

Learners' Perception about Learning System in Open and Distance Learning at Bangladesh Open University

Meherin Munjarin Ratna*

Abstract

The learning process in open and distance learning (ODL) mode is dissimilar from the conformist in-person education system. However, this study has been conducted on the learners of SSC and HSC programs at Bangladesh Open University (BOU). 240 surveys have been conducted through structured survey interview questionnaires in six different regional centers namely Dhaka, Chittagong, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Sylhet, and Khulna of BOU. These surveys have been conducted for collecting quantitative data from the learners. Moreover, 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 12 key informant interviews (KIIs) have been conducted for collecting the qualitative data. Therefore, the main aim of the study was to explore the perception of learners about learning instruments in open and distance learning of BOU. This study would help the policymakers of BOU to formulate further initiatives regarding learning instruments.

Keywords: Learner, Perception, Learning Instruments, ODL, BOU.

Introduction

In this modern era distance learning is treated as a valuable asset in teaching-learning situations where learners' centric environment is also available. The learners of distance learning mode are able to select their own necessary subject to develop themselves as required for time. As a result, the learning materials should be need-based and have flexibility in nature. In ODL, learners are self-motivated and they can be involved in the learning process individually. In this process of learning and teaching, technology is an essential tool while the teacher is one of the most important factors (Souza & Polonia, 2015). Learning materials are also an important issue in this process. Bangladesh Open University uses various materials in imparting education to the learners. As a result, learning materials play an important role to engage the learners in the learning environment in ODL mode. However, the process of developing learning materials involves many stakeholders such as the course coordinator, author, instructional designer, content developer, graphic designer, media experts, and editor (Dekkers, 1994). Further Dekkers et al. (1991) previously mention four stages in the process of course development such as pre-preparation, preparation, authoring stage and manufacturing. The audio-visual components of distance learning are also available in BOU such as audio lecture which broadcasted on radio, video lecture which telecasted on television and Open TV, BOU Tube, YouTube, face to face tutorial session at study centers. On the other hand, BOU has a vast arena of e-learning materials, such as, e-books, learning management system (LMS), BOU Web TV, BOU IP TV, IVCR, facebook, twitter etc. (BOU, 2020).

* Assistant Professor (Bangla), Open School, Bangladesh Open University, Gazipur

Learners' Perception about Learning System in Open and Distance Learning at Bangladesh Open University

Objectives of the study

Broadly this research wanted to know the learners' perception about learning instruments, engagement and improvement in open and distance learning at Bangladesh Open University. Specifically, this study wanted to:

- explore the perception of learners about learning instruments;
- observe the perception of learners about engagement in the learning process; and
- explain the perception of learners about learning improvement.

Review of Literature

Sambrook (2001) explores the learners' observations of the excellence of computer based education resources through investigating and comparing quality judgments in the paper titled "Factors Influencing Learners' Perceptions of the Quality of Computer Based Learning Materials". The authors remark that the easiness in using education resources, presenting clearly without any mistake, excellence of images and illustrations, involvement without boring, quality of content, gaining new knowledge, understandability of materials, current skills and knowledge of the learners, learning type, language and text are the factors for judging the learning materials. Rahamat et al. (2012) explain four dimensions for developing literature components for website in the paper titled "Measuring Learners' Perceived Satisfaction Towards e-Learning Material and Environment". The authors find the dimensions in learner, course, design and environment that affect the professed pupils' fulfilment. Islam, et al. (2006) discuss the course development team for writing course materials for ODL in their paper titled "Quality and Processes of Bangladesh Open University Course Materials Development". The authors also discuss the formation of curriculum committee, media experts, delivery media of BOU course materials, course resources improvement procedure, quality, limitation and improvement process of course resources. Inozu et al. (2010) depict the characteristics of dialectal education involvements beyond classrooms in the paper titled "The Nature of Language Learning Experiences beyond the Classroom and its Learning Outcomes". The authors also depict students' attitudes, reasons for the difficulty of using English language learning in the context of resources, actions, involvements and skills. They discuss the outside classroom and the frequency of using of materials such as audio tapes/cassette tapes, pronunciation books/tapes, dictation exercises, CD ROMs, music, videotapes/DVDs, television news, radio news, television programs, newspapers, computer programs, reading books, internet, magazines, vocabulary exercises, grammar books, dictionaries and punctuation exercises for language learning in ODL mode. Joshi (2011) explores learners' awareness of language learning, self-exertion, activities, confidence, usage of resources, enthusiasm, and use of technology in education, motivation, and the learners' perceptions of the roles in learning i.e. the role of learner, the role of teacher, and teachers' insights of student sovereignty in the paper titled "Learner Perceptions and Teacher Beliefs about Learner Autonomy in Language Learning". The author finds that the majority of the students believe in their ability in language learning which makes them in taking decisions frequently.

