

# LEARNERS' PRIORITY-SATISFACTION ANALYSES AS A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL IN MANAGING OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) AT OPEN UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA (OUM)<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The Open University Malaysia (OUM) started its operations in 2001. Being a new and the first ODL institution in the country, it needs to identify its institutional strengths and weaknesses. The success of OUM is very much dependent on the quality of the support services it provides. Traditionally, quality is measured uni-dimensionally, that is, using learners' satisfaction. However, for greater reliability and accuracy, learners' satisfaction should be viewed in the context of their priorities or expectations. Combining the two dimensions of priority and satisfaction, the results of the survey will enable OUM to determine its strengths (high priority-high satisfaction) and weaknesses (high priority-low satisfaction).

The study is based on a survey to determine the profile of learner-respondents, the priorities placed on OUM's support systems and their levels of satisfaction for the support systems.

The analysis was done separately on three cohorts of learners: the "BPG" / teachers group; the Open Market Bachelor's Degree group and the Open Market Diploma group. The results indicated slight variations in the profiles of the respondents, their priority listings and satisfaction levels. However, all three cohorts accorded the highest priority to: (i) program of study and (ii) fees. They rated highest satisfaction for: (i) tutor and (ii) program of study. The lowest priority items include (i) learning centers, and (ii) learning materials. The least satisfied items were: (i) library, and (ii) e-Learning platform (myLMS). Overall, eight out of the nine services rendered fell in the high priority-high satisfaction quadrant (its strengths). Only the library services fell in the high priority-low satisfaction quadrant (its weakness).

The paper will highlight the findings and discuss their implications.

## **Introduction**

Open University Malaysia (OUM) started its operations in 2001 with its first modest intake of 753 students. Since then, yearly enrollment figures increase in record breaking numbers, giving a present enrollment figure of almost 29,000 students. As the numbers multiply, so too the challenges confronting us—challenges that compel us to continually reassess our position and options. These challenges are varied and complex. OUM spares no effort in ensuring that these challenges are looked into and taken care off, but on top of that OUM is always mindful of one critically important variable, that is retention of students. The status and brand name and also the continuous success of OUM are dependent on the institution's retention efforts.

OUM has started well with an ambitious set of goals for student enrollment and has recognized that creating a student-centered environment – that is placing “student success” and "learner/customer service" at the center of the institution– produces an academic environment that will lead to high academic achievement and hence high retention rates. Different institutions define retention in different ways, but OUM being a “learner-centered” institution would like to adopt Moxley's et al (2001) argument that retention is not just about finishing the course/programme but assisting students in 'navigating the learning years'.

However, numerous research findings have shown that there are many factors that influence retention/attrition rates, and some are beyond the control of universities, such as race, age, gender and socioeconomic status (Cooke, Sims and Peyrefitt, 1995). There are numerous strategies that OUM can adopt to reduce attrition or to improve retention provided sufficient information is available.

The main aim of conducting this pilot survey was to find out how effective and successful has OUM been in its provision of support services to its learners. One common way is through a satisfaction study. Satisfaction covers the issues of students' perceptions and experiences during their university years. According to Astin (1993), given the amount of time and energy invested in attending a university, learners' perceptions and experiences should be given due attention. It is important for a University to know who their students are exclusively and what they expect from their institution.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to assess the level of satisfaction learners at Open University Malaysia (OUM) have about the support services that are made available to them, compared to the relative importance that they hold about each of the support services rendered. The study gives us the opportunity to listen to our students, in terms of how satisfied they are, and what we could do better to serve them. In other words, the study helps develop awareness and to ready the institution for institutional planning. The

priority-satisfaction matrix obtained from this study will highlight OUM's strengths, and this can be used to sharpen OUM's focus on student recruitment and student retention strategies. It will also be useful in influencing the whole planning and budget decisions taking into consideration and pinpointing the specific expectations of different demographic groups. Overall, results of the study will also provide a blueprint for improving support services to students, thus moving on towards improved institutional effectiveness.

