

## The Management Effectiveness of Distance Teacher Education in Addis Ababa University

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**Abstract:** The focus of this study is on the management practices and effectiveness issues of AAU distance education program as it pertains to instructional quality and students support system. A vast literature document that distance education is at present quite popular throughout the world. Learning occurs non-contiguously and the educational process is technologically mediated (Tella, S 1997; Rumble, G. 1992). While the system of education can be used at various levels, it is more appropriate for secondary and post-secondary level education. In Ethiopia, distance education (the former correspondence education) has been applied to the training of teachers as well as other staff of the civil service in vocational and business subjects. In the Ministry of Education's 5-year perspective plan (ESDP I) many more teachers that are under-qualified are needed to be upgraded urgently. Accordingly, among others, Addis Ababa University has ventured in the training of such teachers at bachelor degree level. Besides the public teachers colleges in the regions in close support from the Educational Mass Media Agency (EMA), few private distance higher education institutions such as 'Alpha', St. Mary's College', 'Unity University College' and the UK-Open University affiliated with Addis Ababa Commercial College, as well as World Bank with the Ethiopian Civil Service College are higher education systems that have also emerged and contributing to the effort. In order to study the management effectiveness of these DE institutions, a survey questionnaire was distributed to sample learners and interviews were conducted with course instructors, tutors assigned in the centers, management staff of the University and MOE. The analysis based on the data revealed that appropriate organization and management are lacking for effective program operation. The frequent turnover of top management, absence of experienced and skilled staff and shortage of funding for monitoring, tutoring and learning materials development and improvement are critical to strengthen the program. The AAU management and the MOE policy-makers would benefit from the study that suggests points of policy implication.

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## **Introduction**

The significance of education and its contribution to the modernization and welfare of countries has been recognized since early times. Education invariably prepares the youth and adults to be equipped with scientific knowledge and skills for labor productivity and with a positive attitude and concern for society. It has a vital role to play in national development. Through formal and non-formal education, not only high rate of literacy can be attained, but also educating and training a very high pool of citizens ready for task accomplishment in national endeavor.

To ensure the supply of qualified labor needed in the economy, beyond the primary and secondary levels, further education in the technical/vocational and higher education institutions must be sufficiently available. To cope with the increasing demand for further education, therefore, the conventional formal higher institutions must exist alongside the emerging alternative systems like 'open' universities and distance education systems.

To all these efforts, adequate supply of teachers is needed without which proper educational activity is very difficult if not impossible. The teaching force is the critical input in the process of teaching and learning. Any shortage of teachers has to be tackled without delay by cost-effective and time-saving means.

The Ministry of Education of Ethiopia has always committed itself in the pre-service and in-service training of teachers that take longer time and produce few graduates unable to satisfy the ever-growing school demands. Thus, since 1998 it has made a strategic shift in adopting the distance education program that sets a target in training teachers on the job for a diploma and degree qualifications. This study is an investigation of the effective planning and management of teacher education and training program through distance mode in Addis Ababa University.

### **Problem Statement**

The development of education in Ethiopia is still at its lower stage. This is revealed in MoE statistical abstract (EMIS) of 2003 where the gross enrolment ratio of primary (grade 1-8) school age is 64.4%, one of the lowest in the world. Similarly, at secondary schools (9-10) and in higher education, of the age cohort for the same year, it is 19.3% and 2.0% respectively. The corresponding teaching force deployed at the three levels, i.e., in 12,471 primary schools, 491 secondary schools, and at tertiary level constituting 8 government (public) universities and 15 regional colleges/institutes were 134,212, 14,030 and 4,224 respectively.

Whereas enrolments at primary and secondary schools have increased significantly over the last decade, the provision of facilities and teacher supply is not sufficient to bring these to the standard. Overall, the quality of education is reported to be low. The poor performance is linked to inadequate facilities, shortage of books, inadequate teacher training, etc. Obviously, funding is inadequate, i.e., (13.7 % share of government budget or 2,485 million Eth. Birr in 2000/01) due to the country's low income-base and to which it relies heavily on government financing.

