STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES OF AIOU, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the Study was to investigate the Student Support Services provided by Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan and its deficiencies. All the officers of BPS-17 and above of Directorate of Regional Services and Directorate of Student Advisory and Counseling Services and 50% of 100 tutors for the semesters Spring and Autumn 2008 were included in the study. For the purpose of collection of data, three questionnaires were developed, separate for each sample. Data collected through questionnaires were tabulated, analyzed and calculated using mean scores. Major findings of the study reveal that (1) Tutors received intimation letters from the region about tutorship in time; (2) Tutors discourage late submission of assignments; (3) Regional heads occasionally visit the tutorials; (4) DRS plans, coordinates and monitors the work of regional centers; (5) Regions were equipped with modern A.V. aids; (6) DRS was provided sufficient funds; (7) Students Advisory and Counseling facilitates the learners. It was concluded that tutors discourage late submission of assignments, regions solved the problems of students, Student Advisory Service facilitates the distance learners and the staff of Students Advisory was trained. The recommendations made are included; assignments may be returned under postal cover; regional centers should respond to the queries of tutors; DRS should be provided trained staff; there should be transport facilities at the DRS; and the staff of Students Advisory and Counseling may be trained in their work.

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Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), distance education, regions, regional centre, directorate of regional services (DRS), student support service.

Background

The formal educational system in developing countries has proved inadequate in coping with their social and manpower training demands for economic and social development. New and less expensive ways of education and training have to be developed to cope with their training needs. Educational planners are convinced that distance education (Correspondence courses and mass media techniques) will be a solution for the many problems of education and training the developing countries are facing.

According to Zaki (2003) the attraction of distance education lay in the potential economies-of-scale that could be realized. Distance education is not only a less expensive way of solving educational problems but, in most areas, it is considerably more effective. Its effectiveness, in particular, relates to the minimization of drop-out rates and study at leisure at home and place of work.

Institutions of formal education are important and occupy a pivotal place in imparting education, being deeply rooted in the community. But due to information explosion, population explosion, diversification of population and limited resources the conventional system alone cannot cope with the increasing demands of education.

Distance Education

The term distance education is used to describe various forms of study at all levels. It is a mode to learning and teaching in which majority of instruction occurs while educator and learner are at a distance from one another. Rai (2000, p.1) has stated:

> Distance education is being widely used in different parts of the world to widen educational access at all levels. The communication with the learner is established through a range of media from printed self-instructional learning materials, audio-video cassettes, radio broadcast, T.V lessons or teleconferencing by choosing and combining the strengths of different media. In many countries, distance education is seen as a way of making educational resources go further for providing education to many, without incurring the extra cost of building new schools or colleges.

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. Harris (1997, p.14), "… any planned and regular educational provision where there is distance between teacher (or instructors or educator) on the one hand and student (or learner or respective audience) on the other hand". According to Dodds (1978, p.246), "distance teaching means, "methods / system provides education / courses by correspondence, broadcasting and occasional face to face learning".

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Distance education emerged in 1970's as a valued component of many national educational systems in both developed and developing countries. The first Open University in the world was established in UK IN 1969. The establishment of Allama Iqbal Open University in 1974 marked the beginning of Distance Education in Pakistan.

Establishment of AIOU

The Allama Iqbal Open University was established in 1974 under the name, the People's Open University. It was renamed as Allama Iqbal Open University in 1977 at the eve of the first of the national poet and philosopher, Allama Muhammad Iqbal.

The Vice Chancellor's Annual Report (2004-05, p.3) mentions that
> Open Universities are being used in several countries to provide education and training to people who cannot leave their houses and jobs for full time studies. An Open University will, therefore, be established to provide part-time educational facilities through correspondence courses, tutorials, seminars, workshops, laboratories, televisions and radio broadcasts and other mass communication media---.

Objectives of AIOU

According to the AIOU Act, 1974 and Vice Chancellor's Annual Report (2004-05, p.4). the main objectives of the University are described as follows:

- To provide facilities to people who cannot leave their homes and jobs in such manner as it may determine.
- To provide such facilities to the masses for their educational uplift as it may determine.
- To provide facilities for the training of teachers in such manner as it may determine.
- To provide for instruction in such branches of learning technology or vocation as it may deem fit, and to make provision for research and for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge in such manner as it may determine.
- To hold examinations and to award and confer degrees, diplomas, certificates and other academic distinctions.

