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# **ANALYSIS OF FACE - TO - FACE TUTORIAL SERVICES FOR DISTANCE LEARNERS: The CASE of SMUC, CODL, ADDIS ABEBA CENTER**

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## **1. The Problem and Its Approach**

This chapter deals with the background, statement of the problem, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, the research design, organization of the study and definition of the terms used.

### **1.1 Background**

In most developing countries such as ours, since the majority of adult population is out of formal school system, non-formal education is an effective strategy in providing access to education in various delivery modes based on the learners' need. One of the delivery modes of non-formal education is distance education.(knowles,1 980:25)

In the context of education system of Ethiopia, the program of distance education is being conducted in various institutions at different levels of which St. Mary's University College is one.

Therefore, this paper focuses on pointing out certain problem areas in the approach of tutorial program in St. Mary's University College (SMUC) at Addis Ababa Center and suggesting some possible solutions to problems observed.

### **1.2 Objectives (Purpose) of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to assess and analyze the existing approaches of the tutorial services of distance education in SMUC especially at Addis Ababa Center and thereby forward recommendations for further improvement.

In this attempt, the study will seek to answer the following basic questions.

1. Are tutors and distance learners interested in the tutorial program?
2. What are the main problems of distance learners and tutors in the tutorial program?
3. Is there a two-way communication between the tutors and the distance learners?

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

The research team believes that St. Mary's University College, especially, the College of Open and Distance Learning (CODL) can be benefited from the findings of this study to conduct the tutorial program in more effective way. Even though the focus of the study is on Addis Ababa Center, since it is based on the general methodology and principles of Andragogy, its findings can be useful to other centers, too. In addition, it also may be used as a base for further comprehensive study in the all dimensions of the distance education program of the University College.

### **1.4 Delimitation of the Study**

Even though the tutorial program is being carried out in various centers of the University College, due to time and financial constraint, the study is restricted only to Addis Ababa tutorial center.

### **1.5 The Research Design and Methodology**

The study employs a descriptive survey type, where documentary information, questionnaires and interview were used as tools of data collection.

The study sample constituted a total of 150 respondents, i.e. 124 learners, 24 tutors and 2 coordinators. The selection of the center for the study including the coordinators was made on the basis of availability sampling technique, whereas the learners and tutors were taken by simple random sampling technique.

In order to collect relevant data, the two sets of questionnaires and an interview were prepared in Amharic. After the distribution, completion and collection of the questionnaires, the responses obtained were organized, tabulated and analyzed in terms of percentage. Finally, summary of the findings and conclusions were made and recommendations were forwarded on the basis of the data analyzed.

## **1.6 Organization of the Study**

The study is composed of four chapters. Chapter One consists of introductory information concerning the problems to be researched and ways of approaching. The second chapter deals with the review of related literature, while the third chapter consists of the analysis on the interpretation of the data gathered. The last chapter presents the summary of the findings, the conclusions and the recommendations.

## **1.7 Abbreviations of the Key Terms Used**

For the purpose of clarity and consistency in the study, the following abbreviations of terms are used;

- CODL = College of Open and Distance Learning (within St. Mary's University College)
  - MoE = Ministry of Education
  - SMUC= St. Mary's University College

- n ( in the tables) = number of respondents
- TC= Testing Center (within St. Mary's University College)

## **2. Review of the Related Literature**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides a review of literature that underpins this study. At first it gives an overview on the concept of adult and non-formal education in general and distance education in particular. It then indicates the highlights on the ways of assisting distance learners in their study.

### **2.2. The Concept of Distance Education**

In most developing countries such as ours, since the majority of the adult population is out of the formal school system, non-formal education is an effective strategy in providing access to education in various delivery modes based on the learners need.

As it is described by Knowles, one of the delivery modes of non-formal education is 'distance education', that has been accepted as a legitimate mode of education by both developed and developing countries. When properly and timely used, it is an effective, economical and productive way of delivering instruction (Knowles, 1980:25).

