

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNER SUPPORT SYSTEM (LSS) FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING (SDL) AT OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DISTANCE
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CERTIFICATION

The Undersigned certifies that she has read and hereby recommends for acceptance by the Open University of Tanzania a Dissertation entitled **“Learner Support System (LSS) for Self Directed Learning (SDL) at the Open University of Tanzania”** in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Distance Education of the Open University of Tanzania

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DECLARATION

I Mavoa Elias, do hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and that it has not been presented and will not be presented to any other University of a similar or any other degree award.

Signature

Date

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Paulo, Muivei Mavoia and my family.

ABSTRACT

The study explored how Learner's support services stimulate and sustain Self-directed Learning among students at Open University of Tanzania. The study analyzed the meaning students and lecturers attach to the concept on Learners' support and Self-directed learning; and contribution of learners' support to students' learning experience. The study was conducted at Korogwe town and Tanga municipality in Tanga region. The sample composed of 50 respondents including 40 Open University of Tanzania students; 5 academic staff, 3 tutors and 2 non-academic staff at the Open University of Tanzania Tanga regional centre. The study employed simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected through interviews, observation and documentary review.

Findings revealed that: Learners' support services played a greater role in enhancing students' Self-directed Learning. Lecturers and students had a notion of dependency in learning that dissolves self-directed learning behavior. Students had a correct description of self-directed learning such that learning is the learner's responsibility. It was revealed further that learners' support provided by the Open University of Tanzania did not satisfy students' needs. Most learners did not have appropriate self-directed learning skills.

The study recommends the following: The Open University of Tanzania should provide adequate and appropriate Learning support that should enhance SDL. Students and lecturers should be trained on SDL skills; increase number of lecturers and tutors at the Director of Regional Centres' offices; and there should be display of proper organization of student support.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BA.Ed	Bachelor of Arts with Education
CD	City Director
CIPP	Content Input Process Product
DRC	Director of Regional Centre
HESLB	Higher Education Student Loan Board
IAE	Institute of Adult Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KTCIV	Korogwe Town Council Investment profile
LLS	Learner Support Services
MoEVT	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
OCDI	Oddi Continuing Learning Inventory
ODeL	Open Distance and e-Learning
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
OUT	Open University of Tanzania
PRO	Personal Responsibility Orientation Model
SDL	Self Directed Learning
SDT	Self Determination Theory

RAS	Regional Administrative Secretary
TD	Town Director
TPEO	Town Primary Education Officer
TRIP	Tanga Regional Investment Profile
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
VETA	Vocational and Educational Training Authority
ZPD	Zonal of Proximal Development

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents the Problem and Its Context under the following Sections: Background to the Problem; Statement of the Problem; Objectives of the Study; and Significance of the Study. Other Sections include: Scope of the Study; Limitations of the Study; Definition of Key Terms and Concepts; and Conceptual Framework.

1.2 Background to the Problem.

Self-directed learning (SDL) is an inner motivation that pushes a student towards learning. Gibbons (2002) defines self-directed learning as a process in which learners take initiatives and responsibilities regarding aspects happening in their education. The concept of SDL was developed by Edward C. Linderman, an American educator in 1925. According to Linderman,(1926), learners, especially adult learners are motivated to learn if they feel that through learning, their needs and interests will be satisfied because learning in adulthood entails life-centered, and thus, adults are considered to be self-directed. Thus, learning occurs when learners are motivated to learn as long as they feel that their needs and interests will be satisfied through learning Maslow(1943).

Before Linderman's theorizing about self-directed learning, the concept of SDL existed but was named and perceived by ancient philosophers like Socrates and Aristotle as self-education (Kulich, 1970). According to Socrates (470 BC-399 BC), wisdom begins in admitting one's own ignorance, and is followed by self-education. According to this

view, people become self-directed, not because they are prompted by someone else, but because of an inner urge to knowledge Ryan and Deci (2000). Mardziah (1969) adds that self-directed learners are confident, goal oriented, motivated, persistent and independent.

Knowles (1975) defines self-directed learning as a process where individuals take initiative(s) with or without the help of others to diagnose their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying resources for learning, selecting as well as implementing learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes.

Candy (1991) summarized two characteristics of self-directed learner. They are attributes and skills that drive one to curiosity, gets motivated, methodically disciplined, logical, analytical, reflective, self-aware, flexible, independent, interpersonally competent, persistent, and responsible. Other supporters of self-directed learning such as Haye (1993), Tough (1967), Merriam and Caffarella (1991), and others believe that self-directed learners take the primary responsibility for planning, carrying out the study and evaluating their learning experience.

In Open and Distance Learning (ODL), self-directed learning is highly required especially that learners are separated from their instructors Boston (1992). Learners who are self-directed take initiatives and responsibilities on what occurs in their learning. They select, manage and assess their learning activities as well as take their responsibility for their own learning in order to learn effectively at their own pace and develop their independent and life long learning skills to fulfill their learning objectives Dale and Barry (1998).

It falls that learners who are not self-directed will be the opposite of those who are. for example, those who are not self-directed are not curious, motivated, disciplined, analytical, reflective, aware and all those attributes that Candy explained. Without SDL, individual learners in distance learning environment will lack motivation and such that they will decide to drop out (Drucker, 1994). Thus, a self directed learner can be identified from a non-self directed learner by assessing and examining their involvement in learning. For instance, self-directed learners have positive personal drives towards planning and setting learning goals, but non self-directed learners depend solely on the teacher's goals and objectives. Self directed learners are both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated, while non-self-directed learners mostly rely on extrinsic motivation Long (1991).

From the foregoing, SDL is theorized as emanating from the learner's inside, and actually it is very social in that people become intrinsically motivated to do certain activities including learning from other people around them Rogers, (1983). A child may be motivated to learn a skill after seeing his or her parents or peers doing things skillfully (ibid). Likewise, one may become demotivated by being punished for doing something, and therefore, develops dislike of learning something that he or she suffered from the consequence Sutton and Barto (1998). This idea also comes from Vygotsky's (1978) concept of "zone of proximal development," which implies that learning is not a natural and individual process, but a social and cultural activity that an individual is assisted by peers or by other more knowledgeable individuals.

If this is true, it follows that self-directed learning can be very much developed socially, when a learner is motivated to learn, and this brings to what is known as

Learner support system (LSS) James (2008). Learner support refers to all forms of assistance provided to the learner to help him or her learn better and in open and distance learning, LSS is provided to distance learners so as to ensure that learning tasks are performed successfully (Gunawardena, 1996).

Linda (2000) defines student support as prevention, intervention and transition follow-up service for learners, students and families. According to her (ibid.), learner support is concerned with removing barriers of learning through direct counseling, consultation and individual assessment. In many learning institutions, scholars have theorized learner support system as important in motivating learners to learn.

Garrison and Bayton (1987) define learner support as resources that learners can access in order to carry out the learning process. Resources from learning institutions normally fall under resources such as library facilities, various media as well as software programs, community learning and the like (Casson,2001).

Learner support in distance learning is practiced by identifying the learner's needs and determines how those needs could be met Rae (1989). After an initial identification, the supporter is supposed to think of ways and strategies to provide support to meet those needs. In order to determine if the students' support is effective, the provider of support should do a comparison with that of the most effective provision, which promotes independence in learning and enhances self-directed learning (ibid).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Literature on self-directed learning is not linked to learner support services. Likewise, the literature on learner support has not been linked with self-directed learning. Scholars see learners as inner motivated that they have active desire on learning and they are driven by their feelings to fulfill their learning goals in life Gibbons(2002),Linderman (1926).Similarly, it has been theorized that distance learners are very active in planning and formulating their learning goals without the help of others Knowles (1975).More over learners become self motivated due to their attributes and skills that are very natural Haye (1993), Merriam and Caffarella (1991).All these scholars see learners as being inner motivated, perhaps making a decision to rely on intrinsic motivation.

These scholars have not looked into a possibility that perhaps, extrinsic motivation such as learner support may strengthen or dissipate one's self-direction. Furthermore, while the above scholars have discussed self directed learning, much of this discussion has only described about self-directed learning and none has empirically studied how students come to be self-directed learners and how that disposition can be developed or strengthened. Scholars talk of SDL as if it comes from inside an individual and nothing from the outside can qualify or bar it. Furthermore, scholars have yet to determine how LSS can promote SDL. Thus, this study aimed to filling in this gap in literature.

1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1 Main Objective

The Main Objective of this study was to assess the manner in which learner support system (LSS) can promote and sustain self-directed learning (SDL) among students at the Open University of Tanzania.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

The study had the following Specific Objectives:

1. To assess student support services at the Open University of Tanzania;
2. To explore meanings that students and lecturers attach to the concept of self-directed learning; and
3. To examine students and lecturers' perceptions on how students support services can contribute to self-directed learning.

1.3.3 Research Questions.

The study was guided by the following Research Questions:

1. What student support services are provided at the Open University of Tanzania?
2. What are meanings attached by students and lecturers on the concept of self-directed learning?
3. What are students and lecturers' perceptions on how student support services can contribute to self-directed learning?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Result from the study would provide insight to stakeholders and lecturers concerning learning problems that are related to inadequate and inappropriate learning support. Also results from the study would give some insights into reviewing students and facilitators' perceptions on learner support services and self-directed learning and how learners' support enhances students' self-directed learning.

In addition, institutions dealing with Learner support system and SDL in distance education such as The Open University of Tanzania (OUT), Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOVET), Institute of Adult Education (IAE) and Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA) would benefit from the findings thereby facilitate necessary adjustments in order to attain the desired objectives of successful learning. Moreover, the study would contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study concentrated on assessment of learner support in self-directed learning at the Open University of Tanzania. The study was conducted at the Open University students in Korogwe town and Tanga City. In the study, two centers were involved whereby they catered for students from rural and urban areas. Specifically, the study focused on contribution of learner support in Self-directed learning (SDL) to students' learning experiences.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited by the following barriers: firstly, there was a rigid bureaucracy

for release of research permit from the Regional authority to the district level. The researcher delayed to conduct research till he was officially permitted. The researcher remained patient while the official procedures were on-going.

Secondly, the research was conducted during University examinations. Hence, it became somehow difficult because some students refused to be interviewed because they were tired while others were in a hurry to attend in their study sessions. Despite those difficulties, the researcher succeeded to conduct the study with the required number of both students and facilitators. They all confidently responded to the study.

Lastly, at the examination centres, some students hesitated to respond to some questions worrying that may be their responses could be reported to the government or at the Open University of Tanzania. However, the researcher informed them that their responses will remain confidential and their names will not appear in any part of the study because the study is only for academic purposes .

1.7 Definition of Terms and Concepts

In this study the following terms and concepts were defined as following:-

Autonomous motivation:

Autonomous motivation means involving an individual learner in learning activity voluntarily or willingly without being forced (Deci and Ryan, 1975).

Controlled Motivation:

Controlled motivation is a situation that involves doing a task with a sense of pressure or demand (Deci and Ryan, 1975).

Learner Support:

Learner support encompasses resources that a learner can access in order to carry out Learning (Garrison and Bayton, 1987).

Motivation

Human internal or external force that drives him or her to do something (Maslow, 1943).

