Effectiveness of the M. Ed Distance and Face-To-Face Education Program of the Addis Ababa University (AAU) in Curriculum Studies in Meeting its Objectives: An Evaluative Overview of the Stakeholders' Perceptions

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Abstract: This study was intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the M.Ed program in curriculum studies launched in 1999 by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction of the Addis Ababa University through both Distance and Face-to-Face modes in addition to the already existing regular M.A/M.Ed program. The Ministry of Education, for the purpose of improving the quality and shortage of high level curriculum experts at the federal level, in regional states and zonal educational offices, teacher training institutes, colleges and universities has launched the program. Data for this study were secured from 20 graduates of the M.Ed distance and face-to-face education program in curriculum studies at AAU: (3, 5, 3, and 9 graduates of the years 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004, respectively) using questionnaire. Moreover, 5 professors teaching the courses and 3 officials, one each from the Ministry of Education, Addis Ababa and Oromia education bureaus-were interviewed. Official documents and other sources pertaining to the program were also reviewed. The results of the qualitative and quantitative analyses of the data show that the M.Ed distance and face-to-face education program in curriculum studies at AAU was effective in achieving its objectives for which it had been initiated. The findings further confirmed that the decision to quit the program in 2003/4 was too early and did not have research-based evidence. The action portends a hiatus of development efforts, for the fact that introducing a program in September and deciding its success or failure in June of the same year is easy to be wise after the event. It was, therefore, highly recommended that the statutory and regulatory bodies should re-examine, re-think and re-capitulate once again to restart the prematurely quitted program supplementing technology-based multi-media and incorporate it into "pedagogical model" for the higher education expansion endeavors in the country, having its own academic and administrative division with full authority and responsibility. On top of this, all stakeholders are entrusted to think reflectively in order to make the future planning and delivery of higher education distance learning more responsive to the practical learning needs and life exigencies of adult clientele.

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Introduction

To learn is to change. Consequently, education is a process to change the learner. This implies that the level of the change in the learner and the conduct of the programs that have brought the change should be evaluated. This in turn necessitates the explication and conceptualization of evaluation and its objects (Leonard, 1968 cited in Doherty, 1994: 149).

Different individuals or groups in different countries, contexts, and at different times have conceived evaluation in many different ways. Commonly, however, evaluation is perceived as the process of making judgments about the merits, values, or effectiveness of a program, method or other phenomena. In other words, evaluation is defined as a broad and continuous effort to inquire into the effect of utilizing educational/training content and process according to clearly stated objectives (Moursund, 1973). In terms of this definition, evaluation may be expected to go beyond simple application of the evaluator's values and beliefs.

One of the challenges, however, is evaluation has not been frequently mentioned in the literature on distance education (Howel et al, 2000: 513). This is because distance education itself is a recent phenomenon, which has acquired considerable significance all over the world in general and in developing countries including Ethiopia in particular. It is necessitated by the increasing demand for education, which the formal provision could not fulfill.

The term distance education "covers the various forms of study at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or on the same premises but which, nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and teaching of a supporting organization" (Holmberg, 1989: 3). As distinct from traditional education, distance education is deliberately planned and directed or facilitated in a structured manner by an instructor separated in space and/or time from the learners.

Characterized by flexibility, high productivity, and the capability to respond to socio-economic, political and cultural demands, distance education has been conceived in developing countries as an instrument that can satisfy the requirements of equity and universal education.

Ethiopia, being one of the developing counties, has pledged to materialize the goal of universal primary enrollment by 2015 (MoE, 1999:4). Yet, there are numerous problems among which “The weakness of the capacity for planning and management" has been underscored by the same source (P.2). In view of this, BESO (1999:3) has indicated that high-level experts in curriculum studies and educational planning and management are needed.

Basic Education System Overhaul (BESO), which is very much involved in primary education in Ethiopia, initiated the idea of using distance education to develop the capacity of existing education experts in the regions and at the center. Consequently, the AAU has agreed to offer M.Ed distance and face-to-face education program (distance education for short) in curriculum studies and educational planning and management through the then Faculty of Education, which was responsible for course offerings.

The M. Ed. Distance Education Program of AAU, which was started in 1999 by enrolling 45 candidates (20 for Curriculum and Instruction/C & I; 25 for Educational Planning and Management/EDPM), had the following aims/goals.

- To strengthen the capacity of the MoE and regions in the areas of Curriculum Studies and Educational Planning and Management.
- To meet the learning opportunities of aspiring professionals of the MoE and regions who have been unable to undertake studies in postgraduate level in education through regular residential programs.

