

Identification of Training Needs for Vocational Tutors at Allama Iqbal Open University

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to analyze the identification of training needs for vocational tutors. The main objectives of the study were to identify the training needs of vocational tutors, to evaluate the performance of vocational tutors and to identify /solve problem faced by vocational tutors to suggest suitable solutions of vocational tutors' problems. Questionnaires were used as the main sources of data gathering tool. Questionnaires were developed for the target population after the review of related literature. The target population consisted of students, tutors and academicians of AIOU. Main findings of the study indicate that majority of the students were in favour of vocational courses being taught by the AIOU through the distance education system. Majority of students were satisfied about admission, time duration, study material, practical skills and tutorial arrangement but did not agree to encouraging remarks as well as return of assignments in due course of time. Conclusions of the study were included that technical courses being offered through distance education system are useful for developing sufficient of vocational skills and full opportunity was provide for learning the theory and practical skills at the technical center. It was recommended that trained tutors may be appointed to turn the system effectively.

Keywords: *Training Needs, Vocational Tutors, AIOU*

1. Introduction

Education plays significant role for the socio-economic and political development of an individual and the society. (International Bureau of Education, 1982) Education, or being educated, involves all senses being exposed to a series of stimulate, which will enhance and grow the mental capacity of someone, to achieve a set of, or a specific objective.(Rhodes, 2010) Education is considered as a precondition for economic and total factor productivity growth through its contribution to both adoption and innovation (Benhabib & Spiegel, 1994).

According to CEDEFOP, (2000) formal learning consists of learning that occurs within an organized and structured context (formal education, in-company training), and that is designed as learning. It may lead to a formal recognition (diploma, certificate). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective. On the other hand non-formal education is often to serve people who were classified as failures at school. In developing countries such as Pakistan such people are usually the underprivileged, deprived and often-destitute population of the rural areas (Rashid, 1998).

It was realized that the global changing circumstances demanded abrupt changes in the formal system but due to its s ----- llana, (1984) distance education is becoming an increasingly common mode of education. It is specially sign of maturity and it soon move from a field of study to discipline. It is likely to spread fast in the developing countries as it promises to ease out the mounting pressure on formal school system, reach with the speed and then economy to educationally disadvantaged groups of population and contribute significantly to the acceleration of the development process through the use of communication technology. Rashid (1992) describes "distance education as a combination of effective use of mass media such as radio, television, correspondence material, a variety of audio, visual aids, study centers and distance tutors".

The day by day after the arrival of new technology the scope of distance education can be seen in many areas of the society. According to Khawaja, (1990) the scope of distance education is almost limitless. It can have wider range of application, cover a wide scope of atrocities, contribute to general and specific national objectives, particularly focusing on specific target groups using a wide range of resources that has been typical of the existing system.

In distance education system instructions are carried out particularly in Open University by a variety of teaching and learning methods. Teachers in distance education institutions develop instruction plans, implement them and evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction to enable their students to acquire their knowledge skills prescribed in the course of study. The tutorial support provides assistance to utilize their potential in relevant courses of study. Slator, B. M. (1999) has stated that "tutors provide assistance to players in the course of their deductive reasoning within the scientific problem solving required for the accomplishment of their goals".

A tutor in distance education system is expected to play the role of a guide and an inspirer. There is a resemblance in the work of a classroom teacher and a tutor. The tutor communicates the word of print, presented as bits of information. The tutor in distance education solves the learning difficulties of the learners. Tutors also identify and foster desirable personality traits of learners. Apart from the responsibilities of tutors, the role of vocational tutor is different. He has not only to clarify the different aspects of the course/programme but to provide practical training to the students also. His training needs and provision of training is different from general education tutors. Due to multi-dimensional role of tutor, the researcher has taken this research. Therefore the study was designed to identify training needs of vocational tutors at Allama Iqbal Open University.

