Comparative Study of Quality Assurance Practices in Open Distance Learning (ODL) Universities

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Abstract

Traditional standards and measures of quality show that there are no principle standards for distance learning to achieve goals/objectives of quality assurance in Pakistan. The study was aimed to compare and gain the knowledge about current practices and measurement standards in open distance learning (ODL) at international level between the ODL universities. Threats and factors that are and will be affecting the quality of ODL and strategies that will help Pakistan to meet the high quality as benchmark for ODL were also discussed and answered through this research project with comparative perspectives. The study was conducted between August, 2016 and September, 2016. Data sets were collected from Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) which is the first Asian mega university of ODL and Universitas Terbuka (UT) Indonesia. Thematic analysis was employed to identify, examine and record patterns or themes within the data. The findings of the study indicated that both universities, AIOU and UT, have Quality Assurance departments namely Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Quality Assurance Unit. Directorate of Quality Enhancement is struggling for Quality Assurance with the departments and Higher Education Commission (HEC). AIOU and its departments are under the process of accreditation of the programs from various recognised bodies of HEC. Whereas University of Terbuka (UT) has accreditation of its programs from the Higher Education National Accreditation Board, certified from ISO 9001; 2008 and International Council of Distance Education. UT has centralised, well organised and well documented quality assurance unit. AIOU and UT need more efficient infrastructure, monitoring and controlling system for the e-learning and student support services at regional centers.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Open Distance Learning, Threats and Factors

Introduction:

Traditional standards and measures of quality show that there are no principle standards for distance learning to achieve goals/objectives of quality assurance. Especially with reference to AIOU, which is the mega and leading university of ODL in terms of number of students and large infrastructure across the Pakistan. Allam Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has not a well documented quality assurance policy because after the establishment of institution, it concentrated more on capacity building, designing, and implementing system processes and procedures. It is essential to maintain the quality standards while developing and implementing systems, process, and procedures. AIOU has quality assurance department that was established few years ago named as Directorate of Quality Enhancement (DQE). AIOU is applying following process in terms of the quality education through ODL system to achieve the objectives of ODL.

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1. Admission process
   - Merit based program
   - Criteria based program
   - Advertisement to attract the students
   - Accessibility of forms across the country
     - Online
     - Prospectus sell points
   - Confirmation of admission
   - Information to continuing students
2. Material Resources
   - Traditional Books correspondence mode by post
   - E-Content
   - E-Media
     - Radio
     - Television
     - Web based TV
3. Assignments
   - Correspondence
   - Online support
   - Online submission
4. Tutors
   - Correspondence tutorship
   - E-Tutoring
5. Face to Face component
   - Compulsory Workshops
   - Optional Tutoring
6. Examination
   - Written exams
   - Viva-Voice
   - Practical/Internship
7. Decentralized center system
8. Centralized
9. Outputs/Outcomes
   - Researches
   - Graduates

Diversifications of culture, language, geographical/climate changes directly and indirectly affect the quality of these processes in ODL.

Framing of Issues:

Following issues were discussed and answered through this research project with comparative perspectives.

1. What are the existing measurement standards to measure the quality of inputs, processes and outputs of ODL system?
2. How to measure the quality of education in ODL?
3. Is there preparedness to handle the increase in demand of ODL with quality?
4. What are the threats and factors that are and will be affecting the quality of ODL?

5. What measures and strategies will help to meet the high quality as benchmark for ODL?

Research Method
Researchers had adopted the cross sectional survey design to carry out the study. Qualitative data were collected through document analysis, questionnaires and interviews.

Population
All regular faculty members of both universities (AIOU and UT) were the population of this study.

Instrumentation for Data Collection
A questionnaire developed by Commonwealth of Learning in 2016 (Commonwealth of Learning, 2016) has been modified by the researchers with the help of experts for content validity and then modified questionnaire was employed for the collection of data from the faculty members of both universities. The purpose of tool was provision of views and observations by faculty members regarding steps and measures already been taken by the AIOU and UT and identification of benchmark standards and strategies to attain high quality in ODL.

Data Collection and Analysis
The data were collected by researcher from Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Pakistan by administering the modified questionnaire amongst the faculties. The data were collected by the researcher and her counter parts from Universitas Turbuka (UT) Indonesia. Documentary analysis was conducted on already adopted/developed policies regarding quality assurance by both universities for the purpose of triangulation.

