

Role of AIOU to Promoting Education in The Rural Areas of Sindh

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Abstract

Promoting quality education in rural areas has significant importance for the development of the country and nation in the 20th century. Various developed and under-developing countries adopt rigorous ways; some follow a world-standardised pattern, and some make their own history in terms of educational development. Providing quality education in rural areas is every country's preference with limited resources and time, but Pakistan is a country where the education budget is 1.77% of the total GDP. Promoting quality education in rural areas of Sindh is the important objective of the study. For this purpose, we have collected data from n = 100 tutors, n = 100 students, and n = 4 regional directors in the province of Sindh. Quantitative research techniques were used to collect data and analyse it using the SPSS-20 version. The mean, standard deviation, and chi-square test were calculated. Regional directors like the democratic style in their institutions and essential learning with moral values. Environmental performance under the democratic style remains up-to-date and highly positive. Tutors like to resolve the problem as early as possible with proper guidance. Students strongly agree that the course is research-based and that self-assessment exercises help them analyse their knowledge.

Keywords: AIOU, Rural Education, Quality Education, Education Development, GDP

INTRODCUTION

Education is a fundamental pillar for society, which plays a significant role in human development (Ilechukwu, et al., (2014)). It encourages a productive and informed citizenry to generate opportunity for the economically and socially unemployed sections of society. Globalization has boosted economic competition and demand, making human expertise development increasingly imperative. Only a skilled, educated workforce can harness globalization's opportunities (Korten, (2011)).

(Yasunaga, 2014) described the three categories of non-formal education: skills-oriented education, vocational education, and correspondence education. In corresponding education, the educational material is sent to the learners by post. They complete their course work and

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assignments and send them back to the tutors in due time, which is described by the university. Tutors mark these assignments with different comments. Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) offers distance education to people all over Pakistan and also in other countries.

There are many institutions in every country for the fulfilment of the aims and objectives of education. Among universities, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in the world is playing a pivotal role in the promotion of education through a new system of education called the distance education system. Allama Iqbal Open University in Pakistan is the first and only university that serves a large portion of the population by providing education in all fields of life. There are the least restrictions and maximum opportunities for every individual for every type of education. An average student runs with the university easily and achieves his own goals in life. The population of the world is increasing day by day, and the formal institutions don't have the capacity to have a larger number of students to get admission into the institutions (Khan, 2012).

As far as the province of Sindh is concerned, it is lagging behind, particularly in its rural areas, in education. So, Allama Iqbal Open University is playing its role considerably in these neglected areas. In rural areas, all innovative university activities are carried out with greater zeal and zest. Also, through distance education, they develop healthy attitudes, skills, beliefs, knowledge and environmental responsiveness. These skills encourage and motivate people to modernise society and provide skilled managers for modern industrial, educational, business, and scientific institutions to resolve problems and learn for life, Warwick and Reimers (1995).

Distance education allows working people to improve their skills without leaving their jobs or homes. It also allows them to improve their job effectiveness and output through non-degree programs. This system uses self-learning textbooks and reading materials. The Open University provides radio, TV, audio, and video cassettes to help students study at home, Seely Brown & Adler. (2008)

Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is increasing Pakistan's literacy rate through distance education. The university has regional campuses and centres nationwide for this purpose. The university has 38 regional campuses and centers. Part-time tutors are recruited from across the country. Regional campuses and centres have a roster of qualified and willing experts in each discipline to appoint as tutors. Under tutor assistance, students read and submit assignments for evaluation and guidance. End-of-semester workshops boost learning, Ali and Shahzad (2011).

Objective of the study:

- To examine the role of Allama Iqbal Open University in the promotion of quality education in rural areas.
- To providing information to the educationist about facilities provided by AIOU for education and teacher training perspective.
- To evaluate the role of all stakeholders (Regional Director, teachers, and students) working with the Allama Iqbal Open University Regional and Sub-Regional offices.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Distance education is the process of teaching pupils from a distance or outside of the traditional classroom setting. Greenberg (1998) defines distance learning as a planned teaching and learning experience that uses a variety of technologies to access learners at a distance and is designed to foster learner involvement and learning certification. According to Mahmood and Malik (2012), the phrase "distance education" refers to a variety of teaching methodologies; however, its major distinction is the separation of the teacher and the learner in terms of location and time.

