

Inclusiveness of the Library Services Available for Distance Education Students at University of Zambia

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Abstract: This paper explored the ‘inclusiveness’ of the library provided services for all students at the University of Zambia. A survey with a sample size of 54 respondents that included library staff, lecturers, Institute of Distance Education staff and students on distance learning mode. The major findings were that the majority of respondents indicated that University of Zambia library had introduced a number of services with a view to widening access to library materials by all categories of students including those on distance mode and those who attended evening classes. The services introduced included establishing Provincial libraries, subscription to various e-resources (e-books and Journals), establishing an institutional repository and many more electronic based platforms. While the University of Zambia has widened access to library services, there are still challenges bordering on attitudes and quality of infrastructure and learning materials that need further improvement to guarantee full inclusiveness for all distance education students.

Key words: Distance Education, Open Access, Library services, University of Zambia

I. INTRODUCTION

Distance Education at university of Zambia was established in 1966 following the Lockwood commission’s recommendation to establish the University of Zambia. With the establishment of the university the commission recommended that the university develops degree programmes that would be also offered to the external students (Lockwood, 1963, Siachiwena, 1988; Simui, Namangala, Tambulukani & Ndhlovu, 2018; & Simui, Chibale, & Namangala, 2017). It was recognized then that it was necessary to offer alternative mode of study to those who had no opportunity of enrolling full time. Since then university of Zambia has been offering distance education programmes alongside fulltime programmes). Distance education was also meant to capture those who could not enrol fulltime at the institution. With the increase in enrolments of conventional and distance students the university was under pressure to provide adequate facilities and services including library services one of the key learner support.

Education as a basis for change and development is now delivered in different modes. One of these modes is distance education. Distance education is offered all over the world as an alternative to formal education system. This type of learning system is often referred to as out of class learning. This means that it is received while the students are outside the learning institution. In other words, distance education is

an educational process in which a significant proportion of teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/ or time from the learner. Due to the fact that students are not required to be physically in class and can mostly learn on their own in their localities, distance education has proved to be relatively cheaper to run. This has also led to its popularity and expansion in developing countries where educational infrastructure is in most cases not adequate. In other words, the popularity of the mode of study is also based on heightened level of awareness among the students to pursue their studies using different modes and away from the conventional ways. This therefore means that civic awareness levels among the students are not limited to conventional learning but are also seen in the context of the other types of learning hence following the distance education mode.

One also gets the sense that the heightened level of awareness can be attributed to civic awareness arising from their civic educational processes (Muleya, 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2019; Bergersen & Muleya ,2019; Machila, Somba, Muleya, & Pitsoe, 2018; Magasu, Muleya & Mweemba ,2020; , 2020; Mupeta, Muleya , Kanyamuna, & Simui, 2020. Habanyati, Simui, Kanyamuna & Muleya, 2020; Mwase, Simuyaba, Mwewa, Muleya, & Simui, 2020 Mwanangombe, Mundende, Muzata, Muleya, Kanyamuna & Simui, 2020). Wu, 2003, argues that though tertiary institutions have a responsibility in producing scholars, the universities are constrained by space, time, and money. There is a need to adopt innovative learning methods that will permit the delivery of education to the majority of those seeking higher education. Therefore, distance education appears to offer a popular option for students in Zambia most of whom could make it as conventional students in higher learning institutions. Daniels and Trullinger (1991), in addition mentions that a number of studies have shown that distance education is more cost-effective than traditional programmes, especially with large student enrollments. However, there should be a good student support system that should include libraries.

Importance of the library in distance education

Most writers on distance education have argued that though distance education depends on the guidance from learning facilitators, and the information technologies (ICTs), the students need to use the library and information centers for reading and information search. The library, serves as the heart of every learning institution because it contains relevant

information materials in various formats such as books, journals, DVDs, CD-ROM and internet facilities necessary to not only resident students but also to non-resident students for their school work and their own research. The library enables the students to develop their potential and capabilities both academically and socially. Brown, 1996, stresses that library services especially at the tertiary level acts as a place for independent work because at this level, the users should be able to locate, access, use, compare and contrast as well as evaluate information more meaningful to their educational inquiry.

