

## Open distance learning and the use of audio – visual material: case study of the Open University learners

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Use of Audio-Visual (AV) material is one of the most important delivery methods in open distance learning. It provides an effective, interesting and joyful environment for the learner. Audio-Visual aids such as multimedia, electronic media facilitate the dissemination ideas, knowledge and information among individual and groups.

In this context, the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) has been using e-learning method in virtual learning environment. The OUSL has developed online courses also. The university has its own media centre developed materials as well as the materials bought from the outside vendors for learners to use. These materials are kept in the main library and some regional centres such as Matara, and Kandy. But, it was found that the learners are not getting an adequate benefit, out of these resources. Various studies done by the researchers on distance learning also have mentioned the impact of this situation towards the quality of OUSL learners.

Against this backdrop a study has been conducted to find out the reasons for not using AV materials by the learners. This study was conducted in the Open University of Sri Lanka. The study adopted mostly the qualitative study methods.

The study findings show that there are individual reasons of the learners as well as the failures of the University for not using the AV materials by the learners. Lack of time, other commitment, family related issues, distance from home to OUSL, lack of knowledge on using AV materials, and unawareness of the available AV facilities of learners, have minimised the use of AV materials. On the other hand the institutional constraints also prevent the learner's association with AV materials. Furthermore, lack of adequate facilities in the library, poor staff support, not creating awareness among the learners, academic workload, and the poor quality of the material are the institutional factors that minimise the usage of AV materials.

**Key words:** Distance learning, Audio - visual materials, Adult education, Educational technology, University teaching

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