Self directed learning: a process where learners take a primary responsibility of planning, carrying out the study and evaluate their learning experience Merriam and Caffarella (1991)

1.8 Conceptual Model for Implementation of Self Directed Learning SDL and Learner Support.

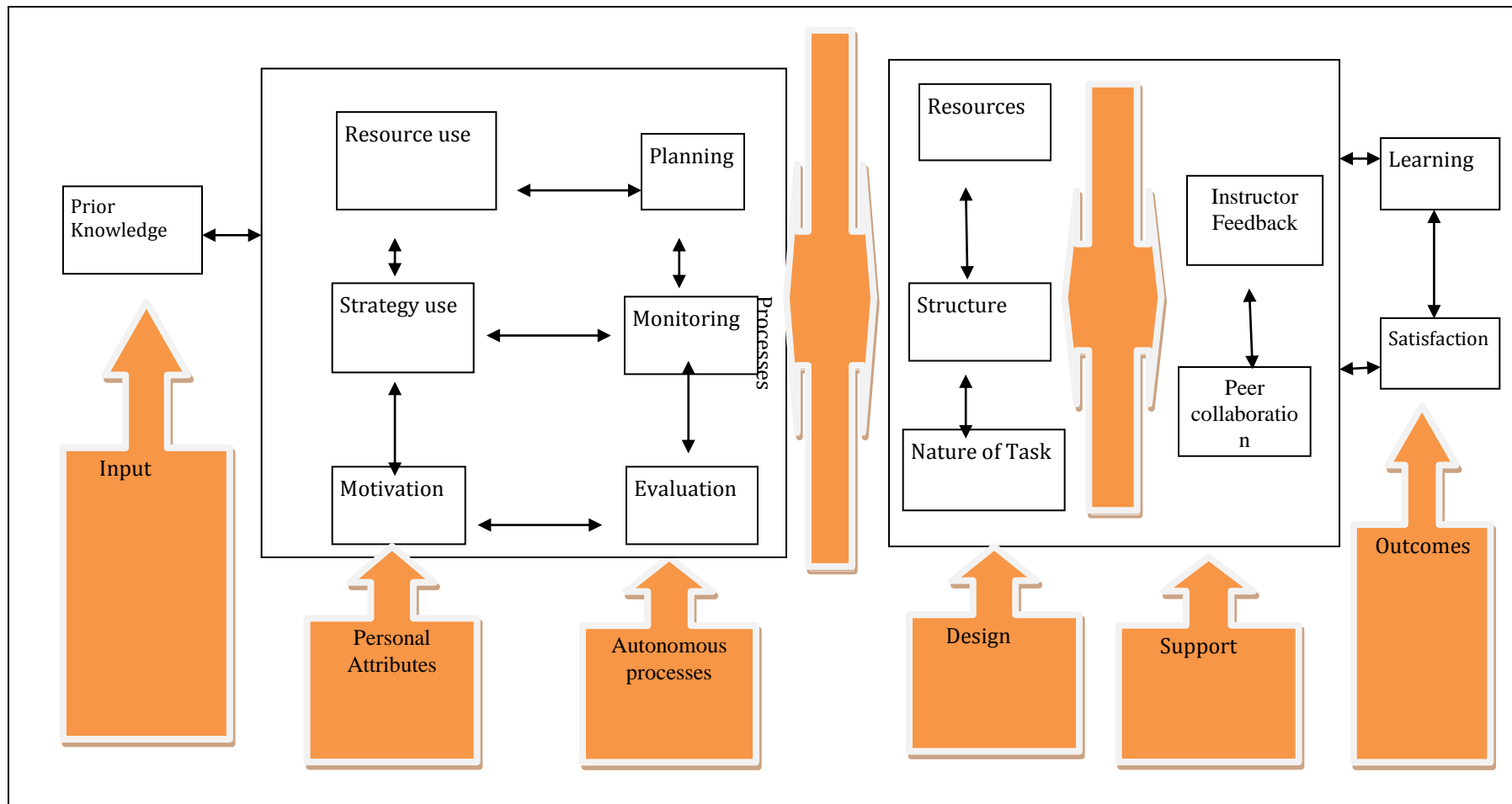


Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework for implementation of self directed learning and learner support in open and distance learning.

Source: Adapted from Candy (1991), Brockett and Hiemstra (1991), and Garrison (1997).

In considering nature of the study, several theoretical frameworks were considered along the way. One was Stufflebeam's CIPP (1971) cited by Candy, 1991; Brockett and Hiemstra, 1991; Garrison, 1997) model, which consists of four stages, namely, context, Input, process and product. The Theoretical framework that was considered is a Conceptual Model of understanding SDL in Provision of Learner Support in learning Environments. The model was developed and adapted from Candy's Four Dimensional Model (1991), Brockett and Hiemstra's Personal Responsibility Orientation model [(PRO) 1991] and Garrison's (1997) Three dimensional model (1997).

The model incorporates SDL as a personal attribute and SDL is a process as pointed out by many scholars in the literature of SDL .The third dimension is learning Context to indicate impact of environmental factors on SDL.

Personal attribute refers to learners' motivation and capability for learning. Garrison (1997) asserted that personal attribute also involves use of learning resources, that is, learning materials such as print materials, audio visual materials, internet as well as face-to-face and counseling sessions. Also it involves robust cognitive strategies, characteristics learners bring to a specific learning context such as intrinsic motivation, prior knowledge and experience. Process examines the extent of learners' autonomous learning process of planning monitoring and evaluation (Moore, 1972). Learners' autonomy is viewed as a continuum (Candy, 1991).

Figure 1.1 presents a conceptual model for implementation of SDL and Learner Support in Open and Distance Learning adapted from Candy (1991), Brocket and Hiemstra

(1991) and Garrison (1997)

Context is concerned with environmental factors and how environmental factors impact the level of SDL provided to the learner Candy (1991). As the model illustrates, there are support elements that are concerned with instruction feedback or peer collaboration and communication. For instance, constructive feedback from the instructor facilitates SDL, while judgmental feedback from the instructor has nothing to do with learning rather than giving response about the instructor 's needs (Garrison 1997;King 2002).

Design elements include resources structures and nature of tasks. In the Learning context, the design element helps to decide on course structure. Personal attribute is concerned with resources in different forms that include human and information resources (Hill, Hannafin, 2001; Petrides, 2002).

Effective Strategies play a significant role in successful SDL in learning context (Hanafin, Hill, Oliver, Sharma, 2003). Strategies include reflection and communication that are related to text based in learning environment. Motivation in SDL environment should contribute to cognitive deep messages (King, 2002). Motivation strategies should be enhanced in order to avoid procrastination to learners (Elves, Polzella and Graets, 2003). Physical presence in class sessions or face-to-face may not be avoided to expose learners to materials on a daily basis. In order to succeed in SDL, it is important for learners to take control in planning (Chizmar and Walbert, 1999) and monitor their learning comprehension (Sharpely, 2000). Also the learner should possess ability to actively explore various learning resources (Sener and Stove, 2000). Learners should also evaluate and making judgment Petrides (2002),develop Strategies to effectively use

of resources and overcome challenges, for example, written communication (Hill, 2002) and overcome procrastination, affordances of creating meaningful interaction (King, 2002).

Relevance of Conceptual Model in SDL Learner Support SDL is closely related and associated to learning support from both the process and personal attribute perspective. Many studies have found that student support is highly beneficial to self-regulated learners (Shaperly, 2000). Some have found that certain aspects of SDL attributes such as self-efficacy were positively related to student attitude and achievement in learning (Lee, Hong and Ling, 2002). Therefore, the Conceptual model was designed for facilitators/learners to understand the relationship between SDL and learner support.

As illustrated in the model, specific learning context has an impact on how much control the learner has over the process of planning monitoring, and evaluating her or his learning experience (Candy, 1991).

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one presents the background of the problem and its settings. While chapter two covers Literature review and theoretical framework, Chapter three presents research methodology. Chapter four describes Results and discussion. Chapter five provides summary of the study conclusion and recommendation.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents literature review related to this study. It presents empirical studies focusing on the three issues developed in Chapter one: the concept of students' support; students' self-directed learning; and the contribution of learner support to self-directed learning in their own learning experience. The first Part presents Theories that include Self-Determination Theory and Maslow Hierarchy of Needs Theory. These are complimented with Adult Learning Theory. The second part presents a critical review of empirical studies. The last section of the chapter presents Synthesis and Research Gap.

2.2 Theoretical Grounding

2.2.1 Motivation Theories

Self Determination Theory of Motivation (SDT) was founded by Dr. Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1975) at University of Rochester. This is an influential contemporary motivation theory. SDT is a theory of macro-theory of human motivation that differentiates between autonomous and controlled forms of motivation. Autonomous motivation is motivation that is self-start, while controlled motivation is that comes from the outside of the individual Deci and Ryan (1985). In a learning setting, for example, behaviorist theorists believe in controlled motivation in that learners become highly motivated when the learning environment is manipulated to suit their interests, such as seating arrangement and availability of attractive resources. The theory has been applied

to predict and influence learners' behaviour change Deci (1975).

Autonomous motivation involves learners engaging in an activity with eagerness and volition with sense of choice and willingness. It is made of the following two types: (1) Intrinsic motivation means that doing a task because it is interesting and spontaneously, satisfying and identified; and (2) Identified motivation, which is a well internalized form of extrinsic motivation and involves the task because it feels personally Deci and Ryan (2000).

Self-Determination Theory of Motivation (SDT) is important in this study to explain ways in which learner support system can promote or stifle self-directed learning. The second theory adapted in this study is Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation, whereby human beings are considered to have innate curiosity in learning. In education perspective, Maslow's five hierarchies of needs can be used in encouraging learners to accomplish their goals in learning.

The five levels of needs include the following: (1) Physiological needs, for example, food, water, air and shelter; (2) Safety needs such as security, stability, and freedom from fear as well as threat; (3) Social needs, for example, friendship, affection, acceptance, and interactions; (4) Self-esteem needs such as personal feeling of achievement, self-esteem, the need for recognition and respect of others; and (5) Self-actualization, for example, self-fulfillment or realization of one's potentials Maslow (1943). Students' support needed to meet physiological need in open and distance learner include basic needs such as tangible physical needs such as food, oxygen, free

accommodation, books, learning materials, course outlines, appropriate software, computer laptops with high bandwidth internet access. Essential materials such as books, learning materials and software to open learners and distance learners should be provided during pre course orientation Greenberg and Baron,(2003).

To ensure safety need in open and distance learning, facilitators should make sure that students are supported with counseling sessions to avoid learners' anxiety and stress that may, in one way or another, impede their learning potential. Moreover, learners who are workers in private or public institutions should be given permissions to attend various learning programmes/sessions that are necessary during their working hours/days Maslow (1943). This should be done so as to assure learners job security. On the other hand, instructors must maintain fair orderly and safe learning environment at all times. In line with this, grading and discipline policies must be understood by students. Learners should be aware of consequences of their actions Sutton and Barto (1998).

Love, affection and belongingness needs in open learning can be met through provision of group exercises. Secondly, those needs can be met through keeping lighthearted and fun online learning sessions in order to create affectionate bonds between classmates (King,2002). Facilitators and institutions should recommend online face-to-face learning groups that will create social interaction and friendship between learners. Students should also be supported with an instructor's positive interaction and feedback Maslow (1954). Facilitators also need to show promise in encouraging participation.

Self esteem need in learner support for distance learning can be met when facilitators use positive reinforcement to avoid bias to learners Sutton and Barto (1998). Learners

should be valued and their ideas should be taken as resourceful in learning. Instructors should clarify goals and assessment to learners, supply descriptive quick and responsive feedbacks to learners Nicol and Migan, (2006). Facilitators should make sure that learning environment is free from emotional and bullying and more than that they should encourage students to study harder after they have failed below an average score in an assignment Maslow (1954).

In order to fulfill the need for self-actualization, learners should be supported to achieve their highest potential in provision of assignments through various websites. Institutions should make sure that students are supported to develop their individual growth and make them manage their learning towards fulfilling their maximum potential (Greenberg and Baron 2003). Assistive tools such as humanistic learner guides should be provided. Furthermore, instructors should adopt highly facilitative orientation focused on targeting individual student needs through SDL Knowles (1984). All in all, instructors need to use various strategies, resources and tools to help student visualize as well as get better sense of self. More importantly, teachers should encourage students when they have done well but also push to achieve their highest potential in using lesson plans incorporated with technology Greenberg and (Baron,2003). Such measures should help to step outside classroom and realize their potential in real world scenarios .

Like an educator it is very important to consider Maslow Hierarchy of needs Theory in the classroom. It will be even more important to specifically link the theory with specific need of Learners and appropriate support required in the classroom. For instance, in order to discern knowledge of the Open University on student support the researcher,

assessed to know if there was any basic needs insufficient for them to make their learning successful. Similarly, it was necessary to hear from the learners if the learning environment was safe for students to work in groups in order to foster friendship. The researcher also assessed if online face-to-face sessions can bring learners to gather and make learning prosperous. Moreover, learners were required to provide their views on instructors' behaviors that, in one way or another, promote or hinder learning. The learners were given an opportunity to express themselves how emotional bullying, home and family responsibilities become a hindrance to their learning success.

