

Tutor Support in an Open Distance Learning (ODL) Environment for Upgrading Teachers

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ABSTRACT Tutor support in open distance learning (ODL), which is beyond the scope of course material, is very important as it fosters collaborative learning and support in students. This support could be extended to that of an educational counsellor or tutor counsellor, career guidance, manager, assessor, facilitator, demonstrator, role model or pastor and the tutor could also act as a friend and advocate for the student within the ODL system. To this end, action research studies in the United Kingdom with Open University students have shown that students come to ODL courses with varying expectations of the levels of service and support they will receive from their tutors. It has been further established that specific expectations-led quality assurances that enable the sharing of these expectations before a course starts could be of mutual benefit to the student and the tutor, as well as generally improving the overall quality of tutor support provided by the distance learning organisation. This process, it is argued, would be appreciated by the students as it would help to shape their future and have beneficial effects on student satisfaction with tutor support, consequently reducing student drop-out and increasing course completion rates.