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## Student Support Services in Higher Education: A Student Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Various policies have been framed from time to time to uplift the quality of higher education. But policy makers usually miss the key element of higher education that is students. Giving support to students including social and emotional support along with academic support brings awareness in students and can help a lot in enhancing the quality of higher education. The present study has been conducted to evaluate the student support services provided by authorities for improvement in individual as well as in improving the functioning of the institution. Majority of the students were not satisfied with the support system provided to them in higher education institutions. Students demanded regular revision in the curriculum according to the changing needs of the society, preferred knowledge with skills, addition of books in library and good support system for disabled students.

*Keywords: Student Supportive Services, Higher Education*

Student support services (SSS) are a cluster of facilities and activities that are provided to make the learning process easier and more interesting for the learner. They serve as the interface between the institution and the learner. The quality of higher education depends directly on the student support services provided in various modes of higher education. If universities and colleges of higher education are deficient in providing support to their students, then it does not serve the purpose of education, but only distribution of degrees.

There are much evidence to suggest that there is a positive relationship between students' academic performance and effective use of support system. However it is a matter of concern that large number of students either chooses not to make optimum use of some or all of these services, or do not know how to use them effectively. Consequently it is important to understand more about students' perceptions and use of support systems in order to maximize the effectiveness of these to enhance students' performance.

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Students need support in all forms of education, formal or non-formal. Students does not require support in only academic area of education, but emotional and social aspects of education of individual also demands support in higher education.

According to Bridges (2008) student support services are still the neglected areas in higher education system and come to focus only when unrest prevails in the students. Dhanappa (2014) pointed out that lack of awareness of their rights and responsibilities of the present day, learners are hampering the quality of education.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The student support services are the neglected face of higher education in India. In order to improve the quality of higher education, we need to promote student support services in higher educational institutions. Unless the students themselves demand for the support services, one cannot bring quality in higher education. One needs to know the perception of students' regarding the available support services before implementing new services or improving the existing ones.

Hence, the findings of the study, based on views and perceptions of students will be of immense use to create awareness for student support services, to bring new services and to raise the quality of education.

#### ***Objectives of the study***

To study the students' perception about student support services in higher education in the area of curriculum, infrastructure, teaching-learning process, library facilities, hostel facilities, examination, mode of admission and quality factor in higher education.

#### ***Delimitations***

The present study is delimited to students of Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab

#### ***Research method***

Qualitative approach (percentage analysis) was followed in this study. In order to achieve the objectives of the present study, descriptive research method was used for investigation, as this was found to be most appropriate method to survey the students' views and perceptions about current practices of the student support services prevailing in higher education Institutions.

#### ***Research tool***

A self developed questionnaire was used as the research tool for undertaking the present study. This research tool includes 30 questions with 'Yes' and 'No' response.

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### *Sample*

Out of 65 departments only few were selected for data collection. Stratified random sampling technique was used for sampling. The sample consisted of 160 students pursuing post-graduation and doctoral studies. Equal strata of 40 students were taken from each categorized department though the number varied for males and females.

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### *Students' Perception about Student Support Services*

| S.NO. | ISSUES   | YES%  | No%   |
|-------|--|-------|-------|
| 1     | Satisfaction with library facilities in department.            | 46.25 | 44.37 |
| 2     | Sufficient books in library                                    | 50.00 | 23.75 |
| 3     | Laboratory facilities according to needs                       | 26.87 | 48.75 |
| 4     | Need of addition of books in library                           | 51.87 | 40.00 |
| 5     | Sufficient funds for up-gradation of library facilities        | 35.00 | 35.00 |
| 6     | Large no. of students use library facilities                   | 62.50 | 25.00 |
| 7     | Use of library during night                                    | 44.37 | 35.00 |
| 8     | Need of entrance examination for admission.                    | 61.25 | 33.75 |
| 9     | Satisfied with admission criteria                              | 55.00 | 38.12 |
| 10    | Provision of coolers in hostels                                | 33.75 | 43.75 |
| 11    | Cafeteria facilities   | 46.87 | 45.62 |
| 12    | Playground facilities  | 60.62 | 33.75 |
| 13    | Satisfaction with physical infrastructure                      | 23.75 | 42.50 |
| 14    | Support services for differently able Students                 | 29.37 | 38.12 |
| 15    | Effective mechanism of providing financial aid                 | 34.37 | 41.87 |
| 16    | Continuous assessment by internal tests                        | 47.50 | 37.50 |
| 17    | Provision of yearly examination                                | 61.25 | 28.12 |
| 18    | Curriculum according to present day needs                      | 56.87 | 30.00 |
| 19    | Satisfied with curriculum                                      | 30.62 | 60.62 |
| 20    | Project works in curriculum                                    | 41.87 | 40.00 |
| 21    | Regular revision of syllabus                                   | 61.87 | 28.75 |
| 22    | Teachers encourage participation of students in all activities | 54.37 | 39.37 |

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| S.NO. | ISSUES   | YES%  | No%   |
|-------|--|-------|-------|
| 23    | A visionary administrator ensure quality education               | 61.25 | 20.62 |
| 24    | Qualified staff guarantee quality education                      | 59.37 | 26.25 |
| 25    | Ultimate aim is socially effective human being                   | 66.87 | 17.50 |
| 26    | Knowledge without skills-no quality education                    | 78.75 | 16.25 |
| 27    | Manners, ethics, culture must to imbibe quality in education     | 68.12 | 19.37 |
| 28    | Human relations important for quality in education               | 73.75 | 15.62 |
| 29    | Quality education must be linked to productivity & employability | 64.37 | 25.00 |
| 30    | Co-curricular activities important for quality education         | 70.62 | 18.75 |

### (i) Mode of admission

As shown in the table, while expressing their opinion regarding the admission criteria 61.25 percent of the students favored entrance examination as the criteria of admission. 55 percent students were satisfied with the present admission criteria. Thus, students largely favored entrance examination as the criteria of admission to the courses in the university.

