

Comparative Study of Facilities and Practices of Open and Distance Learning Directorates Working in Conventional Universities in Islamabad Capital Territory

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Abstract

Higher Education Commission in Pakistan permitted to fourteen formal Universities to establish Open and Distance Learning Directorates to run programs through open distance Learning. The main objectives of this study were to find out the available facilities, explore the prevailing practices and to find out the differences in prevailing practices of Open and Distance Learning Directorates working in three conventional universities in Islamabad capital Territory. Directorate of Distance Education International Islamic University, Directorate of Distance Education Comsat Institute of Information Technology, Directorate of Distance Education Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology, Islamabad Campus were selected to conduct the study. The study was descriptive in nature adopting survey design. A Check list, an interview protocol and Questionnaire were used as instruments to check the facilities and practices of ODL Directorates. 539 students, 30 faculty members and three Heads/ Directors were surveyed. The results of the study indicated that these directorates may have sufficient room for improvement in hiring faculty, infrastructure, curricula and facilities needed for ODL system. There was no harmony in the practices of ODL Directorates regarding their course content, content delivery and exam mechanism. It is recommended to provide proper infrastructure and faculty training to run the ODL programs in these directorates. A mutual collaboration mechanism among these directorates should be established for faculty exchange, ICT usage, curriculum Development instructional designing and research projects.

Keywords: Facilities, Practices, Open and Distance Learning Directorates

1. Introduction

In modern pedagogy, education is a dynamic process that molds the life of an individual to positive side. This process continues through-out the life and remains active up to the end of one's life. Education uplifts human standards and provide a direction to progress and prosperity.

Satish and Sajjad, (2012) revealed education is "cradle to grave continuous process as it describes the extremely significant and permanent property of every individual. Open and Distance education is the current need of recent time. Comparatively dense population in developing countries increasingly boosts the need to explore unconventional solutions for education. In this scenario only Open and Distance education allows students from anywhere in the world to study at home. HEC has planned and developed distance Education Directorates via letter No .Ref. DG (QAA)/HEC/DDE/2015/392 Dated 9.7.2015. The principal example of distance learning institutions which are working in Pakistan is Allama Iqbal Open University. . The main objective of Allama Iqbal Open University was to provide educational access to the deprived part of the country who are living in far flung areas. The principal campus of AIU is in Islamabad and its regional offices are working in all over the Pakistan and in Middle East also.

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On this direction many formal institutions started distance Education programs. The main purpose of Open and Distance Learning institutions is to deliver education from distance to all people in the world. The biggest and best example of distance learning institutions in Pakistan is Allama Iqbal Open University. Besides AIOU and Virtual University there are fourteen other institutions which are currently engaged in distance learning these universities are as follows.

1. Bahauddin Zakriya University, Multan
2. COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Virtual Campus, Islamabad
3. Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan City campus Gomal university, Dera Ismail Khan
4. University of Balochistan, Quetta
5. University of Peshawar, Peshawar
6. University of Sindh, Jamshoro
7. University of Agriculture Faisalabad
8. Government College University Faisalabad
9. Islamia University, Bahawalpur
10. Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur
11. International Islamic University Islamabad
12. Sarhad University Peshawar
13. The university of Faisalabad, Faisalabad
14. Preston University Islamabad

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Scope of Open and Distance Learning system in Pakistan is increasing day by day because of its flexibility, that's why fourteen formal universities also started their some programs through distance mode. New universities having no infrastructure and practices of distance Education. They may not cope with the standards needed for Distance education programs. If this study has not been conducted a great collapse may occur. So there is an initial need to explore the facilities and practices of ODL institutions working in Islamabad Capital Territory. The present study will explore the gap between theory and practice of ODL system of Distance Education institutions and provide solutions to immediate problems hindering the system.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the facilities available for Open and Distance Learning Directorates established in conventional universities in Islamabad Capital Territory.
2. To explore the prevailing practices in Open and Distance Learning Directorates established in conventional universities in Islamabad Capital Territory.
3. To find out the differences in prevailing practices of Open and Distance Learning Directorates established in conventional universities in Islamabad Capital Territory.
4. To give suggestions for improvement of Open and Distance Learning Directorates established in conventional universities in Islamabad Capital Territory.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the existing facilities available in Distance Education programs in Open and Distance Learning Directorates?
2. What are prevailing practices in Distance Education programs in Open and Distance Learning Directorates?