With its main campus at Islamabad, the University extends its educational facilities to the remotest parts of the country, firstly through the mailing of learning package and its radio and T.V broadcast and secondly by tutorial services through its regional campuses and study centers established at almost all the major cities of the country. Under its country-wide net-work of regional centers, the University arranges the tutorial support to students at local level, through the study centers established in various educational institutions of the formal system of education. This collaboration at local level is an example of the partnership nature of the University. It is working hand in hand with government departments and agencies at all levels, as well as with a range of non-government agencies, both national and international, in carrying education and development forward throughout the country.

The AIOU System

The Annual Vice Chancellor's Report (2004-05, pp.5-6) highlighted the system of AIOU as given in following sections:

Admissions

The University provides educational opportunities at a variety of levels, from pre-literacy to post-graduate levels. Admission in different programs of the University is, therefore, open to all whether male or female, living in rural or in urban areas. The University provides these opportunities to enhance and improve their education through its innovative distance education system having the capability of taking education to the door-steps of those who may have missed chance of getting the education.

For its main academic programs, the university's academic year comprises two semesters: Spring and autumn. Admission is advertised in leading daily national newspapers, as well as by radio announcements.

After checking and processing, the forms are further processed at the university's computer centre for the preparation of enrolment lists, and address labels and the initiation or updating of student records.

Teaching Methodology

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

A. Materials including; Course books/reading material; Tutorial Schedule; Radio/ TV Schedule; General Students Guide; and Student Course Guide
B. Radio and television broadcasts, especially prepared for distance learners
C. Course assignments as an instrument both of teaching and continuous assessment
D. Tutorial instruction through face-to-face learning at study centers, or correspondence and workshops, where necessary
E. Certain courses are offered online
F.

After admission, instructional materials are mailed to students at their addresses. These printed units are supplemented by radio and television programs which are based on the content of the course. Media programs and tutorial schedules are also sent to students as apart of learning package.

Regional Network Outreach System

According to Vice Chancellors Annual Report (2007-08,p.55) the University has 36 regional campuses / centers with part time Regional Coordinating Offices throughout the country for providing assistance to the Regional Campuses / Centers. Over 900 study centers are established during a semesters and are managed through the university's regional campuses and centers.

Each student is assigned a tutor who is a subject specialist. During the year 2004-05 about 25000 tutors were appointed in both the semesters around 12500 per semester. Tutor-student contact is arranged at study centre in the afternoons or on weekly holidays. Regions also arrange workshops, practical and counsel students about study and program. They also identify Examination Centers.

Study Pattern of AIOU System

A full credit course consisting of 18 units has an actual study period of eighteen weeks. A correspondence unit requires about 10-12 hours of study in a week. A half credit course consists of nine units. Most of the courses have nine or more radio programs and several courses also have television programs. Audio cassettes are provided in some language courses. Some courses have a workshop component as well. Recently the university has converted its courses to credit hours system. A half credit course is now of 3 credit hours.

Students are expected to work regularly throughout the semester. A student guide is provided to help them plan their studies. It has been established from a survey that around 70% of student's time is spent on reading the printed texts, the rest being devoted to listening or viewing Radio and T.V programs and attending tutorials at study centres.

Assessment

Each full-credit course has four assignments and a half-credit course has two assignments, which the students are required to complete and send to their tutors for assessment. The assignments have a three-fold function:
- To enable a student to have his / her performance and progress assessed regularly by tutors;
- To enable a tutor to give instruction to his / her students through the comments and correction on the assignment;
- To act as a pacing device for the students during their period of study;

The marks secured by students in assignments are sent by the regions to the Controller of Examinations. Final written examinations are held at the end of each semester. The overall result is based on a combination of continuous assessment and final examination. Workshops or practical also form a part of the overall assessment.

Medium of Instruction

The AIOU provides instruction in Urdu, but English is also used as a medium of instruction in certain courses and for most of the postgraduate programs.

