EXPERIENCES AND TENSIONS OF TUTURING
AT ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY (AIOU) PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan is a country with thick population of 160 million. Its geographical area is 796,096-sq. Km. Its 69% of population lives in rural areas and rest in urban. Since the education of rural people is a difficult task for the government therefore, there emerged a need of open and distance in Pakistan. Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is the first Open University in Asia. It was established in 1974 and now has earned the status of Mega University. AIOU is a Distance Education institution, which provides multi disciplinary education from basic to doctoral level programs. The university employs non-formal method of correspondence, radio and television broadcasts, special textbooks and reading materials prepared on self-learning basis, part-time teachers (tutors) engaged nearest to the student's residences. The university has more than 36 regional campuses and centers in various parts of the country to coordinate and facilitate decentralized system of education of the university. The regional directors keep a roster of qualified teachers and experts in each field of study in their area and enlist them as the university's part-time tutors.The number of registered tutors with AIOU is more than 30,000. Each group of students is entrusted to a tutor for guidance. Assignments written by the students are evaluated by the tutors and returned to them, with comments. The regional campuses also arrange practical training, teaching practice, workshops and seminars and facilitate holding of examinations in their own areas.

This study presents data from a study of experiences of distance education tutors at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Pakistan, in the use of face-to-face tuition to support their students undertaking teacher training programmes at a distance. It explores the tensions for 'face-to-face' teachers involved in 'distance teaching' courses, and discusses these in terms of the tutors' perceptions of the ways in which face-to-face tutorials are used to manage these tensions.

Keywords: Higher Education, distance education, teacher training,
Distance Education Institution.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the only tool which can lead a nation towards progress. Every nation is trying to educate its individual. The advancement of any country is associated with education. Only educated and skillful population can make the country prosperous. With the increase in the population and needs of the people, formal system failed to cater the demands of the people. As such a need for an alternate method has generally emerged (Jumani, N. 2007). There was need for alternate ways and means. The main factors involved in teaching learning phenomenon were time, place and circumstances. The process that connects learners with a system of learning resources designed to meet the educational needs of a learner, to create and provide access to learning when time and distance, or both separate the source of information and the learner is said to be Distance education. Thus the student being educated by this process is known as distance learner. To meet the needs of the time the concept of distance learning appears. Throughout the world the aim of distance education is to educate the individuals at all levels. In beginning distance education was criticized, but with the passage of time it gains more and more importance.

Tutor is an important and useful element in distance education system. Tutors play the role of face-to-face teacher during tutorials sessions. He is responsible to arrange some activities for motivating and encouraging the students by assignment marking, tutor provides useful guidance in the form of lectures, discussions, questions-answer sessions and general clarification of any course –related issues if required.

LITERATURE

The concept of distance education is comparative a recent development in number of developing countries .the main aim of this system of education is to provide the opportunity for higher education to large sections of people particularly to those who live in rural areas and have no educational opportunities in others who wish to upgrade their qualifications. The attraction of distance education lies in the potential economic of –scale that could be realized. Distance education is not only a less expensive way of solving educational problems, but in most cases, it is considerably more effective. (AQ)

The main characteristics of distance education are below:

- ➢ Distance education allows a large number of people to avail benefits of education at all levels.
- ➢ It increases opportunities for education without increasing cost in proportion.
- ➢ In this system a few teachers or tutors can teach a large number of students.
- ➢ Those learners who cannot approach the tutors because of far distance from educational institution can learn through this system.
- ➢ It promotes the trend of self- study among the students.

The need of the distance education is increasing day-by-day. Following are some prominent points, which stress the need for distance education:

> ➢ **People need education to acquire a broad base of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills on which they can build in later life even if they don't receive further formal instructions. Distance education provides people with the potential to learn, to respond, to new opportunities, to adjust to social and cultural changes, and to participate in the political, cultural and social activities.**
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> ➢ **The formal system alone can't cope with the demand of education for all. In this regard, distance education is adopted to meet national needs both in its methodology and its content.**
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> ➢ **The developing countries have investigated to search for alternative methods of educat6ion, which can reach the masses cheaply.**

In Pakistan Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad (AIOU) introduced the distance and non-formal education. This university was formally established at Islamabad in June 1974, after passing the people's Open University act by the national assembly of Pakistan. Its origin lay in the education policy (1972-80) document stated below:

A people's Open University will therefore be established to provide part –time education facilities through corresponding courses, tutorials, seminars, radio broadcast and other mass communication media.