Meherin Munjarin Ratna

The literature evidence there was no direct relation to the present study. So, it's important to conduct the study to find the perceived knowledge of learners about learning materials and processes.

Methods

This study has been conducted in Dhaka, Chittagong, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Sylhet and Khulna regional centers of Bangladesh Open University. 240 learners from Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate programs have been interviewed through a structured survey interview questionnaire. Moreover, 12 key informant interviews (KIIs) and 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) have been conducted through checklist. Secondary data has been collected from related documents through desk reviewing. The collected data has been sorted, analyzed and prepared by SPSS and MS excel software and presented in the graphs and tables.

Findings of the study

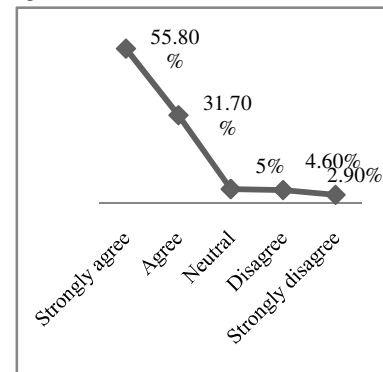
Perception about learning instruments

The respondents had knowledge about their study materials while mean=1.6708 and SD= .97456 indicates that they knew that the written materials were found in both electronic and paper form. This statement clearly discloses the knowledge of the respondents about their learning instruments which point out the perception of people to open and distance learning (Table 1 & Figure 1).

Table 1: Electronic and paper form

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
Open and distance learning covers written materials in both electronic and paper form	55.8	31.7	5.0	4.6	2.9	1.6708	.97456

Figure 1: Electronic and paper form



Source: Field survey, 2019

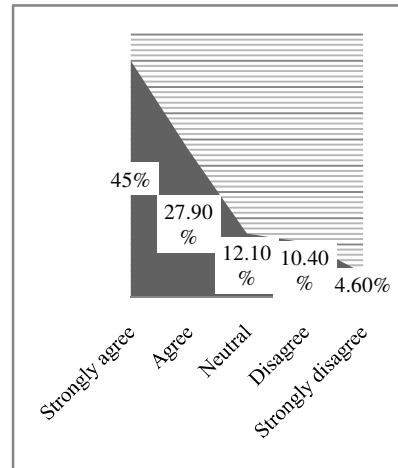
Table 2 and Figure 2 shows that the learners had clear perception about the different electronic education resources of open and distance learning (Mean=2.0167 & SD=1.18557). This point consider that visual instruments enrich the learning process which makes uniqueness of the ODL than other conventional education resources.

Learners' Perception about Learning System in Open and Distance Learning at Bangladesh Open University

Table 2: Visual learning materials

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
Open and distance learning includes diverse visual learning materials like movies, videos, animations, pictures and symbols	45.0	27.9	12.1	10.4	4.6	2.0167	1.18557

Figure 2: Visual learning materials



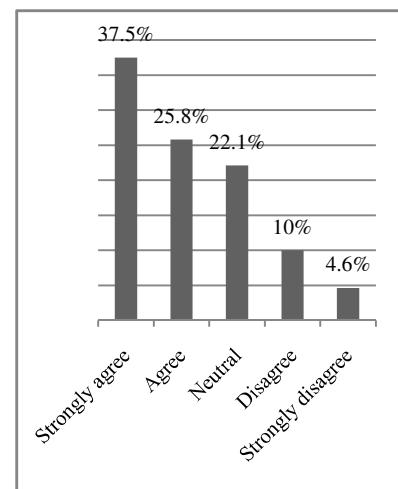
Source: Field survey, 2019

The Mean=2.1833 & SD=1.17494 proves that open and distance learners of Bangladesh Open University knew about the auditory resources like presentations, lectures, stories, songs and radio broadcast. They also believed that in open and distance learning mode the auditory resources creates extra opportunity to learning environment (Table 3 & Figure 3).

