

INTRODUCTION

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system has shown a tremendous growth during the last few decades due to its unique feature of being a users' friendly system. In this system, the students are free to learn at their own pace and convenience while being away from the institution. This system came into existence with the basic objective to provide wider access to higher education as the conventional system was proving to be unable to cope with the ever-increasing demand. ODL in recent times has thus emerged as an alternative mode for higher education all over the world especially in developing countries like India (Sharma, 2002).

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) established by an Act of Parliament in 1985 has today emerged as largest Open University in the world. The university has introduced a wide range of academic programmes (credit as well as non-credit) ranging from short term awareness courses to Certificate, Diploma, Post-graduate Diploma, Bachelor Degree, Master Degree and Research Degree Programmes. In order to offer student support services, the university has established a wide network of Regional Centres (RCs) and Study Centres (SCs) in India and Partner Institutions (PIs) abroad (www.ignourcdelhi1.in/Downloads/STNC_Prospectus.pdf).

IGNOU being the largest Open University today serves the educational aspirations of over 4 million students in India and 36 other countries through 21 Schools of Studies and a network of 67 Regional Centres, around 3,000 learner support centres and 67 overseas centres. The University offers about 490 certificate, diploma, degree and doctoral programmes, with a strength of nearly 420 faculty members and academic staff at the headquarters and regional centres and about 36,000 academic counselors from conventional institutions of higher learning, professional organizations, and industry among others (www.ignou.ac.in).

The achievements of IGNOU highlighted above may be attributed to the management of student support services as this poses perhaps the most challenging problems to an Open University. Much of the success of the university would depend on how carefully the series are planned and how sincerely and efficiently they are managed and implemented. The Basic issues that have enormous significance for the success of the support services are the sincerity of the institution towards its students and its correct assessment of their needs. Management of Study Centres which are the immediate contact points for open university students is crucial to their successful completion of courses.

IGNOU Study Centres are expected to perform the following functions (www.ignou.ac.in):

- a) Organise counselling and audio-visual sessions.
- b) Arrange practical sessions, demonstrations, field work etc. as per programme requirements.

- c) Receive assignments from students, get them evaluated by approved counselors and send feed back to students and grade sheets to SR & E Division and the Regional Centre.
- d) Maintain records of activities and accounts.
- e) Send regular feedback reports to the Regional Centre.
- f) Provide Information about IGNOU and its programmes.
- g) Generate bio-data of academic counsellors and forward them to the Regional Director for their part-time appointment as Academic Counsellors.
- h) To supervise and coordinate the activities of attached work centres, if any.

While the IGNOU Study Centres play very important roles in imparting quality education, it is assumed that the Study Centres will have venues for improvement in delivering support services. Hence problem of the study was conceived to see how the IGNOU Study Centres in Aizawl City are functioning and find out whether there is a need for improvement in the process delivering students support services.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the present study was to look into the general functioning of IGNOU Study Centres. The specific objectives were:

- 1) To find out the roles of IGNOU Study Centres in providing necessary student support services;
- 2) To find out the perceptions of students on the services provided by IGNOU Study Centres;
- 3) To identify problems and suggested solutions for improvement of student support services at IGNOU Study Centres.

METHODOLOGY

Sample of the Study

The sample of the study were of two groups. The first one was of the Centre Coordinators and the second was of the students. There were a total of ten (10) IGNOU Study Centres in Aizawl City and one (1) Tele Learning Centre at Regional Centre. Selection of the students was based on the enrolment of January 2012 session. For the purpose of the study four (4) Study Centres which have highest number of enrolments in the referred session were selected. From the selected Centres, 20% of the total enrolment and one each of Coordinators were taken as sample of the study. Sample of the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample of the study

Name of Study Centre	Population (Enrolment)	Sample Size	
		Student	Coordinator
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education (IASE)/CTE	122	24	1
Government Aizawl College	80	16	1

Government Hrangbana College	72	14	1
Government Aizawl West College	41	8	1
Total	315	62	4

Tools and Techniques for Data Collection

The required data for the study were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through guide questions and questionnaires. Guide questions were framed for the Coordinators and they were interviewed using these guide questions. On the other hand, questionnaires were formulated and these were used for collection of data from the student respondents. In addition to the primary data, secondary data were also collected from relevant office records of Regional Centre as well as Study Centres.

FINDINGS

Profile of IGNOU Study Centres

Profile of the IGNOU Study Centres under the study are presented in terms of years of experience and management of the Study Centres, courses offered, infrastructure facilities available, support services provided and student enrollment.

Years of experience of the Study Centres

Among the four Centres of Study, the Gov't. Aizawl College which started IGNOU Study Centre in 1988 has the longest experience with 25 years in running the IGNOU Courses followed by Gov't. Hrangbana College which started the Study Centre in 2000 with 13 years of experience. Gov't. Aizawl West College is the third to start the IGNOU Study Centre in 2003 with 10 years of experience and the last, Institute of Advanced Studies in Education (IASE) that started the IGNOU Study Centre in 2004 has 9 years of experience in running the IGNOU Courses.

