

**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE PRACTICE OF TERTIARY LEVEL
DISTANCE EDUCATION IN BAHIR DAR UNIVERSITY AND
ALPHA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

**A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES OF ADDIS ABABA
UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENT OF THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN ADULT AND LIFE LONG LEARNING**


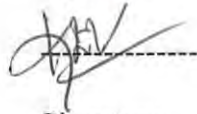
**BY
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Table of Contents

	Page No.
Acknowledgment	i
Table of Contents	ii
List of Tables.....	vi
Acronyms	vii
Abstract	viii

Chapter One: The Problem and Its Approach

1.1. Background of The Study	1
1.2. Statement of The Problem	3
1.3. Objective of The Study	4
1.4. Significance of The Study	4
1.5. Delimitation of The Study	5
1.6. Limitations of The Study	6
1.7. Operational Definitions of Related Terms.....	6
1.8. Organization of The Study	6

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

2. Introduction	8
2.1. Distance Education – A Conceptual Framework	8
2.2. Historical Overview of Distance Education	12
2.2.1. Global Development	12
2.2.2. Ethiopia’s Experience	13
2.2.3. Distance Education in Bahir Dar University.....	16
2.2.3.1. A Brief History of Bahir Dar University.....	16
2.2.3.2. Organization of Distance Education in Bahir Dar University	17
2.2.3.2.1. Programs under offer.....	17
2.2.3.2.2. Mode of delivery	17
2.2.3.2.3. Admission Criteria	17
2.2.3.2.4. Duration of the study.....	18

2.2.3.2.5. Assessment.....	18
2.2.3.2.6. Fees	18
2.3.4. Distance Education in Alpha University College	19
2.3.4.1.A Brief History of Alpha University College	19
2.3.4.2. Organization of Distance Education Alpha University College	19
2.3.4.2.1. Programs under offer.....	19
2.3.4.2.2. Mode of delivery	20
2.3.4.2.3. Admission Criteria	20
2.3.4.2.4. Duration of the study.....	20
2.3.4.2.5. Assessment.....	20
2.3.4.2.6. Fees	20
2.4. Modes of Delivery in Distance Education	21
2.4.1. Major Media Used in Distance Education	21
2.4.2. Print- A Common Distance Teaching Technology.....	22
2.4.2.1.Advantages of Print.....	23
2.4.2.2. Limitations of Print	24
2.4.2.3.Effective Use of Print.....	24
2.4.2.4.Study Guides and Quality Issues.....	24
2.5. Course Material Distribution System in Distance Education	25
2.5.1. Methods of Delivery of Distance Learning Materials	26
2.5.1.1.Local Centers	26
2.5.1.2.Tutors	27
2.5.1.3.Mail/Post	27
2.5.1.4.Courier.....	27
2.5.1.5.Online	27
2.6. Learner Support System in Distance Education.....	28
2.6.1. Types of Learner Support Services	29
2.6.1.1.Face to Face Tutoring.....	29
2.6.1.2.Library/Reference Service	30
2.6.1.3.Guidance and Counseling	30
2.6.2. Tutors Role in the Learner Support System.....	31

2.7. The Practice of Assessment and Feed Back in Distance Education	32
2.7.1. Types of Assessment.....	33
2.7.1.1. Formative Assessment	33
2.7.1.2. Summative Assessment.....	34
2.7.2. Major Assessment Devices in Distance Education.....	34
2.7.2.1. Assessment by Exam	34
2.7.2.2. Tutor Marked Assignments.....	34
2.7.2.3. Assessment by Portfolio.....	35
2.7.2.4. Online Assessment.....	35
2.7.3. Quality Issues in Assessment and Feedback.....	35

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Research Design.....	37
3.2. Sources of Data	37
3.3. Sample Population	37
3.4. Sampling Size and Sampling Technique	38
3.4.1. Sample Size.....	38
3.4.2. Sampling Technique.....	38
3.5. Data Collection Instruments.....	38
3.5.1. Questionnaire	38
3.5.1.1. Pilot Testing of Instruments.....	39
3.5.2. Interview	39
3.5.3. Observation Checklist	39
3.6. Data Management and Analysis.....	40

Chapter Four: Presentation and Interpretation of Data

4.1. Background information of the Respondents.....	41
4.1.1. Learner Respondents.....	41
4.1.2. Tutors	43
4.1.3. Center Coordinators	43
4.2. Convenience of Course Material Distribution System	43

4.3. Quality of Distance Learning Materials	46
4.4. Availability and Adequacy of Learner Support System	49
4.4.1. Availability and Adequacy of Administrative Support Service.....	50
4.4.2. Availability and Adequacy of Academic Support	52
4.4.2.1. Convenience and Adequacy of Face to Face Tutorial Contact	53
4.4.2.2. Tutors Role/Task.....	57
4.4.2.3. Availability and Convenience of Library/Reference Service	59
4.4.3. Availability and Adequacy of Guidance and Counseling Service	60
4.5. The Practice of Assessment and Feedback	61
4.5.1. Tutor Marked Assignments and Feedback.....	62
4.5.2. Exam and Feedback	64

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Summary	69
5.2. Conclusions	76
5.3. Recommendations	77

References

Appendices

List of Tables

	Pages
Table 1 Learner Respondents by Age, Sex and Employment Status.....	42
Table 2 Learners' Response to Issues Related to the Convenience Of Course Material Distribution.....	44
Table 3 Learners' Response to Issues Related to Quality of Distance Learning Material.....	46
Table 4 Learners' Response to Issues Related to Availability and Adequacy of Administrative Support.....	51
Table 5 Learners' Response to Issues Related to Adequacy and Convenience of Face to Face Tutorial Contacts.....	53
Table 6 Learners' Response to Issues Related to Tutors Role/Task.....	58
Table 7 Learners' Response to the Availability and Adequacy of Library/ Reference Service.....	59
Table 8 Learners Response to the Availability and Adequacy of Guidance And Counseling Service.....	61
Table 9 Learners' Response to Issues Related Tutor Marked Assignments and Feedback.....	62
Table 10 Learners' Response to Issues Related to Exam and Feedback.....	65

Acronyms

ADEA- Association for the Development of Education in Africa

AUC – Alpha University College

BDU- Bahir Dar University

COL- Common Wealth of Learning

CDS- College of Distance Studies

DED- Distance Education Division

DEP- Distance Education Program

ICDE- International Council for Distance Education

ICCE- International Council for Correspondence Education

MOE- Ministry of Education

NVCE- National Vocational Correspondence Enterprise

SAIDE- South African Institute for Distance Education

UNDP- United Nations Development Program

UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the practice of tertiary level distance education in two selected pioneers of public (Bahir Dar University) and private (Alpha University College) higher education institutions of Ethiopia. To this end, comparative descriptive survey method was employed to investigate the convenience of course material distribution system; the quality of distance learning material, the availability and adequacy of learner support services and the practice of assessment and feedback. The sample of the study consisted of 380 and 497 management, accounting economics and business administration distance learners of BDU and AUC respectively. Besides 8 tutors (four from each institution) and two center coordinators of the institutions under study were selected. Subject groups were selected using availability and purposive sampling techniques. Data collection tools were questionnaire, semi structured interview and observation check list. The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using percentages, whereas the qualitative data obtained through semi structured interview and observation were transcribed, interpreted and triangulated with the quantitative data where necessary and appropriate.

The findings revealed that both institutions entirely use print media and did not have convenient course material distribution system; the quality of distance materials of BDU was not appropriately designed; the learner support service of both institutions was not diverse and adequate; tutor marked assignments were neglected by BDU; AUC's assessment practice by tutor marked assignments had shortcomings such as delay in timely and properly correcting assignments. Finally, assessment practices of both institutions had shortcomings like inconvenience of exam schedule, exam hall and delay in announcing their respective learners' results. Based on the major findings conclusions were drawn and certain recommendations were forwarded: both institutions should utilize different media and convenient course material distribution system; revise their distance learning materials; provide various and adequate learner support services and establish convenient, effective and efficient assessment and feedback system.

Chapter One

The Problem and Its Approach

1.1 Background of the Study

Distance education, structured learning in which the student and instructor are separated by time and space is currently the fastest growing form of domestic and international education. What was once considered as special form of education using non traditional delivery system is now becoming an important concept in mainstream education.

Distance education has evolved from early correspondence education using primarily print based materials in to a worldwide movement using various technologies (Rumble, 1992:14). Due to such rapid development of technology, courses using a variety form of media are being delivered to students in various settings in an effort to serve the educational needs of the growing population.

The potential benefits associated with an expanded use of distance education are numerous. If adequately managed, distance education could enable expansions of students enrollments at less cost per student than under the traditional school system, greater flexibility in the design and delivery of curriculum than is normally associated with classroom teaching enables distance education courses to adapt to specific needs of or work requirements , thereby enabling greater relevance .It also accommodates the growing demand of lifelong learning more easily than do residential programs (UNESCO,2002:19-21).

The role that distance education plays in the provision and expansion of tertiary education is also crucial. In relation to this William Saint (1999: 7-8) succinctly put that greater access, improved quality and cost efficiency are the primary benefits of tertiary distance education. More importantly, in developing countries like Ethiopia where tertiary education is underdeveloped, its importance is greater.

However, to reap the above mentioned benefits of distance education, William saint, contends require better management skills than traditional tertiary programs since distance education is characterized by scattered students, dispersed part time tutors, far flung

logistics, unreliable communication services, time sensitive production and distribution of learning materials and detailed student records.

In support of William's idea, Desmond Keegan (1996:4-5) proposes the realization of the following facts to reap the benefits of distance education. These are:

- a. Distance education is fundamentally different in its structure, organization and delivery than conventional face to face education;
- b. Distance education is based on a specialized division of labor in the development and division of courses; and
- c. Distance education requires technology of some kind to mediate between tutors and learners because the two are separated by time and distance

In the same way, Aruna Goel and S.L. Goel (2001) emphasize on the appropriate design and use of alternative media as keys for the success or failure of distance program. Manjulika and Reddy (1996), on the other hand saw the implementation of distance education in terms of preparing self instructional materials, dispatching of materials, supportive services, face to face contact sessions, correction of assignments and examination of systems as determinants to reap the benefits of distance education in general and tertiary distance education in particular.

Although Ethiopia's experience of practicing distance education in its correspondence form dates back to the 1960s, as Wosenu and Befekadu (1991) contends, it is still in its infancy stage. A number of possible explanations can be forwarded for its underdevelopment. Of these, the absence of supportive policies and shortage of skilled manpower in the field could be mentioned. However, the 1991 change in government which led to the introduction of market economy also created conducive atmosphere for the mushrooming of privately owned educational institutions which started to launch distance education programs of different levels. This participation of the private sector ushered a new era of distance education in Ethiopia.

Moreover the international educational movements like” Education for All” and “Lifelong Learning” not only paved the way for the expansion of education by making governments of different countries to put educational issues on top of their national agenda but also introduced different modes of delivery. Distance education, one of the modes of delivery advocated by international education movements, is now gaining momentum in Ethiopia. One instance of such momentum of distance education in Ethiopia is the recently involvement of public higher education institutions in providing tertiary education using distance mode.

It is obvious that such public and private involvement in tertiary distance education contributes to solve educational problems associated with the development and expansion of higher education in the country. Nevertheless, tertiary distance education provided by both public and private institutions is seen by the wider public as inferior to conventional higher education. Even the learners of the program complain about problems of the program. There may be many factors for such limitations of tertiary distance program. But the researcher believes that the study of the way how the public and private higher education institutions practice tertiary distance education could help in finding explanatory factors and forward possible solutions that could address the problems associated with tertiary distance education.

Therefore taking in to consideration of the works of the above mentioned scholars of distance education and Ethiopia’s experience , the practice of tertiary level distance education in selected public(Bahir Dar University) and private (Alpha University College) higher education institutions of Debre Markos , in a comparative manner, is studied.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Issues pertaining to distance education in Ethiopia have not been much researched. Of course it is worth mentioning the studies conducted by Zenebe Baraki (2006), Ejeeta Negari (2005) and others. Even though their studies can be considered as a significant contribution to the development of distance education in this country, none of them dealt with comparative analysis of public and private distance education providing higher education institutions.

Hence, the researcher will fill this gap by studying the practice of tertiary distance education, in a comparative manner, by taking two pioneers of tertiary level distance program providing institutions, namely Bahir Dar University (Public) and Alpha University College (private). In doing so, attempt is made to give answers for the following basic research questions:

1. Do the two institutions provide quality distance learning materials to their learners?
2. Are the course material distribution systems of the selected institutions convenient to their learners?
3. What learner support systems do the two institutions provide to their learners?
4. What assessment and feed back methods do the two institutions employ?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Generally, the objectives of the study is to reveal the practice of, in a comparative manner, tertiary level distance education in selected public (BDU) and private (AUC) higher education institutions of Ethiopia. Specifically it is aimed to examine:

- ✪ The quality of distance learning materials
- ✪ The convenience of course material distribution system
- ✪ The availability and adequacy of learner support services
- ✪ The practice of assessment and feedback

1.4. Significance of the Study

Scholarly works on distance education in general and tertiary level in particular is scanty. Even the already available few works on the field give much emphasis in examining the different aspects of teacher distance education programs of public or privately initiated. As

far as the researcher is concerned, no scholarly work is done on tertiary distance education in a comparative manner- public vis-à-vis private higher education institutions of Ethiopia.

