

FACTORS AFFECTING THE SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, IN THE USE OF DISTANCE LEARNING FOR IN-SERVICE TRAINING AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors which affect the school teachers in getting the further professional qualifications through the distance mode of Allama Iqbal Open University. For this purpose, 300 in-service secondary school teachers who completed M.Ed from Allama Iqbal Open University and 100 heads of secondary schools were taken as the sample of the study. The main objectives of the study were,

- to explain the status of teacher educations through distance-learning in Pakistan,
- to identify the obstacles in getting in-service professional training through distance education.

The major recommendations of the study were;

- Allama Iqbal Open University should design fee-concessions and scholarship polices for the experienced teachers,
- the promotion policy of teachers should be made professional based not seniority based and M.Ed qualified teachers should be given propriety for the next scale,
- facilities and support services should be provided to the students so that objectives of M.Ed program be fully achieved,
- the departmental obstacles and restrictions be eradicated by reshaping the policies and advance increments should be reinstated after the completion of M.Ed program,
- Higher Education Commission (HEC) which is the body of preparing policy for Higher studies scholarship, so M.Ed level programs should be included in the policies of HEC, and
- the admission criteria of AIOU should be changed; experience teachers should be given priority in the admission.

Keywords: Distance Education, Advantages of Distance Education, Distance Education in Pakistan, Distance Education for Professional Development in Pakistan, Factors Affecting the Distance Learners.

WHAT IS DISTANCE EDUCATION

The term 'distance education' was first used in the nineteen seventies. Distance education is referred to as "Distance Learning" as well, and is simply defined as "a field of education focusing on the andragogy and pedagogy, instructional systems, and technology which endeavor to deliver an education to students who are not physically in a classroom or campus setting." According to Rashid, M. (1992, p.3) distance education is to cover various forms of study at all levels, which are not under the continuous supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms, distance education may be any formal approach to learning in which a majority of instructions occur while educators and learners are at a distance from one another". (Moore, 1973) defined the distance education as "The family of instructional methods in which teaching behaviors are performed

apart from learning behaviors, including those that in a contiguous situation would be performed in the learner's present, so that communication between the teacher and the learner must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanical or other devices". (Wedemeyer, 1977) said that "Consists of various forms of teaching-learning arrangements in which teachers and learners carry out their essential tasks and responsibilities part from one another, communicating in a variety of ways. Its purposes are to provide learners with opportunity to continue learning in their own environments, and develop in the capacity to carry on self-directed learning..."

Schlosser, L.A. (2002, p.12) defined distance education as an institution based, formal education where the learning group is separated, and where interactive telecommunication systems are used to connect learners, resources, and instructors. There are four main components to this definition. First is the concept that distance education is 'institutionally based'. This is what differentiates distance education from self-study. The second component of the definition of distance education is 'the concept of separation of the teacher and the student'. Most often, separation is thought of in geographic terms in which teachers are in one location and students at another. Also implied by the definition is the separation of teachers and students in time. Asynchronous distance education means that instruction is offered and students access to it at separate times, or any time as it is convenient to them. Interactive telecommunications is the third component of the definition of distance education. Interaction can be synchronous or asynchronous at the same time, or at different times. Interaction is critical but not at the expense of content. Hulsman (1997) had approached the definition of the concept of open and distance learning from the characteristic point of view. He identified four crucial features of distance education as follows:

- The separation of the teacher and the learner in time or place, or in both time and place.
- Influence of an educational institution: necessity for institutional accreditation of programs and courses.
- The use of technical media: involving mixed media courseware such as print, radio and television broadcasts, video and audiocassettes, computer band learning and telecommunications.
- The provision of two-way communication: allowing for interaction between learners and tutors either synchronously or asynchronously, as opposed to the passive receipt of broadcast signals.

