph's College of Maine has a team of seven admissions counsellors whose responsibility is to guide potential students from their initial contact with the college to establish if the support offered is of importance. This is made possible through regular contact via phone, mail and email. Students are also attached to academic advisors who guide them throughout their programme by addressing issues that may arise as well as exploit other services available such as the online course help desk, online library services, tutorial services and career counselling resources among others (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000).

According to Cheng et al, (1993) students at Saint Joseph's College of Maine noted that whenever they went through difficult times, counsellors would encourage them not only in academic matters but also emotionally. At the National Open University of India, academic advice is conducted on a regular basis depending on the need and convenience of the learners to provide personal guidance to the learners regarding content difficulty, projects assignments, dissertation and time management.

In Zimbabwe Open University, academic advice as a learner support service is expected to assist students to write their assignments and prepare for examinations. It is done by
the student advisors who are employed and stationed at every regional centre of the university to receive student complaints, queries and concerns and document them so that they can be addressed by the relevant departments. Additionally a call centre has been established to respond to students enquiries on matters relating to the programmes offered as well as informing them on any emerging changes that may affect them (Ndeya-Ndereya et al, 2003). However, to some extent, students did not access the necessary academic advice as the advisors are few, while the call centres are limited by the congestion of calls and the cost of making the call.

The students at the institutions under study are offered academic advice from their first contact with the universities. This is possible through telephone and email and to some extent the physical visit to the institutions or their respective campuses. Students are directed on what to do as per their careers of choice as well as the units to register for. They are also encouraged to seek advice whenever they are not aware of the direction to take in their studies from the university.

2.5.3 Guidance and counselling

Guidance and counselling to open, distance and e-learning students play an important role in solving both academic and social challenges that affect the students. It helps the students to cope with learning albeit in difficult situations caused by factors which may be social or academic and individual or institutional based. While BACP (2001) indicated that guidance and counselling ought to be a continuous process at the regional centres, it has not been emphasized by some institutions offering open, distance and e-
learning programmes. Actually some have labelled the service as an unnecessary one while others offer a little guidance and counselling. It has been established that lack of counselling demotivate students who in turn may not learn well. Many of them tend to drop out from the system being labelled failures. According to Kangai et al, (2011) counselled students are more likely to continue with learning than non-counselling students. As such, institutions must monitor the students in order to address their problems through counselling since guidance and counselling reinforces the student sense of confidence, self-esteem and progress (Roberts & Associates, 1998). Further, institutions must also invest in more counsellors to be able to spend quality time with students whether in face to face counselling or online counselling (Haasbroek, 1995).

Research findings in Asia and Europe revealed that all groups of students required guidance and counselling as a reassurance that they were on the right track. In the Open University of the United Kingdom, it was noted that there was no proper counselling sessions for students who experienced academic and social problems. As such, many students had been dropping or would discontinue their studies because of some academic and social problems that would have been solved if counselling had been carried out (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000). However, students based support is offered in the Open University of Netherland whereby every students is offered a personal mentor who supervises and oversees them throughout their course while assisting them in problematic areas while career guidance is offered in the University of Madras and counselling on personal and academic needs (Akinade, 1998).
In UNISA, guidance and counselling services are offered during registration to those who are able to go to registration venues. To ensure quality and effective guidance and counselling, counsellors have been deployed to the regional centres such as Cape Town, Durban and Pietersburg (Okumbe, 1998). Further, studies done in Zimbabwe Open University (Tucker, 2003) indicated that guidance and counselling is an important learner support service for open and distance learners that is offered through a student support service unit where over 80% of the students were of the view that they needed quality and effective guidance and counselling starting from pre-entry stage after enrolling into the programme all the way to clearing the course. For instance, there are learners who get confused by the amount of information they already have, or by the lack of information in relevant areas and therefore a need to provide counselling during registration either as a group or as an individual (Agboola, 1993). Unfortunately, students complained that they were not satisfied with guidance and counselling and especially with individualised counselling, a situation that is replicated and attested in the Open University of Tanzania in that students were reluctant to contact the administration, the counsellors or their tutors when they had problems as they were uncertain about whom to contact in order to seek advice on different problems (Mahai, 2005). The three institutions under study have ensured that guidance and counselling services are offered at regional centres on subject combinations, as well as interpersonal relationships. Secondly, institutions have engaged qualified personnel to assist students whenever need arises at the regional centres that are spread across the country in collaboration with the dean of students’ office at main campuses (University of Nairobi, 2013).
2.6 Summary of Literature Review

The literature reviewed highlighted the importance of learner support services offered to open and distance students across the world. It has established that different institutions offer the services differently. More importantly, in many developed countries, learner support services have been emphasized but in Africa, the institutions have been concerned with infrastructural developments and the challenges of open and distance learning to the institutions and the decision makers. In recent times, learner support services have been put into focus and especially in southern Africa and the tide of change is also sweeping across East Africa. However, the few studies done and especially in Kenya have not looked at the nature of the learner support services that are offered to open, distance and e-learning students. As such, this study intends to establish the types of learner support services offered, identify essential learner support services, establish the attitudes of the users of the programme and identify factors that influence learner support services offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will discuss the methodology used. The following will be discussed here; the research design, the variables, the location of the study, the target population, the sampling technique, construction of research instruments, piloting procedure, data collection procedure, data analysis as well as logical and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

The research used a descriptive survey design which is appropriate when looking at attitudes and opinions on educational and social issues. The design was ideal for the study of the research problem as it helped in the qualitative data collection since it looked at the state of affairs as they were (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). Further, Orodho (2004) noted that descriptive survey design can be used in explorative studies to assist in gathering, summarizing, presenting and interpreting information for clarification. Based on the above reasons the researcher found the design as suitable for the study.

3.1.1 Variables

Variables are concepts that vary in amount or kind (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995). Accordingly, Kombo & Tromp (2006) referred to them as attributes or qualities of cases that we measure or record in research. Nachmias & Nachmias (1990) explains a dependent variable as the variable that a researcher wishes to explain and the
independent variable as the one expected to explain the change in the dependent variable. In this study, the dependent variable was the Learner Support which can be made better and satisfactory by improving the independent variables which were teaching and learning needs, access of information needs and personal and social needs. Any changes done to any independent variable is expected to positively or negatively affect the nature of learner support service. In this case, the type of teaching and learning needs, access of information needs and personal and social needs that are offered to open, distance and e-learning students determine how good or bad learner support is. This would ultimately lead to success or failure of the programme.

3.2 Location of the study

The study was carried out at the Centre for Open and Distance Learning at the University of Nairobi, Digital School of Virtual and Open Learning of Kenyatta University and the College of Open and Distance Learning at Egerton University. The institutions were chosen as they were the first public universities to offer the programme. Secondly, the institutions under study had been operating for almost two decades and as such it was expected that they had enough time to develop good and adequate learner support services and lastly, the institutions are expected to put up adequate learner support system bearing in mind that open and distance learning was born out of a national government policy.
3.3 Target population

A population is the entire group of individuals, events or objects with similar observable characteristics (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The target population for the study was fourth year students, coordinators and directors to the institutions offering Open, Distance and E-Learning at Egerton University, Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi.

Table 3.1 Target population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Coordinators</th>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egerton</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenyatta</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>921</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2028</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>2060</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Researcher, 2015)

3.4 Sampling technique and sample size

According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), a sample is a smaller group that is derived from the target population. However, the sample size ought to be manageable as resources and time can be major constraints. For this study, purposive sampling was used to select three public universities with major components of open, distance and e-learning programme namely, Egerton University, Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi which are institutions that have offered the programme for almost two decades. As such they were expected to have put in place adequate learner
support services. Further, purposive sampling method was used to select three regions in which all the selected universities had study centres to minimise the constraints of resources and time. A total of nine study centres, three from each of the three universities under study located in Mombasa, Nakuru and Kisumu were selected for the study. The study centres were purposely selected in regions that were located away from the main university. This was to eradicate bias as students who live in areas near the main university are likely to benefit more on the learner support services available at the main university. Secondly, it would help to compare the services offered by different universities within the same location. The target population was stratified into two groups within each university; those with a population of less than fifteen individuals and those with above fifteen individuals. Basing the sample size determination on Morgan & Krejcie (1970) model, a sample size of 327 respondents was targeted as the table helps the researcher to determine, with 95% certainty, what the results would have been had the entire population been surveyed. Therefore, all the administrators (directors and the coordinators) to each of the universities were involved in the study. Stratified sampling was used to identify the number of sample size from each university and study centre. Lastly, convenience sampling was used to select fourth year students enrolled for a Bachelor’s Degree programme to participate in the study. The sample size for each university was arrived at using the formula;

\[ N_s = \frac{P_s \times S}{N} \]

Where

\( N = \) Study population (2028)

\( N_s = \) Sample from each university (367)
S = Total sample size

Ps = Population in each university (367, 740, 921)

Table 3.2 Sample size

Therefore the sample size was

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Coordinators</th>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kenyatta</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>921</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egerton</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2028</strong></td>
<td><strong>329</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>361</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that the sample size as per Morgan and Krejcie was 327 respondents. However, in the sample size table, it is indicated as 329. This is because in calculating the sample sizes there were incomplete whole numbers and since we cannot have decimals of human beings, the figures were rounded off to the nearest whole number.

3.5 Research instruments

The research instruments used in the study were questionnaires for the students and the coordinators and interview schedules for the directors.
3.5.1 Questionnaires for students and coordinators

The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from the students and coordinators as they are appropriate in descriptive survey where the number of respondents is high (Orodho, 2004). Wiseman (1999) noted that questionnaires are very useful in data collection from a large sample and can be used to cover a wide area of study. Besides, it is the most popular, easy and cost effective method for collecting data in education and behavioural sciences where a large population is under study. Through this instrument, respondents have a chance to express their ideas (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

The questionnaire had both structured and open-ended questions. A rating scale to gauge the type of learner support offered to students in the open, distance and e-learning programme was used as they reduce the respondent’s subjectivity and is easy in qualitative data analysis (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Further, questions collected data on essential learner support services that the students and coordinators felt were essential. Another set of questions was used to show the perception of both the students and the coordinators on the learner support services offered in their institutions. Lastly the coordinators were requested to indicate the considerations they took when offering learner support services.