Distance education is the system of education in which education is imparted to students from a distance. It contains two basic elements: (a) the physical separation of teacher and learner; and (b) the changed role of the teacher, who may meet the students only for selected tasks such as counseling, giving tutorials or solving students' problems. The system is heavily dependent upon the printed material and too limited to face-to-face contact sessions. (Reddy, 1996)

When we say, distance education is a method characterized by physical separation of the teacher and the learner, it does not mean that there is no interaction with learners and the organizing body (tutors). The learners might face various problems as a result of the content which they are studying (Rahel, 2009).

### **2.3. Difficulties that Open and Distance Learning Students May Face During Studying**

R. Lewis points out that:

- *there will be a delay in getting, materials and feedback (module, assignment, project work etc.)*
- *they may feel isolated and may find it hard to keep going,*
- *they can be discouraged or ‘stuck’ and unable to resolve problems quickly,*
- *they may face problems in self-discipline, careful planning and study tactics,*
- *in the case of adults, they may lack a confidence thinking that “they are too old to study.” (Lewis, 1981:15)*

In order to solve (minimize) these problems, the following should be taken into consideration.

- Students’ work (assignment and projects) should be marked and returned very quickly, as much as possible, with ample comment.
- Students must be provided with sufficient study materials in time (during registration).
- As prevailing situation allows, a variety of mechanisms to contact learners through telephone and correspondence should be facilitated.

- In addition to reviewing the course materials, tutors have to assist learners in developing their study skills by giving them guidance and counseling in face-to-face tutorial program.
- It is very important to give a professional advice to adult learners know ‘how to study before they start to study’. In other words, they have to learn ‘how to learn’ before they enter into actual study program. (Percy D. 1989).

#### **2.4. The Role of Face-to-Face Tutorial Program**

As it is explained by R. Lewis, face-to-face tutorial program is useful:

- to establish a personal human link between the tutor, and the learners and to create a relationship among fellow students,
- to reinforce the learning materials and to offer remedial help,
- to encourage a peer-group interaction,
  
- to make clear the difficulty concepts in the learning material through a two-way communication, and
- Largely, to maintain motivation among learners. (Lewis, 1981:125)

Generally, a face-to-face contact (tutorial) program is likely to be the most costly; so, it needs a careful planning. It requires best communicators (tutors) those who:

- are respected by the learners and society,
- know more about adult behavior, and
- have greatest influence. (EMA, 2004)



## **2.5. The Way of Handling Group Tutorial Classes**

### **A) Preparation Before Tutorial Session**

The learners should be clearly informed the schedule of the program. They have to be initiated to come with some questions which might be unclear to them while studying. Also, it is advisable to provide learners with some general questions in advance to be studied before a tutorial class. In addition, since most of the participants are adults, the tutorial classroom should be clean with a sufficient light and fresh air.

Although, it is not convenient to prepare a lesson plan similar to formal education classes, the tutor should be ready beforehand to answer unpredicted questions which can be raised from the participants.

### **B) During the Tutorial Session**

The following are some of the important points to be given attention by tutors.

- Putting the participants at ease by giving them a short and brief introduction how the session is going to be handled,
- Providing a short and general description on the course content,
- Providing a chance (enough time) for participants to ask questions and create interaction. (*http://Rezanur(2006)*)

### **C) Ending the Tutorial Session**

At the end of the face-to-face tutorial session:

- the participants should be asked for ideas and comments which will help the tutor to improve the next tutorial program, and

- a short conclusion should be given by initiating the learners and giving some intellectual pieces of advices to motivate them for better performance. (Lewis: 135)

Reddy V. Points out that *attendance at tutorial centers should be made compulsory. Tutors who are not familiar with the techniques of counseling and treating adults should get some orientation beforehand.* (Reddy, 1996)

## **2.6. Factors that Contribute to a Successful Distance Education**

### **A) The students**

- attitude, motivation, study skills, independent learning ability

### **B) The course**

- Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency of course material and clear media, etc.
- The distribution system and availability of course materials,

### **C) The student support system**

- Registration service
- Academic advice and counseling
- Communication and other components
  - tutorial
  - other means of communication

### **D) Evaluation system**

- Assignment and project work
- Examination
- Accurate and timely grading system (EMA, 2004)