Therefore, this study is hoped to be useful in examining the weaknesses and strengths of the two selected types of institutions with regard to the practice of tertiary distance education, thereby providing a comprehensive picture of the practice of tertiary distance education in Ethiopia in general and in the selected institutions in particular.

Specifically, the findings of the study will:

- ✦ Provide information to policy makers and distance education curriculum developers on the practice of tertiary distance education in Ethiopia in general and in the selected institutions in particular.
- ✦ Help distance education providing institutions under study identify their strengths and weaknesses so that they can make adjustments and improvements of their distance education programs in the future.
- ✦ Enable other distance providing institutions learn from the weaknesses and strengths of studied institutions thereby adjusting and improving their own distance programs.
- ✦ Not only this research work enriches the limited literature work in the field, but also inspires others to conduct further research on the area.

1.5. Delimitation of the Study

Conceptually, the research is delimited in comparatively examining the practice of tertiary level distance education in the context of the convenience of course material distribution methods, the quality of distance learning materials, the availability and adequacy of learner support services and the practice of assessment and feedback.

Geographically, it is delimited to two selected public (Bahir Dar University) and private (Alpha University College) higher education institutions of Ethiopia – with particular reference to Debre Markos Distance Education Center of the selected institutions.

1.6. Limitation of the Study

The findings of the study would have been generalized to the practice of tertiary distance education of BDU and AUC if all distance education centers of the selected institutions were included. Financial and time constraint attribute to such lack of generalization.

1.7. Operational Definitions of Related Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following operational definitions are used:

Course Material Distribution System: refers to the type and the distribution system employed to provide the media for learners.

Quality of Distance Learning Materials: refers to quality of modules in terms of objectives, contents and organization.

Learner Support Systems: refers to administrative, academic (face to face tutoring) and library or reference service) and guidance and counseling provided to distance learners.

Assessment and Feedback: refers to Tutor Marked Assignments and Exam based assessments.

Tertiary Level Distance Education: refers to distance education program after diploma level.

1.8. Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five parts. In the first chapter, background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, significance, limitation, operational definition and organization of the study are included.

Review of related literature is dealt under chapter two. Wherein definition and concepts of distance education; historical development of distance education at global, national and institutional level; modes of delivery, learner support system and assessment and feedback methods of distance learners are thoroughly discussed.

Chapter three, on the other hand, contains the research design, data source, sources population, sampling technique employed, data collection instruments used and data management and analysis methods are presented.

The presentation and interpretation of data gathered from different sources is dealt under chapter four.

Finally, the fifth chapter deals with summary of the major findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the findings.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

2.1. Introduction

This part of the thesis deals with the conceptual framework, historical development of distance education at global, national and institutional level. And more specifically focuses on modes of distance education delivery, learner support system and assessment and feedback of distance learners.

2.2. Distance Education: A Conceptual Frame Work

A number of scholars have attempted to define and conceptualize distance education in different ways. Of these scholars the most widely accepted definition is that of Borje Holmberg and Desmond Keegan. To Holmberg (1981:9-11), 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 in the same premises, but with, nevertheless benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organization. Basic to this conception of Holmberg is that the separation of teachers and learner and the planning of an educational organization.

A more comprehensive definition, however, is forwarded by keegan (1986:36) in which he outlined six elements of distance education. These are:

- ✓ The separation of teacher and learner which distinguishes it from face to face lecturing;
- ✓ The influence of an educational organization which distinguish it from private study;
- ✓ The use of technical media ,usually print, to unite teacher and learner and carry the educational content of the course;

- ✓ The provision of two way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue;
- ✓ The possibility of occasional meetings for basic didactic and socialization purpose; and
- ✓ The participation in an industrial form of education.

In situations, however, where there are different interpretations of a single concept, the researcher believes that, taking the definition of international organization would serve as a solution to reach consensus among scholars of the field. To this end and for the purpose of this paper UNESCO's definition and conceptualization of distance education is taken. UNESCO (2002:22) defines distance education as:

"....Distance education is any educational process in which all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone removed from space and or time from the learner with the effect that all or most of the communication between teachers and learners is through an artificial medium either electronic or print..."

Another point that should be noted in defining and conceptualizing distance education is that the term distance does not always refer to the geographical separation of learners and teachers. With regard to this Evans (1994) noted that the concept of distance refers to not just as static distances which can be measured in kilometers or miles ,rather they are complex fluid 'distances' in the teacher learner relationships. These are not always matters of geography or even time. The social, economic, spiritual, political, experiential and personal dimensions add also many interwoven layers to the distancing of the teacher from the learner. It seems nowadays realistic to understand that physical separation is not a major necessary defining feature of this form of educational provision.

In defining and conceptualizing distance education a distinctive feature of distance education vis-à-vis conventional or traditional form of education should also be made. Holmberg (1981:36-38) argues that distance education is different from conventional schooling and has so many characteristics of its own that as an academic area of study it may be regarded as a

discipline in its own right. Added to this point, Sewart and others (1988:113-114) state the following distinctive features between the two.

- ✓ In traditional education a teacher teaches but in distance education an institution teaches;
- ✓ In distance education the goal of linking of learning materials to learning is at the center of the organizational structure. In conventional education, the inter subjectivity is automatically setup. Moreover in distance education this inter subjectivity is lacking and there is no guarantee that anything will happen once learning materials have been developed and dispatched to the students;
- ✓ The distance system gives a radical meaning to the concept of the independence of the adult learner. In this system, the adult learner is also responsible for initiating the learning process and to a large to maintain it throughout. Questions of motivation and skill acquisition, of a specifically different kind to those required in traditional education need to be tackled to combat the problem of non starters and dropouts that have been a feature of this type of education ;
- ✓ Management skills that are more akin to those found in industrialized enterprises are also needed in distance education. this is because the distance system has daily preoccupations with lead times, deadlines, print runs, job schedules, typefaces, warehousing, delivery and dispatch and planning decisions on educational priorities that must take place two to three or more years before teaching is to take place; and
- ✓ Last but not least, distance education is a form of education that can easily become depersonalized both from staff and students. There is little doubt that the absence of students can create a sustained atmosphere for lectures .The constant process of writing creatively for distance students, whether alone or in a course team framework, pose problems, which are not fully resolved even in those institutions where the lecturers have some responsibilities for on campus students as well.

In a more succinct manner, Peter Jarvis (2004:221-225) contends that distance education has its own four major unique characteristics that distinguish it from other forms of education: The distinguishing characteristics are:

- a. ***Space- Time Distanciation***: by space –time distanciation, Jarvis meant that distance education enables learners to attend their courses in their own time and place.
- b. ***Disembodied Mechanisms and Expert System***: the disembodied mechanism of distance education lies in the fact that distance teaching institutions can be experienced not as places to which learners travel for study with a teacher but as mechanisms through which the pursuit of their studies is processed. By expert system, Jarvis argues that, there is no need to know how the distance system function and without being aware of all process of the system, students receive products(modules) once they registered.
- c. ***Reflective Learning***: reflective learning, according to Jarvis, refers to the existence of opportunities in distance education which help students operate at their own time and space and in their own space for them to reflect upon the learning material with which they are presented.
- d. ***Individuation***: by individuation, Jarvis refers to the opportunity that distance education provides for people who have interest to continue their education individually in their own space, at their own time and pace by a disembodied educational institution and an expert system.

A discussion on a conceptual frame work of distance education should also address the Concept of “distance education” vis-à-vis “open learning”. Although nowadays it is customary to see these two concepts together as in “distance and open learning”, note should be made that ‘distance education’ and ‘open learning’ are two distinctive but interlinked concepts. Distance education is a non contiguous and more or less space time free form of education. Open learning, on the other hand, is a generic term used to represent not only open access, but also a variety of forms of flexibility in the learning process designed to meet individual needs (UNESCO, 2002). It refers to learner-centered learning and the

removal of various kinds of barriers existing in teacher-centered or institution centered education. In other words, in an open learning system, the learner is able to choose subjects, environment, media, strategies and so on based on his or her individual requirement and possibilities.

2.3. Historical Overview of Distance Education

2.3.1. Global Development

Correspondence education, home study, off campus study, telematic teaching ,extramural system are all the different labels attached to what is currently and widely referred as distance education in the course of its history of existence and development. Of these variant names and features of distance education, correspondence education is assumed to be the root and precursor of what is commonly known today as distance education.

The date of the first publicly announced provision of distance education is in dispute. Battenberg cited in Verdun, et.al., (1991) describes the advertisement in the march 20, 1728 Boston Gazette for short hand lesson by mail as the first correspondence education. Similarly, Bratt cited in the same source describes an 1833 advertisement in a Swedish newspaper offering postal tuition in composition as the beginning of correspondence education. However neither of these early advertisements mentioned apply two way communication or learning.

Reference to what was probably correspondence education occurs as early as the 1720s and to what was indisputably correspondence education with Isaac Pitman, who is generally recognized to be the first modern distance educator in 1840. By profession a phonographer, he began teaching shorthand by correspondence in Baath, England. This method of study appealed to adults who needed new methods of learning that would not conflict with their work days. In the system, students were instructed to copy brief Bible passages in short hand and return them to Pitman for grading using the new Penny Postal system (Dinsdale cited in Verdun, et.al.,). In 1843 the Phonographic Correspondence Society was formed to take over these corrections of shorthand exercise.

Although literature reveal that correspondence education was used to provide education at all levels, it is only in early half of the 19th century that correspondence courses for higher and continuing education started to be used. For instance the beginning of correspondence education by the University of London which was established in 1836 to conduct examinations and confer degrees is worth mentioning. Correspondence education in US America also began in 1874 by Illinois Wesleyan University where both graduate and undergraduate degrees could be pursued in absentia (Rumble, 1986).

Correspondence study in its historical course has been known in various names as “the pen and ink system”, “the postal tuition” or “the tutorial system”. However, with the beginning of utilization of different technologies other than print led to the evolution of what is called distance education. More importantly, this transformation in term and concept from correspondence study to distance education is strengthened when the UNESCO affiliated organization called International Council for Correspondence Education (ICCL) changed its name to International Council for Distance Education (ICDE) in 1982. (Gachuhi and Matiru, 1989:11)

2.3.2. Ethiopia’s Experience

Like any other parts of the world distance education in Ethiopia traces back its origin in the form of correspondence study. Correspondence study courses at secondary, non formal and tertiary level were launched by international colleges, non governmental and governmental organizations. Following an attempt is made to present some of the major institutions that launched correspondence courses in Ethiopia. These are:

1. British Tutorial College

It was one of the pioneers in starting correspondence education in Ethiopia which was based in Kenya. It opened its branch in Addis Ababa and started to offer courses in correspondence form as early as 1967. To get admission into this college student had to pass the entrance exam conducted by the examining body of the University of London. Despite its strict admission policy, about seven thousand students were reported to have graduated from the College (DED, 1999:17).

2. Trans World Tutorial College

This college started operation in 1957 and continued giving its service up to 1978. It offered courses in accounting, management, auditing, and businesses (18).

3. International Correspondence College

International Correspondence College started to give its services in 1969 by offering courses in English, Modern math, elementary and advanced French.

4. Agri-Service Ethiopia Sponsored Non Formal Correspondence Education

This was a non governmental organization initiated correspondence education in pilot program of non formal in nature launched in Wolayta Zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples. Agri Service-Ethiopia emerged as a corporate body of African Institute for Social and Economic Development, which then organized and operated correspondence education for farmers in nine West African francophone countries. Basically the principal aim of the program was to promote improvement in agricultural methods, community development as well as the improvement of home conditions (Kabawasa, 1999:18).

5. National Vocational Correspondence Enterprise (NVCE)

NVCE was established by Alpha International and Ethiopian private firms in 1980/81 to provide non formal vocational courses with the objective of upgrading and improving the skills of untrained but inexperienced low level technicians by providing them with basic scientific and technical knowledge that relates to and enhance their practical experience. Some of the courses given were general mechanics, auto mechanics, wood work, etc. NVCE's certificate was also accredited by the ministry of education and is equivalent to comprehensive high school vocational stream certificate (Kabawasa, 1999:19).

6. Universal Language and Commercial Correspondence School

It was a private correspondence school opened in 1974 aimed at teaching English language as a second language for Ethiopian students. It offered courses ranging from Ethiopian

School leaving Certificate Exam English exam preparation, essential academic English, spoken English to junior secondary level English courses.

7. Directed –Study For Teachers

It was an attempt made to alleviate the shortage and qualification of primary and secondary school teachers. Directed-study for teachers was an in service program run in 1967/68 by Ethiopian-US cooperative education program to enhance the academic performance of those unqualified teachers. However, the program had failed before it evolved in to a distance education system. This was due to the fact that the two countries had stopped suddenly cooperation in education in 1972 (Telbot &Getachew, 1983:6).

8. Hailesillasse I University and Ministry Of Fine Art's Joint Correspondence Program

Demands made by teachers, people working in different places military organizations and the factory paved the way for the launching of such a joint secondary level correspondence program by Hailesillasse I University, the present Addis Ababa university and the Ministry of Fine Arts in 1967. To effectively run the program a correspondence unit was established under the supervision of the extension division of Addis Ababa University. Up until 1972/73,with the financial ,organizational and expertise support of Netherlands's distance education organization and USA, the unit was able to offer correspondence courses in Amharic, English, maths and geography for grades nine to twelve.