2.2.2 Adult Learning Theory

Adult Learning Theory was developed in 1950 by Malcolm Knowles, an American practitioner and theorist of adult learning. This theory fits to describe and explain SDL and LSS in ODL. It is designed and identifies principles of adult learning. The principles can be used to make open and distance learners be self-directed Knowles (1980).

The theory is built within six main principles such as: Learners are internally motivated and self-directed; they tend to resist learning if others impose ideas on them; the role of facilitator is to make learners more self-directed; learning is perceived as personal responsibility; and the learning programme that fits to the learners should move learners from less to more responsibility. Learners' opinions, and interests should be valued, goals should be reviewed whereby acknowledgement needs to be granted on its completion Fidshun (2000). Encouragement should be made on use of resources, for example, libraries, journals, internet and other departmental resources Knowles (1980) cited in Lieb (1991).

Secondly, learners bring life experience and knowledge to learning experience. Life experience is regarded as foundation in new learning and reflective learning is highly insisted Knowles (1980). Thirdly, learners are goal oriented such that they engage in learning that matches with their needs and interests to cope with more satisfying real life tasks (Knowles, 1984:44 cited in Fidshun, 2000). Thus, learning becomes useful when is meaningful.

Fourthly, the theory insists that learning should be relevant to student interests. Learning should also be practical such that what is learned in classroom must be applied to the real environment especially at work places or in jobs. The last but not least principle is that learners need to be valued and respected Maslow (1943). Learners need to be acknowledged with wealth of experience they have in regarding them as colleagues who are equal in life experience. The theory insists on valuing and encouraging ideas, reasoning and feedback Knowles (1975).

The importance of adult learning theory in this study is its strength in elucidating what motivates adults to learn. While self-directed learning is consistent with this theory, learner support system in a way contradicts adult learners' inner motivation,

2.3 Empirical Studies

2.3.1 Students' conception of Student/Learner Support

Mse and colleagues (2002) conducted a study in Kenya on adequacy, and appropriate learner support in ODL programmes delivery. The study used Garrison (2000) Industrial Mode. Purposive sampling procedure was used where two public universities, Nairobi

and Kenyatta, were selected. Students randomly enrolled in Open Distance and e-learning (ODEL) were selected and structured questionnaires were administered to the selected students Berdie&Anderson (1974:48).

Results from the study showed that most teaching staff for the two universities were inappropriate because they lacked required skills on ODL delivery. The study found that only 32 percent of 257 lecturers had training on ODL skills on presentation and delivery, while 68 percent did not get such training. In line with that, 90 percent of 628 students declared that the required of staff in ODL programme were inadequate.

It was also revealed from the study that computing resources such as hardware and software that are very crucial in ODL were difficult to afford in reasonable quality and quantities. Then the study discovered that there were technological constrains. Inadequate and absence of such support aspects hampered students' cognitive partnership with Information and Communication Technology(ICT) Mse and colleagues (2002).

Furthermore, the study revealed that the two universities lacked library facilities to both students and lecturers Knowles (1950). There was acute shortage of journals and publications . Such situation greatly hindered learning and teaching activities and was caused by lacking financial support to the universities from both the government and the community Garrison (1997). The study also revealed that in the sample of 628 students, 215 (34.2%) respondents felt that resource centers were used effectively in provision of students' learning support, while 413 (65.3%) felt that resource centers were not used

effectively in provision of students' learning support Maslow (1943).

On students satisfaction on provision of learners' support, out of 628 students who participated in the study, 590 (90.8%) were dissatisfied with programme provision, organization and delivery of learners' support. Then 9 percent were satisfied with programme provision, organization and delivery of learners' support.

Most students' point of view were that ODL support was faced with many challenges. For example, some thought there was no optimal utilization of learning facilities, there was delay of production of study materials, inadequate funding, and low teaching staff levels Knowles (1950). Lack of guidelines of ODL policy framework posed challenges on resource utilization, mobilization and programme quality issues. The two universities, being dual modeled, were overwhelmed and were unable to meet demand of university education Brockett and Hiemstra(1991). The study recommended that further research should focus on identifying reasons open and distance learning student support should not be realized in dual model institutions.

In South Africa, the study that examined the situation of learners' support in distance education found out that provision of learners' support lowered drop-out rate and increased pass rate (Roberts, 1999). From students' views, the study listed norms and standards for learner support that were necessary for their distance learning such as two way communication, use of technology for tutoring at distance, contract tutoring, assignment tutoring, mentoring and counseling Garrison (1997). The students also preferred simulation of peer support, presence of adequate learning facilities, study

resources and empowerment of learners in decision about aspects to learn Knowles(1975).

Furthermore,, Robinson and colleagues (2007) conducted a study in USA on what was relevant students' support for learners. The study employed purposive sampling technique whereby 212 students were selected from Carnegie Mellon University. The results from the study revealed that students learned significantly more when they are in groups Robinson (2007). Students further pointed out that they regarded dynamic tutorial dialogue and peer counseling as the best learners' support in distance education Maslow (1943). The study insisted that provision of students' support must match with learners' needs (Robinson, (2007).

2.3.2 Students' conception on Self-directed Learning

Taylor (2001) conducted a study in UK to investigate students' views on Self-directed Learning in Nurse Education. He (ibid.) used qualitative research method to 18 students and focused definition on observable events thought to demonstrate Self-direction rather than involved cognitive processes. Students considered SDL of some value but only when used in conjunction with Teacher-led methods Maslow (1940). Students felt that learners/students take more responsibility for learning in a self-directed learning than in traditional teaching Knowles (1950). However, there was a difference in opinions as to which responsibility was devolved and accepted and neither party was completely convinced that the other respected them.

It was further contended that attempting such definition and reducing SDL to an observable form may lessen it from its perceived value. From the study, it can be inferred that in order to implement SDL the issues of control and autonomy should be put into account in learning environment. The study requires further exploration rather than basing on observable teaching and learning tools or method.

Kungu and Kinyanjui (2010) carried out a study in Kenya on students/learners' conception on SDL in continuing Education. The study used qualitative research approach. The instruments used were Oddi Continuing Learning Inventory OCLI (1986) and SDL Readiness Scale (Gugelimino, 1986). The sample of 317 Students from public Universities was selected. Results revealed that students from public Universities had a higher readiness for Self-Directed Learning in continuing Education Tough, (1967). This was evidenced by higher item mean score and higher overall OCLI mean scores. Rothman and Freker (2006) observed that results were surprising given that instructions in public Universities in Kenya tend to be lecture-based or teacher-directed with a few opportunities of SDL endeavors. They (ibid.) suggested that a future study should incorporate assessment of teaching methods, which may offer some explanations about the high SDL scores.

Another study conducted in South Africa by Greyling and co-workers (2002) examined students' perception on their SDL and SDL support contained in their studies. The study discovered that students generally lacked readiness to SDL where much of the learning did not match with learners' needs. They (ibid.) insisted that learners' needs should be considered in order to intensify SDL. Lack of SDL in learning make learners lack ability

to be self-motivated and fail to employ learning resources to solve problems in learning (Brockett and Hiemstra, 1991). The study also investigated reasons that caused learners lack readiness to SDL and suggested measures to be taken to curb those problems in order to make sure that SDL skills become incorporated in Teaching and Learning at ODL Miyoung (1976).

The study revealed that most learners had higher readiness to learn because of motivation Maslow (1943). Also results showed that self-directed learning of students is greatly affected by self-esteem, anxiety and belongingness (Miyoung, 1976). To this effect he (ibid.) suggested learners' self esteem need to be developed and anxiety needs to be avoided to make learners self-directed. The study recommended that there is a need to strengthen learners' sense of belongingness in order to enhance SDL Meece and Colleagues (1990). Furthermore, the study suggested that in order to enhance SDL, students should be enabled to develop ability to generate new ideas, goals and plans toward learning Miyoung (1976).

In Canada, Tough (1967) conducted in depth interviews with 66 adult learners by probing them to recall their learning during the year before the interview and to remember how they had set about learning. The study revealed that most adult learners are self-motivated to achieve some practical objective. He further found that 75 percent adult learners pursued learning for interest, curiosity or enjoyment. The study further revealed that when learning is associated with people's jobs, homes, families, sports and hobbies, people become self- directed Brockett and Hiemstra (1991).

2.2.3 Students' perception on contribution of student support to self-directed learning

Dillon and Parker (1992) conducted a study on students' perception on contribution of learner support to SDL in Turkey. The study used qualitative research approach whereby structured questionnaires were administered to a selected sample of distance learners at Anadolu University (Dillon and Parker, 1992). They (ibid.) found that learner support contributes to make learners' effective self-directed learners such as instructors avoided negative attitude towards off-campus students, instructors had established contacts with students/learners outside the classroom. Furthermore, constructive feedback was found to motivate learners towards self-directed learning Garrison (1997), King (2002).

Huang (2008) conducted a study on students/learners' conception on contribution of student support to SDL in Australia. The study used qualitative research approach with semi-structured interview questions to explore students' experience on learning activities in their undergraduate courses Creswell (1994). Findings from the study revealed that participants perceived a shift in learning styles between learning programs in the university. The study indicated further that highly frequent counseling of using student-directed learning activities in which students were encouraged to be active and take responsibility for their learning tasks was one of the great changes in teaching and learning approaches perceived by the participants. Moreover, the study revealed that students/learners perceived their achievement, learning goals, perception on learning environment, teaching and learning process and development of SDL readiness Huang (2008).

2.3.4 Empirical Evidence : Tanzanian Context

Kishimbo and co-workers (2008) conducted research in Tanzania on how to increase capacity to health students on SDL. Data were collected from 25 distance learning programmes at health institutions, universities and non-governmental organizations. The study applied the following data collection methods: desk reviews, telephone email, mail surveys, onsite observation and interviews Yin (1981). Results revealed that students faced onsite challenges that hampered their self-directedness in learning such as technological constraints, insufficient funding, financial problems, psycho-social problems and lack of motivation Deci and Ryan (2000).

2.4 Synthesis and research Gap

2.4.1 Synthesis of Literature Review

Learner support services plays a significant role in enhancing learning to the Open University students. Therefore Learner support services was necessary to intensify self directed learning to the learners. This study would provide insight to stakeholders, lectures and Students concerning learning problems related to inadequate and inappropriate Learner Support Services (LSS).

It is a high time for MoVET and OUT to adopt the provision of LSS in order to make the students become more self directed learners so as to rise the quality of education. When OUT students are equipped with SDL skills and LSS they would be able to demonstrate their competence on what they can do on Teaching and learning activities so as to improve learning. It was expected that good preparation of learners, and

professionals was to be made in order to be able to conceptualize and accept changes (Mudler, 2003). This was accompanied with training skills to professionals on SDL and Learner Support Services.

2.4.2 Research Gap

Most of the reviewed studies have focused on the perception of students and lecturers on learner Support Services (LSS) and Self Directed Learning (SDL). The role played by LSS in enhancing students' self directed learning. Furthermore the review suggests that there is a need of improvement in provision of learner support services for the open and distance learners; and to impart self directed learning teaching and learning skills to students and facilitators. Various studies have been conducted on a few aspects related to how learner support services enhance self directed learning. For example Bhalalusesa (1998) examined experiences of learning for OUT students studying Undergraduate degree programme. The study discovered that experience of learning at distance varies and is influenced by inadequate learning resources and education infrastructures. Furthermore Kissassi (2011) conducted a study on provision and accessibility of face to face as a student support to students of the Open University of Tanzania.

The study revealed that there is positive effects of face to face sessions to students' learning. Kishimbo and co-workers (2008) conducted a study on contribution of Learner support services in self directed learning to health students the study revealed that onsite challenges such as technological constraint and insufficient funding greatly affected learners' self directed learning. Yet, most of the reviewed studies focused on LSS and its contribution to SDL in general. For instance (Bhalalusesa 1998) looked on student

support such as education facilities and learning resources very briefly, (Kissassi 2011) examined the accessibility of face to face sessions to OUT Students and how it affects learning. This study was so general because face to face is one aspect of students' support services provided by OUT. Similarly (Kishimbo and co-workers 2008) assessed the contribution of LSS to SDL and found that technological constraint and insufficient funding hindered self directed learning among health students. This study was conducted in another field basing on two aspects of learner support services.

