EVALUATION OF COURSE TUTOR'S PERFORMANCE THROUGH OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING IN PAKISTAN:
Perception of the students

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ABSTRACT

The research article deals with the evaluation of course tutor's performance appointed by the Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad at Master of Education level. The study was delimited to the students enrolled during semesters, spring 2006 to spring 2007 in Rawalpindi region.

The sample of the study consisted of 63 students of Rawalpindi district. A five-point Likert rating scale was administered to collect the views about the selected parameters of course tutor's performance. The 30 items 0f the instrument focused on the selected parameters of tutor's performance. The data were analyzed on applying simple percentage formula along with the calculation of mean score and the recommendations were made from the findings of the study. The study showed their performance was dissatisfactory regarding beforehand written instructions about the methods, ways and styles of writing assignments.

Results showed that tutors' performed better regarding students' guidance and providing instructions in first tutorial meeting. The performance of tutors regarding the evaluation of assignments and written feedback of right and wrong was below average. Remedial efforts and correction based reinforcement was lacking in prevailing practices performed by the tutors of ODL system.

Keywords: Tutors performance; Distance Education; Assignment; Evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

The role of assignments in leaning process is vital in both formal and non-formal systems of education. Assignments are placed and considered as compulsory component and matter of top priority especially in the non-formal mode of education. The study material provided by a non-formal and distance-learning institution is reviewed and studied by

the learner at his/her own pace and it is made possible through the assignment work. The regular and on permanent basis interaction between teachers and students is not existing there in distance and non-formal education.

The tutors and tutorial classes to a small extent meet such purposes of teacher student interaction. After one or two weeks there is a tutorial meeting of one and half hour at a study center where the learners and tutor of the same course can meet and share their academic problems. So there are no daily bases regular classes, home work assignments and assessment or evaluation of students learning outcomes in distance and non-formal learning like a formal leaning mode.

 In this way assignments are the most important and effective component of non-formal learning which meet different ends e.g. a means to engage the learner to study and go through the contents and books while writing the assignments, enable them to search and find out the answer of the questions, enhancement of their writing power, and on the other end a good source to judge their writing capabilities, expression skills and approach to explain, describe and respond a question etc. Standards set for students support in Open Distance Learning (ODL) as stated by Iqbal and Huma (2007, pp.10-12) include as:

> - Support offered is sufficient to meet the reasonable needs of learners, encourage the learning process and facilitate successful completion of the course.
> - (2)Support is offered on a prompt, timely and wherever possible personal basis. (3)Support offered is appropriate to the level of the course.
> - (4)Learners are encouraged to complete their courses.

Progress is monitored, and learners are provided with prompt and helpful comments on their progress in relation to leaning expectations and goals. Support offered in ODL system regarding provision of tutorial schedule and assignment work is a valuable input by the program provider. Appropriate schedules for the submission and return of tutorial assignments are adopted and communicated to learners. Turn around times is kept to a minimum. The study was conducted to evaluate the performance of course tutors appointed by the AIOU at Master (of Education) level during semester spring 2006 and spring 2007. The objectives of the study were;

> - to explain the role of assignment in distance mode of learning.
> - to find the tutorial and guidance practices of course tutors at Master level in distance and non-formal education system.
> - to evaluate the performance of course tutors

REVIEW LITERATURE

There are three modes of education in the prevailing set up in all over the world. These modes are known as formal, non-formal and informal modes of learning. Informal education starts with the very first day of a child life, the cradle is the first informal institution of a learner. Formal mode or system of education of a country is a very effective instrument to educate and bring up its youths when they are of the age of learning and they just study with out doing any other permanent job as an earning source. It runs from pre childhood or primary stage to the higher level of education.

In this way all the schools, colleges and universities established and running under a regular, organized and scheduled programme of learning are considered the formal institutions of education.

DISTANCE AND NON-FORMAL MODE OF EDUCATION

The non-formal mode of education is also an organized, planned and proper system of education which differs from the formal mode in terms of regular and formal classes, time frame, daily and regular student-teacher interaction. It is an emerging and effective way of educating the individuals who could not continue their education through formal mode due to some problems.

There are different further ways and approaches in the non-formal mode of education e.g. Distance education, Open and distance learning system, Correspondence education, University with out walls, Adult education etc. Gulteki (2006, p.1) states and quotes William and others in this regard as;

> *Today, distance education is one of the most rapidly developing approaches in the world. The potential effect of distance education on the whole education system from primary to higher education has been emphasized through information and communication technologies (William, Paprock & Covington, 1999, p. 14).*

Rashid (1992, p. 24) narrates the future of distance education thus; throughout the, governments are faced by the problems of the increasing demand for education on the one hand and the inadequacy of resources to provide it on the other.

