

**“Increasing Access to Higher Education Through Distance Learning – A Case Study of School of Distance Learning and Continuing Education”  
Kakatiya University, Warangal, A.P., INDIA.**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Distance Education is one of the most important educational innovation of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (V.S. Prasad, 1998).. It is known by different nomenclature in different countries. By 2007, there exists 1086 distance education institutions offering 28,295 courses in 107 countries. In India, the Open Distance Learning (ODL) is offered under Dual Mode System (K. Murali Manohar, 1996), viz., (a) Distance Learning Directorate such as SDLCE under conventional universities. There are 64 such directorates in India. (b) Exclusive Open Universities System such as Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). There are 13 such exclusive open universities. The present paper concentrates on the School of Distance Learning and Continuing Education (SDLCE) of Kakatiya University, Andhra Pradesh, INDIA.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER**

The present paper has the following objectives, namely:

- a) To present the enrolment (accessibility) position of under graduation students with the SDLCE.
- b) To present the dropout position of SDLCE students (B.A & B.Com) pertaining to the batches of 2001-02 to 2004-05; and
- c) To present two profiles of the students who have been enfranchised by the SDLCE, and also one profile of the Joint Director of the SDLCE.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The author has collected both primary and secondary data. The author has depended more on secondary data in presenting the information pertaining to the accessibility (enrolment) of under-graduate (UG) courses. During study period 2001-02 to 2004-05, the author has also depended on primary data for the purpose of presenting a few examples (profiles) of the students, who have been enfranchised by the SDLCE of Kakatiya University, Warangal, A.P. INDIA. While presenting these profiles the author has made an attempt to present a judicious mix of different profiles. For this purpose, a structured questionnaire has been administered to former students of the SDLCE. To supplement this, the author has personally interviewed one of the Joint Director of the SDLCE, on matters pertaining to the accessibility/enrolment of the students at under graduate level and their drop-outs in later years. The author has also offered some measures/suggestions to overcome the various problems associated with the enrolment of the students and their drop-outs. The data collected from this method has been presented under appropriate headings under profiles of the former students and Joint Director of the SDLCE. These profiles have been presented with a view to understand the feelings of the students of the Open Distance Learning (ODL) System.

## **Enrolment (Accessibility) of Students in SDLCE**

The School of Distance Learning and Continuing Education (SDLCE), of Kakatiya University, A.P. INDIA has been created in the year 1989. One of the stated objectives of the SDLCE is “to provide access to higher education to large segment of population (Website, SDLCE), particularly to those disadvantaged groups living in remote and rural areas, working people, housewives and other adults who wish to upgrade or acquire knowledge and skills”. The SDLCE is offering around 50 courses to meet various educational needs of the people in general Telangana region in particular. The student enrolment under SDLCE stood at more than 34,000 in the year 2006-07 (Official Diary, 2008). The details of the students enrolment at UG level during the study period has been presented in Table-1.

TABLE - 1

Statement showing the Enrolment and Dropouts of the SDLCE students pertaining to the Batches of 2001-02 to 2004-05: Gender wise

Batch of the Students/Courses/Community	Enrolment		Drop-outs		Drop-outs		Drop-outs	
	I Year	%	II Year	%	III Year	% to II Year	Total Nos	% to enrolment in I Year
Batch 2001-02	9280		4205	43.31	1498	35	5703	61.45
B.A. Total	6851	100		44.57	1099	35.9	4153	60.61
Male	4042	58.99	1951	48.26	673	34.49	2624	64.91
Female	2809	42	1103	39.26	426	38.62	1529	54
B.Com. Total	2429	100	1151	47.38	399	34.66	1550	63.81
Male	1833	75.46	940	51.28	310	32.97	1250	68.19
Female	596	24.53	211	33.4	89	42.18	300	50.33
Batch 2002-03	11476		5216	45.45	1580	30.29	6769	59.57
B.A. Total	9086	100	4140	45.56	1228	29.66	5368	59.06
Male	5468	60.16	2679	48.99	742	27.69	3421	62.56
Female	3618	39.81	1461	40.38	486	33.26	1947	53.81
B.Com. Total	2390		1076	45.02	352	32.71	1428	59.74
Male	1750	73.22	837	47.82	624	74.55	2922	83.48
Female	640	26.77	239	37.34	88	36.82	327	51.09
Batch 2003-04			4680	40.19	1808	28.63	6488	55.72
B.A. Total	8855	100	3515	39.69	1335	37.98	4850	54.77
Male	5320	60.07	2264	42.55	879	38.82	3143	59.07
Female	3535	39.92	1249	35.33	456	36.5	1705	48.23
B.Com Total	2787	100	1165	41.8	473	40.63	1638	58.77
Male	2001	71.79	879	43.92	365	41.52	1244	62.16
Female	786	28.2	286	36.38	108	37.76	394	50.12
Batch 2004-05	12961		5637	43.49	1874	33.24	7511	57.95
B.A. Total	10120	100	4329	42.77	1461	33.74	5790	57.21
Male	6381	63.05	2980	46.7	1948	65.36	4928	77.22
Female	3739	36.94	1805	48.27	513	28.42	2318	61.99
B.Com. Total	2841	100	1308	46.04	413	31.57	1721	60.57
Male	2076	73.07	1038	50	321	30.92	1359	65.46
Female	765	26.92	270	35.29	92	34.07	362	47.32