Quality Assurance in ODL
Commonwealth, in its report titled Open and Distance Learning Quality Assurance in Commonwealth Universities published in 2016, (Commonwealth of Learning, 2016) has reported that all the evidences of improvements either in the form of equal access, more enriched and cost-effective delivery through applications of information and communication technologies (ICTs), or more pedagogically sound and learner-centered methods in ODL; the governing authorities and general public has still concerns regarding the quality of ODL system and programmes offered by universities.
According to Commonwealth report (Commonwealth of Learning, 2016)
"*Critics of ODL are only too ready to seize upon the lower or absence of entry standards, the limited support for isolated learners, the costs and effort involved in creating and maintaining the technological infrastructure and developing the courseware, and the sometimes higher no completion and failure rates. In some jurisdictions, ODL is perceived as "last-choice education." Sometimes these viewpoints may be a hangover from the days of "correspondence education," with its slow and poor-quality feedback and limited support for learners. In other cases, the rise of private online providers more interested in profit than academic quality has helped give ODL a bad name.*"
Ensuring the accountability of public funds, bringing improvement in the quality of higher education, providing information for funding decisions, having informed students and employers, stimulating competitiveness within and between organizations, undertaking a quality check on new (and sometimes private) institutions, assigning institutional status, supporting the

transfer of authority between the state and institutions, providing assistance in student's mobility, and making international comparisons are the reasons for Quality Assurance (QA) in higher education. (Brennan, 1998)(Commonwealth for Learning, 2016)

Universities are considered as at academic autonomy therefore they must maintain it with the freedom to plan, implement and examine their own academic quality assurance standards in accordance with the diversity (COL Report, 2016).

There is another issue in implementing the quality assurance policies and standards that QA practices are deemed to be too costly, bureaucratic and extra burden on universities and academia.

Directorate of Quality Assurance AIOU Pakistan

The Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) of AIOU was established in the year 2007 and since then it has been actively involved in quality assurance, enhancement and institutionalization of quality culture in the functioning of AIOU. However, later in the year 2013, a Third Party Evaluation under "Commonwealth of Learning Review and Improvement Model (COL-RIM) Implication" was held. DQE also has a deep concern for the evaluation of programmes/courses, participation in national/international events and in capacity building of the AIOU employees through trainings, workshops and seminars. Furthermore, the academic activities of AIOU are routed through DQE and are monitored by Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), HEC. (DQE, 2016)

AIOU has membership of association with Commonwealth Of Learning (COL), Salon C and International Council for Distance Education. Since its establishment, DQE has acheived the following goals:

1. Third Party Evaluation
2. Research and Development (R & D) Survey 2012-13
3. Accreditation of Programmes from the Relevant Councils
4. Trainings/Workshops/Seminars
5. Assistance to the Scholars in International Scholarships
6. Faculty Development Programmes (MS/PHD Foreign)
7. In-Service Professional Development Programmes
8. Membership of Associations/Networks
9. Quarterly Progress Reports
10. Research Papers Evaluations (Travel Grants) – in process (www.aiou.edu.pk)
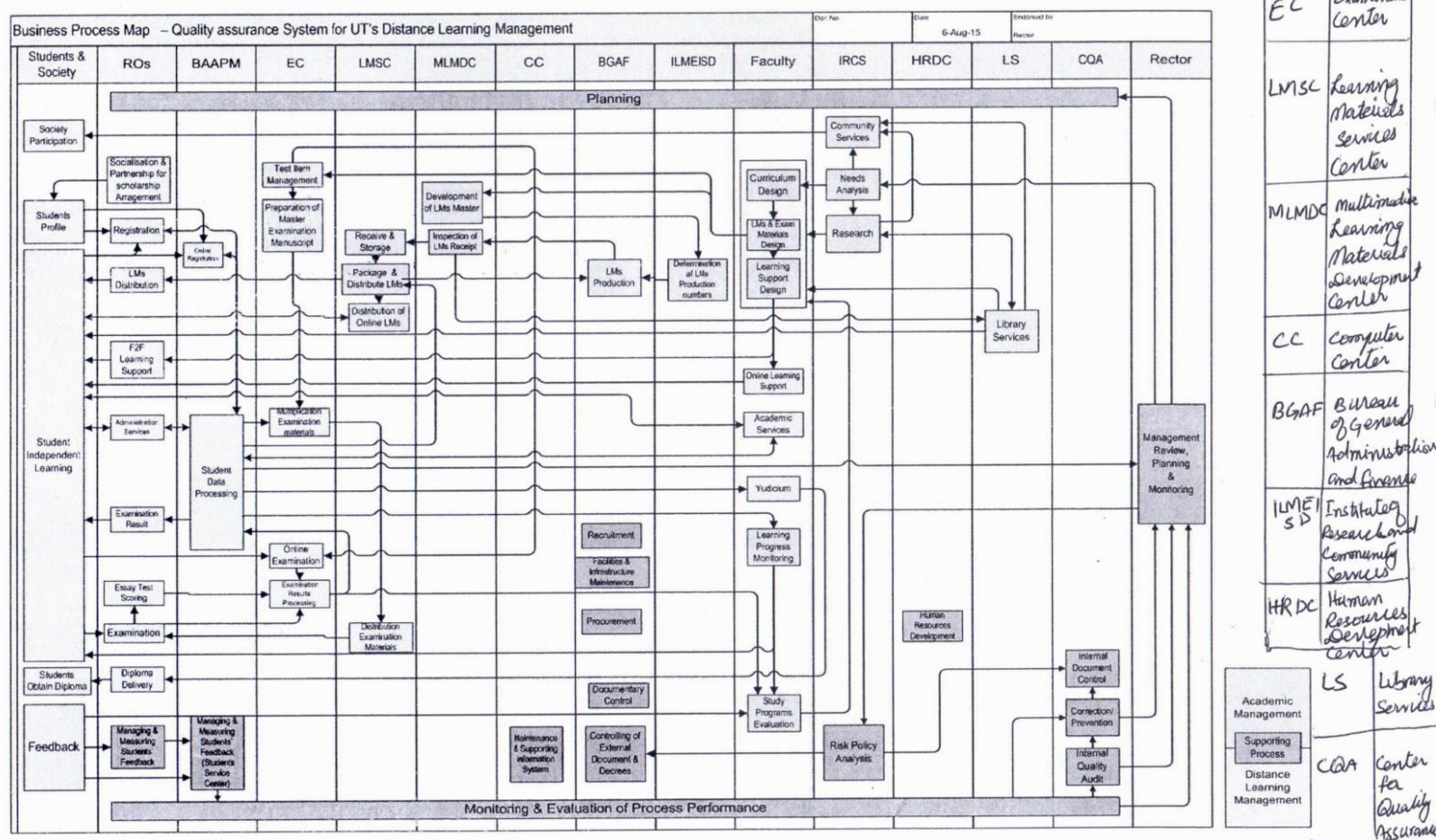
a. Quality Assurance Unit of TU Indonesia

Universitas Terbuka (TU) has developed and implemented comprehensive Quality Assurance System, Sistem Jaminan Kualitas (SIMINTAS) since 2002. This system was adopted from the Asian Association of Open Universities Quality Assurance Framework (AAOU-QA Framework). UT accommodated the demand for improvement by integrating all requirements (BAN-PT, ICDE and refinement of AAOU-QA Framework into AAOU-QA Statements of Best Practices) into a new policy called SIMINTAS-UT 2012.

Structure and Components of SIMINTAS-UT

The components are:

The Busniss Process Map of UT (Source QAU, 2016)

1. Planning and Policy
2. Human Resources
3. Internal Management
4. Students and Student's Profile
5. Program Design and Development
6. Learning Supports
7. Facilities, Media and Learning Resources

8. Students Assessment and Evaluation
9. Research and Community Services

Research Findings on the basis of Questionnaire from the Faculty of AIOU and UT:
This part includes the analysis and interpretation of findings for the data which was collected through questionnaire from faculties of AIOU and UT.

Table 01. Is your department permitted to set its own quality standards and policies for quality assurance and enhancement with special need of ODL?