### (ii) Curriculum

Table reveals that 61.87 percent of students desired regular revision of the syllabus. In further view, 56.87 percent students demanded for the curriculum according to the present needs. 60.62 percent students were not satisfied with the curriculum. While 48.75 percent students agreed that laboratory facilities were not according to the needs of the students. Project work found an appropriate place in their curriculum as responded by 40 percent students. However 70 percent students agreed that co-curricular activities are important for quality education in higher education. Thus majority of the student were not satisfied with the present curriculum and demands improvement.

### (iii) Library Facilities

As shown in the table, while expressing their opinion regarding the library facilities, more than fifty percent of the students agreed that there were good facilities available in university library such as “Sufficient number of books in the library” (50 percent), “Need of addition of books in library” (51.87 percent), “Large number of students use library facilities ” (62.50 percent).

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However, only 35 percent responded to the use of library at night. The students who were satisfied with the library facilities in the department were 46.25 percent. 35 percent agreed that there were sufficient funds available for up-gradation of library facilities.

### (iv) Examination

The students' perception regarding examination as shown in the table, 61.25 percent students have positive views regarding yearly examination. The students who favored semester system were 54.37 percent. While only 47.50 percent students necessitated for continuous assessment by internal examination.

### (v) Quality Based

The students' perception regarding quality based higher education as shown in table is as: 78.75 percent of students were of the opinion that knowledge without skill is not a quality education. For 73.75 percent students believed that human relation are important for quality in education. 68.12 percent students expressed that manners, ethics, culture are must to imbibe quality in education. Ultimate aim for 66.87 percent students is socially effective human being. 64.37 percent students think that quality education must be linked to productivity and employability. 61.25 percent responding students agreed that a visionary administrator ensures quality in education while 59.37 percent students believed that qualified staff guarantees quality education.

### (vi) Infrastructure and other facilities

As shown in the table, most of the students were not so happy with the infrastructure and other facilities. Only 33.75 percent of students responded to provision of coolers in hostels. 46.87 percent and 60.62 percent of students were satisfied with cafeteria facilities and playground facilities respectively. While only 23.75 percent students were satisfied with physical infrastructure. In response to support services for differently abled students, only 29.37 percent students agreed for it. Of all, only 34.37 percent of students think that there is effective mechanism of providing financial aid to students of higher education.

## EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study has a significant role to examine the student support services in higher education. Today, student support service is one of the burning issues and demands a deeper investigation into this area. The educational implications of the study may be useful in the following ways:

1. The policy planners, curriculum experts and educationists must evaluate all the aspects of student support services prescribed by the regulatory bodies. They should analyze whether the present services caters to the needs of the students in the changing circumstances of the society in the era of globalization.
2. The findings of the study indicate that sufficient facilities such as library, new technologies, teaching learning materials, methods of teaching, examination pattern should be ensured to the students in order to maintain the quality in higher education.

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3. The quality education must be linked with knowledge, skills, productivity and employability along with all desirable values. Higher education should be oriented to the national development by producing capable and socially effective human beings.
4. The unnecessary formalities and restrictions, complicated admission procedures, fees depositions, casual attitude hinders the quality of good student support services. Administrative procedures must create conditions that enhance the student support in educational institute.
5. Elected representatives of the students must be present in the administrative body to bring problems of ground root level to the notice of the administration and also work for its solution in short time period.

### SUGGESTIONS

In the light of findings of the present study along with its delimitations, certain suggestions are being made for future researchers to focus on the student support services in higher education:

1. A replicative study of the present study to gauge the views and perception of students regarding student support services in different colleges and universities across Punjab and India may also be conducted.
2. A study may be conducted on teachers' perception regarding student support services in Indian colleges and universities.
3. A comparative study of perception of students regarding student support services studying in government and private universities may be under taken.
4. The issues concerning student unrest, student's socio-psychological problems and student welfare activities in higher education can be focused by researchers in order to enhance the student support services as well as quality in educational institutes.
5. The replicative study of the present study can be conducted on the research scholars of the universities of Punjab as well as of India and world at large.
6. Other statistical techniques can also be followed for quantification of different aspects of student support services in higher education.
7. A comparative study of student support services among different state open universities may result in providing some useful data.

### CONCLUSION

In nut shell, students of the university are satisfied with library facilities but wanted regular addition of books in library. They desired objective type of entrance examination as sole criteria of admission. Hostel students were not satisfied with the facilities provided to them. Physical infrastructure also does not satisfy students especially for differently-abled students. They demanded for flexibility in the curriculum that needs to be revised according to changing needs of the world. They preferred yearly examination followed continuous assessment by internal examination. Examination should be combination of both objective and subjective questions. Human relations within the campus are important for quality in higher education. A visionary

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administrator and qualified staff ensure quality in higher education. The ultimate aim of education is socially effective human being.

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