9. Ministry of Education Sponsored Correspondence Program

The correspondence unit which was under the Extension Division of Addis Ababa University was officially transferred to the Ministry of Education in November 1970,and MOE by taking the experience of Kenya, Tanzania and England launched a secondary level correspondence study for dropouts from conventional schools and other adults who were residing in rural and remote areas. Between 1979 and 1989 about 6020 learners were reported to have participated .What makes this program interesting is that beside print materials radio had been used as supplementary media.

10. Current Trend

The change of government in 1991 and the subsequent direction towards allowing the participation of the private sector in education led to the mushrooming of a number of privately owned colleges providing distance education courses of all levels across the country. Of these colleges like Alpha, Unity, Admas, and St. Marry University College and others have a well established distance system at tertiary level. Though, public higher education institutions' involvement in the provision of distance education is a recent phenomenon, that of Bahir Dar University and Mekele University's Distance programs are exemplary in many ways. Moreover MOE organized Project 1700,¹ a teachers upgrading, distance program; Addis Ababa University's distance Masters Programs in curriculum and educational planning and Ethiopian civil Service college's distance program for civil servants are also the major distance learning activities undertaken in post 1991 Ethiopia.

2.3.3. Distance Education in Bahir Dar University*

2.3.3.1. A Brief History Of Bahir Dar University¹

Bahir Dar University was inaugurated on May 6, 2000 by amalgamating two institutions. These amalgamated institutions were:

- a) *Bahir Dar Polytechnic Institute*- it was established in 1963 under technical cooperation between the government of USSR and imperial government of Ethiopia with the objective of training skilled technicians in the field of textiles and wood technologies.
- b) *Bahir Dar Teachers College*- it was established in 1972 by the tripartite agreement of the imperial government of Ethiopia, UNESCO and UNDP with the objective of training multi purpose primary education professionals capable of rural development.

* BDU's leaflet and information from the center coordinator was used in the writing of the institutions history

After it becomes a university, Bahir Dar Polytechnic Institute and Bahir Dar Teachers college are renamed as faculty of engineering and faculty of education respectively. Later on other faculties like: faculty of business and economics (since 2001), faculty of law (since 2003) and faculty of agriculture (since 2005/06) are organized.

2.3.3.2 Organization of Distance Education in Bahir Dar university

Bahir Dar University is the pioneer public institution to launch tertiary distance programs since 2005/2006. The program was launched under the Distance Education Program (DEP), which is organized to run the distance program of the university.

DEP, which is located at the main campus of BDU (Peda), is organized in to four organs. These are: Distance education Dean, Administrator, Program officer, Program expert, Testing officer, Logistics and promotion officer

Moreover the university has seven branch offices led by center coordinators in Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, Debre Markos, Debre Birhan, Dessie, Gondar and Woldiya.

The university's major objective of launching distance course is to enable individuals who for various reasons are unable to learn in the regular, summer or evening courses pursue their education at higher level through distance.

2.3.3.2.1. Programs under offer

Currently Bahir Dar University provides more than 23 distance degree programs under its four major faculties of education, agriculture, business and economics, and law

2.3.3.2.2. Mode of delivery

The mode of delivery of distance education of BDU is entirely dependent on print media.

2.3.3.2.3. Admission criteria

In order to be admitted in any of degree programs offered by Bahir Dar University's distance education program, prospective learners are required to meet at the following criteria:

- ✪ have diploma in any field of study for any field of study, or
- ✪ Cumulative Grade Point Average of (CGPA) 2.5 and above in Ethiopian

- School Leaving Certificate Examination, or
- ✪ any less than 100 marks in Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Qualification Certificate Exam

2.3.3.2.4. Duration of the study

Except law and land administration which require five years of study, other distance degree programs of BDU took learners four years of study.

2.3.3.2.5. Assessment

Every distance degree program learner of BDU is expected to take two term end final examinations every year. This means that those participants in course which took four year would take 8 examinations before they graduate. Surprisingly, the institution recently stopped sending tutor marked assignments to its learners. BDU usually gives examination on two terms- January and August.

2.3.3.2.6. Fees

Bahir Dar University requires its distance learners to pay three types of fees. These are:

- a) Application Fee- each learner of the program is required to pay birr fifteen only once during the first time of registration.
- b) Registration Fee- this type of fee is amounted birr thirty to be paid every time students register throughout the course of their study.
- c) Tuition Fee: - the university has two types of tuition fee systems. Those government or organization sponsored learners are required to pay tuition fee of birr fifty per credit hour, where as self sponsored learners are required to pay birr forty per credit hour.

2.3.4. Distance Education in Alpha University College*

2.3.4.1. A Brief History of Alpha University College²

The foundation of Alpha University College traces back its origin to National Vocational Correspondence Enterprise which was established in 1981 with the objective of offering vocational and technical training to those Ethiopians who had no opportunity to attend day and evening courses. It was from this institution that the present day AUC evolved in 2005.

In its early existence as NVCE (1981 and 1982), AUC used to provide short term training courses that led to certificates. However between 1992 and 2001, the university college launched diploma programs in business and vocational courses. As of 2002, it launched degree programs in accounting, management, development management, business management, law, business administration, law, economics and public administration. Currently it provides more than 70 fields of degree study.

2.3.4.2. Organization of Distance Education in Alpha University College

Distance education at AUC is currently organized as College of Distance Education having major objective of providing quality, relevant and affordable education to Ethiopians. To achieve its objectives AUC is organized having its own dean, department of curriculum and exam, department of logistic. Besides to this it has about 18 branch and 85 distance coordinating offices across the country. Moreover it also provides distance courses to Ethiopians who live in more than 30 countries.

2.3.4.2.1. Programs under offer

Currently in all of its branch and distance coordinating offices AUC offers more than 75 distance degree courses in business, economics, education and law.

* AUC's leaflet and information from the center coordinator was used in the writing of the institutions history.

2.3.4.2.2. Mode of delivery

The mode of delivery of distance education of AUC is also entirely dependent on print media.

2.3.4.2.3. Admission criteria

The admission criteria to be admitted in any of degree distance programs of the institution at least require prospective learners to:

- ✪ Have a relevant college diploma or,
- ✪ Fulfill Ministry of Educations yearly entrance mark of Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Qualification Certificate Exam

2.3.4.2.4. Duration of the study

AUC do not follow fixed duration of study since it allows learners with diploma in a related field course exemption. However, the minimum duration to complete a degree distance course is 2 years and above per students performance.

2.3.4.2.5. Assessment

The assessment process of AUC is also dependent on the duration of the study. However every learner of the institution face term end examinations for every course he is registered and also evaluated by tutor marked assignments which comprise 30% of his/her total grade. AUC provides term end exams thrice a year-November, April and January.

2.3.4.2.6. Fees

Distance students of AUC are required to pay admission fee once they registered. With regard to academic fee, every student required to pay birr 40 per credit hour. However the institution fee system is so flexible that learners have a chance of long term credit or a chance of discount if they pay in advance.

delivery technology for distance education in the western world though most African distance programs are still relied on it as the use of other communication technologies is often cost prohibitive.

According to Garrison & Shale (1990) print based correspondence study is a first generation distance education technology and Mengistu (2002:61) argues that print is a foundational element of distance education programs and the basis from which all other delivery systems have evolved. Print technology can also be found in different formats including modules, textbooks, study guides, work books, course syllabi and case studies.

2.4.2.1. Advantages of Print Technology

Print in its various formats has several advantages. Compared to other technologies it is familiar, inexpensive and portable. If properly prepared it also has the advantage of allowing readers to access any part of its sections. More importantly it does not require any additional equipment to utilize it and hence stood independent of its own having the potential to be used anywhere and anytime where a source of light is available. (Bates, 1984:42-44)

Print in a form of study guide or module can also steer and facilitate the study of correspondence texts, television programs and other components in a distance education course. A study guide, if well designed, can also provide the integration between various media components and active students to read and or listen to presentations of various kinds, to compare and criticize them and to try to come to conclusions of their own. Moreover in a study guide or correspondence text, simulated conversation can be brought about by the use of conversational tone, advance organizers, mathemategenic devices such as directions and self assessment and self remediation exercises.

Added to this, Teshome (2000:8) argues that the pedagogical effectiveness of print material is crucial in conveying abstract ideas and serving as references. Bates, cited in Verdun and Clark (1991) argues that the advantage of print media lies in its suitability for presenting new ideas and information and its flexibility to be used by students at their pace.

Kember cited in Commonwealth of Learning (2004:84) suggests the various advantages and limitations of study guides. Under the advantages the cost required to produce when compared to other print formats is low. Moreover a study guide gives students a chance of accessing a variety of points of view on a given topic. However issues like difficulty to find the exact text, risk of out of print and difficulty in meeting the different target groups of distance program are some of the major limitations.

A quality study guide/module contains specific features as: unit outcomes, contents, activities, commentary on the published text, additional content, progress tests with feedback and summaries. Moreover it should have clearly laid learning outcomes and an explicit indication of study time which allows learners to adopt sensible study plans. Content and teaching approach of the material should also support learners in achieving the learning outcomes. (SAIDE: 2004:29).

Another quality issues to be considered with regard to study guides (modules) is that the content of the course should be accurate, up to date, and relevant to aims and outcomes, free of discrimination and should be written in learner friendly manner. Besides the language level of the material should be appropriate for the target learners and it should also assist learners with particular difficulties that learning through-reading and learning at distance requires.(40-41).

Moreover a good study guide also takes care of understanding the contexts in which learners live and work as well as their prior knowledge and experience. In addition it uses active learning and teaching approaches to engage learners intellectually and practically catering for individual needs. It also shows clearly sign posted integration of course materials and different media. Last but not least a quality study guide is designed in an accessible way having access devices such as content pages ,headings ,graphic presentation of information and layout which facilities its use by the target learners (40-42).

2.5. Course Material Distribution System in Distance Education

One of the factors that determine the successful implementation of a distance education program is the presence of an effective course material distribution system. In distance education, material distribution refers to the dispatch of print and other learning material to

learners. Rao (1994) propose that course materials should be distributed to students in advance and in doing so distance education systems should choose course material distribution methods that are cost effective and convenient for both the learners and the distance providing institution.

According to Holmberg (1995:138) institutions use three methods or approaches in distributing course materials to students. A few distance teaching organizations send packages containing complete course at the beginning of the study. This is felt to be a questionable procedure, as many students are likely to be intimidated by the large packages to be worked through. This approach has also, as to Holmberg, economic problems for the institution as even modest drop out rates lead to smaller editions of later units being required if course materials are distributed in batches along with students' progress (38).

A second and much more common approach is, Holmberg argues, is to send study material in pre determined dates. However , to send materials decided on advance without paying attention as to individual students need seems to be counter productive , as then such a great number of course units can be amassed on slow working students desk that they feel discouraged from studying.

A third approach is to adapt the distribution of course material to what is desirable from the points of view of motivation, support and the non contiguous way of communication. According to this approach, course units are distributed in relation to the individual study pace of each unit. This can be effected by providing the student at the out set with a small number of units of each course involved and then to send out a new unit with each assignment returned with corrections and valuable comments.

2.5.1. Methods of Delivery of Distance Learning Materials

According to a publication of the Common Wealth of Learning (2004:175-180) some of the major methods used by distance institutions to deliver course materials are the following:

2.5.1.1. Local Centers

This method allows learners to get materials from the local center of their institution. This method could create a chance for distance students to build a relationship with the center and

also allow them to get other services of the institution in the meantime. However, this delivery method of course material requires students to travel to the center there by costs learners additional transportation and time. Even this method could be a burden task for center staffs that have other tasks to be handled in the center.

2.5.1.2 Tutors

In this method a tutor will be responsible in delivering materials to learners. In fact the method like picking from local center enables students to build a relationship with their tutors. However it has also the limitation in terms of cost and time. Moreover for tutors it would be a burden task for they have other duties to accomplish.

2.5.1.3. Mail/Post

Such type of delivery method is applied in areas where there is a well developed postal system. However, loss of material through the process and uncertainty on whether learners received the materials or not; particularly in poor postal systems, are some of the major limitations of this method of delivery.

2.5.1.4. Courier

This method of delivery has the major advantage of assuring the delivery of materials to learners. However using such method is not cost effective both to learners and distance teaching institutions and difficult to apply in developing countries like Ethiopia.

2.5.1.5. Online Delivery

Online delivery of course materials is the latest approach in which materials are delivered to learners who have a computer and an internet connection. In such situation it has the advantage of low cost. However, the fact that its delivery potential is limited to certain types of material and students are required to afford the cost of printing puts the effectiveness of such method in to question.

2.6. Learner Support System in Distance Education

Learner support system remains the back bone of distance education. According to Mills, (2003:104) student support in distance education refers to the totality of the provision of the institution to support the learners other than generic teaching materials produced by instructional designers. Similarly Mheta (1999:64) describes students support services as anything other than the actual course materials which an institution provides to students. These services, he argues, can be academic or administrative which promote the harmonious relationship between students and the distance education institution. (Aruna Goel and S.L.Goel2001; Mheta, 1999)

Learner support system is a critical component of distance learning for the fact that distance learners are challenged by a number of problems. Akinade, cited in ADEA (2002:72) and other scholars argue that while students in a distance environment enjoy high degree of freedom as compared with those in traditional mode of education, they are expected to exercise more responsibility with regard to their learning and this will be a challenging task if learners are not able to get support of either academic or administrative type.