Management of the Study Centres

The Study Centres are managed by Coordinators assisted by Assistant Coordinators with other supporting Staff. The Centre Coordinators and Assistants Coordinators are usually appointed by the concerned College authority from their existing Faculty while the supporting staff are outsourced. Table 2 gives the staff position of the Study Centres.

Table 2: Management staff of the Study Centres

Centre	Number of staff		
	Coordinator	Asst. Coordinator	Supporting Staff
Gov't. Aizawl College	1	3	8
Gov't. Hrangbana College	1	2	6
Gov't. Aizawl West College	1	1	6
Institute of Advanced Studies in	1	1	4

Education (IASE)			
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Source: IGNOU Regional Centre, Aizawl

Working hours

With regards to the working hours of the Study Centres, the Centre Coordinators of Gov't. Aizawl Collge, Gov't. Hrangbana College and Gov't. Aizawl West College reported that their daily office hours was from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM while the daily working hours of IASE Centre was from 9:30 AM to 5:00 PM.

Courses offered

Gov't. Aizawl College Centre

The Gov't. Aizawl College Centre offered Master of Arts programmes in 1) History (MAH), 2) Political Science (MPS), 3) Rural Development (MARD), 4) Public Administration (MPA), 5) Sociology (MSO), 6) Library and Information Science (MLIS), 7) English (MEG), 8) Social Work (MSW), 9) Economics (MEC), 10) Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education (PGDDE) and 11) Diploma in Distance Education (DDE).

The Bachelor courses included 1) Bachelor of Arts (BA), 2) Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com), 3) Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS), 4) Bachelor of Social Work (BSW), 5) Diploma in HIV and Family Education (DAFE), 6) Bachelor of Arts (Tourism Studies), 7) Post Graduate Diploma in Rural Development (PGDRD), 8) Certificate in HIV and Family Education (CAFE), 9) Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education (PGDDE), 10) Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDHE), 11) Post Graduate Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication (PGJMC), 12) Post Graduate Diploma in Audio Programme Production (PGDAPP).

Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre

The Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre offered Master of Arts programmes in 1) Master of Arts (English), 2) Master of Arts (Political Science) 3) Master of Arts (History), 4) Master of Commerce (M.Com).

Bachelor Courses and Certificate Courses were 1) Bachelor of Arts (BA), 2) Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com), 3) Certificate in Human Rights (CHR), 4) Certificate in Consumer Protection (CCP), 5) Certificate in Teaching of Primary School Mathematics (CTPM).

Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre

The Gov't Aizawl West College Centre offered Master of Arts Programmes in 1) Master of Arts (English), 2) Master of Arts (History), 3) Master of Arts (Polscience), 4) Master of Arts (Economics), 5) Master of Arts (Public Administration), 6) MAPC.

They also offered Certificate courses and Bachelor programmes, such as 1) Bachelor of Arts (BA), 2) Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com), 3) BAPC, 4) Post Graduate Diploma in Disaster Management (PGDDM).

Institute of Advanced Studies in Education Centre

The Courses offered by the Institute of Advanced Studies in Education (IASE) Centre were Master of Arts (Education), M.Ed and B.Ed programmes.

Infrastructure and Facilities

With regards to office space, all the Centre Coordinators reported that separate office spaces for IGNOU were provided by the College. But they all reported that the present office spaces were not sufficient to accommodate the staff and equipments.

For smooth functioning of the Centres, office furniture and equipments were provided by the IGNOU Regional Centre, Aizawl. Details of office furniture and equipments available in the Study Centres are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Infrastructure and facilities available

Centre	No. available							
	Table	Chairs	Telephone	TV	Computer Set	Almirah	Book Shelf	Edusat
Gov't. Aizawl College	8	20	1	1	4	1	17	-
Gov't. Hrangbana College	5	20	1	1	3	8	7	-
Gov't. Aizawl West College	8	15	1	1	4	4	5	1
IASE	3	20	1	1	2	1	-	-

Source: IGNOU Study Centres

The Centre Coordinators were also asked about the facilities available in the Study Centre. The Coordinators of 2 Study Centres viz. Gov't. Aizawl College and Gov't. Aizawl West College reported to have internet facilities in the Study Centres. While Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre reported to have internet facilities for both office use and use of students, Gov't. Aizawl College Centre reported of having only for office use. The other 2 Study Centres, Gov't. Hrangbana College and IASE reported of not having internet facilities.

With regards to classrooms, all the Study Centres reported to have enough rooms as they could use the class rooms of the their respective Colleges. On the library facilities, all the Centres reported to have libraries, but the students could not make much use of the libraries as there were only few books available.

Support Services Provided by the Study Centres

As reported by the Centre Coordinators, the common Support Services provided include: i) support in admission, ii) process for reimbursement of fees, iii) supply of study materials, iv) arrange Academic Counselling classes, v) assessment of assignments, vi) conduct examinations etc. A part from these, Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre reported that they arranged teleconferencing and Edusat programme for students occasionally.