Currently, there is a dire need for qualified secondary school teachers to place in their respective levels. The formal training scheme for teachers is insufficient and hence there has always been a gap between demand and supply. Even after 100 years of modern education development in Ethiopia, such a shortage is remarkable. For instance, in 1998, out of the qualified secondary teachers needed, there were only 18.14% supplied for the level. The fact remains, therefore, that increased teacher supply through professional development at a faster and cost-effective way is imperative. In addition to pre-service training, there is the urgency to upgrade a very large number of primary and secondary school teachers to diploma and degree level through in-service and distance teacher-training programs. In the first plan period (in 1998), for instance, some 5,000

teachers were enrolled to qualify at bachelor's degree program. As the goal is to train under-qualified teacher and close the backlog in a few years, distance education with a face-to-face component during summer was introduced in AAU. This program was applied in addition to the summer in-service programs in which 5,716 bachelor's degree program teachers were enrolled in 2001/2. The 2003/4 AAU Registrar data for distance education shows there was over 3,300 enrolled from first to fourth year in social science, science, and language areas of study.

Currently, similar distance education programs are underway in all the universities in Ethiopia owing to the country's urge for expansion. To ensure satisfactory results from distance education system, there must be realistic planning and effective management system for implementation in place. It is assumed that aspects such as the extensive use of technical media, the production of good quality self-instructional course materials, the maintenance of student support services have to be adequately attended to. This implies there is a need for a systematic investigation of distance teaching institutes with the objective of seeking workable solutions to any setbacks in the system.

The scope of the study is limited to one institution because it allows for a thorough analysis of the various aspects of the program vis-à-vis its planning and management. Eventually, it might help to draw lessons that can be learnt by other similar higher education systems. In general, this study is believed to contribute to the overall improvement of the distance education program in Addis Ababa University in the area of instructional materials quality, tutorial/counseling support, raising student attendance and academic evaluation that affect students overall professional preparation.

The specific research questions dealt with are:

- To what extent is the planning of distance higher education program in Addis Ababa University realistic?

- What efforts are made to establish the efficient management of the academic and student support system components?
- How can the constraints to promote distance education practices be overcome?

## **Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks**

### *Returns in Education*

Education is an investment with the aim of producing skilled and educated workforce, which would be absorbed in the economy. A well designed and purposeful education results in perceptible benefits that accrue both to the society and the individual. Economists and educators alike summarize the costs and benefits of education to individuals and the society. According to Mingat and Tan (1996), while the costs refer to *direct individual costs/ fees, forgone earnings, and public subsidy*, the benefits that accrue are listed into five items as: *Increased market productivity; Spillover effects in worker productivity; Expanded technological possibilities; Private non-market effects, and Community non-market effects*. It is due to these benefits we find education expanding from time to time to widen the opportunity and enhance societal benefits. In particular, distance education allows new and flexible learning opportunities which the formal systems cannot provide.

### *Teacher Demand and Supply*

In a situation where there is a very high demand for secondary school teachers and where there is limited supply in the labor market, governments remain short of their education development plans. In 2003, the share of qualified secondary school teachers (9-12), as quality indicator, was only 39.0% (MoE 2003:21). When we consider the demand for and supply of secondary school teachers, the picture looks as in Table 1.

**Table 1: Secondary School Teacher Demand and Supply (1995 – 1998)**

Year	Demand		Supply		% Supply	
	Diploma	Degree	Diploma	Degree	Diploma	Degree
1995	7094	5720	498	222	7.20	3.88
1996	3166	1889	538	277	16.99	14.66
1997	6978	2392	798	396	11.43	16.55
1998	8419	2766	617	502	7.32	18.14
....						
2002	46,872	..	14,484	..	..	20.10

**Source:** Mekuanent in Bridges, D. and Marew Z. (2000:36). Data obtained from MoE, Secondary Education Panel, March 1999; and researcher data, June 2004, from same panel, MoE.