Besides, unlike conventional students, distance students are challenged by the following problems which demand the provision of good learner support system. Some of the problems as identified by Akinade(71-73) are: meeting deadlines for submission of their academic work; doing group work cooperatively; acquiring good study habit and preparing for and taking exams. Robinson, cited in COL (2004:114) on the other hand, has identified three main areas in which students experience problems as distance learners such as: study and learning difficulties; interacting at a distance; and personal problems.

Moreover reasons for providing a range of learner support services of different types at different stages of a program include the need to assist with learners recruitment, the need to maximize learners retention, provide for learners demand for support, to help in overcoming learners feelings of isolation and the need to nurture learners who may not have participated in formal education for some time (Mills, & Rowntree, cited in COL: 2004:112-113). Besides one of the perceived disadvantages of studying at a distance is the geographical distance between the learner and the institution and the isolation that can be felt by learners

as a result. Therefore developing a sense of connectedness between learners and the institution through a better learner support system is a critical success factor for distance program.

Similarly Rowntree (2000:72) explains that learners without support are more liable to delay their completion of a program or to drop out altogether. This is because they have no one to turn to when they have a problem. Besides, learners who have deprived of support are found to experience anxiety. Mills (2003) and Thorpe (1994) also believed on the need for extra support and help for distance students to make them feel secure and stable. In the same way Manjulika and Reddy (1996) recommend that the provision of adequate and appropriate services to distance learners is crucial in helping them to overcome the challenges of isolation and to facilitate learning.

Rowntree further suggests that distance learners may need support before, during and after their program. Such support might include: deciding what learners' wishes to learn; assessment of their present experience and abilities; organizing a study time table; developing their study skill; and learning from others on an informal basis.

Rumble (1992:62), on the other hand, propose that students should get support services in the following areas; choosing what to study; the subject matter of the content (tuition); personal problems which affect distance learners; career and further study; institutional regulations affecting the study; and issues requiring specialist advice

2.6.1. Types of Learner Support Services

2.6.1.1. Face to Face Tutoring

In face to face tutoring, a tutor appears physically in a tutoring center and meets a group of tutees to assist them in their learning. According to Gibbs and Northedge in Rowntree(2000:80), in a face to face tutoring ,the tutor plays the role of a facilitator mediating and helping with group collaboration from which learners benefit from one another's insight and experience. To Manjulika and Reddy (1996) this type of learner activity denotes the assembly of distance students and teacher for specific period with the

intension of teaching ,motivating ,creating a sense of belongingness, solving students difficulties and anxieties and supplementing distance learning materials.

However to reap these benefits of face to face tutoring , Rumble (1992) argues that distance teaching institutions should in advance inform learners on tutorial schedules by using different type of media which can be accessed by learners. Moreover, Rumble contends that venues where tutorials are conducted should be convenient and have adequate technical and academic staff that could conduct and follow the proper implementation of the tutorial contact

2.6.1.2. Library/Reference Service

Aruna Goel and S.L. Goel (2001:166) emphasize the central place that library/reference service has in the distance education system as one components of academic support service. Such services are central, the same scholars argue, for they provide to distance learners who are characterized by independent learning to get additional reference materials and information communication technology services.

Though many institutions find establishing library /reference services costly, scholars like Mizoue (2003) suggest alternative ways that help institutions to provide such services to their distance learners. Mizoue suggests that institutions can create partnership with other public or private institutions which have library/reference centers so that their learners could get the chance to borrow or use the materials available in the partner institutions.

2.6.1.3. Guidance and Counseling

This type of learner support activity is provided mainly to solve non academic problems encountered distance learners. According to Melton (2002) distance students need guidance and counseling services to solve problems related to emotional and other personal issues. Rowntree (2000:83), on the other hand, also emphasizes the importance of guidance and counseling to distance learners in areas of getting started and organizing on a course issues. Such assistance is crucial, he argues, because distance learners are denied of the chances of picking up from other learners or from the advantage of frequent face to face contact with their teachers.

There are different methods as to how distance institutions provide guidance and counseling services. With regard to this Holmberg (1995) argue that, institutions could provide such services to their learners via correspondence, telephone or face to face. However what type of media is used for the service, Thornton and Mitchell in Holmberg (1995) contends that guidance and counseling must evidently promote a sense of closer rapport between the student and the guidance and counselor in which the later needs to demonstrate empathy and sensitive to the spoken and unspoken needs of the distance learner. Similarly, Melton cited in COL (2004:128-130) argues that guidance and counselors need to be good listeners, easy to talk to, open, friendly, accessible and able to help students and clarify issues.

2.6.2. Tutors Role in the Learner Support System

Although tutors are just one means of supporting learners, they are widely seen as the most important component of a support system. According to Rowntree cited in COL (2004:131-132) tutors are the most crucial part of learner support system. Without qualified tutors, he argues, the best materials in the world may prove disappointing. Similarly Thorpe (1994) viewed tutors as facilitators or mediators between students learning and the learning material. Added to this point, Rowntree stresses the role of tutors is not to re teach the content of the materials. Rather it is to help learners make their own sense of what they are learning.

The major distinctive role of tutors' vis-à-vis conventional teachers are:; explaining content prepared by others; being a helper or colleague; helping the students learning; being at a distance; working with individuals; commenting on written work and advising on how it can be improved (132-133).

Robinson (1989:150) and Thorpe (1994:76) classify the tasks of tutors into two. These are:

- a. **Tutorial Tasks:** which include: advising on available learning materials; answering course related queries; marking and commenting on written work such as assignments; tutoring individual students/groups face to face; tutoring individual students/groups by phone or online; and keeping record of students progress.

- b. **Counseling Tasks:** which include: answering non course related queries; giving guidance about choice of courses; supporting students during their course; advising students on post course choices; and advising students about the system.

Rogers (1989:88) defines an effective tutor as one who has a warm responsibility, generates and uses learners' ideas, is skilled in resolving learners' problems and is enthusiastic. However, in many distance teaching institutions tutors are employed on a part time bases which in turn affect the performance of tutors. Added to this, Paul (1990) noted that the over all commitment of the part-time tutors is not as strong as that of full time permanent staff.

2.7. The Practice of Assessment and Feedback in Distance Education

Assessment is one of the educational techniques that determine the effective practice of any educational program in general and distance education in particular. This is because of its potentiality to meet as Ausbel and Robinson, cited in COL (2004:162), noted the needs of four different sectors which involve in practicing distance education. For learners it provides feedback on their progress and often with certification of their achievement; for teachers it has the potential of providing information about how learners are coping with the course and their strengths and weaknesses. For the distance providing institution it serves as evidence of achievement of stated aims, validation of courses and a program. Finally for society, assessment gives confirmation that learners have achieved a specific standard and is equipped for certain occupations and information about the effectiveness of instruction in a particular institution.

Assessment and feedback are inextricably linked for the former's result lead to the latter's practice. Emphasizing this point Lantell (2003:68) referring Jackson (2001) argues that careful reading of students work and giving the appropriate comments is crucial in distance education. Rogers (1989), on his part, argues that absence of proper and timely feedback contributes to learners' failure. The motivational role of feed back is also emphasized by Wills (1992) in that successive feedback and reinforcement motivates distance learners for better learning.

2.7.1. Types of Assessment

Based on the specific purposes they serve in the teaching learning process, assessments can be of either formative or summative type. Here under attempt is made to elaborate the aforementioned types of assessment.

2.7.1.1. Formative Assessment

Formative assessment refers to those all activities designed to motivate, enhance understanding and to provide learners with an indication of their progress (Morgan and O'Reilly cited in COL: 2004, 172). Added to this point Raggart in the same source indicate that formative assessment is not only for certificate but also to aid learning. Since the purpose is to aid the ongoing learning, formative assessment should be conducted in frequent and complete manner.

Ausbel and Robinson (1971, 301-302) succinctly put the following four major characteristics of quality formative assessment these are: it should be immediate, frequent and continuous; it should aim to help the student to avoid making errors rather than correcting; it should prompt the student to the right answer rather than tell them the right answer; it should always tell student why their answers are right or wrong ; and offer complete explanations as to why an answer is right or wrong or tell the student the direction of their error rather than simply stating their answers is wrong.

Although formative assessment, often, can be carried out by tutors during face to face contact sessions, there are also other devices that can be used to formatively asses and feedback distance learners (COL:2004,173). These are:

- ✓ Activities in course materials can help to asses learners progress on the material
- ✓ Self assessment tests and progress tests in course materials
- ✓ Tutors comments on assignments and other written work
- ✓ Tutors responses to specific student questions over the phone or by email
- ✓ Comments from peers informally or in student groups.

2.7.1.2. Summative Assessment

This type of assessment is designed and conducted to record or report learners' achievement (Morgan and O'Reilly, 1999:15). Similarly Pratt cited in Derbessa (2004) defines summative assessment as a type of assessment which is carried out at the end of an academic year to determine the achievement of students in the subject or for grading purposes. The main devices that are used in summative assessment, according to COL, are: exam, projects, theses, assignments, portfolios, etc.,.

2.7.2. Major Assessment Devices in Distance Education

Some of the assessment devices used in distance learning as identified by COL (2004:164-169) are:

2.7.2.1. Assessment by Exam: - it is a summative type of assessment device which is commonly used in distance education program. The potential benefits associated with assessment by exam are many but to mention some, assessment by exam enable to measure learners' performance, capable of detecting plagiarisms and if properly administered, gives the institution respectability in the public eye.

2.7.2.2 Tutor Marked Assignments: - generally assignments can be of both formative and summative. They tend to be summative when the marks of the assignment are becoming part of the final grading of the course otherwise they serve the purpose of formative.

Tutor marked assignments play crucial role in the distance learning process for they are useful, according to Rowntree (1994) to pace students' learning and reduce facing behind studies. Assignments are also important to maintain a link between the institution and the students in that the institution prepares and send the assignments to students, the student do and submit them to be corrected by the institution, and then the institution marks and gives the necessary comment on the students work and sends back to students (Rogers, 1989).

Aruna Goel and S.L. Goel (2001) and Manjulika and Reddy (1996) contend that the type of questions included in assignments need to be based on the course materials provided to students thereby helps to know whether the students have studied and understood the course ,and to asses the learners progress at different stages of the course. Similarly, Gachuhi and

Matiru (1989) suggest that assignments should not be difficult at the beginning and should gradually increase in difficulty and ensure that the learners build up the necessary skill.

2.7.2.3. Assessment by Portfolio: - this type of assessment is compatible with the idea of students taking responsibility for their own learning. According to Gibbs cited in COL (2004:167) a portfolio can show a range of student work more than can be seen in an exam. It can also asses processes and content unlike other assessment types which focus only on content. Moreover, unlike other assessment methods which concentrate on the last few weeks of the course, a portfolio requires a student to collect evidence of her learning throughout the duration of their course.

2.7.2.4. Online Assessment: - is another type of assessment in which students can submit a word processed assignments to a tutor via internet or students take and get online testing and marking. According to Mason cited in COL (2004:168) online submission is the commonest use of online systems and has an advantage of speeding up turn around.

2.7.3. Quality Issues in Assessment and Feedback

The first quality criterion in practicing assessment is that students should get adequate information. In relation to this Freeman cited in COL (2004:170-171), propose three types of information that distance learners should get with regard to assessment and feedback. These are:

- a) **Information on the Processes:** - under this category students should know about what number of assessment are in there in the course; type of assessment items; recommended data for starting and submitting the assessment; acceptable formats for submission and methods by which the assessment items are processed.
- b) **Information on the Tasks:** - purpose of the task; the task to be covered; task instructions; length and format of their expected response and criteria that will be used to mark the task are some of the major assessment task related information that distance learners should get.
- c) **Information on the Results:** - this type of information includes all the information that students should get after assessment have been marked. Some of them are:

students mark or grade; what the marks or grade mean and feedback if the assessment has a formative aspect on their performance.

Besides providing information to students on the assessment practice; the level of challenge of the assessment in a program should be appropriate for the level of qualification to which it leads and assessment should be integrated into every learning and strategy adopted. The staff involved in assessment should also be assessment literate and competent to assess students learning at the level required by the program (SAIDE, 2002:45-46). Particularly where part time tutors are involved in assessment, academic staff should monitor and moderate both formative and summative assessment to promote reliability and fairness.

Moreover marking procedures for both formative and summative assessment should ensure consistency and accuracy of marking and grading and the provision of helpful feedback to learners (48). In addition there should be a clear procedure to receive, record processes and turn around assignments within a given frame that allows learners to benefit from formative feedback prior to the submission of further assessment tasks. More importantly an appeal system should be in place for when students have complains about the fairness of the assessment.

Last but not least, security of assessment should be assured (ADEA, 2004:31-34). Particularly the arrangement of locally administered summative assessments should be secure. Similarly documented procedures should assure the security of personal information protected in the conduct of assessment and in the dissemination of results. Moreover there should be clear and efficient arrangement in place to ensure that the integrity of certification process is not compromised.

Times and venues where assessments and feedbacks are conducted should also be convenient and friendly to distance learners. This could be achieved by conducting prior needs assessment of distance learners and arranging well equipped and adequate rooms per their students' number.

Chapter Three

Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Research Design

In this study attempt is made to comparatively study the practice of tertiary distance education in selected public (Bahir Dar university) and private (Alpha University College) higher education institutions of Ethiopia with the context of course material distribution; quality of distance learning material; learner support system and the practice of assessment and feedback. The study was made by taking tertiary level distance learners of Debre Markos distance Education Center of the selected institutions. To this end comparative descriptive survey method was used for the method helped the researcher to describe the salient points about opinion, attitude and suggestions of tertiary level distance learners, tutors and center coordinators, on the contexts of the research.