They have therefore, been compelled to adopt distance teaching as a means of bridging the gap between what they can provide and what is necessary. According to Dodds (1978, p. 246) this method/system provides education/courses by correspondence, broadcasting and occasional face to face learning.

THE ROLE OF TUTOR IN DISTANCE LEARNING MODE

The need to plan effective instruction is necessary for a successful distance teaching and learning system. This is due to the fact that the instructional design, the author the tutor, and the student are often separated by distance and may never meet in person.

This is an increasingly common scenario as more students access international distance education instruction. As much as possible, teaching by distance should stimulate the student's intellectual motivation and contain all the necessary learning instructional activities that are capable of guiding the student through the course objectives.

Therefore, the course/self-instructional material in distance system should contain all that which the syllabus prescribes as well as the tutors should perform their duties regarding the guidance and counseling of individuals in a very effective, committed and serious way, because the learner of this system needs it much more as compare to the learner of formal education system. Keegan (1990, p.125) cited in Rashid (1992), has asserted that distance education is complex enough to have an industrial base of operation.

However, education has been a craft profession, with the teacher standing at the center of practice but most industrial operations require a division of labour.

Branson (1991) stated that students learn not only by the teacher but they also learn along with the teacher and by interacting with one another. Indeed, now students can learn much more than that the teacher teaches in conventional learning environments. For productive teaching learning process teachers and students have to use information technologies according to their requirements and availability.

Tutor plays a vital role in ODL System and if he/she works as a supervisor, facilitator, guide and helper of the learner he/she may show good results otherwise there is no way and most suitable source of guidance and helping the students. Although there are a number of tasks which are/should be practiced by the tutor of ODL system but a tutor should pay special attention to the following tasks while working as a part time tutor in ODL system.

These indicators may be considered as tutor's performance parameters/criteria.

Beforehand Instruction Regarding Assignments

The learners of this mode of education, either enrolled in SSC level or higher level of education, are needed to provide beforehand instructions for doing the assignment work by the university, institution and tutor. Because there are no formal classes and direct interaction between learner and teacher in this system and students have knowledge about how to do their assignment work. In this way it is the duty of the tutor to tell his/her students that how they will be required to do their work and a tutor performing so will be considered an effective communicator and good tutor in the system.

Attending the Study Center and Providing
The Guidance Regarding Assignment Work

There are no formal classes and direct interaction between learner and teacher in this system that is why it is too necessary for tutor to attend the tutorial classes in the study centers and provide proper guidance to the learners regarding how should they develop their study habits, how can they search for their answers as well as how should they write their assignments and express their viewpoints, ideas and feelings inn response of the questions.

If a tutor does not take care of such responsibilities no doubt he/she is not contributing and not performing well as a guide and tutor in ODL system.

Evaluation and Checking Of Assignments And Provision Of Guidance

Evaluation and checking of assignments by the tutor is another parameter of tutor's performance.

If a tutor evaluates the assignments with special attention and gives his/her remarks about each and every weak aspect of the work as well as gives written reinforcement on good contribution by the learners, then he/she is justifying well with his job.

Provision of written guidance by the tutors enhances the learning of the students and it meets the objectives of changing attitudes, enabling the students to differentiate among right and wrong ways of interpretation and keeping the learners on the right track of learning etc.

Learning Through Assignment Work

Assignments are very important component of ODL system. Students are expected to meet a variety of objectives through assignment work.

Study habits development, learning through study and reading, understanding of the questions and ways of answering the questions, writing practices and way of writing and expression etc. are the targets which are met through the assignment work.

So when a learner learns through this component it indicates that the system is going on the right track and the tutors of the system are doing well as they are expected to do and as they should be.

METHODOLOGY

Students enrolled in M. A. Education Program during Semester spring 2006 and spring 2007 were the population of the study.

Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the representative sample for the study. Sixty-three male and female students were randomly selected as a sample of the study from the population of Rawalpindi district.

To make the sample really representative of the population, not more than thirteen students were taken from the same Tehsil. A five point rating scale, consisted of 30 items, was developed and the experts validated it. The instrument was pilot tested and some of the items were modified to bring clarity. The items of the rating scale were comprised on four parameters of tutor's performance i.e.

> ➢ Beforehand instructions regarding assignments
> ➢ Attending the study center and providing the guidance regarding assignment work,
> ➢ Evaluation and checking of assignments and provision of guidance,
> ➢ Learning through assignment work. The data were collected through five point rating scale, and the researcher approached the respondents himself for filling the items of the instrument.
> ➢ A coding scheme was prepared and data were tabulated separately. Mean scores were calculated and simple percentage formula was applied for the analysis of the data.

