DISTANCE EDUCATION AND THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY: A CASE STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

by

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ABSTRACT

For reasons of its tested capabilities distance education has been widely accepted and adopted in many institutions across the world. The University of Botswana (UB) is an institution that operates a dual-mode educational delivery system – combining the traditional system with the non-conventional delivery mode. In pursuing the distance education programme, an outreach arm of the University - Centre for Continuing Education (CCE), was established. The Centre’s distance education unit (DEU) presently runs two courses by distance delivery mode.

The University of Botswana Library (UBL) has a commitment to give necessary support service to all academic programmes of the university, irrespective of the mode of delivery. Indeed, the mission of the UBL among others aims at responding speedily and appropriately to academic support needs and expectation of students and faculty. The main aim of this study was to carry out an investigation of the role and involvement of the library in the provision of distance education at the University of Botswana.

Knowing that the practice of library and information service to the ubiquitous distance learners promises to be a clear departure from the known traditional library system, the dissertation starts with a detailed description of the research problem and specific aims and objectives of the study.

In carrying out the study the research methods adopted comprise mainly the review of the literature, structured interview and use of the questionnaire. In reviewing literature we consulted current journals, appropriate books, relevant proceedings of conferences, the Internet, etc. Structured interview was arranged with some staff of DEU and librarians who were directly involved. Questionnaires were directly administered to one of the two
groups of distance learners during a residential session and mailed/faxed to all the 18 students of the second group.

The findings and discussions from the research supported the hypotheses formulated and provided a concrete base from which conclusions are drawn and recommendations made to all the stakeholders. These are the library/librarians, the DEU - the providers of distance education at the university, and distance learners themselves.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study has been made possible through the assistance and encouragement of many people. The author therefore wishes to express his sincere gratitude to Prof. TJD Bothma who has been my study leader throughout this endeavour. Without his patience, encouragement and meticulous guidance this study would not have been successful.

Sincere gratitude is expressed to the distance learners who so willingly participated in completing the research questionnaire, some during their tight residential session, others from their remote locations.

The author is especially indebted to the staff of distance education unit of the Centre for Continuing Education and University Library for the information volunteered either orally during interview or in writing.

Deepest appreciation is also expressed to friends, brothers and sisters particularly Dr Gbola Adekanmbi, Dr 'Segun Ojo, Professor 'Tunde Oladiran, Mr Thandazane Kamara, Dr Natsayi Matimba and Mrs Dinah Marathe for their concern and encouragement.

I must express special gratitude to my wife and children. Without their understanding and cooperation, it would have been impossible to complete this work.

Above all, I give all glory to God for making it possible for me to accomplish this task.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, ‘Sumbo and children, ‘Seun, ‘Seyi and ‘Sayo who missed so much of me while this study lasted.
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