3.2. Sources of Data

The primary sources of data for this study were tertiary level distance learners, distance center coordinators and tutors. Whereas, the secondary sources, were selected institutions documents and learning materials.

3.3. Sample Population

The selected institutions offer distance education courses in different parts of the country. However, due to the delayed release of the research grant, the researcher is confined to undertake the research at Debre Markos Distance Education Center of selected institutions where he can get support from his family and relatives. Therefore, this study did not include other distance education centers of the institutions under study. Based on this, all second semester and above level distance learners of the accounting, economics, management and business administration field are selected as sources of information. This group was taken as target source for the fact that both institutions have large number of students and have a relatively longer experience in the fields mentioned.

The questionnaire for Bahir Dar University students was administered during the second semester final examination- august 2008 whereas for Alpha University College distance learners it was administered during the third semester final examination period-July 2008. This was because it was during exam periods that distance learners are found easily gathered together.

3.4. Sample size and Sampling Techniques

3.4.1. Sample size

The selected institutions offer tertiary level distance course in various distance programs and the number of learners in the fields are also varying from field to field. To this end all second semester and above level learners of economics, management, accounting and business administration which have large number of students and areas where the institutions have longer experience were selected as source for quantitative data. There fore, 384 learners from BDU and 500 from AUC were targeted.

Furthermore, 8 tutors (four from each institution), and center coordinators of each selected higher education institutions were selected.

3.4.2. Sampling Technique

The distance learners were selected using availability sampling technique where as, tutors and center coordinators were selected using purposive sampling technique.

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

In the course of the study different types of qualitative and quantitative data gathering instruments were employed. To combine the strengths and amend the inadequacies of each instrument, three complementary techniques of data collection instruments were employed. These are:

3.5.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was set to get ideas of learners on the practice of tertiary distance education with particular reference to the convenience of course material distribution methods; quality of distance learning materials; availability and adequacy of learner support

systems and the practice of assessment and feedback systems. Structurally, it was of both closed ended offering respondents a set of alternatives and asking to choose the one that closely represents their view and open ended inviting the respondents to provide their thoughts freely and to explain their feelings further.

The questionnaire for Bahir Dar University students was distributed during the second semester final examination (August 2008), whereas for Alpha University College distance learners it was administered during the third semester final examination period (July 2008). Out of then 384 questionnaires distributed to BDU learners and 500 for AUC, 380 and 497 of them were filled and collected back from BDU and AUC distance learners respectively.

3.5.1.1. Pilot Testing of the Instruments

In an effort to check the appropriateness of the questionnaires to generate the expected information and their internal consistency pilot testing was conducted. This was made by distributing 30 questionnaires to tertiary level distance learners of AUC of Addis Ababa distance education center and analyzing to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaires. Finally by integrating the responses obtained from the pilot test and the comments and suggestions made by the advisor, the questionnaire were modified and improved.

3.5.2. Interview

Semi structured interview guide was employed to acquire qualitative data concerning the practice of tertiary distance education from tutors, and center coordinators. Moreover, it was used to triangulate with the quantitative data obtained through the questionnaire.

3.5.3. Observation Checklist

The researcher also observed tutorial activities of selected institutions using observation checklist in an effort to get first hand information on how tutorials are conducted and tutors role during tutorial sessions. This was made by using observation check list (see appendix D).

3.6 Data Management and Analysis

In an attempt in analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data obtained through different data collection tools, various data management and analysis systems were employed.

Tallying of frequencies and computation of percentages were employed for quantitative data mainly obtained from questionnaires in an effort to analyze the various characteristics of the sample population; to determine the proportion of the total respondents who have similar judges and to compare similarities and differences between groups.

The qualitative data obtained from interviews, and observation checklist were summarized, analyzed and summarized. Finally, these qualitative data were triangulated with the quantitative data where necessary and appropriate.

Chapter Four

Presentation and Interpretation of Data

This part of the thesis deals with the presentation, and interpretation of data gathered from BDU and AUC distance learners through questionnaires. Besides the data obtained through interview from 8 (four from each) purposefully selected tutors and center coordinators was employed in the interpretation of the study. Attempt is also made to incorporate data gathered through interview and observation checklist where necessary and appropriate. Then after, interpretation was made in line with the basic research questions raised in chapter one.

The presentation begins with brief description of the background information of the respondents and the presentation of data in tabular form using frequency counts and percentages. Effort is also made to describe and interpret the results in table by adding supplementary information obtained from the qualitative data.

4.1. Background Information of the Respondents

The background information of the major study subjects' (learner respondents, interviewed tutors and center coordinators) are briefly discussed as follows.

4.1.1. Learner Respondents

The learner respondents in this study are all above second semester level accounting, economics, management and business administration distance learners of selected institutions of Debre Markos Distance Education Center. Of the 384 questionnaires distributed to BDU learners 380 and 500 questionnaires distributed to AUC learners 497 of them were collected back respectively.

Both BDU and AUC respondents were asked to identify their background information through questionnaire. In this respect the collected data were examined to describe the characteristics of the respondents' in terms of sex, age and employment status.

Table 1. Learner Respondents in Age, Sex and Employment Status

No	Item	BDU Respondents		AUC Respondents	
		No	%	No	%
1	Sex:				
	a. Male	270	71.05%	365	73.44%
	b. Female	110	28.95%	132	26.56%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
2	Age				
	a. 18-25	15	3.95%	66	13.28%
	b. 26-30	30	7.89%	36	7.24%
	c. 31-35	100	26.32%	17	3.42%
	d. 36-40	170	44.74%	224	45.07%
	e. above 40	65	17.11%	60	12.07%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
3	Employment Status				
	a. Employed	336	88.42%	382	76.86%
	b. Unemployed	34	8.95%	115	23.14%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%

Sex

As it is indicated in the above table (Table 1), the great majority of the respondents, i.e., 270 (71.05) of BDU and 365 (73.44%) of AUC distance learners are males. Here one can easily understand that under the sampled study the participation of males is greater than females in both institutions through AUC has more female learners when compared to that of BDU.

Age

The majority 170 (44.74) of BDU respondents are found between the age ranges of 36-40. Similarly, the majority of 224 (45.07) AUC respondents are found between 36-40. Here we can understand that both institutions provide their education to what categorically called adults.

Employment Status

With regard to employment, the majority of both 336 (88.42%) BDU and 382 (76.86%) AUC distance learners are employed. This fact may be associated with the reality that learners' of both institutions are adults.

4.1.2. Tutors

Of the four purposefully selected tutors from BDU, all of them are males, of these three of them are found between the age range of 36-40 and the remaining two are found with age range of beyond 40. Where as , among four purposefully selected tutors from AUC two of them are females, within an age group of 36-40; and the remaining two being males of which one of them is under age group beyond 40, while the remaining one between 36-40 age group.

All of the selected tutors in the two institutions have a bachelor's degree. Similarly except the tutorial guide provided by the institutions, both tutors of the two selected institution responded that they did not get any form of training.

With regard to employment status of the tutors, all tutors of the two institutions are employed on par time basis.

4.1.3. Center Coordinators

The center coordinator of AUC in Debre Markos has a bachelor's degree in history and is found in the age range of 26-30. Where as, the center coordinator of AUC in the same center has master degree in education and is found in age group beyond 40. Both center coordinators of the two institutions are males and except short term seminar on their duties and responsibilities, both center coordinators of the selected institutions replied that they did not get any form of training on the management of distance learning.

4.2. Convenience of Course Material Distribution System

As indicated in the literature review, there are a number of modes of delivery of distance education. However, scholars of distance education advise the consideration of different factors in the choice and use of media and technology. Perraton (2003) and Rumble (1992)

for instance emphasize on factors like question of access, practicalities, cost and educational purpose.

Moreover, works of scholars tells us that, successful implementation of distance education program is dependent upon effective and efficient course material distribution system. This is because distance teaching process is affected by the quantity and quality of learning materials made available to distance students on time and in convenient way.

Thus it is in light of this fact that the researcher found it important to investigate whether the two institution's course material distribution is convenient to their respective distance learners'. To this end each institution respondents were provided with questions aimed to measure the convenience of course material distribution and their results are presented below.

Table 2. Learners Response to Issues Related to the Convenience of Course Material Distribution System

No	Item	BDU Respondents		AUC Respondents	
		No	%	No	%
1	Which media does your institution utilize in the distance education program? (More than one answer is possible)				
	a. Print/modules	380	100%	497	100%
	b. Video				
	c. Audio-Video				
	d. ICT				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
2	If your answer to the above question is A, where do you get the module?				
	a. Distance education center	380	100%	497	100%
	b. Via tutors				
	c. Via courier				
	d. Via mail box				
	e. online				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
3	If your answer to question 2 is A, is the module distribution method convenient to you?				
	a. Yes	46	12.11%	75	15.09%
	b. No	334	87.89%	422	84.91%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
4	If your answer to question 3 is No, what problems did you encounter? (more than one answer is possible)				
	a. Delay of modules	175	52.40%	100	23.70%
	b. Remoteness of distance education centers	159	47.60%	92	21.80%
	c. Shortage/incomplete of modules			230	54.50%
	d. Bureaucracy in the center			230	54.50%
	e. Required to pay additional fee				
	f. other				
	Total	334	100%	422	100%

As shown in the above table (Table 2), the dominant and the only media used for the distance education is print media in the form of modules (item1). The result obtained from interview with both institutions center coordinators also reveals the same fact. Both institutions authorities attribute issues like the countries underdevelopment, costs and access for such reliance on print media.

Concerning the modular distribution system (item2) all learners from both institutions replied that they get modules via distance education centers. Interview results obtained from both institutions center coordinators and authorities also confirms the learners' response. They relied on such method for other methods are costly for both learners and the institutions themselves.

Regarding the convenience of module distribution system to learners (item3), the majority of 334 (87.89%) BDU and 422 (84.91%) AUC of the respondents replied that they didn't get the module distribution system convenient for their learning.

The majority of 175 (52.40%) BDU respondents replied that the delay of modules as their sources of their inconvenience. Where as, for the majority of 230 (54.50%) AUC shortage or incomplete lack of modules is their source of inconvenience. Interview result with BDU coordinators and authorities also shares the students' response. However the center coordinator of BDU disagrees delay of modules for learners inconvenience in that his institution timely provide the materials but learners, he contends, come to the center whenever they like. On the contrary, the center coordinator of AUC agrees with learners' response but he accounted the cause for his institution allows course exemption which often leads to shortage of some modules in some courses.

Though other reasons of inconvenience account the small proportion of each institutions respondents, they have their own impact towards learners' achievement. BDU's respondents inconvenience due to delay of modules, as scholars tells us, brings to learners about uncertainty and anxiety in the minds of learners and as a result demotivates them. The same problem will also hamper AUC respondents who face shortage or incomplete of modules.

4.3. Quality of Distance Learning Materials

As discussed in the literature review, the provision of quality distance learning material or modules is crucial for the successful practice of distance education. As Rowntree (1994) contends a course material for distance learning needs to be designed in self instructional mode for which students can learn with little help from the teacher. Realizing Rowntree's remark and considering other scholars of distance education work on the indicators of quality distance learning material, the researcher found it worth studying whether the two selected institutions are providing quality distance learning modules for their learners or not. To this end, respondents of both institutions were provided with questions that are aimed to measure the quality of distance learning materials and their responses are presented and interpreted below.

Table 3. Learners Response to Issues Related to Quality of Distance Learning Materials

No	Items	BDU Respondents		AUC Respondents	
		NO	%	No	%
1	Are learning outcomes clearly stated in the modules?				
	a. Yes	387	100%	497	100%
	b. No				
	Total	387	100%	497	100%
2	Do your modules provide you with study advice?				
	a. Yes	11	2.89%	422	84.91%
	b. No	369	97.11%	75	15.09%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
3	Are they written in friendly manner?				
	a. Yes	14	3.68%	450	90.54%
	b. No	366	96.32%	47	9.46%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
4	Do your modules have adequate examples?				
	a. Yes	8	2.11%	466	93.76%
	b. No	372	97.89%	31	6.24%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
5	Do your modules provide you with lots of activities with feedbacks?				
	a. Yes	15	3.95%	470	94.57%
	b. No	365	96.05%	27	5.43%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
6	Are the contents of modules arranged in a logically sequenced manner??				
	a. Yes	44	11.58%	481	96.78%
	b. No	336	88.42%	16	3.22%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%

7	Do your modules have an indication of time?				
	a. Yes	15	3.95%	62	12.47%
	b. No	365	96.05%	435	87.53%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
8	Do your modules have structured spaces so that you can write the responses of the activities?				
	a. Yes	15	3.95%	56	11.27%
	b. No	365	96.05%	441	88.73%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
9	Do your modules have the necessary illustrations, pictures and diagrams?				
	a. Yes	16	4.21%	434	87.32%
	b. No	364	95.79%	53	10.66%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
10	Do your modules have self marked progress tests?				
	a. Yes	371	97.63%	452	90.95%
	b. No	9	38.68%	45	9.05%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
11	Is the language level of your module appropriate to your level?				
	a. Yes	18	4.74%	396	79.68%
	b. No	362	95.26%	101	20.32%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
12	Are your modules written with the consideration of the contexts in which you live?				
	a. Yes	66	17.37%	374	75.25%
	b. No	314	82.63%	123	24.75%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
13	Are your modules free from any racial, cultural or sexist stereotyping?				
	a. Yes	351	92.37%	439	88.33%
	b. No	29	7.63%	58	11.67%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
14	Are your modules durable and portable?				
	a. Yes	321	84.47%	444	89.34%
	b. No	59	15.53%	53	10.66%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%

As indicated in the above table (Table 3), all BDU and AUC respondents replied that their modules have clearly stated outcomes (item1). Concerning item 2, the majority 369 (97.11%) of BDU replied that their modules did not provide them with study advice. On the contrary the majority 422 (84.91%) of AUC replied that their modules do provide them with study advice. Regarding the modules style of writing (item 3) again the majority 366 (96.32%) of BDU replied that their modules are not written in friendly manner where as the majority 450 (90.54%) of AUC respondents replied that their modules are written in friendly manner.