The three attributes that need to be looked into when planning and crafting directions for a university include, catering to the needs of the learners; improving the quality of learning experience and using learners' satisfaction results for continuous improvement. The first step towards the above effort is to conduct self-examination of the quality of these support systems. Since ODL focuses on the learners, the best place to begin this self-examination is to evaluate the quality of these support systems from the learners' perspectives.

Traditionally, quality is measured uni-dimensionally, that is using learners' satisfaction scores. However, for greater reliability and accuracy, learners' satisfaction should be viewed in the context of their priorities or expectations. The list of support systems ranked in order of importance (priority) can be used by OUM to determine whether we are allocating efforts in the areas that are considered important by our learners. The report on this study will provide valuable encouragement and feedback for the management, faculties/centres/divisions/units, staff, administrators, tutors and learners.

The study involves the following steps:

- i) Identify the priorities learners place on the various learning and teaching support systems and their components provided by OUM;
- ii) Determine the learners' level of satisfaction for each of the above support systems and their components;
- iii) Study the relationship between the priority and satisfaction level for each of the above support systems and their components;
- iv) Identify from the above relationship, the high quality (high priority and high level of satisfaction) and low quality (high priority and low level of satisfaction) support systems and their components; and
- v) Recommend to OUM to set its priorities in providing the support systems which are closely aligned with those of its learners.

## Literature review

One of the primary challenges of an ODL institution is in managing its attrition rate. Studies around the world indicated that the average attrition rate of an ODL institution is between 40 to 50 percent (Ref).

A study by Eileen Thompson indicated that one of the primary reasons cited by students for withdrawal was related to administration issues, such as the late receipt of unit materials and the lack of feedback from the tutor on their first assignment by the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) assessment date (Thompson, 1997).

In relation to the above, an ODL institution also has to deal with adult learners who have more diverse needs and greater set of constraints on their time than fresh school leavers. To be successful, therefore the institution need to fully understand these varying needs and adequately provide support systems to assist them through their learning. In the past, efforts to identify learners' needs focused only on determining their level of satisfaction. This one dimensional analysis appears to be inadequate in the context of providing quality services to meet learners' expectations (Noel-Levitz and CAEL, 2003)

The first of these studies was carried out in 1995. It employs the Student Satisfaction Inventory developed by Noel-Levitz in 1993 to study students in a traditional campus environment. The inventory which measures two dimensions of students satisfaction and student priorities was able to identify which aspects of campus that students consider as most important and which are they most satisfied with and vice versa.

Using data from 152 colleges and universities from four-year public, four year private, and two-year community, junior and technical institutions, and categorizing the various aspects of campus life into 12 categories, the study found that for both four-year public and private institutions, instructional effectiveness and academic advising were scored the highest in terms of priority and satisfaction. The aspect which ranks lowest in terms of priority in both the types of universities is campus life. In terms of satisfaction, safety and security, campus life and recruitment and financial aid were rated the lowest three.

A series of studies were then conducted using similar instruments.

In 1999, a study was carried out to identify the priorities and satisfaction of students staying in two residential colleges of the University of Malaya (Latifah and Ramli, 1999) on services and facilities provided by the colleges. A priority satisfaction matrix was effectively used to determine areas for further improvements.

In 2003, the Council of Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) developed the Adult Learning Inventory (ALI) to assist institutions to assess their adult learning programmes. The 40 item inventory was based on an in-depth study of best practices in serving adult learners at colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada.

## **Methodology**

### **The Instrument**

The study uses the traditional survey method. The questionnaire is divided into three parts: the background of learner-respondents, the priorities they place on OUM's support systems and their components, and their level of satisfaction for the above support systems and their components.

The questionnaires were sent out by mail/hand to the Administrators of each of the 28 Learning Centers to be distributed during Tutorial 6 of the August 2003 Semester.

### **The Data**

Out of a total of 5000 questionnaires that were sent out, 3,371 were completed and used for the study. This represents approximately 20% of the total active students for the August 2003 Semester.