3.5.2 Interview schedule for the directors

An interview schedule was used to gather information from the directors to the institutions offering Open, Distance and E-learning programme. According to Orodho (2004), interview schedules are appropriate when dealing with few respondents since a
researcher is able to get more information from respondents as compared to using questionnaires. The directors were involved in the study as they are significant decision makers in their institutions and as such they were seen to have valuable information on the learner support services offered to their students. The interview had four themes which were on the type of learner support offered, essential learner support services, their perception on the services offered and the considerations they made before offering any learner support service. Each theme had a main question which guided the probing questions.

3.6 Pilot study
The data to pre-test the instrument was collected from Embu Regional Centre of Kenyatta University which was reserved for piloting the study. The regional coordinator and ten (10) students had the questionnaires administered to them. This is because the reliability and validity of research instruments must be tested before collecting the real data for research (Mugenda& Mugenda, 2003). Any instrument found unreliable was revised before using it for actual data collection.

3.6.1 Validity
The research instrument was validated through content validity in that it tested the degree to which the sample of the test denoted the content that the test was expected to measure (Orodho, 2004). This validation of the questionnaires was done with the help of experts from the Department of Educational Communication and Technology whose judgement was critical in the selection of essential questions. The validation ensured
that each instrument measured what it was designed to measure (Wiersma, 1995). Discussions of questions were done with the supervisors, lecturers from the department, and colleagues on whether the instruments accurately represented the concept of the study. Their views were earnestly considered and aptly integrated.

**3.6.2 Reliability**

According to Nachmias & Nachmias (1990), reliability is an indication of the extent to which a measure contains errors which differ from one observation to the next for a given analysis measured twice or more by the same instrument. This means that the test results for the instrument administered to the same group within a period ought to be quite close (Orodho, 2004). In this study, the common variation in the two sets of scores (Gorard, 2001) was done by dividing the questionnaires into two equal halves using even and odd numbers after administration. Each half was scored independently of the other with the items of the two halves matched in content and difficulty. A high correlation coefficient between the odd and even questions was an indicator that the instrument was reliable. Split-half method was used to take care of fatigue of the respondents. A correlation coefficient of 0.73 was considered high enough to judge the instrument as reliable. This was done using Spearman’s rank order coefficient formula.

Spearman’s rank order coefficient formula:

\[ r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \Sigma \hat{d}^2}{n(n^2 - 1)} \]

Where: \( r_s \) = Spearman’s coefficient of correlation.
\[ d = \text{difference between ranks of pairs of the two sets of scores.} \]

\[ n = \text{number of pairs of observation.} \]

Once reliability of the research instruments was done items that were identified as lacking clarity were polished for use in the study.

### 3.7 Data collection procedure

Data collection refers to gathering of information to serve or prove some facts (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The researcher used the approval letter from Graduate School, Kenyatta University to apply for a research permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation before proceeding to collect data. The institutions under the study were visited prior to acquaint the researcher and research assistants with the authorities in charge of the centres.

#### 3.7.1 Data collection from the students

The researcher and the assistants visited the institutions during tutorials to administer the questionnaires. The respondents were given instructions and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Thereafter, questionnaires were distributed for filling. The respondents were given enough time to fill the questionnaires which were collected immediately they were through with them. The researcher and the research assistants ensured that they thanked each and every respondent individually as they handed in their questionnaires.
3.7.2 Data collection from the coordinators

Acquaintance was made through the telephone numbers with the assistance of the respective directors’ office. Thereafter, questionnaires were mailed to the coordinators by the researcher with an addressed return envelope. After two weeks, the coordinators were contacted to remind them to mail back the questionnaires. Follow up was done after two more weeks to request the coordinators to fill and mail back the questionnaires. Once the filled in questionnaires were received, the researcher called the coordinators thanking them for their support and cooperation.

3.7.3 Data collection from the directors

The directors’ offices were visited by the researcher with the letters from the relevant authorities. Appointments were booked at the convenience of the directors with requests for interviews. Copies of interview schedules were left in their offices to assist them to prepare for the interviews. On the material days, the researcher arrived in time. After introductions, and with the help of the research assistants, requests were made to record interviews. Later the researcher thanked the directors and promised to give copies of the report to their offices.

3.8 Data analysis

Data collected is referred to as raw information and therefore it is not informative unless it is analyzed (Cohen & Manion, 1997). As such there was need to further interpret the data collected to make meaningful deductions. The researcher sorted and excluded the incomplete questionnaires from the students and the coordinators. Thereafter, the questionnaires were keyed into the computer using likert scale ranging from one to five.
while the directors’ interview schedule was transcribed as per the objectives and keyed in using the same likert scale. The data collected was coded and entered into the computer for analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 as the programme is able to handle large amounts of data with efficiency (Orodho, 2004). Descriptive statistics in form of frequency distribution tables and graphs were used in favour of complex statistics as their simplicity ensures that results are likely to be understood by a large group of readers.

3.9 Logical and ethical considerations

Logical considerations made were in reference to pre-field activities, field logistics and post-field activities during the study. Pre-field activities included preparation of research instruments and seeking permission from Kenyatta University and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation. In the field logistics, the researcher trained the research assistants and prepared them for the possible constraints that were likely to occur while in the field while post-field activities related to the challenges during the sorting and analysing of data.

Ethical considerations ensured that the study was original in content as well as in design. This was done by informing all the respondents about the research problem and the research methodology to be used. Further, the respondents were assured of confidentiality of their responses and that the findings were purposely to be used for academic purposes and lastly permission was sought from all the institutions involved in the study before collecting data.
CHAPTER FOUR
REPORTING AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data and discussion of the research findings. The chapter shows the findings as per the research objectives. The study sought to establish the nature of learner support services offered to Open, Distance and E-learning students at Egerton University, Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi. The analyzed data was collected through administration of questionnaires to 329 students, 29 regional coordinators and interview schedules to three directors. SPSS Version 20 was used to generate the data.

The objectives of the study were to; (i) ascertain the types of learner support services offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya, (ii) identify learner support services that the students and the administrators felt were essential to be offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya, (iii) establish the attitudes of the users of open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya and (iv) identify the factors that influence learner support services offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya.
4.2 Questionnaires Response Rate

Response rate is the percentage of the respondents who return questionnaires with all the questions completed. The use of questionnaires as one of the research tools and more so, mailed questionnaires that are known to have poor response rates ranging from 20 to 40 percent made it necessary to establish the response rate of the study. Table 4.1 indicates the questionnaire response rate across the three categories of respondents.

Table 4.1 Questionnaire Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Tools administered</th>
<th>Valid Response Received</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Coordinators</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Students and the administrators)

The study achieved 68.9% of the students responses as the questionnaires administered to 227 students were returned fully filled out of the 329 issued. The regional coordinators tool had a response rate of 79.3% having distributed 29 questionnaires and 23 were returned duly completed and the directors’ tool had a response rate of 100% response rate. The overall response rate of 70.1% was achieved which conforms to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting of data, 60% as good response, and 70% and above as excellent. Therefore,
this implies that the response rate for the study was excellent for data analysis having attained 70.1% response rate.

4.2.1 Students Response as Per University

The students’ respondents were supposed to indicate their institutions to ensure that the universities under the study were well represented. Table 4.2 shows the students distribution.

Table 4.2 Students Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Tools distributed</th>
<th>Valid Response Received</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egerton University</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenyatta University</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Nairobi</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Students questionnaire)

The study found out that Egerton University had achieved 73.3% response rate. Kenyatta University achieved 69.1% whereas the University of Nairobi had 67.1% response rate. This shows that each university managed to attain acceptable response rates from the respondents for data analysis.
4.2.2 Administrators Response

The coordinators and the directors were clustered together as administrators. However, the coordinators had not been requested to indicate their institutions as the researcher had taken note of their institutions while posting the questionnaires to them while the interviews for the directors was done by the researcher. Their responses were as shown below.

Table 4.3 Administrators Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Tools distributed</th>
<th>Valid Response</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egerton University</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenyatta University</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Nairobi</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Coordinators and Directors questionnaires)

The administrator’s response rate which comprised the coordinators and the directors to the institutions was quite high with Egerton University having a response rate of 75% whereas both Kenyatta University and University of Nairobi posted response rates 80%. This shows that the questionnaires for the coordinators and the interview schedule for the directors to the institutions were well responded to by the administrators involved in the study.
4.3 Objective 1: Type of learner support

The first objective of the study was to ascertain the type of learner support services offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya. The students and the administrators were asked to rate the services that were offered to learners in reference to teaching and learning needs such as face to face interaction, availability of e-learning materials, printed materials, online library, pre-course study skills and the examination administration procedures. Further, they were to rate access of information needs such as access of information on registration requirements, examination results and institutional regulations and personal and social needs which included online interaction, academic advice and guidance and counseling services.