2. Review of Related Literature

Training Need Assessment

There are three aspects of training i.e. knowledge, skills, and attitudes which have to be taken together successfully. The essence of these three things is necessary if a person is to develop his/her to contribute effectively to group or organization to which he/she belongs. Training is about enabling people to gain knowledge, to practice their skills and to shape their attitudes. Need assessment is used to identifying gaps and to provide information for a decision on whether gaps on identifying and solving performance problems. These performance problems may be related to knowledge, skills, and attitudes. (<http://www.uodc.org/pdf/youthnet/tools>).

The words need assessment and need analysis have same meaning and interchangeable, and have meaning and purpose to assess and analyze. The training need assessment ensures that there is a need for training and to identify the nature of contents of training programme. Needs assessment is defined as a type of evaluation that provides a formal process for identifying, documenting, and prioritizing gaps between current and desired results, based on the cost to meet the need versus the cost to ignore the need. The needs assessment incorporates data and opinions from different sources to enable decisions about what to change as well as what to continue. (Guerra, I; 2002, Kaufman, R. 2000). A needs assessment is a broad, systematic research effort like a needs assessment can be highly beneficial in addressing many communitywide needs and problems. Most importantly, such an assessment can provide valuable information for understanding a particular social problem that is troubling a local community. The alternatives depending on idle talk or a few case examples as evidence, or having feelings about a problem are not enough documentation to take the problem seriously. (Marlow, 2005).

Identification of Training Needs

The aim of training is to develop new skills, knowledge or expertise” (Patrick, 1992). Goldstein (1980) adds that training is “the acquisition of skills, concepts or attitudes that result in improved performance”. According to UNESCO (2006) source, identification of training needs is the starting point for a training programme. Systematic identification of training needs goes a long way in improving the quality of training. Needs goes a long way in improving the quality of training. Identification of training needs helps in the determination of training objectives, design of curriculum, selection of training modalities and plans a training strategy.

Vocational Programmes of AIOU

According to AIOU (1992) department of engineering and technology established a department of technical and vocational education placed in the faculty of sciences of AIOU which is responsible for catering to the needs of courses in industrial, technical, and vocational fields. At present the department is offering the following vocational courses.

- i. Electrical wiring (HSSC level) code 307
- ii. Electrician (I-ISSC level) code 314
- iii. Fundamental Electricity (HSSC level) code 344
- iv. Auto Mechanics (HSSC level) code 351
- v. Radio Servicing (I-ISSC level) code 348
- vi. Maintenance and repair of Household Electrical appliances (HSSC level) code 341
- vii. Maintenance of Household Electrical appliances (SSC level) code 212
- viii. Auto Servicing (HSSC level) code 332

Role of Vocational Tutor

Distance tutor is personnel who provide learning contact between the subject matter and the correspondence students. Thus tutor becomes a bridge between the student and the institution. (Rashid, 1998).The term tutor according to Robinson, (1981) used to refer both to the person who has closed content with a student through the medium of written assignments and face to face and telephone discussions. According to Rashid, (1992) “normally distance tutors are recruited from suitable teachers, ex-teachers, specialists, professionals or other suitably educated people”.

Objectives of the Study

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To identify the training needs of vocational tutors.
2. To evaluate the performance of vocational tutors and to identify problems faced by vocational tutors.
3. To suggest suitable solutions of vocational tutors problems.

3. Research Method

The study was descriptive in nature and survey was conducted and data collected from the population. 170 students of Rawalpindi and Sahiwal regions who were enrolled in vocational courses during semester's spring 2005 to spring 2006 were randomly selected as the sample of the study. 50 Tutors and 41 academicians were also selected throughout Pakistan as the sample of the study.

Questionnaire was the collecting instrument in this study. Three questionnaires were developed. One was for the tutors and other two were for the students and academicians of AIOU respectively. In each questionnaire the respondents were requested to give their response to each item on five point rating scale:

Strongly Agreed	(SA)
Agreed	(A)
Uncertain	(UN)
Disagreed	(DA)
Strongly Disagreed	(SDA)

The questionnaires for three categories were tested through pilot testing. Thirty students, two tutors of semester 2004 and one member from academicians were taken as a sample for the pilot study. All the questionnaires were finalized in the light of pilot testing.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed on percentage and mean score. The following scales were used to calculate the mean score.