Table 1 shows the situation for the last decade. Annually, about 20% of secondary school teachers were supplied from the two universities (Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar). Again between 7.0% and 16.0% of the demand for diploma holder teachers were met for the accelerated increase of primary schools (grades 5-8). Overall, the 2001 Education Statistics (EMIS p. 12) shows that only 22.5% teachers on the job were certified for upper primary school teaching while 37.7% were qualified for secondary schools at bachelor's degree level. If so, can we meet the demand for secondary school teachers in the formal system alone? Certainly not. That is why the Government (MoE) considered the issue as something that needs urgent action.

#### *Distance Education System: An Overview*

The foundation of distance education was believed to be correspondence instruction, which was started in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has now extended to distance and open universities. A review of the literature (Rumble, 1992; Raghunath, 1994; Sharma, 1994; Mohanty, 1995; Ansari, 2002; etc.) indicate that the wealth of distance education as an enterprise is yet untapped. That is, in many countries there have been a growing number of secondary school graduates, seeking specialized training, and those on the job (e.g. teachers) but wanting higher qualification, adults aspiring for specific area of knowledge and skill, etc, all seek admission into these types of higher education institutions.

Since its emergence, correspondence instruction served its purpose in different countries – Germany 1856, USA 1873, and Sweden 1890. More recently, there are many independent, autonomous, full-fledged distance teaching higher education institutions in the world. Among these, the *Open University* in the United Kingdom, the *Fern Universitat* in Germany, *Athabasca University* in Canada, *Universidad Estatal a Distancia* in Costa Rica, *University of the Air* in Japan, *Indira Gandhi National Open University* in India, and the *University of South Africa* can be representative of distance higher education systems in different regional locations that are highly organized. Without referring to the type of organization distance education has become globally widespread. Many millions of students are studying in various distance-learning institutions throughout the world. The number of students in these universities and emerging others has been increasing year after year. Sharma (1997) indicates there are 106 countries offering 31,752 different courses to learners.

One popular program among countries has been to train teachers - particularly teachers who are already in post and whose level of previous training is insufficient. Countries where this has been done include Nigeria, Tanzania and Mexico. Ethiopia, too, has recently started (since 1998) implementing the upgrading of teachers through distance at diploma and bachelor's degree levels around the universities and regional colleges.

#### *Organizational types*

Actually, distance education literature focusing on the management and organization of the system broadly classifies the types or models of institutions into three. While some use terms like 'autonomous', 'mixed' and 'consortium' types, others call them 'single mode', 'dual mode' and 'consortia' institutions. Perry and Rumble (1987:22) describe them as in the following.

- *Single mode distance education* - It is established for the purpose of offering distance education only. Typically, 'open universities' founded since 1969 (in UK), have a separate and

autonomous instructional management system. They are independent, autonomous, full-fledged single mode tuition systems offering a more flexible and wide ranging course offerings in distance education.

- *Dual mode distance education* - These institutions provide both conventional, face-to-face education and also distance education. Some were founded to do both. Most, however, started as conventional institutions and only later began to teach at a distance as well.
- *Consortia* – In this category, there are few groups of autonomous institutions (educational, publishing, broadcasting) that agree to combine to offer distance education.

In Ethiopia, the ‘Dual Mode’ distance education type is practiced and Addis Ababa University is one of them. The consequence is that it is administratively subordinated to the main system. Hence, the distance education units are departments within certain faculties or colleges that only share the resources (staff, facilities and premises) of the conventional universities. Usually, less attention and support is accorded for development and diversification in response to demand. In general, distance education is an option to formal schooling and has got universal acclaim. For Mullik, (1998), there are four distinguishing characteristics:

- the use of self-instructional materials (SIMs);
- the use of tutorial method to supplement SIMs;
- the implementation of philosophy of open education; and
- the industrialization of educational enterprise.

Overall, distance education has a specific nature featured by its accessibility, liberalism and multi-media approach.