The Scope of Student Support

A rapid expansion of distance education and an increase in the complexity of distance education system has been seen during the last decade. Rashid (2003, p.140) stated that "… the Open University system thus serves the specific subject requirements of the mass of its students through centrally produced correspondence materials and broadcasts. This service through correspondence contact and face-to-face instruction and counseling by tutor. The student support

also includes tuition and guidance of students throughout their course of study, and the provision of structures which ensure the most effective learning experiences for students."

Techniques of Student Support

The techniques of student support are probably the most fundamental to the learning process in distance education. Such techniques have been derived from psychological theory and research. The techniques are based on certain principles and from these principles, can be derived guidelines which can direct teacher/tutors behavior. According to Rashid (2003, p.164) normally the tutors are instructed in how to utilize almost every aspect of the environment to capture and sustain student's attention. Particularly emphasized is the effectiveness of engaging as many of the student's senses as possible when initiating a lesson. Instruction which appeals to sight and hearing and perhaps also small and touch certainly gains and holds the learner's attention better than utilizing only sight and hearing alone. The increased use of multi-media presentation in distance education is certainly in accordance with the motivational principle. Some additional techniques for focusing attention which can easily be incorporated into distance education are:

- Raising a question is more likely to hold a student's attention than giving information.
- Presenting something novel to the student or learner is more likely to gain his attention than presenting something familiar.
- Changing the tempo and face of activity is more likely to increase attention than maintaining an even tempo.
- Involving the learner in discussion is more likely to hold his attention than presenting information.
- Ensuring the learner understands helps to hold his attention.

The tutor of distance education system can do much to diagnose and help the learner change his self-defeating behavior. To do this, tutor must have comprehensive information regarding the background of the student. A student with a background of failures or incompletes needs special help in overcoming the adverse motivational effect of past failure. The tutor can guide him in selecting leaning tasks etc.

Students Supports Services

The main aim of the support services is to promote educational process through self-learning and tutorials with the help of reading material and mass media. According to Lockwood (1995, p.232) the term student support means the range of activities which compliment the mass-produced materials which make up the most well-known element in Open Distance Learning (ODL). It is, of course, true and printed course units, television and radio programs etc, which replace the lecture as a means of delivery and offer so much both in terms of social and geographical access and in terms of cost-effectiveness, support students in central ways. Gujjar et al. (2009, p.354) "the rationale of student support services is to provide educational help to the student. No one can deny the importance and pivotal role of student support services in the successful completion of the course." Rashid (1999, p. 180) has described that 'tutors training or guidance consists of briefing sessions at the beginning of each semester". Gujjar et al. (2009,

p.363) has further recommended that AIOU should improve its system of student support services with the help of tutors and regional offices." The Vice Chancellors Report (2004-05, pp. 227-254) has listed following student support services departments exist in AIOU:

Students Advisory and Counseling Services

The Directorate consists of sub-divisions; Administration; Advisory and Counseling Divisions; Overseas Cell; and Inquiry / information Section.

The major activities undertaken by the Directorate for the students are as follows:

- The Directorate provides guidance and counseling services to the distance learners through media, telephone and letters.
- Individuals as well as group (face to face) counseling sessions are also conducted for the students on Campus as well as at the Regional Office level.
- The Directorate act as a liaison between the students and the main Campus. It also aims to promote healthy interaction amongst the students through curricular co-curricular activities so as to motivate them to become active learners through out their course of studies.
- The Directorate attracts new learners and facilitates them in the choice of courses / programs, orients them with the distinct features of distance education.
- 52 weekly radio programs have been written and recorded by the Directorate Students Affairs during the subject period.
- To respond to the queries of general nature, standard letters regarding University programs / procedures are designed in the Directorate.
- The staff of the Directorate helps in resolving the problems of the students by making liaison with the relevant academic and servicing departments.
- Ten Student Counselors are working at the ten Regional Campuses of AIOU. They keep on apprising the Directorate of Students Affairs about the current problems faced by the students in the regions and also provide feed- back .These counselors solve the problems of the students by coordinating with the Main Campus.
- Two information Lobbies at the entry point in the pilot phase, aim to provide information and guidance to the students. These lobbies will be equipped with computers and work on the provision of online data is under process.
- Financial Assistance is being provided to the deserving and needy students of AIOU enrolled in all programs of the University (excluding research).
- An amount of two million rupees allocated for all the 36 Regions Offices to arrange student activities. The Regional Centers motivate the students to participate in the academic, social and cultural activities which including National Celebrations, study trips, participation in co-curricular activities, inter colleges / University competitions, and debates and musical competitions.
- The Directorate of Students Affairs has been successful in formulating a talent pool of the students of AIOU through out Pakistan who shall now be nominated for participation in the Interuniversity, Inter provincial and national competitions.
- Study tours within the Regions and between the Regions and on Campus also arranged and a significant number of students visited historical places and project sights related to their discipline.