Options		Yes		No		Partially	
Results	AIOU	13	26%	07	14%	30	60%
	UT	014	28.57%	28	57.14%	07	14.28%

Table 01 shows that 60% respondents from AIOU agreed with the statement that partially departments are permitted to set their own quality standards and policies for quality assurance and enhancement with special need of ODL. Further in comments respondents elaborated that they contribute in the following functions; 1. Taking care of assignment questions, quizzes, midterms, presentations and exam papers development, 2. Allowed to contribute but things are still in practice, 3. Improving courses content to some extent in the form of revision 3. Some courses have manuals, and 4. Preparing agenda for approval from the statutory bodies.
One of the respondent commented,
" under the faculty all departments have to follow the same rules for quality in programs having similar nature."
By comparing the results of both universities (AIOU and UT), it can be witnessed that the findings are quite different from each other i.e., 57.14% respondents from UT disagreed with the statement that departments are permitted to set their own quality assurance standards and policies. Comment explained,
"They coordinate with the Center of Quality Assurance System and blue print for all learning process. Departments comply with quality standards and policies set by Quality Assurance Unit of UT"

Table 02. Is there an institutional Quality Assurance Framework for ODL Programmes?

Options		Yes		No		Partially	
Results	AIOU	29	58%	09	18%	10	20%
	UT	46	93.87%	01	02.04%	02	04.08%

Table 02 is presenting that 58% of the respondents from AIOU were in agreement with the statement that there is an institutional Quality Assurance Framework for ODL programmes. Additionally, it was stated in the comments that there is a seprate department for quaity assurance in AIOU, which is weak in functionality and doesnot meet updated expectations of ODL system. Therefore, AIOU is following the Higher Education Commissions criteria, rules and manual for quality assurance. One of the respondent elaborated the weak functionality of Qallity Assurance department of AIOU in these words;
"It is working but not functional/mean it only collect data and do not try to set the standards."

Results in above table are showing that 93.87% respondents from the UT agree with the statment about existance of an institutional quality assurance framework for ODL programmes. Comments given by the respondents expressed that this framework is based on Indonesian Government Policies, Asian Association of Open University (AAOU) Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Assurance Policy of International Council on Distance Education (ICDE), Indonesian National Qualification Framework, ISO 9001-2008 standards and BAN-PT.

Table 03. Is there a set of procedure/process to collect data and interpret to ensure Quality of administrative and management practices?

Options		Yes		No		Partially	
Results	AIOU	17	34%	10	20%	27	54%
	UT	46	93.87%	03	06.1%	00	00%

Table 03 shows that 54% respondents from faculty of AIOU are partially agreed with the statement about the existance of set of a procedure/process to collect data and interpret to esure quality of administrative and management practices. Few responses in the form of comments elaborated the opinions of respondents as following: 1. Usually give a questionnaire to the students, 2. Science faculty offers face to face interaction mode for programmes so that information can be gathered directly from students and resource personnel, 3. Annual performance reports of the employees, and 4. Annual Report generated by the Research Cell of AIOU.

As per the results of UT, there is a set of procedure/process to collect data and interpret to ensure Quality of administrative and management practices and 93.87% respondents from UT agreed with it. In comments procedures were highlighted i.e. consultant to collect and interpret the data, monitoring and evaluation programmes, student satisfaction study, tutorial and exams practices, study program evaluations, tracer study (Alumni), ISO 9001-2008, collection of data by staff at the end of semester in the form of internal audit.

Table 04. How many times this (collection & interpretation of data) procedure takes place?

Options		Semesterly		Yearly		Any Other	
Results	AIOU	11	22%	09	18%	14	28%
	UT	29	59.18%	14	28.57%	03	06.1%

Table 04 describes that only 68% respondents from AIOU liked to give their response for any given option on the statement about time period for collection and interpretation of data. All respondents provided explaination in the form of comments, which are; there is no fixed time line, procedure depends upon demand , at special occasion/s, for special project/s, and periodically as well as on need basis. Whereas, 24% respondents commented that they dont have any idea about collection and interpretation of data. As stated by one of the respondent that:

"At university level Quality Assurance department collect and interpret the data without time line whereas at departmental level we give feedback at the end of workshop (face to face component) twice in a year"

On the other hand only 59.18% respondents from the UT agreed with the semesterly option of data collection. Furthermore, respondents commented that data is collected semesterly for internal audit in the form of student satisfaction study for ISO Certification and to follow the ICDE procedures.

Table 05. Has your department developed a quality assurance policy manual?

Options		Yes		No		Partially	
Results	AIOU	06	12%	39	87%	05	10%
	UT	10	20.40%	31	63.26%	07	18.16%

Table 05 elaborates that 87% respondents from AIOU disagreed that their department has developed any quality assurance policy manual. Further in comments, respondents explained that they are planning to develop a manual and usually it is the responsibility of QA department. One opinion came from faculty of AIOU in these words:

"I think it should be developed faculty-wise because of nature of programs, teaching and evaluating procedures."