### **The Variables and Data Collection**

Part I of the questionnaire attempts to collect the demographic data of the learners. These information include:

- i) Gender
- ii) Age
- iii) Ethnic group
- iv) Marital status
- v) Job sector
- vi) Highest qualifications at entry point
- vii) Programme
- viii) Method of surfing the Internet
- ix) Why learners chose to pursue tertiary education
- x) Why learners chose OUM as their IHL
- xi) OUM's Learning Center

Part II of the questionnaires attempt to collect information on the priorities learners place on the support systems and their components and Part III looks at their level of satisfaction for each of the items. The support systems considered in this study include:

- i) OUM Learning Centers
- ii) Learner Services
- iii) Digital and Physical Library Facilities
- iv) Programme of Study
- v) Learning Materials
- vi) Fees Structure
- vii) Tutors
- viii) Administrators, and
- ix) Learning Management System

In Part II of the questionnaire, learners were asked to rank the support systems and their components based on their preference. The ranking scale was open-ended implying that learners may rank from 1 to any number, with 1 indicating the highest ranking or highest importance. The bigger the number given to a support system or its components, the lower will be the importance of that system or its component to the learner.

In Part III of the questionnaire, learners were asked to indicate the level of satisfaction for each of the above support systems using the number 1 through 4, with 1 indicating the highest level of satisfaction and 4 the lowest.

### **The Analyses**

A two-part analysis was conducted using SPSS for Windows: Release 11.5.1.

Part I describes the profile of the respondents.

In Part II, the cumulative percentage of respondents who indicated a ranking of 1, 2 and 3 for each of the sub-items in each of the support systems was calculated to represent the percentage of respondents who had indicated that the support system was important. The same procedure was applied to all the other support systems and their components.

Part III looks at the satisfaction level. In this part, the cumulative percentage of respondents who were satisfied (those who had answered 1 or 2) was determined for each of the sub-items listed under each of the 9 different support systems. The average of all the cumulative percentages of the sub-items was used to represent the percentage of respondents who were satisfied with each of the support systems.

The results for each of the support systems were plotted to determine whether there is any relationship between the respondents' priority and satisfaction. The results are presented in Part IV in the form of a priority-satisfaction matrix.

The above graphical presentation was used to analyze the strengths (high priority-high satisfaction) and weaknesses (high priority-low satisfaction) of OUM's support systems and its components.

## Results

### Part I: Profile of Respondents

Tables 1-4 show the summary of profile of the learner respondents. We have conveniently categorized OUM learners into 3 cohorts, namely (i) the Teacher group, (ii) the Open Market (OM) Bachelor group, and (iii) the Open Market (OM) Diploma group.

From the gender point of view, the majority of our learners are females except for the (OM) Bachelor group, where only 47% are females. The racial composition of the respondents is made up of a majority of Malays (67-79%) for all three cohorts of learners. A small percentage (5-12%) of the respondents is Indians and a lower percentage (0-9%) is Chinese. The rest (6-10%) are others.

Table 1: Learners' Profile

Item	Category	BPG	OM	Dip
Gender	Male	36.8%;	53.0%;	46.4%
	Female	63.2%;	47.0%;	53.6%
Ethnic Group	Malays	78.6%	67.6%	77.0%
	Chinese	8.5%	6.5%	0.0%
	Indian	5.2%	12.4%	11.5%
	Others	5.9%	10.7%	9.1%
Age Group	19-25 years	0.0%	22.9%	51.2%
	26-35 years	56.9%	47.3%	33.9%
	36-45 years	43.1%	27.5%	14.3%
Marital Status	Married	92.4%	60.9%	37.7%
	Singles	6.5%	38.3%	61.1%
	Single Parents	1.1%	0.8%	1.2%
Prior Qualification	Diploma	45.1%	48.4%	7.3%
	STPM	29.1%	25.0%	6.7%
	SPM	25.0%	21.1%	21.1%
	Others	8.0%	6.4%	4.9%

