

Comparison of Study Material Used at B.Ed Level of Allama Iqbal Open University and Sri-Lanka Open University

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Received: September 12, 2014

Accepted: November 23, 2014

ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to review the quality of paper, printing and formatting of study material and its impact on students of B.Ed program of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) and Sri Lanka Open University (SLOU). A sample was randomly selected which consisted of 1060 students at B.Ed level from both these University separately. The study was descriptive i.e. survey type in nature. Questionnaire was used as tool of research. Questionnaire was constructed on five point rating scale. Purpose of use of this rating scale was to obtain systematically and objectively a sample opinion on study material. The study was carried out to determine the similarities and differences in study material used at B.Ed level between the universities. Data was collected from the students of B.Ed program fall semester 2009 running in both the University. The data was statistically analyzed by applying frequency, percentage and mean score. The findings of the study revealed that the language of the study material of Allama Iqbal Open University was simpler than Sri Lanka Open University's study material. Majority of respondents appreciated the study material because of its effectiveness and simplicity.

KEY WORDS: Allama Iqbal Open University, Sri Lanka Open University, Distance Education, Study Material,

1 INTRODUCTION

Education is a process of learning and brings a permanent change in behavior. Education is a changing agent; it is a social activity to interact with society in two ways (Siddiqui, 1990). It interacts within the environment to improve its programs and develop innovations in desired program. Education plays a vital role in the character building. Character is the essential constituent of personality. A good character leads to the development of good qualities of citizenship. Education helps to increase the individual abilities, skills and attitudes. Education is the basic right of human beings. Seeking knowledge from cradle to grave is one of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) indicates the lifelong education or all life is education. So this saying shows that the idea of education for all is accepted increasingly. The sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) have been adopted by International Council of Distance Education (ICDE). Education may be categorized into formal, non formal and informal based on the process of learning. Formal and non formal system of education are supporting in the needs, demands and challenges of society properly. Human learning is a lifelong process. So the role of distance and non formal education is useful in providing education at all levels.

The need of distance learning system in developing countries is accepted because formal education have problems and contradictions which find manifestations in the form of following specific tensions (Ghafoor, 1991). Distance learning system is capable to fulfill the philosophy of national development that requires; the participation of men and women, young and old, either directly through their daily work or indirectly through their economic and social groups (Soedjatmoko, 1986). However full participation by the population cannot be achieved unless individuals acquired the skills and knowledge needed for such participation. So education particularly distance system is given a higher priority in bilateral development program between the developed and developing countries of the world.

When we look at various distance education institutions in the world, we find that they are of different types. But generally all open universities comprise some of the important aspects such as objectives, admission, choice of courses, instructional system, enrollment, student evaluation, governance, regional and local centers, cost-effectiveness (Reddy, 1992). In the same way, Allama Iqbal Open University and Sri Lanka Open University, situated in the South Asian Region, share the common culture, taboos, and basic

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infrastructure. The quality of education of an institution can best be judged with reference to its comparison with an indigenous institution, that how one institution perform better than other with having the same regional, social, and economical conditions. So this study was designed to seek comparison of study material at B. Ed level of Allama Iqbal Open University and Sri-Lanka Open University.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Distance education is provided through different means i.e. study material, tutorials, use of multimedia, assignments and workshops. The importance of this is highlighted by Venkataiah, (1999, p.254) as:

It is a system of relational actions of imparting the knowledge, skills and attitudes. Direct social relationships between teacher and students give way, to a great extent, to indirect relations, which are characterized by technical rules and prescriptions, a context free language, conditioned prognoses and conditioned instructions, goal attainment with the help of target-means relations and the systematical increase of affectivity.

Media used in distance education is stated as delivery media, storage/resource media. Best practice in distance education is use of multimedia approach through presentation with the combination of audio, video, computer and conventional print. Distance education is a multimedia system, it comprises of the following components:

- a) Study Material (Printed Course Books/Prescribed Books
- b) Tutorials
- c) Media
- d) Term papers/assignments
- e) Workshops / practical
- f) Internship where required.
- g) Final examination

The following is their brief elaboration.

a) Study Material (Printed Course Books /Prescribed Books)

The students who enroll in the university at any level are provided relevant course books prepared on self-instructional principles. However, at post-graduate level, study guide of the relevant courses including printed study material is provided. The study guide helps the students to go through the reading materials according to learning sequence and course outlines.