University of Zambia Library

University of Zambia library whose sitting capacity is 1600 officially opened its doors to the public on 23th October 1969. This was two years after it was designated “National Reference Library”. Since then the library has been serving the University community as well as the general public. Among UNZA’s strategic directions in the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan is to “Promote and maintain excellence in teaching, learning, research and consultancy”. Central to attaining this objective is the mandate of the library to provide access for researchers, and students, both resident and distance, to the most current, high quality and appropriate academic and research information services (UNZA 2013-17 strategic plan). As such, the library is the focal point of study and research in the University.

However, the library has been struggling in re-stocking reading materials as well as upgrading its infrastructure and services. For a long time now, University of Zambia library has neither expanded in terms of infrastructure nor achieved full staff establishment. Collection building particularly for print resources has remained limited due to dwindling budget allocations from central administration as well as Government. This has left the library with no option but to depend on donations from well-wishers for print materials. Like most the academic libraries, University of Zambia library has also adopted some initiatives such as introducing Open Access resources, Institutional Repository, E-journals and E-books in order to remain effective in meeting its obligations to the community which include all students studying at UNZA using different modes of study. The open access platforms and subscribed e-journals and books that offer scholarly resources have been appreciated due to the rich content they have. Open Access resources particularly offer free content to anyone so long one has access to internet. Open access has widened dissemination of peer-reviewed literature to both the rich & poor countries thereby supporting research as well as enhancing education at no or minimal costs.

University of Zambia library inclusive services

Open Access

According to Suber (2015, Open-access literature is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions. OA operates in two main platforms namely OA journals and archives (repositories). These

platforms have allowed Scientists and scholars to access scholarly literature leading to knowledge creation as well as dissemination.

The University of Zambia library has not lagged behind in exploiting such an opportunity. The library has introduced a number of OA services to mitigate the limited information materials for the users. Some of the services include the subscription to e-journals through the Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) where most databases are accessed freely on a minimal membership fee. The library has also established an open access Institution Repository, and has provided links to OA eBooks and various OA directories such as Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Directory of Open Access Books (BOAB), Directory of Open Access Repositories (OpenDOAR) and World-wide Science. The University library has also in the past organised and participated in OA activities meant to promote OA content, publishing and information sharing among researchers and students.

University of Zambia Institutional Repository

The University of Zambia Institutional Repository was established in June 2010 with a view to opening up unpublished research output of the university to the global world. To date, the collection has more than 4000 research materials produced by the University community. Its aim is to increase access for students on campus and those on distance to the University of Zambia research output on OA basis. . According to Lynch (2003), a Repository is “a set of services that a university offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members”. Digital repositories offer possibilities of new ways to publish and share information. University of Zambia Institutional Repository is open access. This means that there are no restrictions in terms of access to the materials archived in the Repository. This is in line with the research policy of University of Zambia (UNZA) which states that research done at UNZA becomes the property of the institution.

University of Zambia Institutional Repositories contains masters’ theses, PhD dissertations, and research articles produced by the University. According to Craw (2002) and Chan (2004), IRs increase visibility (Access to research content), prestige, and public value of contributors. They offer diversified scholarly materials collected and preserved by academic institutions. Likewise, the University of Zambia IR serve as a significant indicator of University of Zambia’s academic excellence as it showcases the research output of the institution which has proved to be relevant research materials to all students on different modes of learning.

The repository is maintained by the Library staff who provide much of the expertise in terms of metadata tagging, authority controls, Faculty, Researchers and students provide content and the Computer Centre for Information Communication Technology (CICT) staff provides the technical expertise

Open Access Directories

Other OA services provided by the library include links to OA eBooks and various directories such as DOAJ, DOAB and OpenDOAR, etc. Launched, in 2003, DOAJ offers access to about 8, 869 peer reviewed OA journals covering all areas of science, technology, medicine, social science and humanities from 29 countries.

DOAB offers access to about 4, 695 academic peer-reviewed books for 155 publishers. It aims at increasing discoverability of Open Access books of member academic publishers. Similarly, OpenDOAR provides about 2600 listings of repositories. Additionally, it provides tools and support to both repository administrators and service providers in sharing best practice and improving the quality of the repository infrastructure.

