

Effectiveness of ICT Training Workshop for Tutors of Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan

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Abstract—The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of ICT training workshop of tutors of Allama Iqbal Open University Pakistan. The study was delimited to tutors of Multan region. The total sample comprised of 100 tutors. All the tutors who participated in ICT training workshop in Multan region were taken as sample in the study. A questionnaire having two parts, based on five point rating scale was developed by the researcher. Part one was about the competency level of computer skills while Part two was based on items related to training delivery, structure and content. Part One of questionnaire had five levels of competency about computer skills. The questionnaire was personally administered and collected back by the researcher himself on the last day of workshop.

The collected data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Through this study it was found that majority of the tutors strongly agreed that training enhanced their computer skills. Majority of the respondents consider themselves to be generally competent in the use of computer. They also agreed that there was appropriate infrastructure and technical support in lab during training workshop. Moreover, it was found that the training imparted the knowledge of pedagogy of using computers for distance education.

Keywords—ICT, Tutors, AIOU.

I. INTRODUCTION

EQUITY of access to education is the right of all humanity. All over the world requirement of ICT based education has extremely been intensified. The formal system of education fails to provide education opportunities to all children. In this situation the distance education offers its unique services. Distance education is the most promptly progressing area of education, and its future affects on all education system cannot be undermined.

Open learning and distance education are instrumental in opening access to education. “The terms open learning and distance education represent approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners” (UNESCO 2002) [1]. The distance education free learners from the time and place. “Distance education focuses on teaching methods and technology on an individual basis, to students who feel difficulty to be physically present in a

traditional educational setting.” (Distance Education, December 27, 2011) [2].

Now days, many universities are providing distance education. In fact the progress in technologies has changed the procedure of distance education to a great extent. The significance of distance education cannot be ignored because there are many students who want to study but they don't have opportunities that meet their needs. AIOU provides favorable circumstances for working people to improve their qualifications without leaving their job or home. “Open University was established as Peoples Open University under an act of parliament in 1974. It was then the world's second Open University; the first such university was established in the UK in 1969” (Allama Iqbal Open University 2011) [3]. In Pakistan distance education is especially suitable to the female as it provide them facilities to study at home. The people living in the tribal and remote areas far from formal educational institutions have an opportunity to learn. In Pakistan the formal system of education could not expand with the increase of population. The dropout rate and gender inequality are very significant in Pakistan. In order to meet such challenges, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) was setup. Now Allama Iqbal Open University is offering from literacy to PhD level courses. “The AIOU, a Mega University, is a unique institution in many ways, affording educational facility to all children from ‘nine to ninety’ ” (Safdar.M, 2011) [4]. AIOU has come up as the largest University of Pakistan in terms of course enrolment and programs.

In distance education system support services play an integral role. The students don't get education directly in the regular classroom. They have not face to face involvement with the teachers as in regular class system. They are provided with guidance in different way. The role of ICT to speed up the delivery of the support services has now become inevitable for the distant learners. There are enough qualified teachers who can operate computers and use ICTs in their learning and teaching. “Training for these purposes is so important and vital in education that some researchers claim if insufficient effort is put into training teachers to use technology and to use it imaginatively then it is probably better to dispense with technology altogether” (Davies 2007) [5].

In each semester, Allama Iqbal Open University employs a vast number of instructing staff called as “Tutor”, for educating different courses, extending from secondary level to PhD degree. The teachers are hired as part time tutors and these tutors are registered and their profiles are saved in

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central database of open university. Due to important role of tutors in distance learning system Allama Iqbal Open University decided to train its tutors in ICT field.

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training program was inaugurated by Vice Chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad (AIOU) in October 2010. The program started with the collaboration of Intel Education Initiative Pakistan. AIOU, planned to impart computer skills to its tutors all over the country through the regional services network. In this respect master trainers were being trained by Intel Education Initiative, an internationally renowned organization in the field of computer technology. Plan of the training was to prepare master trainers to train tutors at regional and districts level [6].