Allama Iqbal Open University is one of the largest institutions in South Asia. For effective teaching learning process AIOU appoints tutors who guide the student, solve their academic problems.

Allama Iqbal Open University being a distance education institution relies heavily on all varieties of available media to reach its students in an effective manner. The main components of its multi media package are: 1) Correspondence material, 2) Radio and Television, 3) Satellite transmission, 4) Non-broadcast media, 5) Tutorial instruction, 6) Tutorial/ Face to face teaching and 7) Group training workshops.The conventional tutorials have been replaced by the use of television, radio and written correspondence, directed reading has been replaced by specially designed course units; and the study centre has become a base for students' interaction (Sewart, 1981).

Tutorial is an essential element of teaching and learning and it is of critical importance in distance learning. Distance students need almost the same services as do resident students, but travelling to campus is inconvenient and often not feasible. Resultantly the attitude of students towards tutorial sessions does not remain serious. May be reason being tutorials as optional component. According to Harris (1975, p.18) the distance tutor: "Is the voice and the personality of the correspondence method. It is   primarily on the tutor that method ultimately depends for on its efficiency and its humanity."

Thus the tutor becomes a bridge between the students and the institution. But, tutoring means different things in different distance learning systems. The term tutor is used to refer both the person who has close contact with a student through the medium of written assignments and face-to –face and telephone discussions, as well as the assignment or the response sheet marker who grades the written work of large number of students as one of t a pool of markers without having other contact. (Bernadette, Robinson, 1981, p.149)

There are different labels like marker, examiner and instruction given by different countries. Generally, distance tutors are recruited locally to economize on postage and travel costs. However, in developed countries, they can be living at a distance from the institution to which the students' work is sent. Normally, distance tutors are recruited from suitable teachers, ex-teachers, specialists, professionals or other suitably educated people (Rashid, M, 1992, p.71)

Bernadette, Robinson (1981, p.150) explain various functions of a tutor as given below:

1. Commenting on student's written work.
2. Marking and assigning grades to students; written work.
3. Helping students to understand course material through discussions.
4. Answering student's queries about the system.
5. Helping students to plan their work.
6. Organizing self-help groups or study circles.
7. Conducting face-to-face or telephone discussion.
8. Demonstrating and supervising practical or project work.
9. Teaching at a residential school or personal contact programme.
10. Keeping records of students' progress.
11. Delivering a lecture and giving feedback on course material and students' problems to the local centre co-coordinator, or counselor or course writers.
12. Negotiating with the institution on students' behalf when certain problems occur.

It is clear that tutor meets a variety of needs and that tutor in on form or another is seem as playing a significant role in distance teaching process. Tutorial meetings are very important in distance education system. Distance education is an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and /or time from the learner. Tutorial meetings are held at study centre where students solve their academic problems in tutorial meetings.Tutor works as a bridge between the students and the university. Tutor informed the students about their registration in the university and also guides the students in every problem. Distance education depends upon correspondence of tutors, personal contact of students with tutors and other tutorial services like study centres, library services, telephone.

For driven smoothly, Allama Iqbal Open University appointed highly qualified tutors throughout the country. These tutors accommodate distance learner on each aspect. Although to be a tutor is an excited experience for the tutors but there are many problems concerning tutor faced by the distance learners of Allama Iqbal Open University. Since tutorial meetings are optional components for the students therefore little number of students tends to attend the tutorials. This trend varies from subject to subject and level to level of education of students. Tutor arranges some kinds of activities for motivating and encouraging students.

The academic role for tutors ranges from helping students to learn how to learn, to facilitate their gaining a sense of personal meaning from the distance learning program.

Therefore a tutor's academic skills are important in terms of clarifying or providing additional explanation to help students overcome problems they may encounter with course materials and to explore misconceptions, etc. Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Islamabad Pakistan is one of the mega open universities (which have enrolments in excess of 100,000 learners per year) of the world (McIntosh, 2005). It offers distance and open learning courses by using different means of communication ranging from the use of satellite to F2F sessions. Tutorials are considered very important component in distance education but in AIOU it is optional component for students and compulsory for the tutor concerned (to be available on the study centre).

PROCEDURE

The main objectives of the study are: to discuss the role of the tutor, to find out the behavior of the learners towards tutorials/face to face meetings in distance education and to point out the problems faced by the tutors. For this research a questionnaire based on 10 items was developed. All the tutors of Allama Iqbal Open University, involved in Master of Education level, were considered as the population of the research.