For elaboration of these books Inoue and Bell (2006, p.30) pointed out that:

Distance education dictated changes in behavior of both the teacher and the learner; successful students develop persistence and skills in self directing work. Critical elements for successful distance teaching are (a) instructor enthusiasm, (b) organization, (c) strong commitment to student interaction, (d) familiar with the technology used in the class format and (e) critical support personnel.

Printed material provides foundation in distance education while other material is supplement of the courses. The first distance-delivered courses were offered by correspondence study, with print materials sent and returned to students by mail. While technological developments added some other helping tools for distance educator, print continues to be a significant component of all distance education programs.

Rowntree (1994, p. 1) commented on the importance of learning material by saying that;

Open, distance and flexible learners usually depend a lot on learning materials. This may be because there aren't enough teachers or trainers to give them constant attention. It may be because they want to learn their own – at a time, pace and place of their own choice. It may be because they are learning to take responsibility for their own learning.

With the advent of technology of web the importance of print material is challenged but it's worth with regard to learning cannot be ignored and still it is used in different media, Smith& Smith (2006, p. 35) stated that;

Relatively little attention is paid to print-based distance education materials, yet it is likely that print-based materials will remain widely used for the foreseeable future as demand for fully on-line learning remains low and problems of access and technology remain in many areas of the world. There is a dearth of current research studies on printed distance education materials and the use that DE students make of these materials as most recent studies of distance education have tended to focus on the use of e-learning. However, the literature on printed distance learning materials is relatively limited.

Printed material is the cheapest, fruitful media easily accessible to students. They can use it several times whenever they need it, without any restriction of space and time. Correspondence material for distance learners is prepared in self-explanatory manner. It contains illustrations and explanations enough to substitute a tutor.

Printed material for distance education is self-explanatory and a substitute for teacher. Rashid (1998, p. 58) suggested the following functions for the Printed material:

1. To arouse attention and motivate; the presentation of objectives that are within close reach appears to be of particularly great importance in the respect
2. To make students aware of the expected outcomes of the study
3. To link up with previous knowledge and interest
4. To present the material to be learnt
5. To guide and structure; offering guidance for learning
6. To activate students
7. To provide feedback
8. To promote transferability by giving additional examples
9. Provisions are also made for practice and use of the new capability so that it will be remembered

The study guides are prepared in easy to difficult ways. The second unit contains some explanations of the unit first and so on. Units are fragmented into frames. These frames contain necessary pictures, maps, illustrations, examples and activities for practical application for the knowledge, exercises and assignments. Further, it provides references or other sources of study. The language of the material is simple, friendly and explanatory.

b) Tutorials

According to Sharma and Chandra (2003, p.4):

Tutorial is a sub part of the class in which a teacher tries to solve the problems of the small groups of the pupils. Moreover, in order to guide the students during the semester, part-time tutors are appointed throughout the country out of the roster of qualified experts in each field available for the concerned region. Thus a group of students is assigned to a teacher/expert. The tutorials are arranged at a study centre established in institutions of formal education, or in the regional offices to enable the student getting guidance through correspondence personal visits of face-to-face group coaching during the tutorials.

c) Media Support

The topic of printed material, which needs elaboration and explanation, is presented through media, i.e. radio and television. Being the cheap and easy to access radio is a successful media to impart education. Excellent lectures, discussions, fiction, drama and several kinds of audio aids are provided through radio programs for distance students. The schedule for media programs is enclosed with the course material. Through television range of hearing and vision is utilized while through radio why sense of hearing is utilized. Thus television is better source of learning than radio. Clarke (1970, p.304) quoted by Rashid, M. (1992, p.66) provided a good description for the use of television as:

Television adds vision and movement to radio sound. We can get the full personality of the teacher, if only in one direction... it is a particularly good medium for demonstrations since the camera can look in a microscope, peer into corners and give close-ups of things which could never be so closely or accurately observed in a normal classroom situation.

Distance education institutions use their own broadcasting stations or hire some hours from national or

commercial television stations to have access to a large population. Television programs can be watched in groups under supervision of native teachers or individually according to the pre-scheduled information.

d) **Electronics**

The use of electronic devices is fruitful in distance teaching. There are two aspects through electronic learning: the technological infrastructures and pedagogical readiness. Electronic libraries include the digital publication of e-books and electronic articles in the development of digital system. It is common in scientific publishing where it has been argued that peer revised paper scientific journals are in the process of being replaced by electronic publishing. Although network distribution is strongly associated with electronic publishing, there are many non-network electronic publications such as Encyclopedia on CD and DVD (Mason & Rennie, 2004).