- To deliver the course by distance education so that students can continue with their work and family obligation while studying for the masters degree.
- To provide a program that is tailored to the job requirement of the students while meeting the academic provisions for awarding degrees.
- To lay a foundation at Addis Ababa University for distance education programs in other areas.

Objectives of the M.Ed. in Curriculum Studies were to:

- strengthen the skills in curriculum development and implementation in the primary, secondary and teacher training levels,
- strengthen the ability to create curriculum that meets the needs of the new education and training policy and the current best practices in curriculum development for effective learning, and
- strengthen the capacity to conduct research in curriculum development and implementation.

In the second intake, 40 candidates (16 for C & I; and 20 fro EDPM), and in the third intake 35 candidates (10 for C & I, and 25 for EDPM, in total 120 students (46 for C & I, and 74 for EDPM) excluding the fourth batch were given a chance to pursue their M.Ed via distance and face to face program. Of these, 16, 11, and 9 had graduated in M.Ed from the C & I Department in the years 2000/01, 2001/02, and 2002/03 respectively. The program was stopped in 2003/4 by MoE for some reasons, which, however, could not convince all the stakeholders.

As an indication of the relevance of the program for educational personnel, the list of courses, credit hours and schedule is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Course Titles, Credit Hours and Schedule

Course Title	Credit Hours	Schedule	
		Semester (Distance)	Summer (Face-to-face)
First Year: First Semester Courses			
1. Research Design and Methodology in curriculum and instruction	3		1st
2. Principles and practices of Adult Education	2		1st
3. Comparative education in curriculum studies	2	1st	
4. Curriculum construction and development	4	1st	
First Year: Second Semester Courses			
5. Curriculum implementation and evaluation	4	2nd	
6. Communication and media studies in curriculum studies	3	2nd	
7. Testing and Assessment skills	3		2nd
8. Issues, methods and materials in Teaching Primary School subjects	3		2nd
Second Year			
9. M. Ed Thesis	6	**1st & 2nd**	
Total	**30**	2 years	

Purpose of the Evaluative Survey

Evaluative data helps all program stakeholders to know whether to continue improve or abandon a program.

It is, therefore, the purpose of this evaluative study to survey how the learners in particular and other stakeholders in general value the effectiveness of the implementation of the program in achieving its objectives. It is hoped that this evaluative survey can make a contribution to the field and also remind statutory bodies at different levels to think rather more about what they are trying to achieve and how to measure its success systematically.

In short, this attempt is hoped to solicit data from the sources so as to:

- remind all the stakeholders (central, regional and the university) to reactivate the program and participate in planning, implementation and evaluation of the program systematically,
- generate a more deliberate decision making process at all levels of program implementation,
- initiate practitioners and professionals as well as learners to participate in evaluation and get access to the findings as these accumulate and can respond to them directly by applying some new idea or information in the way they carry out their roles, as educational officers, curriculum experts, instructors or others,
- find out whether the means used have achieved their goals, and to prevent the danger of taking for granted assumptions about their effectiveness and ineffectiveness, and

In general, it is hoped to generate data to the program and make a difference to the program leading to reactivate it and better ways of implementing it.

Statement of the Problem

> "…Without evaluation, there cannot be feedback.
> Without feedback, there cannot be good knowledge of results.
> Without knowledge of results, there cannot be systematic improvement in learning."
>
> *(Parnell, 1973 cited in Mehrens and Lehman, 1991:6)*

Even though professional literature about evaluation as a general theme exist in profusion, little has been written about stakeholders' perception of distance education in general. Nonetheless, M.Ed. Distance Education learners are the major parts of the program implementation stakeholders. They are adults who have implicit and explicit involvements in and contributions to the successful implementation of the program.

More specifically, there is hardly any explicit attempt to involve the learners so as to evaluate the implementation of the A.A.U. M.Ed. Distance Education Program since its commencement in the summer

of 1999. Thus, it might be difficult to judge and/or know whether, how and in what directions effective implementation was being undertaken in achieving its objectives. To this end, this evaluative survey answers the following basic research questions.

- How do the different level of stakeholders (learners, their instructors and officials) rate the effectiveness of the implementation of the M.Ed. Distance Education Program in curriculum studies in achieving its objectives?
- To what degree have the learners been satisfied with the program in general and some specific provisions in particular?
- What factors/issues negatively affect the satisfaction and performance of the learners? How do the learners rate the effects of the negatively influencing factors/issues?
- What do the teachers, the learners as well as the officials suggest pertaining to the program continuation or discontinuation?

