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*Poster*

## **A study on public awareness of Open and Distance Learning (ODL)**

Open and distance learning is different from traditional learning .It focuses on freeing learners from limitations of time and place while offering flexible learning opportunities. ODL is delivered using a variety of print and electronic systems either through learning, in which all parties participate at the same time, or through learning in which parties participate at different times. It is done through correspondence, audiovisual means (television and radio), multimedia (audio and text files), and the Internet. In the traditional education system, some constraints can be observed with regard to access and equity. But in ODL, the learner has the opportunity to learn regardless of age, educational level or geographical barriers. Therefore, it is worthwhile to understand the awareness level of the public regarding ODL in Sri Lanka. Hence, the following research problem is being discussed.

“Is the general public aware of open and distance learning in Sri Lanka?”

The interview method was adopted among a sample of 50, representing the age group of 18-60, and people who are working as well as not working in the areas of Colombo, Galle and Anuradhapura. Interestingly, findings reveal that most of the respondents are of the view that it is expensive, and they have to learn only from postal correspondence. Even though it has mentioned “open and distance” people are of the view that they have to come to Colombo for their studies. Hence, the awareness of the public on the ODL method can be considered as low. The public has not been properly informed of what ODL means. It is the responsibility of higher education authorities to promote ODL in order to enhance equity and access to education for all. It can be recommended that an integrated marketing communication plan be launched to make the public aware of this.

**Keywords: Equity, Access, Open and Distance Learning(ODL), Awareness**