Directorate of Regional Services

The Regional Services constitute a distinctive aspect of AIOU that differentiates it from formal universities. At present, the network consists of 36 Regional Campuses and Centers with part-time Regional Coordinating Offices, established in different parts of the country for providing assistance to the Regional Campuses / Centers.

Spheres of Activity
It comprises the following broad spheres of activity:

Tutorial Support (Teaching and Guidance)

Rashid (2003,p.167-68) has stated that study centers at various places help to meet student academic needs. A tutor is assigned a group of students and they meet twice a month. These tutors belong to local educational institutions and provide guidance / counseling to the students besides evaluation of their assignments. Zaidi (2008, p.ix) in his research study recommended that" AIOU regional centers should appoint tutors on merit and should intimate tutors in time and there should be need of comprehensive training of tutors for the betterment of tutorial support system". The functions of the study centre are to:

- Encourage group activities such as discussions and paper readings. Students are informed in advance about the topics to be discussed. The teacher acts as moderator; students do most of the talking.
- Invite students to come with their problems arising from the study material they have received.
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The University has by now established over 900 Study Centers, where tutorials are held as per study schedule. 70 of these Study Centers are equipped with Audio / Visual aids. At some places, there are exclusive Study Centers for female students. Well-equipped private sector institutions have also been enlisted for face-to-face component for computer added science courses and also for practical training, workshops / internships. There were more than 60,000 part-time registered tutors with the University Tutorial Support and guidance (http://www.wikieducator.org/Allama_Iqbal_Open_University).

Face-to-Face Coaching

In addition, the Directorate of Regional Services has established 105 Study Centres in collaboration with private institutions of high repute, where full-time coaching is provided to the students of Computer Science, IT, Business Administration, Physics, Maths and Chemistry. Gujjar et al. (2009, p.363) in their study recommended that there should be more interactive sessions between tutor and the students and competent tutors should be appointed by AIOU and they can solve many of the students' problems at the spot."

Conduct of face-to-face workshops for the students joining professional courses provides opportunities of intensive academic interaction. Prolonged practical for technical and vocational courses are arranged usually on weekly holidays.

Continuous Assessment and Terminal Examination

AIOU's evaluation of a student's achievement takes place through
- Continuous Assessment i.e. Assignments / Workshops / Midterms Tests, and
- Final Examinations.

Regional Services coordinate all continuous assessment of a student achievement through its part-time tutors. Regions also identify Examination Centres, Supervisory Staff and facilities inspection of University Examinations, arranged all over the country twice a year.

Promotional Activities

The regional services also provides the following
- Promoting AIOU's educational services in all parts of the country
- Motivating prospective candidates to benefit from AIOU course offerings
- Reaching out to females and other disadvantaged groups and making them aware of the educational and occupational training activities of AIOU

Co-Curricular Activities

Regions also manage co-curricular activities i.e. debates, speech contests and study tours, to foster healthy attitude of distance education students.

Development of Regional Campuses

The University has planned to shift its offices from rented buildings to its own purpose-built buildings. The campuses at Lahore, Multan, Karachi, D.I.Khan, Quetta, Dera Ghazi Khan and Mirpur (AJK) are functioning in University's own buildings.

Provision of Internet Facility in Regions

The regional activities mainly consist of a series of academic management tasks related to the instructional system. It involves enormous amount of work termed as Student Support Services throughout the country.

The Regions are today equipped with the latest electronic communication facilities such as Copy Printer, Multi Media Projector, Computers (for offices and libraries), Photocopiers beside modern means of communication i.e. Internet at many stations. The transmission and retrieval of data from the main campus and vice versa is now available so that student's complaints are redressed locally and immediately. The e-mail facility is available in 30 regional campuses / centers. Very few studies have been conducted to look at the Students Support Services being provided.