Similarly, as indicated in the implementation guide (manual) of the tutorial program of St. Mary's University College, College of Open and Distance

Learning (CODL), *it is important to give a brief orientation to tutors in advance. Additionally, conducting tutors performance evaluation will help for future action.* (CODL guide, 2002)

### 3. Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data obtained through the two types of questionnaires and an interview from three different groups of key people to the distance education tutorial program. The three groups of respondents were distance learners, Tutors, (Assessors from Testing Center, Editor Tutor Assessors from CODL, and from other educational institutions) and Tutorial Coordinators of CODL who involved in Sene, 2003 tutorial program at Addis Ababa Center.

The respondents of the study constituted a total of 150, i.e. 124 learners, 24 tutors and 2 coordinators. The selection of the center for the study was made on the basis of availability sampling technique, whereas the learners and tutors were taken by simple random sampling technique. The gathered data were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted in the following manner.

#### 3.1 Characteristics of the Respondents

**Table I. The characteristics of respondents by Age, Sex, Education Level, and Marital Status**

NO	Characteristics		Respondents					
			Learners (n=124)		Tutors (n=24)		Coordinator s (n=2)	
			No`	%	No	%	No	%
1	Sex	A) Male	80	64. 5	17	70. 8	2	100
		B) Female	44	35. 5	7	29. 2	-	-

NO	Characteristics		Respondents					
			Learners (n=124)		Tutors (n=24)		Coordinator s (n=2)	
			No`	%	No	%	No	%
2	Age	A) 20-30 years	49	39.5	16	67.0	2	100
		B) 31-40 years	48	38.7	4	16.5	-	-
		C) Above 40 years	27	21.8	4	16.5	-	-
3	Education	A) Degree (on process)	67	54.0	-	-	-	-
		B) Diploma (on process)	50	40.3	-	-	-	-
		C) Certificate (on process)	7	5.6	-	-	-	-
		D) BA	-	-	19	79.2	2	100
		E) MA	-	-	5	20.8	-	-
4	Marital Status	A) Single	46	37.1	15	62.5	2	100
		B) Married	78	62.9	9	37.5	-	-

As shown in Table I, from the total of 150 respondents, 66% were male and 34% female.

Regarding educational level, 54% of the learners were from Degree program, 40.3% were from Diploma and the rest 5.6% were from certificate program. The majority of the tutors (79.2%) were First Degree holders and 20.8 % were of Masters Degree.

In terms of age, 67% of tutors were less than age of 30 and 60.5% of respondent-learners were above the age of 31.

The information obtained from the table also reflects that from the total respondents, 62.9 % of learners and 37.5 % of tutors were married.

### 3.2 Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

**Table II. The Experience of Respondents in Tutorial Program**

Items	Learners (n=124)		Tutors and coordinators (n=26)	
	No	%	No	%
For how many terms did you participate in tutorial program at SMUC?				
A) For the first time	-	-	5	19.2
B) For the second time and above	120	96.8	21	80.8
C) No response	4	3.2	-	-

As it can be seen in Table II, 96.8% of learners have attended the tutorial program for two or more terms. In case of tutors, the majority of respondents (80.8%) had participated in tutorial program for various rounds. On the other hand, 19.2% of the respondent-tutors were with no experience and skill of tutoring distance learners.

**Table III. The Learners' Interest Towards the Tutorial Program**

No	Items	Learners Response (n= 124)	
		No	%
1	How do you rate the advantage you got from tutorial program?		
	A) High	25	20.2
	B) Medium	55	44.4
	C) Low	44	35.4
2	IF "medium" or "low" the reason is		
	A) Lack of tutors' preparation	30/99*	33.3
	B) Shortage of time allotted	71/99*	71.7
	C) Delay of module distribution	41/99*	41.4
	D) Being bulky of modules	35/99*	35.3
	E) Unavailability of tutorial questions	60/99*	60.6
3	The time allotted for discussion:	23	18.5
	A) It was enough	73	58.9
	B) Not enough	27	21.8
	C) No time allotted		
	D) No response	1	0.8
4	How clear was the description given by tutors?		
	A) Very clear	24	19.4
	B) Medium	56	45.2
	C) Not clear	43	34.6
	D) No response	1	0.8