Due to the flexibility in nature (Willinsk & Wolfson, 2001) electronic publishing is more efficacious for research and exploration of relevant but tangential information. Its usage enables the preparation of documents in a range of formats e.g. CD-ROM and print copy. This enables increased flexibility in the provision of teaching and learning programs. Using electronic publishing is less expensive than traditional educational publishing. Files are easily stored, saving space and information contained are reused or repurposed (Smith, 2000).

Electronic publishing covers a wide set of applications and processes such as web-based learning, computer based learning, virtual classrooms and digital collaboration. It includes the delivery of content via internet, intranet/ extranet, audio and videotape, satellite and CD-ROM (Ardil, 2003). Nevertheless e-learning is a tool for education and can be used in a range of education context and environment. Its rapid development shows that soon distance institutions will shift their attention towards its use for fruitful results (Garg, 2006).

In developed countries, television sets are regularly used for learning purpose while in the developing countries, the situation is different. Very few can yet use television effectively for education. Pakistan Television initiated educational programs in 1973. Only a few students in cities have their own television sets and fewer have access to it in the countryside. Allama Iqbal Open University in Pakistan has successfully used television programs for its different educational discipline.

3. DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The study was descriptive i.e. survey type in nature. For this study, questionnaire was developed as tool of research. Questionnaire in general, is the measurement of variables of the subject under consideration. In this study, five point Likert rating scale was used. The design of rating technique considered the existence of the judges who will do the rating, the phenomena to be rated and continuum along which they will be rated. The first step in constructing a five point Likert rating scale was to collect a number of statements about qualities of good study material. It is a method of turning a series of qualitative facts into quantitative series. Each statement expresses a definite idea/position. The questionnaire was consisted of 39 items. All statements of the questionnaire were close ended except the last one. Each close ended statement provides description of five levels namely strongly agrees (SA), agree (A), uncertain (UNC), disagree (DA) and strongly disagree (SDA), so that quantitative judgment rather than the vague and meaningless penalization might be made. Respondents checked one of these levels, which they thought to be most appropriate. Purpose of using this rating scale was to obtain systematically and objectively a sample opinion on study material being provided. The population was well acquainted with the study material which could express accurate and dependable opinion. For this, carefully worked out instructions for the use of questionnaires were provided.

3.1 Population: All male and female students of B.Ed. program running in both the universities consisting a total of (21204) and (3129) respectively constituted the population of the study.

3.2 SAMPLE: A sample of 1060 students of each university was selected. The random sampling technique was adopted to select the sample. Out of 21204 students of Allama Iqbal Open University 1060 (only 5 percent) and 1060 out of 3129 students of Sri Lanka Open University 1060 (35percent) i.e. were taken as sample. Detail of population and sample of the study is reflected in the following table.

Table 1: Break up of population and sample of AIOU and SLOU

| S. No. | Name of Institution /Place | Population | Sample |
|--------------|------------------------------|------------|--------|
| 1 | Allama Iqbal Open University | | |
| i. | Islamabad | 3146 | 158 |
| ii. | Lahore | 10819 | 540 |
| iii. | Multan | 7245 | 362 |
| Total | | | 1060 |
| 2 | Sri Lanka Open University | | |
| i. | Colombo | 1635 | 656 |
| ii. | Kandy | 732 | 248 |
| iii. | Kigali | 462 | 156 |
| | Total | | 1060 |

Source: AIOU (2010), Statistics of 2009-2010, p.114 and SLOU (2009) Progress Report 2009, pp. 32-33

3.3 Administration of Tools: In case of Allama Iqbal Open University, the questionnaire was delivered among students personally during the workshops held at Islamabad, Lahore and Multan. By doing this 100% response was received from the target students. At Sri Lanka Open University, the data were collected through the courtesy of Dr. Leakamge, Dean, Faculty of Education, Sri Lanka Open University and through Dean of Education, Preston University and family friends who provided email addresses of authorities of Sri Lanka Open University. The Dean Education of Sri Lanka Open University arranged questionnaires to be filled in by the students of Colombo, Kandy and Kigali cities of Sri Lanka.