4.3.1 Type of learner support as per students

The students were requested to rate learner support services as provided by their various institutions on a scale ranging from very poor to very good. Table 4.4 show the students responses on the type of learner support services offered in reference to teaching and learning needs.
Table 4.4 Teaching and learning needs as per students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Egerton University</th>
<th>Kenyatta University</th>
<th>University of Nairobi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VP</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to face interaction</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-learning materials</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed materials</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online library</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course study skills</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination administration</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Students questionnaire) N = 227

Key; VP = Very poor, P = Poor, S = Satisfactory, G = Good, VG = Very good,

4.3.1.1 Face to face interaction

According to Table 4.4, students indicated that learner support services related to teaching and learning needs such as face to face interaction was poor across the three institutions under study. At Egerton University the students indicated that it was very poor (15.9%), 56.8% felt it was poor while 25% indicated the service was satisfactory and 2.2% felt that the service was good. None of the respondents indicated that face to face interaction as a service was very good. At Kenyatta University, 38.5% of the students noted that face to face interaction was very poor as 43.3% indicated that it was poor. Further, 14.4% were of the opinion that the service was satisfactory while 3.6% noted the service as good. It was observed that 15% of the students at the University of Nairobi felt that face to face interaction was very poor as 59% noted that it was poor.
However, 26% felt that the service was satisfactory while no student indicated that the service was good. Also, just like Kenyatta and Egerton universities, there was no student who felt that face to face interaction as a learner support service was very good. As such, this service was rated as generally poor across the three universities at 81.8% at Kenyatta University, 74% at the University of Nairobi and 72.7% at Egerton University. This kind of scenario was witnessed in a study conducted in Zimbabwe Open University that indicated that 75% of the students felt that face to face interaction was inadequate (Wilson, 1993). However, the institution embarked on improving its face to face interaction service and by 2012, a study done by Chadamoyo & Ngwarai (2012) indicated that students at Zimbabwe Open University were satisfied with the face to face interactions. From the table, the findings deviate from Harry (1993) who noted that in established institutions offering open, distance and e-learning, face to face interaction is vital in that 56% of tutors explain contents well and later 89% of distance learners contact their tutors to discuss further points though 67% of the students contact tutors during the face to face sessions. Therefore institutions under study should strive to make the service more satisfactory so as to benefit of the majority of the students.

### 4.3.1.2 Availability of e-learning materials

Further, availability of e-learning materials service was rated very poor (31.8%) and poor (20.4%) at Egerton University as 13.6% noted the service was satisfactory with 25% indicating that the service was good and 9% were of the opinion that the service was very good. Students at Kenyatta University indicated that the service was very poor (19.2%) and poor (20.4%). Further still, 32.5% indicated the service was satisfactory
with 24% noting that it was good while 3.6% felt that it was very good. At the University of Nairobi, 32% of the students indicated that the service was very poor while 31% indicated that it was poor. It was also observed that 27% felt that it was satisfactory as 5% noted that the service was good and (5%) very good. Therefore, students at the University of Nairobi and Egerton University were of the opinion that availability of e-learning materials service was generally poor at 63% and 52.2% respectively while at Kenyatta University, the service was rated as satisfactory at 59.1%. Availability of e-learning materials as a learner support service is important bearing in mind that in established institutions in open learning such as KNOU, only 65% of distance learners indicated that e-learning materials offered were very good while 31.5% noted that they were somewhat good with only 3.5% of the students noting that the materials were either bad or very bad (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000). Actually, there is need for institutions to make e-learning materials available as well as increasing the level of the students’ awareness on available and accessible e-learning materials due to the fact that at the National Open University of Nigeria, 56.8% of the students were not aware of the availability of electronic information resources at their study centres.

4.3.1.3 Printed materials

However, students across the three universities were of the opinion that printed materials service was quite satisfactory in the three public universities under the study. It was established that 2.2% of the students at Egerton University indicated that printed materials were very poor and (6.8%) poor while 63.6% noted that the service was satisfactory. Further, 25% felt that the service was good as 2.2% noted that printed
materials were very good. At Kenyatta University, 1.2% of the students indicated that the service was very poor as 12% noted that it was poor. However, 63.8% indicated the service as satisfactory as 21.6% and 1.2% felt that the service was good and very good respectively. Students at the University of Nairobi also indicated that the service was poor and satisfactory at 10% and 59% while 29% and 2% felt that the service was good and very good. The high frequencies of satisfaction at 91% at Egerton University, 90% at the University of Nairobi and 85.8% at Kenyatta University, are indicators that the service offered was quite helpful to the students which agrees with SAIDE (1999) that there was a high positive correlation in satisfaction of distance learners who used the modules in Zimbabwe Open University bearing in mind that printed materials or modules are simplified and interactive and therefore in the absence of the tutor, they play an important role in a student’s academic progress.

4.3.1.4 Online library

Online library as a learner support service was also rated poorly across the three universities. At Egerton University, 38.6% and 34% of the students rated the service as very poor and poor as 18.1% noted the service as satisfactory. Further, 6.8% and 2.2% noted that the service was good and very good. From the study, students at Kenyatta University indicated that online library service was very poor and poor at 32.5% and 43.3% respectively as 14.4% noted that the service was satisfactory. However, 8.4% were of the opinion that the service was good while 1.2% indicated that it was very good. Generally, online library service was rated poor at 83% at the University of Nairobi, 75.8% at Kenyatta University and 72.6% at Egerton University. This has been
replicated in the studies done by Anyona (2009) that Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi had acute shortage of recent journals and publications in their libraries and Mahai (2005) who noted that the Open University of Tanzania students were dissatisfied with online library services. Online libraries ought to provide online learning resources and services to e-learning students just like those students who are on campus (Bagwandeen, 1999) to assist them to go through the programme. Besides these, students at Payane Noor University which is rated as among the best universities offering open, distance and e-learning has good online supplemented by home delivery of library materials, full-text databases, and instructional tutorials availed to support distance learners (Harry, 1993).

4.3.1.5 Pre-course study skills

Pre-course study skills were also rated as poor across the universities under the study. At Egerton University, 15.9% and 59% rated the service as very poor and poor respectively as 4.5% noted that it was satisfactory. Further, 18.1% felt that the service was good and 2.2% indicated that it was very good. Further still, at Kenyatta University, students felt that the service was very poor (15.6%) and poor (61.4%). However, 10.8% noted the service as satisfactory while another 10.8% and 1.2% indicated that the service was good and very good. At the University of Nairobi, 10% noted that pre-course study skills were very poor as 63% indicated that they were poor while 20% felt that it was satisfactory. Only 7% felt that the service was good while none indicated that it was very good. Therefore pre-course study skills were poor across the three
Accordingly, studies have shown that pre-course study skills are necessary since learners do not have all the necessary skills necessary to exploit the resources available. They also ensure that distance learners take advantage of the use of internet technology in their studies while protecting the interests of copyright owners. It is no wonder that Reddy & Manjulika (2000) noted that students hardly follow instructions whereby 78% watched television programmes before going through the programmes materials. This could be through the assumption that learners were already aware of what distance learning is all about but this may not necessarily be true.

### 4.3.1.6 Examination administration

Lastly, students at Egerton University noted that the examinations administration was very poor (18.1%) and (54.5%) poor. However, 15.9% noted the service as satisfactory while 9% and 2.2% indicated that the service was good and very good. Students at Kenyatta University also noted that the service was very poor and poor at 36.1% and 50.6% respectively as 9.6% felt that it was satisfactory while 3.6% indicated that the service was good. Further at the University of Nairobi, 25% of the students noted that the service was very poor 46%. Further still, 22% indicated the service as satisfactory while 5% of the students felt that the service was good as 2% indicated that it was very good. Generally, examinations administration service was rated poor across the three universities under the study. This is as noted at 86.7% at Kenyatta University, 72.6% of
Egerton University and 71% at the University of Nairobi. This could be as a result of planning where students may not have been informed on the dates or venues earlier or even the changes in the scheduled examination times. This may further be affected by new requirements before sitting for examinations such as getting clearance from the office. All these may affect a student if they come up just before sitting for examinations. Possibly, institutions under the study need to borrow from UNISA which has been noted to be very efficient in the administration of examinations and Zimbabwe Open University which has followed suit by having examination timetables which are prepared well in advance and are accessible to the students SMS broadcast systems and voice telephone calls (Chadamoyo & Dumbu, 2011).

This implies that majority of the students did not find most of the services categorized as teaching and learning needs as good enough to assist them as they went through the programme, as a huge percentage of learners were missing out on the importance of these critical services. Thus, institutions need to incorporate more ICT in the teaching and learning so as to embrace e-learning for learners to have a variety of materials. Though it is notable that the universities under study had noted that there were a variety of e-learning materials, the students indicated that they were poor. The administrators need to rethink about the appropriateness of the e-learning materials that are in use in their institutions and their relevance to the students and possibly establish if they could have been rendered irrelevant by the rapid technological changes that are taking place. Further, the institutions concerned should ensure that there are fully equipped online libraries that distance learners can make use of so as to gain a wide wealth of
knowledge from various sources of information. This can be possible if the institutions under study work closely with other institutions offering open, distance and e-learning programme in the world over through collaborations to offer online library services.

Further, the students were asked to rate the services offered in reference to access of information needs such as access of information on registration requirements, examination results and institutional regulations as shown in Table 4.5 below.

**Table 4.5 Access of information needs as per students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Egerton University</th>
<th>Kenyatta University</th>
<th>University of Nairobi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VP</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regulations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Source: Students questionnaire)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>227</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:** VP = Very poor, P = Poor, S = Satisfactory, G = Good, VG = Very good.