Student Enrollment

The data on students enrollment were collected from the Study Centres. The Gov't. Aizawl College Centre could provide the data till the year 2011 covering 24 years while Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre could provide the enrollment till 2011 covering 12 years. Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre could provide the data till 2012 covering 10 years while IASE Centre could provide data till 2013 also covering 10 years.

The total number of enrollment in the Study Centres are presented in Table 4. The Gov't. Aizawl College Centre has a total enrollment of 9172 during the period of 24 years with an average of 382 students per year while Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre has a total of 9139 enrollment within a period of 12 years with an average of 762 students per year. The total number of enrollment for Gov't. Aizawl College Centre during the period of 10 years is 2955 with an average of 296 students per year while for the IASE Centre the enrollment for the same 10 years period is 1302 with an average of 130 student per year.

Table 4: Student enrollment

Centre	Total Enrollment	Average Enrollment
Gov't. Aizawl College	9172	382
Gov't. Hrangbana College	9139	762
Gov't. Aizawl West College	2955	296
IASE	1302	130

Source: IGNOU Study Centres

Profile of IGNOU Students

The profiles of IGNOU students are described in terms of age, sex, marital status, occupation, educational qualification, source of household income and economic status.

Age of the Students

The age of the students are categorized into three groups viz. "21 – 30 years", "31 – 40 years" and "41 – 50 years" and the results are presented in Table 5. The overall results shows that the largest group of students belonged to the age group of "21-30 years" (62.90%). Large majority of students in Gov't. Aizawl College, Gov't. Hrangbana College and Gov't. Aizawl West College Centres belong to the youngest age

group of “21 – 30 years” with 93.75%, 85.71% and 75% respectively. On the other hand the students in IASE Centre are a little older where majority of them (58.33%) belong to the age group of “31 – 40 years”.

Table 5: Age of respondents

Centre	Frequency				Percentage			
	21 – 30 Yrs	31 – 40 Yrs	41 – 50 Yrs	Total	21 – 30 Yrs	31 – 40 Yrs	41 – 50 Yrs	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	15	1	0	16	93.75	6.25	0.00	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	12	2	0	14	85.71	14.29	0.00	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	6	2	0	8	75.00	25.00	0.00	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	6	14	4	24	25.00	58.33	16.67	100
Total	39	19	4	62	62.90	30.65	6.45	100

Sex Composition of the Students

The sex composition of the student respondents are presented in Table 6. The overall results indicate that there are more female students with 51.61%. The same is true with two Centres viz. Gov't. Aizawl College Centre and Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre have more female students with 62.50% and 64.29% respectively. An interesting to observe that Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre has equal number of Male and Female students with 50% each. On the other hand, the IASE Centre has more Male students with 62%.

Table 6: Sex of the respondents

Centre	Frequency			Percentage		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	6	10	16	37.50	62.50	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	5	9	14	35.71	64.29	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	4	4	8	50.00	50.00	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	15	9	24	62.50	37.50	100
Total	30	32	62	48.39	51.61	100

Marital Status of the Students

The overall results on Marital status shows that large majority of students (68%) were single while the rest (32%) were married. The results as highlighted in Table 7 further reveals that most of the student respondents in Gov't. Aizawl College, Gov't. Hrangbana College and Gov't. Aizawl West College Centres were single with 93.75%, 71.43% and 62.50% respectively while IASE Centre had equal number of single and married student (50% each).

Table 7: Marital status of respondents

Centre	Frequency			Percentage		
	Single	Married	Total	Single	Married	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	15	1	16	93.75	6.25	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	10	4	14	71.43	28.57	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	5	3	8	62.50	37.50	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	12	12	24	50.00	50.00	100
Total	42	20	62	67.74	32.26	100

Occupation of the Students

The overall result on Occupation of the respondents as presented in Table 8 reveals that largest group of respondents (33.87%) belong to Teacher followed by Student (17.74%), Business and Gov't Servant with 16.13% each. About 11% of the respondents are Lecturer while the rest are Home Nurse, Housewife and SBI Clerk with 1.61% each.

Among the students enrolled in Gov't. Aizawl College Centre, the highest number (43.75%) was doing business followed by students (25%) and Gov't. Servant (18.75%). Out of the students enrolled in Gov't Hrangbana College Centre, the highest number (28.57%) was Gov't. Servant followed by Business, Teacher and Student with 21.43% each.

Of the students enrolled in Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre, half of them (50%) were students not having any other occupations apart from studying. The number is followed by Gov't. Servant (37.50%) and Teacher (12.50%). Among the students who were enrolled in IASE Centre, most of them (70.83%) were working as Teachers and the number is followed by the same line of occupation i.e. Lecturers with 25%.