Percentage of respondents from the UT disagreeing with the statement is 63.26% and provided the views that quality assurance policy manuals are developed by the Quality Assurance Unit, through a centralized procedure. Respondents who agreed with the statement explained that a manual was developed by their respective department and then submitted to the QAU. Respondents partially agreeing with the statement provided the justification that quality assurance manuals are developed mutually by the QAU and representatives from the departments.

Table 06. Does your institutional Quality Assurance Framework have distinct standards for ODL?

Options		Yes		No		Partially	
Results	AIOU	14	28%	26	52%	10	20%
	UT	33	67.34%	12	24.48%	04	08.16%

Table 06 under the question statement is illustrating that 52 % of the respondents from AIOU disagreed that existing institutional Qualiry Assurance Framework have distinct/specific standards for ODL.

Comparison of the results from both universities (AIOU and UT) provided the evidences of opposite variations. It was witnessed that the majority of the respondents from UT agreed with the statement i.e. 67.34%.. Oone of the respondent commented that:

"UT's QA framworks are developed on the basis of ODL standards referred by the AAOU and ICDE."

Table 07. Does your existing Quality Assurance Framework measure quality in ODL in terms of input?

Options		Yes		No		Partially	
Results	AIOU	27	54%	11	22%	09	18%
	TU	44	89.79%	03	06.01%	02	04.08%

It can be observed in Table 07 that Fifty-four percent (54%) respondents from AIOU agreed that existing quality assurance framework of AIOU measures the quality in ODL in terms of input. A respondent commented in reply of the statement in these words:

"Feedback from students shows any deficency if any."

While 89.79% of the respondents from the UT agreed with the statement about measuring the quality in ODL for inputs through the existing quality assurance framework of UT. For

instance the quality in ODL is measured by inputs such as registration, pre-requisits for admission, standards for leasning material, and curriculum etc.

Table 08. Does your existing quality assurance framework measure quality in ODL in term of output/outcomes?

Options		Yes		No		Partially	
Results	AIOU	19	38%	14	28%	14	28%
	UT	47	95.91%	01	02.04%	01	02.04%

Data in Table 08 is showing that 38% of the respondents from AIOU agreed with the statement while 28% of the respondents partially agreed with the statement about measurement of quality in ODL by outputs through prevailing quality assurance framework of AIOU. Following comments were given under Question Statement No. 08:
1. Number of passed students solely does not reflect the real picture of outputs/product.
2. Outputs in terms of certified graduates are worthy.
3. Next semester planning is based on feedback provided by the current semester students.
4. Activities /calender of events are based on semester work flow.
5. Quality graduates are pursued for higher studies in abroad i.e. for PhD programmes, or providing services as per the capacity in various disciplines across the country.

In case of UT, almost ninety-six percent (95.91% exactly) of the respondents agreed with the statement that existing quality assurance framework measures the quality in ODL in terms of Outputs/outcomes, such as:

1. Alumni Competencies
2. GPA/Final Score
3. Length of Study Time
4. Jobs and Employer's Satisfaction
5. Research Thesis Defence
6. Student Satisfaction Survey
7. Exit Surrvey

Table 09. Does your institution/department has external audit?

Options		Yes		No		Partially	
Results	AIOU	27	54%	15	30%	08	16%
	UT	49	100%	00	00%	00	00%

Table 09 indicates that 54% of the responses from AIOU were in agreement of the statement while 16% of the respondents partially agreed at AIOU that university/department has procedures of external audit. Respondents claimed that HEC audits AIOU and also Commenwealth of Learning (COL) had audited the university in 2013.

On the other hand, all 100% respondents from UT were very sure about the institutional/department external audits. Details about the external audit, given by the respondents in form of comments are as under:
1. Regular Audits
2. International Council of Distance Education
3. Higher Education National Accreditation Board (BAK-PT)

4. Financil Audit by Governmnet Agencies
5. ISO, 9001-2008

Table 10. Do the external audits involve visits to your institution by external audit personnel?

Options		Yes		No		Partially	
Results	**AIOU**	27	54%	20	40%	11	22%
	UT	47	95.91%	01	02.04%	01	02.04%

Results in the Table 10 are showing that 54% of the respondents from AIOU were in full agreement with the question statement whereas 22% of the respondents were partially agreed that the external audits involve visits to AIOU by external audit personnel. Comments by faculty of AIOU were as:
"HEC visit during Semester",
"Offical visits are arranged by HEC",
"External audit is general in nature and not specific with ODL."
In case of UT, 95.91% of the respondents agreed that the audit personnel visit their institution at the time of external audits. One of the comments by the UT respondent is as:
"We have two types of audits, 1. Internal Audit 2. External Audit. Quality Assurance Unit is Responsible for the conduction of internal audit befor the commencment of external audit. Whereas we are audited by the external auditor of ICDE (2005, 2010, 2015) after every five years, BAY-PT (3-4 years), and ISO 9001-2008 (Six months)"

Table 11. Are the students involved in quality assurance audits through feedback?

Options		Yes		No		Partially	
Results	**AIOU**	31	62%	16	32%	03	06%
	UT	29	59.18%	11	22.44%	09	18.36%

Table 11 shows that 62% respondents from AIOU agreed with the statement regarding the involvement of students in quality assurance audits through feedback. They commented that:
"We get feedback formally through feedback forms filld by the students."
Whereas 59.18% responses from UT were in full favor and 18.36% responses were in partial agreement with the statement. Respondent commented that:
"We have conducted research such as exit survey, tracers study and students satisfaction survey."

Table 12. Does your department/institution has internal/external funds or grants system to support the quality assurance practices?

Options		Yes		No		Partially	
Results	**AIOU**	16	32%	28	56%	06	12%
	***UT**	27	55.10%	14	28.57%	02	04.08%

Table 12 indicates that fifty-six percent (56%) respondents totally agreed and 12% respondents partially agreed that department/institution has internal/external funds, grants system to support the quality assurance practices. Respondents stated that Higher Education Commission, Non-Government Organizations and in some cases university itself provides funds to the faculty members for quality assurance practices.

Fifty-five percent (55.10%) responses from the faculty of UT were in favor of above statement. Respondents justified that they have internal funds provided by the UT and external funds from the Indonesian Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education.

Table 13. Is there any quality assurance system for continuous process of improvements in ODL?

Options		Yes		No		Partially	
Results	AIOU	21	42%	12	24%	13	26%
	*UT	42	85.71%	02	04.08%	03	06.12%

Table 13 describes that 42% of the respondents from AIOU totally agreed and 26% of the respondents showed partial agreement regarding the quality assurance system for continuous process of improvements in ODL. They explained that Directorate of Quality Enhancement at AIOU is the example of it. In this regards training programs and seminars are arranged. One of the example is arrangement of International Conference for National Policy on ODL.

85.71% responses from UT were in favor of the statement. Comments by faculty members elaborated that Quality Assurance Unit is responsible for continuous process of improvements in ODL with the collaboration of departments and regional centers.

The Challenges and Threats that Affect the Quality Assurance of ODL Programmes

The Challenges and Threats that Affect the Quality Assurance of ODL from AIOU:

All respondents from AIOU listed challenges and threats that affect the quality assurance of ODL, which are:

1. Internal Quality Assurance system is weak. Although students get degrees but the expertise in subject are weak
2. Poor standards of technology
3. Inefficent management & monitoring system within AIOU
4. Lack of concrete quality standards for Qualituy Assurance of ODL
5. Centeralization of system
6. Lack of coherent policy
7. Faculty of science is offering all its programmes in face-to-face teaching mode under the umbrella of ODL system
8. Time management among various components
9. Non serious behaviour of the ODL students
10. Quality Assurance procedures and protocols
11. Discontinued monitoring and lack of timely modified procedures
12. Communication is the main problem due to non-availability of electricity
13. Lack of proper implementation of policies
14. Comparative environment in offering ODL programmes by different formal universities
15. Large number of students
16. Political influence
17. Recognition/Accreditation problems as compared to formal system
18. Inefficent feedback system
19. Assurance of ODL programs on conventional standards

20. Constant change in technology
21. Mindset of assurance agencies
22. Assessment system of students
23. Increased enrollment
24. Standard procedures for different mode of ODL e.g. online, blended, conventional ODL
25. Low level of trust on quality of student's assignments
26. Less trust on activities going on at regional campuses

The Challenges and Threats that Affect the Quality Assurance of ODL from UT:

All respondents from the UT listed following challenges and threats that affect the quality assurance of ODL in UT.