ADVANTAGES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

The advantages of distance education are countless. The convenience of study forms the most important point. Distance education saves money as well as time. Distance education has the following advantages:

Lots of Flexibility

With distance learning courses, students can complete their course work from just about anywhere, provided there are a computer and internet connection and other support services for each course. This allows students to work when and where it is more convenient for them without having to squeeze in scheduled classes to an already busy life.

No Commuting

Taking a course online can be one way to cut down on costly gas or public transportation. Since students can often work from home to complete their class assignments, both time and money are saved in cutting out the trips to and from class.

Numerous Choices for Schools

Even if students live in a community with few or formal institutions, distance learning allows them to choose from a wide variety of schools to complete their education. Students can also find online institutions that specialize in their particular field or one that can provide a great general education. Either way, students' options for education will be greatly expanded.

Lowered Costs

Prices for online courses are generally cheaper than their on-campus counterparts and students won't have to worry about commuting, moving or getting meal plans on campus, some additional benefits to learning from home.

Learn While Working

As distance learning can usually be completed on their own schedule, it is much easier to complete distance learning courses while working than more traditional educational programs. Keeping on the job gives the students more income, experience and stability while completing their degrees giving them less to worry about and more time to focus on their studies.

DISTANCE EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is the unique institution which is providing education and training at distance. It has been working to promote literacy towards achieving social change and a better future for all. The programs of Allama Iqbal Open University are offered through its distance education system in Pakistan and some Middle Eastern Countries. At this time, programs are offered at wide choice of courses at all levels especially in professional training. It has performed an effective role in the promotion of education, particularly in the teacher training field. In the University, the training of teachers is considered as an area of great concern. AIOU is unique institution providing teacher education at a distance in Pakistan. AIOU is playing a friendly and successful role in the professional of teachers. The teacher training programs of AIOU are the National and International level. Iqbal, M. Z. (2002, p. 33) the salient features of distance teacher courses of AIOU:

- Through introducing a teacher training course, the un-trained teachers and other related people, until now deprived of all facilities, can be trained in their respective fields.
- Traditional syllabus of teachers, training is being replaced by such modern courses only because they have conformity with the needs of present era.
- Majority of women teachers are getting training for first time through DL (distance learning) system of AIOU.
- Teacher training courses are entirely field based.

The teacher training programs of AIOU are based on fresh knowledge, practically skilled and produce abilities in the teachers worked as a teacher. Its programs reshape the attitudes of teachers, remodel their habits and bring impressive changes in their personality. According to Iqbal, M. Z. (2002, pp.34-35), following distance features of its distance teacher education programs:

1. Due to its very nature of keeping on the study of the learners irrespective of time and space distance education plays a vital role in producing teachers.
2. Distance teacher education in Pakistan is particularly suited to the female population, people living in the tribal areas and far-flung areas.
3. This system is flexible in terms of age and even time. A student teacher can join the training for one or two courses in a semester and can come back when he/she has time for study.
4. Being of highly cost-effective in nature as compared to the formal Teacher Training in Pakistan, the prospective teachers prefer AIOU to formal teacher training institutions.
5. Teacher training program of AIOU is not only self-sufficient in financial management, but it is contributing. 43% of it is saving to other programmes of the University, which are in deficits from income-expenditure point of view.

Distance teacher training programs offer an opportunity to the working for untrained teachers to enhance their professional qualifications without leaving their jobs in schools. It also provides them with opportunities to acquire knowledge, skills and techniques relevant to their jobs, which can enhance their job effectiveness and output through in service teacher training programs of AIOU. In the domain of distance teacher education, AIOU stands first in the world. The Department of Teacher Education of AIOU has earned a great goodwill during the last ten years all over the country and overseas (UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Central Asia), that it has trainees in the mountains, terrains, deserts, vales, towns and villages, fields and caves, huts and palace, kitchens and shops, all over the country.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY OF AIOU

The AIOU is primarily a distance-teaching institution, using multi-media techniques. The major components of its teaching system are as follows:

- Learning Package
 - It includes self-learning printed texts and supplementary study materials including the following items:
 - Course books/reading material
 - Assignments
 - Tutorial Schedule
 - Radio/TV Schedule
 - General Students guide
 - Student Course Guide
 - Assignment Forms
- Radio and television broadcast, especially prepared for distance learners.
- Course assignments as an instrument both of teaching and continuous assessment.
- Tutorial instruction through face-to-face learning at study centers, or correspondence and workshops, where necessary (VC Report , 2004).

