Role of Distance Education in Promoting Access to Higher Education: An Experience of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

Dr. Irshad Hussain
Associate Professor & Chairman
Department of Educational Training
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur Bahawalpur, Pakistan
E-mails: irshad.hussain@iub.edu.pk, irshad_iub@yahoo.com, irshad_iub@hotmail.com

الاستاذ المشارك: الدكتور ارشاد حسین
رئيس قسم التدريب التربوي
الجامعة الإسلامية بهاول بور ، باكستان
خلاصة الموضوع

ان باكستان دولة هامة وهي تسري في طريقها إلى الازدهار، حيث 136 من الجامعات و المؤسسات (الاهلية و الحكومية) المكتفة بدرجة، متوفر لها من خلال لجنة التعليم العالي، والتي تقبل أعضا جدها في سوق نشر التعليم العالي و إصلاحه على الطلاب الذين يشكلون في الأطار ال يوجد من تلك الجامعات و المؤسسات. و يلي مش من السياسة التعليمية الفردية لعام 2009 أنتج 5.5% فقط من الطلاب شاركوا في النشاط التعليمي ذلك العام. بالنظر إلى إعداد تسجيل بين الطلاب على التعليم العالي و بين مواقع حصولهم في باكستان. في هذه الصورة لا بد من اختيار استراتيجي مؤثر لكلمة و تطوير التعليم الرسمي في مجال التعليم العالي و نشرها، نظرًا لهوية التعليم العالي و رغبة الطلاب لطلب العلم. أن الفوائد الجامعية الإسلامية بدون دور مؤثر و منحة للتلاميذ من المدارس والتعليم في المناطق بعيدة داخل و خارج باكستان. و هي ورودين الاحتفال في الجامعات (الباكستانية) ولكن لا يستطيعون أن يستهدفوا إليها لكن نحصل ما أرادوا من التعليم والتدريب.

اعتمد المعهد وعرضت على الماجستير في الفلسفة(M.PHI) في التعليم من خلال برنامح التعليم عن بعد في وضع نصي في التعليم في العام الدراسي 2011 و 2012. وقد كان أكثر من ثلاثي طلاب كابون أوراق الاحتفال في هذا العهد. برنامج المذكر، بالإضافة إلى 15 مقدمة مقالية، مع ذلك في ظل الظروف الخاصة تم تسجيل 35 طلابًا في البرنامج و بدء تكبد عملية إعداد الطلبة و انتاج الاحتفال حددت لبرامج الجامعات الإلكترونية الرائدة في نظام التعليم عن بعد. حيث أشادوا ببرنامج التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية لبرامج الجامعات الإلكترونية الرائدة في نظام التعليم عن بعد. حيث أشادوا ببرنامج التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية لبرامج الجامعات الإلكترونية الرائدة في نظام التعليم عن بعد. حيث أشادوا ببرنامج التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية لبرامج الجامعات الإلكترونية الرائدة في نظام التعليم عن بعد. حيث أشادوا ببرنامج التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية لبرامج الجامعات الإلكترونية الرائدة في نظام التعليم عن بعد. حيث أشادوا ببرنامج التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية لبرامج الجامعات الإلكترونية الرائدة في نظام التعليم عن بعد. حيث أشادوا ببرنامج التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية لبرامج الجامعات الإلكترونية الرائدة في نظام التعليم عن بعد. حيث أشادوا ببرنامج التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية لبرامج الجامعات الإلكترونية الرائدة في نظام التعليم عن بعد. حيث أشادوا ببرنامج التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية لبرامج الجامعات الإلكترونية الرائدة في نظام التعليم عن بعد. حيث أشادوا BProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية لبرامج الجامعات الإلكترونية الرائدة في نظام التعليم عن بعد. حيث أشادوا BProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية لبرامج الجامعات الإلكترونية الرائدة في نظام التعليم عن بعد. حيث أشادوا BProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم والاحتفال، وطرق تفاعلية LProgram التعليم و
Pakistan is a developing country where 139 (public and private sector) universities and degree awarding institutions recognized by the Higher Education Commission are imparting higher education in the country. The National Educational Policy 2009 describes the participation rate at higher education level up to 5% only. It indicates an imbalance between the demand of higher education and opportunities in the country. In such a situation, there seems a dire need of a strategy to supplement the formal system of higher education by promoting access to all.