Strongly Agreed	(SA)	5 points
Agreed	(A)	4 points
Uncertain	(UN)	3 points
Disagreed	(DA)	2 points
Strongly Disagreed	(SDA)	1 points

Mean score was calculated by using the following mentioned formulae:

$$\text{Mean Score: } \frac{f_{SA} \times 5 + f_A \times 4 + f_{UN} \times 3 + f_{DA} \times 2 + f_{SDA} \times 1}{N}$$

4. Results

Table 1 indicates that 18 statements were framed about tutors' opinions to know the needs assessment of training of vocational tutors. The mean score of these statements range between 2.58 to 4.82 which indicate that respondents have positive responses. Majority of the respondents (96%) agreed that they received in time information about their tutorship. 78% were of the opinion that they received reading material on time and mostly were also responded that tutors were expert in their subject. (86%) were in favour that tutors behaviour towards students is friendly. While (94%) agreed that they involve their students into studies. (98%) agreed that they use modern technology in their teaching learning process. Majority of the respondents agreed that tutors provide guidance to their students in their study difficulties. (48%) respondents were not agreed with the statement that tutors observe punctuality in the class room. All most all tutors agreed that reference material is provided. (70%) respondents agreed that tutors marks assignments on time and (78%) were of the opinion that tutors give their comments on time. While (68%) were satisfied that tutors normally return assignments on time. All respondents agreed that vocational tutors need training in the area of how to teach in tutorials, short-term courses and how tutors can attend seminars, conferences' and in-service training courses etc.

Table 1 Tutors Opinion

S.NO	STATEMENTS	SA	A	UN	DA	SDA	Mean Score
1	Received the information from AIOU about tutorship in time	24	24	2	0	0	4.44
		96%		4 %			
2	Received the reading material on time	19	20	3	8	0	4.00
		78%		6%	16%		
3	Tutor are experts in their subject	29	18	3	0	0	4.52
		94%		6%			
4	Tutors behavior towards students is friendly	31	12	1	6	0	4.36
		86%		2%	12%		
5	Tutors involve the students into studies	26	21	3	0	0	4.42
		94%		6%			
6	Tutors use modern technology in teaching learning process	10	30	1	0	0	4.36
		98%		2%			
7	Tutors provide guidance to their students in selecting the reference material	25	21	4	0	0	4.42
		92%		8%			
8	Tutors provide guidance to the students in their study difficulty	28	17	5	0	0	4.36
		90%		10%			
9	Tutors observe punctuality in the class	6	12	8	17	7	2.86
		36%		16%	48%		
10	Reference material is provided to the tutors	17	28	5	0	0	4.24
		90%		10%			
11	Tutors mark assignments on time	10	25	8	7	0	3.76
		70%		16%	14%		
12	Tutors give comments on the students assignments	12	27	3	8	0	3.86
		78%		6%	16%		
13	Tutors encourage students through comments on their assignments	0	13	10	20	7	2.58
		26%		20%	54%		
14	Tutors normally return the assignments on time	6	28	2	14	0	3.52
		68%		4%	28%		

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15	Tutors need training on how to teach in the tutorial	38	12	0	0	0	4.76
		100%					
16	Short term training courses are needed for tutors	39	11	0	0	0	4.74
		100%					
17	Tutors need encouragement to attend seminars and conferences etc.	41	9	0	0	0	4.82
		100%					
18	Tutors need in-service training to work in the system of distance education	29	19	2	0	0	4.54
		96%		4%			