### 4.3.1.7 Information on registration requirements

Table 4.5 shows that learner support services related to access of information needs such as access of information on registration requirements was rated poorly across the three universities under the study. At Egerton University, students rated the service as very poor (4.5%) and 52.3% noted that it was poor. However, 29.5% indicated that the service was satisfactory while 4.5% and 9% felt that it was good and very good respectively. Students at Kenyatta University indicated the service was very poor
(16.8%) and (53%) poor as 21.6% noted that it was satisfactory. Further, 3.6% felt that the service was good and very good at 4.8%. Further still, 24% of the students at the University of Nairobi indicated that the service was very poor and 42% noted it was poor. However, 25% noted it was satisfactory though 3% indicated that the service was good as 6% felt it was very good. Therefore access of information on registration requirements as a learner support service was poorly rated at the three universities under study at 69.8% at Kenyatta University, 66% at the University of Nairobi and 56.8% at Egerton University. This shows that the information given to students on registration requirements was not clear and, therefore, many may end up missing vital and critical information that may affect them during their studies. There is need for the institutions under study ensure that information on registration requirements are clearly spelt out. This has worked in other institutions as stated by Reddy & Manjulika (2000) that in KSOU, registration requirements and procedures are properly and clearly explained during orientation and is completely online as learners are expected to have computer skills as a pre-requisite to open, distance and e-learning. Further, in Saint Joseph's College of Maine, 90% of distance learners noted that the registration process was very good (Allen & Seaman, 2008) which may not be comparable with only 9% of students at Egerton University indicating the service as very good as compared to 4.8% and 6% at Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi respectively.
4.3.1.8 Examination results

On the contrary, examination results were rated satisfactory across the three universities. At Egerton University, 1.2% of the students indicated that the service was very poor as 15.9% felt that it was poor. However, 29.5% felt that the service was satisfactory as another 29.5% indicated that it was good while 22.7% noted that it was very good. Further, at Kenyatta University 1.2% of the students felt that the service was very poor as 15.6% felt it was poor. However, 53% indicated it was satisfactory and 20.4% and 9.6% noted the service was good and very good respectively. Further still, at the University of Nairobi, 3% of the students noted the service was very poor and 13% indicated it was poor. None the less, 43% indicated the service was satisfactory while 22% felt it was good and 19% very good. Generally, this was a good learner support service offered to open, distance and e-learning students at 84% at the University of Nairobi, 83.2% at Kenyatta University and 82.9% at Egerton University indicating that they were satisfied with the access of examination results. These concur with Reddy & Manjulika (2000) who indicated that learners who were aware of their examination results were motivated to learn and as such, access to examination results whether good or bad would help the students to prepare for any eventuality in future. These preparations would possibly include; preparing the finances for the following academic year where one had passed an examination or revising for a supplementary where one had failed. The same results may also prepare and enable a student to apply for further studies or for a job placement (Kangai et al, 2011).
4.3.1.9 Institutional regulations

Further, institutional regulations services were rated as satisfactory across the universities under the study. Students at Egerton University indicated that the service was very poor and poor at 4.5% and 2.3% respectively. However, 41% noted that the service was satisfactory as 25% felt it was good and 27.3% indicated that the service was very good. It was also noted that at Kenyatta University, 6% of the students were of the view that the service was very poor as 12% also noted it was poor. On the other hand, 45.8% indicated the service was satisfactory while 13.3% and 22.9% noted that the service was good and very good. The study established that students at the University of Nairobi felt that the service was very poor (3%) and poor (13%) as 41% noted it was satisfactory, and 22% felt that it was good while 21% indicated that the service was very good. Therefore, majority of the students agreed that institutional regulations services were generally good at 93.2% at Egerton University, 84% at the University of Nairobi and 82% at Kenyatta University. This concurs with Cheng et al, (1993) observations that who were aware of the rules and regulations that govern institutions and the consequences of not following them were likely to excel in their studies while Tait (1995) noted that rules and regulations ensure order is maintained by the learners as well as the institutions for smooth running of the programmes.

Therefore, it is the prerogative of respective institutions to ensure that all the necessary information is passed to the students to ensure that they are abreast with all the requirements as they enroll in the programme. It is important to note that registration starts from enrolling as a student in an institute where certain requirements must be met.
Further, students are required to register for units. To some extent, registration is pegged on payment of a certain percentage of the required fees. All this information need to be passed on to students and as clearly as possible. Notable still, students who are aware of their examination results are motivated to learn (Allen, 2008) and as such, access to examination results whether good or bad would help the students to make future preparations and decisions pertaining their education.

In addition, students were requested to rate the services that were offered in reference to personal and social needs such as online interaction, academic advice and students counseling services. Table 4.6 indicates their responses.

Table 4.6 Personal and social needs as per students

| Percentage | Egerton University | | | | Kenyatta University | | | | University of Nairobi | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Online interaction | VP | P | S | G | VG | VP | P | S | G | VG | VP | P | S | G | VG | VP | P | S | G | VG |
| 45.4 | 34 | 13.6 | 6.8 |  | 33.7 | 38.5 | 31.6 | 6 |  | 47 | 43 | 8 | 2 |  |
| Academic advice offered | 22.7 | 50 | 4.5 | 6.8 | 15.9 | 13.2 | 59 | 9.6 | 12 | 6 | 20 | 48 | 22 | 4 | 6 |  |
| Students counselling | 54.5 | 43.1 | 2.2 |  | 55.4 | 33.7 | 9.6 | 1.2 |  | 51 | 35 | 11 | 3 |  |

(Source: Students questionnaire)  
N = 227

Key: VP = Very poor, P = Poor, S = Satisfactory, G = Good, VG = Very good.
4.3.1.10 Online interaction

The study established that learner support services related to personal and social needs which included online interaction, academic advice offered and students counseling were rated as poor across the three institutions. From the table, online interaction was rated very poor (45.4%) and poor (34%) at Egerton University while 13.6% noted that the service was satisfactory as 6.8% of the students indicated that the service was good. At Kenyatta University, 33.7% of the students rated the service as very poor and 38.5% indicated it was poor. However, 31.6% felt that the service was satisfactory as 6% indicated it was good. Further, at the University of Nairobi, 47% of the students felt that the service was very poor as 43% noted that it was poor while. Further still, 8% indicated that the service was satisfactory while 2% who felt that the service was good. It is notable that none of the students across the three institutions under the study indicated that the service was very good. Therefore, it was established that the service was rated poorly at 90% at the University of Nairobi, 79.4% at Egerton University and 72.2% at Kenyatta University. This contrasts the studies done at University of South Africa in that students want support though 10 per cent of distance students may want interaction with other students, 90 per cent yearn for it (SAIDE, 1999). This is supported by studies done in Zimbabwe Open University whereby learners noted that they would be more satisfied if the institution developed a more interactive and updated websites, (Allen & Seaman, 2008). Therefore online interaction is necessary to the students to eliminate the barriers of isolation, distance and loneliness.
4.3.1.11 Academic advice

Academic advice as a service was also rated very poor at 22.7% as 50% also noted that the service was poor. However, 4.5% of the students felt that it was satisfactory while 6.8% and 15.9% indicated that the service was good and very good respectively at Egerton University. At Kenyatta University, students indicated that academic advice was also very poor at 13.2% as 59% felt that it was poor. Further, 9.6% of the students noted that the service was satisfactory while 12% and 6% indicated that it was good and very good. Further still at the University of Nairobi, it was established that 20% of the students felt that the service was very poor and 48% indicated that it was poor. Still, 22% noted that the service as satisfactory as 4% indicated it was good and 6% felt that the service was very good. As such, from the study findings, academic advice as a service was generally rated as poor by the students at 72.7% and 72.2% at Egerton University and Kenyatta University and 68% at the University of Nairobi. This is very wanting bearing in mind that at Saint Joseph’s College of Maine, 80% of the students indicated that their relationship with their academic advisor was excellent while 17% reported that their academic advisors contributed to positive experiences with their institute (Cheng et al, 1993).

4.3.1.12 Students counseling

Lastly, students counseling services were not satisfactory to the learners in all the universities under study. From the findings, students at Egerton University rated the service as very poor at 54.5% as 43.1% indicated that it was poor while 2.2% felt that the service was satisfactory. Further, at Kenyatta University, 55.4% noted that the
service was very poor while 33.7% felt that the service was poor. Further still, 9.6% indicated that the service was satisfactory as 1.2% noted that it was good. At the University of Nairobi, the study established that 51% of the students rated the service as very poor and 35% felt it was poor. However, 11% of the students indicated that the service was satisfactory as 3% noted that it was good. In this category, none of the students indicated that students counseling services were very good. Therefore, in all the universities under study, the service was rated poorly at 97.6% at Egerton University, 89.1% at Kenyatta University and 86% at the University of Nairobi. On the other hand, it is important to note that students counselling service is crucial in that studies carried out for instance in Tanzania noted that 91% of distance learners in Open University of Tanzania felt that counselling classes were valuable while 84% percent noted that the sessions were interesting and attractive (Kisassi, 2011). The findings of this study further contradicts SAIDE (1999), who noted that in UNISA, the quality of counselling sessions offered translated into 95% satisfaction to the learners as compared to almost 90% dissatisfaction in our institutions.

This dissatisfaction in personal and social needs could be as a result of lack of infrastructure development to support online interaction or lack of initiative by the students or technical knowhow. Further studies may be necessary to conclusively identify the reasons behind the poor status of the service. It is important to point out that students who miss the right academic guidance are likely to retrogress in their academic capabilities and as such, there is need for the institutions to come up with intervening strategies that would assist students by possibly attaching particular students to personal
academic advisors and mentors who would take the initiative to follow the students’ academic progress. Further, there is need to possibly change the way our institutions conduct counselling sessions. To add to this, noting that majority of open, distance and e-learning students indicated that majority of the learner support services offered by their institutions were either poor or very poor, there is need to critically look at the reasons behind such ratings while institutions have gone a long way to develop them for the sole purpose of assisting the students through the programme. It is worth noting that the effectiveness of a programme is determined by the way institutions design, manage, deliver and evaluate their learner support services (Tait, 1995).