Keeping in view ever increasing demand of higher education, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur that is a formal mode university established an Institute of Distance Education to cater such educational needs of the people. The institute planned and offered an M.Phil (in Education) programme through distance education mode in spring semester 2011. Two hundred plus candidates applied for admission against 25 seats. However, under special circumstances 36 students were enrolled in the programme. After completion of the admission process the students were given an orientation on how to study in distance education system. The semester was broke up into two halves mid-term and final term. The institute provided learning materials accompanied by instructional booklet. The students were assigned to prepare two assignments for the entire semester; one before mid-term and second before final-term workshop. The students had to be present in the classroom for 24 hours (12 hours during mid-term and 12 hours during final-term workshop) for one 3-credit hour course. Skype conference, social media and mobile phones were used for academic coaching of the students. They had to give presentations and submit the assignments after plagiarism check through Turnitin software. In the examination, students performed well. They showed their willingness to continue their studies ahead. This experience contributed a lot to the university administration, academician and students. The strategic operations and measures, success and achievements, problems and issues and challenges are presented in the paper. The experience will be shared through presentation in the conference.

**Keywords:** Distance Education, Skype Conference, Social Media, Higher Education, Learning Experience
INTRODUCTION

Pakistan as a developing country embraced the 21st century with promise of promoting opportunities for higher education to all irrespective of gender, caste and creed. Therefore, some innovative steps were taken by the then Government of Pakistan and university authorities. Amongst others; the establishment of the virtual university (VU) of Pakistan and restructuring of University Grants Commission (UGC) as Higher Education Commission (HEC) in 2002 appeared as a model for other countries of the region. The HEC is questing for promoting access to higher education, bringing about standardization of higher education programmes in Pakistan and putting them into line with global standards.

Under the guidelines of the HEC, universities and degree awarding institutions in Pakistan have taken initiatives for providing quality education through innovative approaches – distance education, virtual education, e-learning projects and consortiums. Such approaches appear to be feasible for catering higher education needs of individuals in 21st century's knowledge society. In 21st century all individuals (either male or female) of the society have to play their roles for productive life and successful survival that is likely to fit in the Darwin's theory of “survival of the fittest” in the world at present (AIOU, 2005). Higher education makes individuals and societies survive with pride.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN – A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Pakistan is a developing country where higher education appeared as one of the major enterprises in 21st century. The overall participation rate in higher education is low – currently up to 5% for the 18-23 age cohort. Various factors seem to be responsible for this low participation rate in higher education, including poverty, the social deprivation of women, the lack of facilities, and an emphasis on teaching rather than learning and skill development. Nonetheless, following HEC initiatives, the enrolment in all higher education institutions had increased to over 600,000 students (about 350,000 male and 256,000 female students) by the 2006-07 academic year, from 475,000 in 2002. At provincial level, enrolment presents a gloomy picture and depicts the miserable condition of socially restricted areas: in 2006-07, the overall enrolment in all higher education institutions was about 147,000 in Punjab (population of 73.6 million), 114,000 in Sindh (pop: 30.4 million), 52,000 in the North-West Frontier Province (pop: 17.7 million), 8,000 in Balochistan (pop: 6.6 million) and 284,000 in Islamabad, Federally Administered Northern Areas and Azad
Jammu & Kashmir (pop: 5.1 million). The expansion in enrolment continued and reached to 875,000 in 2007-08.

The situation indicates that the formal education cannot cope with the demand of higher education of the masses. Distance education may be linked to the issue of access to education in order to reduce gender disparity in the country. It provides freedom to learn to all individuals of the country on their own pace, place and choice. It is questing to eliminate the gender disparity in education sector at all levels (Rashid, 2002).

Distance education emerged in response to the need of providing access to those who would otherwise not be able to participate in face-to-face (f2f) courses. It encompasses those programmes that allow the learner and instructor to be physically apart during the learning process and maintain communication in a variety of ways.