Table 8: Occupation of respondents

Occupation	Frequency					Percentage				
	Gov't. Aizawl College	Gov't. Hrangbana College	Gov't. Aizawl West College	IASE	Total	Gov't. Aizawl College	Gov't. Hrangbana College	Gov't. Aizawl West College	IASE	Total
Business	7	3	0	0	10	43.75	21.43	0.00	0.00	16.13
Gov't. Servant	3	4	3	0	10	18.75	28.57	37.50	0.00	16.13
Home Nurse	1	0	0	0	1	6.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.61
Housewife	0	1	0	0	1	0.00	7.14	0.00	0.00	1.61
Lecturer	1	0	0	6	7	6.25	0.00	0.00	25.00	11.29
SBI Clerk	0	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.17	1.61
Student	4	3	4	0	11	25.00	21.43	50.00	0.00	17.74

Teacher	0	3	1	17	21	0.00	21.43	12.50	70.8 3	33.8 7
Total	16	14	8	24	62	100	100	100	100	100

Educational Qualification of Students

The data on educational qualification of the respondents is presented Table 9. The overall data reveals that the highest number of respondents (45%) were Post Graduates followed by 12th Passed with 32% and Graduates with 23%.

In Gov't. Aizawl College Centre the highest number of students were Graduates with 43.75% followed by 12th passed with 31.25% and Post Graduates with 25%. Among the students enrolled in Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre half (50%) were 12th passed followed by Graduates with 35.71% and Post Graduates with 14.29%. On the other hand all the students (100%) enrolled in Gov't. Aizawl West College were 12th passed. Large majority (91.67%) of the students enrolled in IASE Centre were Post Graduates while the rest (8.33%) were Graduates.

Table 9: Educational Qualification of respondents

Centre	Frequency				Percentage			
	12 th Passed	Graduate	Post Graduate	Total	12 th Passed	Graduate	Post Graduate	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	5	7	4	16	31.25	43.75	25.00	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	7	5	2	14	50.00	35.71	14.29	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	8	0	0	8	100	0.00	0.00	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	0	2	22	24	0.00	8.33	91.67	100
Total	20	14	28	62	32.26	22.58	45.16	100

Source of Household Income

The overall data on respondents' source of household income as presented in Table 10 reveal that the source of household income of majority (66.13%) was salary which is followed by business (19.35%) and agriculture (11.29%).

Equal number of students enrolled (43.75%) in Gov't. Aizawl College Centre reported business and salary as their source of household income while the rest (12.50%) reported as agriculture. The household source of income for majority of students enrolled in Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre was Salary with 64.29% followed by Business with 28.57% and Agriculture with 7.14%. Among the students who enrolled in Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre, 50% of them reported their source of household income as Agriculture followed by Salary with 37.50% and Business 12.50%. Among the students enrolled in IASE Centre, a large majority of students (91.67%) reported their main source household income to be Salary followed by mixture of Agriculture with Salary and Salary with Business that account for 4.17% each.

Table 10: Household income source of respondents

Source of Income	Frequency					Percentage				
	Gov't. Aizawl College	Gov't. Hrangbana College	Gov't. Aizawl West College	IAS E	Total	Gov't. Aizawl College	Gov't. Hrangbana College	Gov't. Aizawl West College	IAS E	Total
Agriculture	2	1	4	0	7	12.50	7.14	50.00	0.00	11.29
Agriculture & Salary	0	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.17	1.613
Business	7	4	1	0	12	43.75	28.57	12.50	0.00	19.35
Salary	7	9	3	22	41	43.75	64.29	37.50	91.67	66.13
Salary & Business	0	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.17	1.613
Total	16	14	8	24	62	100	100	100	100	100

Economic Status of Students

The student respondents were also asked to give their household economic status as perceived by them. The overall results presented in Table 11 reveal that large majority (92%) the respondents considered themselves belonging to medium income category while 6% thought they belong to rich family and the rest of only 2% thought that they belong to poor family.

Majority (75%) of students enrolled in Gov't. Aizawl College Centre reported that they belong to medium income family while the rest (25%) reported to be of poor family. All of the students enrolled both in Gov't. Hrangbana College and Gov't. Aizawl West College Centres reported that they belong to medium income group of family. Of the students enrolled in IASE Centre large majority (95.83%) reported that they belong to medium income family while the rest (4.17%) reported to belong to poor family.

Table 11: Economic status of respondents

Centre	Frequency				Percentage			
	Rich	Medium	Poor	Total	Rich	Medium	Poor	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	4	12	0	16	25	75	0	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	0	14	0	14	0	100	0	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	0	8	0	8	0	100	0	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	0	23	1	24	0	95.83	4.17	100
Total	4	57	1	62	6.45	91.94	1.61	100

Services Provided by IGNOU Study Centres

This section of the paper discusses the findings on the services provided by IGNOU Study Centres and the students' access to these services.

Source of Information about IGNOU

The student respondents were asked of how they came to know about IGNOU and the results are presented in Table 12. The table reveals that majority (54.84%) of the respondents came to know about IGNOU from their friends while 37.1% of them reported media to be their source of information about IGNOU. There were few who came to know about IGNOU from their parents and relatives with 6.45% and 1.61% respectively.

Of the students who were enrolled in Gov't. Aizawl College Centre, half (50%) of them came to know about IGNOU from media while 43.75% learned about it from friends and the rest 6.25% from parents. Among the students enrolled in Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre, majority (57.14%) came to know about IGNOU from their friends while the sources of information about IGNOU for the rest was parents, media and relatives with 21.43%, 14.29% and 7.14% respectively. For the students who were enrolled in Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre, the source of information about IGNOU for large majority (87.50%) was friends while for the rest (12.50%) it was media. With respect to the students of IASE Centre, the sources of information about IGNOU were friends and media with equal number of 50% each.