After admission, instructional material is mailed to students at the addresses. These printed units are supplemented by Radio/TV programs, which are based on the content of course assignments. Media programme and tutorial scheduled are also sent to students as a part of learning package. The university has 34 regional centers with 86 part time Regional co-coordinating offices throughout the country for providing assistance to Regional Campuses. Each student is assigning a tutor who is a subject specialist. Tutor-Student contact is arranged at the study centre in the afternoon. Regional offices also arrange workshops, practical, and they also identify Examination Centers.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DISTANCE MODE IN PAKISTAN

The main objective of Allama Iqbal Open University is to provide education to people at the home or at the stations of their business. In this process of teaching and learning the teachers and students are at a distance from each other. Information's and learning materials reached to them by mail or by media. Due to this it is called distance education. People belonging to any area can get admission in its Programs. The second characteristic of this is that no restriction of age limit. Every age group of people can get admission in its programs. Allama Iqbal Open University consists of faculties and departments of different disciplines. Education faculty has the following departments: (1) Department of Distance and Non-Formal Education, (2) Department of Elementary Teacher Education, (3) Department of Secondary Teacher Education, (4) Department of Special Education, (5) Department of Education Planning and Management, (6) Department of Science Education, and (7) Department of Adult Education Continuing Education.

In the system of distance learning students and teachers are at a distance, learning material are sent to students by postal services. This material has been written in simple and understandable language. For the

guidance of students necessary diagrams, self-assessment questions and activities are added to the courses. All out efforts have been made that students should understand the material without any external assistance. Each course may be half or full credit. Full credit course has eighteen units, and half credits have nine units. Normally, a unit discusses a topic in detail. One unit is covered in the time of one week with two hours daily working. Radio and TV programmes are broadcasted for additional support to distance learners.

M.Ed PROGRAM

M.Ed programme has been offered by the university to train the secondary teachers/heads, principals, voice principals, and administrators. Those teachers who are already teaching at elementary or secondary level can improve their qualifications. Administrators. Those ered six full credit courses and duration of three semesters.

FACTORS AFFECTINE DISTANE LEARNERS

Ahmed, et.al. (1986) explained those factors that create hindrances in getting the professional development, these are the following: economic factor, socio-cultural and geographical factors, and admission factors. These factors are listed below:

Economic Factors

- Low level of economic development of the country.
- Low capital income of the people.
- Inadequate provision of physical facilities in schools.
- Shortage of funds.
- Poor standards of health and nutrition.
- Costly test-books/exercise books.
- Inadequate number of audio-visual aids.

Socio-Cultural Factors

- Socio-cultural inhibitions towards education of the female.
- Rivalry among families especially in Baluchistan/Tribal Areas.
- Establishment of Schools in the Houses of Zamindars.
- Indifference of communities and parents to education in general and that of girls in particular.
- Custom of early marriages.

Geographical Factors

- Outmoded procedure of supervision and administration.
- Indifferent attitude of administrative and supervisory presume toward teaching community.
- Inadequate of audio-visual aids.
- Inadequate supervision.

The present study was conducted to analyze the factors affecting the secondary school teachers in getting in-service professional training through distance-learning mode of AIOU and working under the Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEI), functioning under GHQ Rawalpindi Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

The study is designed to evaluate the factors affecting the secondary school teachers, in the use of distance learning for in-service training as professional development in Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

This study has the following objectives;

- To explain the status of teacher educations through distance-learning in Pakistan.
- To identify the obstacles in getting in-service professional training through distance education in Pakistan.