**SOURCE: SDLCE Student admission records**

The Table 1 indicate the enrolment (gender-wise) of the students in First year of BA and B.Com courses during the academic years 2001-02 to 2004-05 and their drop-outs in the succeeding years ie. Second and Final year. The following observations are made from the Table-1

(a) The overall enrolment of the Students in the first year of BA and B.Com under-graduate courses is more among 'male' students than the 'female' students during the study period.; (b) The rate of enrolment among the 'male' students has been increasing, where as the rate of enrolment among 'female' students has been fluctuating and (c) the drop-outs rate among 'male' students has been increasing during study period except in the year 2003-04, In case of 'female' students, the drop-outs rate has been fluctuating during the study period. Thus, it is inferred that more number of enrolment and drop-outs among 'male' students than the 'female' students.

The data available pertaining to the enrolment and drop-outs in relation to their community has been presented in Table – 2.

**TABLE - 2**  
**Statement showing the Enrolment and Dropouts of the SDLCE students pertaining to the**  
**Batches of 2001-02 to 2004-05: Community - wise**

Batch of the Students/Courses/Community	Enrolment		Drop-outs		Drop-outs		Drop-outs	
	I Year	%	II Year	%	III Year	% to II Year	Total Nos	% to enrolment in I Year
<b>Batch 2001-02</b>	<b>9280</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4205</b>	<b>43.31</b>	<b>1498</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>5703</b>	<b>61.45</b>
B.A. Total	6851	73.82	3054	44.57	1099	35.98	4153	60.62
SC	888	12.96	451	50.78	150	33.25	601	67.68
ST	371	5.41	159	42.25	67	42.13	226	60.92
BC	3217	46.95	1422	44.2	591	41.56	2013	62.57
OC	2375	34.66	1020	42.94	291	28.52	1311	55.20
B.Com. Total	2429	26.17	1151	47.38	399	34.66	1550	63.81
SC	292	12.02	149	51.02	58	38.92	207	71.89
ST	45	1.8	14	31.11	12	85.71	26	57.78
BC	1250	51.61	576	46.08	211	36.63	787	62.96
OC	885	36.43	410	46.32	118	28.78	528	59.66
<b>Batch 2002-03</b>	<b>11476</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5216</b>	<b>45.56</b>	<b>1580</b>	<b>30.29</b>	<b>6796</b>	<b>59.22</b>
B.A. Total	9086	79.17	4140	45.56	1228	29.66	5368	59.08
SC	1194	13.14	581	48.65	167	28.74	748	62.65
ST	488	5.37	228	46.72	79	34.64	308	63.11
BC	4463	49.11	2097	46.51	653	31.13	2750	61.62
OC	2941	32/36	1234	41.95	329	26.66	1563	53.15
B. Com. Total	2390	20.82	1076	40.04	352	32.71	1428	59.75
SC	242	10.12	121	50	40	33.05	161	66.53
ST	22	0.92	14	63.63	2	14.28	16	72.73
BC	1157	48.41	541	46.75	200	36.96	741	64.04
OC	969	40.54	400	41.27	110	27.50	240	24.77
<b>Batch 2003-04</b>	<b>11642</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4680</b>	<b>40.19</b>	<b>1808</b>	<b>28.63</b>	<b>6488</b>	<b>55.73</b>
B.A. Total	8855	76.06.	3515	39.69	1335	37.98	4850	54.77
SC	1142	12.89	539	47.19	173	32.09	712	62.35
ST	533	6.01	195	36.58	39	20	234	43.90
BC	3674	41.49	1537	41.83	620	40.33	2157	58.71
OC	3506	39.59	1224	34.91	503	41.12	1727	49.26
B.Com. Total	2787	23.93	1165	41.8	473	40.6	1638	58.77
SC	308	11.05	143	46.42	50	34.96	193	62.66
ST	45	1.61	23	51.11	2	8.69	25	55.56
BC	1043	37.42	460	44.11	170	36.95	630	60.40
OC	1396	50.08	540	38.68	252	46.66	792	56.73
<b>Batch 2004-05</b>	<b>12961</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5637</b>	<b>43.49</b>	<b>1874</b>	<b>33.24</b>	<b>7511</b>	<b>57.95</b>
B.A. Total	10120	78.08	4329	42.77	1461	33.74	5790	57.21
SC	1050	10.37	511	48.66	158	30.91	669	63.71
ST	664	10.37	237	35.69	75	31.64	312	46.99
BC	5289	52.26	2358	44.58	823	34.90	3181	60.14
OC	3128	30.9	1226	39.19	404	32.95	1630	52.11
B.Com. Total	2841	21.91	1308	46.04	413	31.57	1721	60.58
SC	196	6.89	107	54.59	29	27.1	136	69.39
ST	38	1.33	17	44.73	1	3.7	18	47.37
BC	1402	49.34	658	46.73	238	31.17	896	63.91
OC	1207	42.48	527	43.66	145	27.51	672	55.68