4.3.2 Type of learner support as per the administrators

Having looked at the students ratings of the learner support services offered to them, it was also important to establish the ratings of the administrators who included the coordinators and directors to the institutions. Their responses were not categorized as per their respective universities to ensure confidentiality. Their responses were as indicated in Table 4.7.
### Table 4.7 Type of learner support as per administrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Coordinators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VP</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching and learning needs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to face interaction</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-learning materials</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed materials</td>
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<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online library</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course study skills</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access of information</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration requirements</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination results</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional regulations</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal and social needs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online interaction</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advice</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students counseling</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Directors interview schedule and coordinators questionnaire) N = 26

Key; VP = Very poor, P = Poor, S = Satisfactory, G = Good, VG = Very good,

According to Table 4.7, the directors indicated that teaching and learning needs such as face to face interaction, availability of e-learning materials, modules and the
examination administration procedures were good or very good with the exception of online library service that was noted to be 100% satisfactory and pre-course study skills that was rated 33.3% satisfactory. This was supported by the coordinators in that majority of the services offered in this category were rated satisfactory apart from online library service where 39.1% rated the service as poor while availability of e-learning materials and pre-course study skills were also rated as poor at 13%. These positive ratings are supported by the policies put down by respective institutes. For instance, all the institutions conduct tutorials before the start of a new academic year to briefly go through the units on offer and clarify the difficulty areas (www.ku.ac.ke, 26/5/2010).

This is in agreement with Harry (1993) who noted that in the University of Botswana, face to face interaction was held on three sessions per year running for two weeks. Further, Allen & Seaman (2008) stated that the availability of high quality e-learning materials ensure that open, distance and e-learning learners are well taken care off like the fulltime on campus students. Still, the adoption of e-learning materials is in cognizance that distance learners are able to access study materials anywhere anytime. More so, Roberts and Associates (1998) felt that there was need to ensure that modules were available, adequate and accessible to supplement other methods of teaching and learning as they are simplified, interactive and organized didactively with exercises at the end of every topic to gauge the students understanding before proceeding to the following topic. This is supported by Moore (2005) who indicated that pre-course study skills were necessary to guide and orient distance learners on how to use and exploit
various modes of learning during their academic period in their institutions. Further, they assist students to be well prepared as they enroll in the programme. However, the poor rating of online library contradict other studies done in other areas in that its availability gives students a feeling of confidence as they believe that their success depend on the use of the libraries (Carr, 2000). These services are important because during face to face sessions, students’ areas of concern are addressed. They also get clarifications on the problematic areas in the content materials availed to them earlier.

Further, the administrators were to indicate their rating on the learner support services related to access of information needs. As such, the study found out that services such as access of information on registration requirements, examination results and institutional regulations needs were indicated to be good or satisfactory by all the directors. This was supported by the coordinators who also noted that information on registration requirements service was good while still a majority indicated that access to examination results was satisfactory. However, 43.4% were of the opinion that and institutional regulations were poor. These good ratings are supported by studies in other universities such as the Open University of Netherland where information is availed online and consultations can be done through telephone and emails. Institutions involved in the study offer detailed brochures in their respective regional centres to guide students (Rumble, 1992). This information is necessary in that learners are aware of what they require to register and the qualifications and the timelines they must meet to enroll in various courses. This means students register for what they are able to tackle as per the laid down requirements by the respective institutions. Further, the study
revealed that just like Reddy & Manjulika (2000) noted that examination results motivated learning by giving feedback to many other activities involved in the teaching learning process. They also give direction on the strategies adopted by the institutions to foster learning as well as analyzing the students learning progress and their expectations.

The findings that 43.4% of the coordinators noted that institutional regulations service were poor is critical in that according to Cheng et al, (1993), the set rules and regulations must be respected and followed by the parties concerned. Thus the students and the respective institutions must strictly abide and follow the rules set to maintain order that is required for any meaningful and valuable learning to take place. The high poor percentage rating by the coordinators is understandable bearing in mind that they are directly involved with the students. For instance, if a student fails to pay fees in time for any reason, whether real or imagined, that student may be branded bothersome by their respective coordinators. There would be likelihood for such a student to be late in registering for the units as well as collecting modules. As such, this kind of student may be seeking for services that the coordinators would otherwise have gone over with other students.

Further, the study established that personal and social needs which included online interaction, academic advice and students counseling services were rated by the administrators as good or satisfactory as per Table 4.7. This is supported by the coordinators responses in that according to them, online interaction and students
counseling services were noted as satisfactory by the majority. However, 56.5% of the coordinators indicated that academic advice service was poor. The positive opinion is supported by SAIDE (1999) who noted that online interaction increases the quality of distance education. Allen & Seaman (2000) agreed to this by stating that through online interaction, students developed a sense of community and they were able to push away the isolation bug that is associated with distance learning. Further, academic advice assists students to aspire to meet their expectations (Siaciwena, 1996) and also as stated by Haasbroek (1995) that comprehensive academic advice enables students to be proactive and by extension to help them achieve their academic potential. More so, students counseling is important through counseling, students’ problems can be addressed to boost their confidence and self-esteem (Roberts & Associates, 1998).

Therefore, online interaction is able to bring students from different locations together through various modes such as skype, chat and e mails to navigate through challenges that are easily resolved that would otherwise have been very difficult to individual isolated students. Well academically guided students are likely to seek help whenever they are faced with issues during their academic period as they already have expectations that are set as guided in their institutes (Moore et al, 2005). The indication by 56.5% of the coordinators that academic advice service was poor could be possibly as a result of the actions of the students. This can be seen where students register for courses that they are not qualified for or register for inappropriate units. All these must be rectified by the coordinators and therefore the possible feelings that academic advice is poorly done. Lastly, it is imperative to note that students with psychological issues
may not concentrate on their studies and therefore attending to those bothersome issues whether academic or social problems can go a long way in maintaining the student in the programme as well as meet their academic obligations that they had set out to achieve before enrolling into the programme.

The administrator’s responses as established in Table 4.7 paint a different picture with the students’ findings. According to the directors of the institutes all the services offered were satisfactory. In fact, a majority of them were rated as good or very good. However, the coordinators were of a different opinion with services offered ranging from poor to very good. On the contrary, the students were of the opinion that majority of the services were poor. On this premise therefore, bearing in mind that the services are usually supposed to cater for the learners needs, it is very necessary for the administrators and especially the directors to establish the reasons behind the poor students ratings and look for ways to make the services offered better for the sake of the students in the open, distance and e-learning programmes.

4.4 Objective 2: Essential Learner Support Services

The second objective of the study was to identify learner support services that the learners and the administrators felt were essential to be offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya. The learners were requested to highlight five essential learner support services that they felt were very necessary to them. Their responses were as shown in Figure 4.1.
According to Figure 4.1, the students indicated that the essential services that would be very necessary to them in the order of preference were; printed materials, online interaction, online library, availability of e-learning materials and face to face interactions. However as can be seen in Figure 4.1, pre-course study skills and academic advice were also deemed as necessary learner support services by a substantial number of open, distance and e-learning students.

Further, the administrators also indicated learner support services that they felt were very necessary to open, distance and e-learning learners. Their responses were as shown in Figure 4.2.
According to Figure 4.2 above, the administrators indicated that the key learner support services included; printed materials, face to face interaction, online library, online interaction, and e-learning materials. Additionally, pre-course study skill and academic advice were also learner support services that were also rated highly as important to distance learners. This shows that the learners and the administrators agree that printed materials, online library, face to face interaction, online interaction and e-learning materials are the five most essential learner support services that open, distance and e-learning learners require. Further, they also felt that pre-course study skills and academic advice were also necessary. Therefore institutions offering open, distance and
e-learning programmes must strive to offer the aforementioned essential learner support services and ensure that they adequately support learners instead of offering a wide range of learner support services that less that 10% of the learners feel that they are satisfactory.

4.5 Objective 3: Perceptions on the learner support service

The third objective was supposed to establish the attitudes of the users of open, distance and e-learning programmes on the learner support services offered in selected public universities in Kenya.

4.5.1.1 Students attitude on teaching and learning needs

The students under open, distance and e-learning were requested to indicate their views on statements relating to the services offered. Their responses were as indicated in Table 4.8 below.
Table 4.8 Students attitude on teaching and learning needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somehow Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face to face interaction is a waste of time</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students easily to access e-learning materials</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students get modules in time</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are happy with online library</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course study skills are necessary to distant learners</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are contented with examination administration procedures</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Students questionnaire) N = 227

Table 4.8 above show statements relating to teaching and learning needs of which students were supposed to indicate their opinions. As seen in the table, 35.6% of the students strongly disagreed with the statement that face to face interaction was a waste of time while 29.5% disagreed. Further, 15.4% somehow agreed with the statement as 12.7% and 6.6% of the students agreed and strongly agreed with the statement. Therefore, 65.1% felt that face to face interaction was necessary as compared to 34.9% who indicated that it was a waste of time. Further still, 16.7% of the students strongly disagreed with the statement that students easily accessed e-learning materials as 14% also disagreed with the same. On the contrary, 8.4% somehow agreed that it was easy while 40.5% and 20.3% agreed and strongly agreed that it was easy to access e-learning materials respectively. According to the findings, only 30.7% of the students
experienced problems in accessing e-learning materials. The study also established that 19% of the students strongly disagreed that they got printed materials in time while 62.2% disagreed with the same. However, 7% somehow agreed with the statement as 7.9% agreed and 3.9% strongly agreed. This shows that 81.1% of the students received printed materials in time as compared to 18.8% who were in the contrary.

From the study findings, 17.6% of the students strongly disagreed with the statement that students were happy with online library as 61.2% disagreed with the same. On the other hand, 7.5% somehow agreed while 8.8% agreed and 4.8% strongly agreed with the statement. Overall, 78.8% of the students are not happy with online library while only 21.1% were happy with online library. It was also observed that 11.5% of the students strongly disagreed with the statement that pre-course study skills are necessary to distant learners while 13.2% disagreed with the statement. However, 6.2% somehow agreed while 48.5% agreed while 20.7% strongly agreed that pre-course study skills are necessary to distance students. Therefore, 75.4% of the students view the service as necessary. Further, 35.2% of the students strongly disagreed that they are contented with examination administration procedures while 44% disagreed. On the contrary, 11% indicated that they somehow agreed with the statement as 9.7% agreed. This indicates that 79.2% of the students are not happy with the way examinations are administered as compared to 20.7% who were happy.