Internet Access	Home	82.1%	60.5%	51.5%
	Workplace	4.1%	24.7%	17.8%
	Cyber Cafe	12.2%	12.8%	29.4%
	Others	1.6%	2.0%	1.2%
Programme of Study	BETESL	23.6%		
	BEMATH	30.2%		
	BESC	24.7%		
	BECE	4.9%		
	BEEE	7.3%		
	BEME	9.3%		
	BIT		40.2%	
	BITM		7.2%	
	BMC		4.1%	
	BIM		25.5%	
	BBA		22.9%	
	DIT			46.4%
DIM			53.6%	

In terms of age, almost all (99.9%) of the teachers and a slightly smaller percentage (75.8%) of the Bachelor group are in the 26-45 age group. However, for the Diploma group, only 48.2% are in the 26-45 age group, a bigger percentage (51.8%) are in the 19-25 age group, i.e. the Diploma students are generally younger compared to the rest of the students.

A similar trend is observed in the marital status of the respondents; 92.4% of the teacher group and 60.9% of the OM Bachelor group are married, whilst for the Diploma group, the majority (61.1%) are singles, only 38.9% are married.

On the learners' prior qualification, nearly half of the teachers and the Bachelor group of learners (48.4% and 45.1%) are Diploma holders. A high majority (81.1%) of the Diploma group of learners are SPM certificate holders, whilst the rest are holders of STPM and Diploma certificates.

There are several ways in which our OUM learners access Internet for their online learning. The survey results show that the majority of OUM learners, i.e. 82.1% the teachers, 60.5% of the Bachelor group and 51.5% of the Diploma group of learners access Internet from their own homes. The rest either access Internet at their workplace or at Cyber Cafes.

Table 2: Reasons for Teachers Continue their Education

Reasons	BPG	Bachelor	Diploma
To do better in their career	77.7%	77.5%	74.5%
Self-ctualisation	60.9%	56.9%	39.8%
Achieve unfulfilled ambition	56.1%	46.1%	36.7%



Departmental requirement	13.3%	0.9%	7.2%
Others	2.9%	0.9%	3.6%

Table 3: Reasons for Choosing OUM

Reasons	BPG	Bachelor	Diploma
Flexible mode of learning	58.5%	74.7%	60.8%
Relevant programmes	54.2%	43.8%	40.7%
Location of learning centres	52.2%	39.9%	36.1%
Affordable fees	30.9%	27.4%	17.4%
Sponsored by employer	25.8%	01.1%	04.2%
Conducive and attractive facilities	16.0%	15.3%	15.1%
No other alternative institution	9.0%	14.0%	28.9%
Others	02.1%	2.1%	03.0%

There are many possible reasons why learners decide to continue their education. They may be studying subjects related to and complementing their professional practice, or they may be adults (see Knowles, 1997, description of adult learning/androgogy in ‘The Adult Learner’) studying in new fields to prepare for a career change. Some study for interest while others are only interested to refresh a skill or update knowledge in a certain profession. Interestingly, for all the 3 cohorts of learners, more than 70% of the respondents decide to continue their higher education because they want to do better in their career. A slightly lower percentage (39.8% - 60.9%) pursues further education for self-actualization and to achieve a long-time ambition that was never achieved before. A low percentage (0.9% - 13.3%) does so because of the requirement of the department at workplace.

The results of the survey showed that 58%-75% of learners choose OUM because of the flexibility of the learning system. Another 40% – 54% of the respondents choose OUM because the programmes offered fit their needs. Another 36% – 52% choose OUM because of the convenient location of the Learning Centres from their homes or workplace. About 15% of the respondents said that good facilities were the reason for their choice. It appears that sponsorship by the employer is not the main reason for choosing OUM, especially among the Open Market group of learners. About 15% chose OUM because of the availability of suitable and attractive facilities and 9%-29% had no other choices of institution except OUM. This is especially true for the Diploma group of learners, the majority of whom are SPM/STPM certificate holders. They cannot pursue their Diploma at the public universities, and if they choose the private colleges, they have no choice but to do their Diploma on a fulltime basis.

## Part II: Priority Analysis

Table 4 shows the priority accorded by learners to the services and facilities provided by OUM.