Methodology

In carrying out this evaluative research, descriptive and comparative type of methods have been employed. The former is used to describe the nature and status of the M Ed Distance Education program in curriculum studies, whereas the latter is used to qualitatively compare the objectives of the program with its achievements so far. Such type of methodology is believed to elicit pertinent data pertaining to the issue under discussion.

The procedural steps followed in this study include: data sources and sample selection procedures; instruments and methods for data collection; and methods of data analyses.

Data Sources and Sample selection Procedures

Exclusively purposive/expert choice sampling technique (Dyer, 1979) was employed, due to the nature of the topic and convenience to the researcher. Accordingly, 3, 5, 3, and 9 graduates of the first, second,

third and forth batch respectively of the M.Ed. Distance education program in curriculum studies have been taken as subjects in this study. Five course instructors; 3 officials, one each from MoE, Addis Ababa and Oromia education bureaus, were also purposively selected.

To substantiate information gap that might arise, official documents pertaining to the aims/goals and objectives of the program and respective course lists, and others were reviewed.

Instruments and Methods for Data Collection

Two types of data collection tools were employed: a questionnaire and an interview. A questionnaire with a rating-scale type questions pertaining to the stakeholders' perception of the effectiveness of the implementation of the program objectives, the learners satisfactions, and the negatively affecting factors were prepared and dispatched by hand to 26 graduates of the program. In addition, a systematically structured interview guide was prepared and used to collect data from 5 course instructors, and 3 officials. Consequently, discussion and clarifications were made with almost all the interviewees.

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data have been employed. All the close-ended questions of the questionnaire and that of the interview including the preliminary data were entered in to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and quantitatively analyzed. Accordingly, analyses of simple frequency and percentage supplemented with descriptive statistics have been employed. The open-ended questions of both were qualitatively analyzed and interpreted.

Review of Related Literature

In this section, national and international literature that have relevance to the topic under investigation have been reviewed under different

sub-sections starting from conceptions. More precisely, in this section characterizations and conceptions of distance education, student archetypes, strengths/weaknesses of distance education, and motivational perspectives have been discussed.

Characteristics and Conceptions of Distance Education

Distance education is characterized by spatial separation of the teacher from the learner, an age heterogeneous learner group, and easy availability in the nature of programs offered (Powar et al, 2000: 1).

According to Aggarwal (1997: 337-338), distance education has the following main characteristics:

- There is very little face-to-face relationship,
- There is very little oral instruction,
- There is no fixed classroom,
- There is no immediate supervision by the tutor present with his students,
- Learning is on an individual basis and not on group basis,
- There is multi-media use i.e., use of postal services, radio, TV, etc.,
- Industrial form of production is used,
- Learning is on part-time basis,
- There is a provision of two-way communication, and
- Learner is more motivated.

Distance education is getting more and more recognitions at higher education levels. According to Tait et al (1999:17), it is just and good that more people of different kinds have access to higher education. In developed countries the call for access to higher education began as part of a broad movement that demands spreading opportunity to participate in the prosperity and power of contemporary society. Similarly, educational institutions' marketing has increased access for adult students and have developed a variety of techniques, services

and processes. To find solutions to the unending problems of access and equity, developing countries also have chosen distance education programs.

Student Archetypes

Educational programs, in both the conventional and distance-education systems, generally have in their “mind’s eye” a fairly clear notion of which they want to teach and what potential students’ needs are (Tait et al, 1999:80). Virtually, the convergence between the needs and behavior of conventional and distance-education students has not necessarily resulted in a convergence of response by the conventional and distance education systems.

Who are Distance Education Learners?

According to Tait et al (1999), archetypal non-conventional students are adults who have completed their formal education, are participants in the labor force and may have started families and assumed community responsibilities. This archetype is roughly equivalent to other labels and descriptions such as the 'adult learner', the 'second-chance learner' and the 'life long learner'. In contrast to conventional students, non-conventional students do not have the luxury of devoting themselves solely to the pursuit of their education. Other work, family and community obligations necessarily intrude and have to be balanced with educational goals. The constrains of time, place and the pacing of studies effectively exclude non-conventional students from participating in most formal education even if formal credentials are desired. Finally, non-conventional students are often not able to rely on a single educational provider to pursue their studies, but have to 'patch together' their programs through a variety of providers in both formal and non-formal settings. Consequently, they cannot rely on the generous public support afforded to conventional students. Non-conventional students have to be more reliant on the resources provided by them or by their employers to pay the costs of their education (Ibid).