None of these Scholars has empirically studied how students come to be self-directed learners and how that disposition can be developed or strengthened. Moreover Scholars have yet to determine how LSS intensify SDL in Open and distance learning. Thus, this study, sought to fill in this gap.

In summary this chapter has the following theories presented: Motivation Theories and Adult learning Theory. In Motivation Theories, it is proposed that learners experience competence when they are challenged, while intrinsic motivation flourishes high quality of learning in SDL. All in all this, theory postulate that self-regulation and self responsibility are great incentives that promotes SDL in ODL. Furthermore, physiological needs such as food, shelter, social interaction, security, love, self esteem, acceptance, friendship, self actualization plays a significant role in supporting SDL in ODL. Learners learn best when they are valued and respected. On another development learners enroll and become self directed when the expected outcome of the course or programme enhance promotion, bonuses and salary increment.

The second part in this chapter provides an account of various empirical studies on SDL and Learner Support in ODL. These empirical studies focus on student's conception on learner support, student's conception on SDL and students perceptions on contribution on learners support to SDL. Concerning the students conception on learners' support research discovered that students in distance learning liked to be supported with learning materials Mse et al (2002), from this study many students as (65.3%) declared that resource centers were not used effectively in provision of students/learner support, while 90% of the same sample interviewed students were dissatisfied with provision, organization and delivery of learner's support. Similarly another study revealed that learners are interested with online learning and various courses offered on line because of its financial and social benefits Reisner and colleagues (2007). Another case study on SDL was on students' conception on SDL, where the study revealed that learners take more responsibility in learning when become self directed than in traditional learning. Moreover learners liked SDL and declared that there is a need to reform the curriculum to incorporate SDL teaching and learning strategies.

On learner conception on SDL, it has also been discovered that students in higher learning had higher readiness in SDL and preferred pursuing learning using SDL as a strategy. Furthermore, the study discovered that learners without SDL skills lack the spirit of self motivation, self regulation, creativity and they are unable to employ learning resources to solve problems in learning Brockett & Hiemstra (1991). Similarly, learners especially adults undertake major learning efforts they have desired to achieve practical objective. Some adults pursue learning for interests curiosity and enjoyment. It was also revealed that common reasons for learning are associated with people's jobs,

homes, families, sports and hobbies.

Another empirical study was on learner/students' perception on the contribution of learner support to SDL, various studies indicate that learners perceive importance of LSS to SDL such as facilitators to avoid negative attitude towards off campus learners/students. Other contributions include presence of learning contract between facilitators and learners/students, availability of frequent feedback after teaching and learning process, provision of training on the use of education media and technology to distance learners to enhance students/learners confidence. Furthermore students need encouragement to use self-directedness activities such as perseverance, self commitment and working hard in learning Huang (2008).The students declared that provision of financial support in line with learning materials would enable them to remain with confidence and become self independent in learning Huang (2008).Another Study conducted in Tanzania showed that onsite challenges such as insufficient funding, financial constraints, lack of motivation, and technological constraints decreased SDL attitude to Open and distance learners Kishimbo and co-workers (2008).

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents Research Methodology. It contains the following sections: Research Design, Study Area and Sample and Sample size. Others include Data Collection Methods, Validity and reliability, Data Analysis Plan, and Ethical issues.

3.2 Research Design

Research Design is a distinct plan on how a research problem will be attacked Omari (2011). According to Creswel (1994) Research design is a systematic plan to study a scientific problem and the design of the study also defines design types such as flexible and fixed designs. Further, research design refers to the overall strategy that you choose to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, ensuring that one will effectively address the research problem it constituents, the blueprint for the collection, measurements and analysis of the data Devaus (2001).

The study employed qualitative research approach because it enabled the researcher to provide descriptive data. Qualitative research is method of inquiry employed in many different academic disciplines, traditionally in social sciences, aiming at gathering an in-depth understand of human behavior and reasons that govern such behavior Creswel (2006). Qualitative data enabled researcher to be obtrusive and flexible as possible in order to capture the reality of observed event. Qualitative data also use a holistic approach that work almost exclusively on people, their language, interaction, lifestyles and their ways of thinking (Sanday, 1983:2). More importantly, qualitative data are very

natural in that they are allowed to unfold naturally rather than collected according to specific framework prescribed by the researcher. Furthermore, the data draw meaning by multiple sources by evaluating several variables such as context and language Creswel (2006).

In this study The researcher employed these qualities in variety of ways such as: Firstly qualitative research enabled the researcher to listen the respondents and build a picture based on ideas (Sanday,1983).Secondly the approach allows for in- depth analysis of comments that individuals hold. Thirdly, the approach was used to provide descriptive forms of conducting interview, documentary review and observation. This approach is an appropriate measure to employ when a researcher is working to enrich thinking and discourse of educators (Steanhouse, 1988).

This study used ethnography to understand the meanings and perceptions that students and lecturers attach to the concepts of student support services and self-directed learning. Ethnography design was used to document the perceptions and the meanings attached to the concepts of student support services and self-directed learning.

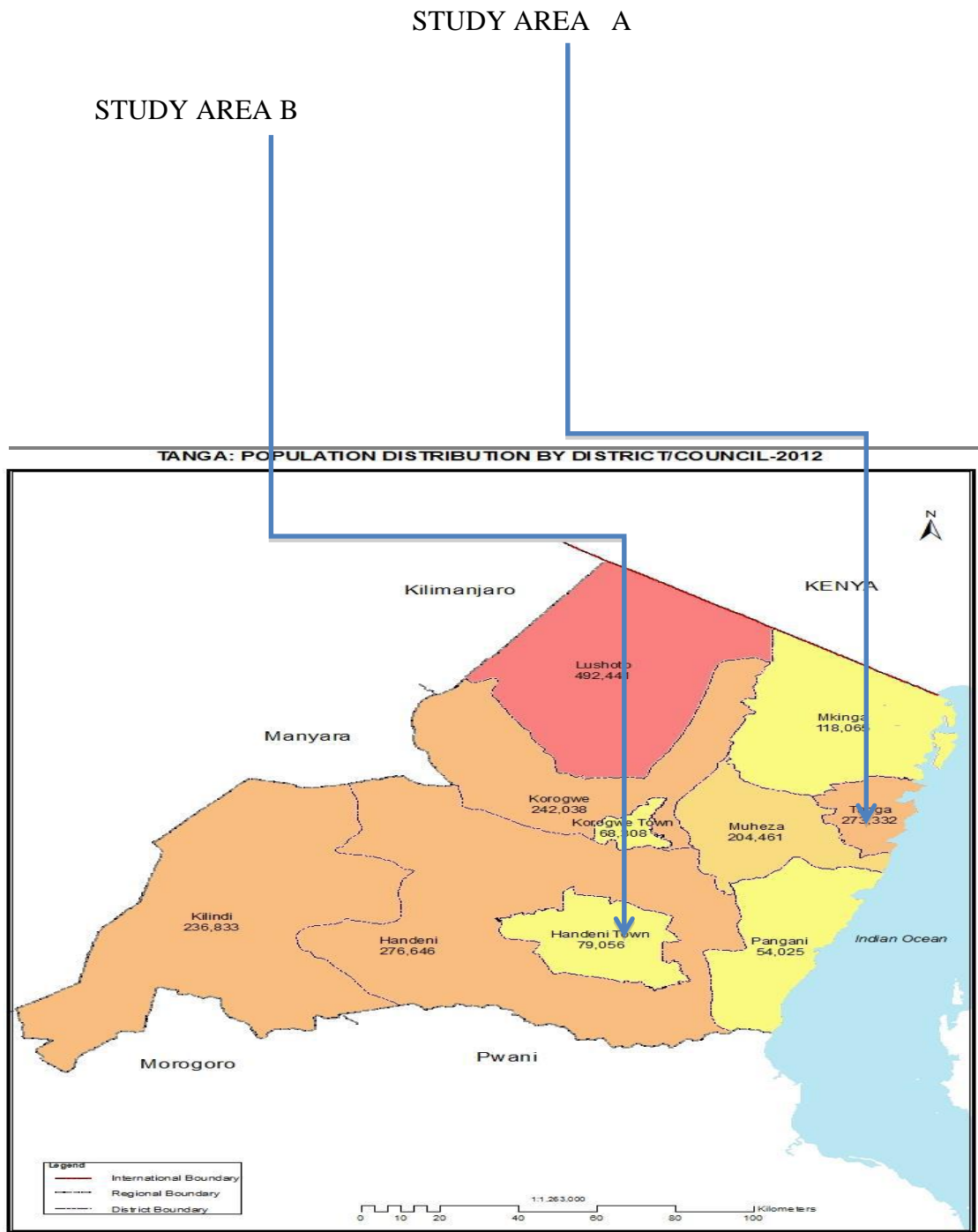


Figure 2.3: A Map of Tanga Region Showing Study Areas

Source: Population and Housing Census Report 2012

Tanga Region is located in North East of Mainland Tanzania. Tanga Region lies between Latitude 4 and 6 degrees South and Longitude 37 and 39 degrees East (TRIP, 2009). It is bordered by Republic of Kenya to the North as well as Kilimanjaro and Manyara Regions. To the West it is bordered by Morogoro region, Coast Region to the South and Indian Ocean with Pemba and Unguja Isles to the East (TRIP,2009).

There are eight districts that form the region, namely Tanga, Pangani, Lushoto, Korogwe, Muheza, Handeni, Mkinga and Killindi. There is one Town council in Korogwe and one district council in Bumbuli. Tanga town was elevated to the status of the city in 2005 and Korogwe to a town council in 2006. TRIP (2009),KTCIP,(2010).The Tanga city is administered by Tanga city Council which has a Mayor and the City Director (CD) and Korogwe Town is also administered by the Korogwe Town Council which has Town Council chairman and Town Director (TD).The region has a total land area of 26,809 Kilometer squares and estimated population of 2,045,205 according to 2012 population and housing census. There are 3 Universities with an estimated number of 3099 students.

The main reason for selecting the study areas was due to the fact that SDL and Learner support is a new paradigm to lecturers and students at Open University. Secondly, Korogwe town and Tanga city are among OUT Centers with the biggest number of students in the Tanga region. Thirdly, the two centers are mostly preferred by many students in conducting their Teaching Practice. OUT Facts and Figures (2013/2014). In due regard, the researcher anticipated that both Tanga city and Korogwe Town Councils could enrich the study with required information.

3.4 Sample and Sample size

Sampling concerns with the selection of subset of individuals from within a statistical population to estimate the characteristics of the whole population Scott and Wild (1986)

The sample of 50 participants was drawn from the targeted population. The sample comprised 37 OUT students, 5 lecturers at Regional Centre, 3 Tutorial assistants 2 non-teaching staff,3 OUT pre-service students.

3.5 Sampling Procedures

Sampling procedures refers to the rules that specify how the system calculates the sample size and it contains information about the valuation about the inspection characteristics during results recording Scott and Wild (1986).

Two kinds of sampling procedures were employed, namely, Purposive Sampling Procedure and Random Sampling Procedure.

The lecturers, tutors and non- academic staff were purposively selected, They were involved in this study because they are responsible with day-to-day supervision and coordination of education provision to OUT Students. Hence, they were expected that they were knowledgeable about the subject under study Omari, I.M (2011).Non-academic staff were purposively selected and they were involved in this study due to their involvement in various activities in rendering services to OUT Students.For instance personal secretaries had duties of register the students for university examinations and showed them how to surf learning materials in various websites. Librarians concerned with supervision and coordination of provision of books and

learning materials to the students ETP (1995). There were 5 lecturers and 3 tutorial assistants at the Director of Regional Centre (DRC). The 3 tutorial assistants are stationed at three districts, namely, Killindi, Lushoto and Mkinga.