Table 3: Auditory resources

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
Open and distance learning includes auditory resources like presentations, lectures, stories, songs and radio broadcast	37.5	25.8	22.1	10.0	4.6	2.1833	1.17494

Figure 3: Auditory resources



Source: Field survey, 2019

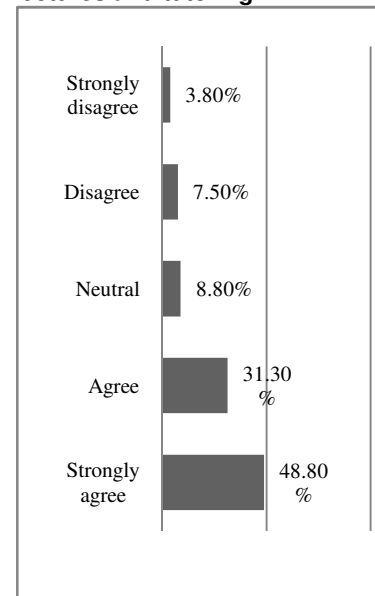
Meherin Munjarin Ratna

The learners had a strong scrutiny on small or big group in person session as the learning process of ODL. They mentioned that different in-person classes through speeches, forum etc. were conducted at local schools, colleges and universities in different groups (Mean=1.8625 & SD=1.09480). (Table 4 & Figure 4).

Table 4: Workshops, seminars, lectures and tutoring

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
In-person classes through speeches, forum etc. can be conducted in the at local schools, colleges and universities in different groups	48.8	31.3	8.8	7.5	3.8	1.8625	1.09480

Figure 4: Workshops, seminars, lectures and tutoring



Source: Field survey, 2019

Perception about learning engagement

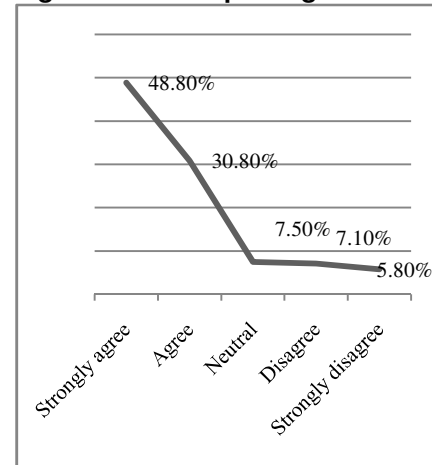
The learners also believed that the speeches, forum could take place through Google hangout, Skype, messenger, or something similar (Mean=1.9042 & SD=1.16934). This means they were more apparent about their learning engagement and learning materials (Table 5 & Figure 5).

Learners' Perception about Learning System in Open and Distance Learning at Bangladesh Open University

Table 5: Online placing

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
The speeches, forum can also take place through Google hangout, Skype, messenger, or something similar	48.8	30.8	7.5	7.1	5.8	1.9042	1.16934

Figure 5: Online placing



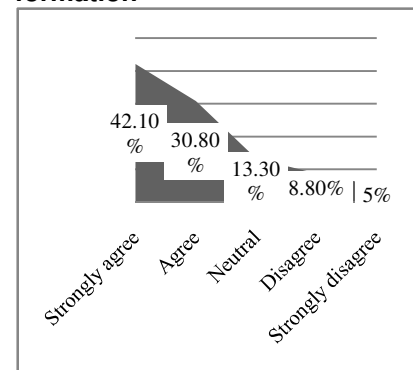
Source: Field survey, 2019

The Mean=2.0375 & SD=1.16551 evident that learning circles were effective in open and learning in ODL. Effective learning circle formation could play important role in learning process in Bangladesh Open University (Table 6 & Figure 6).

Table 6: Learning circles formation

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
I think learning circles are effective in open and learning	42.1	30.8	13.3	8.8	5	2.0375	1.16551

Figure 6: Learning circles formation



Source: Field survey, 2019

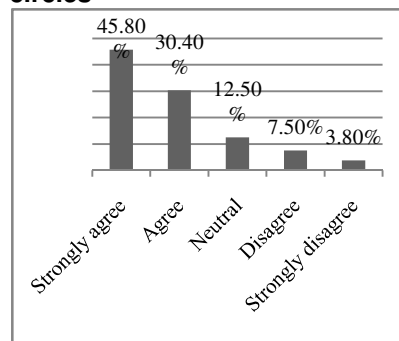
Meherin Munjarin Ratna

The leaning circle could be formatted on the basis of different subjects. The learners mentioned that learning circles could be formed on the basis of same or mix of different subjects (Mean=1.9292 & SD=1.10494). (Table 7 & Figure 7).