1. Infrastructure
2. Online learning
3. Data collection and auditing takes lot of time in adimission
4. Constant change in National Policy
5. Non-supportive governemnt policy for ODL
6. More services to students support
7. Less awareness about Quality Assurance
8. Internet access for students
9. Less Human Resource Development
10. Tutor and student ratio
11. Lack of expertise in ODL
12. Unique characteristics for each UT regional campuses
13. Consistancy in implementing the Quality Assurance programs
14. Less efficient monitoring system for students
15. Less support from the Indonesian Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education
16. Less willingness of the staff to implement the procedures of Quality Assurance
17. Government does not have the standards for ODL
18. Reliability of data for Quality Assurance
19. Less implementation through feedback.

Recommended Strategies

Strategies Proposed by the Respondents from the Faculty of AIOU
Following are the strategies proposed by the respondents from the faculty of AIOU.

1. Quality standards for ODL system
2. Development of Quality Assurance Framework
3. Regular intervals
4. Quality in research work
5. Uniform policy, SOPs for quality of all institutions of ODL
6. Establishment of ODL council at national level
7. International standards and criteria should be focused but not be followed blindly
8. Vigilant examination department or e-assessment as alternative
9. Personal training and awareness programs about the quality education through ODL

10. New e-Learning modes, access and development of Open Educational Resources
11. Blended learning approach
12. Adequate IT equipped regions
13. Appointment of right person for right job, and serving the justice objectively rather than subjectively
14. More collaboration from the ODL international institutions

Strategies Proposed by the Respondents from the Faculty of UT:
Following are the strategies proposed by the respondents from the faculty of UT:

1. Revised learning material
2. Support by the Indonesian Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education
3. Improvement in benefits achieved by remote labs and virtual reality
4. Focus on the funding relevent to each unit
5. Discussion with Higher Education for more relaible standards of ODL
6. Continuous training programs and improvements
7. Increasing awareness about importance of Quality Assurance for institutional survival in the long-run
8. National and international networking and agreements with ODL stakeholders
9. Financial support from government
10. Applicable policy for unique UTS branches/campuses
11. Provision of high speed internet services
12. Monitoring and control over implementation
13. Evaluation researches

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Background of the Study
Universitas Terbuka (UT) has offered a short-term AAOU Inter-University Staff Exchange Fellowship Program to researchers of member institutions of Asian Associations of Open Universities (AAOU) for the year 2016. This program provided a platform for capacity building and establishment of sustainable partnership as well as fostering the exchange of knowledge and promotion of mutual understanding among the staff of the open universities in Asia. (UT, 2016)

The study was aimed to compare and gain an up-to-dated knowledge about current practices and measurement standards in Open Distance Learning (ODL) at international level between the ODL universities of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Pakistan and Universitas Terbuka (UT), Indonesia.

Summary of the Findings
The findings of the study indicated that both universities (AIOU and UT) have QA departments namely Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Quality Assurance Unit respectively. Directorate of Quality Enhancement is struggling for Quality Assurance with the departments and Higher Education Commission. AIOU and its departments are under the process of accreditation of the programs from various recognizing bodies of HEC. Whereas University of Terbuka (UT) has accreditation of its programs from the Higher Education National Accreditation Board, certified from the ISO 9001;2008, and International Council of Distance

Education. UT has centralized, powerful, well organized and well documented quality assurance unit. AIOU and UT need more efficient infrastructure, monitoring and controlling system for e-learning and students support services at regional centers.

Recommendations

It is recommended on the basis of analytical findings that in order to have Quality Assurance and enhancement of Open Distance Learning (ODL) at international level, universities like Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Pakistan and Universitas Terbuka (UT), Indonesia should have:

1. Collaboration in Research Projects/joint researches at faculty and students level for quality enhancement in research work.
2. Collaboration and exchange of designed instructions as well as exchange of quality standards.
3. Comparison of different systems and sub-systems of AIOU and UT i.e. Examination, Admission, Student Support Services for the exchange of strengths between universities to eliminate weaknesses of ODL system implementation
4. Faculty and administrative exchange programs for Quality Assurance Policies implementation.
5. Collaboration in monitoring and feedback systems and assessment systems
6. Globalized programs

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