These findings are supported by Tait (1995) who noted that face to face interaction is important to students since it is an effective tool for the technologically unfamiliar
distance education student. Accordingly, Moore et al (2005) noted that reference materials, course syllabi, study guides and supplementary materials assist students in learning the course content. Further, universities such as IGNOU e-link have been adopted to avail materials and other reference materials online for students. This is very important in that students are able to go through the available materials to enrich their knowledge in their areas of speciality other than the simplified and detailed modules.

Therefore, since the students indicated that face to face interaction service is important, then there is need to improve it more by possibly increasing interaction time or even by distributing recorded presentations for those who may miss tutorials or may want to go through the presentations once more. Also, institutions concerned should ensure that learners can access e-learning materials in an easy manner and timely as distance learners may not be able to access the traditional university library for any reference materials. This can be achieved by possibly training students on how to use the programmes in use as well as access the uploaded materials. Therefore making e-learning materials easily available translates into assisting students to access as many reference materials as possible. Further, students are expected to receive modules early to read through before going for tutorials to seek assistance where necessary. This indicates that learners may end up attending face to face interactions without any idea of the contents of the module. However, this delay may be affected by other measures put in place. For instance, students are issued with modules after paying the required fees. This means that though one might have registered, they cannot be issued with modules until such a time when the fees are cleared. Thus institutions should adopt a policy
where learners are issued with modules in the shortest possible time so as to start well in advance. As such, institutions need to embrace technology in making materials available to all the students wherever they are to eradicate rote learning that is associated with dependence on the use of printed modules. May be it is time students were examined on material not contained in the modules.

4.5.1.2 Students attitude on access of information needs

Secondly, students were requested to indicate their perceptions relating to statements relating to access of information needs. Table 4.9 shows their observations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somehow agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information on registration process and requirements is not clear</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination results are always available in time</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules and regulations are not relevant to distance learners</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Students questionnaire)  
N = 227

According to Table 4.9, 11.8% of the students strongly disagreed with the statement that information on registration process and requirements is not clear while 70.9% also disagreed. However, 11% somehow agreed with the statement as 4.8% and 1.3% agreed and strongly agreed respectively. This indicates that 82.7% of the students view the
information on registration process and requirements offered by their respective institutions as clear. Further, 28.2% of the students strongly disagreed that examination results were always available in time as 40% disagreed with the same. On the other hand, 23.7% somehow agreed that the service was available as 4.4% agreed that it was also available. Lastly, 3.5% strongly agreed that examination results were always available in time. Therefore, 68.2% of the respondents disagreed with the statement as compared to 31.6% who were able to access examination results in time. It was also observed that 13.2% of the students strongly disagreed that rules and regulations were not relevant to distance learners as 33.5% disagreed with the statement. It was also noted that 26% somehow agreed as 17.6% agreed while 9.7 strongly agreed that rules and regulations were not relevant to distance learners. Generally, 53.3% were of the view that rules and regulations were not relevant to distance learners while on the contrary, 46.7% felt they were relevant.

This means that information given is clear and this enables the students to prepare well in advance with the registration requirements (Allen & Seaman, 2008). This also conforms to SAIDE (1999) that informed learners are aware of where to seek for clarification and advise when faced with problems. The information given helps the prospective students to grasp the requirements of the course before registration as well as its appropriateness. Besides, where information may not be clear, students can still raise the issues with the institutions through telephone or email or through customized websites that are on offer at the institution. Further, according to Tait (1995), students must understand and observe rules and the regulations as set out by their respective
institutions though institutions are also expected to play their part in observing the same
rules and regulations, (Cheng et al, 1993). As such, rules and regulations are expected to
ensure there is order in that they guide the activities undertaken by the students and the
institution from the admission into the programme to the graduation to the next level.
These findings show that the students were split in the middle on the need for and
against the service. This may be as a result of the presence some rules and regulations
that may seem inappropriate to distance students. Thus it is important to scrutinise the
rules and regulations in place and their effect and relevance to distance students.

4.5.1.3 Students attitude on personal and social needs

Thirdly, students were asked to indicate how they felt on the services offered to them in
relation to personal and social needs. Their responses were as recorded in Table 4.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somehow Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online interaction has no value to learners</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advice is available to distance learners</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>55.9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are no counselling services for students</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Students questionnaire)  
N = 227
From the table, 7.9% of the students strongly disagreed that online interaction had no value to learners while 66.1% disagreed. On the other hand, 17.6% somehow agreed as 4.4% agreed and 3.9% strongly agreed with the statement. As such, 74% of the students felt that online interaction is valuable to them. Additionally, 4.8% strongly disagreed that academic advice was available to distance learners and 14.9% disagreed. This is contrary to 13.2% who somehow agreed and 55.9% and 11% who agreed and strongly agreed respectively. This means that 80.1% agree that academic advice was available. Lastly, 7.9% strongly disagreed that there are no counselling services for students as 12.3% also agreed with the statement. However, 7.9% somehow agreed that the service was not there while 51.1% agreed with the statement and 20.7% strongly agreed that there were no counselling services. This shows that 79.7% indicated that there were no counselling services while 20.2% were of the contrary opinion.

These findings agree with Bates (2003) that online interaction enables students to reach out to each other through emails, face book or creating a study group. The interaction help in motivating the student to keep alive the academic progress as they consult each other as well as encourage themselves through various interactions. Further, through online interactions, students are able to consult tutors and the tutors can also monitor the students’ progress. Either, problematic areas can also be attended to through the same interactions. Still, Reddy & Manjulika (2000) noted that at Saint Joseph College of Maine, students are attached to academic advisors to guide them throughout their college life while in India, institutions offering distance learning must offer accessible and beneficial counselling services to students (Cheng et al, 1993).
Though the statements did not require the students to indicate the reasons behind their perception, there is need to establish why they were not interested in online interaction in the institutions under study given the huge role played by the service. Maybe there is need to make it more appealing and academically necessary for students to participate and thereafter enjoy its benefits. This service is important in that it helps distance learners to identify and achieve their maximum educational potential as well as tackle and handle emerging academic issues that may affect them. Besides, distance learners are faced with a lot of challenges which ultimately affect their performance in academics. As such, counselling comes in handy to assist them to cope with the diverse tasks as well as continue with their education. Through the above students’ statements, it is imperative for the institutions under the study to critically analyse the services offered by their relevant institutes and find out the reasons behind the negative perceptions on the statements that were put through. Further, the directors and the coordinators need to re-evaluate the mandate of the services put in place and their relevance in the modern technological changes that are evolving very fast.

4.5.2 Administrators’ attitude of the learner support available

The administrators to the institutions offering open distance and e-learning programmes were also requested to indicate their attitude on the same statements. Their responses were as indicated in Table 4.11.
Table 4.11 Administrators perception of the learner support available

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentages</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to face interaction is a waste of time</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students easily to access e-learning materials</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students get printed materials in time</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are happy with online library</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course study skills is necessary to distant learners</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are contented with examination administration procedures</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on registration process and requirements is not clear</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination results are always available on time</td>
<td></td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules and regulations are not relevant to distant learners</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online interaction has no value to learners</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advice is available to distance learners</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are no counselling services for students</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Directors interview schedule and coordinators questionnaire)  N = 26

Key:

SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, SA= Somehow Agree, A= Agree,

SA= Strongly Agree

The study finding in Table 4.11 show that 11.5% of the administrators strongly disagreed with the statement that face to face interaction was a waste of time while 42.3% disagreed. However, 34.6% somehow agreed and 11.5% agreed with the statement. This indicates that 53.8% of the administrators were of the opinion that face
to face interaction was necessary to the students as compared to 46.1%. The study also revealed that 11.5% of the administrators strongly disagreed that students easily accessed e-learning materials as 30.8% disagreed. On the contrary, 46.1% somehow agreed and 11.5% agreed with the statement. Therefore, 57.6% of the administrators felt that students easily accessed e-learning materials. Further the study established that 23.1% of the administrators disagreed that students got printed materials (modules) in time. On the other hand, 11.5% somehow agreed as 34.6% agreed and 30.8% strongly agreed with the statement. Thus 76.1% agreed that students got printed materials in time. Further still, 42.3% of the administrators disagreed that students were happy with online library while 34.6% somehow agreed and 23.1% agreed with the statement. Generally, 57.7% agreed that students were happy with online library. It was also observed that 30.8% of the administrators agreed that pre-course study skills were necessary to distance students. However, 34.6% somehow agreed with the statement while 26.9% and 7.7% agreed and strongly agreed respectively. As such, 69.2% of the administrators agreed that pre-course study skills were necessary as compared to 30.8% who felt study skills were not necessary. The study also established that 11.5% of the respondents somehow agreed that students were contented with examination administration procedures while 50% agreed and 38.5% strongly agreed with the statement translating into 100% agreement. Further, 11.5% strongly disagreed and 73.1% disagreed that that information on registration process and requirements was not clear. On the contrary, 15.4% agreed they were clear. Therefore, 84.6% of the administrators disagreed with the statement. Further still, 76.9% and 23.1% agreed and strongly agreed that examination results are always available in time at 100%.
In line with these findings, other studies conducted indicate that face to face interaction service is important in that over 80% of the students require it (Jowi, 2003) while Nicholas & Tomeo (2005) noted that students should be supported with e-learning materials which can be easily accessed to supplement the few printed materials available. Roberts and Associates (1998) stated that printed materials (modules) are very important to a distance learner. This is ascertained by SAIDE (1999) who indicated that there was a positive correlation in satisfaction to distance learners where quality modules were available. Additionally, this has been further attested to by Moore (2003) who noted that pre-course study skill training acts as a session that equips students with the skills that they use while in the programme. Through this training, students are directed on how to take notes, access library materials as well as address any queries that they may come across online.

