

# A Study to Explore the Coordination Level among Personnel of Servicing Departments at Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad

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**Abstract** Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) having Mode of Distance Learning Education System is a Mega University of Pakistan due to its huge student's enrollment i.e. more than 1.2 million in multiple programmes of Secondary level to Ph. D level in each semester. Coordination of personnel working in the different departments of any institution is a compulsory element for the achievement of objectives of the institution. Therefore it is necessary to explore the level of coordination among the employees of AIOU. The data was collected through questionnaire and interview from the Supervisory staff and officers BPS-09-19 working in servicing departments of AIOU. Total size of population was 105. The data obtained were interpreted and analyzed using the percentages and means scores. The study reflects lack of coordination among the officials of servicing departments, due to overload of work, lack of staff, non-availability of adequate space for working environment, non-availabilities of equipment/adequate system and lack of communications skills etc. The study recommends that the size of the regular staff may be increased in the servicing departments of AIOU as well as adequate space, facilities and equipment may be provided to those departments.

**Keywords:** distance education, coordination, supervisory staff, personnel, adequate space, equipment, and communication skills

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## 1. Introduction

Allah almighty says in the Holy Quran: "Are those who know and those who don't know are equal? not at all" (Al-Quran 39:9)

The formal system of education is not sufficient to cope with the demand of education for all. Therefore, Non-Formal education system can be readily assumed to meet the national needs.

The trend towards Distance Education is increasing due to limitations of Formal Education in Pakistan. The other reason of this trend is availability of time and ease for on job people. It is not possible particularly for females belonging to the rural areas to continue their education through the Formal Education system.

There is another system of education which is called 'Non-Formal education' this system is good for continuing education for updating the knowledge and encouraging those who could not continue their education in formal system because of certain reasons. Some conditions for Non-Formal Education are as under: ([15], p.8). In the Non-Formal Education:

- It is the responsibility of the student to study at his own pace.

- There is specified curriculum to be completed within a specific period of time.
- Tutors guide the students through tutorial meetings.

But Distance Education system provides the full access of education and skill to such peoples who could not leave their homes and jobs. According to Coombs and Ahmed ([3], pp.10-11), "Any organized educational activity outside the established formal system whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity that is intended to serve identifiable clientele and learning objectives". "The term 'Distance Education' has grown from the term correspondence or extra mural education. The change has occurred due to use of diversified learning techniques such as printed material, correspondence, learning through Radio and TV programs. Distance education or distance learning is a field of education that focuses on teaching methods and technology with the aim of delivering teaching, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting such as a classroom. It has been described as "a process to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both [8].

All "open universities" use distance education technologies as delivery methodologies and some have grown to become 'mega-universities. [4] In South & East Asian regions, Distance Education has been successfully provided by Pakistan, Thailand, India, Philippines, etc. The Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) of Pakistan has done an excellent job and its services were well recognized nationally and internationally". ([11], p.23) Holmberg ([7], p.2) defines distance education as: 'Distance Education' is 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 planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organization.

Allama Iqbal Open University was established in 1974 under an Act of Parliament with the nomenclature, the Peoples Open University. It was renamed as Allama Iqbal Open University in 1977 by the then President of Pakistan General Zia Ul Haq. (Mini Prospectus of AIU ([12], p.7) Allama Iqbal Open University is a unique open distance educational institution providing educational opportunities at a variety of levels, from pre-secondary to post graduate levels.. Main Campus is located in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. University offers a number of courses from Matric to Ph.D in different disciplines. There are four faculties of the University i.e. Faculty of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic studies and Faculty of Science. There are a number of departments in each faculty. According to Siddiqui, A.H quoted by Jamsheer J. ([10], p.51) "AIU is patterned on the UK Open University in Milton Keynes, which extended technical assistance to the AIU in its formative phase under an Overseas Development Administration (ODA) project. The idea has spread to all parts of the world and about fifty open universities are now operating around the world. AIU is the largest Distance Education University in Pakistan in terms of its student enrollment". The major departments of AIU are: Administrative Departments, Academic Departments and Servicing Departments. Servicing departments of AIU are: Examinations Department, Admission Department, Computer Center, PPU, Mailing Section, DRS, I.E.T & Student Advisory and Counseling services. (Source: Vice-Chancellor's Annual Report 2007-2008). In addition to this there are 44 regional offices throughout the country which are facilitating the students and coordinating the main campus.

The word 'Personnel' is a noun of 'Persons' which means employees, people, members, staff, workers, men and women, workforce, helpers & human resources. In other words a group of people willing to obey orders is called personnel. Some other definitions of personnel are as under:

- The body of persons employed by or active in an organization, business, or service.
- An administrative division of an organization concerned with the body of persons employed by or active in it and often acting as a liaison between different departments.