METHODOLOGY

The study was descriptive in nature and survey was conducted to collect the data. This study consisted of the following steps:

Population of the Study

Population of the study consisted of the following:

- All (male and female) teachers of secondary level working under the Federal Government Educational Institutions (Cantts/Garrisons) completed their M.Ed during service to improve the professional qualification through the distance mode of AIOU.
- All (male and female) Head-teachers of secondary level working under the Federal Government Educational Institutions (Cantts/Garrisons).

Sample of the Study

The sample of the study was:

- Three hundred (male and female) teachers of secondary level working under the Federal Government Educational Institutions (Cantts/Garrisons).
- One hundred (male and female) Head-teachers of secondary level working under the Federal Government Educational Institutions (Cantts/Garrisons).

Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to the following:

- Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEI), functioning under GHQ Rawalpindi Pakistan.
- Secondary school teachers who completed M.Ed program distance and teaching at secondary level and working under the Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEI), functioning under GHQ Rawalpindi Pakistan.
- Heads of secondary school of Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEI), functioning under GHQ Rawalpindi Pakistan.

COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data was collected through questionnaires of sessions from teachers and head-teachers (male and female) secondary level functioning under the Federal Government Educational Institutions (Cantts/Garrisons). The value of mean score and t-value was calculated. Findings and conclusions were made on the basis of data analysis.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 1
 The mean difference between mean scores of heads
 and teachers on Admission Factors

Statements	Respondents	Mean	SD	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Continue professional development in the need of the day.	Teachers, N=300	4.430	0.840	0.049	-0.939	0.350
	Heads, N=100	4.350	0.778	0.680		
Distance teachers training leads to professional development.	Teachers, N=300	4.071	0.970	0.058	1.015	0.312
	Heads, N=100	4.160	0.754	0.079		
M.Ed program of AIOU is comprehensive	Teachers, N=300	4.420	0.817	0.049	2.203	0.019
	Heads, N=100	4.310	0.668	0.068		
There are reserved seats in M.Ed for in-service teachers.	Teachers, N=300	4.320	0.839	0.049	-0.938	0.337
	Heads, N=100	4.280	0.087	0.089		
Priority is given to in-service teachers for M.Ed admission.	Teachers, N=300	4.490	0.787	0.046	0.944	0.347
	Heads, N=100	4.310	0.787	0.046		
It is easy to get admission at AIOU	Teachers, N=300	4.540	0.850	0.049	-0.939	0.350
	Heads, N=100	4.330	0.787	0.680		
There are reserve seats for in-service teachers	Teachers=300	4.170	0.807	0.049	2.203	0.019
	Heads, N=100	4.260	0.817	0.072		

Table 1 indicates that mean score of the teachers is significantly better than heads in the, continue professional development in the need of the day, there are reserved seats in M.Ed for in-service teachers. Priority is given to in-service teachers for M.Ed admission, and it is easy to get admission at AIOU. The mean score of Heads is significantly better than the teachers in the, distance teachers training leads to professional development and there are reserve seats for in-service teachers. It is concluded that the in. The mean score of teachers were better than the heads on the admission factors.

Table 2
 The mean difference between mean scores of heads and teachers on Financial Factors