Table 12: Source of information about IGNOU

Centre	Frequency					Percentage				
	Parents	Friends	Relatives	Media	Total	Parents	Friends	Relatives	Media	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	1	7	0	8	16	6.25	43.75	0.00	50.00	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	3	8	1	2	14	21.43	57.14	7.14	14.29	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	0	7	0	1	8	0.00	87.50	0.00	12.50	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	0	12	0	12	24	0.00	50.00	0.00	50.00	100
Total	4	34	1	23	62	6.45	54.84	1.61	37.10	100

Reasons for Choosing IGNOU

The respondents were also asked about the reason for choosing IGNOU. The results are presented in Table 13. There were 12 (19.35%) respondents who did not give any reason. The reason for choosing IGNOU as given by the highest number (41.94%) was '*Suitable/Convenient*' which is followed by '*Can study while working*' with 22.58%. The rest few respondents give the reasons as '*Cannot afford regular class*' (4.84%), '*Subject availability*' (4.84%), '*Course materials are easy to understand*' (1.61%), '*Easy to get admission*' (1.61%), '*No time for regular class*' (1.61%), '*Relevance of syllabus*' (1.61%).

While majority (56.25%) of students enrolled in Gov't. Aizawl College Centre did not respond the question, there were students who gave their reasons as '*Subject availability*' (18.75%), '*Suitable/Convenient*' (12.50%), '*Can study while working*' (6.25%), '*No time for regular classes*' (6.25%).

For those who were enrolled in Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre, the highest number of respondents gave their reasons for choosing IGNOU as '*Can study while working*' and '*Suitable/Convenient*' with 42.86% each while the rest (14.29%) did not give any reason.

Majority (62.50%) of students enrolled in Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre gave '*Can study while working*' as their reason for choosing IGNOU while there were few student who gave their reasons as '*Cannot afford regular class*' (25.00%) and '*Suitable/Convenient*' (12.50%).

In the case of students enrolled in IASE Centre, the reason for choosing IGNOU as given by majority (70.83%) was '*Suitable/Convenient*' which is followed by '*Can study while working*' with 8.33%. The rest with equal number of 4.17% each gave their reasons as '*Cannot afford regular class*', '*Course materials are easy to understand*', '*Easy to get admission*' and '*Relevance of syllabus*'.

Table 13: Reasons for choosing IGNOU

Reasons	Centre					Percentage				
	Gov't. Aizawl College	Gov't. Hrangbana College	Gov't. Aizawl West College	IASE	Total	Gov't. Aizawl College	Gov't. Hrangbana College	Gov't. Aizawl West College	IASE	Total
Can study while working	1	6	5	2	14	6.25	42.86	62.50	8.33	22.58
Cannot afford regular class	0	0	2	1	3	0.00	0.00	25.00	4.17	4.84
Course materials are easy to understand	0	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.17	1.61
Easy to get admission	0	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.17	1.61
No time for regular classes	1	0	0	0	1	6.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.61
Relevance of syllabus	0	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.17	1.61
Subject availability (1 Social Work & 2 Sociology)	3	0	0	0	3	18.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.84
Suitable/convenient	2	6	1	17	26	12.50	42.86	12.50	70.83	41.94
No response	9	2	0	1	12	56.25	14.29	0.00	4.17	19.35
Total	16	14	8	24	62	100	100	100	100	100

Getting Help in Admission

The respondents were again asked about who helped them in admission. The overall results as highlighted in Table 14 reveals that majority (72.58%) did admission by themselves without getting any help from others. The rest few respondents got help from others such as Friends (12.9%), Parents (11.29%) and Relatives (3.23%).

The results further reveal that majority of students in all the Centres did admission by themselves with 68.75% in Gov't. Aizawl College Centre, 64.29% in Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre, 62.50% in Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre and 83.33% in IASE Centre.

Table 14: Who helped in admission?

Centre	Frequency					Percentage				
	Parents	Friends	Relatives	Self	Total	Parents	Friends	Relatives	Self	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	4	1	0	11	16	25.00	6.25	0.00	68.75	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	1	3	1	9	14	7.14	21.43	7.14	64.29	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	1	2	0	5	8	12.50	25.00	0.00	62.50	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	1	2	1	20	24	4.17	8.33	4.17	83.33	100
Total	7	8	2	45	62	11.29	12.90	3.23	72.58	100

Attendance in Orientation

The overall data on attendance of the students in orientation programmes is presented in Table 15. The results reveal that half (50%) of the students reported that they '*often*' attend the orientation programmes of IGNOU while 27.42% of them said they seldom attended the orientation programmes. Only 8.06% reported to have attended the orientation programmes '*very often*' while 14.52% of them '*never*' attended the orientation programmes.

Of the students who enrolled in Gov't. Aizawl College Centre, majority (56.25%) of them said they '*seldom*' attended the orientation programmes while the rest (43.75%) said they '*often*' attended the orientation programmes.