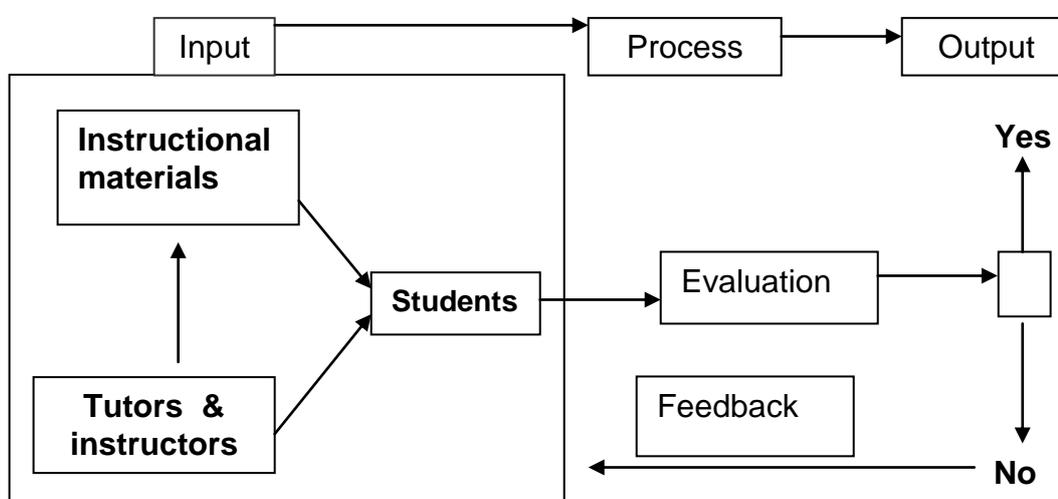
#### *Systems Approach in Management*

Whatever the type, distance education as an alternative involves teaching from distance and learning at distance with the use of different media – print, radio, TV, computer, etc. with limited student-teacher interaction in which education is taken to learners’

environment separating the learner from the teaching institutions, the teacher or fellow learners.

It is argued that effective distance education management is ensured if the institutions consider all activities from a system approach. The systems conceptualization is applicable to social systems like educational organization, which distance education is one. A given system has a set of specific functions that must be performed by its components to achieve the desired objectives. The distance education system has the prime objective of providing instructional or training services emphasizing self-learning. To explain the 'instructional system', Misra (1998) developed a model, which shows the details of key functions in effective management of teacher education through distance.

**Fig 2. Distance Education System Model**



**Source:** Mullik In Rastogi, S. (ed.). (1998). **Educational Technology For Distance Education**. Rawat Publications, New Delhi. p. 41

In simple terms, the proper arrangements and provision of instructional materials and instructors for the benefit of the learners/ students shows the *input* side. The interaction of these sub-

components during teaching-learning and evaluation shows the *process* of the system, while completion or graduation of students is taken as *output* of the system.

The management domain in the system plays an integrating role of all the functional elements. It seeks to secure and provide information about the different ways in which distance education is organized and administered. As such, the top management is charged with a complex set of tasks to coordinate and integrate the system's input and process components to achieve the desired targets.

The process starts with defining and reviewing institutional mission. Based on existing education policy and desired targets, short- and medium-term plans are designed. For effective utilization of available resources, the human and financial resources have to be allocated among competing student demands and public interests. This means there is the selection, appointing, training and monitoring of instructors to carry out the academic programs. The recruiting, registering, and placement of students has also to be monitored. The selecting and controlling of the use of technologies is also important as it involves huge funding for operation and technical maintenance. The production and delivery of instructional materials must also be managed with due attention. A planning system must be set up and maintained. Finally, the management domain also deals with issues of quality control, cost analysis and cost effectiveness.

#### *Distance Education in Addis Ababa University*

Addis Ababa University is the oldest university in Ethiopia. Since its establishment in 1950, it has undergone reforms to cope with ideological and developmental changes (in programs expansion and curriculum reviews) of the different governments. For instance, so as to accommodate the new policy changes after the military regime, a proclamation (No. 113/1993) has been issued aimed at reorganizing the university. In its powers and duties assigned, among others, it was designated to:

- establish and run faculties, colleges and other academic and research units;
- design and implement undergraduate and graduate programs.