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Table: 1
Beforehand instruction regarding assignments

Item	Statement	Exc	%	G	%	Ave	%	P	%	VP	%	Mean
1	intimation	19	30.16	20	31.75	13	20.63	9	14.29	2	3.17	3.71
2	appointment intimation	10	15.87	4	6.35	8	12.70	14	22.22	27	42.86	2.30
3	instructions other than printed	4	6.35	0	0	4	6.35	4	6.35	51	80.95	1.44
4	how to write the assignment	14	22.22	16	25.40	20	31.75	7	11.11	6	9.52	3.40

When the respondents were asked that whether tutors intimate well in time about their appointment: 82.51% (30.16 Exc+31.75 Good+20.63 Ave) agreed that they were intimated well in time about the appointment by their tutors. The calculated mean score i.e. 3.71 indicates that the performance of course tutors is good in this regard. The analysis of this table reveals that 65.08% (22.22 P+ 42.86% VP) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that tutors send a set of instructions for writing assignments along with their appointment intimation.

The mean score 2.30 indicates that the performance of tutors in this regard is below average.

Table: 2
Attending the study center and providing the guidance regarding assignment work

Item#	Statement	Exc	%	G	%	Ave	%	P	%	VP	%	Mean
1	Students attendance center	9	14.29	8	12.70	9	14.29	27	42.86	10	15.87	2.67
2	Tutor's attendance center	14	22.22	15	23.81	20	31.75	13	20.63	1	1.59	3.44
3	Teaching of Course unit	19	30.16	14	22.22	24	38.10	3	4.76	3	4.76	3.68
4	Benefit of the class	27	42.86	11	17.46	23	36.51	2	3.17	0	0	4.00

The analysis of this table reveals that 87.30% (6.35 P+ 80.95% VP) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that tutors provide instructions for writing assignments other than the instruction printed on the assignment question paper sent by the university. The mean score 1.44 indicates that the performance of tutors in this regard is

below average. When the respondents were asked that whether tutors tell "how to write the assignment" during first tutorial meeting: 79.37% (22.22 Exc+25.40 Good+31.75 Ave) agreed that they were told "how to write the assignment" during first tutorial meeting. The calculated mean score i.e. 3.40 indicates that the performance of course tutors is average in this regard. The mean score 2.30 indicates that the performance of tutors in this regard is below average. The analysis of this table reveals that 87.30% (6.35 P+ 80.95% VP) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that tutors provide instructions for writing assignments other than the instruction printed on the assignment question paper sent by the university.

The mean score 1.44 indicates that the performance of tutors in this regard is below average. When the respondents were asked that whether tutors tell "how to write the assignment" during first tutorial meeting: 79.37% (22.22 Exc+25.40 Good+31.75 Ave) agreed that they were told "how to write the assignment" during first tutorial meeting. The calculated mean score i.e. 3.40 indicates that the performance of course tutors is average in this regard. The analysis of this table reveals that 58.73% (42.86 P+ 15.87% VP) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that they have attended all of the tutorials. The mean score 2.67 indicates that the trend of students regarding attending the tutorial classes is average. When the respondents were asked that whether tutors have taken all of the classes regularly: 77.87% (22.22 Exc+23.81 Good+31.75 Ave) agreed that tutors have taken all of the classes regularly. The calculated mean score i.e. 3.44 indicates that the performance of course tutors is average in this regard.

Table: 3
Evaluation and checking of assignments and provision of guidance

Item#	Statement	Exc	%	G	%	Ave	%	P	%	VP	%	Mean
1	Assignment written by students	49	77.78	8	12.70	4	6.35	2	3.17	0	0	4.65
2	satisfaction with evaluation standard	20	31.75	13	20.63	17	26.98	5	7.94	8	12.70	3.51
3	Minutely checking of assignments	16	25.40	8	12.70	24	38.10	11	17.46	4	6.35	3.33
4	Pointing out the mistakes in the assignments	8	12.70	12	19.05	13	20.63	19	30.16	11	17.46	2.80

When the respondents were asked that whether tutors teach at least one unit of the book in each class: 90.48% (30.16 Exc+22.22 Good+38.10 Ave) agreed that teach at least one unit of the book in each class. The calculated mean score i.e. 3.68 indicates that the performance of course tutors is good in this regard. When the respondents were asked that whether attending the tutorial classes has appeared beneficial for them: 90.48% (30.16 Exc+22.22 Good+38.10 Ave) of the respondents agreed with the statement. The calculated mean score i.e. 4.00 indicates that the performance of course tutors is good in this regard.The analysis of this table reveals that 96.83% (77.78 Exc+22.70 Good+6.35 Ave) of the respondents agreed that have written all of the assignments themselves.