4 FINDINGS

Data was collected from students of Allama Iqbal Open University and Sri Lanka Open University which were analyzed. The analysis is given below:

Table 2 Quality of paper

| No. | Item | University | Level | Frequency | Percentage | Mean Score |
|----------|--|------------|-------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 1 | Quality of paper of study material was good. | AIOU | SA | 181 | 17.1 | 3.41 |
| | | | A | 449 | 42.4 | |
| | | | UNC | 117 | 11.0 | |
| | | | DA | 260 | 24.5 | |
| | | | SDA | 53 | 5.0 | |
| | | SLOU | SA | 450 | 42.5 | 4.23 |
| | | | A | 506 | 47.7 | |
| | | | UNC | 25 | 2.4 | |
| | | | DA | 60 | 5.7 | |
| | | | SDA | 19 | 1.8 | |

It is indicated from table 1 that in Allama Iqbal Open University 59.5 % students agreed that quality of paper of study material was good, 11.0 % were uncertain and 29.5 % were disagreed while in Sri Lanka Open University 90.2 % opinioned in favor of the statement, 2.4 % were uncertain and 7.5 % disagreed. The mean score is 3.41 and 4.23 for Allama Iqbal Open University and Sri Lanka Open University respectively.

Table 3 Printing of study material

| No. | Item | University | Level | Frequency | Percentage | Mean Score |
|----------|---|------------|-------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 2 | The printing of study material was done properly. | AIOU | SA | 227 | 21.4 | 3.85 |
| | | | A | 617 | 58.2 | |
| | | | UNC | 86 | 8.1 | |
| | | | DA | 93 | 8.8 | |
| | | | SDA | 37 | 3.5 | |
| | | SLOU | SA | 316 | 29.8 | 3.83 |
| | | | A | 502 | 47.4 | |
| | | | UNC | 12 | 1.1 | |
| | | | DA | 208 | 19.6 | |
| | | | SDA | 22 | 2.1 | |

It is evident from the table 3 that 79.6 % students of Allama Iqbal Open University agreed that printing of the study material was done properly, 8.1% were uncertain and 12.3 % disagreed, while in Sri Lanka Open University, 77.2% agreed with the statement, 1.1 % were uncertain, 21.7% disagreed with the statement. The mean score is 3.85 and 3.83 for Allama Iqbal Open University and Sri Lanka Open University respectively.

Table 4 Format of the study material

| No. | Item | University | Level | Frequency | Percentage | Mean Score |
|-----|--|------------|-------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 3 | The format of study material was good. | AIOU | SA | 6 | 30.0 | 4.15 |
| | | | A | 11 | 55.0 | |
| | | | UNC | 3 | 15.0 | |
| | | | DA | --- | --- | |
| | | | SDA | --- | --- | |
| | | SLOU | SA | 4 | 19.0 | 4.04 |
| | | | A | 15 | 71.4 | |
| | | | UNC | 1 | 4.8 | |
| | | | DA | 1 | 4.8 | |
| | | | SDA | --- | --- | |

It is evident from the table 3 that 85.0 % students of Allama Iqbal Open University held their opinion for the statement and 15.0 % remained uncertain while in Sri Lanka Open University 90.4 % agreed and 4.8 % were uncertain and 4.8 % disagreed. The mean score for Allama Iqbal Open University and Sri Lanka Open University is 4.15 and 4.04 respectively.

Table: 4 Language of study material

| No. | Item | University | Level | Frequency | Percentage | Mean Score |
|-----|--|------------|-------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 4 | The study material was in simple language. | AIOU | SA | 248 | 23.3 | 3.89 |
| | | | A | 593 | 55.9 | |
| | | | UNC | 102 | 9.6 | |
| | | | DA | 90 | 8.4 | |
| | | | SDA | 27 | 2.5 | |
| | | SLOU | SA | 141 | 13.3 | 3.31 |
| | | | A | 528 | 49.8 | |
| | | | UNC | 33 | 3.1 | |
| | | | DA | 242 | 22.8 | |
| | | | SDA | 116 | 10.9 | |

Table 4 reveals that 79.2 % students of the Allama Iqbal Open University agreed that the language of the study material was simple. Only 9.6 % were uncertain and almost same number i.e. 10.9 % disagreed, in comparison, in Sri Lanka Open University 63.1 % were agreed with the statement, 3.1 % remained uncertain and 33.7 % students disagreed with the statement. The mean score of Allama Iqbal Open University and Sri Lanka Open University, which is 3.89 and 3.31 respectively.