3. What are the differences among Open and Distance Learning directorates in prospects of Existing facilities available in Open and Distance Learning Directorates?
4. What are the differences between Open and Distance Learning Directorates in prospect of prevailing practice in Distance Education programs?
5. What suggestions should be adopted to improve the Open and Distance Learning system in conventional universities?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is beneficial for additional knowledge in perspective of effectiveness of distance education directorates working in conventional Universities in Islamabad capital Territory. This study would be helpful for ODL planners to design curriculum and activities keeping in view the present facilities and practices of ODL directorates and they will also be able to fill Distance learning institutions of Pakistan will get benefit about the instructional design of ODL institutions of Pakistan. This study will improve their ODL system, by using the recommendation of the study. Distance learners may be able to know about the facilities and practices of ODL directorates and through this they will be able to choose ODL directorates for their required field of study.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

1. Directorate of Distance Education International Islamic University Islamabad.
2. Directorate of Distance Education Comsat Institute of Information Technology Virtual Campus Islamabad.
3. Directorate of Distance Education Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology, Islamabad Campus.

2. Literature Review

Open and distance Learning is an effective system of learning all over the world. It is effective with respect to cost, access, equity and learning culture. This system is also related with the use of technologies like Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). With the rapid change in digital age and current advancement in worldwide economy has produced large prospects and challenges to the universities all over the world. (Lundmark, 2010).

Rao, (2011) described that Open distance learning system needs ICT arrangement to deliver educational amenities very comprehensively at different level of student life. The ICT arrangements include network infrastructure, the calculating infrastructure, the software for different services, the Internet Service Provider (ISP), the bandwidth, the policy context and the security substructure.

Bannier, (2016) further more supported it by adding that as people and organizations expand their acquaintance to markets at international level, more and more learners are attracting towards globalization of their education that goes out than their formal boundaries of education.

The British Open University came into being in 1969. The UKOU is measured as the first university in the world. The university is properly using technologies to deliver balanced print-based instructions through well-designed courses.

Anne Gaskell & Roger Mills (2014) stated in UKOU the quality of Distance teaching resources in ODL programs matters a lot. This quality assurance includes the association of

resource person outside of university in production, learner and tutor opinion and intermittent by outside resource persons.

According to Jones, C and Aoki, K. (2009) the Open University virtual learning platform, is consisted on Moodle, virtual learning is a unique part of UKOU large design of services in to a flexible and cost effective Web based system. Now in UKOU developed a new strategy for the convenience of students as online submission of assignments.

Makamane, (2011) states integrity and consistency of the assessment process is a big deal in distance education process. It needs the three basic qualities for comprehensive assessment such as validity, reliability and fairness. There is formative and summative system of evaluation is being used in UKOU. In each course, there is term-end exams and projects, dissertation, observation and practical examinations.

China has also got an important place in world in the distance education sector. This university has a great significance in new field of Medicine and Engineering. Open University of China (OUC) was founded with the aim to provide education to people of China. In university various methods were used like audio and visual courses and web based courses to manage the transmission. For the dense amount of learners who are recorded in compulsory courses are educated through internet and satellite TV transmissions are also castoff to deliver course content all over the country for distance learners Jonassen, (2011).

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) came into being in 1980 and it's enrolled its first batch of students in same year in 1980. The Open University of Sri Lanka has three main faculties which are working in the university. Asim Ali Muhammad, (2005) states the OUSL is having an exclusive system of management to provide sustenance to all Faculties in different departments and other staff of university in their work and in researches, These units which are working in management system of OUSL are Academic counseling cell Examination system, Student Affairs cell, Information cell for students Office, Printing Press, General staff of university in their work and in researches.