Majority (57.14%) students enrolled in Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre reported that they '*often*' attend the orientation programmes while 28.57% of the students '*never*' attended the orientations. The rest 14.29% said they '*seldom*' attended the orientation programmes. For those students enrolled in Gov't. Aizawl College Centre, half (50%) of them said they '*often*' attended the orientation programmes while the same number (50%) said they attended the orientation '*very often*'.

Table 15: Attendance in orientation

Centre	Frequency					Percentage				
	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	0	9	7	0	16	0.00	56.25	43.75	0.00	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	4	2	8	0	14	28.57	14.29	57.14	0.00	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	0	0	4	4	8	0.00	0.00	50.00	50.00	100

Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	5	6	12	1	24	20.83	25.00	50.00	4.17	100
Total	9	17	31	5	62	14.52	27.42	50.00	8.06	100

Half (50%) of the students who were enrolled in IASE Centre said they '*often*' attended the orientation programmes followed by those students who reported '*seldom*' (25%), '*never*' (20.83%) and '*very often*' (4.17%) in attending the orientation programmes.

Access to Library Facilities

The results on access to library facilities as presented in Table 16 reveals that majority (53.23%) of the respondents '*never*' availed the library facilities of IGNOU Study Centres while only 3.23% said they availed the library facilities '*very often*'. There were 27.42% and 16.13% students who reported '*seldom*' and '*often*' respectively on their access to the library facilities.

Table 16 further presents Centre-wise distribution of respondents on their level of access to library facilities of the IGNOU Study Centres. Among the students of Gov't. Aizawl College Centre, the highest number (43.75%) said they accessed the library facilities '*often*' followed by '*never*' (37.50%) and '*seldom*' (18.75%). On the other hand majority (78.57%) the students of Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre said they '*never*' accessed the library facility while the rest gave '*seldom*' and '*often*' with 14.29% and 7.14% respectively as their level of access to library facilities..

Among the students of Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre, majority (62.50%) said they '*never*' accessed the library facilities followed by the students who reported to avail the library facilities '*very often*' with 25% and '*often*' with 12.50%. With regards to the students of AISE Centre, 50% said they '*seldom*' accessed the library facilities followed by '*never*' (45.83%) and '*often*' (4.17%).

Table 16: Access to library facilities

Centre	Frequency					Percentage				
	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	6	3	7	0	16	37.50	18.75	43.75	0.00	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	11	2	1	0	14	78.57	14.29	7.14	0.00	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	5	0	1	2	8	62.50	0.00	12.50	25.00	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	11	12	1	0	24	45.83	50.00	4.17	0.00	100
Total	33	17	10	2	62	53.23	27.42	16.13	3.23	100

Access to Computer Facilities

The results on students' access to computer facilities as presented in Table 17 reveal that majority (54.84%) of the student '*never*' had access to computer facilities of the Study Centre. The number is followed by students who said '*often*' (24.19%), '*seldom*' (16.13%) and '*very often*' (4.84%) on their access to the computer facilities.

Gov't. Aizawl College Center had 50% of its students who reported '*never*' on access to computer facilities followed by '*often*' (43.75%) and '*seldom*' (6.25%). The Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre also had large majority (85.71%) of its students who said '*never*' on access to computer facilities.

On the otherhand, the Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre had 50% of its students who said '*often*' on access to computer facilities followed by those who said '*never*' (37.50%) and '*very often*' (12.50%). The IASE Centre had the highest number (45.83%) of its students who said '*never*' on access to computer facilities followed by '*seldom*' (33.33%), '*often*' (12.50%) and '*very often*' (8.33%).

Table 17: Access to computer facilities

Centre	Frequency					Percentage				
	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	8	1	7	0	16	50.00	6.25	43.75	0.00	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	12	1	1	0	14	85.71	7.14	7.14	0.00	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	3	0	4	1	8	37.50	0.00	50.00	12.50	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	11	8	3	2	24	45.83	33.33	12.50	8.33	100
Total	34	10	15	3	62	54.84	16.13	24.19	4.84	100

Access to Internet Facilities

As may be seen in Table 18, majority (56.45%) of the students said they '*never*' accessed the internet facilities. The number is followed by those who said '*often*' (24.19%), '*seldom*' (12.9%) while only 6.45% reported to access the internet facilities '*very often*'.

The Centre wise data (Table 18) further reveals that the Gov't. Aizawl College Centre had 50% of its students who said '*never*' on access to internet facilities followed by those who said '*often*' (37.50%) and '*seldom*' (12.50%). Majority (71.43%) of students in Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre said they '*never*' accessed the internet facilities which is followed by the student who said '*seldom*' with 14.29%. There were equal number of students with 7.14% who said '*often*' and '*very often*' on access to internet facilities.

Among the students in Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre, there were equal number of students with 37.50% who said '*never*' and '*often*' on access to internet facilities while the rest 25% said '*very often*'. With regards to the IASE Centre majority (58.33%) of the students said they '*never*' accessed the internet facilities which is followed by '*often*' (20.83%), '*seldom*' (16.67%) and '*very often*' (4.17%).