The use of technology has bridged the distance between tutor and learners by introducing new forms of distance education like virtual education, e-learning, online education etc. It has enabled learners to access education at any time and from any place. Moreover, the use of emerging technologies in education has provided a platform to the learners’ community for establishing synchronous and asynchronous learning networks for interactions and communication.

**DISTANCE EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN**

Pakistan is pioneer in South Asia in adopting distance education mode for imparting education to the people. Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad was envisioned and established in 1974 by the then Government of Pakistan. It is second Open University of the world and was established on the model of the United Kingdom Open University (UKOU). It is offering different programmes ranging from basic (functional literacy) to higher education (PhD) level. It is addressing the issue of limited access for unprivileged and neglected population of the country by catering their educational needs. The university is gender friendly, accommodating both of the genders throughout the country in all disciplines and/or programmes. According to AIOU (2006) “distance education in Pakistan is particularly suited to female population as it affords them an opportunity to study at home”.

Distance education seems appropriate to address the issue of gender discrimination and to provide opportunities of equal access to quality education at all levels to all individuals in Pakistan. It seems feasible for providing education to female population even in culturally restricted areas where women are not allowed to go out of their homes; like tribal areas of North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Balochistan, Sindh and southern Punjab. It can cater educational needs of the society at the doorstep on equal basis and frees learners from time and place restrictions through its unique instructional strategies.
DUAL MODE UNIVERSITIES IN PAKISTAN

Although AIOU is providing higher education to the people; however, due to increase in population there is need of more opportunities and facilities of higher education in the country. Therefore, as a strategy; the formal universities have started offering their programmes through distance mode along with their regular on-campus programmes. These are dual mode universities and are providing access to higher education to those who are otherwise unable to attend regular on-campus classes. These are increasing in number year by year currently including University of the Punjab, Bahauddin-Zakariya University, University of Sargodha, Government College University Faisalabad, University of Sindh Hyderabad, Karachi University Karachi, COMSATS Islamabad (have launched Virtual Campus), Gomal University Dera Ismail Khan and the Islamia University of Bahawalpur.

THE ISLAMIA UNIVERSITY OF BAHAWALPUR, PAKISTAN – AT A GLANCE

The Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB) was established in 1975 to cater educational needs of the people living in this region. The university has been questing for imparting quality education and aiming at uplifting the living standards of people in this region. Throughout its history, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur has been providing quality education to its students at undergraduate and post-graduate levels based on research for development.

The University is enabling students to develop and apply their academic skills in an international arena. The research based innovative programmes are developing professional and social skills and ethics among IUB graduates to live and work in 21st century. Performance indicators show that more than 85% of the IUB graduates are in employment or studying to enhance their qualifications.

INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION – Background

The 21st century dawned with unprecedented innovations and inventions. These innovations & inventions brought about revolution in all aspects of human activity and education is not an exception. Education is regarded as key to development of a country and innovations enhance its pace. Therefore, education embraced such innovations & advancements to cater the needs of 21st century learners. It adopted new approaches and mechanisms of instructional process and appeared in its new forms – distance education, virtual education and e-learning. Distance education is the simple form of education and promotes opportunities of education for all.

There is a dire need of distance education in Bahawalpur Region which consists of remote areas with scarce educational opportunities. The people living in rural areas have fewer educational facilities and therefore, are unaware of the importance of education. Mostly, the people of the
region feel reluctant to send their females to cities for education especially for higher education. That’s why the region has low literacy rate. It calls for an alternate system to cater the educational needs of region. The Islamia University of Bahawalpur is serving a huge population and larger community of the region.