The materials have been developed at BOU then different student support services have been used to deliver this material to the students. BOU used outdated postal services it is very difficult to deliver study material to students on time. All the courses are in print form for learners at BOU. The online mode of delivery of learning material is not in practice at BOU (Jahan, et al., 2012). Face to face interaction is significant in ODL. However tutorial status tutors academic qualification and its experience are least important in distance education process. In Bangladesh tutorial services are not provided to students till now in Bangladesh Open University programs. (Sadat, 2010)

In AIOU, OLIVE software is being introduced for distance learners. OLIVE is an online model, which has been developed to get assistance in teaching and learning process from other countries. Through OLIVE, blended and e-learning for distance learners is being adopted (Kumar, et al., 2009).

Modern training aids are being used in the university. Self-study materials consist on some basic substances such as books of programs /guide books, project, t.v programs radio programs and assignment forms for the distant students. Self-learning study bundle and additional study books are two main components of Corresponding materials of AIOU (Jumani, et al., 2011).

The Indira Gandhi National Open University started working in India by the act of parliament in 1985. In India MOOCs courses through an online platform named as Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) are offered and IGNOU has developed a web

portal that will propose an online course in different programs for distance learners,. (Senthil&Nisha, 2015).

The learning management system of IGNOU is being developed with many qualities and it is associated with the structure of Indira to provide online courses. This system provides access to students regarding integrating web, Internet resources in content packages, accessing to LMS by using mobile, e-books, wiki books, and facilities for creating social environment to develop process based content and recording comments. (Seraji, 2017).

The AllamaIqbal Open University was founded in 1974. It is the second Open University in the world and the first Distance University in Asia and Africa.The AIOU has 48 provincial centers in different cities of the country to provide assistance to distance learners regarding their study problems. For distant students, 105 Study Centers have also been established in collaboration with private institutions under the supervision of Directorate of Regional Services which are well known and helpful for distance learners. At study centers, supervision is being delivered to students for Computer Science, IT, Business Management, Physics, Math and Chemistry (Gujjaret al., 2009, p.363).

3. Research Methodology

A comparative study of the facilities and practices in open and distance learning directorates are working in conventional universities was Descriptive in nature which comes under survey design.

3.1 Research Design

It was Qualitative as well as quantitative a mixed method research design was adopted. Mixed method research was conducted with qualitative and quantitative view point, data collection and analysis were made on basis of mix method research.

3.2 Population Sample and Sampling Technique

Table No. 1*Population and Sample of the Study*

S.No.	Institution	Population	Sample	Sampling Technique
1	IIUI	80	66	Random Sampling
2	Sarhad University	200	132	Random Sampling
3	CIITI	3000	341	Random Sampling

Table 1 shows that the populations of this study were three Open and Distance Learning Directorates of Islamabad and it includes heads, teachers and students of International Islamic University, Sarhad University Islamabad Campus and Comsat institute of Information Technology. Random sampling technique was adopted from the random sampling scheme in multiple stages.

3.3 Instrument Development

After review of the literature, a checklist and one questionnaire were developed which were used for the Heads, teachers and students of International Islamic University Islamabad, Comsat Institute of Information Technology Virtual Campus Islamabad and Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology, Islamabad campus.An interview Protocol was developed

for Heads of Directorates. The instruments were validated, made reliable, pilot tested through proper procedures.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Results

Table No. 2 *Analysis of Facilities*

S.No.	Facilities	IIUI	Sarhad University	CIITI
1.	Student Information System	Fair	Need Improvement	Acceptable
2.	Programs management Unit	Need Improvement	Need Improvement	Acceptable
3.	Quality Assurance cell	Fair	Need Improvement	Acceptable
4.	Call Centers	Fair	Fair	Acceptable
5.	ICT Management Unit	Need Improvement	Need Improvement	Acceptable
6.	Guidance and Counseling Cell	Fair	Fair	Acceptable
7.	Study Centers	Fair	Fair	Acceptable
8.	Online Library	Need Improvement	Need Improvement	Acceptable
9.	Online Exam Portal	Need Improvement	Need Improvement	Acceptable

Table 2 shows the facilities available at Directorates of Distance Education. The percentage of facilities for distance programs at CIITI is higher than International Islamic University and Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology Islamabad campus. The responses show that Facilities that are pre requisites for Distance Learning Programs are available at Comsat Institute of Information and Communication Technology Virtual Campus.