Without going into greater detail, we can see the extent of programs AAU runs: Diploma, Bachelor's, MD, DVM, Masters, Specialty Certificate and PhD degree programs. It launched its first MSc programs in 1979 and its first PhD programs in 1987. MoE (2001) shows that in the three delivery modes, total enrolment was 13,123 in the regular, 10,557 in the evening and 445 in in-service (summer) programs. The total enrolment aggregated is 24,125 students. Again, number of graduates at regular, evening and in-service programs was 2,684, 999, and 426 respectively or a total of 4,109 of which only 4 were PhD.

**College of Education** – As the history of the university tells, in 1959 the 'Department of Education' was formed. From 1964 up until 2003, it was a 'Faculty' playing a pivotal role in producing teachers, educators, and educational administrators for the nation. Recently it has expanded from 5 departments into 13 departments incorporating all teaching fields in the natural sciences, social science, language studies, and pedagogical/professional areas pertaining to teacher education.

The College of Education Newsletter (June, 2004:3) makes the point that the college has become the biggest section of the university that runs these cumbersome programs with not more than 141 instructors. The issue of manpower shortage can be clear if the number of staff is compared with a total of 3982 undergraduate and 237 postgraduate students. Beside the regular programs, the continuing education (extension, summer and distance education) activities that include teaching, evaluation and certification are essentially handled by the College.

**Continuing and Distance Education (CDE)** - Data from AAU (2003/4) shows that the current population of continuing education is

about 12,000 students distributed in seven faculties. A total of 21 degree and 20 diploma programs are offered. With increased intake quota from government (seriously pushing for expansion), enrollment is expected to increase significantly in the coming years especially in the Continuing and distance education and postgraduate programs. While the formal programs are relatively well organized in terms of staff and facilities, there was no clear direction for the new system of distance education program to organize itself for resources' procurement and utilization, staff recruitment and deployment and above all the monitoring and evaluation of the program towards development (responding to training demands).

Distance education for teachers is emerging vigorously overtaking the summer-in-service program that used to take 8 years to graduate at a bachelor's level. With the new approach, this has been reduced to only 5 years offering more courses during face-to-face teaching in summer. This was implemented with close dialogue between the Ministry of Education and AAU in 1998. At present the program seems to earn greater attention as it is run or managed under '**Associate Vice President**' status, albeit its powers and duties are not clearly defined nor it has a formal structure. The AVP Office merely plays a coordinating role in setting schedules for tutorial and exams, and distribution of instructional materials.

### **The Study Approach**

**The Design** - The conceptual framework selected is a '*systems approach*' and related to teacher training model. This helps in the systematic investigation of the planning and management sub-systems pertaining to effectiveness of distance education in higher education systems in Ethiopia, of which Addis Ababa University is a case in point. This study mainly takes up the explanatory survey research method. A closer look into AAU distance education program is attempted. Data on the case of AAU management problems associated with distance education have been surveyed.

**Data Sources** - While relevant elements (sub-systems) for the study are diverse, the data sources considered are broadly classified into three categories. These include in-service teacher learners, tutors or counselors and the program coordinators found at three levels, i.e., the Ministry of Education, Addis Ababa University and the tutorial centers in the colleges. Accordingly, the study considered purposive sampling to select 10 course instructors, 6 tutors and 8 officials from the Ministry of Education (at head office and EMA) and Addis Ababa University (CDE officers). For selecting the collaborating tutorial centers/colleges availability sampling was found appropriate. In two rounds, that is, during first tutorial (in February) and second tutorial (in August), survey questionnaires were distributed to 236 and 333 learners of the university, respectively. For this paper, the 236 distance students' data to which the respondents selected randomly within the diverse geographic areas of service provisions in six tutorial centers have been used. The tutorial centers include AAU, Bahirdar University, and the regional junior teacher colleges in Ambo, Leketmt, Jimma, and Awassa.