But, the young boys and girls living in this area are facing much difficulty to complete their courses/programmes from the formal system. Therefore, the establishment of an ‘Institute of Distance Education (IDE)’ at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur is the need of the region. It was established on March 15, 2011 by the Worthy Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar. Its establishment is a reflection of the blend of vision & wisdom of the Vice Chancellor for providing education to all in the region. Here are some of the reasons behind the establishment of the Institute of Distance Education:

- Bahawalpur Region is a developing area with limited opportunities of Higher Education
- Due to social norms and values parent are reluctant to send their daughters for Higher Education in big cities
- The inhabitants of Bahawalpur have to go far away to get higher education
- Private Colleges of Education are appearing as ‘degree mills’ without proper infrastructure and trained personnel
- Education in 21st century – the vision 2025 that all universities of the world will be offering all or some of their educational programmes through distance approach by adopting emerging technologies
- Our sister Universities Bahauddin Zakariya University and Gomal University have started offering their programmes through distance education mode
- The trend indicates that distance education is attracting people to study and earn a degree through without leaving their families and work

**MISSION OF INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

The Institute of Distance Education intends to make a history of preparing professional educators for the Bahawalpur Region and Pakistan. The institute is committed to promote a culture of learning by providing educational opportunities to all. The quest is to foster a culture of research, reflective practice and inquiry within a diverse community of learners to make them assume leadership role in the society.

**VISION OF INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

We are committed to provide education to all at all places for making Pakistan a better place to live and work in the 21st century. The modern technologies such as cell phones, internet, audio and video-conferencing and other satellite links and other technological resources are used for
effective learning and to bring about horizontal and vertical expansion in the field of education. Various higher education institutions in the world have started Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to make their educational programs accessible to the people of the world. The educational planners have sufficient reasons to believe that the brick university will be replaced by Click University by the year 2025. Foreseeing the future trends and needs of educational community, the Vice chancellor of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur has envisioned the Institute of Distance Education.

**OBJECTIVES OF INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

The IDE was established with the following objectives;

- To impart quality education to all on their own paces and places
- To empower the people of Bahawalpur with the power of knowledge through technology
- To extend educational opportunities of learning while earning to those who cannot leave their jobs and homes
- To promote a culture of service learning in the region particularly and country generally
- To provide people a second chance of education
- To develop a linkage with media and higher education institutions particularly distance education institutions - national & international
- To prepare individuals to live and work in the 21st century with new vision and charter
- To make best use of available resources and impart skill based-knowledge

**OFFERING THE PROGRAMMES**

*Programme Coordinator (Faculty Member)*: conceives the titles of the courses to be offered in the respective programme. Titles are discussed in the meeting of the committee of courses.

*Course Coordinator (Faculty Member)*: conceives the outlines of the relevant course(s) and selects the contents that are discussed to finalize in the committee of courses and later on in Board of Studies. S/he also designs activities and assessment procedure of the course(s).

*Committee of Courses (Chairmen/HOD, Programme Coordinator, Course Coordinator and two senior teachers of the Department)*: reviews the titles of the courses, their outlines and contents of the courses. The committee also reviews the activities and assessment procedure of the course(s).

*Board of Studies (as per varsity rules & regulations)*: reviews the programme(s), course(s), their outlines, contents, activities and assessment procedures, and recommends for approval of the Academic Council of the Varsity.

*Academic Council (as per varsity rules & regulations)*: As per procedure of the varsity, academic council approves a course of study or otherwise. After approval of the Academic Council, the department offers programmes and/or courses through distance education approach.
# SCHEME OF STUDIES

Each of the departments in the institute prepares and implements the scheme of studies of each programme according to the HEC guidelines. The scheme of studies is approved by the Departmental Committee of Courses, Board of Studies and Academic Council before its implementation.

# COURSE DEVELOPMENT

The Course Coordinator (Faculty Member) conceives the outlines of the relevant course(s) and selects contents to be discussed to finalize in the committee of courses and later on in Board of Studies. S/he also designs activities and assessment procedure of the course(s). The course coordinator is responsible for preparation of the assignments, orientation and final workshop.

**Course Book/Study Guide/Course Guide:** Each course coordinator prepares course book/study guide/course guide. The course guide consists of course outlines, handouts and detailed contents, activities, assignments – 1 or 2, schedule of assignments submission, guidelines on how to write assignments and final term examination.