Similarly the majority 372 (97.89%) of BDU respondents replied that their modules have no adequate examples (item4) and the majority of 365 (96.05%) of also replied that the modules are devoid of lots of activities and feedbacks (item5). On the contrary, 466 (93.76%) and 470 (94.57%) of AUC respondents replied that their modules provide them with lots of examples (item4) and also provide them with lots of activities with feed back (item5) respectively.

In the same way asked about the logical sequence of the contents of their modules (item6), indication of explicit times in the modules (item7), presence of structured spaces (item8) and the presence of the necessary illustrations , pictures and diagrams (item9) the majority of BDU respondents replied no with percentage score of 336 (88.42%),365 (96.05%),365(96.05%) (97.89%), and 364 (95.79%), respectively. Similarly, the majority 435 (87.53%) and 441 (88.73%) of AUC replied no for item7 and item 8 respectively. But for item 6, and item 9, the majority 481 (96.78%) and 434 (87.32%) of AUC respondents replied yes, respectively.

Asked about the presence of self marked progress tests in their modules, the majority 371 (97.63%) of BDU respondents and majority of 452 (90.95%) AUC respondents replied yes.

With regard to the language level of the modules (item 11) the majority of 362 (95.26%) of BDU respondents replied that the language level of the modules are not appropriate to their level, where as the majority 396 (79.68%) of AUC respondents replied that the language level of their modules is appropriate to their level.

With regard to modules consideration of the contexts in which learners live (item12) the majority of 314 (82.63%) of BDU respondents replied that their modules do not take into consideration of the contexts in which they live where as the majority 374 (75.25%) of AUC respondents replied that their modules do consider the contexts in which they live.

The majority of both BDU 351 (92.37%) and AUC 439 (88.33%) respondents replied that their modules are free from any racial, cultural or sexist stereotyping (item13). In a similar fashion the majority of BDU 321 (84.47%) and AUC 444 (89.34%) respondents replied that their modules are durable and portable (item14).

Interview made with BDU tutors also confirmed the poor quality of the distance learning material of the institution in terms of its contents, organization and structure. On interviewed tutor replied that:

“...I get my B.A in accounting from BDU in a regular program.....when I get a chance to work as a tutor in the distance program; I was wondered when I see the lecture notes I jotted down while I was a student... in one module where I am assigned to teach...”

The researcher has also randomly selected some modules of accounting, economics, management and business administration course to evaluate their quality in terms of contents, structure and organization. Surprisingly, none of them look like a distance learning material.

On the contrary, all of interviewed tutors of AUC agree that their institution provides quality distance learning materials. One interviewed tutor remarked that:

“...I do believe that AUC has quality distance learning materials which even attracted students of conventional universities who frequently refer them.....”

A similar random selection of four different subjects by the researcher also confirms the relative quality of distance learning material of AUC, though the modules fail to include structured spaces and indicate explicit study time.

Generally as can be seen from the above results AUC provides more quality distance learning materials to its learners' than BDU on the criteria used to measure the materials quality.

4.4. Availability and Adequacy of Learner Support System

Learner support system is a critical component of distance learning for it helps to mitigate the problems and challenges that distance learners face in the process of their learning. Such services are not only important to complement distance learners limitations but also promote harmonious relationship between students and the distance teaching institution.

Scholars generally suggest that distance learners should be provided with administrative, academic and guidance and counseling learner support services. However, such services, according to Manjulika and Reddy (1996) should be provided in adequate and appropriate manner to distance learners so that the services could help the learner overcome the feelings of isolation and to facilitate learning.

Cognizant of this fact, the researcher find it important investigating the availability and adequacy of some learner support services in the institutions under study with particular emphasis on availability and adequacy of administrative support services; face to face tutorial contact; library/reference service; guidance and counseling services.

4.4.1. Availability and Adequacy of Administrative Support Services

Of all the different components of learner support system, the provision of adequate administrative learner support system helps distance learners to solve administrative problems confronted in their learning. Therefore, it is mandatory that distance providing institutions should provide such support for their learners. The provision should also be in adequate manner to the demands of learners need. To carry out this task, however, institutions should have adequate administrative personnel equipped with a sense of purpose and devotion for the service of distance learners.

To this end, the researcher made an attempt to investigate the availability and adequacy of administrative support in the two selected institutions. To do so a set of questions related to administrative support supposed to measure the availability and adequacy of the administrative support were provided to both learner respondents of the institutions under study. Their responses together with the responses gathered from interview are presented as follows

As indicated in the table below (table 4) all respondents from both institutions replied that they get administrative support (item1). All of them also indicated that they get administrative support: of on registration process, academic fee, on start and end of course, institutional rules and regulations and rights and responsibilities of learners. (item2)

**Table 4 Learners Response to Issues Related to the Availability and Adequacy of
Administrative Support Services**

No	Item	BDU Respondents		AUC Respondents	
		No	%	No	%
1	Do you get administrative support from your institution?				
	a. Yes	380	100%	497	100%
	b. No				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
2	If your answer to question 1 is Yes, what type are they? (more than one answer is possible)				
	a. Information on registration process	376	98.95%	497	100%
	b. Information on academic fee	371	97.63%	497	100%
	c. Information on start and end of course	299	78.68%	385	77.46%
	d. Information on institutional rules and regulations	369	97.11%	391	78.67%
	e. Information on rights and responsibilities of learners	375	98.68%	421	84.71%
	f. other				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
3	When do you get the administrative support?				
	a. whenever you ask	19	5.00%	35	7.04%
	b. by the time of registration	361	95.00%	462	92.96%
	c. other				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
4	How do you get the administrative supports?				
	a. phone				
	b. email				
	c. leaflets/broachers	321	84.47%	449	90.34%
	d. mass media	361	95.00%	441	88.73%
	e. other				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
5	Do you generally find the administrative support of the institution adequate to your learning?				
	a. Yes	56	14.74%	86	17.30%
	b. No	324	85.26%	411	82.70%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
6	If your answer for the above question is No, why? (more than one answer is possible)				
	a. There are no adequate staff				
	b. Administrative staffs are reluctant to help	149	45.99%	114	27.74%
	c. The communication line is not working	175	54.01%	297	72.26%
	d. other				
	Total	324	100%	411	100%

With regard to item 3, the majority 361 (95.00%) of BDU learners and 462 (92.96%) of AUC respondents replied that they get the administrative support on the time of registration. Asked about how they get the administrative supports (item4) the majority 270 (71.05%) of BDU and 362 (72.84%) AUC respondents replied that leaflets /broachers of the institution are the means in which they get administrative support.

However, the majority of 324 (85.26%) BDU respondents and 411 (82.70%) AUC respondents replied that they do not generally find the administrative support of the institution adequate to their learning (Item 5). The majority 175 (54.01%) and 149 (45.99%) of BDU respondents found the administrative support of their institution as inadequate for the communication line is not working efficiently and reluctance of administrative staff, respectively (Item 6). Similarly the majority 297 (72.26%) and 114 (27.74%) respondents of AUC also attribute to communication inefficiency and reluctance of the administrative staff for their institutions inadequate administrative support.

Both center coordinators admit the problems raised by students with regard to their respective institutions administrative support system. However the BDU center coordinator attribute the inadequacies of the support for the branch office has only two staffs and has no its own office (it is situated in Debre Markos Teachers College). The center coordinator of AUC, on the other hand attributed, the inadequacies of the institutions administrative support for the fact that the center serves other branch offices of the institution, namely Bichena and Mota, which created burden of task that led to the dissatisfaction of Debere Markos center learners.

4.4.2. Availability and Adequacy of Academics Support Services

As discussed in the literature review, distance learners face problems associated with lack of physical proximity from their teacher, lack of adequate infrastructure, shortage of time, fear of examination and so on. Such problems inherently associated with distance learners require the need for the provision of adequate academic learner support. Of the various academic support systems, for the sake of this research, the availability and adequacy of face to face tutorial contacts, library and /or reference service and tutors role or task in the selected institutions is investigated by presenting a set of questions related to issues under discussion

to both respondents of the institutions. Their response is presented and interpreted as follows.

4.4.2.1. Convenience and Adequacy of Face to Face Tutorial Contacts

As presented in the literature review, face to face tutoring is one component of the academic support service in which a tutor appears physically in a tutoring center and meets a group of tutees for the purpose of teaching, motivating, creating a sense of belongingness, solving students' difficulties and anxieties. Face to face tutoring also helps to remove students self created tensions, make them feel secure and comfort, enhance their satisfaction and motivate them to learn and move ahead.

However to reap the potential benefits associated with face to face tutoring, requires advance planning of dates, informing students, well trained tutors , favorable tutorial venues, etc. With regard to this, questions related to the convenience and adequacy of face to face tutoring was presented to respondents of both institutions in an attempt to examine the status of tutoring in the institutions under study.

Table 5. Learners' Response to Issues Related to Face to Face Tutorial Contacts

	Item	BDU Respondents		AUC Respondents	
		No	%	No	%
1	Do you get face to face tutorial contacts?				
	a. Yes	380	100%	497	100%
	b. No				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
2	If your answer to question1 is Yes, how many tutorial contacts do you get for a course in a semester?				
	a. 1	380	100%	497	100%
	b. 2				
	c. 3				
	d. 4 and above				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
3	Do you think the tutorial contacts are adequate?				
	a. Yes	40	10.53%	51	10.26%
	b. No	340	89.47%	426	85.71%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
4	Do you find tutorial contacts significant to your learning?				
	a. Yes	331	87.11%	456	91.75%
	b. No	49	12.89%	41	8.25%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%

5	Do you get advance information on tutorial schedule?				
	a. Yes	380	100%	497	100%
	b. No				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
6	If your answer for question 5 is Yes, how do you get the information?				
	a. Institutions notice board				
	b. Mass media	380	100%	497	100%
	c. Personal message from the institution				
	d. Other				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
7	Based on you answer for question 6, is the method convenient to you?				
	a. Yes	110	28.95%	102	20.52%
	b. No	270	71.05%	395	79.48%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
8	Is the time during which tutorials are conducted convenient to you?				
	a. Yes	66	17.37%	35	7.04%
	b. No	314	82.63%	362	72.84%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
9	If your answer for question 8 is No, what problem did you encounter? (more than one answer is possible)				
	a. Tutorial schedule conflict with your work	168	53.50%	186	51.38%
	b. Tutorial schedule conflict with your family responsibilities	146	46.50%	176	48.62%
	c. Tutorial schedule conflict with your religious practice				
	d. other				
	Total	314	100%	362	100%
10	Where does your institution conduct tutorials?				
	a. at its own center				
	b. at a rented hall				
	c. in a rented school/college	380	100%	497	100%
	d. other				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
11	Do you find tutorial centers convenient to you?				
	a. Yes	54	14.21%	101	20.32%
	b. No	326	85.79%	396	79.68%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
12	If your answer for question 11 is No, what problems did you encounter? (more than one answer is possible)				
	a. Tutorial rooms are crowded	169	51.84%	271	68.43%
	b. Desks are broken and incomplete				
	c. Rooms do not have adequate light and ventilation	157	48.16%	125	31.57%
	d. Other				
	Total	326	100%	396	100%
13	How long will a tutorial session for a course last?				
	a. 40 minutes				
	b. 50 minutes				
	c. 1 hour	134	35.26%	199	40.04%
	d. More than 1:30	246	64.74%	298	59.96%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%

14	Do you find the duration of tutorial sessions adequate?				
	a. Yes	45	11.84%	166	33.40%
	b. No	335	88.16%	331	66.60%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
15	Have you ever missed tutorial sessions?				
	a. Yes	210	55.26%	261	52.52%
	b. No	170	44.74%	236	47.48%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
16	If your answer for question 15 is Yes, why? (more than one answer is possible)				
	a. Remoteness of tutorial center	97	46.19%	115	44.06%
	b. Variability or inconsistency of schedules				
	c. Absenteeism on the part of tutors				
	d. Personal problems	113	53.81%	146	55.94%
	e. Other				
	Total	210	100%	261	100%

As indicated in the above table (Table 5) all of the respondents in both type of institutions replied that that they get tutorial contact (item1). However in terms of the number of tutorial contacts for a course in a semester (item2), all respondents of BDU replied that one tutorial session is given for a course per semester. Similarly, all of AUC respondents replied that they get one tutorial contacts for a course in a semester.

Asked about the adequacy of tutorial contacts (item3) the majority respondents of BDU 340 (89.47%) and AUC 426 (85.71%) replied no. however, again the majority respondents of BDU 331(87.11%) and AUC 456 (91.75% replied that tutorial contacts are significant to their learning (item4).