\*Multiple responses

Regarding the interest of the learners towards tutorial program, (Table III), 44.4 % and 35.4% of them responded that the advantage they got was

“medium” and “low” respectively. On the other hand, only 20.2 % of the respondents indicated that they got great advantage from the tutorial program. As it can be seen in the table, question 2, the respondents replied in their multiple response, that the reason for decreased interest on tutorial program was a shortage of time allotted (71.7%) , unavailability of “tutorial questions” (60.6%), delay of module distribution (41.4%) and lack of tutors preparation(33.3%).

In terms of “Time allotment” for discussion during tutorial session, (Qu.3) the majority of the respondents (58.9%) said that the time given for discussion was not enough and 21.8% of them pointed out that no time at all was given for discussion. Only 18.5 % were responded that the given time was enough.

Concerning the clarity of the tutors’ description during tutorial sessions, (Qu.4) , 45.2% and 34.6% of them respectively replied that it was “medium” and “not clear”. Contrarily 19.4% of them indicated that it was very clear.

**Table IV. Preparation of the Learners for Tutorial Program**

No	Items	Learners’ Response (n=1 24)	
		No	%
1	Did you come with some questions to ask during tutorial session?		
	A) Yes	71	57.3
	B) No	50	40.3
	C) No response	3	2.4



No	Items	Learners' Response (n=124)	
		No	%
2	For Qu 1, if your response is "yes" did you get a chance to ask and got a satisfactory answer?		
	A) Yes and got satisfactory answer	35/71	49.3
	B) Yes, but not satisfactory answer	10/71	14.1
	C) No question asked	26/71	36.6
3	For Qu.1, if your response is "No", what was the reason?		
	A) Lack of time to read the module	8/50	16.0
	B) Unavailability of Module in time	26/50	52.0
	C) It was clear, no need for question	1/50	2.0
	D) Assuming, no time for question	5/50	10.0
	E) Unavailability of Tutorial Questions	10/50	20.0
	F) No response	-	-

Table IV reveals the degree to which the learners were prepared before-hand for the tutorial program. As it can be seen in question 1, most of the respondents, (57.3%) came to the tutorial session with some questions which were unclear to them while studying. Others (40.3%) replied that they come with no questions.

As it is indicated in question 2, out of those who came with questions, 49.3% had a chance to ask question and got a satisfactory response. Contrarily, 14.1% of them did not get satisfactory answer. And 36.6% out of 71 (Qu.2C) have not got a chance at all to ask question due to a shortage of time.

As it is seen in question 1, those who came to tutorial session with no preparation (40.3%) indicated their reasons under question 3, ie. unavailability of module in time (52%), unavailability of “Tutorial questions” (20%), lack of time to read the module, (16%) and assuming, no time to ask question (10%).

**Table V. Preparation of Tutors for the Tutorial Program**

No	Items	Tutors' response (n=24)	
		No	%
1	How do you rate your preparation for the tutorial program?		
	A) Well prepared	12	50
	B) Medium	7	29.2
	C) Low	5	20.8
2	For Qu.1, if your response is either “medium” or “low” what was the reason?		
	A) Lack of time	7/12	58.3
	B) Large content of the modules	5/12	41.7
3	How was learners' participation in the tutorial class?		
	A) Very good	2	8.3
	B) Medium	8	33.3
	C) Low	11	45.8
	D) No participation at all	3	12.5

No	Items	Tutors' response (n=24)	
		No	%
4	For Qu3 if it is "low" or "no participation what could be the reason?  A) Paying less attention of learners for tutorial  B) Shortage of time for discussion	7/14  7/14	50.0  50.0

According to the response indicated in Table V, half of the tutors (50%) made preparation for the tutorial program before-hand. The rest, 29.2% and 20.8% made medium and low preparation respectively. As stated under question 2, lack of time (58.3%) and the large content of modules (41.7%) were given as a reason for an unsatisfactory preparation.