Statements	Respondents	Mean	SD	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Fee system of AIOU is affordable	Teachers, N=300	4.450	0.839	0.047	-0.938	0.330
	Heads, N=100	4.210	0.086	0.087		
There is fee concession for in-service teachers.	Teachers, N=300	4.060	0.980	0.057	1.013	0.336
	Heads=100	4.190	0.756	0.077		
Govt grants scholarships for professional development	Teachers, N=300	4.200	0.816	0.048	2.203	0.018
	Heads, N=100	4.420	0.667	0.067		
AIOU grants scholarships for distance learners in professional developments	Teachers, N=300	2.240	1.182	0.070	-1.777	0.070
	Heads, N=100	2.100	1.091	0.104		
There is rapid promotion after completing M.Ed	Teachers, N=300	4.370	0.785	0.042	0.947	0.343
	Heads, N=100	4.320	0.782	0.045		
HEC grants scholarships at M.Ed levels for secondary schools teachers.	Teachers, N=300	4.350	0.819	0.041	2.206	0.015
	Heads, N=100	4.260	0.667	0.062		
Selection grade is granted on the completions M.Ed	Teachers, N=300	2.410	0.678		18.849	0.000
	Heads, N=100	4.290	0.110	0.057		
Domestic responsibilities create hindrance in getting further education	Teachers, N=300	4.180	0.087		0.058	0.000
	Heads, N=100	2.311	0.085	2.848		

Table 2 indicates that the mean score values of teachers are significantly better than the heads in the. Fee system of AIOU is affordable, AIOU grant scholarships for distance learners in professional developments and there was no rapid promotion after completing M.Ed. HEC grant scholarships at M.Ed levels for secondary schools teachers, and selection grade was not granted on the completions M.Ed.

The value of mean score of heads is significantly better than the teachers in the. There is fee concession for in-service teachers. Govt grant scholarships for professional development and domestic responsibilities create hindrance in getting further education. Therefore, it is concluded that the overall mean score of teachers is better than the heads on the financial factors.

Table 3

The mean difference between mean scores of heads and teachers on Departmental Factors

Statement	Respondent	Mean	SD	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
It is easy to get permission from the higher authorities.	Teachers, N=300	4.150	1.036	0.062	0.878	0.389
	Heads, N=100	4.270	0.657	0.663		
Study leave is available for higher studies.	Teachers, N=300	4.070	0.933	0.052	0.097	0.328
	Heads, N=100	4.230	0.946	0.099		
Head of the institutions motivates the subordinates for higher studies.	Teachers, N=300	3.970	1.061	0.065	2.490	0.017
	Heads, N=100	4.260	0.798	0.075		
There are advance increments after completing M.Ed.	Teachers, N=300	4.127	1.046	0.066	2.340	0.020
	Heads=100	4.390	0.586	0.058		
Extra allowances are admissible after completing M.Ed.	Teachers, N=300	4.250	0.785	0.047	0.037	0.937
	Heads, N= 100	4.240	0.919	0.097		
There are many ways for new jobs after completing M.Ed.	Teachers, N=300	3.800	1.334	0.074	3.688	0.000
	Heads, N= 100	4.180	1.138	0.124		

Table 3 indicates that the value of mean scores of teachers is significantly better than the heads in the. Head of the institutions motivates the subordinates for higher studies, and there are many ways for new jobs after completing M.Ed. The value of mean scores of heads is significantly better than the teacher in the. It is easy to get permission from the higher authorities. Study leave is available for higher studies and there are advance

increments after completing M.Ed. Therefore, it is concluded that the mean scores of heads are overall better than the mean scores of teacher in the departmental factors.

Table 4
 The mean difference between mean scores of heads and teachers on Social Factors

Statements	Respondents	Mean	SD	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
The society favors education highly.	Teachers, N=300	4.070	0.902	0.904	3.836	0.000
	Heads, N=100	4.400	0.621	0.060		
Domestic responsibility affects the students to get further education	Teachers N=300	4.210	0.876	0.050	0.897	0.350
	Heads, N=100	3.450	0.740	0.770		
Lack of facilities on the part of AIOU is a hurdle for further education.	Teachers, N=300	4.250	0.844	0.049	1.227	0.225
	Heads, N=100	4.370	0.668	0.068		
	Heads, N=100	2.010	0.947	0.055		
Feudalism effects especially in the rural area.	Teachers, N=300	4.280	0.684	0.067	21.852	0.000
	Heads, N=100	2.061	0.980	0.561		
Parents of female students are the major hindrance in getting further education.	Teachers, N=300	3.650	1.333	0.077	3.680	0.000
	Heads, N=100	4.160	1.134	0.116		
Illiteracy on the part of family elders is a hindrance in female education	Teachers, N=300	4.440	0.766	0.660	1.220	0.000
	Heads, N=100	4.350	0.948	0.040		

Table 4 shows that the mean score of teachers was significantly better than heads in. Society favors education highly and domestic responsibility affects the students to get further education.