The other OA activity mentioned earlier on is the OA campaign that the University library organized and participated in from 10- 12 June 2015 under the theme “OA, an alternative perspective of scholarly communication, research and innovation”. The main objective of the campaign was to promote OA research not only at the University of Zambia but in the country as a whole. In specific, the campaign aimed at promoting local content publishing through institutional repositories and OA journals as tools for research dissemination. It further intended to help the participating institutions understand critical issues surrounding OA publishing such as OA policies and the benefits of using OA, at individual through institutional to national levels. While faculty publications in journals reflect positively on academic institutions, institutional archives concentrate on the intellectual products created by the members of staff, making it easier to demonstrate scientific, social and financial value. This value to individual researchers is evidenced in increased visibility thereby reflecting a high quality of scholarship (SPARC 2002).

Subscribed e-resources

University of Zambia Library and the time this research was undertaken it had subscribed to the following databases: EBSCO Host, Emerald, Oxford University press, SAGE, Science Direct and Wiley Online Library. The data bases contain thousands of e-journals and e-books which were accessible on internet. The library has also a number of UN sponsored data bases that are free of charge for those who could access them. Some of these data bases include HINARI for health information, AGORA for agriculture related research, GOALI for legal and justice information, OARE for environmental research and many more.

Establishment of Provincial Libraries

Following the launch of open distance learning (ODL) policy at the University of Zambia, The University library in conjunction with the Institute of Distance Education were mandated to establish and coordinate Provincial libraries in all the ten provinces of Zambia near where students were located. At the moment two provincial libraries have been established

in Kitwe and Livingstone centres. The idea behind this is to take library services closer to students on ODL and those that are studying in the evening. In addition, the Institute of Distance Education through its learner management system has provided an e-library with over 2500 titles meant for distance education students. This library is accessible on mobile phones, tablets as long as one has internet bundles in his or her mobile or tablet and is a registered student. All these strides in improving access to library materials are meant to cater for every student studying at UNZA regardless of the mode of study being used.

Statement of the Problem

While it has been acknowledged and noticed that the university of Zambia library had introduced all these initiatives with a view to include all students on different modes of study, there has been no research conducted to ascertain the level of usage and appreciation of these services by the user community. This paper therefore set out to assess the level of usage and appreciation of these services. The findings for instance justified the need for UNZA library and other libraries with financial challenges to take advantage of OA platforms that offer a more reasonable and affordable resources. The platforms are intended to improve library services in addressing various information needs of users.

Purpose of the study

The rationale of this paper is to bring to the attention of the central management, an assessment of the initiatives the library and IDE, had introduced showing whether the resources were being used and appreciated by all students including distance education students. The research will also encourage UNZA library to do more awareness activities to encourage all students and other users to use and appreciate open access resources as an authentic alternative to print materials found in the library. The findings of this research will further help library management to identify more open access resources and other subscribed e-resources relevant to programmes offered at UNZA for the benefit of all categories of the users.

Study Objectives

The central objective that guided the study was ascertaining the inclusiveness of library services for distance education students and establishes the extent to which these services are used and appreciated by students.

II. THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

The study applied Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The Technology Acceptance Model, most known as technology acceptance model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989), being an adaptation of the model Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). The intention of the development of the model TAM resulted from an IBM Canada contract with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology – MIT, in the 80 s to evaluate the market potential to new products of the brand and to make it possible an explanation of the determinants of computers use (Davis; Bagozzi; Warshaw, 1989). Davis

(1989) defines the two main determinants of TAM on the following way: (i) Perceived utility – degree in which a person believes that the use of a particular system may improve his performance; (ii) Facility of perceived use – degree in which a person believes that the use of an information system will be free of effort.

III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Suber (2015) defines Open-access as digital or online literature that is free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions. He explains that OA removes price barriers (subscriptions, licensing fees, pay-per-view fees) and permission barriers (most copyright and licensing restrictions). OA content therefore offers free availability and unrestricted use. Similarly, Terras defines Open Access as the provision of unrestricted access to peer-reviewed scholarly research. She argues that OA is there to promote open research, open data and open science. For example, research is specifically conducted to avail its methods, data and results so that others can replicate, investigate, corroborate and ultimately contribute to answering the underlying research questions. This therefore leads to knowledge creation and problem solving

Fang Hu and Hangsheng Jiang (2014) conducted a research on OA document delivery, a case study in Capital Normal University Library. The results showed that OA has become an extraordinarily useful source for librarians to perform document delivery service. For example, over the years 2010-2012, CNUL provided 414 papers for users, of which only 17 papers came from free Internet resources. On the other hand, results indicated that 87 per cent of the users did not know about the OA publishing platforms hence the need for deliberate programs meant for promotion of OA resources such as creation of OA resources links on the library Web site.