Regarding the learners participation, the majority (45.8%) replied that it was "low," 33.3 % medium and 12.5% indicated "no participation at all". Only 8.3 % of tutor-respondents rated that it was "very good".

Accordingly, as it is indicated in question 4, half of the respondent responded that the cause for "low" and "no participation", was lack of learners' preparation (50%) and shortage of time for discussion (50%)

**Table VI. Data Gathered from the Coordinators of the Tutorial Program through Interview**

NO	Questions raised	Response of coordinators (n=2)
1	How many learners were expected to attend this program?	Approximately 1200
2	How many attended?	900
3	How many tutors were	From SMUC -34 out of the college 7 Total 41

NO	Questions raised	Response of coordinators (n=2)
	assigned?	
4	When compared with previous programs, how was the interest of learners to attend tutorial?	Decreasing
5	What will be the case for decreasing number of learners to attend tutorial?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some learners give less attention to tutorial, as if it is not a part of learning</li> <li>- Some tutors lack efficiency of tutoring, that their weak and unplanned approach do not attract learners to attend the class.</li> </ul>
6	In your opinion, what are the major problems of tutors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of motivation</li> <li>- Boring due to staying the whole day for a single course (specially who join one course)</li> </ul>
7	What do you suggest in order to solve or minimize these problems?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some mechanisms should be developed to motivate the tutors (Specially for those who are assigned from SMUC)</li> <li>- Weekly (Sunday) study circle should be organized</li> </ul>

According to the response given by the coordinators of the tutorial program through structured interview, (Table VI), from approximately expected total of 1200 attendants about 900 were present, i.e.25% were absent. But, the above figure (900) does not show the full attendance of the learners because once the attendance was taken, it is obvious that some of them (uninterested groups) leave the class in the middle of the session.

As it is indicated in question 3, from the total of 41 tutors, 34 (83%) of them were assigned from SMUC employees (from TC and CODL), the rest 7 (17%) were employed from external educational institutions. Regarding the interest of the learners for tutorial, as the response for question 4 shows, is decreasing.

And as replied in question 5, the cause for lack of interest in terms of the learners was giving less attention to tutorial program and, on the other hand, lack of efficiency and lack of motivation of some tutors.

Accordingly, the response for question 6, also indicates that the major problems of tutors are lack of motivation and boring to stay for the whole day. In this case, there are such instances that some tutors become absent mainly in the afternoon session. In addition, some of them complete their afternoon program within the morning session by making an agreement with the learners.

#### **4. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

This chapter of the study deals with the summary of major findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the information gathered through various methods.

##### **4.1. Summary**

The main purpose of this study was to survey and analyze the existing condition of the tutorial program of distance education in SMUC, Addis Ababa Center.

In line with this, as indicated in the preliminary section of this study, the following basic questions were raised:

1. Is there a two-way communication between tutors and distance learners?
2. Are distance learners and tutors interested in tutorial program?
3. What are the main problems of the distance learners and the tutors in the tutorial program?

The respondents of the study consisted of 150 resource persons which include 124 learners from various fields (13.8% of the whole learner-participants of the center), 24 tutors (more than half of total number of Tutors) and 2 coordinators. The sample is selected by using simple random sampling technique, except the coordinators that were taken by availability sampling. So, based on the processed data, the major findings of the study are summarized as follows.

1. Most of the learner-respondents (96.8%) have attended in tutorial programs for 3-9 rounds. In terms of tutors, the majority of the respondents (80.8%) had an experience of tutoring distance learners. Contrarily, 19.2% of the respondent-tutors were with no experience of tutoring.