Table 4: Priority of Support Services/Facilities by Cohort

ITEM	ALL		BPG		Bachelor		Diploma	
	% Prioritise 1,2,3	R	% Prioritise 1,2,3	R	% Prioritise 1,2,3	R	% Prioritise 1,2,3	R
Programme of study	98.4%	1	98.4%	1	98.4%	1	98.8%	1
Fees	84.8%	2	83.0%	2	86.6%	2	87.3%	2
Administrator	78.2%	3	81.3%	3	73.8%	8	84.0%	3
Library	77.0%	4	75.0%	4	78.8%	3	80.8%	4
E-learning platform (myLMS)	74.6%	5	73.6%	5	75.5%	4	76.9%	6
Tutor	73.8%	6	72.0%	8	75.5%	4	77.5%	5
Support services	73.7%	7	72.9%	6	74.3%	7	76.2%	8
Learning materials	72.2%	8	69.0%	9	75.4%	6	76.5%	7
Learning centres	71.9%	9	72.1%	7	71.5%	9	72.7% <sup>18</sup>	9

The above table shows that the top three in the priority list are: Programme of Study (98.4%), Fees (84.8%) and Administrator (78.2%), except for the Open Market Bachelor group of learners where Library is ranked the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Administrator is ranked.

The three items which include library, e-learning platform and tutor which are classified under academic support systems are ranked fourth, fifth and sixth in priority. There could be several reasons why learners do not consider these academic support services, particularly e-learning and library important. First, they may lack awareness; secondly, they may lack the training and skills in dealing with technology; and thirdly they may embrace it, but many may not understand it and some may be lacking the confidence to use it. Another possible reason could be due to the learners' deeply entrenched attitude that the conventional face-to-face mode of learning is the best method of learning.

Learning materials and learning centres are accorded lowest priority by the respondents.

### Part III: Satisfaction Analysis

The overall learner satisfaction results on the support services made available to them are above the median percentage and considered positive (53.5%-82.0%), except for library services (43.3%), which was consistently rated least satisfactory by all three cohorts of learners. The common feature between e-learning and library is that both are electronic driven, hence they are highly dependent on availability of ICT infrastructure. The low satisfaction could be attributed to ICT accessibility and connectivity problems. This is a very pertinent finding in view of the fact that OUM being an ODL higher education provider in Malaysia is moving more towards online learning and personalized learning. Online learning is going to play a great part in the future of higher education.

Table 6: Level of Satisfaction

ITEM	ALL		BPG		Bachelor		Diploma	
	% Satisfied	R	% Satisfied	R	% Satisfied	R	% Satisfied	R
Tutor	82.0%	1	81.6%	1	82.4%	1	82.3%	1
Programme of study	75.5%	2	76.2%	2	74.6%	2	77.1%	2
Administrator	69.2%	3	74.1%	3	63.6%	6	68.0%	4
Fees	68.6%	4	70.3%	4	67.1%	4	64.7%	6
Learning centres	66.7%	5	68.1%	5	64.8%	5	68.0%	4
Learning materials	64.8%	6	61.9%	7	67.8%	3	68.7%	3
Support services	60.3%	7	63.3%	6	56.8%	7	60.4%	7
E-learning platform (myLMS)	53.5%	8	51.3%	8	55.5%	8	57.7%	8
Library	43.3%	9	40.6%	9	45.4%	9	52.4% <sup>19</sup>	9

The results showed that tutor, programme of study, administrator and fees are the items that most learners are satisfied with. This reinforces the emphasis given by learners towards the face-to-face interaction, where a tutor is to play a central role, as compared to the online interaction.

Next to tutor in the satisfaction rating is programme of study. The profile of learners (in Part I) indicated that more than 70% of the learner respondents embark on further study mainly to improve their career prospects. The high satisfaction rating accorded to programme of study indicates that OUM has designed the right courses for their learners. This means that programme of study is OUM's strength, and should be treated as an excellent selling point and to be used as a marketing strategy. In fact, other items such as fees, administrators, learning centres and learning materials should all be used in our marketing strategy.