Table 18: Access to internet facilities

Centre	Frequency					Percentage				
	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	8	2	6	0	16	50.00	12.50	37.50	0.00	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	10	2	1	1	14	71.43	14.29	7.14	7.14	100

Gov't. Aizawl West College	3	0	3	2	8	37.50	0.00	37.50	25.00	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	14	4	5	1	24	58.33	16.67	20.83	4.17	100
Total	35	8	15	4	62	56.45	12.90	24.19	6.45	100

Access to E-mail Facilities

The overall results on access to e-mail facilities as presented in Table 19 reveal that majority (56.45%) of the students 'never' had access to e-mail facilities. The number is followed by those who said 'often' (24.19%) and 'seldom' (12.9%) while only 6.45% said 'very often' on access to e-mail facilities.

The Centre wise data on access to e-mail facilities further reveal that the Gov't. Aizawl College Centre had 50% of its students who said 'never' on access to e-mail facilities followed by 'often' (43.75%) while the rest (6.25%) said 'seldom'. Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre had majority (64.29%) of its students who 'never' accessed e-mail facilities followed by 'often' (21.43%). There was equal number with 7.14% who said 'seldom' and 'very often' on access to e-mail facilities.

Table 19: Access to e-mail facilities

Centre	Frequency					Percentage				
	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	8	1	7	0	16	50.00	6.25	43.75	0.00	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	9	1	3	1	14	64.29	7.14	21.43	7.14	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	3	0	4	1	8	37.50	0.00	50.00	12.50	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	15	6	1	2	24	62.50	25.00	4.17	8.33	100
Total	35	8	15	4	62	56.45	12.90	24.19	6.45	100

The Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre on the other hand had 50% of its students who 'often' accessed e-mail facilities. The number is followed by those who 'never' accessed the e-mail facilities with 37.50% while the rest (12.50%) reported to access 'very often'. The IASE Centre had majority (62.50%) of its students who 'never' accessed e-mail facilities followed by 'seldom' (25%), 'very often' (8.33%) and 'often' (4.17%).

Access to Tele/Video Conference Facilities

On the access of students to tele/video conference facilities, most (77.42%) of them reported that they 'never' accessed the tele/video conference facilities (Table 20). The number is followed by 'often' (11.29%), 'seldom' (9.68%) and 'very often' (1.61%).

From the Centre wise data as presented Table 20, it can be observed that majority of the students in all the Study Centres said they 'never' accessed the tele/video conference facilities where Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre has 92.86%, Gov't. Aizawl College Centre had 87.50%, IASE Centre had 66.67% and Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre had 62.50%.

All the Study Centres except Gov't. Hrangbana College had equal number of students with 12.50% who said they '*seldom*' accessed tele/video conference facilities. Of the students who said they '*often*' accessed the tele/video conference facilities, Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre had 25% while AISE Centre had 16.67% and Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre had 7.14%. Only AISE Centre had student who reported to access the tele/video conference facilities '*very often*' with only 1 (4.17%).

Table 20: Access to tele/video conference facilities

Centre	Frequency					Percentage				
	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	14	2	0	0	16	87.50	12.50	0.00	0.00	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	13	0	1	0	14	92.86	0.00	7.14	0.00	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	5	1	2	0	8	62.50	12.50	25.00	0.00	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	16	3	4	1	24	66.67	12.50	16.67	4.17	100
Total	48	6	7	1	62	77.42	9.68	11.29	1.61	100

Attendance in Counseling Class

The overall result on attendance in counseling class as presented in Table 21 reveals that the highest number with 35.48% said they '*often*' attended the counseling class followed by '*never*' (29.03%), '*very often*' (27.42%) and '*seldom*' (8.06%).

Majority (75%) of the students in Gov't. Aizawl College Centre reported that they '*often*' attended the counseling class while the rest 25% reported '*very often*' in their attendance in counseling class.

Among the students of Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre, majority (71.43%) of them said they '*never*' attended the counseling class while there were equal number (14.29%) who reported '*often*' and '*very often*' in attending the counseling class.

With regards to students in Gov't. Aizawl West College, 50% of them '*never*' attended counseling class while 37.50% attended '*very often*'. On the other hand, the IASE Centre had 33.33% each of its students who reported '*often*' and '*very often*' on their attendance in counseling class while there were equal number of students who reported '*never*' and '*seldom*' in attending the counseling class with 16.67% each.

Table 21: Attendance in Counselling Class

Centre	Frequency					Percentage				
	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	0	0	12	4	16	0.00	0.00	75.00	25.00	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	10	0	2	2	14	71.43	0.00	14.29	14.29	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	4	1	0	3	8	50.00	12.50	0.00	37.50	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	4	4	8	8	24	16.67	16.67	33.33	33.33	100

Total	18	5	22	17	62	29.03	8.06	35.48	27.42	100
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Access to Photo Copy Facilities

The overall data presented in Table 22 reveal that 46.77% reported 'never' in their access to photocopy facilities of the IGNOU Study Centres. The number is followed by 'seldom' (25.81%), 'often' (24.19%) and 'very often' (3.23%).