Table No. 3 *Mean Score on Factors*

S.No.	Factors	Mean Score DDE (IIUI)	Mean Score DDE (Sarhad)	Mean Score DDE(CIITI)
1	Admission Practices	4.09	3.87	3.98
2	Material Practices	4.15	3.85	3.99
3	Quality Assurance	4.18	3.85	3.95
4	Delivery Practices	4.38	4.04	4.03
5	Evaluation Practices	4.05	3.84	3.8

Table 3 indicates that majority of the respondents of International Islamic University Islamabad, Sarhad University and Comsat Institute of Information Technology is strongly agreed that Admissions Practices are well in time the calculated mean score of IIUI is 4.09, Sarhad 3.87 and CIITI is 3.98. Majority of the respondents of International Islamic University Islamabad, Sarhad University and Comsat Institute of Information Technology is strongly agreed that materials practices are good the calculated mean score of IIUI is 4.15, Sarhad 3.85 and CIITI is 3.99. It also indicates that majority of the respondents of International Islamic University Islamabad, Sarhad

University and Comsat Institute of Information Technology is strongly agreed that Quality assurance practices are in their institutions mean score of IIUI is 4.18, Sarhad 3.85 and CIITI is 3.95. Majority of the respondents of International Islamic University Islamabad, Sarhad University and Comsat Institute of Information Technology is strongly agreed that Delivery practices are conducted the calculated mean score of IIUI is 4.38, Sarhad 4.04 and CIITI is 4.03. Majority of the respondents of International Islamic University Islamabad, Sarhad University and Comsat Institute of Information Technology is strongly agreed that Evaluation practices are not as per ODL parameters calculated mean score of IIUI is 4.05, Sarhad 3.84 and CIITI is 3.80.

Table No. 4 *Difference on Admission Practices among three DDE*

	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	157.668	2		7.162	.001
Within Group	5889.010	535	78.834		
Total	6046.678	537	11.007		

Table 4 illustrates the admission practices of three institutions IIUI, Sarhad University and CIITI. The table shows that IIUI has (M=4.33) and Standard Deviation is .641, Sarhad University has (M=4.31) and S.D is (.074) and CIITI has (M=4.35) and Standard Deviation is .041. The F value is 7.162 at $p > .005$ which is non-significant. Hence there is no significant difference in practices in universities regarding admission services. The mean value of IIUI is greater than Sarhad and CIITI which shows practices regarding admission at IIUI are more affective.

Table No. 5 *Difference on Material Practices among three DDE*

	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	90.859	2		41.47	0.016
Within Groups	5880.643	535	45.429		
Total	5951.502	537	10.954		

Table 5 illustrates the practices of IIUI, Sarhad University and Comsats institute of information technology. The table shows that IIUI has (M=31.62) and Standard Deviation is 3.96, Sarhad University has (M=30.23.33) and S.D is (3.74) and CIITI has (M= 30.93) and Standard Deviation is 2.97. The F value is 41.47, $p > .005$. which is non-significant. Hence there

is no significant difference in material practices of all three universities. The mean value of IIUI is greater than Sarhad and CIITI.

Table No. 6*Differences on Quality Assurance Practices among three DDE*

	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	75.718	2		41.47	0.000
Within Group	2345.858	535	37.859		
Total	2421.576	537	4.385		

Table 6 illustrates the practices of three institutions IIUI, Sarhad University and CIITI. The table shows that IIUI has (M=16.74) and Standard Deviation is 1.79, Sarhad University has (M=15.43) and S.D is (2.36) and CIITI has (M= 15.79) and Standard Deviation is 2.03 .The F value is 41.47 $p > .005$ which is significant .Hence there is a significant difference in quality assurance practices of all three universities. The mean value of IIUI is greater than Sarhad and CIITI.