Table 5 Self-assessment questions

| No. | Item | University | Level | Frequency | Percentage | Mean Score |
|-----|--|------------|-------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 5 | The material included self-assessment questions. | AIOU | SA | 388 | 36.6 | 3.94 |
| | | | A | 462 | 43.6 | |
| | | | UNC | 26 | 2.5 | |
| | | | DA | 129 | 12.2 | |
| | | | SDA | 55 | 5.2 | |
| | | SLOU | SA | 379 | 35.8 | 3.88 |
| | | | A | 461 | 43.5 | |
| | | | UNC | 12 | 1.1 | |
| | | | DA | 134 | 12.6 | |
| | | | SDA | 74 | 7.0 | |

It is evident from table 5 that in Allama Iqbal Open University 80.2 % students agreed with the statement, only 2.5 % were uncertain and 17.4 % held the opposite opinion. 79.3 % of the students in Sri

Lanka Open University agreed, only 1.1 % was uncertain and 19.6 % disagreed. 3.94 and 3.88 is mean score for both universities i.e. Allama Iqbal Open University and Sri Lanka Open University respectively.

Table 6 Involvement of students

| No. | Item | University | Level | Frequency | Percentage | Mean Score |
|-----|--|------------|-------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 6 | The material involved the students into the studies. | AIOU | SA | 209 | 19.7 | 3.89 |
| | | | A | 650 | 61.3 | |
| | | | UNC | 87 | 8.2 | |
| | | | DA | 106 | 10.0 | |
| | | | SDA | 8 | 0.8 | |
| | | SLOU | SA | 134 | 12.6 | 3.24 |
| | | | A | 454 | 42.8 | |
| | | | UNC | 66 | 6.2 | |
| | | | DA | 346 | 32.6 | |
| | | | SDA | 60 | 5.7 | |

Table 6 shows that 81.0 % respondents of Allama Iqbal Open University agreed with the statement, 8.2 % remained uncertain and 10.8 % disagreed with the statement, while in Sri Lanka Open University 55.4 % agreed that the study material involved the students into the studies, 6.2 % remained uncertain and 38.3 % disagreed. The mean score for Allama Iqbal Open University and Sri Lanka Open University is 3.89 and 3.24 respectively.

Table 7 Simple and effective study material

| No. | Item | University | Level | Frequency | Percentage | Mean Score |
|-----|--|------------|-------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 7 | The students appreciated study material because of its effectiveness and simplicity. | AIOU | SA | 157 | 14.8 | 3.58 |
| | | | A | 550 | 51.9 | |
| | | | UNC | 173 | 16.3 | |
| | | | DA | 114 | 10.8 | |
| | | | SDA | 66 | 6.2 | |
| | | SLOU | SA | 217 | 20.5 | 3.60 |
| | | | A | 513 | 48.4 | |
| | | | UNC | 23 | 2.2 | |
| | | | DA | 307 | 29.0 | |
| | | | SDA | --- | --- | |

Table 7 reflects that 66.7 % respondents of Allama Iqbal Open University held their opinion in favor of the statement, 16.3 % were uncertain and 17.0 % disagreed, while in Sri Lanka Open University 68.9 % students agreed, 2.2 % were uncertain and 29.0 % disagreed. The mean score obtained from Allama Iqbal Open University and Sri Lanka Open University is 3.58 and 3.60 respectively.

5. Conclusion: The followings are the conclusions based on the findings:

1. Paper quality of study material of Sri Lanka Open University was better than study material of Allama Iqbal Open University.
2. The printing of study material of both universities was done properly at the same degree.
3. The language of the study material of AIOU was simpler than SLOU.
4. Format quality of the study material of both these universities was good.
5. Study material at B. Ed level was almost equally effective in both the universities i.e. AIOU and SLOU.
6. The study material of Allama Iqbal Open University involved their students into studies but Sri Lanka Open University's study material lack this characteristics.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

In the light of data analysis, documentary comparison and findings, following recommendations are made for Allama Iqbal Open University:

1. Allama Iqbal Open University may manage the resources i.e. finance and manpower in order to provide its students study material with good quality paper.
2. More questions may be added in the self assessment exercises in study material at B. Ed level to involve the students in activities.
3. Sri Lanka Open University may involve their students by adding self assessment questions at B.

Ed level.

4. Sri Lanka Open University may take certain steps to make their study material at B. Ed level simpler by changing the language of the study material.
5. Printing quality regarding missing word may be improved in study material by Sri Lanka Open University.

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