**SOURCE: SDLCE Student admission records**

The Table 2 indicates the enrolment (community – wise) of the students in First year of B.A and B.Com courses during the academic years 2001-02 to 2004-05 and their drop-out in the succeeding years i.e., Second and Final Year.

The following observations were made from Table 2 in relation to the enrolment of the students (a) There has been a continues overall growth in the enrolment of students in the First year of under-graduate courses during the study period ; (b) There has been a fluctuation in the enrolment of Scheduled Caste (SC) Students in First year BA as well as B.Com courses during the study period.; (c) In case of Scheduled Tribal Students there has been a continues growth in enrolment of students in First year of BA course, But in case of B.com course there has been a fluctuation in the enrolment during the study period. (d) In case of BCs, there has been a fluctuations both in case of BA as well as B.com courses, and in case of OCs, there has been a continues growth in the enrolment of students in first year of BA as well as B.Com Courses during the Study period except in the year 2004-05.

The following observation were from the Table 2 regarding drop-outs :

(a) Table 2 Shows that the over all rate of drop-outs during the study period has been increasing except in 2003-04. (b) Incase of BA the drop-outs are decreased in 2003-04 and B.com in 2002-03 (d) In case Back word Caste's and OC's there was a tendency of fluctuations in the percentage of dropouts during the study period in BA and B.Com Courses. (e) It is also observed that among the students who were passed into II year, there were a further drop-outs before appearing for their final year examination. (f) The rate of drop-outs in this regard has also been increasing during the study period. Thus, it is inferred that the overall tendency of dropouts in downtrodden (SC, STs) and weaker sections (BCs) are more than the upper caste (OCs) during the study period.

## PROFILES

The profile of two successful students and the profile of a Joint Director SDLCE has been presented hereunder

1. Mr. Sudhakar, 2. Mrs.Jyothi, 3. Joint Director of the SDLCE.

### 1. Profile of Mr. Sudhakar, A Farmer student of SDLCE

Mr. Sudhakar borned in 1968 in an agricultural family in a Village Ramavaram, of Warangal District, A.P., India. and his family was living below the poverty line. He was an intermediate drop-out. He joined the SDLCE as an employee, with the designation of "Office attainder" in the year 1991 on "daily wage basis".. In the same year, he took admission into under-graduation course BA (SPP) and completed it in the year 1995. After acquiring his firsts degree from SDLCE. he has resigned for his Office attender post in SDLCE and joined as "Stringer/Reporter" in Eenaadu daily newspaper in Telugu language.

Later he felt the need for acquiring Bachelor of Communication and Journalism (BCJ) qualification and accordingly he took admission and completed it in the year 1996-97 He had been elevated to the position with the designation "State Chief Reporter" in the Eenaadu newspaper. With the experience that he gained with the above said newspaper, he moved to electronic media and joined with ETV2 and he had been made as an "Incharge of AP State for ETV2" .After serving a couple of years with ETV2, he has resigned and joined as "Chief Bureau of "Andhra Jyothi" newspaper in Telugu language in Warangal District He has used all his abilities, skills, to place it on top circulation. He has stated that because of his relentless efforts to reach higher positions owing to acquiring of his degrees BA(SPP) MA (Sociology), Bachelor of communication and Journalism (BCJ) from the SDLCE. Had he not been joined ODL scheme and acquired BA, MA, BCJ degrees, he would have been an 'Agricultural Labourer'.. The ODL scheme offered by SDLCE has transformed his life in many respects, he opined.