Contrasting Conventional and Non-Conventional Learners

Table 2 provides a summary of the contrasting archetypes of conventional and non-conventional students (Tait et al, 1999).

Table 2: Student Archetypes

Characteristics	Conventional Learner	Distance Learner
Age	Under 24 years	25 and older
Labor-force participation	Not in the labor force	In the labor force
Life roles	Student role is primary role	Student role is one of several competing life roles
Prior learning	In most cases secondary school education	A variety of related formal and experiential learning
Need for credentials	Essential	May be important but not essential
Time and Place of study	Able to study at institutionally set time and place	Constrained by locations, competing job, family and community obligations
Educational providers	Single institution	Seek out multiple educational providers
Financial support	Largely public	Largely private

Strengths and weaknesses of Distance Education

Having the following strengths, post-secondary distance education institutions are well positioned to respond to the needs of the contemporary learner (Tait et al, 1999:93-95).

- The ability to remove barriers of time and place of study,
- The fact that complex and multifaceted distance education systems are no longer the 'new kids on the block'. There is a proven educational track record both in terms of successful teaching of students and the recognition of the value of credentials awarded,
- The ability to accommodate growth without substantial capital investments in classroom space, laboratories, dormitories and so on,

- The ability to utilize off-site academic expertise in materials development, and
- The cost advantage of virtually eliminating relocation expenses and cost associated with campus-based education.

Although offering many advantages to the contemporary student, distance education has weaknesses that may affect its ability to attract students. Some of these are:

- Distance education institutions are often unable to benefit from both informal and formal evaluative feedback mechanisms to enhance quality,
- It has a limited ability to offer socially significant opportunities for instructor-to-student and student-to-student interaction given the exigencies of separation in time and place of study, and
- Its organizations have typically been modeled in accordance with management principles first developed by Frederic K.Tylor (1911).

Motivation as Educational Factor in Distance Learning

The greatest educational resource of all is the extraordinary capacity of motivated people to learn on their own when given access to the stuff of learning (Bishop, 1994: 77). This entails that there should be created learning environments and situations that distance learners find motivating. Of course, the same things motivate not everyone. Particularly, distance learners (adults) are more likely to "buy into" the learning process when they feel they have some say in it (Jensen et al, 2000:68-69). Distance learners, notably at post secondary levels, are adults in many ways. Adult motivation to participate in learning is usually voluntary, although job loss and other exigencies may be compelling inducements. Adults' decisions to enter education may involve competing tensions between incentives and disincentives, such as the need to improve income versus previous negative experience with school or peer attitudes. Often participation results

from a transition or change for which education offers a resolution (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980; and Scholossberg, Waterf & Goodman, 1995; Boulmetis, 1997 cited in Maehl, 2000:36).

Different educators reviewed literature on motivational factors that affect distance learners' participation, and by implication persistence, in learning activities. As Cross cited in Maehl (2000) indicates, two modes had been proposed for adult educators and researchers to consider in their work. The Chain of Response (CoR) model dealt with negative and positive motivations for participation and their valences, which might be affected by interventions. The other model, Characteristics of Adult Learners (CAL), described a set of personal and situational characteristics that distinguish adults from children as learners and therefore could suggest different approaches to be used by educators of adults. Many of the factors that she noted with regard to both adult learner motivation and characteristics are addressed by the recommendations of Knowles (1960) and other adult-centered authors.

Research on motivation for participation in distance (adult) education is dominated by two kinds of study. In the first, adults are asked about their preferences for different content areas, and in the second they are asked what they hope to get out of participation. Results and/or stated motivation indicate many goals. But surveys of this kind reduce the whole idea of motivation for learning in adults to the status of a hit parade of expected benefits, rather than probing more deeply into underlying psychological reasons for engaging in learning (Knowles, 1960; Tait et al, 1999).