Table 2 Students Opinion

S.NO	STATEMENTS	SA	A	UN	DA	SDA	Mean Score
1	Tutors intimate their tutorship in time	80	39	42	7	2	4.10
		70%		42.7%	53%		
2	Tutors attend the class in time	48	78	24	18	2	3.89
		74%		14%	21.7%		
3	Tutors are well experienced in their subject	106	46	12	6	0	4.48
		89.5%		7.1%	3.55		
4	Tutors attend the study center regularly	36	54	56	6	18	3.49
		53%		32.9%	10.6%		
5	Tutors give immediate responses to students enquiries	16	80	28	28	18	3.28
		56.5%		16.5%	27%		
6	Tutors often returned the assignments unstamped	0	20	28	34	88	1.88
		11.8%		16.5%	71.8%		
7	Tutors provide practical skills as required by the students	78	36	54	2	00	4.11
		67%		31.8%	1.2%		
8	Tutors take interest in conducting tutorials	32	72	42	24	0	3.65
		61.3%		24.7%	14.1%		
9	Tutors provide guidance on how to study self instructional material as well as its practically implementation	66	42	44	18	0	3.91
		63.5%		25.9%	10.6%		
10	Tutors use audio visual aids to facilitate the tutorials	72	50	44	2	2	4.10
		71.8%		25.9%	2.4%		
11	Tutors way of dealing with students is friendly	96	26	44	4	0	4.25
		71.8%		25.9%	2.4%		
12	Tutors involve students into studies	94	12	46	16	2	4.05
		62.4%		27.1 %	10.5%		

Table 2 indicates that 12 statements were framed to obtain the responses of students about the needs of vocational tutors. (70%) respondents were of the opinion that tutors intimate their tutorship to the students in time. (74%) agreed that tutors attend the class in time. Respondents were in the opinion that tutors were expert in their subject. Only (53%) agreed that tutors attend the study center regularly and (56%) agreed that tutors give responses immediately to the students' enquiry. (71.8%) respondents with mean score (1.86) not agreed with the statement that tutors often return the assignments without unstamped.

(67%) respondents agreed that tutors provide practical skills as required by the students. (61.3%) respondents with the mean score (3.65) were in favour that tutors take interest in conducting tutorials. (63.5%) of the respondents agreed that tutors provide guidance in the practical use of instructional material. (71.8%) were in favour of the use of A.V aids and also agreed that tutor has friendly behaviour with their students and (62.4%) were of the opinion that tutors involve students into studies.

Table. 3 Academicians Opinion

S.NO	STATEMENTS	SA	A	UN	DA	SDA	Mean Score
1	Practical books are provided by the vocational study center to the class	28	10	2	1	0	4.58
		94.7%		4.9%	2.4%		
2	Tutors are provided guidance about their duties	22	15	4	0	0	4.43
		90.2%		9.8%			
3	Tutors are well aware with the latest development and use of technology in teaching learning process	3	19	11	5	3	3.34
		53.6%		26.8%	19.5%		
4	Vocational tutors are appointed on merit	22	19	0	0	0	4.58
		100%					
5	Regional office respects to the queries of tutors on time	15	16	7	3	0	4.04
		75.6%		17.1%	7.3%		
6	Tutors always cooperate with the staff of the regional office	8	14	13	6	0	3.58
		54.6%		31.7%	14.6%		
7	Tutors take care about the relevant material i.e. tutor guide, manual assignments schedule, practical accessories in the study center	19	17	4	1	0	4.31
		87.8%		9.7%	2.4%		
8	Tutors need training on how to teach in the tutorials	35	6	0	0	0	4.85
		100%					
9	Short term courses are needed for tutors	35	6	0	0	0	4.85
		100%					
10	Vocational tutors need encouragement to attend seminars and conferences etc.	27	14	0	0	0	4.65
		100%					
11	Poor financial provision for tutorial services influence the tutors performance	28	10	2	1	0	4.58
		92.7%		4.9%	2.4%		
12	Tutors have interaction with the department	8	18	10	3	2	3.65
		62.4%		24.4%	12.2%		
13	Tutors provide feedback on the problems involved in the study	3	12	16	7	3	3.12
		36.6%		39%	24.4%		
14	Tutors are poorly briefed by the department	18	19	2	2	0	4.29
		90.2%		4.9%	4.9%		
15	Tutors encourage their students by their positive comments on the assignments	4	13	17	4	3	3.12
		36.6%		41.5%	21.0%		