Mr. Sudhakar has offered few suggestions for improvement of ODL scheme. These are: In the light of opportunities and challenges under globalisation, the SDLCE must introduce the relevant courses. More number of contact classes must be offered. Guest Lectures should be arranged. Vocational courses must be introduced. Women, psychology oriented special courses must be introduced. The course on communication skills (read, write and speak) in English language must be introduced Mr. Sudhakar says that this suggestion would definitely enable the candidates who have acquired their degrees under ODL scheme in getting proper placement.

Mr.Sudhakar, while responding to the questions, he has stated that he was “very happy” with his educational qualifications. He felt that “education must be part and parcel of his/her work” at the end, he concluded by stating “Earn while Learn”. He strongly believed this maxim and practiced too in his life. Thus, it is inferred that Mr. Sudhakar has emerged as a “real hero” and a part of this credit goes to ODL scheme of the SDLCE, Kakatiya University, Warangal.

## **2. Profile of Mrs. Jyothi**

Mrs Jyothi aged 30 years, borned in Warangal, AP India. She was a drop-out at plus two stage due to her marriage. She has appeared for an Eligibility test for her admission into SDLCE in the year 2001-02 and completed her BA(SPP) in the year 2003-04 and MA(Sociology) 2006-08 under ODL scheme of SDLCE.

Mrs Jyothi narrated her, feelings on different aspects that are connected to ODL under SDLCE Kakatiya University, Warangal which are presented here. She strongly felt that the contents of the curriculum especially in Sociology Subject helped her a lot in tackling variety of problems that she has faced while doing her own business( LPG dealer). She attributed the success in her business to the knowledge, that she got through contract programmes and study materials of the SDLCE. When she was asked to offer suggestions for improvement. She has given the following suggestions a) Introduction of one paper on computers in BA level or in every ODL programme. b) Spoken English classes must be conducted. c) Increase in the number of contact classes. In her conclusion she has stated that after acquiring BA and MA degree under ODL Scheme, She had been commanding respect, status and dignity in the society, which in turn, enhanced her level of confidence in many respects.

## **3. Profile of Prof. M.E.Swamy, Joint Director, SDLCE**

Prof. M.E. Swamy Joint Director, is a post-graduate in MA (Economics), M.Phil. and Ph.D. from Kakatiya University, Warangal. Joined in University as a Lecturer. Later, he has joined in SDLCE as a Deputy Director in the year 1992 and had been promoted to Joint Director, in the year 2000.

The Joint Director has stated the concessions offered by the SDLCE to lure a cross sections of the people who were denied the access to higher education, due to variety of reasons: a) The SDLCE is offering both UG as well as PG and M.Phil. courses in different subjects. b) Fee concession to women and weaker sections. c) The SDLCE has opened 100 study centers in the different parts of the country, including at Dubai with a view to provide greater access to the students. d) Exclusive study and examination centers were opened at **Central Prison**, Warangal with a view to provide access to higher education to the prisoners at a free of cost. e) **“Phone-in-Programme’s”**: to students. While responding to the questions he has stated that the poor attendance and poor educational foundation of the students are the major reasons for drop-out.

With a view to improve the quality of the education, the Joint Director has stated that the SDLCE has introduced certain measures in its centers. These include: a) Making all arrangements to reach the study material and information to the learners. b) Running counseling classes very systematically. c) Orientation programmes to the Counselors, coordinators, principals have been organised.

## **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

### **The findings of the study are as follows:**

a) The overall enrolment of the Students in the first year of under graduate courses (BA and B.Com) during the study period is higher among the ‘male’ Category than the ‘female’ category of students. b) The drop-outs rate among male students has been increasing during the study period except in the year 2003-04. Which can be considered as highly significant. c) The rate of enrolment among SC Students has been fluctuating during the study period. d) The overall drop-outs rate has been increasing during the study period excepts in 2003-04. e) Which can be considered as highly significant by any standard. f) Among the STs, the overall percentage of dropout has been increasing during the study period except in 2004-05 under BA Course. g) The poor educational back ground and poor attendance of the students were the major reasons for dropouts under ODL scheme of the SDLCE.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Thus, the study is concluded that the enrolments (accessibility) position of under graduate students has been increasing continuously during the study period, and on the other, the rate of dropouts during the study period has also been increasing. This is a serious concern to the management.. As far as the dropouts position is concerned, it resembles the primary and secondary level of education. As regards the successful candidates under ODL scheme it is concluded that, many students have settled well. This programme has also created a lot-off awareness among the ODL students and enables them in reaching higher levels of confidence and better recognition in society.

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