This study involved 40 OUT students, 20 from Korogwe and 20 from Tanga. In Korogwe, 20 students were interviewed during University examinations among these 9 students came from rural areas, while 11 worked in Korogwe town. Similarly at Tanga, 20 students were interviewed during University examinations. Then 14 students who were interviewed were from Tanga urban, while 6 were from Tanga rural.

Lecturers, tutors and non-academic members of staff were involved in this study because they are responsible with day-to-day provision and supervision of education in-service programmes in their area of jurisdiction. It is evident that they are also responsible in coordinating and executing material as well as undertake guidance and counseling to their students at the Open University of Tanzania.

The sample of 2 non academic staff at DRC were purposively selected for the study. Purposive sampling involves picking units most relevant or knowledgeable in the subject matter Omari, I.M (2011). The non academic staff were included in this study due to their daily involvement in supervision and coordination of education activities. The sample of 37 in-service and 3 pre service students were selected because in-service students experience different problems that affects SDL compared to pre service students.

A sample of two centres with open University learners were selected for the study. In order to avoid bias in the sample of two centers, students were selected randomly to

make sure that each student had equal and independent chance to be selected for the sample. Random sampling is the best method that reduces bias (Kothari, 2004). The researcher confirmed that sampling frame matched with the targeted population, judgmental and convenience sampling was highly avoided.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods is a process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypothesis and evaluate outcomes. Sapsford, and Jupp (2005). Triangulation Method was employed in data collection. The reason of applying this method is to crosscheck accuracy and consistency of the information that was provided by the respondents. Use of combination methods in data collection is highly insisted. This is supported by Kothari (2004) who proposed that no single technique is more exhaustive than the other. This study employed interview, observation, and documentary review as data collection methods.

3.6.1 Interviews

An interview is a conversation between two people where questions are asked by the interviewer to elicit facts or statements from an interviewee (Holsten, 2002). Interview is used in this study because it is more exploratory, it allows flexibility, enables researcher to get additional information Yin (1981).

Participants who were interviewed were OUT lecturers, non-academic Staff and students. The study employed unstructured interview questions to obtain respondents'

general views. The interviews were administered to DRC, OUT lecturers (academic staff), students as well as non-academic staff.

3.6.2 Documentary review

This study intended to consult both primary and secondary sources of data. All pieces of information concerning SDL and Learner support were collected.

According to Cohen (2000), primary sources of data are described as those original to the problem under study, while secondary sources do not bear physical relationship to the event under the study. Data in secondary sources are described as not original (Kothari, 2000).

Primary documentary sources included student learning materials, plan arrangements, term papers, portfolios, course outlines, contracts of course coordinators, records that show teachers as well as learners; activities, various government circulars issued as guide to lecturers, teaching and learning resources, teaching methodologies used by lecturers and assessment records.

Secondary sources of data involved various reports and workshop/seminar papers to obtain experience about others on SDL, and Learner Support. The researcher decided to use documentary review in order to get extensive data collection, both primary and secondary sources.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Validity

Validity of instrument measurement is the extent to which they measure what they were supposed to measure Jean, (2000)The argument is valid if and only if its conclusion is logically entailed by its premises Beer ((1993) .Before conducting the study, the researcher conducted a trial in Tanga municipality to refine the instruments where 10 Open University of Tanzania students and 2 lecturers were selected. The study used interviews and observation as data collection methods for accruing primary data and they were checked in the pilot study for relevance and coverage to control internal validity.

Reliability

Reliability refers to measures that yielding the same results in the different clinical experiments Cohen and Marison, (2001). Reliability refers to consistency or repeatability of research measures.Through the pilot study ambiguous and inconsistent questions were deleted and others were modified where necessary to fit with the objective of the study. Data that were obtained in the try out exercise enabled the researcher to make modifications in the instruments where it was found necessary in the study.

3.8 Data Analysis plan

Qualitative data were organized into thematical areas. Themes are patterns across data set that are important to the description of the phenomena and are associated to specific research question Jean (2000).In this study themes were used in coding interview

transcripts in order to get reality under each research objective. Then such data were subjected to content analysis. Content analysis is an approach of empirical methodological controlled analysis of text within the context of communication Scott and Wild (1986). Content analysis was used in this study to analyze information gathered during interview. Such data were obtained from documentary review and observation.

3.9 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues were also considered to avoid psychological touch or misconduct that may harm participants in the study. In line with that, the researcher ensured protection of human rights to participants that were involved in the study by considering four aspects, which are confidentiality, informed consent, observing the protocol and privacy.

Informed Consent

Before conducting the study, the researcher explained to participants the topic, purpose and objective of the study. This was to make sure that all participants understood objectives of the study and set them free to give their views concerning the study.

Observing Protocol

The researcher got research clearance from the Open University of Tanzania before going to the field for data collection. Then the researcher requested permit from Tanga Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS). The RAS provided permit for research that was directed to Tanga City Director (CD) and Korogwe Town Director (TD).

Privacy.

In this study, privacy was highly considered to reflect sensitivity of information that was to be provided. Information that was collected was kept safely to avoid any leakage, misinterpretation or distortion of findings from the study. In order to ensure privacy, the collected data were preserved and carefully protected from being accessed by unauthorized individuals. The researcher also ensured that all research instruments were anonymously prepared baring no any identifying marks such as names or personal information.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents Results and Discussion. The chapter is divided into three sections as per study objectives: Findings of each Sub-section are presented in a sequential order. Findings from documentary review start first followed by those collected through interviews. The last presents data collected through observation.

4.2 The meaning students attach to the concept of learner support service

This section present data on meaning student attach to the concept of learner support at the Open University of Tanzania. Interviews were used to collect data from the Open University students, Director of Regional centre, academic staff and non-academic staff. The question was: “When you hear a **word** ‘student support,’ what comes to your mind ?”. To respond to this question, one of the Students had this to say:

“Learner support means all kinds of assistance a learner need from his/ her fellow students, institution or any other source whether in hard copy, soft copy, financial or moral that can help him/her learning successfully.” (Student centre A, 10 February, 2014).

Another had this to say:

“Learner support is an assistance that a student gets from outside the institution such as from parents, government, spouse, friends and others that facilitate his or her learning” (student centre B, 15 February 2014).

Still another student had this to say:

“Learner support refers to all things that student need to get in order to learn successfully and pass his or her examination”(Student centre B, 16 February 2014).

Another student had this to say;

“Learner support refers to all learning materials required by the learner to enable him or her learn all courses and perform successfully” (Student centre B 15 February 2014).

Another student also added this by saying that:

“Learner support refers to all financial assistance needed by the learner to enable him or her meet all the cost required by the University” (Student centre A,10 February 2014).

Also another student had this to say:

“To the best of my knowledge learner support concerns with all the assistance the student need from his or her employer that facilitate learning performance, like permission to attend face-to-face sessions and study time” (Student centre B 15

February 2014).

From the findings, most students seemed to have an understanding of students' support. From their perspective, it is evident that students perceived learner support as assistance or all things that learners need in order to learn successfully, and those things comes from different sources. The students' perceptions correspond well with what is in the literature where learner support service encompasses all things or assistance to be granted to the learner to make him or her successful academically (Garrison, Bayton, 1987). As Mse and colleagues (2002) suggest that teacher delivery skills, computing resources (hardware and soft ware), library facilities, programme organization and financial support can be termed as student support. This is in line with Roberts (1999) who also pointed out that students viewed student support as assistance like efficiency in communicational technology, tutoring, counseling, presence of learning facilities and study resources. Similarly, Robinson (2007) in his study on relevant student support also explained students' conception of learner support as tutorial dialogue, group discussion, and peer counseling. The findings also revealed that other students had different views on what is student support. In summary, it was observed that 82.7 Percent of students had the correct meaning of learner support as described in the literature review.

The same question was posed to lecturers, and here are their responses:

“According to my view, learner support refers to all facilities and services that allow a distance learner to study and achieve his/her objective in academics”
(Academic Staff, Centre A 16 February 2014)

Another lecturer had this to say:

“Learner support are all services that are provided to the student such as laboratory, computer, learning materials and all others, which help learners study successfully (Lecturer centre A, 16 February 2014).

Still another lecturer said that:

“Learner support refers to all assistance provided to the student to enable him or her do well in his or her learning experience” (Lecturer Centre A February 2014).

Like their students, lecturers also had the same **notion (opinion)** about student support. However, both responses from students and the lecturers indicate that students’ support services are to help them to learn. None pointed to the services that may promote self-motivation such as being given chance to learn what they want, and learn on their own pace.

Their views relate to those found in the literature but those only focus on motivating learners. They did not focus on those creating a condition for learners to be self-motivated and self-directed. In other words, both students and lecturers perceived learners as dependent on others, that is on teachers or institution for learning, rather than self-motivated and self-directed to learn.

4.2.1. Learner support at the Open University of Tanzania

This Sub-section presents data on learners’ support provided by the Open University of Tanzania. Relevant information on learners’ support provided by the institution was

obtained through interviews and observation. Respondents for this research question were Open University students, and academic staff of the DRC.

The question for the student was: What types of student support do you get as you engage in learning at OUT? Majority pointed to be study materials, face-to face, moral support, library services, internet and communication were partly provided while financial support was not provided by the institution.

4.2.1.1 Financial support

In this aspect data was collected through interview and observation. Respondents were students and lecturers. Both students and academic staff responded that OUT does not provide financial support to students. One of the student had this to say:

“Apart from provision of books and learning materials, OUT does not provide any financial assistance to students. There is a need to support students financially so that they will perform well in their studies” (Student, centre A 10 February 2014).

Another student said that:

“If you have not paid fees there is no excuse or favor. Your name will be automatically cancelled in the list of candidates who will sit for examinations. The OUT needs to relax conditions for registration to students, who in one way or another, did not meet financial requirements” (Student, centre B, 14 February 2014).

Still another student said:

“OUT does not provide financial support to the students apart from advising them to apply for a loan from Higher education students’ loan board (HELSB). procedures in HESLB is too bureaucratic to get a loan”.(Student centre A February 2014)

Yet another student had this to say:

“All financial costs to OUT students rely on themselves. Neither the institution nor employer contributed financially to my studies. However, knowledge I get will be useful to people of this country “(Student Centre A 16 February 2014).

Students’ responses indicate that OUT does not provide financial assistance to learners, and all costs for learning are learner’s responsibility. The learners declared that financial support would be of greater advantage to make their learning be successful. It was also revealed that many students are lacking financial support. That might be a reason that makes other students drop-out from studies at OUT. This essence is similar in literature that learners are interested with distance education because of its minimal financial costs and social benefits (see also Reisner, 2007). Hence, the issue of cost needs to be considered for distance education delivery at OUT. In line with that, financial resource plays a significant role as support to make OUT learners be motivated. This is evident as shown in the framework for this study in that financial resource works as a design in the process (Petrides, 2002; King, 2002; Graets, 2003).

The four lecturers who were interviewed responded that OUT as an institution does not provide financial services to students although there is delivery of drivers for education services.

One of the lecturers was quoted as follows:

“There is no financial support provided by OUT to the students. The students are required to pay among other costs tuition fee, stationery and examination fee to the institution in order to enable it execute its activities” (Academic staff centre A, February 2014).

Another lecturer had this to say:

“Financial support to Open University students is highly required to make them learn successfully. The students have the responsibility of paying all costs by themselves or their employers”.(Academic staff Centre A 16 February 2014)

Similarly, another lecturer had this to say:

“Support provided by OUT aims at minimizing financial costs to the student. Such support includes free internet, soft copy materials pamphlets and journals” (Lecturer centre A 14 March 2014).

Still another lecturer had this to say:

“This institution (OUT) does not have power to finance students other than to be dependent on them in its operations. The university, to a large extent, depends on fees from students as sources of fund to operate several academic activities”(Lecturer, centre A,18 February 2014).

Similarly, the lecturers had views that were like their students that OUT does not provide financial support to students. They both stressed that the burden of the costs is casted upon learners. Likewise, they all declared that financial costs play a significant role in making learners become self-directed in learning. Their views are similar to those found in literature. However, none of them analyzed that the services offered by OUT such as internet, library services, efficiency in information and communication technology are among services that are intended to reduce financial costs to the students.