The Continuum of Influences on Distance Learning

In a discussion of distance education, different educators (Knapper et al, 2000), for instance, have given several examples of organizational aspects of distance learning that are often viewed as shortcomings, but can, in fact, have beneficial consequences for distance learning:

- Learners at home do not have their time on task organized and supervised by an expert (a tutor or teacher). As a result, they must take at least partial responsibility for planning and organizing their own learning.
- They do not receive regular and immediate feedback during learning task. As a result, they must themselves evaluate their learning.
- They do not learn in a group. As a result, they must develop skill in learning alone.
- Learning outside settings specifically designed to foster it requires special learning skills such as planning and organization of learning, and evaluation by learners of their own progress. It also involves special psychological components, of which motivation is possibly the most obvious. In particular, learners outside the traditional system must be largely self - or intrinsically motivated (Knapper et al, 2000:27-28).
- This implies that it is counter-educational to foster solely extrinsic motivation and dependency; discourage self-assessment, responsibility and initiative; and to empower lectures, not students (Brown et al 1994:31).

In the same vein, Knapper et al (2000:186) have indicated that extrinsic motivation is not sufficient to activate learning or even foster acquisition of the necessary learning skills. Experience of failure - or even of success, but only through highly dependent, teacher-centered learning - encourages learners to see themselves as incapable of learning, except perhaps under close supervision. It goes without saying that a combination of negative attitudes to learning, seeing it instead only as a means to fuzzy ends, and unfavorable self-image is not conducive to distance learning.

As Brown et al (1994:33) indicate, in recent years students have become much more strategic in their studying patterns, rarely studying for love of learning alone, but concentrating their energies on what will get them a better degree on a higher project mark. This implies that if formative assessment is not inbuilt as a normal, natural

procedure in all courses, then its effects are likely to be severely compromised by this "extrinsic, mark-driven motivation". Equally, however, if students do not know how they are doing, they tend to stop working, unless their internal motivation is very high. Motivation and feedback, are therefore, intertwined.

Current research also concluded that the present assessment procedures in many distance learning institutions are inadequate and do not motivate the learners to pursue and/or succeed in their learning. They seem designed to tell only university academics anything, and in any case it is doubtful whether they use assessment data to any good purpose (Ibid.38).

Fostering Distance Learners' Motivation

The psychological, social, and economical needs of distance learners must be considered when specifying goals and implementing the program. The need to achieve, for example, is related to the probability of success. Adult learners' aspirations vary, depending up on how they perceive their chances of success and whether they were successful on a previous task. Needs such as affiliation, self-worth and nurturance may help determine the goals of education and the motivation of learners (Mehrens and Lehman, 1991:30).

Of the many stakeholders who have roles in fostering distance learner motivation, tutors are cited here. Their tasks in promoting learners' motivation have to be more fully conceived than has been commonplace. Brown et al (1994:40) have listed that tutors will need to:

- give full feedback, when they are the assessors, rather than the student or peers, which is related both to the criteria for successful completion and to the individual student,
- identify with students points for development,
- set or agree tasks which embody a broad and balanced curriculum,

- generate and share criteria which blend departmental requirements with student priorities,
- grade rapidly-effective feedback is swift feedback,
- see the job as empowering students, hence see it as principally a counseling and facilitating job,
- be aware of the best thinking on student learning in higher education, and
- be supportive, foster intrinsic motivation, preferably by being interesting and enthusiastic.

Brown et al (1994:40) further indicates that there are two major implications of formative assessment for the university as a whole:

- Students need to have academic counselors who periodically meet them, review progress across the whole program, identify areas for further attention, while having in mind possible career paths and relevant personal circumstances, and
- Teaching has to be given greater priority, and with in it training for teaching which is in harmony with formative assessment.

Summative Examinations, as the same source indicates, also have considerable power to encourage learning, partly through providing that extrinsic motivation which is so necessary (though we are not denying the importance of intrinsic motivation). Examinations provide a stimulus for understanding to be developed through deep learning. When setting examinations, it is advisable that tutors should think about what students should actually be doing during that time. Is it necessary that they should be writing at length for the whole period, or is it possible that some elements of the examination could take the form of summaries or reviews, which might be much shorter in length, representing just as much student thinking and workload but not so much text?

In justifying motivating forces in learning at higher education, Doherty (1998:152-157) elaborates three components, which are the hallmarks of Total Quality Improvement (TQI) into the college

classroom. These components are: customer focus, student involvement, and continuous improvement.

Customer Focus: Identifying the customer in higher distance education is difficult. While the immediate customers are students, the real customers comprise two groups with quite similar interests. One is employers who want to draw on the knowledge and skills of the would be graduates. The other is the community of taxpayers who want to be assured that the subsidies provided to the program were well spent.

Student involvement: Distance learners will benefit from active involvement in the learning process. The active involvement appropriate for students in a customer-driven environment had become apparent from many surveys and the resulting list of proficiencies.