Objective of the Research

The objective of the study was to investigate Student Support Services provided and its deficiencies by Allama Iqbal Open University.

Population

The population of the study composed of the following categories:
   i.   The three officers BPS-17 and above of Directorate of Regional Services.
  ii.   The two officers BPS-17 and above of Directorate of Students Advisory and Counseling Services.
 iii.   There were 100 tutors for HSSC program appointed for the semesters Spring and Autumn 2008.

Sample

The following were taken as sample:
   i.   All the officers (100%) of Directorate of Regional Services at main Campus AIOU.
  ii.   All the officers (100%) of Directorate of Students Advisory and Counseling Services at main Campus AIOU.
 iii.   50% Tutors appointed for HSSC program for the Semesters Spring and Autumn 2008 by the Regional Centres Abbottabad by using table of random numbers.
  iv.

Table: 1 Percentage Wise Sampling

S.No.	Category	Total Population	Sample	%age
1	DRS	03	03	100
2	S.A & C.S	02	02	100
3	Tutor	100	50	50

Instruments

Three questionnaires one each for Directorate of Regional Services, Students Advisory and Counseling and Tutors were prepared and discussed with the experts of the field to validate it with respect to content, language and format. These were improved in the light of their suggestions. The questionnaires were also pilot tested and improved.

Collection of Data

The questionnaires were handed over to the sample respondents i.e. officers of DRS and Students Advisory and Counseling Services at main Campus AIOU in person along with self addressed stamped envelops for reply. The lists of tutors were obtained from the office of Regional Centre Abbottabad. Request for quick response was made through telephone, e-mail and reminders. Questionnaires from all the respondents were received.

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Analysis of Data

The collected data were presented is tabular form and analyzed by calculating percentages and mean score. The findings and conclusions were drawn from data analysis and recommendations were made. The data obtained were tabulated in terms of frequency. The frequencies were converted into score by assigning the following scale value of each five responses:

SA	= Strongly agree	05 points
A	= Agree	04 points
UNC	= Uncertain	03 points
DA	= Disagreed	02 points
SDA	= Strongly disagree	01 points

As mentioned above the analysis of data has been presented in Tables 2 to 4.

Table :2 Analysis of Questionnaire for Tutors

Item	Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	Mean score
1	Received the intimation from the region about tutorship in time.	10	27	6	3	4	3.72
		74%		12%	14%		
2	The course materials and supplementary material is received in time.	12	28	4	3	3	3.86
		80%		8%	12%		
3	Tutors discourage late submitted assignments.	15	26	2	5	2	3.94
		82%		4%	14%		
4	Assignments are returned within specific period.	22	20	4	3	1	3.18
		84%		8%	8%		
5	Assignment/workshop results are submitted in time.	29	19	2	2	1	4.34
		90%		4%	6%		
6	Training for tutorship is arranged.	5	5	10	15	15	2.4
		20%		20%	60%		
7	Basic facilities like electricity and fans are available at study centre.	17	22	8	2	1	4.04
		78%		16%	8%		
8	Region solves the problems faced at the study centre.	11	23	3	10	3	3.58
		68%		6%	26%		
9	Regional Head occasionally visits the tutorial during a semester.	7	21	3	10	9	3.14
		56%		6%	38%		
10	Chalk, duster and other teaching A.V. aids were available at the study center.	7	19	10	9	5	3.28
		52%		6%	38%		
11	Remuneration bills paid without delay.	11	22	3	6	8	3.26
		66%		6%	28%		
12	Tutors have to spend a lot of money to	13	26	1	6	4	3.76

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	bear the expenditure on postal charges for returning assignments to students	48%		2%	20%		
13	Regional campus/centre does not respond to the queries of tutors promptly.	4	6	11	25	4	2.62
		20%		22%	58%		
14	The staff of the regional campus/centre is well behaved.	18	24	3	3	2	2.26
		84%		6%	10%		
15	Tutor briefings are arranged.	2	20	10	11	7	2.98
		44%		20%	36%		