#### **Part IV: Priority-Satisfaction Matrix**

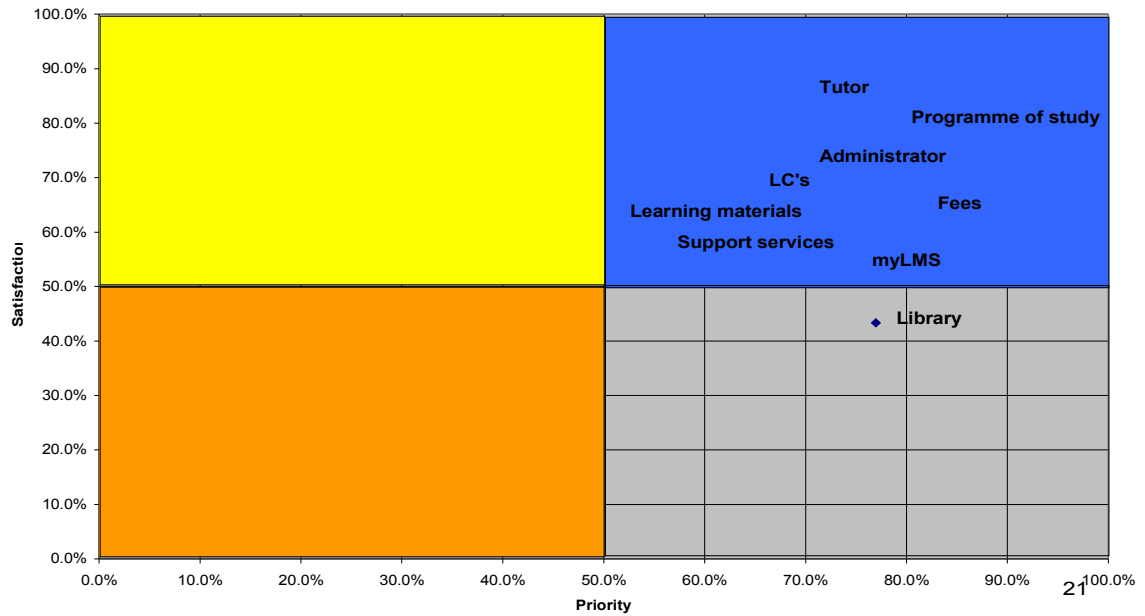
The Priority-Satisfaction Matrix is shown in Figure 1. The matrix reveals that:

Overall, the respondents indicated that they are satisfied with 8 out of the 9 support services that we provided. This is evidenced by the concentration of the services in high priority-high satisfaction quadrant.

Only one support service, namely Library, falls in the high priority-low satisfaction quadrant. The high priority and the low satisfaction level accorded to Library presents a challenge to OUM to further improve its services to its learners. A more detailed investigation into the level of satisfaction of learners on the types of services provided by the library reveals that learners are generally dissatisfied with its borrowing facility (only 36.4% expressed that they are are satisfied with it), availability of a physical library at the learning centres (39.0%) and accessibility (41.5%), space of study (42.8%) and appropriateness of reference materials. (43.4%).

Figure 1

**Priority-Satisfaction Matrix - ALL**



## Discussion of Results

Today's learners are from a much broader base of the population and they view higher learning and education as a *right* rather than a *privilege*. This creates an atmosphere where learners become more demanding of the services and support that we provide. OUM recognizes the need to be more responsive to the diverse needs of different groups of learners, and also to be more adaptable and more comprehensive in its approach to teaching and learning. The survey has identified certain areas which represent OUM's strengths and weaknesses. This section discusses some of these strengths and weaknesses and highlights the measures that have been taken to further improve our support services to our learners.