Concerning, getting advance information on tutorial schedules (item5), all respondents of both institutions replied that they do get advance information. In a similar pattern, all respondents of both institutions replied that they get information about tutorial schedules via mass media (item6). However, the majority 270 (71.05%) of BDU respondents and 395 (79.48%) of AUC respondents find the mass media inconvenient (item7) means of transmitting information. Interview results obtained from the center coordinators of both institutions also confirms this fact that both institutions utilize mass media to inform their respective learners. However with regard to using other options, both of them mentioned

issues of cost, institutional capacity and infrastructural development of the country to use other options.

With regard to times during which tutorials are conducted (item8), the majority of 314(82.63%) BDU respondents and 362 (72.84%) AUC respondents replied that the tutorial schedule is inconvenient to their learning. The majority respondents of 168 (53.50%) BDU and 186 (51.38%) AUC again find the tutorial schedule inconvenient for the schedule conflicts with their work responsibilities (item9).

Asked about the place where tutorial sessions are provided (item10) all respondents from both institutions replied that schools are used as centers of tutorials contacts. However, the majority of 326 (85.79%) BDU respondents and the majority of 396 (79.68%) AUC respondents do not find schools convenient (item11). This inconvenience (item12) for the majority of 169 (51.84) and 157 (48.16) of BDU respondents and the majority of 271 (68.43%) and 125 (31.57%) AUC respondents are the crowdedness of tutorial rooms and inadequate light and ventilation of the rooms.

Tutors of both institutions also admit that the existence of crowdedness in their respective institutions. BDU tutors attribute the cause of such problem for the institutions want to minimize the cost of room rent. The same factor was also shared by all interviewed tutors of AUC. However tutors of AUC also add the large number of students of the institution as cause for crowdedness.

Similarly AUC and BDU center coordinators admit the existence of such problem. For AUC center coordinators, crowdedness usually occurs in some common courses which are taken by all students. But BDU coordinator argues that such crowdedness in his institution occurs in some courses where finding adequate tutors is difficult.

The majority of 246 (64.74%) BDU and 298 (59.96%) AUC respondents replied that a tutorial session for a course lasts more than one hour and a half (item13). However, the majority 335 (88.16%) of BDU and 331 (66.60%) AUC respondents replied that the session is inadequate to their learning (item14). Interview results obtained from both institutions purposefully selected tutors also reveals the inadequacies of tutorial sessions.

In relation to this one tutor from BDU responded that:

“...When I enter to class I am always baffled what to do. You know why? If I lecture I could not answer students question and if attempt to answer students question I fail to satisfy their needs. So in a confusion I simply go on lecturing even then the bell rang without finishing what I started.”

One AUC interviewed tutor also shared his BDU's counterpart in that he stated as:

“... Distance learners do not come on time.... When I started teaching interruptions are frequent.....I do not have the moral or institutional liberty to stop interruptionsSo how could you think in such situations, which took their share of minutes from the 1.30 time, the time allotted is adequate...?”

The researcher's visit also witnessed the existence of such problems like late comings, diverse interests of learners in asking, crowded rooms which all took their share of time from the allotted duration that ultimately contribute to the inadequacy of face to face tutorial activities of the institutions under study in terms of duration of tutorial sessions.

Asked whether they ever missed tutorial sessions or not (item15), the majority 210 (55.26%) of BDU and 261 (52.52%) AUC respondents replied yes. This was due to, according to the majority of BDU respondents, personal problems 113 (53.81%) and remoteness of tutorial center 97 (46.19%). The majority of AUC respondents also accounted personal problems 146 (55.94%) and remoteness of tutorial center 115 (44.06%) for their reason of missing tutorial contacts.

4.4.2.2. Tutors Role/Task

Tutors play a crucial role in distance learning for they facilitate and guide students learning in distance education. To effectively play their crucial role, scholars argue that tutors need to have good knowledge of the subject, communicate effectively and be committed to their roles and responsibilities. In line with this fact a set of questions were presented to respondents of both institutions aimed to measure the effectiveness of tutors.

Table 6. Learners Response to Tutors Role / Task

No	Item	BDU Respondents		AUC Respondents	
		No	%	No	%
1	Which tasks do your tutors perform mostly during tutorial sessions? (more than one answer is possible)				
	a. Lecturing on the points of the module	380	100%	497	100%
	b. Answering questions raised by students	353	92.89%	393	79.07%
	c. Advising students on how to study and prepare for exam				
	d. Guidance and counseling of learners				
	e. Other				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
2	Do you think that your tutors have good knowledge of the subject?				
	a. Yes	294	77.37%	388	78.07%
	b. No	86	22.63%	109	21.93%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
3	Do you have a chance to contact your tutors outside of tutorial sessions?				
	a. Yes				
	b. No	380	100%	497	100%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%

As indicated in the above (Table 6) all respondents of both institutions replied that tutors perform the task of lecturing the points of the module. Similarly, the majority of respondents of 353 (92.89%) BDU and 393 (79.07%) AUC replied that their tutors also usually perform the task of answering questions raised by students (Item 1). The majority of 294 (77.33%) of BDU and 388 (78.07%) of AUC think that there Tutors have good knowledge of the subject (Item 2). More over, asked whether they have a chance to communicate (item3) with their tutors outside tutorial sessions, all the respondents of both institutions replied no.

The researchers' observation of tutorial tasks using observation check list (see appendix) also witnessed that both tutors of selected institutions focus on lecturing the contents of the modules and attempting to answer questions raised by learners. Asked about why they only perform these tasks, all tutors of both institutions replied that these are the only tasks they are expected to perform by their respective institutions. Added to this a tutor from AUC replied that:

“... How could you expect me to perform other tasks with crowded students, no training and additional payment...”

Similarly a tutor from BDU responded that:

“...after all the payment to do the tasks I am doing is not even adequate let alone doing other jobs.....besides I and the students meet once in a semester like ' maskal bird' ... ”

From the above responses one can observe that tutors of both institutions are not performing other ideal tasks of a tutor for tutors of selected institutions have-not received adequate training, poorly paid and have large number of students. Both center coordinators of the institutions under study also share with their respective tutors' response. However, the center coordinator of AUC contends that student can get other roles expected to be performed by tutors form their modules or center staff.

4.4.2.3. Availability and Convenience of Library /Reference Services

Another academic support that should be provided to distance learners is library/reference service. According to Aruna Goel and S.L. Goel (2001:161) library and other information technology services have a central place in the process of distance education by facilitating distance earning process. In line with this fact, a set of questions aimed to measure the availability and adequacy of library/reference service were presented to respondents of both institutions and their responses are presented and interpreted as follows.

Table 7. Learners Response to the Availability and Convenience of Library/Reference Service

No	Item	BDU Respondents		AUC Respondents	
		No	%	No	%
1	Do you get library service?				
	a. Yes				
	b. No	380	100%	497	100%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
4	If your answer for question 1 is No, did you encounter problem in your leaning?				
	a. Yes	289	76.05%	234	47.08%
	b. No	91	23.95%	263	52.92%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%

4	If your answer for question 1 is No, did you encounter problem in your leaning?				
	a. Yes	289	76.05%	234	47.08%
	b. No	91	23.95%	263	52.92%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
5	If your answer for question 5 is No, why?				
	a. You can use other libraries at your nearby	36	39.56%	114	43.35%
	b. The modules are enough by themselves	55	60.44%	149	56.65%
	c. Other				
	Total	91	100%	263	100%

As indicated in the above (Table 7) all respondents of both institutions replied that they do not get library or reference service (item1) asked about if they encountered problems due to lack of library service (item4), the majority of 289 (76.05%) of BDU respondents replied yes. Where as the majority 263 (52.92%) of AUC respondents replied no. those majority respondents of AUC who replied no reasoned that their modules are self satisfactory 149 (56.65%) and access to other libraies 114 (43.35%). Similarly those minority respondents of BDU replied no for their modules are self satisfactory 55 (60.44%) and have access to other libraries 36(39.56%) (item5).

The interview response of both center coordinators of selected institutions under study was similar to their respective learners. However, the center coordinator of AUC argues that the modules are self explanatory and adequate which makes library service more important only for those learners who have the pursuit of knowledge beyond their modules.

4.4.3. Availability and Adequacy of Guidance and Counseling Services

As noted in the literature review, guidance and counseling support should be provided to distance learners for it helps them solve non academic problems that may arise in the course of learning. The provision of adequate guidance and counseling service will also help to solve learners problems associated to emotional and other personal issues. Cognizant of this fact, the researcher presented a set of question related to guidance and counseling services to respondents of both types of institutions in an effort to measure the availability adequacy of such service in the institution under study.

Table 8. Learners Response to the Availability and Adequacy of Guidance and Counseling Services

No	Item	BDU Respondents		AUC Respondents	
		No	%	No	%
I	Do you get guidance and counseling services?				
	a. Yes				
	b. No	380	100%	497	100%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%

As indicated in the above (Table 8) asked about whether their institutions provide them guidance and counseling services (item1) all the respondents of both institutions replied no.

The responses obtained from an interview made with center coordinators of both institutions are mixed. BDU center coordinator admits that the institution has no a separate guidance and counseling system. But he argues that he give his mobile phone number so that students could contact him whenever they like which makes him believe that the absence of the system could be partially solved. AUC center coordinator also admits the absence of such system but contends that some advises are included in the modules and students are also given the aerial, postal and telephone address of the institution and its staff so that they could contact them whenever they need any type of support.

Generally, although there are few and uncoordinated attempts to provide guidance and counseling services in the institutions under study, both the responses of learners and centers coordinators of selected institutions clearly indicate that the absence of a guidance and counseling stem which obviously makes the teaching learning of distance learners of respective institutions difficult.

4.5. The Practice of Assessment and Feedback

Assessment is a useful tool in distance learning for it helps to measure the achievement or progress of distance learners. As presented in the literature review it can be of two type- formative and summative. What ever type it is, assessment is inextricably linked with feedback. To this end assessment and feedback devices with emphasis on assignments and examinations are investigated in the selected institutions. To do so questions related to

assignment and examination were presented to distance learners of selected institutions under study. Their responses are presented and interpreted as follows.

4.5.1. Tutor Marked Assignments and Feedback

As indicated in the table below (table 9), All of BDU respondents replied none of the courses they took have assignments (item1). Results obtained from interviews made with BDU's distance coordinators also admit that their institution does not provide assignments for they observed that all learners present the same answer in assignments and its validity becomes insignificant. For this reason BDU recently stopped giving tutor marked assignments to its distance learners. On the contrary, the majority 385 (77.46%) respondents of AUC replied that more than three tutor marked assignments were given for a semester.

Table 9 Learners Response to Tutor Marked Assignment and Feedback

No	Item	BDU Respondents		AUC Respondents	
		No	%	No	%
1	How many tutor marked assignments are you given in a semester?				
	a. none	380	100%		
	b. 1				
	c. 2			112	22.54%
	d. 3 and above			385	77.46%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
2	If your answer to the above question is a the number tutor marked assignments?				
	a. Excessive			122	24.55%
	b. Adequate			346	69.62%
	c. Inadequate			29	5.84%
	Total			497	100%
3	Do you find assignments significant to your learning?				
	a. Yes			497	100%
	b. No				
	Total			497	100%
4	If your answer for question 3 is Yes, they are because? (more than one answer is possible)				
	a. They have motivational value			491	98.79%
	b. Prepare you for final exam			485	97.59%
	c. other				
	Total			497	100%
5	While you are working assignments, do you find the answers easily from the modules?				
	a. Yes			296	59.56%
	b. No			201	40.44%
	Total			497	100%

6	If your answer for question 5 is No, how do you attempt them? (more than one answer is possible)				
	a. You contact your tutors				
	b. You ask other people for help			126	62.69%
	c. You search in a library			75	37.31%
	d. Other				
	Total			201	100%
7	Do you find adequate information on when to submit your assignments?				
	a. Yes			158	31.79%
	b. No			339	68.21%
	Total			497	100%
8	Do you get your assignments evaluated back?				
	a. Yes			345	69.42%
	b. No			152	30.58%
	Total			497	100%
9	If your answer for question 8 is Yes, do they reach you before exam?				
	a. Yes			163	47.25%
	b. No			182	52.75%
	c. other				
	Total			345	100%
10	If your answer to question 8 is Yes, are they correctly commented?				
	a. Yes			125	36.20%
	b. No			220	63.80%
	Total			345	100%
11	Do your assignments result account to your final grade?				
	a. Yes			497	100%
	b. No				
	Total			497	100%
12	If your answer for question 11 is Yes, how much do they account to your final grade on the average?				
	a. 5%				
	b. 15%				
	c. 25%				
	d. More than 25%, please specify			497	100%
	Total			497	100%

The majority 346 (69.62%) of AUC respondents replied that the number of tutor marked assignments (item2) is adequate. Moreover, all of the respondents replied that the available ones are significant to their learning (item3). In the same manner all of AUC respondents replied that their assignments are significant for they motivate them to study (491(98.79%) and prepare for final exam 485(97.59%) (item4).

The majority 296 (59.56%) of AUC respondents replied that they do find the answers of tutor marked assignments in their modules (item5) asked about how they attempt the tutor marked assignments (item6) the majority 126 (62.69%) of them replied that they ask others help.