Findings from Tutors

Following findings were drawn on the basis of analysis of the questionnaire:
1. 74% of the respondents agreed that received the intimation from the region about tutorship in time.
2. 80% agreed that the course materials and supplementary material was received in time.
3. 82% of the respondents agreed with the statement that tutors discourage late submitted assignments while 84% of the respondents agreed that assignments were returned within specified period.
4. 90% agreed that assignment/workshop results were submitted in time.
5. 78% of the respondents agreed that basic facilities like electricity and fans were available at study centers.
6. 68% agreed that region solves the problems faced at the study centre and 56% respondents agreed that regional head occasionally visits the tutorials during a semester.
7. 66% agreed that remuneration bills paid without delay whereas 84% of the respondents agreed that the staff of the Regional Centre was well behaved.

Conclusions of Tutors

Tutors receive the intimation from the regions about their tutorship in time and course material and supplementary material in time. Tutors discourage late submission of assignments and returned within specified period. Region solves the problems faced at the study centre and remuneration bills a of tutors are usually paid without delay. Regional heads occasionally visit the tutorials and tutor briefings are also arranged.

Table :3 Analysis of Questionnaire for DRS

Item	Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	Mean score
1	It plans that the coordinates and monitor the work of regional centre.	2	1	0	0	0	4.67
		100%		0%	0%		
2	All regional campuses and centers of AIOU are provided guidance and coordination from the Directorate of	3	0	0	0	0	5.00
		100%		0%	0%		

	Regional Services.						
3	It facilitates the regions to arrange tutorial programs.	3	0	0	0	0	5.00
		100%		0%	0%		
4	Regions are equipped with modern Audio-visual Aids to strengthen tutorial support	1	1	1	0	0	4.00
		67%		33%	0%		
5	The Directorate is provided reasonable funds for its proper functioning.	2	1	0	0	0	4.67
		100%		0%	0%		
6	Its supporting staff is efficient in allotted duties.	0	3	0	0	0	4.00
		100%		0%	0%		
7	It arranges tutorials/face-to-face coaching facilities as approved by statutory bodies	3	0	0	0	0	5.00
		100%		0%	0%		
8	DRS is promoting its services in remote areas of the country.	1	2	0	0	0	4.33
		100%		0%	0%		
9	It gets full support in providing electronic communication facility in the regions.	1	2	0	0	0	4.33
		100%		0%	0%		
10	Students' lists for specified programs for tutor appointment are received in time by the directorate.	0	3	0	0	0	4.00
		100%		0%	0%		
11	Tutor briefings/training are coordinated by the DRS.	0	3	0	0	0	4.00
		100%		0%	0%		
12	Transport facilities are available for the Directorate.	1	2	0	0	0	4.33
		100%		0%	0%		
13	Repair and maintenance of equipment and vehicles is properly funded.	1	2	0	0	0	4.33
		100%		0%	0%		
14	Payments to tutors is made in time.	0	3	0	0	0	4.00
		100%		0%	0%		
15	The Directorate has support from academic and administrative departments.	0	3	0	0	0	4.00
		100%		0%	0%		

18. Findings from Directorate of Regional Services

1. All the respondents agreed that all regional centers of AIOU were provided guidance and coordination from the Directorate of Regional Services.
2. All the respondents agreed that it facilitates the regions to arrange tutorial programs.
3. 67% of the respondents agreed that regions were equipped with modern Audio- Visual Aids to strengthen tutorial support.
4. All the respondents agreed that the Directorate was provided reasonable funds for its proper functioning while 100% of the respondents agreed that its supporting staff was efficient in allotted duties.
5. All the respondents agreed that it arranges tutorial/face-to-face coaching facilities as approved by statutory bodies.

6. All the respondents agreed that DRS were promoting its services in remote areas of the country.
7. Majority of 100% of the respondents agreed that it gets full support in providing electronic communication facility in the regions.
8. All the respondents agreed that students' lists for specified programs for tutor appointment were received in time by the Directorate.
9. All the respondents agreed that tutor briefing/training were coordinated while 100% of the respondents agreed that transport facilities were available for the Directorate.
10. All the respondents agreed that in time submission of results by tutors/regions was ensured.
11. All the respondents agreed that repair and maintenance of equipments and vehicles was properly funded while 100% of the respondents agreed that payments to tutors were made in time.