According to the table, 26.9% of the administrators strongly disagreed that rules and regulations were not relevant to distance learners as 46.2% disagreed. On the other hand, 15.4% somehow agreed and 11.5% agreed with the statement. Therefore 73.1% felt that rules and regulations are relevant to distance students. It was also noted that 26.9% strongly disagreed and 53.8% disagreed that online interaction had no value to learners. However 7.6% and 11.5% somehow agreed and agreed that it was valuable. This shows that 80.7% of the administrators agree that online interaction is quite valuable. Further, 11.5% disagreed that academic advice was available to distance learners while 30.7% somehow agreed and 57.6% agreed with the statement, meaning that 88.3% of the administrators were in agreement with the statement. Lastly, 23.1%
strongly disagreed and 42.3% disagreed that there were no counselling services for students. On the contrary, 19.2% somehow agreed and 15.4% agreed that the service were there. Therefore, 65.4% noted that there were counselling services for students.

The findings concur with those of Allen & Seaman (2008) who said that the registration process and requirements ought to be clear and simple and students should be made aware well in advance of the requirements. This can be achieved by giving the students all the necessary information and as clearly as possible on the first contact that they make with the institution. Also, they may be encouraged to contact the respective officers whenever they need clarifications. This would go a long way in equipping the students with all the necessary information that they require. Secondly, it is important to note that examination results are essential to students in that they help them to prepare to move to the next level or prepare for a supplementary examination. These are only possible if students are informed well in advance so as to prepare for any eventuality. Thirdly, according to Carr (2000) rules and regulations must be followed and the institutions must also observe, maintain and enforce those rules as stipulated in their individual charters (Cheng et al, 1993). Observing the rules and regulations as stipulated ensures that order is maintained as stipulated by all the parties. Lack of order is a recipe for chaos which is not acceptable in any institution if credibility is to be maintained. Therefore, open, distance and e-learning students must observe the institutions rules and regulations and as such they are relevant.
Further, Moore et al (2005) indicated that online interaction reduces the physical separation between students and their tutor through channels such as email, chats and telephone. This kind of interaction enables students to keep in contact with others as well as encourage each other as they continue with their academic work as it develops a cohesive group that works together to achieve their academic goals. Also, academic guidance is intended to guide the students through making good choices on the course to undertake as well as exploit other services available within the institution while counselling ensures that students are able to navigate through various kinds of problems to achieve their set out academic expectations. This is only possible if institutions can invest in adequate trained professional counsellors who are able to assist the students to handle their issues. For instance, in the Mauritius College of Air, individual counselling is offered while the Open University of Tanzania is offering counselling services in their regional centres (Reddy & Manjulika, 2000). In this scenario therefore, counselling is vital to any individual in all the aspects whether personal or academic.

4.6 Objective 4: Factors affecting learner support services

The fourth objective was to identify the factors that influence learner support services offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya. The administrators were requested to indicate the considerations made before rolling out any learner support service. Their responses were almost similar across the three universities under study. The chart showing their responses as indicated in Figure 4.3.
According to Figure 4.3, 19% of the administrators indicated that before offering any learner support, the existing infrastructure must be thoroughly interrogated to establish if it can be used to support learners in any way as an institution may not adopt a new technology bearing in mind that the existing infrastructure may still be useful and relevant to the learners to some extent. Still, another 19% of the administrators felt that availability of funds was a major consideration as institutions operate within budgetary allocations. This agrees with Juma (2000) that large amounts of the institutions budget go to the remuneration of institutional staff and therefore little money is left for teaching and learning materials and equipment. Furthermore, many institutions offering distance education have relied donor funding and therefore the lack of funds has limited institutions to subscribe to enough library publications.
Further, 17% of the directors and coordinators consider the existing support that was being offered as a key consideration before further learner support service is offered. A respondent noted:

You cannot do away with the existing learner support which had earlier been invested in as long as it is relevant and useful at any degree.

As such there is need to check the compatibility of the existing support offered and the required support to establish the need of a different learner support. The administrators also indicated that the cost of the service to be offered was of paramount consideration at 16% as each learner support offered to students has a cost implication on it which must be put into account. Therefore, institutions can only offer services that are within their means.

Additionally, the administrators indicated that programme sustainability was a necessary factor to consider at 15% as institutions provided learner support services that had been carefully scrutinized to meet the intended objectives. Prior scrutiny ensures that institutions roll out learner support services that would be used over a period of time as investments made in any programme to support learners require immense use of resources. Also, any learner support service that is rolled out to the learners has to be maintained to the highest standards possible to maximize on its use as compared to the cost of rolling out a new learner support service.

Lastly, 14% of the administrators indicated that ICT skills were necessary to the learners as the use of ICT in education is central to any distance learning student.
Today’s learner support systems are based on new technological trends which require the students to have computer literacy skills. As such, it is imperative that students are aware that ICT skills are very necessary to enable them to make use and exploit various learner support services available to them. Therefore, these factors show that institutions go to great lengths and details before embarking on any learner support service.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction
This chapter presents a summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations based on the study findings. The chapter also suggests areas for further research. The findings were related to the objectives of the study which included to ascertain the types of learner support services offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes and secondly, to identify learner support services that the students and the administrators felt were essential to be offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya. The third objective was to establish the attitudes of the users of open, distance and e-learning programmes and lastly identify the factors that influence learner support services offered in open, distance and e-learning programmes in selected public universities in Kenya.

5.2 Summary of the study
The study sought to establish the nature of learner support services offered to open, distance and e-learning students at selected public universities in Kenya with the aim of improving the services offered at various institutions. The study was guided by systems approach whereby input such as teaching and learning needs, access of information needs and social and personal needs would lead to good and adequate learner support services which would ultimately result into reduced isolation and frustration and increased motivation and self-esteem leading to greater fulfilment of students as they pursue their education through open, distance and e-learning mode of study. The study
employed descriptive survey design targeting 329 students, 29 regional coordinators and three directors. Stratified random sampling was used to get a representation of the fourth year students across the selected public universities while convenience sampling was used to select students across the selected centres. All the coordinators and the directors were used in the study. Below is the summary of the study findings.

5.2.1 Type of learner support services
The study was intended to establish the type of learner support services offered to learners at the three institutions under the study. From the study findings, it was apparent that 76% and 51.6% of the learners rated face to face interaction and availability of e-learning materials as poor. However 89.3% of learners indicated that availability of modules was satisfactory. Further, 77.1% noted that availability of online library was poor. Majority of the learners (75% and 76.8%) indicated that pre-course study skills and examination administration procedures were poor.

Accordingly, 64.2% of the learners noted that access of information on registration requirements was poor though access of examination results and institutional regulations were rated as satisfactory at 83.4% and 86.4% respectively. However, online interaction was noted to be poor at 80.5% just like academic advice offered (71%) and students counselling services which were also poor at 90.9% as per the learners’ responses. Therefore the study established that students rated the services offered across the three institutions under study as poor at 75% while only 25% of the services offered to open, distance and e-learning students were rated as satisfactory.
Despite the results of the study findings, the administrators were of a contrary opinion. According to the directors, there was no service that was rated as very poor or poor. However, 34.6% were of the opinion that online library service was poor while 38.4% did acknowledge that access to institutional regulations was also poor. Further, 50% of the administrators indicated that the academic advice service offered to open, distance and e-learning learners was poor. These study findings show a disconnect between the students responses and the administrators as students indicated that most of the services offered were poor while the administrators noted they were good.

5.2.2 Essential Learner Support Services

From the study findings, it is evident that students and the administrators were of the opinion that printed materials (modules), online library, face to face interaction, online interaction and e-learning materials were the main learner support services that would assist learners in distance learning.

5.2.3 Attitude to learner support services

The study established that 65.1% of students felt that face to face was necessary. This was in agreement with 53.8% of the administrators who were of the same opinion. Also, both the learners and the administrators agreed that learners could easily access e-learning materials at 69.1% and 57.6% respectively. However, majority of learners (81%) noted that they did not get printed materials (modules) in time while the administrators agreed at 76.9% that learners got modules in time. Further, the study
revealed that only 21.2% of the learners were happy with online library as compared to 57.7% of the administrators. According to the findings, the learners and the administrators agreed that pre-course study skills were necessary to open, distance and e-learning learners at 75.3% and 69.2% respectively. Whereas 100% of the administrators were of the view that learners were contented with examination administration procedures, only 20.8% of the learners were of the same idea. Further, according to the findings, 82.8% of the learners noted that information on registration process and requirements was clear and the administrators were in agreement with the same at 84.6%. Also, as 100% of the administrators felt that learners accessed their examination results in time, only 31.8% of the learners agreed with the statement. Further, 53.3% of the learners agreed that rules and regulations were not relevant to them, only 26.9% of the administrators agreed with the learners’ sentiments. It is important to note that the learners and the administrators agreed that online interaction was valuable to learners at 74% and 80.7% respectively and they also agreed that academic advice was available to distance learners at 80.1% and 88.3%. Lastly, 79.3% of the learners felt that there were no counselling services available while 65.3% of the administrators disagreed with the same statement.