However, 25 tutors of Master in Education from Rawalpindi region were selected as purposive sampling. Likert scale was used to know the opinion of the tutors. While analyzing the data, Chi square were calculated to know the overall strength of the responses to each item and verification of the hypotheses.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data was analyzed statistically at level 0.05 while applying Chi square and represented with the emerging themes as under:
Tutor's qualification

AIOU advertises for registration of the tutors in various subjects. Qualified person either from formal or Open and distance learning organization may have equal opportunity as far as registration is concerned subject to the conditions that the person concerned fulfils specified criterion. It may be assumed that for tutoring purposes the person qualified from distance learning may deliver better than the others.

Table: 1
Tutor's qualification

Statement	Yes	No
You possess any degree from Allama Iqbal Open University	18 (72%)	7 (28%)

Table given above indicates that more number of tutors were having qualification from distance learning.

Initiative of Students In this the hypothesis (Ho) of the study was: "Students do not take initiative in discussion". Tutorial meetings may be taken as formal get together of tutors and learners. Distance education approach is learner oriented rather than the teacher. Hence, learners should initiate discussion and actively participate in the meeting.

Table: 2
Initiative of students regarding discussions

Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	X^2
Students initiate discussion by putting questions for the sake of knowledge.	12	7	3	2	1	16.4
	48%	28%	12%	8%	4%	

df =4   Table Value of $X^2 =$ 9.488

Table 2 indicates that calculated value is greater than tabulated value hence hypothesis "students do not take initiative in discussion" was rejected. It means that students initiate discussions.

Students' interest in tutorials (F2F) meetings
In this regard the hypothesis (Ho) was: Students do not take interest in tutorial meetings. In AIOU the tutorial meetings are optional and students may attend or may not. Nevertheless, the participation in the f2f meetings may result into effective learning.

Table: 3

Interest during tutorial meetings

Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	X^2
Students take interest in study during tutorial meetings.	10	8	1	4	2	12
	40%	32%	4%	16%	8%	

df =4   Table Value of $X^2 =$ 9.488

Table 3 shows that calculated value is greater than tabulated value hence hypothesis "Students do not take interest in tutorial meetings" was rejected. It is inferred that students actively participate in tutorial meetings.

Cooperation of regional office of AIOU with tutors
The appointing authority of the tutors is Regional Director, Regional campus of the university. Hence administrative and financial matters are to be looked after by him. It is commonly realized that the tutors faces some red tape problem. Therefore it was hypothesized that Officials of Regional campus do not cooperate with tutor in smooth running of his tutoring affairs.

Table: 4
Cooperation in official matters

Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	X^2
AIOU Regional offices cooperate in official matters with tutors.	10	5	3	6	1	9.2
	40%	20%	12%	24%	4%	

df =4   Table Value of $X^2 =$ 9.488

Table given above indicates that calculated value is less than tabulated value hence hypothesis was accepted. It means that officials of regional campus do not cooperate with the tutors.

Feedback of the tutors and response of learners

The distance learners commit mistakes in the first attempt of assignments etc. Tutors point out their mistakes while checking the first assignment; the learners understand the process gradually and overcome their mistakes in the light of the remarks forwarded by the tutor(s). In this regard the hypothesis was "Students do not overcome mistakes even after first assignment". The hypothesis was checked through the tutors and it was concluded that students may rectify their mistakes after the first assignment checked by tutor.

Table: 5
Responses on the Instructions

Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	X^2
Students overcome their mistakes in the second assignment, after remarks/feedback given in the first assignment.	13	8	2	3	1	20.4
	52%	32%	8%	12%	4%	

df =4   Table Value of X^2 = 9.488

Table given above reveals that calculated value is greater than tabulated value hence hypothesis "Students do not overcome mistakes after the first assignment" was rejected.

Submission of assignments

Assignment is a compulsory component of the distance learning. The process of assignment preparation provides a chance to go through the books and prepare themselves for the examination. AIOU provide the schedule of submission assignments, and students are bound to submit their assignment accordingly. Preparation of assignments by distance learners for the first time may be a difficult task but they have to comply with the schedule. It was assumed that "Students do not submit their assignment in time"

Table: 6
Submission of assignments

Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	X^2
Students submit their assignments well in time.	16	6	0	3	0	35.2
	64%	24%	00%	12%	00%	

df =4   Table Value of X^2 = 9.488

Table given above indicates that calculated value is greater than tabulated value. Hence hypothesis "Students do not submit their assignment in time" was rejected. Provision of related material. For better performance in any subject there remains a dire need of related material. Related material of any subject makes concepts clear and broadens vision.