Keegan (1995) says distant education and training are the outcomes of the technological separation of teacher and learner, which frees the student from the need to travel to a fixed location at a given time and to meet a fixed person for learning. Ameer et al., (2018) as can be seen from these definitions, students and teachers in distance education are separated by both location and time. As a result, videos and other mediums are used to deliver distance education. The use of online video tutorials for distance learning is on the rise. The non-formal education system known as distance learning is relatively new. Distance education, distance teaching, open education, and open learning are just a few of the many names given to this type of education. Correspondence or postal courses, contact, electronic media such as radio, television, video and audio cassettes, etc., and other audio-visual aids are all methods of teaching Ameer et al., (2018).

Distance education is characterised by the absence of constant and immediate teacher supervision, apart from the planning, guiding, and tutorial structure of the programme. An educational process in which a substantial percentage of the instruction occurs outside of the learner's immediate vicinity is referred to as "distant education." According to Ayyaz (2015) the tutor-student relationship is always mediated through the employment of a third party. Initially, correspondence was used for distance education. According to Rumble (2019), the term "correspondence" was solely connected with written words, but due to the use of media in education, the term "correspondence education" was deemed to be restrictive. The phrase "distance education" was coined in 1982 during the 12th World Conference on Correspondence Education (WCCE) in Vancouver, British Columbia. The council voted to alter its name to "International Council for Distance Education," giving the phrase "distance education" international recognition. "Distance education," say Schlosser and Anderson (1994), "is education that either doesn't use the physical presence of the teacher authorised to give it in the area where it's received or where the teacher is only there once or for certain tasks."

Sanga (2013), Distance education is appropriate for the majority of students who are working or who cannot afford regular colleges owing to financial constraints or other factors. It provides education for all, and it is a lifelong learning system with many benefits that allows everyone to gain an education.

Masood and Ali (2017) look at how the size, complexity, and pressure of the education problem, as well as the ability of different countries to pay for the formal education system, have forced education planners to look into the possibility of using non-traditional methods to get around the problems with the formal education system. As a result, countries adopted distance education as one of the solutions to the problem. Distance education is being widely recognised as an alternative option to solve learners' educational challenges. Education is

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difficult to provide owing to a lack of time, money, or energy, but only distant education can alleviate these challenges. The traditional educational system is unsuitable in third-world nations due to a lack of resources such as buildings, furnishings, and teaching staff, among other things. It is necessary in these countries to communicate information in order to avoid wasting efforts in education providing. This need is met through distance education.

METHODOLOGY

In a quantitative research technique, we collected data from 100 tutors, 100 students, and 4 regional directors by using a simple questionnaire. All questionnaires were closed-ended with a five-point Likert scale. The mean, standard deviation, and chi-squared were calculated.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1.1: Descriptive Statistics of Tutors Responses

Factors	Mean (n=100)	SD
Age	1.50	.503
Gender	1.32	.469
AIOU is doing a great service in teaching and training formal and non formal instructor in pre and in-service training.	1.36	.578
AIOU is working to eliminate illiteracy especially I rural areas of Pakistan.	1.42	.516
AIOU is helping the rural masses to learn and put into practice things which will be of functional use to their educational socio cultural and economic life.	1.42	.535
The tutors/ instructors appointed by AIOU are well qualified and experienced and their appointment is always made on merit.	1.49	.559
AIOU is noted for its cost effective policy to provide higher education at a minimum cost through a specialized university fund	1.66	.742
The syllabus ad textbooks are revised in due time to make it more up to-dated and research oriented.	1.66	.699
The scheme of studies i-e mailed assignments, tutorial meetings and workshops provide knowledge guidance and counseling to the students.	1.59	.588
AIOU is rendering a great service in areas where formal universities are far off or not available.	1.78	.629
I am satisfied with quality of education provided by AIOU to students of different level.	1.48	.522
Student can be teach and guided satisfactorily through distance education.	1.50	.794

In table 1.3 a sample of hundred students mean with their standard deviation are mention, where age contain ($\bar{y} = 1.50, \sigma = .503$), Gender ($\bar{y} = 1.32, \sigma = .469$), Teaching services for formal and non formal programs ($\bar{y} = 1.36, \sigma = .578$), Eliminate the illiteracy in rural area ($\bar{y} = 1.42, \sigma = .516$), Helping to AIOU students with their socio economical, cultural status, ($\bar{y} = 1.42, \sigma = .535$), Well qualified and experienced staff ($\bar{y} = 1.49, \sigma = .559$), Effective policy for