Conclusions of Directorate of Regional Services

DRS plans, coordinates and monitors the work of regional centres and all the regional centres of AIOU are provided guidance and coordination from the DRS. Regions are equipped with modern A.V. aids to strengthen tutorial support and DRS is provided reasonable funds for its proper functioning. Regions are equipped with the latest electronic equipments and regions receive students' lists timely for tutor appointment by the DRS. Repair and maintenance of equipments and vehicles is properly funded and payments to the tutors are made in time.

Table :4 Analysis of Questionnaire for Student Advisory and Counseling

Item	Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	Mean score
1	The Directorate of Students advisory and Counseling services provide services to distance learners through multi-media.	2 100%	0	0 0%	0	0 0%	5.00
2	The Directorate conducts individual as well as group counseling sessions for the students.	1 50%	0	0 0%	1	0 50%	3.5
3	The department acts as a liaison between the students and the main campus.	1 100%	1	0 0%	0	0 0%	4.5
4	It promotes healthy interaction amongst the students through co-curricular activities.	1 50%	0	0 0%	1	0 50%	3.5
5	The Directorate promotes interaction through different means for new learners.	1 50%	0	1 50%	0	0 0%	4.00
6	The Directorate facilitates the distance learners is selection of courses and programs.	1 100%	1	0 0%	0	0 0%	4.5
7	Responses to the student's queries are made well in time.	1 100%	1	0 0%	0	0 0%	4.5
8	The Directorate has designed standard	1	1	0	0	0	4.5

	programs and procedures for helping candidates seeking admission in AIOU.	100%		0%		0%		
9	The Department helps in resolving the problems of the students.	2 100%	0	0 0%	0	0 0%		4.5
10	The Department is allocated sufficient funds for its works.	1 100%	1	0 0%	0	0 0%		4.5
11	The staff of the department is well trained.	1 100%	1	0 0%	0	0 0%		4.5
12	Rules and procedures for financial assistance to deserving and needy students are followed.	2 100%	0	0 0%	0	0 0%		5.00
13	Sufficient amount is allocated to all the Regions for arranging students activities in their regions.	1 100%	1	0 0%	0	0 0%		4.5
14	The Directorate has been successful in formulating a talent pool of students for participation in different competitions.	1 100%	1	0 0%	0	0 0%		4.5
15	The staff of the respective department needs training in their work.	0 50%	1	0 0%	1	0 50%		3.00

19. Findings from Directorate of Students Advisory and Counseling Services

1. 100% of the respondents agreed that the Directorate of Students Advisory and Counseling Services provide services to distance learners through multi-media.
2. 100% of the respondents agreed that the Directorate facilitates the distance learner in selection of courses and programs while 100% of the respondents agreed that responses to the student's queries were made well in time.
3. 100% of the respondents agreed that the Directorate has designed standard programs and procedures for helping candidates seeking admission in AIOU while 100% of the respondents agreed that the Department helps in resolving the problems of the students.
4. 100% of the respondents agreed that the Department was allocated sufficient funds for its work and 100% of the respondents agreed that the staff of the Department was well trained.
5. 100% of the respondents agreed that rules and procedures for financial assistance to deserving and needy students were followed.
6. 100% agreed that sufficient amount was allocated to all the regions for arranging students' activities in their regions while 100% of the respondents agreed that the Directorate has been successful in formulating a talent pool of students for participation in different competitions.

Conclusions of Directorate of Students Advisory and Counseling

The Students Advisory and Counseling department provides services to distance learners through multi-media and facilitates the distance learners in selection of courses and

programs. Responses to the students' queries are made well in time and the Directorate has designed standard programs and procedures for helping candidates seeking admission in AIOU. The department is allocated sufficient funds for its work and the staff of the department is well trained. Directorate has been successful in formulating a talent pool of students for participation in different competitions.

Recommendations

On the basis of conclusions it was recommended that, by hand delivery of assignments should be discouraged and assignments/workshop results may be submitted in time while chalk, duster and other teaching aids may be made available at the study centres. Regional centres should respond the queries of tutors promptly and more funds for the development of Directorate of Regional Services may be allocated. The staff of the Students Advisory and Counseling department may be trained in their work and sufficient staff and immediate counseling facilities may be provided for students.

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