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AIOU dispatches strudy material to each student prior to each semester. But there is no specific package for tutors assuming them qualified in the subject. Whereas, tutors manual for tutoring the related subject may be beneficial for effective tutoring. It was hypothesized that "University does not provide supporting material" this hypothesis was checked through the tutors, they confirmed that it was true that university does not provide any type of related material.

Table: 7
Provision of related material

Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	X^2
University provides books and other related material for reference.	8	8	2	6	1	8.8
	32%	32%	8%	24%	4%	

df =4   Table Value of X^2 = 9.488

Table given above reflects that calculated value is lesser than tabulated value hence hypothesis was"University does not provide supporting material".

Training of subject

Training improves the standard of teaching. Training is the name of process of making the individual skillful. Training improves the level of performance. AIOU has got registered four hundred thousand tutors. It was assumed that "University does not provide training to the tutors".

Table: 8
Training of subject

Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	X^2
University provides training about the subject before you start tutoring of the subject.	5	8	6	3	3	3.6
	20%	32%	24%	12%	12%	

df =4   Table value of X^2 = 9.488

Table given above indicates that calculated value is less than tabulated value hence hypothesis was accepted. Hence, it inferred that the university does not offer training for tutoring to its tutors.

Basic facilities

Physical facilities like proper class rooms, comfortable chairs and tables, water and clean washrooms etc are very necessary. AIOU arranges its tutorial mostly in the buildings of public sector schools or colleges. It was assumed that "university does not provide basic facilities"

Table: 9
Basic facilities

Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	X^2
All the basic facilities available at the study centre.	16	3	2	4	0	27
	64%	12%	8%	16%	00%	

df =4   Table Value of X^2 = 9.488

Table given above indicates that calculated value is greater than tabulated value hence hypothesis was rejected, and concluded that university provide the best available facilities.

Consultations

Tutors on the penal of AIOU mostly are employee in public sector for morning hours and for part time they work with AIOU in the evening hours. They may prefer their legitimate work. It was hypothesized that "university does not confirm the availability".

Table: 10
Consultations

Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	X^2
In conducting tutorials university consult you about your availability.	14	6	4	1	0	19.8
	56%	24%	16%	4%	00%	

df= 4   Table value of X^2 = 9.488

Table given above indicates that calculated value is greater than tabulated value hence hypothesis   "university does not confirm the availability" was rejected.

DISCUSSION

The f2f contact between tutor and student empowers the teaching learning process. These meetings are also a source of contact with other students. For many tutors, tutoring was very pleasant experience. But at the same time, while enjoying the tutoring, also face some problems.

Some problems related to university and some occurred from the student's end. Tutors deal   with both, at the same time. Majority of the tutors possess degree from AIOU. Tutors agreed that in tutorial meetings students take active part and initiate discussion. It may be noted that the participation rate of the students in tutorial meetings vary from region to region of AIOU. AIOU has 36 regional campuses/offices. It is found that participation rate of rural areas is greater than urban based study centres.

Tutors do not agree that university officials help them in different problems. Mostly tutors were agreed at the fact that when they sent back the first assignment after checking, the standard of the next assignment improves and student pay proper attention to their deficiencies. They also accept that tutorial meetings were very helpful for the students.

Tutors agree that majority of the students submit their assignment well in time and also remain conscious about their marks. Knowledge of tutor about his subject is very important. A large number of tutors show their concern over the lack of the refresher courses.

AIOU try best to provide the basic facilities to the students and tutors were satisfied with the facilities provided to them by the university. Over all the tutors were satisfied with the system although they sometime feel problems.

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FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Students take active part in the tutorial meetings and initiate discussion for their knowledge. For better results tutors should motivate them and encourage their enthusiasm.
2. In tutorial meetings students meet with their lass fellows. Study shows that students take interest in their study. Tutors should also initiate discussion so that their confidence could increase.
3. Tutor's response show that Regional offices of AIOU do not cooperate with them. AIOU try to address the problem of the tutors.
4. When tutors sent back the first assignment after marking and give instruction, students improve their mistakes in the next assignments.
5. Tutors agree that students submit their assignment in time.
6. University does not provide related material. Hence, the university should provide proper material to the tutors.
7. AIOU does not provide training to the tutors. University should arrange training for the tutors so that they could deliver their best to the students.
8. Tutors provide information that basic facilities were provided by AIOU on study centre.
9. Before the start of the semester, University consult tutors and ask about their availability.
10. Majority of the tutors possessed degree from distance education organization, and know the process of tutoring.

BIODATA and CONTACT ADDRRESSES of AUTHORS

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