# ADMISSION OF THE OVERSEAS STUDENTS

The department of distance education admits students from the world around. Admissions to the overseas students remain open throughout the year because of some delay in the processing. However, all such admissions are made according to the HEC criteria and varsity rules such as NTS (in case of admission to M.Phill and PhD Programmes), equivalence of the programmes/ degrees etc. The students applying before the advertisement are admitted in the near future semester.

These students study at their own places and submit assignments to their respective tutors/course coordinators according to the schedule. They are provided academic guidance through e-mail, audio and video/Skype-conference. However, for Final Term Examination they are bound to come to the respective department.

**Admission Criteria**

All the programmes and courses are prepared and offered according to the guidelines and criteria as envisaged by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). The IDE adopts semester system as implemented by the university.

**Instructional Delivery & Assessment Criteria**

- The IDE adopts a blended approach for instructional delivery of the courses
- The students study the instructional material at their homes through self-study approach
and complete the self-assessment activities and assignments given by the their respective tutors

• The IDE students are required to complete a certain number of assignments according to the nature of course(s).

• The main topics are discussed during the workshops along with student’s individual presentations

• They are provided compact diskettes (CDs) containing lectures/presentations and contents of each course.

• The selected lectures are planned to upload on the university/ Institutes’ website for open access of the students.

• The learning of the students is evaluated through mid-term examination (30%), final term examination (50%) and assignments/presentations (20%) followed by compulsory workshops for each course

1. **Orientation Workshop**
   One-day in the beginning

2. **Mid-Semester Workshop**
   Two days (6 contact hours daily) for each course after seven weeks of the orientation workshop

3. **Final-Semester Workshop**
   Two days (6 contact hours daily) for each course after 15 weeks of the orientation workshop

4. The maximum time duration for completion of the coursework and research thesis is same as that of the regular classes at the campus.

5. If a student is unable to complete the all requirements within prescribed time limit, s/he will be treated according to the IUB rules and regulations.

**PROGRAMMES OFFERED THROUGH DISTANCE EDUCATION**

Currently, the IUB offers following programmes through distance education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Name of Department</th>
<th>Name of Programme</th>
<th>Contact Person/Programme Coordinator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Applied Psychology</td>
<td>MS Executive</td>
<td>Dr. Masood Nadeem 0092 62 925 5065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>PhD, M.Phil., Diploma in Quranic Literacy</td>
<td>Dr. Raheela Khalid Qureshi 0092 62 925 5559</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Role of Distance Education in Promoting Access to Higher Education: An Experience of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>Commerce</th>
<th>B.COM, M.COM</th>
<th>Dr. Majid Makki</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>BS</td>
<td>Dr. Ejaz Ali Khan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>M.Phil.</td>
<td>Dr. Irshad Hussain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>BS, M.A &amp; M.Phil.</td>
<td>Prof. Dr. Mamona Ghani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pakistan Studies</td>
<td>M.Phil.</td>
<td>Dr. Muhammad Akbar Malik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Islamic Studies</td>
<td>M.A, M.Phil., PhD</td>
<td>Dr. Iftekhar Ahamad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>M.Phil.</td>
<td>Dr. Sajjad Ahmad Paracha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>M.Phil.</td>
<td>Dr. Munir Ahmad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>Diploma in Hospital Pharmacy</td>
<td>Prof. Dr. Naveed Akhtar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Physical Education &amp; Sport Sciences</td>
<td>Diploma in Physical Education</td>
<td>Muhammad Javed Akhtar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>M.A, M.Phil.</td>
<td>Dr. H. Rasheed Ahmad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Urdu &amp; Iqbaliat</td>
<td>M.A, M.Phil.</td>
<td>Prof. Dr. Aqeela Shaheen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POTENTIAL COLLABORATION

The Institute of Distance Education would potentially collaborate with the following organizations.