Table 7: Subject based learning circles

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
I think learning circles can be formed on the basis of same or mix of different subjects	45.8	30.4	12.5	7.5	3.8	1.9292	1.10494

Figure 7: Subject based learning circles



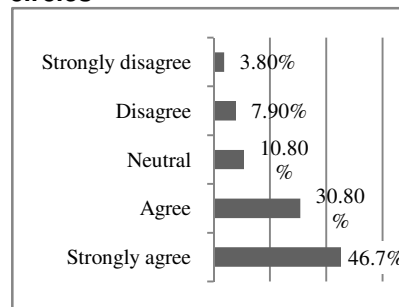
Source: Field survey, 2019

The learners also mentioned that the learning circles could be formed on the basis of same geographical area (Mean=1.9125 & SD=1.10753). (Table 8 & Figure 8). Learning circle based on geographical area may help the learners in face to face group discussion, sharing knowledge, views and ideas.

Table 8: Area based learning circles

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
I think learning circles can be formed on the basis of same geographical area	46.7	30.8	10.8	7.9	3.8	1.9125	1.10753

Figure 8: Area based learning circles



Source: Field survey, 2019

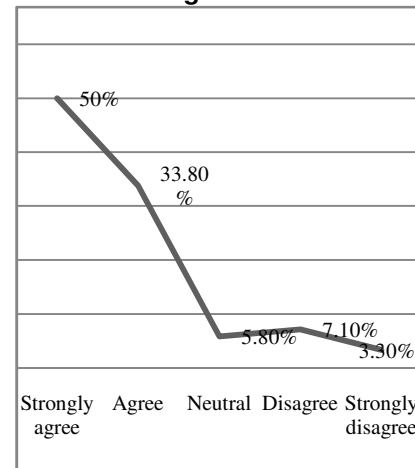
Learners' Perception about Learning System in Open and Distance Learning at Bangladesh Open University

On the other hand, the learners mentioned that learning groups may be formed by focusing the attention and development of learners' interest (Mean=1.8000 & SD=1.05180). (Table 9 & Figure 9). The thinking of formation of learning groups by focusing the attention and development of learners' interest may help the particular learners in sharing their ideas about their learning process and learning materials.

Table 9: Interest and focus based learning

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
I think learning groups may be formed by focusing the attention and development based of learners' interest	50.0	33.8	5.8	7.1	3.3	1.8000	1.05180

Figure 9: Interest and focus based learning



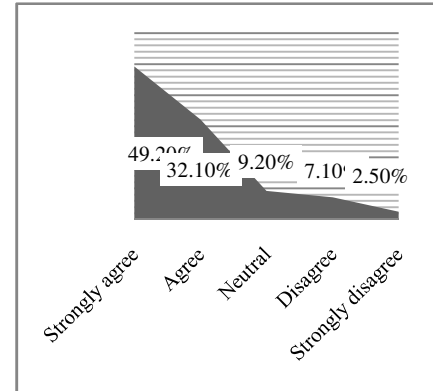
Source: Field survey, 2019

The Mean=1.8167 & SD=1.03077 point out that they learners had believe on the process of teaching groups which could work together on site and virtual. The process of learning and developing learning materials could help the learners both in face to face discussion in open and distance learning on site and virtual (Table 10 & Figure 10).

Table 10: On site and virtual circles

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
I think the process of teaching groups can work together on site and virtual	49.2	32.1	9.2	7.1	2.5	1.8167	1.03077

Figure 10: On site and virtual circles



Source: Field survey, 2019

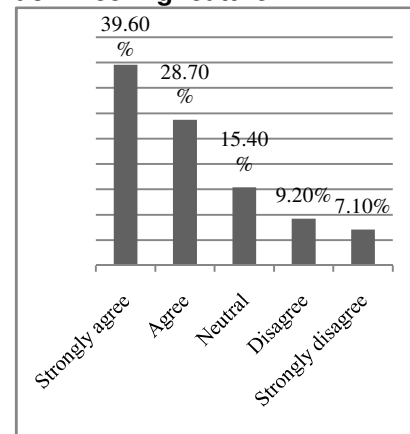
Perception about learning improvements

The learners believed that self-reading had an idiosyncratic and moderately dominant feature for ODL (Mean=2.1542 & SD=1.23968). (Table 11 & Figure 11). The belief on the feature makes sure that the learners of Bangladesh Open University had quite perceived knowledge about the learning process and learning materials of ODL.