AIOU is only the University amongst all Open Universities around the world which started ICT training program for tutors. In the first batch, 50 tutors of Islamabad Region were trained. The ICT training continued up to one week and the training was conducted in the lab of Computer Science Department of the University.

The university has organized 36 regional campuses and centers in different parts of the country to promote system of education at terminal level. There are able and skillful teachers and experts in every field of education. The regional directorate appoints them as the visiting faculty called "Tutors". A group of learners is assigned to a tutor for guidance. Assignments written by the students are evaluated by the tutors and returned to them. The regional campuses also arrange practical training, teaching practice, workshops and seminars and facilitate holding of examinations in their own areas. ICT training program started at regional level after training workshops held at main campus of Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad.

This research study was focused on ICT Tutors training workshop of Allama Iqbal Open University Pakistan in Multan region. This research describes an ICT training workshop provided to tutors of Allama Iqbal Open University, Multan region. The ICT training continued from December 12, 2011 up to December 17, 2011 and timing of the training was 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily. The main purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of ICT training program of tutors of Multan region Allama Iqbal Open University Pakistan.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were answered:

1. What were the important characteristics of the ICT training program as perceived by tutors regarding delivery, structure and content?
2. At what level tutors had got competency in computer skills through ICT training workshop?
3. Which aspects of the training were most valued by the tutors?
4. Was there appropriate infrastructure and technical support?

III. METHOD

All the tutors who participated in ICT training workshop in Multan region were taken as sample of study. After discussing with the experts, the researcher developed a questionnaire based on five point rating scale having two parts. Part one was about the competency level of computer skills after training as perceived by tutors while Part two included items related to training delivery, structure and content. Part One of questionnaire had five levels of competency about computer skills. Scale value for part two of questionnaire was SA (Strongly Agreed)=5, A (Agreed)=4, UD (Undecided)=3, DA (Disagreed)=2 and SDA (Strongly Disagreed) =1. The questionnaire was personally administered and collected back by the researcher himself on the last day of workshop.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The overall picture which emerges is a positive one. Majority of the respondents consider themselves to be generally competent in the use of computer. As depicted in Table I,

TABLE I
TUTORS' COMPUTER SKILLS

Skills %		Excellent 1	Good 2	Fair 3	Low Capability 4	No Capability 5
Word processing	Male	7	29	5	9	2
	Female	11	17	8	11	2
Spreadsheets	Male	---	7	18	13	5
	Female	17	21	4	6	2
Internet browsing	Male	8	26	7	8	1
	Female	5	17	12	6	4
Presentation tools	Male	4	12	24	12	5
	Female	5	17	12	6	3

64 % respondents perceived themselves to be either good or excellent in the use of word processing and 72% in case of internet browsing. Although the situation was different in case of spreadsheets and power presentation skills. Only 17% of participants were good or excellent in use of spreadsheet and 38 % tutors perceived as good or excellent in power point presentation tools.

Tutors' Perceptions about Training Program

Results show that 90 % participants disagreed to the statement that the training sessions were too long. 66% tutors disagreed to the statement that they did not learn too many new things (statement 3).

TABLE II
TUTORS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT TRAINING PROGRAM