5.2.4 Factors that influence learner support services

The study revealed that there were factors that institutions did put into consideration before planning to roll out any learner support service to the learners. The most important was existing infrastructure at 19% as well as availability of funds. This was followed by the existing learner support services being offered at 17%. Further, the cost
influenced learner support service offered at 16% while programme sustainability was rated at 15%. Lastly, 14% of the administrators indicated that ICT skills were a necessary consideration before embarking on offering any form of learner support service to open, distance and e-learning students.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the study, it can conclusively be said that most of learner support services offered to distant learners were not good enough to support the learners effectively. Secondly, the students and the administrators were of the view that there were learner support services that were very vital to distant learners. Thirdly, the students and the administrators were of the general view and in agreement that the learner support services offered were necessary. However, since the students indicated that majority of the services on offer were poor across the institutions under the study, there is need to improve and make them better. Lastly, although the administrators were aware of the necessary learner support services required, they were constrained by other factors beyond their control.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the study, the following conclusions were made;

i. Institutions offering open, distance and e-learning programmes should constantly evaluate the value of learner support services offered by seeking the students’ opinion so as to ensure that services offered are beneficial to the majority of students.
ii. Institutions should strive to offer few but essential learner support services such as printed materials (modules), online library, face to face interaction, online interaction and e-learning materials that are of high quality and satisfactory to their students instead of many services that do not meet the students’ expectations.

iii. All the learner support services offered by various institutions were seen to be necessary. However, it is important to ensure that they are satisfactory to majority of the students.

iv. It was noted all the factors influencing learner support services were leaning towards lack of adequate funding. It is important to realise that investment in open, distance and e-learning programme may not be quantified in form of physical facilities but the technological infrastructures put in place to assist distance learners. As such, there is need to empower institutions financially to be able to offer services that are adequate, of good quality and satisfactory to the students.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

Having conducted the study, it is necessary to carry out research on the following areas;

i. A study should be conducted on the effects of learner support services on academic performance of students under the open, distance and e-learning programme.

ii. A similar study should be conducted in the private universities as they were not involved in this study.

iii. Another study should be done to establish the programme completion rate of students under the open, distance and e-learning programme.
REFERENCES


Gil-Jaurena, I. (2014). Student Support Services in Open and Distance Education. Open Praxis, 6(1), 3-4.


Haasbroek, J. B. (1995). Tutoring and Counseling in Distance Education. Pretoria Institute of Educational Research, University of South Africa.


Kangai, C., Rupande, G, and Rugonye, S. (2011). Students Perceptions on the Quality and Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services at the Zimbabwe Open...


Ndeya-Ndereya, Mhlanga & Chikuya. (2003). A Guide for Tutors in Open Learning and Distance Teaching.ZOU. *A Guide for Tutors in Open Learning and Distance Teaching*. ZOU.


Wilson, C. D. (1993). Study Centres: Key to Success of Field Dependent Learners in Africa. In B. Scriven et al. (Eds). Distance Education for the Twenty-first Century, Selected Papers from the 16th World Conference of the International Council for Distance Education.


Dear Student,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify the nature of learner support services offered by the institute of Open, Distance and e-learning. You are kindly requested to fill the questionnaire as honestly as you can. Your responses will be treated confidential and will only be used for academic purposes. Please do not write your name on this questionnaire.

University ________________________________

Using the scale provided, please “tick” (√) your preferred answer in the spaces provided.

**Rating scale**

1 Very poor 2 Poor 3 Satisfactory 4 Good 5 Very good

A) The following learner support services are offered at open, distance and e-learning learning institute. Please give the rating to each service that is offered to you at your open/distance learning institute.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learner support services related to teaching and learning needs on;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1  Face to face interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  E learning materials</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Modules (printed materials)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Online Library resources</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Pre course study skills and orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>6  Examination administration</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Learner support services related to access of information on;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7  Registration requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Examination results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Institutional regulations</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner support services related to personal and social needs on;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Online interaction</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Academic advice</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Students counselling services</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Are there any other learner support services apart from the ones above that are offered by the institute of Open/distance learning? Yes (   ) No (   )

If yes, which ones are they?

C. Highlight at least five learner support services that you consider essential in to open/distance learners
D) The following statements relate to learner support services offered to open/distance learning students. Kindly indicate your view about each of them.

**Rating scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Face to face interaction is a waste of time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  I can easily access e learning materials</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Students get modules in time</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  I am happy with online library</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Pre course study skills is necessary to distant learners</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  I am contented with examination administration Procedures</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Information on registration process and requirements is not clear</td>
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<tr>
<td>8  I get examination results on time</td>
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<tr>
<td>9  Rules and regulations are not relevant to distant learners</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Online interaction has no</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
value to learners

11 Academic advice is available to distance learners

12 There are no counselling services for students

Thank you for your cooperation.
Dear Sir/Madam,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify the nature of learner support offered by the institute of Open, Distance and e-learning. You are kindly requested to fill the questionnaire as honestly as you can. Your responses will be treated confidential and will only be used for academic purposes.

Using the scale provided, please “tick” (√) your preferred answer in the spaces provided.

**Rating scale**

1 Very poor 2 Poor 3 Satisfactory 4 Good 5 Very good

A) Which of the following learner support services are offered to your students at your open learning institute? Please give the rating to each one of them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learner support services related to teaching and learning needs on;</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Face to face interaction</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 E learning materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Modules (printed materials)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 On line Library resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Pre course study skills and orientation</td>
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<td>6 Examination administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learner support services related to access of information on;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 Registration requirements
8 Examination results
9 Institutional regulations

**Learner support services related to personal and social needs on;**

10 Online interaction
11 Academic advice
12 Students counselling services

**B. Are there any other learner support services apart from the ones above that are offered by the institute of Open learning?**

Yes ( )
No ( )

If yes, which ones are they?

**C. In your opinion, which are the CORE learner support services that you consider essential to open/ distance learners?**

**D. The following statements relate to learner support services offered to open learning students. Using the scale provided, please “tick” your preferred answer in the spaces provided.**
Rating scale

5  Strongly disagree  4  Disagree  3  Somewhat Agree  2  Agree  1  Strongly agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>1  Face to face interaction is a waste of time</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Students easily to access e learning materials</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Students get modules in time</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Students are happy with online library</td>
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<tr>
<td>5  Pre course study skills is necessary to distant learners</td>
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<td>6  Students are contented with examination administration Procedures</td>
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<tr>
<td>7  Information on registration process and requirements is not clear</td>
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<tr>
<td>8  Examination results are always available on time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Rules and regulations are not relevant to distant learners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Online interaction has no value to learners</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Academic advice is available to distance learners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 There are no counselling services for students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. (i) What would you consider before offering any form of learner support to your students?

(ii) Kindly indicate the reasons to the considerations given above

Thank you for your cooperation
## APPENDIX III

### Interview schedule for the Director

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Main</th>
<th>Probing question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learner support services</td>
<td>Types of learner support services</td>
<td>(i) What kind of support do you offer to students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) Kindly, how would you rate the support being offered to the current students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) Are there services that you would want to offer but are not available?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(iv) Which are those services?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(v) Why are you not able to offer them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(vi) What is their importance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential learner support services</td>
<td>(i) From the services offered, are there services that are more important than others?</td>
<td>(ii) Which are those services?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) Why are they important?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(iv) Are you able to offer those important services?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(v) What are your reasons?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of learner support services</td>
<td>What is your opinion on the support you offer to your students?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Factors affecting learner support services | (i) How do you decide the type of learner support to offer?  
(ii) What would influence your decision?  
(iii) How often do you review the services offered.  
(iv) What challenges do you face in offering learner support  
(v) Do you involve the students in deciding the services to offer?  
(vi) What are your reasons? |

(ii) Are there services that you feel are not necessary?  
(iii) Which ones are those?  
(iv) Why are they being offered?

Thank you for your cooperation
APPENDIX IV

Morgan, D.W and Krejcie R.V (1970) Table for Determining Sample Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>100000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: “N” is population size

“S” is sample size
APPENDIX V
Research Authorization (Kenyatta University)

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke
Website: www.ku.ac.ke

FROM: Dean, Graduate School
TO: Mr. Laichena Edward Mutabari
C/o Educational Communication & Technology Dept.
Kenyatta University

DATE: 20th September, 2014

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This is to inform you that Graduate School Board at its meeting of 17th September, 2014 approved your Research Proposal for the M.Ed. Degree, subject to removing 'The Case of Nairobi, Kenyatta and Egerton Universities' from the title to read “Towards Meeting Learning Needs of Open, Distance and E-Learning Programme Students in Selected Public Universities”.

Thank you.

DAVID N. NJOROGE
FOR DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

c.c. Chairman, Educational Communication & Technology Dept.

Supervisors:
1. Prof. Henry O. Ayot
C/o Educational Communication & Technology Dept.
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

2. Dr. Sophie M. Ndethiu
C/o Educational Communication & Technology Dept.
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

Committed to Creativity, Excellence & Self-Reliance
APPENDIX VI

Research Authorization

(NACOSTI)

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: +254-20-2213471, 2241349, 310571, 2219420
Fax: +254-20-318245, 318249
Email: secretary@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

Ref. No.

NACOSTI/P/15/1782/5868

Laichenia Edward Mutabari
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on “Towards meeting learning needs of open, distance and E-Learning programme students in selected public universities,” I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Nairobi and Nakuru Counties for a period ending 6th November, 2015.

You are advised to report to the Vice Chancellors of selected public universities, the County Commissioners and the County Directors of Education, Nairobi and Nakuru Counties before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of the research report/thesis to our office.

DR. S. K. LANGAT, OGW
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The Vice Chancellors
Selected Public Universities.

The County Commissioner
Nairobi County.
APPENDIX VII

Research Permit

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MR. LAICHENA EDWARD MUTABARI
of KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, 203-10228
KANGARI, has been permitted to conduct
research in Nairobi, Nakuru Counties

on the topic: TOWARDS MEETING
LEARNING NEEDS OF OPEN, DISTANCE
AND E-LEARNING PROGRAMME
STUDENTS IN SELECTED PUBLIC
UNIVERSITIES

for the period ending:
6th November, 2015

[Signature]
Applicant's

Permit No: NACOST/IP/15/1782/5868
Date of Issue: 9th July, 2015
Fee Received: Ksh 1,000

[Signature]
Director General
National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation