

Attitudes of Distance and Formal Learners towards Open Learning System**Dr.Kowshik M.C.**Principal Investigator,
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Davanagere, Karnataka**1. Introduction:**

In the recent times in India it is observed that open learning system has made a major breakthrough in providing a viable alternative to the already overburdened formal system of education, especially to the formal Higher Education System. The foundation of open learning system was laid when Delhi University for the first time in India opened the Directorate of Correspondence Education in 1962. Thereafter, many other universities opened their respective correspondence education units. The idea of starting an open university was first officially announced when Prof. V .V. R. K. Rao, the Minister of Education while inaugurating a seminar an open University (in 1970) expressed that, "Open University using the latest educational and communication technology should offer quality education to a much larger body of population which remains outside of the so called university system ". The idea of starting a National Open University was strongly felt by the G. Parthasarathy Committee (1976) whose report observed," in a situation, where the expansion of enrollments in Higher education has to continue at a terrific pace and where available resources in terms of man and money are limited, the obvious solution, if proper standards are to be maintained and the demand for higher education from different sections of the people is to be met, is to adopt the university system with its provision for higher education on a part-time basis. The group. therefore recommends that the Government of India should establish as early as possible, a National Open University by an Act of Parliament, " But so far as the establishment of the first open University is concerned, Andhra Pradesh is credited to open it first, which is now called as Bit Ambedkar Open University. At the

national level, however, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) came in existence. At present there are about four open universities and 41 directorates/ institutes of correspondence in a functional state.

Karnataka State Open University (KSOU), Mysuru, is a State Public University established by the act of State Legislature in 1992, and was brought into force on 1st June 1996. Ever since its establishment, KSOU has been pro-actively engaged in fulfilling the national objectives of higher education i.e., to achieve ACCESS, EQUITY, QUALITY, AFFORDABILITY and ACCOUNTABILITY.

A Pioneer and Premier Centre of Higher Education under Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system, KSOU was carved out of illustrious University of Mysore in 1996. Before becoming the university, KSOU was an Institute of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education (ICC&CE) of the University of Mysore which was established in 1969.

The motto of KSOU- "HIGHER EDUCATION FOR EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE", promises to reach out to those unreached - to all those higher education aspirants. The Open University was established in pursuance of National Policy on Education, NPE-1986 on the recommendation of Central Education Advisory Board MHRD, Government of India. Since its establishment, nearly 20 Lakh students have been graduated from across the country and in all disciplines.

So far as the Philosophy of the open learning system (OLS) is concerned the objectives are quite common that is to provide access to education to all those who seek it but do not afford to go the threshold of formal system of education due to variety of reasons to provide flexibility with

regard to eligibility for enrolment, choice of courses, methods of learning, operation of programmes and taking examination etc. and to offer need - based academic programmes. There is no doubt about the fact that, the OLS is a boon in modern times as it has helped many who could not have otherwise satisfied their urge to get education. It has really truly democratized the system of higher education providing equal opportunity to education. But with all its positive features OLS or the distance learning system has not completely succeeded in annulling the implicit ambiguity from students mind, whether the quality of education, or degrees provided and the general status of these institutions could be equated with those of the formal institutions / Universities. This question is often raised and informally debated among the students both in the formal system and in the system of distance learning and even by other non-students but acquainted with the developments in the OLS. Of course, the institutions (Open learning) concerned have normally been tried to clear these doubts by providing information to their students in different occasions and even in public media. But what is the attitude of students towards OLS is quite a significant question to be carefully investigated into.

Considering the above it could be said that studies conducted in this area are not sufficient. Against this backdrop, the researchers felt it is quite necessary as well as timely to conduct a study on the students' attitude towards OLS.

2. Objectives of the Study:

The study was conducted with following objectives:

- 1) To study the attitudes of distance (KSOU) and formal learners (BUB) towards OLS.
- 2) To study the variations in the attitudes of distance (both KSOU) and formal learners (BUB) groups towards OLS.
- 3) To study sex - wise variations in the attitudes of students from two different system of education.
- 4) To study the variations in the attitudes of employed and unemployed students of KSOU and B.U.B.

3. Hypotheses of the Study:

The following null hypotheses were tested:

- 1) There exists no significant difference in the mean OLS (attitude towards OLS) scores of students in general from two different

systems (i.e, KSOU and RCU).

- 2) There exists no significant difference in the mean AOL scores of male and female students of KSOU.
- 3) There exists no significant difference in the mean AOLs scores of male and female students of formal System.
- 4) There exists no significant difference in the mean AOL scores of employed and unemployed students of KSOU.
- 5) There exists no significant difference in the mean AOLs scores of employed and unemployed students of RCU.