Continuous improvement: Knowing how well the needs of both the immediate and real customers are being met is difficult under conventional approach to instruction. According to Doherty (1998:156), two forms of continuous assessment are possible. One is a series of increasingly complex assignments that monitor how well distance learners are mastering the subject matter and developing the proficiencies set out for the course. Acquiring more complex knowledge and higher-level proficiencies require mastery of what necessarily precedes them.

The other is an ongoing program of feedback on course and instructor/tutor effectiveness. Most distance learning universities require end-of-term evaluations, but few go beyond that. Ongoing evaluations enable faculty members to respond more quickly and effectively to real or perceived problems. Students, as customers, appreciate being consulted about their reactions to the product and how it is packed. Thus, the evaluation process contributes to building a closer and more effective relationship with students.

Presentations and Analysis of Data

Of the 26 copies of the questionnaire dispatched to the subjects, 20 were properly filled and returned. Of the rest 6, one was returned but not properly answered. The other 5 were not returned.

Similarly, interviews were conducted with 8 people (5 instructors of Curriculum and Instruction; 3 officials - one each from MOE, education Bureaus of Addis Ababa and Oromia).

All the questions of the 20 copies of the properly filled and returned questionnaire (including the personal data of the respondents) and interview discussions are analyzed and interpreted in this section. Interview guide questions that match the questionnaire questions have been included in the same category whereas those that do not match have been interpreted separately.

Table 3: Background of the Respondents

Sex	No.	%	Experience in the Field of Education in Years		
Male	27	96.4	Experience	Frequency	Percent
Female	1	3.6	1-10	6	21.4
			11-20	14	50.0
Total	28	100.0	21-30	8	28.6
			Total	28	100.0

Analysis of the personal data indicates that out of the 28 subjects there was only one female. The table also shows that the majority of the respondents (50%) had teaching experiences of between 11 and 20 years in the field of education.

Table 4: Academic Rank/Qualification of Interviewees

Academic Rank	Frequency	Percent
Associate professor	2	25
Assistant professor	3	36
MA	2	25
BA	1	13
Total	8	100

Table 4 depicts that the interviewees have high academic rank; particularly 5 instructors are associate professors and assistant professors.

Table 5: Enrollment and Expected/Actual Years of Graduation

Initial Enrollment			Expected/actual Year of Graduation		
Year	Frequency	Percent	Year	Frequency	Percent
1999	4	20	2001	3	15
2000	4	20	2002	5*	25
2001	5	25	2003	3	15
2002	7	35	2004	9*	45
Total	20	100	Total	20	100

Table 5 shows that a few of the respondents delay for 1 year beyond the expected year of their graduation. As an instance, one from 1999, 2 from 2001 enrollees were delayed from their batches to the respective next years.

This indicates that there were some inconveniences or factors that influence the learners not to graduate as planned. Further, the data obtained through the open-ended questions revealed that the students delayed for one or more years due to the workload at their workplaces and also due to personal cases.

* Transferred from previous year

Table 6: Effectiveness of the M. Ed. Distance Education Program in Curriculum Studies in Achieving its Objectives

No	Objectives	Very Greatly		Greatly	
		Fre	%	Fre	%
1.1	To strengthen the skills in curriculum development and implementation in the primary, secondary and teacher training levels.	15	54	13	46
1.2	To strengthen the ability to create curriculum that meets the needs of the new Education and Training policy and the current best practices in curriculum development for effective learning	12	43	16	57
1.3	To strengthen the capacity to conduct research in curriculum development and implementation	18	64	10	36

Table 6 shows that all the subjects rated the implementation of the M. Ed. Distance Education program in curriculum studies to be effective in achieving its objectives. In other words, no one from both the respondents to the questionnaire and the interviewees rated the program to be low, very low and undecided in achieving its objectives.