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higher educational programs ($\bar{y} = 1.66, \sigma = .742$), Syllabus and textbook core specialized research oriented ($\bar{y} = 1.66, \sigma = .699$), Scheme of studies are very help full for counseling the students ($\bar{y} = 1.59, \sigma = .588$), Great service where formal universities are far off not available ($\bar{y} = 1.78, \sigma = .629$), Satisfied with the quality education ($\bar{y} = 1.48, \sigma = .522$), Satisfied with distance education ($\bar{y} = 1.50, \sigma = .794$).

Table 1.2: Descriptive Statistics of Students Responses

Factors	Mean (n=100)	SD
Gender	1.50	.503
Age	1.30	.461
I am satisfied with the standard of education facilities' and training provided by AIOU in Pakistan	1.20	.471
After completing education from AIOU, I can achieve my goals.	1.39	.549
The length of time to complete courses and programs from AIOU is reasonable	1.42	.554
The learning objectives of the courses and program are met in AIOU.	1.48	.557
The instructors/tutors' knowledge of the subject area is excellent.	1.74	.760
The assignment question and the question asked in examination by AIOU are research oriented.	1.80	.752
The distant education provided by AIOU is economical and time saving.	1.53	.658
Being a student of AIOU I feel myself self-motivated and self-disciplined.	1.77	.694
AIOU is providing quality education in rural areas of Sindh aiming at female education specifically	1.56	.625
The higher education programs by AIOU are of great scope, research oriented and worldly acceptable	1.53	.731

*n=100 (sample size are hundred)

In the above table, descriptive statistics are calculated, where mean and standard deviation of factors, Gender ($\bar{y} = 1.50, \sigma = .503$), Age ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), Satisfied with standard of education ($\bar{y} = 1.20, \sigma = .471$), Length of time to complete AIOU course ($\bar{y} = 1.42, \sigma = .554$), Learning objective programs ($\bar{y} = 1.48, \sigma = .557$), Instructors/tutors knowledge of the area is excellent ($\bar{y} = 1.74, \sigma = .760$), Assignment questions are examination by AIOU research oriented ($\bar{y} = 1.80, \sigma = .503$), Distance education provided by AIOU is economical and time saving ($\bar{y} = 1.53, \sigma = .658$), I feel Motivated and self disciplined ($\bar{y} = 1.77, \sigma = .694$), Quality education for rural area of sindh ($\bar{y} = 1.56, \sigma = .625$), Higher education programmed by AIOU great scope, research oriented and worldly accepted ($\bar{y} = 1.53, \sigma = .731$) are respectively.

Table 1.3: Descriptive Statistics of Regional Directors responses

Factors	Mean (n=4)	SD
Gender	1	0.000

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Marital Status	1	0.000
Age	4	0.000
Qualification	3	0.000
Satisfied with the standard of education facilities, training provided by AIOU	1.75	.500
The length of time to complete courses and programs from AIOU is reasonable	1.50	.577
AIOU is doing a great service in teaching and training formal and non formal instructor in pre and in-service training	1.75	.957
The assignment question and the question asked in examination by AIOU are research oriented.	2	.816
The distant education provided by AIOU is economical and time saving.	1.25	.500
AIOU is providing quality education in rural areas of Sindh aiming at female education specifically.	1	.000
AIOU is one of the greatest institutions in Pakistan which provides professional education and training to students at mass level.	1.75	.500
I am satisfied with quality of education provided by AIOU to students of different level.	1	0.000
Student can be teach and guided satisfactorily through distance education	1	0.000
I find AIOU workshops and tutorials fruitful for the students.	1	0.000

*n= sample size , * \bar{y} =mean, σ =Standard deviation

In above table regional directors responses with their mean and standard deviation are mention, where Gender ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), Marital Status ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), Age ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), Qualification ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), Satisfied with the standard of education ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), Length of time to complete AIOU courses having ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), Great services for teachers and non formal instructor ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), Assignment questions are research oriented ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), Distance education economical and time saving ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), Quality education in rural area of sindh female ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), AIOU providing professional education and training at mass level ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), Quality of education provided by AIOU ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), Student satisfaction through distance learning program ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$), Workshops and tutorial fruitful for the students ($\bar{y} = 1.30, \sigma = .461$).