(<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/personnel>. 25-11-12)

To achieve the objectives of any institution, coordination of personnel is compulsory. Without

coordination of personnel of different departments, it is not possible to achieve the complete objectives of an institution. Gibson, Ivancevich, Donnelly & Konopaske ([5], pp.16-17) stated, "Whenever work is specialized and undertaken by two or more persons. Under such circumstances, the specialized work must be coordinated, creating the necessity for managerial work is then to coordinate the work of individuals, groups and organizations by performing four management functions: planning, organizing, leading and controlling. Employee communication should be undertaken strategically and coordinated centrally to ensure that messages are appropriately linked with corporate strategy and conveyed appropriately. Simply sending out messages to employees regardless of how frequent, how helpful, or how well received is not strategic and is not likely to generate the desired results. Without coordination, messages can have unintended consequences.

According to Way, Boston & Massachusetts ([18], p.110), 'Consider an employee on the front line of a typical organization. The employee is bombarded daily with messages from a variety of points within the organization. Without centralization and coordination, a department whose manager "loves to communicate" may inadvertently develop an image as a "very important area of the organization" simply because of the sheer volume of communications generated. Left to their own devices, department managers and their staff may also inadvertently generate messages that fail to support, or may even detract from, the organization's mission, strategies, or desired image. Panday, [13] emphasizes policy implementation and indicates what happens to policy implementation when there is lack of coordination in terms of institutionalized rules and regulations, financial management, central local relationship, and accountability: democratic vs. bureaucratic. The issue of coordination is underscored and analyzed in order to assess the effects of the policy implementation. Thus In order to provide a guideline for coordination, a theoretical lens is necessary, which shall offer insights into how coordination is performed. Thus, before understanding how coordination is achieved, gaining knowledge of the factors or the ways through which it can be achieved and what factors facilitate coordination, is important. Coordination mechanism may either be chosen based on the capacities, legitimacy, and expertise of those whose functions are subject to coordinate or are pre-designed and imposed ([14]. p. 215). This supports Jamil's argument that variation in performance occurs because of cultural differences among organizations ([9]: 66-67).

Scholars such as Gulick [6], Bernard (1938) & Taylor [16] all emphasized the issue of coordination. Moreover, various studies on coordination have been conducted in both the international and the local levels over the years.

Among others, Mintzberg [12] and Van Meter and Van Horn [17] are prominent scholars who analyzed coordination from intra- and inter-organizational perspectives, respectively. Recently, Christensen and Lægveid (2008) analyzed coordination in the Central Government of Norway from both intra- and inter-organizational perspectives.

As the coordination of personnel affects the performance of the students as well as overall outcomes of the institution, moreover, viewing all that in view the importance of coordination among the concerned

employees of an institution, the present study which has been designated to explore the level of coordination among the personnel of servicing departments at Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad will provide useful information for AIOU authorities to improve the coordination level among the staff.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

- i) To explore the inter-departmental coordination level among the officers and officials of Examinations Department of AIOU.
- ii) To indicate the working relationship and coordination level among the personnel of Servicing Departments at AIOU

## 3. Research Methodology and Procedure

### a) Delimitation

Keeping in view the time limitations and other constraints, the study was delimited to the personnel working in the Examinations Department of AIOU.

### b) Population

All staff members holding BPS 09-19 working in the Examinations Department of AIOU were comprised for the population of the study. Total size of population was

47 that were supervisory staff/officers holding BPS 09-19 working in Examinations Department of AIOU.

### c) Sample

Hundred percent of population i.e officers and staff members of BPS 09-19 working in the Examinations Department were included as sample of the study. This was purposive sampling.

## 3.1. Validation of the Questionnaire

Questionnaire was used as the tool of research for collection of data. Tool was validated by expert opinion. Questionnaire was finalized on the basis of suggestions sought by experts. Final Questionnaire comprising different aspects of coordination issues relating to the servicing departments was developed and administered to the target population by hand and responses were collected in person by the researcher.

## 3.2. Administration of the Tool

Table 1. Questionnaires handed over and received back

Target Population	Handed over	Responded	Responding %age
Examinations	47	45	95.7%

## 4. Analysis Data of Questionnaire

The position of scores of different items of the questionnaire is presented hereunder in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency: 45

Item No.	Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	Agreed %	Dis-Agreed %	Mean Score
1	No. of Staff is adequate in the Servicing Department.	0	7	5	20	13	16	73	2.1
2	Sufficient space is available in the Exams department of AIOU.	0	5	5	22	13	11	78	2.0
3	Officers fully cooperate with the staff in official matters.	2	24	7	12	0	57	26	3.4
4	There is well coordination among the different sub-sections of Exams department.	2	12	3	23	5	31	62	2.6
5	UMC Section sends the decisions in time to the Result Section.	3	10	6	20	6	29	57	2.6
6	The department is well equipped with required modern technology.	1	8	3	30	3	20	73	2.4
7	Officials of Secrecy Section respond in time to the Result Section on students' queries.	0	6	10	20	9	13	65	2.3
8	The staff of Exams department is satisfied with available facilities.	1	7	8	24	5	18	64	2.4
9	Supervisory staff is given official training for public dealing, noting drafting, reporting etc.	0	2	2	30	11	4.4	91	1.9
10	The Computer Center fully cooperates with Exams department in preparation and declaration of results.	2	26	6	10	1	62	24	3.4
11	Computer center facilitates the Exams department for development of requires system software.	0	4	8	22	11	9	73	2.1
12	Admission department at the time of fresh admission feeds accurate data of the students i.e name/father name spelling and date of birth etc.	0	8	6	23	8	18	69	2.3

### 4.1. Findings

The above table reveals that 73% employees disagreed that the number of staff was adequate in the Examinations department of AIOU, 11% remained uncertain whereas 16% agreed with the statement. The mean score is 2.1. (Item # 1). Similarly according to the 78% officials the sufficient space was not available for the working environment in the Examination departments while 11% oppose that statement and 11% remained uncertain. The mean score is 2.0 (Item #2). However, 56% officials agreed that the officers fully cooperate with the sub-ordinates officials/staff

in official matters while 27% dis-agreed the statement and 17% remained uncertain. The mean score is 3.4 (Item#3). Similarly, 62% respondents stated that there was not well coordination among the different sub-sections of Examinations department, however, 31% respondents opposed this and 7% remained undecided. The mean score is 2.6. (Item # 4) Likewise, according to 58% respondents the UMC section of Exams department didn't send in time decisions to the Result Section, while 29% opposed that statement and 13% respondents remained undecided. The mean score is 2.6 (Item # 5). Result of the study indicates that according to the 73% respondents the Exams departments of AIOU was not well equipped with the

modern technology while 20% opposed that statement and 7% remained uncertain. The mean score is 2.4 (Item #6). In the same way, the table illustrates that 65% respondents disagreed that the official of Secrecy Section dispose of students' complaints and send Awards sheets of revised results in time to the Result Section, while 13% agreed the statement and 22% stayed uncertain. The mean score is 2.3 (Item #7).). Similarly, majority 64% staff of Exams Departments was not satisfied with available facilities/benefits while 18% were satisfied. Mean score is 2.4 (Item #8). Furthermore, according to 94% respondents, supervisory staff of Exams department had not been given official training for public dealing, noting drafting, reporting etc. Mean score is 1.9 (Item #9). However, result of the study revealed that according to 62% respondents, the Computer Center fully cooperates with Exams department in preparation and declaration of results while 24% disagreed this. The mean score is 3.4 (Item #10). According to 73% respondents, Computer center of AIOU could not facilitate the Exams department for development of requires system software; however, 9% oppose that statement. The mean score is 2.1 (item #11). In the same way, 69 % respondents stated that the Admission department at the time of fresh admission did not care of full accuracy while punching the data of the students i.e. name/father name spelling and date of birth etc however, 18% opposed that statement. The mean score is 2.3 (Item #12).

## 5. Discussion/Conclusion

Result of the study shows that there is low level of coordination among the personnel of servicing departments at Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad due to multiple reasons such as overload of work, lack of regular staff, lack of adequate space in the servicing departments particularly in the Examinations department. Supervisory Staff are not given proper training regarding noting, drafting, report writing, public dealing, computer proficiency and office communication etc. Moreover, it has been noted through the result of the study that at the time of fresh admission, while punching the data of the students i.e. name/father name, date of birth and proper Tehsil /District full care of accuracy is not maintained by the Computer Center and Admission Department. Moreover the Main Computer Center has not been providing the full access of computer system to the Servicing departments and yet they are using Semi-Computer system or Manual system in spite of latest modern technology.

## 6. Recommendations

Keeping in view the result of the study, following recommendations have been presented to improve the coordination level among the personnel of servicing departments at AIOU:

1. Sufficient regular staff may be provided to the servicing departments.
2. Adequate space may be arranged for the offices of servicing department.
3. The AIOU may arrange compulsory training programs/workshops for her officers and officials to improve their communication skills, noting, drafting, reporting, public dealing and computer proficiency.
4. The officials of Admission Department and Computer Center may be advised to take full care of accuracy while punching the data of the students at the time of fresh admission.
5. Servicing departments of AIOU may be provided full access of computer system regarding redressal of student complaints, removal of objections, provision of quick information and award of certification etc.
6. Hard working staff of the Examinations department as well as other servicing departments of AIOU may be granted incentives to recognize their efforts.

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