Table 7: Learners' Satisfaction of the Factors/ Provisions

No	Factors/ Provisions	Very Satisfactory		Satis-Factory		Unsatis-factory	
		Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%
2.1	Getting release from your employer during summer and tutorial sessions	7	35	9	45	4	20
2.2	Initial Orientation given by the university, faculty of education	6	30	13	65	1	5
2.3	Conduct of the training program in general	11	55	7	35	1	5
2.4	Timely distribution of study materials	10	50	9	45	1	5
2.5	Assessment of learning, markings and feedback mechanisms.	6	30	12	60	2	10
2.6	Academic support services (eg. Advisor, tutor, etc)	7	35	11	55	1	5
2.7	Facilities during summer residential training (eg. dormitory, cafeteria, health, library)	5	25	15	75		
2.8	The program in general	4	20	16	80		

Table 7 depicts that 80% and 65% of the respondents indicated that the program in general and the initial orientation given by the university, the then faculty of education, were satisfactory. In the same vein, 55 % and 50% of them indicated that the conduct of the training program in general and timely distribution of the study materials were very satisfactory. On the other hand, 20% of them indicated that getting release from their respective employers during summer and tutorial sessions were unsatisfactory. None of the respondents rated the listed provision to be very unsatisfactory nor undecided.

Table 8: Factors that Negatively Affected Learners' Satisfaction/ interest and performance

No	Factors/ Issues	Greatly		Moderately		Low	
		Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%
3.1	The course materials are not orderly developed	5	25	12	60	3	15
3.2	The courses are over loaded-too much material to work through in the time scheduled.	5	25	6	30	9	45
3.3	Not enough tuition/ discussion access available	5	25	9	45	5	25
3.4	Inadequate facilities during the residential summer course	3	15	9	45	4	20
3.5	Unforeseen changes (of course lecturers, or your job positions)	-		3	15	13	65
3.6	Lack of encouragement from employers	12	60	5	25	2	10

As can be seen from Table 8, 12 (60%) of the respondents have indicated that lack of encouragement from their respective employers has greatly affected their satisfactions and performances. Similarly, 25% have agreed that the courses are not orderly developed, are over loaded-too much material to work through in the time scheduled, and not enough tuition/ discussion access available.

Table 9: Duration Allotted to Cover the Course

Duration	Frequency	Percent
Too little	2	10
Just right	18	90
Total	20	100

Requested to indicate what they think about the time duration allotted to cover the course, 90% of the respondents rated that it was just right.

Table 10: Opinion on Program's Continuation or Discontinuation

No.	Views	Level of agreement					
		Greatly		Moderately		Low	
		Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%
1	The M.Ed DE programs should be restarted	18	64.3	8	28.6	-	
2	The M.Ed DE program should not be restarted	-		-		21	75.0
3	Before deciding to continue or not, its impact should be studied	14	50.0	11	39.3	1	3.6

Further investigation which demanded the respondents to rate their views pertaining to the continuation or discontinuation of the M.Ed distance education program in Curriculum and Instruction was made. Accordingly, the majority (64.3%) of the subjects rated greatly that it should be restarted, and 50% rated greatly that before deciding to continue or not to continue, its impact should be studied. No one respondent or interviewee had the opinion that the program should not be restarted.

Table 11: Instructors' and Officials' Ratings of the Academic Performance of the Distance Learners

Level of academic performance of DE students	Frequency	Percent
Lower than that of the regular ones	1	12.5
Equal to that of the regular ones	6	75.0
Higher than that of the regular ones	1	12.5
Total	8	100

Seventy-five percent of the interviewees rated the academic performance of the distance learners in comparison with the regular ones to be equal to that of the regular ones.

Finally, requested to list down generally what factors, issues or conditions affect and/or threaten the effectiveness of the program, the subjects enumerated the following:

- The program did not have its own structure and administratively responsible body in the university that would follow-up the program apart from the regular one,
- No feedbacks of term papers to the learners were given,
- Lack of sufficient services like health during the residential face-to-face program,
- Teaching materials are less integrated and less organized,
- Insufficiency of thesis fund,
- Lack of competent tutors, inconsistency of tutorial schedule, and inconvenient tutorial centers,
- Mode of delivery was restricted solely to print media and face-to-face schedules,
- Information gap pertaining to the program in general and the schedules in particular among the university, MoE, and regions from where the learners were coming,
- Time Constraints: The learners pointed out that they were overburdened by many duties and thus did not have time to do all the assignments required of them. In short, the dual responsibilities of the learners-learners and workers put some strain on them,
- Unwillingness of employers to give permission during tutorial sessions and research works,
- Lack of recognition of the adult learner characteristics among the instructors and others, and
- Lack of recognition of individual differences among the learners who had different experiences, exposures, and educational backgrounds.

The respondents have further suggested what they think to be the solutions for the above problems.