Table 1.4: Chi square Test on regional directors, tutors and students response

Factors	Chi-square	P-value
There is an association between role of AIOU regional director on students performance	64.06	.000
Tutors behavior in teaching process and students achievements	19.56	.001
Importance of distance learning program and role of AIOU in promoting quality education	54.40	.000

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AIOU facilities to the students and tutor training perspective	69.48	.000
Stakeholders performance and facilities provided to students in learning process	177.58	.000

*0.05 (level Of significance)

In above table there is an association between regional director, teacher and students responses. However, chi square test independence of homogeneity among the variables and P-value is smallest value or levels of significance were calculated. All P-values are significant with their chi square values.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to identify the behavior of AIOU Regional Directors, AIOU Tutors and AIOU Students of Province Sindh for the enhancement of distance education. For this purpose 4 AIOU Regional Directors, 100 AIOU Tutors and 100 AIOU Students of Province Sindh were selected. Different Sampling techniques were used to collect the data. A five point rating scale consisting of different questions, based on different indicators was used for effective administrations.

Collected data were analyzed in three ways, which are as, comparing among different groups of sample, mean, standard deviation, chi-square test were calculated through using SPSS-18 version, for statistical analysis.

Following results are drawn from the study Regional Directors, AIOU Tutors and Students strongly agreed on the following statements such as;

- The teaching methodologies, textbooks, study guides and material prescribed and provided by AIOU for different courses and programmes are very helpful.
- AIOU is providing quality education in rural areas of sindh aiming at female education specifically.
- Tutors should be unbiased and neutral to socio cultural, lingual, geographical and political differences.
- The students take admission at AIOU being cheaper from the formal system.
- Proper guidance is provided to students in the study centers.
- Tutors motivate to students towards studies
- The tutorial information you received from the university well in time.
- The study material has built in activities and self-assessment exercises.
- Tutors provide guidance and counseling during tutorial meetings
- Tutor marks student's assignments on time.
- The study centre is within the access of students.
- Tutors use A.V.Aids in their teaching in the study centre.
- Tutors are trained on how to tutor in the system of distance education.

DISCUSSION

The 1st result of the study shows that mostly Regional Directors, like democratic styles in their institutions because by adopting this style they can keep friendly atmosphere in the institution. This style is also essential in learning moral values, keep environment moderate and performance of the teachers under democratic style remain up to date and highly

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positive.

The 2nd result of the study shows that mostly AIOU Tutors like to solve students' problems as early as possible. They are also interested in marking assignments on time. Tutors are backbone of AIOU. Tutors motivate students for further studies. Proper guidance is provided to the pupils at study centers. Tutors give remarks at students' assignments.

The 3rd result of the study shows that mostly Students receive their assignment at their proper addresses. AIOU course is very easy and handy for low achievers. Mostly students who are attached with this university are financially weak. All the students are strongly agree at this point that Course is research based and self assessment exercises help them to analyze their knowledge. Tutors provide guidance and counseling during tutorial meetings with students.

RECOMMENDATION

The result of the study shows that the majority AIOU Regional Directors, AIOU Tutors and AIOU Students in Province Sindh are trying utmost effort to enhance Distance education. However, some recommendations are given here on the basis of their responses on those statements.

1 Mostly AIOU Regional Directors, don't permit their employs to work independently, so it is recommended that they may allow their employs to work according to their taste and will.

2 Most of the AIOU Regional Director, showed their disagreement on the statement that A.V, Aids facility is not there at facilitation center So it is recommended that Directors should ensure the availability of A.V, Aids facility at facilitation centers.

3 By keeping in view the responses of the sample group 2nd on the statement that Study centers in the rural areas of sindh are established within the access of students often go beyond the real situation. It is recommended that the study centers should be established within the range tutors as well as students.

4 As most of the students wished that the course period of AIOU is lengthy as compared with other universities. It is positively recommended that the time frame for each course should be revised and should be equal to other universities. In this way mostly student will get admission in AIOU in Sindh province.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIOU	Allama Iqbal Open University
n	Sample Size
DLP	Distance Learning Program
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
WCCE	World Conference on Correspondence Education