The major strengths of OUM identified by the study are in the area of programme of study offered fees and Administrator. Programme of study is accorded the highest priority and second highest level of satisfaction. This finding reaffirms that today's learners are generally very concerned with the type of programme they would like to enroll in, hence the high priority accorded. There are several reasons why learners are highly satisfied with OUM's programme of study. The curricula are first selected from the eleven public universities who are OUM's shareholders. They are then customized to meet the needs of the learners. To further strengthen these programme of study, OUM have instituted a rigorous programme development teams and processes. The teams comprise of the experts from the academia and professionals in the industry. An academic scrutinizes the suitability and marketability of the programmes

Fees score the second highest in priority and fourth highest in the level of satisfaction. This indicates that affordability ranks as one of the main criteria in choosing a higher learning institution. In this regard, OUM charges a relatively low fee compared to its private higher learning counterparts especially for its undergraduate programmes. This is in line with the philosophy of affordability in open and distance learning (ODL). However, when compared to the local public universities, OUM's fees are relatively higher.

As for Administrators, learners rate them third in both priority and level of satisfaction. In ODL, learners are generally distributed nationwide in various locations. Most of the time, they will study on their own. To complement this self-managed learning, they need to attend face-to-face tutorials conducted at the learning centres. In addition to that, the learning centres also provide a meeting place for them to interact with their peers. In this regard, the Administrators of these centres are very important to ensure that these services are adequately provided. These Administrators are the front-liners who handle the day-to-day chores of the centre, especially in assisting the learners in their teaching and learning process. They are also the ones who look into their grievances and problems. Currently OUM has 32 learning centres managed by its Administrators. The study appears to indicate that our learners are satisfied with the services provided by the Administrators.

Another strength of OUM lies in its tutors. The study indicates that learners are most satisfied with tutors. At OUM, our tutors are carefully selected mainly from the well established public universities and higher education colleges of the country. These tutors are then required to attend a rigorous training programme where they are introduced to the unique teaching methodologies of ODL. Only tutors who have gone through this training programme are allowed to conduct tutorials. Tutors are also encouraged to act as counselors and academic advisors to motivate their learners. These efforts on the part of OUM appear to have increased the level of satisfaction of learners for our tutors.

Thus far, we have highlighted our strengths which we believe have been instrumental in contributing towards our phenomenal rate of growth in our tender years. However, we are mindful of the challenges of a young ODL institution, such as ours. This survey had helped us identify some of these challenges.

One area that requires attention is the ICT driven services such as library and e-learning. The survey indicates that learners place medium priority and lowest level of satisfaction on the library services. Currently, OUM's library is equipped with an excellent collection of digital content comprising of three e-book databases with more than fifty thousand titles and nine e-journal databases with more than fifteen thousand titles. However, the usage of the digital library by our learners is below our expectation due to poor connectivity. As a result, our learners are generally unhappy with its accessibility. The good news is our Malaysian government is embarking on a nationwide broadband plan to further improve the connectivity of the country.

Another important aspect of ODL is the online learning which is more popularly known as e-learning. At OUM, we have internally developed our own e-learning platform which we call myLMS. This platform is made available to all our learners to complement their self-managed learning and face-to-face tutorials. The study revealed that learners ranked their priority on myLMS as medium while their level of satisfaction is second lowest. While the problems associated with myLMS are similar to those of the digital library, we find that the attitude of our learners have also contributed to the effectiveness of this online platform. In our attempt to overcome this problem, OUM has introduced a specially constructed module called “Learning Skills for Open and Distance Learners” which intends to sharpen learners’ basic IT skills, information retrieval skills and learning skills. This module would also contribute towards transforming learners’ current preference for face-to-face tutorials to online interactions.

## Conclusion

OUM is a learning organization seeking to improve itself in providing quality support services to our learners. In this regard, we continually search for and devise tools and techniques to assist us in identifying our strengths and weaknesses. The learners’ priority-satisfaction analyses as a diagnostic tool for managing an ODL institution has proven to be an effective tool towards this end. Using this tool, we have identified our learners preferences and their satisfaction levels for the support services that we provide. This study indicates that the services that OUM provide meet the requirements of our learners. However, we should not be complacent and where improvements are needed, serious efforts have been undertaken to address the shortfalls. We believe OUM is in a very good position to make significant gains in meeting students’ expectations and consequently provide a meaningful and rewarding learning experience to our learners.

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