4.2.1.2 Learning Materials

The data computed below were obtained by means of interview, observation and documentary review. However, it was also found that learning materials provided by OUT were inadequate to support all the learners. One of the student said that,

“In actual fact, I do not see what the Open University is doing concerning provision of learning materials. The study materials are not enough. I take the trouble to use my money to produce copies from a few available materials” (Student, center A, 12 February 2014).

Another student had this to say:

“The study materials especially books are not enough. The Open University advices us to find books from our friends who take similar courses. Out of 20 courses that I have registered for, I have only 1 reference book for one course. The rest, which are unavailable I am supposed to find myself” (Student, centre B,14 February 2014).

Yet another student had this to say:

“You mean support from OUT. No support from OUT. All learning support is from myself. I find study materials by myself using my own money. All the learning depends on myself (Student, centre A, 10, February 2014).

Still another student had this to say

“Nothing the OUT helps me other than continuing frustrating me with this endless course. I have been studying for 9 years, now the course is infinite. I have been discouraged with negative answers when I visit OUT centre to ask for learning materials and lost marks for some courses (Student centre A, 09 February 2014).

Table 4.1: Course Materials and Books not Provided to Third Year Undergraduate BA, Ed Students in 2014.

	Code/unit	Quantity			
		January		February	
		Demand	Received	Demand	Received
1	OEM 302. Organization Bachelor and Human Resource	2	X	2	X
2	OSLI. 323 Ubunifu	2	X	3	X
3	OSW.321 isim jamii	-	X	3	X
4	OEP. 101 Education and psychology	2	2	2	2
5	OSW.121utangulizi wa ugha	2	2	2	2
6	OSW. 221 sarufi ya Kiswahili na sintakisia	2		2	2
7	OSW. 222 Fonefiki na fonolojia.	2	2	2	22

Source: Field Data (2014)

It implies that many students are associating student support service with reading materials that, in their view, are inadequate. Learning materials involve only a component of learner support, and the most source of dependence to students. Students seemed to think that knowledge comes only from reading materials provided by the institution. This implies that support they get does not prepare them to be confident in search for materials from other sources instead of waiting for the institution to provide reading materials to them. As Knowles (1950) insisted that facilitators need to encourage learners to use books, journals, and pamphlets in learning. Following these results, the Open University of Tanzania needs to take very stern measures to direct students to be self-starters and seek information from various sources instead of depending on the institution to provide them. Some students also indicated that they were satisfied with the materials they were accessing from the OUT library.

One of the student had this to say:

“ The materials that I get from OUT include books, modules and pamphlets. These materials satisfy my course demand” (student centre A 17 February 2014)

Another student had this to say;

“The materials provided by OUT are hard copy and soft copy. The materials are enough to me for this time. All the courses that I take have their specific learning materials”.(Student centre B, February 2014).

Still, another student said:

“Student support from OUT includes learning materials. The learning materials are so helpful to me other than any other learning support. Without learning

materials, I could not do anything concerning learning” (Student ,centre B February 2014).

Yet, another student had remarks as follows:

“The Open University provides inadequate learning materials so as to make learners active locaters of it. What they are doing is good because if you provide all things to all learners, at the same time you will make learners dormant. This system should continually be in practice because even in conventional universities, learners are not given learning materials”(Student centre B, February 2014).

From the responses, students not only are dependent on the institution to provide the reading materials, but also they are quite satisfied with what they access.

The same view was held by lecturers who also thought that provision of learning materials would satisfy students’ learning needs.

One academic staff said that-

“We do provide learning materials and reference books. Sometimes they are not enough to some courses. We advice the learners to photocopy the learning materials so that they get their own copies.” (Academic staff, centre A, 16 February 2014)

Another lecturer had this to say:

“The students’ support provided in this institution (OUT) among others includes soft and hard copy materials. Hard materials are books, modules, journals and the

like. Soft copies include intangible electronically processed materials” (Academic staff, 16,February 2014).

Still another lecturer had these remarks:

“We offer a variety of student support in this institution. One and the foremost include learning materials. However, some of our students do not get what they demand at their best. What we do is to make sure they get what they are supposed to get (Lecturer centre A, 16 February 2014).

Yet, another lecturer had this to say:

“The Open University provides different types of support to suit learners’ needs. One of such support is learning/study materials. The study materials are very important for learners since they are very basic. Learners build confidence of learning through it” (lecturer, centre A, February 2014).

Lecturers’ responses showed that learning materials were very important for support needed by the learners. However, all lecturers declared that the learning materials provided by the institution were not enough. Some lecturers explained that learning materials provided include hard and soft copies. One lecturer remarked that learning materials enhanced confidence to learners. This is an indication that both students and their lecturers have a very narrow view of learning, in that they have a notion that knowledge can be obtained from the books only.

4.2.1.3 Face-to-face sessions

Other learners' support service includes face-to-face sessions. Many respondents recognized face-to-face as important support provided by the Open University of Tanzania. However, majority of the students asserted that the face-to-face sessions did not attend their academic and social problems as required. The only issues covered in such sessions were only to address students' general matters and specific matters were left to students to deal with them on their own. One of the students had these remarks:

“In General face to-face-session has major two shortcomings:- “The lecturers are few compared to the huge number of student. During face-to-face you may stay in a regional centre for 5 days before you meet with lecturers and perhaps at the end you may be attended by a lecturer from a different discipline from yours”(student,centre B, February 2014).

Another student commented that:

“The lecturer may ask you like, 'you were supposed to read this book.' Where can I get that book while it is unavailable at the library?This is a very big problem that needs an immediate attention.” (Students centre B, 17 February, 2014)

Still another student had this to say:

“The face-to-face sessions are too expensive to attend. Just think a student lives here at Korogwe, he/she attends face-to-face at Tanga and stay there for 7 days. At the end, he or she does not get what he/she was expecting to get. That is wastage of time” (Student centre B, 17 February 2014).

While face-to-face was mentioned to be one of students' services, it is evident that the sessions do not meet students' interests. The reason may be time limit for conducting it. In literature, face-to-face sessions are important student support services especially in distance learning. As Garrison (1997, 2003) suggests, personal attributes of distance learners can be strengthened through resources such as face-to-face.

Data gathered through interviews from 4 (80%) lecturers at the Director of Regional Centre revealed that time used for addressing both academic and social problems during face-to-face sessions was not enough. More than that, it was true that there were inadequate number of staff. This remained to be a problem that hindered to get solutions to specific issues of students. One lecturer had this to say:

“We conduct face-to-face sessions for the purpose of attending both students' social and academic issues. The problem is that the number of the staff is too small to attend such a big number of students” (lecturer centre A February 2014).

Another lecturer had this to say:

“Face to face sessions plays a significant role in equipping students' readiness in learning. Students' issues concerning academic and social issues are addressed” (Lecturer ,centre A,17 February2014).

Still, another lecturer had these remarks:

“One of the support aspects that OUT provides is face-to-face sessions. These sessions are conducted to attend students' social and academic issues. These

sessions build learners' confidence in addressing solutions to weak areas in their learning (Lecturer centre A, 17 February 2014).

Basically, results obtained from interviews revealed that the OUT Regional Centre had shortage of staff. This is the reason face-to-face sessions were not conducted in a required manner. Results obtained from the study indicated that there was shortage of supporting staff in various disciplines in several faculties. The available numbers of the staff addressed general issues concerning students during face-to-face sessions. Accommodation during face-to-face is recommended as the foremost important student support (Brockett and Hiemstra, 1991). Online face-to-face sessions are insisted to expose learners to the learning materials on a daily basis (Garrison, 1997). Contact tutoring during face-to-face sessions are highly appraised so as to save time (Robinson, 2007). The Open University of Tanzania needs to deal properly with the problem of inadequate number of staff in its regional centers and reform the current face-to-face sessions to meet learning demands of the students.

Findings from both students and lecturers revealed that face-to-face sessions is a kind of learner support provided by the Open University of Tanzania. However, students suggested that such sessions were not conducted as due to the shortage of staff. Similarly, lecturers also declared that their number was insufficient to attend the existing number of students. The lecturers declared further that the face-to-face sessions are intended to address students' social and academic issues. They further explained that such sessions enhanced learners' confidence and addressed solutions to students' weak areas in academics. The Open University of Tanzania needs to reform face-to-face

sessions so that they should match with majority of students' demands.

4.2.1.4 Guidance and Counseling

Guidance and counseling was another student service provided at the OUT but this service also seemed not to cater for majority of students' needs or help them to become self-directed learners.

On this service, one student remarked that,

“The OUT provide a guidance and counseling on how to get learning materials. I went there last year to get an advice on how to get materials for two of my courses. The lecturers immediately connected me to the course coordinators and they directed me where to find certain reference books .I went there I got those books”
(Student centre B,10 February 2014)

Another student had this to say,

“We get guidance and counseling at the DRC's office. Once, two years ago I wanted to discontinue myself in learning at OUT. Through my friends, the DRC called and encouraged me to continue with learning and I am continuing until now” (Student centre B, February 2014).

As discussed in literature, guidance and counseling is a security need to retain distance learners in learning programme (Maslow, 1943). The OUT lecturers had put the Maslow theory of learning into practice. Guidance and counseling is regarded as a very important students' support for the distance learners to meet their learning needs such as attractive

resources like books learning materials and good environment of learning (Maslow, 1943; Roberts, 1999).

This study also revealed that 38 (95%) of the students had different views that Guidance and counseling were not provided. One of the students had these remarks:

“There is no guidance and counseling at the DRC. I had never been there to ask for an advice. I am doing what I know myself (Student centre A,17 February 2014).

Another student had this to say:

“ Guidance and counseling is not given accordingly. I went to the DRC for three times seeking advice for my courses as well as other academic issues. I left unattended because the lecturers were busy with face-to-face sessions”(Student centre B, February 2014).

Still another student commented:

“It is so difficult for me to travel from Korogwe to Tanga to seek for an academic advice while I know that I would not get any. There was scarcity of academic advisors at DRC’s office” (Student centre B,10 February 2014).

Yet, another student said that:

“Counseling sessions are not conducted properly because many students do not get proper academic advisors for their courses” (Student centre A, 17 February 2014).

According to responses from the students, it would be true that there was no proper counseling sessions for students who experienced academic and social problems. Many students had been dropping or discontinuing studies at the Open University because of some academic and social problems that would have been solved by students being given pertinent advice.

The data revealed that counseling sessions were not conducted due to the existing huge number of students with a very small number of lecturers. Moreover, many students were living far from the DRC's office. In essence, the existing little number of lecturers decided to undertake counseling sessions regarding matters that were very crucial to students. Due to this reason, it is evident that many students who experience social and academic problems may come out with poor performance during their examinations. Hence, counseling sessions remain to be very important to students for their academic excellence.

Literature in distance education shows that guidance and counseling is very important in learning (Roberts, 1999). Every student needs to report his or her academic counselor for counseling on academic issues during face-to-face sessions (Graets, 2003).

The lecturers were interviewed to explain whether or not student support was necessary to the Open University students. The four (87.5%) staff who were interviewed responded that the learner support was required to the Open University of Tanzania. According to the interviews with staff at the regional centre, it was revealed that academic and social advice was given when students wanted to discontinue from the

learning program. One of the lecturers at the regional centre had this to say,

“Due to the big number of students we have, it is difficult to conduct counseling sessions to every student. We only conduct counseling sessions to the student who has very serious academic and social problems and those who come for help”(Lecturer, centre A, 16 February 2014).

Another lecturer had this to say:

“Counseling sessions are conducted during face-to-face- sessions. We address both students’ academic and social problems. Time used for this exercise is very short due to the big number of students we have”(Lecturer centre A, 17, February 2014).

Still, another lecturer commented that:

“Basically, counseling sessions are very important to the Open University students whereby students are given strategies on how to take off academically. These strategies help them on how to prepare themselves to learn without the instructor and become successful learners”. (Lecturer centre A, 17 February 2014)

Another lecturer added that:

“In fact, counseling is conducted specifically to students with academic problems. We attend very few students due to limited time. This is because we have shortage of staff in this Centre”(Lecturer centre A, 18 February 2014).