Table 11: Distinctive and quite domineering feature

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
I think self-reading has been an idiosyncratic and moderately dominant feature for ODL	39.6	28.7	15.4	9.2	7.1	2.1542	1.23968

Figure 11: Distinctive and quite domineering feature



Source: Field survey, 2019

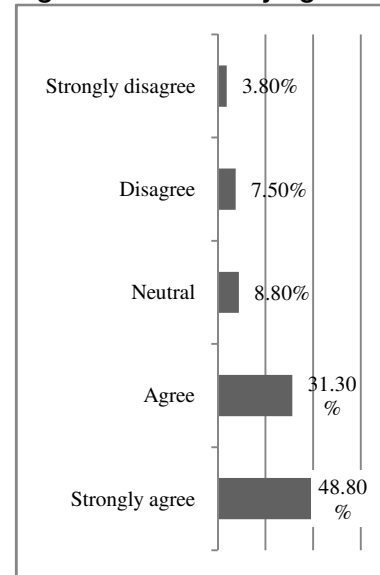
The Mean=1.8625 & SD=1.09480 proves that the learners had the comprehensible knowledge on the process of self-reading which happens through cross-examining someone, observing something or someone or doing something (Table 12 & Figure 12).

Learners' Perception about Learning System in Open and Distance Learning at Bangladesh Open University

Table 12: Self studying

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
I think learners have the comprehensible knowledge on the process of self-reading happens through cross-examining someone, observing something or someone or doing something	48.8	31.3	8.8	7.5	3.8	1.8625	1.09480

Figure 12: Self studying



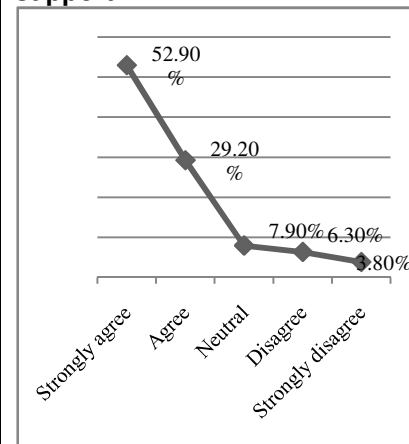
Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 13 & Figure 13 displays that the learners had the faith on the necessity of tutorial classes and care from BOU, local teachers and counsellors at study centres to understand SLM in Bangla language (Mean=1.7875 & SD=1.07494).

Table 13: Tutoring and support

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
I think I tutorial classes and care from BOU, local teachers and counsellors at study centres to understand SLM in Bangla language	52.9	29.2	7.9	6.3	3.8	1.7875	1.07494

Figure 13: Tutoring and support



Source: Field survey, 2019

The learners believed that tutorial class aimed to help the students to achieve learning goalmouths and outcomes of SLM (Mean=1.8083 & SD=1.06520). (Table 14

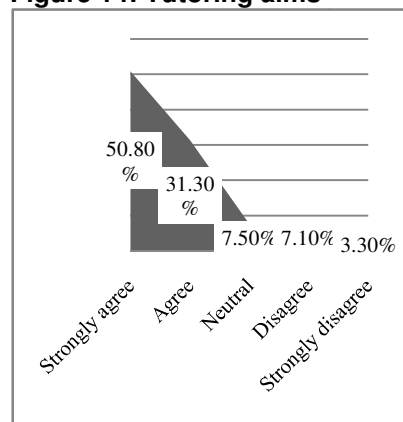
Meherin Munjarin Ratna

& Figure 14). The knowledge on this issue makes the learning process of Bangla language effective and useful.

Table 14: Tutoring aims

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
I think tutorial class aims to help the students achieve learning goalmouths and outcomes of SLM	50.8	31.3	7.5	7.1	3.3	1.8083	1.06520

Figure 14: Tutoring aims



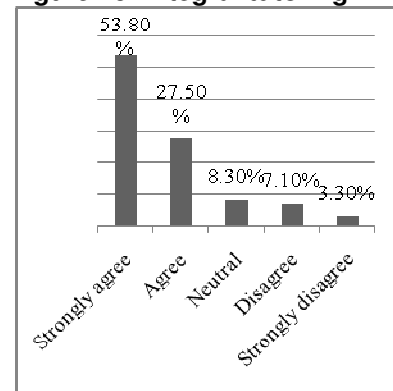
Source: Field survey, 2019

They also assumed that tutorial class was a vital part of the education procedure from the beginning until the end (Mean=1.7875 & SD=1.07882). (Table 15 & Figure 15) which indicates the understandability of the learners in learning process of materials on Bangla language.