The mean scores of heads were significantly better than the teachers in the. Feudalism effects especially in the rural area. Parents of female students were the major hindrance in getting further education, and illiteracy on the part of family elders was a hindrance in female education (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

1. The mean score of the teachers was significantly better than heads in the, continue professional development in the need of the day. There were not reserved seats in M.Ed for in-service teachers. Priority was not given to in-service teachers for M.Ed admission, and it was easy to get admission at AIOU. The mean score of heads was significantly better than the teachers in the, distance teachers training leads to professional development and there were not reserve seats for in-service teachers. The shows that the teachers are more confident than the heads are not confident about the admission factors (Table 1).
2. Overall mean score of the heads was better than that of the teachers but the difference was not significant. It shows that when overall financial factors were taken then mean score of heads were

- higher but not statistically significant, so it can be concluded that overall financial factors both teachers and heads are having the same opinion (Table 2).
3. Teachers mean score was significantly better than heads in: heads of the institutions didn't motivate the subordinates for higher studies, and there were not many ways for new jobs after completing M.Ed. The value of mean scores of heads was significantly better than the teacher in the. It was not easy to get permission from the higher authorities. Study leave was not granted for higher education and there were not advance increments after completing M.Ed. (Table 3).
 4. Teachers mean score was significantly better than heads on that didn't society favors education highly, and domestic responsibility affected the students to get further education. The mean score of heads was significantly better than the teachers in the. Feudalism effects especially in the rural area. Parents of female students were the major problem in getting higher education and illiteracy on the part of family elders was a big hindrance in female education (Table 4).

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the findings, the following conclusions were made:

1. Illiteracy on the part of family elders was a hindrance in female education.
2. Parents of female students were the major hindrance in getting further education.
3. Feudalism affected especially in the rural area.
4. Domestic responsibility affected the teachers to get further professional education.
5. The society didn't favor education highly.
6. The overall M.Ed program offered through AIOU leads towards professional development in the opinion of teachers.
7. It is difficult to get departmental permission and study leave form the higher authorities.
8. AIOU did not grant scholarships for distance learners in professional developments especially for the in service-teachers.
9. There was no repaid promotion and no advance increment in during the service, after completing the M.Ed program.
10. Heads of the institutions didn't motivate the subordinates for higher studies and they also create hurdles in getting further studies.
11. Guidance and counseling is available at regional level so that the students can easily do their routine matters.
12. According to the opinion of teachers, the examination centers are not within the reach to the students of remote areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings and conclusions, the following were made:

1. As the teaching job is the lowest paying job in Pakistan, the fees of the teacher-training programs should be reduced.
2. Higher Education Commission (HEC) which is the body of preparing policy for higher level study scholarship, so M.Ed level programs should be included in the policy of HEC.
3. The admission criteria of AIOU should be changed; high experience teachers should be given priority in the admission.
4. Allama Iqbal Open University should design fee concession and scholarship polices for the experienced and high qualified teachers, so that the objectives of AIOU be fully achieved.
5. The promotion policy should be made professional based not seniority based. M.Ed qualified teachers should be given propriety for the next scale.
6. Facilities and support services should be provided to the students, so that objectives of M.Ed program can be fully achieved.

7. The departmental obstacles and restrictions should be changed by reshaping the policy and advance increments should be reinstated after the completion of M.Ed program.

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