The data revealed that counseling sessions are conducted for those who seek for them and not arbitrary to all students. This may be due to the fact that distance learners are

considered to be self-directed and they can seek for help whenever they get a problem. As discussed in literature, self-directed learners are flexible and they have attributes to take primarily responsibility of planning and evaluating their learning experience (Candy, 1991; Tough, 1967). Self-directed learners are very flexible such that students can easily observe the issue and get an advice where they may opt.

Furthermore, students who needed academic and social advice did not get that service due to limited time and inadequate number of lecturers. It was observed in literature that counseling is very important in the distance education field. Counseling is regarded as basic need for each student (Roberts, 1999). Counseling needs to be conducted by subject advisors after face-to-face sessions in order to expose learners to the learning materials and skills (Graets, 2003).

The findings showed that both students and facilitators regarded guidance and counseling important support provided by the Open University of Tanzania. However, 38 (95%) of the students declared that the counseling is not practiced due to shortage of lecturers, and 2 students 5 percent explained that they benefited from counseling. Hence, this is evident that counseling is very important support to the students Roberts (1999) The lecturers also described that the counseling sessions were conducted but many students did not get that service because the number of lecturers was insufficient.

The usefulness of learner support in learning

A follow-up question was, 'how does student support help the students in learning?'

Five facilitators and 40 students responded to this question.

Results from the study revealed that students were of opinions that learner support was very useful in studies. There was none of the students who had an opposite view. The students mentioned the support they liked more than others were:-21 (52.5%) students regarded group discussion as the only support that they liked most and 11 (27.5%) students answered that learning materials were more important than other learning support services. These notions are similar to what Knowles (1950) insisted that learning materials such as books, journals are very important learning support to learners. Eight (20%) students among who were interviewed replied that financial support from the family and employer facilitated their academic excellence. This is due to the fact that many learners are interested in opting distance education due to its financial and cost benefit Reisner (2007)

One student remarked that:

“ In actual fact, group discussion plays a significant role in my learning. Through group discussion I become exposed to learning materials that I do not have”(Student centre B, 9 February 2014).

Another student had these remarks,

“One of the best student support I prefer is group discussion. I have two group discussion sessions that are operating during the two weeks before examinations. Through group discussion, I gain confidence in learning because I compare knowledge I have with that of others. This learning technique keeps me busy in learning rather than when I studied alone” (Student centre A, 17, February 2014).

Still another student had these comments:

“The student support from OUT encompasses learning materials. Learning materials are so helpful to me rather than any other learning support service. Without learning materials, I could not do anything concerning learning” (Student centre B 9 February 2014).

Yet another student had this to say:

“Learning material is a support that I prefer rather than any other support because it equips me with knowledge and content needed when I enter in examinations. Without learning materials, I can easily loose confidence and fail the examination” (Student centre A,17 February 2014).

Another student added;

“The only support that has helped me at OUT is financial support from myself and my family. Without financial support, one may not learn even if he/she has adequate facilities and materials. You will not get a hall ticket that allows you to enter the examination room if you have not paid the examination fee. My employer had never supported me financially, what he only does is to grant me permission to attend the examinations” (Student centre A,17 February, 2014).

The responses from students revealed that they all believed that learners’ support is very important to distance learning. From their views, majority of students suggested that group discussion was the kind of support they liked most. Students described that group discussion exposed them to learning materials. They said that group discussion built

confidence and removed worries of becoming failures. This is similar to findings from literature in the study conducted by Robinson (2007) that disclosed that learners learn more significantly when exposed to a group than when they learn alone. Similarly, Maslow (1943) insisted that learning should be successful if it incorporates friendship, love and interaction.

Furthermore, the majority of students responded that learners' support was useful in learning, and to them learning, materials were their very important student support. The literature in this study supports students' views that absence of learning materials such as books, journals and modules greatly hindered teaching and learning in distance learning (Mse, and colleagues (2002).

Financial support was also mentioned to be an important learning support to them. Financial support helps the student meet several costs such as production of learning materials, tuition fee, travel, accommodation and so forth. Insufficient funding is a great problem to distance learners (Kishimbo, et. al., 2008).

The lecturers also believed that learners support was useful for students' learning.

In this study, five lecturers in DRC were interviewed. None of the five lecturers had a different view. One of the lecturers had these remarks:

“Learner support contributes largely in learning. For Instance, the learning materials in hard and soft copies contribute largely to students' learning”(Lecturer,14February 2014).

Another lecturer had this to say:

“The computer laboratory is so useful to students because learners are enabled to search and download materials”(Lecturer centre A, February 2014).

Still, another lecturer had these comments:

“Learning support removes learners’ worries and they make students become comfortable in learning. Learning support remains to be a very important tool that fastens learners ability to study” (Assistant lecturer centre A, February 16, 2014).

Yet, another lecturer added that:

“In actual fact, learners’ support such as library and the study shed facilitate learners in getting knowledge through books, pamphlets and wireless network. These support services facilitate students to meet their learning needs” (Lecturer, centre A,16 February 2014)

From quotes, it implies that lecturers declared that student support was very important in learning. However, their notion of support seemed to erode all self-directed learning propounded by Knowles (1975) that,

"self-directed individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating their learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes.”

The DRCs' were not concerned about how the student support helped them in learning or to become self directed learners. They all declared that the students support helped learners learn faster, removed worries and brought confidence in learning. They also explained that learning support services like libraries supplemented the learner with knowledge, apart from the notes that were given to them. The lecturers added that the internet helped the learners to find more materials than lecture notes, and study shed helped the learners to sit down and learn comfortably. None indicated that a student can be a self-directed learner in that they can be non-dependent and a self-directing person. They did not see students as resources for diagnosing needs, planning for learner support services and provide appropriate services that are not imposing.

4.3 The meaning students attach to the concept on Self-Directed learning

This section presents findings for the second objective of this study. The section responds to the questions for students, which asked “What do you understanding by the concept self directed learning (SDL)? Do you consider yourself to be a self-directed learner?” The goal was to get views from respondents about the meaning they attached to the concept on self directed learning and if the they considered themselves as self-directed learners. The students who responded to this question were 40 and 5 Lecturers.

The question posed was: “What is the meaning of self-directed learning?”

One of the students responded by saying;

“ Self directed learning refers to a self-study. This means a student makes all arrangements for his or her own learning” (Student centre A 16 February 2014).

Another student had this to say:

“Self-directed learning means that all responsibilities of learning remain to the learner alone. The learner plans where to get learning materials and arrange time for learning” (Student centre B, February 9 ,2014).

Still another student had these remarks

“Self-directed learning is learning that enables student control himself/herself without depending on the lecturer. What a self-directed learner needs is only course outline” (Student centre A,17, February 2014).

Still, another student had this to say;

“Self-directed learning is an independent learning where the learner guides himself or herself towards the whole learning process in absence of the instructor”(Student centre B,8 February 2014).

The study was interested to find whether or not all the respondents had the correct version of self-directed learning. Their responses tally very well with what is in the literature. For instance, Candy (1991) explained that SDL is an independent learning process where a learner is flexible in planning and monitoring the learning process. Furthermore, Taylor (2001) reported that the service is concerned with autonomous learning process where learners are involved in planning ,monitoring and evaluating their learning. All these notions tally with the meaning of SDL from the responses.

However, some learners had a critical view of self-directed learning. Some thought that self-directed learners cannot survive without help from outside such as financial support

and other necessary materials. This can be deduced from the following responses:

“Even if the learner is self-directed without learning support,he/she cannot learn himself / herself without assistance from facilitators and friends” (student,centre A,14 February 2014). “I think even to the best self-directed learner, encouragement from family and friends is important. If one learns without others seeing and telling her or him that it is a good thing that he or she is doing, one will lose momentum”(Student centre B 8 February 2014).

Another had this to say:

“Although self-directed learning comes from an inner drive of the individual. I also think motivated students learn something that is considered by others important. An employee, for example, must learn what the employer considers to be important, and not what (the employee) considers important”(Student, centre A 14 February 2014).

Similarly, the student who considered himself that he was not a self-directed learner had the reasons that even if the learner is self-directed, there were crucial matters that needed assistance from the facilitators, institution and friends. From this view, it is where students arrive due to the fact that the learner cannot stand alone to be self-directed. There must be assistance to support him or her. This truth is similar to that from literature review in this study that learning is not a natural and individual process, but a social and cultural activity that an individual is assisted by peers or by other more knowledgeable individuals (Vygotsky, 1978).

In this study, lecturers perceived SDL as a process where a student takes responsibility of planning, directs and controlling in their learning process. One of the lecturers had commented as follows:

“Self-directed learning is a system where a learner take charge in his or her own learning. It is the same with independent learning”.(Lecturer centre A,17 February 2014).

Another lecturer had these remarks:

“Self-directed learning refers to situation where students take initiatives of planning in order to carry out their studies to meet their learning objectives” (Lecturer, centre B,17 February 2014).

Still, another lecturer had this to say:

“Self directed learning refers to a self-study where the learner is a chief controller of learning process in its totality”(Lecturer centre A, 17,February 2014).

Yet another lecturer added that:

“Self-directed learning is a situation where a learner has an autonomy of directing and control all his or her learning activities so as to meet his or her learning objectives”. (Lecturer centre A,17 February 2014).

From all these responses, the lectures explained that SDL is a system where a learner takes charge in his or her own learning. They further declared that SDL was independent

learning. This is similar to one of the attributes named by Candy (1991) that in SDL when learners are independent, they become more self-directed learners. Another lecturer described that SDL refers to a situation where students take initiatives in planning, control and directing his/her own learning process. These notions are similar those in literature, For example, Chizmer and Walbert (1999) and Miyoung (1976) held that in SDL, learners should take control in planning of their learning and in order to enhance SDL, students should develop ability to generate new ideas and plans towards learning.

In summary, this part describes responses of students and facilitators on their perceptions on the meaning of self-directed learning. According to the findings, 35 (85%) students had correct meaning of SDL that it refers to a situation where the learner takes responsibility of control and directing his or her learning process Merriam & Caffarell (2006). Five (15%) students had incorrect meaning of SDL by responding that it is a process where the learner takes initiatives of finding his or her learning materials Knowles (1950). One student (2.5%) responded that he was not a self-directed learner and 39 (87.5%) students replied that they were self-directed learners. All the five lecturers had the correct meaning of SDL by alluding that it is a system where the learner takes responsibility of his or her own learning as suggested by Meriam & Caffarella (2006).

From the findings, students who defined SDL correctly did not mention the position of learner support. None of the students had an idea that in order for the learner to be self-directed, there should be an assistance from other sources, Thus, the meaning of SDL

that was given by students were seen correct because their response was similar to that provided in the literature. The student who responded that he was not a self-directed learner had a thought beyond ideas of other learners because he realized that without external support, he could not manage his learning.

4.4 How student support enhances self-directed learning

The third objective was to examine students' perceptions on how they support services can contribute to self-directed learning. This section addresses this objective by providing answers to the ninth question for the students and eleventh for lecturers. The question was: "In your views, how does student support enhance self-directed learning?" The assumption was that self-directed learning cannot stand alone, and learning is not an individual and natural process but cultural and social. For maximum self directed learning an individual needs to be supported, and students' support is more beneficial to self regulated learners (see Shaperly, 2000, Vygotsky, 1978, Petrides, 2002). Regarding how students support enhances SDL, the researcher explored views from both Open University students and lecturers, the key instruments used to collect information was interview. Through interviews, the researcher managed to collect views on how student support enhanced self directed learning. Five lecturers and 40 students were interviewed.

The results showed that all students perceived that student support enhanced self-directed learning. The students named students' support that enhanced self-directed learning included financial support, study materials, group discussions, guidance and counseling and adequate supporting staff. One of the students had these remarks:

“One of the things that affect my self-directed learning is lack of financial support. I am studying under very hard conditions because I am studying while I am starving. I have used my salary in paying fee for me and my kids” (Student centre B, 10 February 2014).