Table No.7*Difference on Delivery System Practices among three DDE*

	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	65.472	2		11.668	0.000
Within Group	1501.019	535	32.763		
Total	1566.491	537	2.806		

Table 7 illustrates the practices of three institutions IIUI, Sarhad University and CIITI. The table shows that IIUI has (M=13.16) and Standard Deviation is 1.48,Sarhad University has (M=12.12) and S.D is (1.54) and CIITI has (M= 12.09) and Standard Deviation is 1.75 .The F value is 11.668, $p < .005$ which is significant. Hence there is a significant difference in delivery practices of all three universities. The mean value of IIUI is greater than Sarhad and CIITI.

Table No. 8*Difference on Evaluation Practices among three DDE*

	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	55.152				5.023
Within Group	2935.762	535	27.563		.007

Total	2990.887	537	5.487
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Table 8 illustrates the practices of three institutions IIUI, Sarhad University and CIITI. The table shows that IIUI has (M=16.21) and Standard Deviation is 2.43, Sarhad University has (M=15.39) and S.D is(2.56) and CIITI has (M= 15.21) and Standard Deviation is 2.23. The F value is $5.023 > .005$ which is non-significant. Hence there is no significant difference in material practices of all three universities. The mean value of IIUI is greater than Sarhad and CIITI.

4. Findings & Conclusions

Findings from the study revealed that majority of the students were agreed that ODL Directorates don't have expert faculty needed to start ODL programs. All ODL Directorates are conducting the ODL programs in different ways on the basis of facilities available for Distance Education Programs in their institutions. All three Universities differ in practices in following ways on ODL programs like in Course content, content delivery and exam mechanism. Proper resources are not provided to ODL Directorates which are needed for ODL Programs. Courses are not developed with standardized techniques of instructional design and contents are not placed in logical order. Students are facing problem regarding their courses due to lack of interaction with teachers. Parameters of ODL are not being followed by all ODL Directorates like online system of education / distance education. Few respondents were disagreed upon the facts that ODL Directorates have provided online fee and examination systems. Of the 355 students responded that the online fee system, online lectures and online exams system should be launched in ODL Directorates. IIUI has high mean score in ODL practices while Sarhad university Islamabad campus and CIITI virtual campus have lower score.

The same findings are found that students of open and distance learning mode face problems as compare to conventional mode because of non-availability of Distance education experts, (Wang, 2013). Teachers also viewed that due to lack of resources they are not capable to provide quality education to students and could not give proper solution to them regarding their problems. The two modes of learning that is distance learning and conventional system are different from each other. These two modes can prove to be advantageous for serving the humanity. (Attri, 2012). ODL Directorates don't send text books, assignments, tutors particulars, workshops schedules, roll number slips, date sheets, results, degrees, admission slips for next semester etc. through postal services plus it uploads all this information on its official website too. All ODL Directorates should revise or update its course material. Books were not written for distance learners in specific ODL mode.

6. Recommendations

Infrastructure /Facilities may be upgraded in the ODL Directorates as per criteria of Distance Education requirements and Higher Education directives. The practices of all ODL directorates are not consistent as reflected in the study so a harmonious mechanism of practices may be developed and implemented in ODL Directorates. An integrated ICT interactive system may be established in all Directorates through online system. Faculty and students of ODL Directorates may collaborate through an integrated collaborative mechanism. Interactive student support system may be established which may be centralized and localized as per requirements of the students. Orientation for students and professional training for faculty involved in ODL system may be conducted. E-books/E-Learning / E-assessment /E-information/E-content should

be as per OER standards which may be repeatedly used by the ODL Directorates. LMS (Learning Management System) on the pattern of Moodles as practice in AIOU in form of OLIVE may be introduced in ODL Directorates.

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