4. Methodology:

4.1. Instrument used:

To measure the attitude of students towards OLS, a likert type scale was prepared by the researcher, following the appropriate procedures of attitude testing. The psychometric properties of the scale were also determined following the due procedures. The test-retest reliability of the scale was found to be 0.89, which is highly significant ($P < 0.001$, $N = 115$). The final version of the scale consisted of total 40 items - 23 positively and 17 negatively framed statements. Each item was followed by five alternatives, viz. "Strongly Agree", ' Agree', 'Undecided', 'Disagree' and ' Strong/ Disagree'. To score the scale the responses were credited with 5, 4, 3,2 and 1 points respectively from favourable (i.e. Positive) to till unfavourable end. The sum of the items credits represented the total attitude score of a respondent. To distinguish between favourable and unfavourable attitude, a total score of 96 was considered as the reference point which is equivalent to responding favourably (i.e. to agree and disagree respectively with the positive and negative statements) to exactly 24 items (60%) out of total 40 items. Thus, those who have got a score of 96 or above considered as the possessor of unfavourable attitude.

4.2. Subjects :

The subjects of the present study comprised of total 100 students - 50 each From:

- a. KSOU, Mysore (Main campus KSOU, Mysore)
- b. P.G. Departments of Education, Bangalore University, Bangalore.

All the students were graduates and were either pursuing Post - graduation courses in their respective institutions. While selecting the subjects care was taken to ensure reasonable representation from deficient groups of students viz male, female, employed and unemployed.

4.3. Statistical Techniques;

The data were analysed by calculating frequencies, percentages and applying percentage, mean, standard deviation and 't' test. S.P.S.S. (Version-22) has been used for data analysis.

5. Results:

The results are presented and discussed objective-wise.

Objective No-1: To study the attitudes of distance (both KSOU) and formal learners towards OLS.

TABLE-1: Sex and system-wise distribution of students according to their Attitudinal Dispositions

Attitude	Formal			KSOU		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Favourable	11 (50.0)	11 (39.3)	22 (44.0)	23 (74.2)	16 (84.2)	39 (78.0)
Unfavourable	11 (50.0)	17 (60.7)	28 (56.0)	8 (25.8)	3 (15.8)	11 (22.0)
Total	22	28	50	31	19	50

* Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages.

It could be seen from the Table -1 that most of the distance learners (i.e. 78% of KSOU students have favourable attitude towards OLS, whereas 56 percent of the formal learners have unfavourable attitude. Sex-wise, majority of the female students from KSOU (84% respectively) have favourable attitude while about 61 percent of the female formal learners have unfavourable attitude towards OLS. Systemwise, 78 percent of the KSOU students have favourable attitude, whereas, only 44 percent of the formal learners possess similar attitude. The above finding clearly shows the stereotyping that have been formed among the formal learners regarding the OLS. However it may be the quality of education and

flexibility in the programme that are offered by KSOU has contributed significantly towards the development of favourable attitude in its students.

Objective-2: To study the variations in the attitudes of distance (both KSOU) and formal learners (BUB) groups towards OLS.

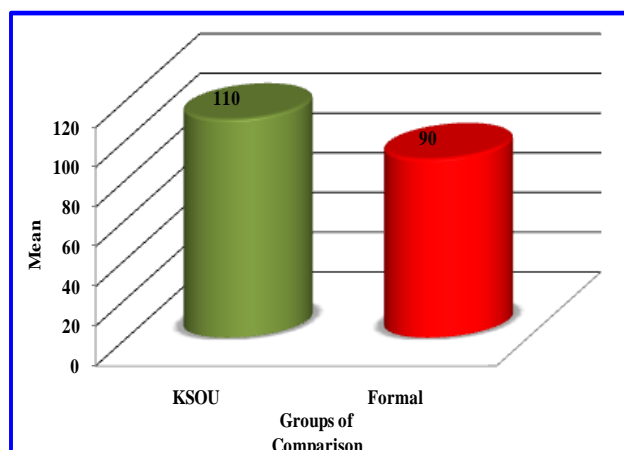
To find out the significance of difference between any two groups, 't' test was applied and the result is given in the Table-2.

TABLE -2: Mean Differences in AOLS Scores of KSOU and Formal Learners

Groups of Comparison	Mean	S.D.	't' ratio	Status of Significance
KSOU	110	8.97	5.972	Significant at 5 percent level
Formal	90	7.82		

It is clear from Table - 2 that, the mean AOLS Scores of KSOU students is higher than those of the Formal learners. However, the mean AOLS Scores of KAOU students differed significantly ($P < 0.01$) from that of the Formal learners. There null hypothesis-1 is rejected and alternative hypothesis was accepted. Therefore we can say that there exists significant difference in the mean OLS (attitude towards OLS) scores of students in general from two different systems (i.e. KSOU and RCU).

Graph-2: Mean Differences in AOLS Scores of KSOU and Formal Learners



Objective-3: To study sex - wise variations in the attitudes of students from two different system of education.

To study sex - wise variations in the attitudes of students from two different system of education was also studied and the data are summarized in the Table-3.

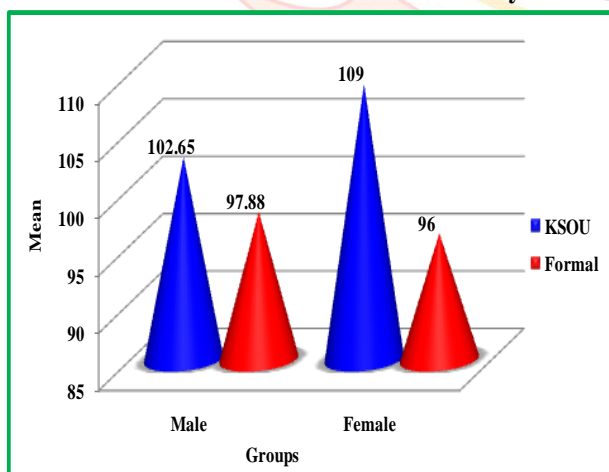
Table -3: Mean Differences in AO LS scores of Male and female Students of KSOU Formal System

System of Education	Groups	N	Mean	S.D	' t' ratio	Status of Significance
KSOU	Male	31	102.65	11.72	1.965	N. S.
	Female	19	109.0	10.41		
Formal	Male	22	97.88	16.80	0.391	N.S
	Female	28	96.0	14.97		

N.S - Not significant at 5 percent level

It could be seen from Table -4 that, all the 't' ratio are not significant ($P > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypotheses nos. 2 and 3 are retained and it was concluded that within any system male and female students do not differ significantly from each other so far as

Grapy – 3: Mean Differences in AO LS scores of Male and female Students of KSOU Formal System



Objective-4: To study the variations in the attitudes of employed and unemployed students of KSOU and B.U.B.

Variations in the attitudes of employed and unemployed students of KSOU and B.U.B. were also

studied and the summary of data is presented in the Table -4

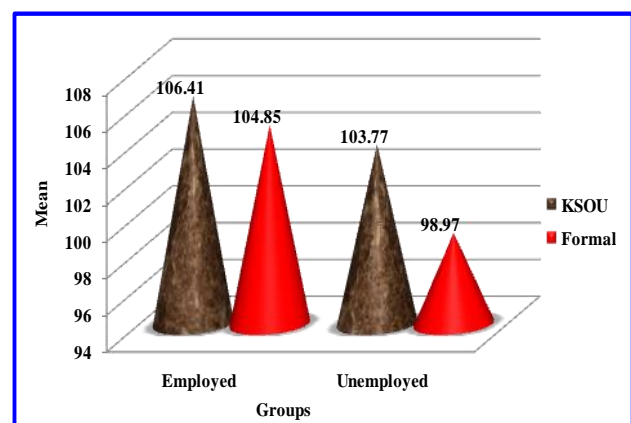
Table-4: Mean Differences in AOLS Scores of Employed and Unemployed Students of KSOU and B.U.Bangalore.

System of Education	Groups	N	Mean	S.D	' t' ratio	Status of Singiance
KSOU	Employed	24	106.41	12.96	0.743	N. S.
	Unemployed	26	103.77	10.75		
Formal	Employed	20	104.85	12.37	1.553	N.S
	Unemployed	30	98.97	13.51		

N. S.- Not significant at 5 percent level.

Table -4 shows that both the 't' ratios are not significant ($P > 0.05$). Therefore, hypotheses nos. 4 and 5 are retained and it was concluded that within any system employed and unemployed students do not much differ in their attitudinal dispositions towards OLS. Persons who are employed are one of the main beneficiaries of the distance education system and obviously they are expected to possess favourable attitude towards OLS. In the present study, it was found that, among the employees nearly 82 percent of KSOU students and 85 percent of formal students possessed favourable attitude. At the same time, a good majority of unemployed students (68% among KSOU and 67% among formal) also possessed favourable attitude.

Grapy – 4: Mean Differences in AOLS Scores of Employed and Unemployed Students of KSOU and B.U.Bangalore.



6. Findings:

1. Most of the distance learners (i.e. 78% of KSOU students have favourable attitude towards OLS, whereas 56 percent of the formal learners have unfavourable attitude.
2. Sex-wise, majority of the female students from KSOU (84% respectively) have favourable attitude while about 61 percent of the female formal learners have unfavourable attitude towards OLS.
3. System wise, 78 percent of the KSOU students have favourable attitude, whereas, only 44 percent of the formal learners possess similar attitude.
4. There exists significant difference in the mean OLS (attitude towards OLS) scores of students in general from two different systems (i.e, KSOU and RCU)
5. Within any system male and female students do not differ significantly from each other so far as
6. Within any system employed and unemployed students do not much differ in their attitudinal dispositions towards OLS.

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