**Instruments** - For obtaining information from learners, questionnaires were used. Two sets of questionnaires were distributed to two category of tutors as found in the study centers at collaborating colleges, and in summer at Addis Ababa University. Interviews were conducted with AAU academic program implementers (faculty staff, department heads and the coordinating officers), and MOE officials (policy makers and planners), alongside with personal observations of the sampled colleges for their status of accessibility and availability of the required educational facilities (such as libraries, audio-visual rooms and tutorial halls).

### **Analysis and Discussion**

Distance education, which is conducted in the College of Education, Addis Ababa University, forms the empirical base of this study. The formal education and training programs in the College of Education include 5 areas/fields of study namely: *Natural Science, Social*

*Science, Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies, Psychology, Educational Planning and Management, and Business Education.* The 2003/4 AAU Registrar data shows that there are a total of 4,413 students of which 2,226 were in the regular, 1,657 in the extension/evening, and 530 in the summer in-service programs. The distance education component that enrolled 2,622 students is sharing a very substantial part of the academic program activities of the university in recent years. All were 1990 to 1995 entries ranging from 540 (final year students) to 603 (first year students). This survey research was conducted in six distance education tutorial centers coordinated by Addis Ababa University. Whether it is giving its due attention in the planning and management aspects is yet to be investigated. Thus, both qualitative and quantitative data have been used here selectively.

Among the variables used for this study, conditions and purpose of admissions, adequacy of course materials, tutorial support systems, and overall indicators of management efficiencies by the coordinating office of AAU have been interpreted based on data from learner responses. Using interviews conducted with officials from the MoE and program coordinators in AAU, the planning and management approach and its effects have been raised. On the basis of these and relating to the principles governing distance education, some recommendations for improvement are suggested.

A selective data interpretation shows that all respondents were diploma-holding teachers enrolled for upgrading where the government gives full sponsorship. Though negligible, they pay nominal service charge (of about Birr 50) at receiving course materials either at AAU during registration or through the tutorial centers. There is exemption to teachers of the “*cost-sharing scheme*” applied for regular or distance education learners in programs at college and university levels.

**The Results** - Considering the profile of learner respondents, we find that 23.0% of them were female teachers. Again, in finding out the

reasons why they chose to be enrolled in this program, they gave contrasting responses. For most (41.5%) it is mainly to earn “higher pay” upon attaining bachelor’s degree while for a few (27.5%), it is for “skill improvement” in the profession. This may be true of those with long years of teaching experience, perhaps who may have already attained the pay scale.

**Table 2: Responses Regarding Attendance at the Six Tutorial Centers (N= 236)**

Question Items	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1. How many times are you attending tutorial classes?	1) Many times (over 60% attendance)	69	29.2
	2) Sometimes (30% to 60%)	49	20.8
	3) Very rarely (below 30%)	108	45.8
	4) No response	10	4.2
Total		236	100
2. If you are not attending to contact classes, please state the reasons:	1. Study center is far away from residence	35	14.8
	2. Lack of time	38	16.1
	3. Financial burden in logistics	27	11.4
	4. Felt it not necessary	7	3.0
	5. Any other reasons	7	3.0
	6. Multiple factors	12	5.8
	7. No response	108	45.8
Total		236	100
3. Do you come prepared to contact classes?	1) Yes	108	45.8
	2) Sometimes	100	42.4
	3) No	28	11.8
Total		236	100

Table 2 shows the frequency of attendance of learners at their respective tutorial centers. It is easy to observe that only 29.2% attend almost regularly. One of the reasons given by those attending only a few times is for lack of time. Actually, tutorials were conducted during school semester breaks and permission is given to those enrolled in the program. Factors related to finance or cost incurred for own logistics and distance might still be taken as weak reason given

the importance of tutorial program. We can see that those who said it was not necessary were negligible (3.0%).