The Centre wise distribution of students on their access to photocopy facilities as further presented in Table 22 reveal that the Gov't. Aizawl College Centre had its highest number with 43.75% who 'never' availed photocopy facilities followed by 'seldom' and 'often' with 25% each while the rest 6.25% availed the facilities 'very often'. Most of the students (78.57%) in Gov't. Hrangbana College Centre said they 'never' availed photocopy facilities of the Centre. The number is followed by 'seldom' (14.29%) and Often (7.14%).

Table 22: Access to photocopy facilities

Centre	Frequency					Percentage				
	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total	Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Total
Gov't. Aizawl College	7	4	4	1	16	43.75	25.00	25.00	6.25	100
Gov't. Hrangbana College	11	2	1	0	14	78.57	14.29	7.14	0.00	100
Gov't. Aizawl West College	4	1	3	0	8	50.00	12.50	37.50	0.00	100
Institute of Advanced Studies in Education	7	9	7	1	24	29.17	37.50	29.17	4.17	100
Total	29	16	15	2	62	46.77	25.81	24.19	3.23	100

With regards to the students in Gov't. Aizawl West College Centre, 50% of them 'never' accessed photocopy facilities followed by 'often' (37.50%) and 'seldom' (12.50%). The highest number of students with 37.50% in the IASE Centre reported that they 'seldom' availed the photocopy facilities while there were equal number of students with 29.17% each who reported 'never' and 'often' on their access to the facilities. There was only 1 (4.17%) student who reported to avail the photocopy facilities 'very often'.

The overall results on students' access to support services provided by IGNOU Study Centres shows that among the various services viz. 1) Orientatation, 2) Library facilities, 3) Computer facilities, 4) Internet facilities, 5) Email facilities, 6) Tele/video conference, 7) Academic Counselling classes and 8) Photocopy facilities, only two (2) support services namely Orientation and Academic Counselling classes were made use of by most students while rest of the support services were hardly accessed by the students. Though the support services might have been made available by the Study Centres, the level of accessibility of these support services by students appeared to be low.

Problems and Suggested Solutions for Improvement of Student Support Services

This last section highlights the problems identified by the Centre Coordinators and Students and their suggested solutions for improvement of students support services in the IGNOU Study Centres.

The problems identified by the Centre Coordinators include the following :

1. Inadequate reading materials.
2. Irregular supply of study materials.
3. Less number of books in the Library.
4. Lack of space for reading rooms.
5. Poor attendance of students in Academic Counselling Classes.
6. Insufficient rooms for running the study centres.
7. Inadequate funds for Academic Counselling Classes.
8. Lack of Internet facilities.
9. Limited number of Guides for project works.

The problems identified by the students include the following:

1. Lack of books on subjects specialization in the library.
2. Less Academic Counselling Classes.
3. Late arrival of study materials.
4. Late arrival of Admit Card (Hall Tickets) for Examinations.
5. Delay in publication of results and mistake in data entry sometimes.

The following are the suggested solutions given by both the Centre Coordinators and students for improvement of Student Support Services in IGNOU Student Centres:

1. Provision of adequate funds for improvement of Centre facilities as well as other Academic activities.
2. Arrangement for more number of Academic Counselling classes.
3. Provision of more books in the libraries.
4. Provision of sufficient office space.
5. Provision of sufficient space for reading room in the Centre Libraries.
6. Adequate and timely supply of reading/study materials.
7. Better access to library, internet, video-conference facilities for students.
8. Timely issue of Admit Cards for Examinations.
9. Early publication of results.
10. Arrangement of exposure visits for students to other Universities.
11. Organizing more workshops for students during holidays. Some even suggested that such workshops may be organized in other Districts apart from Aizawl to better serve students in other Districts.

12. Enhanced remuneration for Guides.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Implications and conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the study and presented below:

1. The IGNOU Study Centres in Aizawl City are provided with minimum required human resources and facilities. However, with the increasing number of students every year, there still are venues for improvements with regards to office space, classrooms, library books etc. There is a special need for improvement of internet facilities as this will be of great help to students to get access to relevant reading materials and in turn enhance their knowledge in subject matters.
2. Though various support services are available in the IGNOU Study Centres, the level of access to these support services by students are found to be low. Possibility may be worked out where more students can have access to more of the support services provided by the Study Centres.
3. The students are however found to be happy with whatever support services they get from the IGNOU Study Centres. The quality of education imparted by IGNOU is also found to be of at par with other Universities by the students.
4. Most of the problems identified by the Centre Coordinators and students are related to paucity of funds. This calls for provision of more funds to IGNOU Study Centres for improvement of the Study Centres and support services. Hence, provision of more funds to Study Centres may be considered to attend the suggestions for improvement given above.
5. More efforts from the part of IGNOU authority are called for improved delivery systems whereby the students are provided with adequate and timely supply of reading/study materials. More efforts also have to be made in timely issue of admit cards and early publication of results with accurate data to the extent possible.

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