Terras (2015) in her study on making and using open digitised cultural content revealed that the digital information environment in which digitised content is created and delivered has changed phenomenally. Open cultural data now allows the sharing and reuse of digital data while encouraging new advances in research across the sector, even though issues of licensing persist. The study further noted that there is need to encourage institutions to contribute in open environment as well as content uptake through the building of aggregation and search facilities to link across information sources that allows resource discovery.

Sahu and Arya (2013) carried out a research on Open access practices in India, to analyze the awareness of open access publishing among researchers and faculty members of Indian institutions, and to evaluate the development of open access initiatives existing in India. The results showed that India's contribution to OA literature and publishing had increased in the last few years. There were increased awareness levels on open access information sources as well as initiatives among the research community.

Technische Universiteit Eindhoven (University of Technology) outlines advantages and disadvantages of Open Access publishing saying OA enhances visibility and impact of one's own work as Open Access articles are downloaded and cited more frequently compared to articles from non-Open Access journals while covering a wider audience. OA provides free access to scientific knowledge and information leading to improved education, research development and creation of knowledge. A help in bridging the digital divide as research content is made available and accessible to both rich and poor countries.

On the other hand, the university argues that the quality and reputation of OA journals have not yet been established as traditional journals. OA publishing is not cheaper than the current costs of licenses as authors pay for their publications: the cost of producing research results has been transferred to producers of information while users go without incurring any costs or very insignificant where it exists. Save the Children's Fund (1995) maintains that inclusive education incorporates the principle of access for all disadvantaged learners and not merely for those with disabilities. Save the Children's view on inclusiveness of education is consistent with Simui, Kasonde Ngandu, Cheyeka and Makoe, 2019; Simui, 2018; Simui, Kasonde-Ngandu, Cheyeka, Simwinga and Ndhlovu, 2018; Simui, 2009 & Eliadou, Lo, Servio & Simui, 2007 who argue that it has about increase access, participation and achievement of the marginalised and excluded learners to the education system within the regular set-up.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A quantitative methodology with a survey design was applied. The researchers purposively distributed questionnaires to distance education students who had come for residential school and had been visiting the library during that period and apparently used the Institutional Repository and other e-resources. A sample size of 75 respondents (students, IDE staff and Library staff) was used to respond to the questionnaires out of which 54 returned their responses.

The figure 1 below indicates that the majority of the respondents (76%) were young students whose age ranged from 25 and below. This also meant that young students were more likely to use computers and internet in accessing information for their academics than older students.

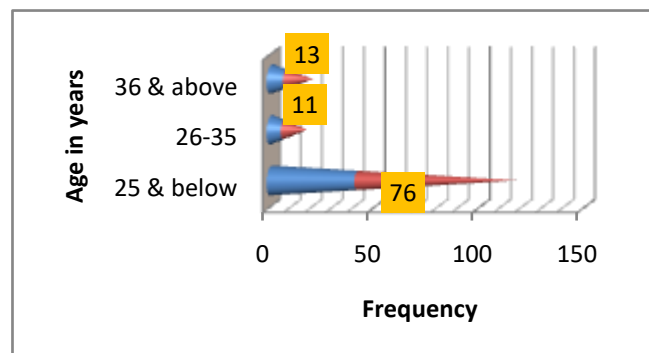


Figure 1: Age of participants

Out of 54 students that responded, 40 (74%) were females, 13 (24%) were males while 1 (2%) did not respond. There were more female students that took part in the survey than male students.

Data analysis was done using SPSS and Microsoft Excel software. The findings were presented in form of figures, tables and charts.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings below were based on the survey that was conducted on distance education students who had in one way or another used the OA platforms and the subscribed e-resources to access information they needed in their research. The students who answered the questionnaire were those who visited the library during the time this research was undertaken in the month of July 2018 during Residential School. Out 66 questionnaires answered, 54 were for students while 12 were answered by members of staff.