Another student had this to say:

“Learning materials are support that contribute to my self-directed learning. Learning materials are more helpful to me than any other learning support. Without learning materials, I could not do anything concerning learning” (Student ,centre B February 2014).

Still, another student had these comments:

“Group discussion is a learning system that I like best. Studying myself does not exhaust much more learning content and memory than participating in learning groups with my friends”(Student centre B, 10 February 2014).

Yet, another student urged that:

“In my view, guidance and counseling is very important to the Open University students. We face different academic and social problems that need an immediate response from our lectures. Unfortunately, we never ever get guidance and counseling” (Student, centre B, 13, February, 2014.)

Another student added that:

“Usually, lecturers have no time to meet with students. They usually need students

to organize themselves and make appointments. This is another problem that unmotivates the students” (Students centre B, 14 February, 2014).

From these findings, financial support, learning materials and guidance and counseling were considered important in helping self-directed learners.

Most students pointed out that learning in groups enabled them to become very busy due to learning time appointments. They also mentioned other advantages of group discussions that they were able to maintain memory, and enabled student to come out with a lot of learning materials and contents from their fellow learners.

These findings maintain what Knowles (1984) proposed that SDL could only occur when learners were encouraged to learn by reasoning and interaction with each other in learning. Similarly, Robinson (2007) asserted that students’ readiness (SDL) was developed significantly when they learned in groups. Also Kishimbo (2008) pointed that guidance and counseling enhance self-directed learning.

The interviews conducted with lecturers at the DRC pointed out that students’ support enhanced self-directed learning. Most of the lecturers named student support like that mentioned by students. However, 2 lecturers pointed that the supporting staff, effective communication systems and computer laboratory, were student support that enhanced self-directed pattern to the learners. One of the lecturers had this to say,

“We have inadequate number of staff. The policy of OUT stipulates that every centre should have 1 academic staff to represent each faculty. At present, we are facing a shortage of staff in some of the faculties” (Academic staff 16 February,

2014).

Still, another student had this to say:

“The communication systems such as telephone and internet are students’ support that enhance self-directed learning. Through telephone, students’ enquires on academic and social issues are replied. The internet is used to post text information such as examination results and other pieces of information from the University” (lecturer, centre A, 17 February 2014).

Yet, another lecturer had this to say,

“In brief, learner support that enhances self-directed learning is a computer laboratory. Learners benefit with this service through searching and downloading reading materials. Students easily exchange electronic learning materials with friends or from lecturers” (Lecturer centre A, 17 February 2014).

The findings indicate that lecturers pointed out other student support services enhance self-directed learning. Most lecturers pointed out that effective communication systems such as telephone and internet strengthened self-directed learning because students could easily communicate with DRC or academic staff and get help when they faced difficulties in their studies. These responses are similar to those presented in literature. It was held that effective communication systems such as telephone and internet contribute largely to successful self-directed learning behavior between learners (Oliver, 2003). Furthermore, use of internet and computers stimulate learners’ motivation to greater

capabilities of learning (Shama, 2003). Similarly, literature further postulates that human resource plays a significant role in increasing SDL through motivating learners (Hill, 2002).

In summary, from students' perspective, financial support, learning materials, group discussions, guidance and counseling were considered important support that strengthened SDL to the learners. Similarly, lecturers pointed such support that led students to believe they exalted SDL. However, the few lecturers considered that supporting staff, effective communication system and computer laboratory are support services that intensified SDL. From these findings, none pointed out that intrinsic motivation is a greater resource in escalating SDL. Likewise, none claimed student support did not stimulate self-directed learning to students.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents summary of the study, conclusion and recommendations. The latter has two Sub-sections, namely, recommendation for practice and recommendation for further research.

5.2 Summary of the study

In regard to objective one, learners and lecturers had a notion of dependency. This shows that they regard learning as not proactive this means that they wait things concerning teaching and learning to be done by the institution. Such culture of dependency was testified by views from both learners and facilitators that they are satisfied with learning materials provided by OUT such as group interaction, and face-to-face sessions. This view on learner support seems to dissolve self-directed learning behavior. This is due to the fact that students and facilitators did not point how learners can be non-dependent and become self-Independent in learning. The culture of dependency in distance education has great effects because students will lack skills and strategies in managing their learning on line. They will also lack creativity autonomy, interpersonal competency, flexibility, independence reflection and intrinsic motivation, which are credible attributes of distance learners. Similarly, learners will never be competent in analyzing and filtering information of learning in distance learning. Absence of all these attributes may lead learners to decide to drop-out.

In regard to objective two, findings showed that all the students had the correct version of self-directed learning. The learners make use SDL knowledge by discerning that they should know their learning goals, planning learning process and evaluating their learning outcomes. Likewise, learners know that the responsibility of learning relies to the learner himself or herself.

The institution (OUT) encourages self-directed learning in its course organization and arrangements. For instance, this is evident because the institution provides student support services, among others, such as learning materials, frequent face-to-face sessions and counseling. Likewise, the institution has established study sheds, computer laboratory and libraries in every region centre. All these initiatives are intended to enhance self directed learning to its students. On the other hand, the institution does not intensify self-directed learning because OUT does not empower learners and lecturers with self-directed learning skills and approaches that make learners become self-directed in learning. Similarly, the student support offered by the institution such as learning materials counseling, face-to-face sessions, instruction design and others are insufficient to make learners self directed.

In objective three, findings showed that student and lecturers declared that student support such as counseling, group discussions, face-to-face, financial support were considered important in enhancing self-directed learning. However, none named other things that inflate SDL such as thinking habits that the learner possesses, self knowledge, intrinsic motivation and the learner's ultimate goals of learning.

To sum up, lecturers and students had notion of dependency since they were satisfied with services provided by OUT to the learners. Both learners and lecturers seemed not to understand that it is their responsibility to initiate their internal personal drives towards learning rather than depending on the institution to do that for them. Such culture of dependency erodes the self-directed students' learning behavior. The culture of dependency in distance education has great effects in that learners lack of skills and strategies in managing their learning. Similarly, learners will lack skills such as creativity, autonomy, interpersonal competency, flexibility, reflection, and independency. Absence of these attributes and skills may lead learners to drop-out from studies.

Secondly, in objective number two, learners had a correct version of self-directed learning such that they regarded learning as a process to formulate goals, planning and evaluating their learning outcomes. The OUT encourages SDL through provision of student support to the learners. However, those learners' support services were insufficient to escalate self-directed learning to students.

Thirdly, results for objective three indicated that lecturers and students declared that student support strengthened self-directed learning. However, none pointed other factors that intensify self-directed learning such as learners' ultimate goals towards learning, thinking habits, self-knowledge and intrinsic motivation.

5.3 Conclusion

This study tried to use a critical eye on learner support services provided at the OUT. It

assessed student support services provided at the Open University of Tanzania. It also explored the meanings that students and lecturers attach to the concept of self-directed learning and lastly, examined the perceptions of students and lecturers on how students support services can contribute to self-directed learning.

Several student support services provided by OUT were mentioned and included study materials, face-to-face sessions, guidance and counseling services. They were not catering for students' needs and interests. Furthermore, student services did not encourage self-directed learning.

The study also found that all students and lecturers had the correct version about self-directed learning means. They all attached it with independent learning and the inner drive to learn. On the question on how student service can contribute to self-directed learning, all respondents had positive views about how that can enhance self-direction.

5.4 New development in knowledge

Self-directed learning is one very important aspect in distance education learners. While learner support services have been propounded to be key to student learning especially in distance learning mode, this service, if not properly handled, can hinder self-directed learning. The study provides an insight on how student support service at the OUT is conducted and how learners feel about it. The information is expected to be useful to stakeholders of education institutions and practitioners to help them accommodate provision of appropriate and adequate students' support that enhances self-directed learning to students.

The consequence of lack of provision of student support had caused student lack readiness to learn (self-directed learning) that resulted into poor performance, discontinuation, and long time in course completion. In attaining objective of provision of proper and adequate student support that enhances self-directed learning, the theoretical framework for implementation of SDL and learner support in open and distance learning adopted and modified from Candy (1991), Brocket and Hiemstra (1991) and Garrison (1997) gives an alternative mechanism on how to rectify the situation. First, the model incorporates SDL as a personal attribute that refers to learners' motivation and capacity for learning (Garrison, 1997). Personal attribute also refers to the capacity of using learning resources such as learning materials, audio visual, internet, face to face, and counseling sessions.

New knowledge development from this study is a reflection of what was aimed to the contribution of learners support to SDL to be attained at actual situation at the Open University of Tanzania. The OUT as a mandatory institution needs to work closely with DRC, education stakeholders and students in order to know what is going on concerning the contribution of students' support to teaching and learning experience.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Recommendations for Practice

In regard to key research findings, the study proposes the following recommendations for practice:

First, the Open University of Tanzania should provide appropriate and adequate student

support services in order to enhance self-directed learning to the open and distance learners. Findings revealed that the current existing students' support services such as face-to-face sessions, financial support, communication, and counseling do not satisfy learners' needs of the learners.

Secondly, the OUT regional centers should be well equipped with necessary facilities such as computer laboratory, large buildings that has adequate space that have enough study shed, huge library, hostel and cafeteria.

Thirdly, regional centers should make sure that learners are taught self-directed learning skills in order to be able to pursue learning in open and distance learning. Furthermore, the DRC needs to organize ICT training for students so that they can be computer literate and able to access information on line.

Fourthly, the regional centre had inadequate qualified staff for assisting learners especially tutors. There is a need to increase efforts to employ new qualified staff at the regional centers so as to reduce the burden of work to the current staff.

Fifthly, effective measures should be taken to extend study centers to the districts. Every district should have a study center that will have similar functions like those of the regional centres. This action will help to bring immediate solutions to students' academic and social problems.

Sixthly, there should be proper organization and coordination of institution support like communication system, guidance and counseling, face-to-face sessions, course content

and course outline in order to fasten teaching and learning process.

5.5.2 Suggestions for further research

The following recommendations for further research are proposed:

This study focused on contribution of learning support services to self-directed learning at the Open University of Tanzania. Furthermore, the study should specifically focus on how financial support can contribute to self-directed learning. This will provide information as to extent the financial assistance can motivate learners to be self-independent in learning.

The study revealed that learning materials provided by OUT dissatisfied learners' needs. There is need to make investigation whether or not organization and delivery of course materials including course content contribute to students' self-directed learning.

The study found that students' self directed activities enhanced their SDL. There is need to conduct a further study to investigate the relevance of self directed learning activities in open and distance learning.

The results of the study discovered that face to face sessions are very important student support in OUT. There is necessity of conducting a research on assessment of counseling sessions at the Open University of Tanzania.

The study was conducted in two Areas, Korogwe Town and Tanga City. Since the study covered a few students, the same study can be conducted to cover more districts and regions so as to allow more generalization for findings.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide for the Open University Students

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

My name is Elias Paulo Mavoja. I am a student at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT). I am conducting study on Learner support system (LSS) to Students in Open University of Tanzania. The aim of this study is to understand the provision of students support and how it helps students to learn better. I request you to respond to questions that you will be given. However, your responses will be taken highly confidential and that your name will not be mentioned or appear on any part of this study.

1. Sex.....
2. Year of study.....
3. When you hear that, “student support,” what comes to your mind?
4. What types of student support services do you get as you engage in learning at OUT?
5. Identify one student support and explain how it has helped you in your learning?
6. What would happen if you did not get that support?
7. What do you understand by the concept, “self-directed learning”?
8. Do you consider yourself to be a “self-directed learner”?

Please explain.

9. In your own views, how does student support enhance self-directed learning?

Appendix 2: Interview Guide for DRC

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DRC

My name is Elias Paulo Mavoja. I am a student at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT). I am conducting study on Learner support system (LSS) to Students in Open University of Tanzania. The aim of this study is to understand the provision of students' supports and how it helps students to learn better. I request you to respond to questions that you will be given. However, your responses will be taken highly confidential and that your name will not be mentioned or appear on any part of this study.

1. Position.....
2. Sex.....
3. Education level.....
4. Working experience.....
5. What do you understand by the concept “student support?”
6. Are student support services necessary for Open University learners?
7. What student support services do you provide to in educational system?