In principle, attendance for tutorials is not compulsory. This underlies the assumption that the learners do understand its benefit, and would come for support to get any of their doubts clarified on their courses. However, it is interesting to find that 45.8% did not respond to this question. It may be that they were not satisfied with the tutorial support provided and did not want to comment. In fact, from another question item “extent of tutor preparation”, it was found that 58.1% replied “yes, adequately” while 37.3% said “no”.

**Table 3: Responses on the Course Materials (N= 236)**

Question Items	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1. Course materials used for this academic year?	1) One	27	11.4
	2) Two	172	72.9
	3) Three	10	4.2
	4) Four to five	27	11.4
	Total	236	100
2. Content adequacy of course material(s) you are currently using?	1) Highly adequate	37	15.7
	2) Adequate	150	63.6
	3) Less adequate	35	14.8
	4) Inadequate	6	2.5
	5) I don't know	8	3.4
Total	236	100	
3. Whether the content is structured in an Interactive style?	1) Yes, most of the time	57	24.2
	2) Only few	153	64.8
	3) None	26	11.0
Total	236	100	

As shown in Table 3, the respondents indicated that they use up to three distance course materials for self-study. About 72.9% of them replied they used 2 course materials for the academic year. As to the adequacy of these materials, 15.7% rated them as “highly adequate” while 63.6% of them revealed that they found them simply “adequate”. However, in terms of content language, it was shown on 5-point Likert-scale as “not difficult”, “difficult to some extent” and “difficult” to be 35.6%, 47.5% and 13.6%, respectively. Regarding the “interactive”

presentation style, it was perceived as having “most of the time” and “only few” of its contents to be interactive for 64.8% and 25.8% respectively. This means that the materials were more activity-oriented, appropriate for self-study.

An interview with AAU Distance Education Coordinating Director indicated that it was only once that the course materials were revised since they have been developed and prepared in the last five years. Even that revision was merely of converting it to a published (book) form from a loose material binding with no substantial improvement in modular form and content writing. Some instructors that were involved in course chapters writing also indicated that they lack the training on how to prepare distance education materials. For them it was inadequate. Besides this, they were not given sufficient time to design, develop and prepare the course materials as the program was urgently started. It is likely that most of the modules were prepared in a rush. Most of these still have not been revised despite the dissatisfactions expressed by students and feedback reports from tutors during the last three years. The learner respondents indicated that they have difficulty in getting supplementary materials or reference materials to enrich their understanding or to do their assignments indicated in their modules. The budget plan by CDE for 2004/5 shows no allocation for course materials revision and printing. It is shown that only 60.0% (2.5 million birr) of the requested budget is approved, which is insufficient.

**Table 4: Availability of Library and Audio -Visual Facilities at Tutorial Centers (N= 236)**

Question Items	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1. Library accessible to learners available	1) On all working days	54	22.9
	2) During contact classes	37	15.7
	3) No response	145	61.5
Total		236	100
2 Availability of audio-video lesson materials	1) Radio lessons	4	1.7
	2) Tape records	1	0.4
	3) TV program	4	1.7
	4) No response	227	96.2
Total		236	100
3. Information about AV from university	1) Yes	4	2.1
	2) No	30	12.7
	3) No response	201	85.2
Total		236	100

As distance education requires self-study on modules, to make it effective, a variety of supplementary materials should be made available in the tutorial centers. Again, as in other countries information and content should be conveyed through the mass media (radio and TV programs). However, this aspect seems to be totally ignored. In Table 4, for all questions “no response” of 61.5% to 96.2% is indicative of the absence of essential student support systems. From an interview with CDE officers and departments, it was revealed that a trial run of TV-based tutorials was transmitted in 2002/3 in 3 social science courses. The plan for the second round of TV tutorial (in February 2003/4) was discontinued due to budget shortage. How can a Distance Education program be technology supported if, (at the minimum) radio and TV are not in use in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is, It is a pity that AAU, being the largest higher education system that started teacher education through distance mode in this country is, unable to utilize the available media and make it a tradition/norm in this respect.