National Level Institutions/ Organizations

- Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad
- Virtual University of Pakistan
- Pakistan Television
- Radio Pakistan Bahawalpur
- Rohi TV
- Kook TV
- National Book Foundation

International Level Institutions/ Organization

- World Bank
- Japan International Development Agency (JICA)
- Common Wealth of Learning (COL)
- Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU)
- United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA)
- Asian Open University

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To find out the strengths of offering distance education programmes at dual mode university
2. To identify the problems faced by academicians and students of distance education at dual mode university
3. To disseminate experience of offering distance education programmes at dual mode university

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is a description of an academic experience i.e. offering distance education programmes at a dual mode university in Pakistan. It would disseminate useful strategic information to the academicians intending to launch distance education programmes at dual mode universities by using latest technologies. There are useful lessons that can be learnt by those already implementing or those about to embark on offering distance education programmes.
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is a case study describing the experience of researcher in implementing distance education programmes at dual mode university—the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. This study is a narrative portrayal based on experience and observation of the researcher to disseminate useful information for offering distance education programmes. The following experience depicts complete methodology.

The Experience –An Example to Follow

The institute planned and offered an M.Phil (in Education) programme through distance education mode in semester spring 2011. Two hundred plus candidates applied for admission against 25 seats. However, under special circumstances 36 students were enrolled in the programme. After completion of the admission process the students were given an orientation on how to study in distance education. The semester was broke up into two halves, mid-term and final term. The institute provided learning materials accompanied by instructional booklet. The students were assigned to prepare two assignments for the entire semester; one before mid-term and second before final-term workshop. The students had to be present in the classroom for 24 hours (12 during mid-term and 12 during final-term workshop) for each 3-credit hour course. Skype conference, social media and mobile phones were used for academic coaching of the students. They had to give presentations and submit the assignments after plagiarism check through Turnitin software. In the examination students performed well. They showed their willingness to continue their studies ahead. This experience contributed a lot to the university administration, academician and students. The strategic operations and measures, success and achievements, problems and issues and challenges are presented in the paper. The highlights of the experience are presented below.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This case study portrays the experience and observation of researcher, the findings of which are given below;

1. The students commended the initiative and they were of the voice that it provided them an opportunity which they otherwise could not have at all. They affirmed the admission process to be easy and merit-based with suitable criteria.
2. They appreciated the efforts of the institute and regarded its environment gender friendly. Opportunities were open to all according to the policy of the HEC. They used library and IT resources without any discrimination between regular and distance learners.
3. The learners were provided study materials about which they were of the opinion that objectives of the courses were clear and understandable. Similarly, the contents were
relevant to the objectives of the course(s) and the programme(s). These contents consisted of self-elaborative & self-instructional materials (offered in different forms and formats) for learners to study at their respective paces and places.

4. The contents of the learning materials were presented in sequence. They were informative and instructive for enhancing the exposure of the learners towards new knowledge. It raised learners’ awareness about the facts for promoting their intellectual capacity. The intellectual capacity facilitated in cross-fertilizing information with personal experiences of the learners for knowledge generation. The virtual learners, thus, appeared to be processing the information cognitively for expanding their knowledge horizontally and elevating it vertically.

5. The learners also expressed their views on the channels of communication for enhancing interactions for learning at their homes and work places. They valued the use of mobile phones, e-mail and Skype conference and social media for synchronous and asynchronous communication and interactions. They used e-mails for submitting their assignments to their tutors and share learning experiences and problems with fellows and faculty. They also appreciated social media and learned through reflective practice.

6. They made telephone or mobile phone calls for promoting synchronous communication & interactions with faculty and their fellow students. It enhanced their interactions through verbal communication for mutual understanding and trust building. They could get immediate responses, feedback & comments on their work/assignments indicating the worth and quality of their work.

7. They felt comfortable during the workshops. Their expressions indicated accepting tendency among them. They also showed their satisfaction with assessment system. However, they reported some problems like computer literacy, medium of instruction, accommodation during the workshops and reading on the screen. Similar problems were conveyed by the faculty with much emphasize on staff development, developing materials, andragogy, students’ support services, infrastructure and campus environment.
CONCLUSION

On the basis of the experience of faculty and students’ aspirations it is concluded that distance education programmes offered by dual mode universities in Pakistan are useful to address the issue of lower access of people to higher education. Such programmes provide students an opportunity to higher education. However, students and faculty have some problems associated with training and staff development – developing materials, providing students support services, andragogy and infrastructure.
REFERENCES