Usage of Open Access Resources and subscribed e-resources

The study revealed that a good number (30, 56%) of students who responded to the questionnaire accessed the IR and other e-resources subscribed by the library anywhere there was internet, 13 (24%) indicated that they found it easy to use the resources, 2 (4%) found the resources relevant and 1(2%) found it to have to a lot of information. These results may mean that most students used the IR and e-resources because it was easy to use and access while a few found it relevant. This also meant that students were starting to trust electronic materials more than before. The results are in the table 1 below.

Table 1:- Usefulness of IR, e-journals, e-books

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
1. They are easy to use	13	24.1
2. They are available	1	1.9
2. Have a lot of information	1	1.9
3. Information is relevant	2	3.7
4. Can be accessed anywhere	30	55.6
5. None Response	7	13.0
Total	54	100

The students were then asked to indicate how long they had been using the IR, e-journals and e-books in order to establish whether they appreciated the resources or not. The assumption was that If students had continuously used the resources for some time then they must have appreciated and if they did not continue to use them then they did not appreciate. The results revealed that 46 (85%) of the respondents to this question, had been using the e-resources for the past two years, 6 (11%) had been using the resources for 1 to 2 years and 2 (4%) showed that they had been using the resources for less than 1 year. The results further showed that 34 (63%) of the respondents

informed that they would find the information they needed without problems while 20 (37%) indicated they could not.

These results are an indication that the majority of the students who responded to this question, had been using the e-resources for some time and are still accessing them because they have found them resourceful. The IR particularly, as an open access platform, has therefore proved to be helpful to the students that use it and could therefore offer the best alternative information resources to UNZA Library clientele. The findings above are consistent with Davis' (1989), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory. The Theory holds that the successful acceptance of new technologies by end users border on perceived utility – degree in which a person believes that the use of a particular system may improve his performance and facility of perceived use, degree in which a person believes that the use of an information system will be free of effort. See table 2 below for the responses.

Table2: Accessibility of Information needed from the OA and other e-resources

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	34	63.0
No	20	37.0
Total	54	100.0

Challenges users encountered during their information search sessions from the IR

To establish the challenges that students faced during their information search schedules, they were asked to indicate how long it took them to retrieve the information they needed from the IR. Whether the exercise was easy or difficult? Eleven (20%) said that they spent less than 5 minutes to retrieve information they needed, 21 (39%) said they spent 5 to 10 minutes while 14 (25%) spent 10 to 30 minutes, 6 (11%) spent between 5 to 10 gave no response. On average, students spent between 5 to 10 minutes for them to find the information they required. This may mean that students were spending substantial amount of time to get the information they needed from the IR and hence the need for the library to provide training services to students on how to effectively use the IR and other existing OA platforms.

When asked how easy respondents found the information retrieval exercise, the study showed that the majority 33 (61%) said that they found it easy to look for information from the IR and 21 found it difficult to retrieve the information they needed. Reasons advanced for non-retrieval of information included slow internet, fewer computers available to students and lack of knowledge on how to get the required information in the shortest possible time. This was compounded by the digital immigrant syndrome among students at the University of Zambia noted by Muleya, Simui, Mundende, Kakana, Mwewa & Namangala (2019). A significant number of students were averse to the use of

Information Communication Technologies. Hence, it is no wonder that they struggled accessing information using modern library technologies as demonstrated in figure 2 below.

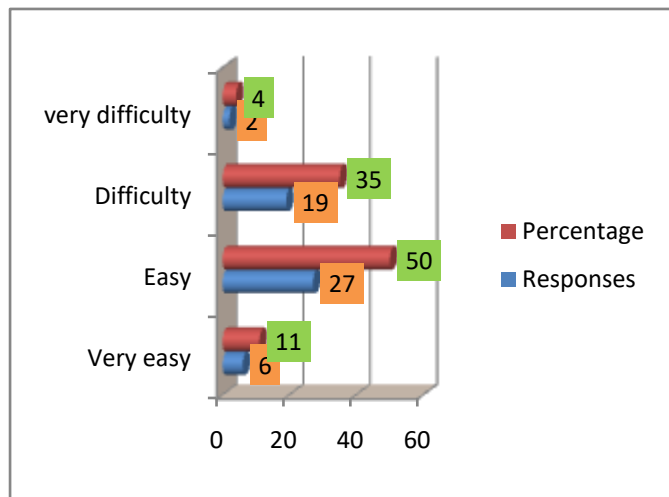


Figure 2: Accessibility of needed information from the Institutional Repository

The above figure shows that the majority of the distance education students found it easy to use the institutional repository.