**Table 5: Feedback on Assignments and Summer Class Exams (N= 236)**

Question Items	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1. Were assignments corrected and returned in time?	1. Yes	47	19.9
	2. No	167	70.8
	3. No response	22	9.3
	Total	236	100
2. Did you find tutor comments useful?	1. Yes	79	33.5
	2. No	126	53.4
	3. No response	31	13.1
	Total	236	100
3. Extent of satisfaction with the summer class examinations	1. Highly satisfied		
	2. Satisfied	3	1.3
	3. Less satisfied	76	32.2
	4. Unsatisfied	89	37.7
	5. No response	29	12.3
	Total	39	16.5
		236	100

Using Table 5, an attempt is made to show the importance of giving feedback on assignments attempted on distance courses. Unlike the previous years, when the regional tutorial centers sent all assignments to CDE, this year (2003/4) they were collected in summer just before the second tutorial session in August. This means there is no time for the tutors to mark them and then give feedback on the papers or during contact at tutorial sessions. After all, the papers are not returned to learners. That may be why 70.8% of the respondents said "no" with less chance of getting back the assignments corrected. Such arrangement must be changed. Regarding the usefulness of tutorial comments 53.0% of them responded "no". This shows that most of their study problems were not taken care of. In general, the degree of satisfaction with the exams showed that it was only "low", i.e., only 33.5% were satisfied with their results.

**Table 6: Learners Perception on Purpose and Effectiveness of Distance Education Program (N= 236)**

Question Items	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1. What Do you think distance education can actually do?	1) Supplement the conventional/traditional education	80	33.9
	2) Goes parallel to the traditional education system	33 65	14.0 27.5
	3) Substitute the conventional education	58	24.6
	4) No response		
Total		236	100
2. Your opinion on effectiveness of overall distance mode of education	1) Highly effective	16	6.8
	2) Effective	151	64.0
	3) Never	49	20.4
	4) No response	20	8.5
Total		236	100

Distance education learners do not seem to have clear understanding on the very purpose of distance education program run in AAU. Adequate orientations must be given to learners who value any changes for improvements. CDE has not yet prepared learner handbook and tutor guides for both groups to be effective in their performance. No modern media is being used at least during the tutorial sessions. As shown in Table 6, the majority of the learners (64.0%) rated the management service as “effective”. How critically they have evaluated is not clear at this stage. About 27% of them even considered distance education program to substitute the regular (conventional) education, which is a misconception. In fact, a substantial number (24.6%) seemed not to know clearly its purpose and chose not to respond.

### Conclusion

Distance education has a value in meeting teacher demand through cost and time effective manner. In view of the demand that come with schools expansion, AAU attempts to address the critical need for

secondary school teachers expressed by MoE. The ideal or effective ways distance education is run has been described adequately in various related literature. The question remains: "Has AAU properly planned and implemented this program to benefit teacher-learners and achieve the desired quality of training?" Results of the survey study showed that learners are less satisfied with overall distance education program implementation. Most of the course materials have not been revised or upgraded. The collaborating tutorial centers have no audio-visual and supplementary material facilities for the purpose. The tutors assigned in AAU and the regional colleges have been rated "low" in giving timely feedback to learners. The tutorial (student support) work modalities must have been properly planned for and its implementation monitored.

Moreover, the coordinators and managers of the program assigned in CDE do not show full-time commitment to plan proactively and execute, as should a distance education operation. Actually, there is no clear organizational structure with due powers and responsibilities entrusted on the CDE staff to plan for academic programs improvement. The budget allocation is insufficient to cover the academic and administrative costs (e.g. for curriculum improvement, teaching staff contract, tutorials, advising, exam setting and marking, etc.) that would be incurred for running quality education and training program. Overall, weak planning, inadequate input from specialists, or too short a preparation time in setting up programs was the deficiency revealed in the distance education teacher preparation. It would perhaps be in a better position if CDE structure and its role were revisited as to make it autonomous within a dual mode university.

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