No	Statements		SD	DA	UD	A	SA	Mean Score
1	The training sessions were too long.	Male	28	17	1	4	2	1.7
		Female	20	25	----	3	----	
2	Too much was crammed into short time.	Male	22	29	3	4	3	1.9
		Female	14	20	2	---	2	
3	I did not learn too many new things.	Male	18	21	---	10	10	2.5
		Female	12	15	---	8	6	
4	There was no feedback after tile tasks.	Male	2	2	---	34	23	4.2
		Female	---	2	---	22	15	
5	There were no examples related to my subject.	Male	10	41	2	6	3	2.2
		Female	7	27	---	2	2	
6	There should have been more examples of how to use computers.	Male	3	3	1	42	14	4.0
		Female	---	2	---	26	9	
7	The training did not contain opportunities to practice the use of computers during the training.	Male	12	38	3	----	2	1.9
		Female	16	24	----	2	3	
8	The training did not develop my knowledge of pedagogy of using computers for distance education.	Male	28	23	3	5	3	1.9
		Female	18	14	---	4	2	
9	The training developed my computer skills.	Male	2	3	1	18	38	4.4
		Female	---	2	---	12	24	
10	The trainer was very knowledgeable on the use of computers for distance education.	Male	6	6	---	19	16	3.4
		Female	3	4	---	20	24	
11	I know how to use computer as I have computer at my home/office that is why it was not important for me.	Male	12	15	---	7	14	2.6
		Female	17	21		5	9	
12	I was completing successfully the task that the trainer was giving us effectively.	Male	3	5	---	23	12	3.8
		Female	6	7		29	15	
13	We many times had problems to get online in the lab.	Male	21	33	---	4	2	1.8
		Female	14	25	---	---	1	
14	The lab was appropriately designed and it was corresponding to my needs.	Male	2	5	1	29	6	3.7
		Female	5	3	2	39	8	
15	I lost my motivation for learning during the training.	Male	25	21	2	3	2	1.9
		Female	23	16	---	5	3	

According to 94 % tutors, there was no feedback after tile tasks and 66% disagreed to the statement that they did not learn too many new things. According to 85% participants there were no examples related to their subject (Statement 5).

91 % tutors were of view that there should have been more examples of how to use computers (Statement 6). Mean score was 4.0 (more than 3.00), which shows the higher level of agreement to the statement.

83% disagreed to the statement that the training did not develop their knowledge of pedagogy of using computers for distance education. 90% tutors disagreed to the statement that the training did not contain opportunities to practice the use of computers during the training. According to 92% participants the training developed their computer skills (Statement9). Mean score was 4.4 (more than 3.00), which shows the higher level of agreement on statement.

81% tutors agreed the statement that the trainer was very knowledgeable on the use of computers for distance education. 65 % participants were disagreed to the statement that the training was not important for them. 93% disagreed to the statement that they many times had problems to get online in the lab (statement 13). 82% tutors of the sample were in favor of the given statement that the lab was appropriately designed and it was corresponding to their needs. 85% were disagreed to the statement that they lost their motivation for learning during the training.

V. CONCLUSION

The conclusion that can be drawn from this study was that the training workshop of ICTs proved very effective. Tutors were fluent users of word processing and e-mail after getting training. Tutors had become able to use presentations tools, although the competency in use of spreadsheets (Excel) was poor among tutors.

In the light of findings it was recommended that the duration of session should be increased. Feedback should be collected during training workshop. The training sessions should be enriched with related examples to the pedagogy of using computers for distance education. All the tutors should be trained. There should be provided more opportunities to practice computers during the training. The training was important for all the tutors regardless they were using computers or not. The lab was well equipped and the trainer was competent and knowledgeable in using computers in distance learning program. The participants took much interest as the training provide motive to use computers.

This study suffered from a few limitations that future research may plan to overcome. First, it addressed tutors in a same way who had computers at their home or offices as well as who had not computer knowledge at all. Second, because of its scope the study was limited to questionnaire only. Interview data and observations can enrich future studies in this area.

Lack of training is the major barrier in the use of ICT. These technologies increase students' motivation and effectiveness of teaching learning process. ICTs play vital role in enriching research environment. Therefore, emphasis may

be given on the training aspect so that optimum benefits may be achieved from the existing paraphernalia

21st century is referred to as information age society, which is the real power behind globalization. Skills to use ICTs are inevitable for teachers to meet the challenges created by globalization and information era. Doubtless to say that teachers are back bone of any education system and prepare young generations compatible to the prevailing and emerging scenario of this planet by transfer of knowledge and excellencies.

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