Table 15: Integral tutoring

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
I tutorial class is a vital part of the education procedure from the beginning until the end	53.8	27.5	8.3	7.1	3.3	1.8083	1.06520

Figure 15: Integral tutoring



Source: Field survey, 2019

Discussion

The result explores that most of the learners (87.5%) had knowledge about the materials used in open and distance learning which covers both written electronic and paper format. Most of the learners (72%) knew that the visual learning materials used in open and distance learning which were available in movies, videos,

Learners' Perception about Learning System in Open and Distance Learning at Bangladesh Open University

animations, pictures and symbols format. In that case, Shabiralyani et al. (2015) conclude that visual aids from learning materials while it is used as a teaching method stimulates thinking and improve learning environment. The auditory resources make enjoyment to the learners while they driving, resting which helps them keep in mind and analyze rapidly (Kayalar & Kayalar, 2017) therefore, learners (63.3%) also knew about auditory resources like presentations, lectures, stories, songs and radio broadcasting that are used in open and distance learning. The learners (80%) were well known about the in-person classes through speeches, forum etc. which could be conducted at local schools, colleges and universities in different groups. They (79.6%) were also well known about in-person sessions the speeches, forum could also take place through Google hangout, Skype, messenger, or something similar. The learners had perceived knowledge about learning circle in open and distance learning. Most of them (72.9%) believed that learning circles were effective in ODL. They believed that it could be formed on the basis of same or mix of different subjects (76.3%), same geographical area (77.5%), interest and focus of development (83.8%). They found that these learning circles could work together in-person on site and virtually (81.3%). The learners (68.3%) believed that self-reading has been an idiosyncratic and moderately dominant feature for ODL. They (80%) knew that it happened through learning resources and diverse activities (like interviewing someone, observing something or someone or doing something). They (82.1%) also knew that they needed tutorial classes and support at local teacher, counsellors at study centre and BOU to understand SLM of open and distance learning and the tutorial classes helped the learners reach learning goals and outcomes on SLM (82.1%) which was important part of the learning procedure from the beginning until the end (81.3%).

Conclusions

The open distance learning is the method of delivering education by engaging learners in the process of learning directly. Thus the process of learning accommodates the learning materials, learning instruments and other instructional components. But the effectiveness of the learning process of ODL sometimes depends on learners' perception while they accept the process and response positively. The old form ODL process mostly depends on paper form of study materials and cassettes based audio-video lecture in Bangladesh Open University. But recently this university makes electronic form of all books and upload its' own website. However, most of the learners are well known about electronic and paper form written study materials. They are also concern about the visual materials to engage themselves in learning process while the auditory resources like presentations, lectures, stories, songs and radio broadcast helps them to enhance

Meherin Munjarin Ratna

the engagement. The learners have knowledge about workshops, seminars, lectures and tutoring, online placing, learning circle formation, subject based learning circles, area based learning circles, interest and focus based learning circles, on site and in line learning circles etc.

Recommendations

However, this study suggested some issue to formulate some recommendations. These are:

1. Motivational:

- a) Motivate all learners to engage in the learning process through electronic form of study materials, visual materials, auditory resources and workshops, seminars, lectures and tutoring.
- b) Motivate all learners to engage in the learning process through learning circles on the basis of subjects, areas, interest and focus, on site and online.

2. Institutional/policy level:

- a) Take necessary initiatives to engage more learners in the learning process through electronic form of study materials, visual materials, auditory resources and workshops, seminars, lectures and tutoring.
- b) Take necessary initiatives to engage more learners in the learning process through learning circles on the basis of subjects, areas, interest and focus, on site and online.

3. Individuals/learner:

- a) Motivate more learners to engage in self studying.
- b) Provide tutorial support to more learners to understand SLM to reach the learners' goals.

Acknowledgement

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Learners' Perception about Learning System in Open and Distance Learning at Bangladesh Open University

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