The students' involvement in assignment works, according to calculated mean score i.e. 4.65, was found the best on scale. When the respondents were asked that whether they are satisfied with the evaluation standard/quality of their assignments: 79.36% (31.75 Exc+20.63 Good+26.98 Ave) of the respondents agreed with the statement that they were satisfied with the evaluation standard/quality of their assignments. The calculated mean score i.e. 3.51 indicates that the performance of course tutors is average in this regard. The data given in this table reveals that 76.20% (25.40 Exc+12.70 Good+38.10 Ave) of the respondents agreed with the statement that tutors check the assignments minutely. The calculated mean score i.e. 3.33 indicates that the performance of course tutors in this regard is average.

When the respondents were asked that whether tutors point out the mistakes in the assignments: a small majority i.e. 52.38% (12.70 Exc+19.05 Good+20.63 Ave) of the respondents agreed with the statement that tutors point out the mistakes in the assignments. The calculated mean score i.e. 2.80 indicates that the performance of course tutors is average in this regard.

Table: 4
Learning through assignment work

Item#	Statement	Exc	%	G	%	Ave	%	P	%	VP	%	Mean
1	Assignment writing is a purposeful activity	48	76.19	10	15.87	4	6.35	1	1.59	0	0	4.67
2	Assignment writing is a useless activi	0	0	1	1.59	4	6.35	4	6.35	54	85.71	1.24
3	Assignment writing is a formality	2	3.17	8	12.70	5	7.93	13	20.63	35	55.56	1.87
4	Learning through tutor evaluated assignments	16	25.40	7	11.11	26	41.27	9	14.29	5	7.94	3.32

The data given in this table reveals that a large number/majority i.e. 98.41% (76.19% SA+15.87% A+6.35% Ave) of the respondents agreed that assignment writing is a purposeful activity. The calculated mean score i.e. 4.67 indicates that learners of distance system are aware of importance of assignment work in teaching learning process. This table reveals that a large number/majority i.e. 92.06% (6.35% DA+85.71% SDA) of the respondents disagreed that assignment writing is a useless activity.

The calculated mean score i.e. 1.24 indicates that learners of distance system are aware of importance of assignment work in teaching learning process and they considered it as a useful component. The data given in this table reveals that a majority i.e. 76.19% (20.63% DA+55.56% SDA) of the respondents disagreed that assignment writing is a formality. The calculated mean score i.e. 1.87 indicates that the learners of distance system considered it as a useful component. The analysis of the data shown in this table reveals that 77.78% (25.40% SA+11.11% A+41.27% Ave) of the respondents agreed that they have learnt much from tutors through their assignment work. The calculated mean score i.e. 3.32 indicates that the performance of course tutors was found average in this regard.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the study is as under;

➢ **Tutors' perform better regarding students' intimation and providing instructions in first tutorial meeting but their performance is dissatisfactory regarding beforehand written instructions about the method, way and style of writing assignments, which is not a good indicator especially in distance learning system.**
➢ **Tutors attend the tutorials and perform on average scale regarding the guidance and counseling through tutorials.**

➢ **The performance of tutors regarding the evaluation of assignments and written feedback of right and wrong is below average. Tutors just tick (√) mark the assignments, they do not read the assignments thoroughly do not point out the mistake or shortcoming in the work presented by the learners. It indicates that tutors handle this important component as a formality. Remedial efforts and correction based reinforcement is lacking in prevailing practices performed by the tutors of ODL system.**
➢ **The learners of ODL system are aware of the importance of assignment work and they consider it as a purposeful activity and good source of learning as well as they learn much through assignment work.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are the recommendations of the study made on the basis of findings for improving the performance of course tutors working with ODL system e.g. Allama Iqbal Open University at Master (of Education) level studies.

➢ **Proper guidance and counseling is the basic demand of teaching and learning especially in case of ODL system, clear-cut and detailed instructions by the course provider or tutor for doing the assignment work, studying the course materials, answering the questions, creative writing and making a logical, creative, critical, comprehensive and to the point discussion etc. are the matters of focus and much importance.**
Tutors should be bound to provide such imperative functions and services in the form of in detail instructions along with the first intimation letter of their appointment, so that the learners sitting at distance can get a written set of instructions for their assignment work and they can learn in a better and more effective way.
➢ **Tutors should be bound to check the assignments minutely, and this evaluation should be a complete feedback, a set of written instructions regarding what is right and what is wrong in the work presented by the learner, written reinforcement, correction of the mistakes and all types of guidance required in distance learning system. Assignment checking as just tick (√) marking the assignments, not reading the assignments thoroughly, not pointing out the mistakes or shortcoming in the work presented by the learners etc are those indicators of tutors' performance which make this important component a formality and matter of less significance**.
➢ **A special training program may be launched to provide awareness to all levels' tutors about their duties and responsibilities in ODL system. In the same way there should be a set of clear instructions regarding checking the assignments and then counter checking of marked and evaluated assignments to see the level**

of following the university instructions given to the tutors for evaluation of assignment work.

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