The responses on table 3 shows that 9 out of 12 respondents (Distance students) representing 75% indicated OA and e-resources as major help or support received from the library while 2 of them representing 16.2% indicated lending books and 1 of the representing 8.3% indicated user education. The above response distribution meant that the major support mentioned was to do with OA, and e-resources.

Table: 3 Major services the library offers

Staff Response	Frequency	Percentage
OA, E-resources	9	75
Lending books	2	16.7
User education	1	8.3
Total	12	100

The table 4 below shows that, 42 (77.8%) out 54 students who were asked about the type of information materials mostly used while away from campus indicated that they used soft copies of module while 8 (14.8%) indicated that they used lecture notes obtained during residential schools. 4 (7.4) of them indicated they used information materials from other libraries. This calls for the use of social media as platform for sharing learning materials in order to widen access to library services (Simui, Mwewa, Chota, Kakana, Mundende, Thompson, Mwanza, Ndhlovu & Namangala, 2018).

Table: 4 Types of information materials students used when away from campus

Student Response	Frequency	Percentage
OA, E-modules	42	77.8
Materials from other libraries	4	7.4
Lecture notes	8	14.8
Total	54	100

This response distribution meant despite the indication that students accessed e-resources they did not rely on them completely. They relied on modules provided through the LMS and the lecture notes prepared by their lecturers. Course materials prepared by teaching staff from their lecture notes and book extracts are the major media of instruction (Chifwepa, 2006). This portrays a very critical situation because as University students they needed more access to information for them to have broader perspectives not only regarding their academic course areas but also political, social and scientific issues in society and this can only happen if they have access to an array of information resources.

Library Cooperation

It is indisputable to say that no man is an island. Everyone in this life needs to co-operate and work with other people if he or she is to succeed in whatever they are doing. This applies even to institutions including the University of Zambia Library. On the issue of whether University of Zambia library cooperation with other libraries and information centers found in all corners of Zambia could be of help to them (distance students), 47 out of 54 students representing 87% as shown in table 5 below, said it could help them access information conveniently. Only 7 (13%) of the 54 indicated that it could not help.

Table: 5 - Library staff's helpfulness to Distance students

Response	Frequency	percentage
Yes	47	87.0
No	7	13.0
Total	54	100

This meant that the participants found it more convenient for the distance students to access library materials near where they lived in line with Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989). If the library was to play a practical and effective role in supporting distance education at UNZA it should engage itself in some form of library cooperation with all types of libraries (Public, Academic and Special libraries) in the country. For instance, UNZA Library can make use of public libraries dotted around the country that are run by both Zambia Library Services and Local Authorities. Some Public libraries in the country are prepared to co-operate with UNZA Library. According to the views the researchers get when they visit these libraries are that despite there being no formal memoranda of understanding signed between UNZA and those other libraries, there was already a service being

rendered to University of Zambia distance students residing in those areas.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has revealed that most students were aware of the Open Access Repository had an experience of using it over 2 years. The survey also indicated that the majority of the respondents would find the information they wanted from the OAR. The study also revealed that the majority had no problems with retrieving information from the IR, hence much easier than using the Online Public Access Catalogue. Thus, while the University of Zambia has widened access to library services, there are still challenges bordering on attitudes and quality of infrastructure and learning materials that need further improvement to guarantee full inclusiveness for all distance education students.

VII. STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Introduce Open Access platforms in order to mitigate financial constraints towards acquiring of information materials;
- ii. Promote the use of Open access resources which are readily available on internet, a good alternative to expensive subscribed library materials especially for students that are on ODL mode of study.
- iii. The University libraries should partner with other institutions such as NGOs and churches present in the areas where there are no libraries.
- iv. Establish satellite provincial libraries or centers that could be accessible by local users as an alternative to the existing university libraries.

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