2. The majority of the learner-respondents, 44.4%, and 35.4% stated that the advantage they got from tutorial program was “medium” and “low” respectively. As the respondents identified in their multiple responses, the reason for such “medium” and “low” result was a shortage of time allotted for tutorial sessions (71.7%), unavailability of tutorial questions (60.6%), delay of module distribution (41.4%) and lack of some tutors’ effective preparation(33.3%).
3. Large majority of the learner-respondents claimed that the time given for discussion during tutorial class was “not enough” (5 8.9%) and “no time allotted” (21.8%).
4. Among the learner-respondents who came to the tutorial class with some questions to ask, 36.6% have not got a chance to ask and 14.1% have got a chance to ask questions but didn’t get a satisfactory answer.
5. Half of the tutors (50%) indicated that they were professionally well prepared for tutorial. The rest were made “medium” and “low” (29.2%, and 20.8%) preparation respectively. The reason given for “medium” and “low” preparation was lack of time and large content of modules.
6. According to the majority of tutors’ response (58.3%), learners’ participation in tutorial class was “low” due to lack of learners preparation and shortage of time for discussion.
7. As the response from coordinators shows, the majority of the tutors are not interested (not motivated), especially most of those who have been assigned on free-service basis. Additionally, there is a claim on the timing of sessions, i.e. in need of covering one or two courses either in the morning or in the afternoon.

## **4.2. Conclusions**

1. As the study revealed, the interest of the majority of learner-respondents towards the tutorial was found to be below average as a result of lack of sufficient preparation of some tutors, delay of module distribution and unavailability of “tutorial questions.”
2. The findings of the study shows that, while conducting the tutorial program, in most classes, the time given for “discussion” was either not enough or no discussion was made at all. From this, we can infer that the communication between the tutors and the learners was based on one-way communication teaching approach, i.e. lecture method.
3. As the study indicates, most of learner-respondents were found to have a great expectation to cover the whole portion of the courses within tutorial class. Hence, some of them came without reading their modules any more. This indicates that most of the learners came to the tutorial class with no preparation.
4. As shown in the study, the majority of tutors were not interested in providing tutorial on the basis of free-service.
5. Although the majority of tutors have experience of tutoring, there were some tutors with no experience and didn't make enough preparation before the tutorial class.
6. As it is claimed by the majority of all categories of respondents, (learners, tutors and coordinators) the time allowed for tutorial session (3 hrs) is not enough to describe some main ideas of the course, and to make sufficient discussion.



### 4.3. Recommendations

As obtained from the study and observed from the existing reality, most of the learners were not interested in the tutorial program. Hence, it requires a sustainable effort to devise face-to-face tutorial classes accompanied by motivational schemes. Thus, to provide an effective face-to-face tutoring:

1. The major role revolves around the competence, experience and willingness of the tutors.  
To attain this;
  - 1.1. Motivational mechanisms need to be facilitated for tutors, especially for those assigned from SMUC on the basis of free-service.
  - 1.2. Those tutors who lack the experience of tutoring need to be inducted (oriented) with the basic concept of Andragogy. In addition, tutors must be assigned on the basis of their interest.
  - 1.3. Since tutoring distance learners is a preplanned professional task, tutors performance evaluation mechanism has to be practiced at the end of each tutorial program; for it can be used as a feedback for further progress.
2. To shape the negative attitude of most learners on the tutorial program, attention should be given to the following factors.
  - 2.1. Providing learners with prescribed modules on time is vital. When the modules are not ready, providing the course out line during registration could be helpful for the learners.
  - 2.2. Almost all learner-respondents are in need of getting “tutorial question” before the tutorial program. As in the previous years, providing learners

with such 'general questions' is believed to initiate the learners to read and work more.

- 2.3. Although distance learning by its nature is more individualized mode, for the advantage of the learners it should be useful if attending tutorial program be mandatory (Compulsory) for distance learners under favorable tutoring conditions.
3. All categories of the respondents in the study indicated that shortage of time for tutorial classes to be a problem. Thus, to give detailed description on the content of the modules, to make discussions on the target area and give professional guidance, the length of the contact hours should be increased. This calls for the revision of the existing time schedule. To do this, arranging the tutorial program twice a term can be taken as an option.
4. As it is suggested by a large majority of both learner and tutor-respondents, there is an interest to cover the given course within either in the morning or in the afternoon session, in terms of saving time and avoiding monotony by waiting for long hours. So, in order for the learners and the tutors, not to waste their time waiting for the afternoon session, it is highly demanded that the time table be prepared consecutively having a little break in the middle, either in the morning or in the afternoon.

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