Table 3 reveals that (94.7%) respondents were in favour that books are provided to the class with the help of vocational study centers. (90.2%) agreed that tutors are provided proper guidance. (53.6%) with mean score (3.34) agreed that tutors are well aware with the latest development and use of technology in teaching learning process. All participants with mean score (4.58) were in favour that tutors were appointed on merit. (75.6%) agreed that regional office respects to the queries of tutors on time. (54.6%) with mean score (3.58) were in favour of that tutors always cooperate with the staff of the regional office. (87.7%) agreed that tutors take care about the relevant material i.e. tutor guide, manual assignments schedule, practical accessories in the study center. All respondents agreed that tutors need training on how to teach in the tutorials, short term courses are also needed for tutors and vocational tutors need encouragement to attend seminars and conferences etc. (92.7%) agreed that poor financial provision for tutorial services influence the tutor's performance. (62.4%) agreed that tutors have interaction with the department. (36.6%) agreed that tutors provide feedback on the problems involved in the study. While (39%) with mean score (3.12) have no decision regarding this statement. (90.2%) agreed that tutors are poorly briefed by the department. While (41.5%) undecided that tutors encourage their students by their positive comments on the assignments

5. Conclusions

Tutors agreed that they received the information and reading material in time. Tutors are experts in their subject. Modern technology is used in teaching learning process. Guidance is provided in selecting the reference materials and how to take final examination etc. Tutors considered that they do not observe punctuality in the class. Vocational tutors are appointed on merit. They marked assignments in time keeping in view all aspects of the questions and comments. They did not encourage students through comments on their assignment.

Tutor returned marked assignments to the students immediately after marking and assignment result also sent well in time to regional office. Tutor replied to the queries of students. Tutors also encourage student-teacher interaction in the tutorials. Tutors were a dire need for vocational skills to train them on how to teach in tutorials, encourage them to attend seminars and conferences.

Students' opinion regarding identification of tutor need vocational training was that the tutors intimate their tutorship and attend the classes in time. Vocational tutors are well experienced in their subjects. Tutors give immediate response to the students' queries and returned marked assignments quickly with their remarks. Students rejected that tutors often returned the assignments unstamped. Full opportunity was provided for learning the theory and practical skills at the technical study center. Students take interest in conducting tutorials. Majority of the view that tutors provide guidance on how to study the self instructional material as well it's practically implementation. Tutor used A.V aids and multimedia to facilitate the students and tutors attitudes toward students was friendly and they involve the students in their studies.

According to academicians opinion tutors were provided guidance for the performance of their duties and they were appointed on merit. Regional offices responded to the queries of tutors on time. Tutors cooperate with the staff of the regional office. Tutor needed training for the arrangement of tutorial and short-term training workshops. Vocational tutors were encouraged to attend seminars and conferences etc. Poor performance provisions for tutorial services influences the tutor's performance. Tutors provided feedback on the problem involved in the study center and tutors are poorly briefed by the department.

6. Recommendations

On the basis of conclusions drawn from findings of the study following recommendations are made.

The vocational tutors appointed for the first time may be made familiar with the system of distance education in vocational education so that they may work in accordance with the requirements of the system. For this purpose tutor's training may be arranged.

Students should be guided by the vocational tutors in subject selection, solution of their personal and learning problems and forming better study habits.

Vocational tutors should be aware of latest development technology and its uses in learning process. All facilities and extra time be given to the students for practical work.

Audio Visual aids and multimedia may be provided to the study center. A technical study center may be established in every district. Vocational tutors may be guide in the teaching methodology in tutorial. Vocational tutors should be encouraged to attend the short term courses, seminars and conferences etc. Tutor should be supervised closely to ensure punctuality.

The present study was delimited to Rawalpindi and Sahiwal regions, a same study be carried out for all the regions of AIOU to generalize the results. A detailed training model for vocational tutors may be developed by AIOU to meet the needs of distance learners.

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