- There should be a distinct structure/organization and administration set up so as to fit the nature of distance education program in general and distance learners' in particular.
- Different level stakeholders mainly the university, MoE and respective regions should have schemes of information exchange and transparency so as to give due attention to program success and also to improve some of the stringent administrative requirements threatening the program.
- The teaching materials of the courses of the program must be integrated, include relevant and timely contents and learning experiences and organized as well.
- Thesis fund should be decided based on the proposal rather than predetermined or rigidly fixed.
- Multi-media mode of delivery should be used.
- Frequency of face-to-face contact with the course instructors should be increased.
- Effective communication mechanism should be encouraged.
- Course instructors should test the subject area covered rather than using exam papers administered for another purpose.

Similarly, requested to suggest and/or comment whatever they feel pertaining to the program in general and the quitting or the continuation of the program in particular, the subjects indicated the following.

- The programs should not be started and die down based solely on the personal judgments of few officials.
- The program should be continued as it: a) satisfies the skilled work force need of the country in general and the regions in particular, b) maximizes the opportunity or access to further education as per career needs, c) maintains the balance between work experience and training outcomes by playing a pivotal role in building one's capacity.

Particularly, the instructors underscored their concerns that the reason for the termination of the program was not clear for them. It was pointed out that instructors who were teaching the regular program were conducting the distance program. They further indicated that institutional development and discontinuation of a program are the prerogatives of the academic establishment. The program could even be a solution for inequity of HE provisions in the country. Consequently, they suggested that the program has to be continued (reactivated) for the following reasons:

- It improves the competence of those practitioners in education,
- Its graduates are innovative, competent and highly demanded by the market,
- Even if MoE might not assist the program, AAU could deliver it in the free market.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introducing a program in “September and measuring its success in June” does not give a solid basis for decision and action. The fact is that a new program is rarely completely implemented in the first few years. Practically, nothing worth doing can be accomplished in a single lifetime of four years. Commonly, five cycles of implementation may be necessary before innovation is completely in place (Prat, 1994).

In the same vein, the development of any educational system, whether conventional or distance, presupposes some conception of the type of students to be served and their educational needs. Many of us experience difficulty recalling how we developed interest in our learning programs. It can be generalized that for any given task an individual's creative production depends on his/her intrinsic motivation to complete that task.

Distance learners at higher education levels are adults in many ways. Adult motivation to participate in learning is usually voluntary. That is

why many educators recommend that distance learning programs at post secondary levels should be designed and implemented in such away that their objectives, contents, and methods of delivery should match with the needs and multifaceted responsibilities of adult learners.

The World Bank document (2004) also indicates that distance education programs generally require stronger management skills than traditional tertiary programs-above-average skills in organization, logistics, and problem-solving.

These all single out that even though we see some quantitative successes in achieving its objectives, the implementation of the program had observable qualitative defects. Particularly, the nature of adult learners and distance education itself have not been duly recognized and planned. Compounding the problem is prematurely measuring its success, and deciding to terminate it soon.

Therefore, the following points need special considerations by respective stakeholders.

- MoE with the Addis Ababa University should rethink, recapitulate, and reexamine once again to restart the M. Ed distance education program at the university by adding technology-based multi-media for it can be incorporated into the "pedagogical model" for higher education expansion in the country. Above all, the assertiveness of the university management pertaining to the issue can brig true success.
- The viability of distance education as a cost-effective alternative to campus-based instruction largely depends on effective program management and the availability of trained human resources to support it. Thus, a strong M.Ed. Distance Education Academic and Administrative Division with full authority and responsibility need to be reorganized in the university.
- Distance learners, notably at higher education level, are adults who need to participate in learning voluntarily and need to be

enhanced and empowered rather than forced by some external influences. Therefore, MoE and the university should create conducive environment to enable M.Ed learners be intrinsically motivated and empowered to actively and persistently learn and assess their achievements on their own, and apply what they learn to practice when they go back to their respective regions.

- The development of the course and/or curriculum materials should take into consideration the current best practices in curriculum development for effective learning by adults.
- MoE and the AAU, should open discussion forums with regional education leaders and the already graduated and potential learners of the program so as to share common understanding about the nature of the program and time-share of the learners for summer face-to-face, tutorial, study and research works.
- Once the program has been restarted, MOE and the University should allocate proposal-based thesis research budget and upfront investment to train staff, design curriculum, develop and test learning materials, and acquire selected technology pertinent to distance education program development in the country.
- Receiving feedback can be an excellent motivation especially when valid criticism is supported by appropriate praise and commentary. Therefore, distance learners should be provided with the level and depth of desirable and timely feedback for the fact that knowing what one knows and does not know focuses learning.

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