Concerning the adequacy of information on when submit their tutor marked assignments, (item 7) the majority 139 (68.21%) of AUC respondents replied that they do not find adequate information. Similarly the majority 345 (69.42%) of respondents replied that they did get their tutor marked assignments evaluated back (item 8). However the majority 182 (52.75%) respondents replied that evaluated assignment do not reach them before exam (item 9). Moreover a considerable majority of 220 (63.80%) respondents replied that their evaluated assignments are not properly commented (item 10).

All of AUC respondents also responded that their tutor marked assignments results accounted to their final grade (item11). And all of them also replied that the tutor marked assignments accounts more than 25% and specifically 30% of their total grade (item 12).

An interview made with the center coordinator of AUC also confirmed the existence of short comings with regard to the institutions assessment practice by tutor marked assignments such as delay of sending corrected assignments and proper feedback. However, he accounted the learners for such shortcomings in that most learners fail to submit their assignments on time as a result of which the institution failed to send back properly commented and evaluated assignments on time.

4.5.2. Exams and Feedback

Assessment by exam is the most widely used device in distance learning which accounts for varying credits or percentages of the overall evaluation of learning depending on the philosophical outlook of the institution. As presented in the literature review, exams are usually conducted in the centers or examination hall in somehow median localities. scholars like Rumble(1992) propose consideration of all sorts of security such as guarding the exam paper, invigilation, the answer sheet should be applied prior to, during and the post periods of the examination. In line with this and other aspects related to exam, the researcher

presented a set of questions to both institutions distance learners in an effort to investigate the practice of exam and feedback in the institutions under study.

As indicated in the table below (Table 10), all the respondents of both institutions replied that they sit for exam by the institutions academic calendar (item1). However, the majority of 201 (52.89%) of BDU and AUC 325(65.39%) respondents replied that the institutions calendar is not convenient to them (item2). The majority of BDU 115 (57.21%) and 86 (42.79%) and AUC 192 (59.08%) and 133(40.92%) respondents find the exam schedule inconvenient for the schedule conflict with their work and family responsibility respectively. (item3).

Table 10. Learners Response to Exam and Feedback

No	Item	BDU Respondents		AUC Respondents	
		No	%	No	%
1	When do you sit for exams?				
	a. On the schedule fixed by the institution	380	100%	497	100%
	b. Whenever you are ready or choose				
	c. other				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
2	If your answer for question 1 is A, is the time convenient for you?				
	a. Yes	79	20.79%	172	34.61%
	b. No	201	52.89%	325	65.39%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
3	If your answer for question 2 is No, it is because (more than one answer is possible)				
	a. Exam schedule conflicts with your work	115	57.21%	192	59.08%
	b. Exam schedule conflicts with your family responsibility	86	42.79%	133	40.92%
	c. Exam schedule conflicts with your religious practice				
	d. other				
	Total	201	100%	325	100%
4	Do you think the number of questions in exam cover the learning contents of the course				
	a. Yes	124	32.63%	398	80.08%
	b. No	256	67.37%	99	19.92%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
5	Which type of question items mostly appear in your exams? (more than one answer is possible)				
	a. True/False	380	100%	497	100%
	b. Multiple Choice	380	100%	497	100%
	c. Matching	380	100%	497	100%
	d. Fill in the Blank			497	100%
	e. Essay			497	100%
	f. other				
	Total	380	100%	497	100%

6	Are the questions in the exam clear and simple to understand with no typographic error?				
	a. Yes	278	73.16%	354	71.23%
	b. No	102	26.84%	143	28.77%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
7	Is the time allotted for exam adequate?				
	a. Yes	297	78.16%	379	76.26%
	b. No	83	27.95%	118	23.74%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
8	Are the marks of each question in your exam quantified?				
	a. Yes	327	86.05%	415	83.50%
	b. No	53	13.95%	82	16.50%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
9	Do you find the exam hall convenient?				
	a. Yes	294	77.37%	219	44.06%
	b. No	86	22.63%	278	55.94%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
10	If your answer to question 9 is No, what problems did you encounter? (more than one answer is possible)				
	a. Broken desks				
	b. Crowdedness	86	100%	278	100%
	c. No ventilation/light	86	100%	278	100%
	d. other				
	Total	86	100%	278	100%
11	Do you think all of the exams are properly administered?				
	a. Yes	201	52.89%	299	60.16%
	b. No	179	47.11%	198	39.84%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
12	If your answer for question 11 is No, what problems did you observe? (more than one answer is possible)				
	a. Loose security of exams				
	b. Leniency of invigilators	179	100%	184	92.93%
	c. Loose security of answer sheets	176	98.32%	193	97.47%
	d. Unfair marking of exams				
	e. other				
	Total	179	100%	198	100%
13	Do you get your exam papers evaluated back?				
	a. Yes				
	b. No	380	100%	497	100%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
16	Is there any opportunity to appeal for your results?				
	a. Yes	236	62.11%	359	72.23%
	b. No	144	37.89%	138	36.32%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%
17	Does your institution provide you with a chance for re -exam?				
	a. Yes	245	64.47%	389	78.27%
	b. No	135	35.53%	108	21.73%
	Total	380	100%	497	100%

With regard to the coverage of questions in exam (item 4) in respect to learning contents, the majority of 256 (67.37%) of BDU respondents replied no. Whereas, the majority of 398 (80.08%) of AUC respondents replied yes.

Asked about type of question items appear in exam (item 5), all of BDU respondents replied that True - False, multiple choice and matching items are frequently appear. Where as all of AUC respondents replied that all items are included in exams.

The majority of 278 (73.16%) BDU respondents and AUC 354 (71.23%) respondents replied that questions in the exam do not lack clarity and have no typographic error (item6).

With regard to time allowed in exam (item7), the majority of 297 (78.16%) of BDU and AUC 379 (76.26%) respondents replied that the time is adequate. In a similar pattern the majority of respondents of both BDU 327 (86.05%) and AUC 415 (83.50%) replied that questions in exam are quantified (item8).

Asked about the convenience of exam hall (item 9) the majority 278 (55.94%) of AUC respondents replied that exam halls are inconvenient for there are crowded and have no ventilation/light (item 10). How ever the majority of 294(77.37%) of BDU respondents found the exam hall convenient.

With regard to proper administration of exam (item11), the majority 201 (52.89%) of BDU and AUC 299(60.16%) respondents replied that they do think exams are properly administered. However, all of BDU and AUC respondents replied that they did not get the exams evaluated back (item13).

Asked about the existence of appeal system with regard to their results (item16), the majority 236 (62.11%) of BDU and AUC 359 (72.23%) replied yes. In a similar way, the majority 245 (64.47%) BDU and AUC 389 (78.27%) respondents replied that they have a chance to sit for re exam (item17).

Both center coordinators of selected institutions did not comply with all their respective learners' response towards the exam practice of their respective institutions. However, both of them admitted that the delay in timely and properly correcting and sending exam results

back to students. BDU center coordinator accounted the delay to the centralized system of the university. He explained this as follows:

“...We have about seven distance branch officesand all final exam papers of these institutions are corrected at the main campus, Bahir Dar University... this takes much time both in sending to and receiving back exam result...”

The center coordinator of AUC also shares his BDU’s counterpart but adds additional reasons as:

“...our students total grade is dependent on two things....their tutor marked assignments and final exam result which account 30 and 70% of their total grade respectively. However, as our distance learners usually do not submit their assignment on timethe institution is forced to wait till their assignments results are received.....and this is a major problem why the institution failed in timely and properly sending exam results to learners....”

Generally, one can clearly understand that the assessment practice of both institutions had shortcoming as identified by learners and center coordinators, inconvenience of exam schedules, delay in timely and properly sending of evaluated results, etc. and the prevalence of shortcomings as works of scholars tells us affect the distance program in general and learners of the institutions in particular.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Summary

The major purpose of this study was to comparatively study the practice of tertiary level distance education in two selected public (BDU) and private (AUC) higher education institutions of Ethiopia with particular emphasis on Debre Markos center distance learners of each institution. The comparative ground used in the research were variables as the convenience of course material distribution, the quality of distance learning materials, the availability and adequacy of learner support system and the practice of assessment and feedback. Since no scholarly work was done on comparative manner, public *vis-à-vis* private, the study is believed to contribute much for the improvement of tertiary distance programs of the country in general and in the institutions under study in particular.

The theoretical base of the research was laid by consulting related literature on the concepts of distance education; historical development of distance education at global; national and institutional level; modes of delivery of distance education; learner support systems and the practice of assessment and feedback in distance learning.

A comparative descriptive survey method was employed to carryout the intended study, for it helped the researcher to get first hand information using multiple data collecting instruments such as questionnaires, semi structured interviews, and observation check list.

All second semester and above level accounting, management, economics and business administration learners at Debre Markos Distance Education center of both institutions were taken as the major data source. Such group was taken as data source for both institutions have considerable number of students in the fields mentioned and have for a relatively long period started to offer these courses. Therefore from such sources quantitative data through questionnaire were collected. Out of the 384 questionnaires distributed to BDU learners 380 and 500 questionnaires distributed to AUC 497 of them had filled and returned the questioners, the analysis of BDU and AUC was, therefore, based on 380 and 497 respondents respectively.

Qualitative data was also used to support and triangulate the quantitative data obtained from learner respondents. Such qualitative data were obtained from the interview made with the purposefully selected tutors (four from each institution); and two center coordinators of selected institutions. Moreover, tutorial activities of both institutions were observed using observation checklist and relevant documents were also analyzed.

5.1.1. Major Findings

Based on the analysis, the major findings of the study are summarized as follows:

5.1.1.1. Background of the Respondents

The background of the major study subjects (learners, tutors and center coordinators) were described in terms of sex, age and employment status.

- ✪ The study revealed that in terms of sex the majority 270 (71.05%) of BDU and 365 (73.44%) of AUC are found to be males. When compared to BDU, AUC caters more females. In terms of age, the majority 170 (44.74%) of BDU and the majority 224 (45.07 %) of AUC respondents are found to be adults within the age range of 36-40. In terms of employment, the study revealed that the majority of 336 (88.42%) of BDU and the majority 382 (76.86%) of AUC are employed.
- ✪ Of the four purposefully selected tutors from BDU, all are found to be males three of which with age range of 36-40 and one of them beyond 40. With regard to four purposefully selected tutors from AUC two of them are found to be females and within an age range group of 36-40, while the remaining two being males. And one of which is found beyond 40 age group while the remaining one found between 36-40 age group. In terms of employment status, all tutors of both institutions are employed on part-time basis. Moreover, all of the selected tutors in the two institutions have a bachelor's degree. Similarly except the tutorial guide provided by the institutions, both tutors of the two selected institution responded that they did not get any form of training.
- ✪ With regard to center coordinators, both institutions' coordinators are males. The center coordinator of BDU has a bachelor's degree and is found in the age range of 26-

30. Where as the center coordinator of AUC has master's degree and is found in the age range of beyond 40.

5.1.1.2. The Convenience of Course Material Distribution System

The convenience of course material distribution system of BDU and AUC institutions were examined in terms of the type of media they use, and the convenience of the distribution system to their respective learners.

- ✦ With regard to media used in the distance learning, the study revealed that both institutions dominantly use print media.
- ✦ Similarly, both institutions respondents responded that they get their modules from their respective distance education centers. However the majority 334 (87.89%) of BDU and 422 (84.91%) of AUC respondents pointed out that getting modules form centers is not to their convenience. The majority 175 (52.40%) of BDU respondents replied that the delay of modules as their sources of their inconvenience .Where as, for the majority 230 (54.50%) of AUC shortage or incomplete lack of modules is their source of inconvenience.

5.1.1.3. The Quality of Distance Learning Materials

The quality of distance learning materials (modules) of both institutions was also examined in terms of its objective, contents, learning activities and organization.

- ✦ In this regard, the majority 365 (96.5%) of BDU respondents pointed out that their modules do not provide them with study advice (97.11%), are not written in friendly manner (96.32%), have no adequate example (97.89%), are not logically sequenced (88.42%), devoid of lots of activities with feedbacks (96.05%), do not indicate explicit time (96.05%), lack structured spaces (96.05%), devoid of illustrations pictures and diagrams (95.79%), inappropriate language level (95.26%) and do not consider the contexts in which they live (82.63%). However, the majority of them also pointed out that their modules have clearly stated outcomes (100%), have self marked progress tests(97.63%), free from any racial, cultural or sexist stereotyping (92.37%) and are durable and portable (84.47%).

- ✧ On the contrary, the majority of AUC respondents pointed out that their modules do have clearly stated outcomes (100%), do provide them with study advise (84.91%), written in friendly manner (90.54%), have adequate examples (93.76%), lots of activities and feedbacks (94.57%), logically sequenced (96.78%), rich with the necessary illustrations, pictures and diagrams (87.32%), have self marked progress tests (90.95%), appropriate language level (79.68%), free from an racial, cultural or sexist stereotyping (88.33%) and are durable and portable (89.34%). Nevertheless, majority of AUC respondents pointed out some shortcomings as absence of indication of explicit time (87.53%), and lack structured spaces (88.73%).

5.1.1.4. *The Availability and Adequacy of Learner Support Services*

i) Administrative Support

- ✧ Regarding the availability and adequacy of administrative support services the study showed that learners of both institutions do get administrative support on issues like registration process, academic fee, start and end of a course, institutions rules and regulations and rights and responsibilities of learners. The majority of BDU (95%) and AUC (92.6%) respondents also pointed out that they get such supports during registration time through leaflets and brochures. However, the majority BDU (85.25%) and AUC (82.70%) of the respondents of both institutions did not find the administrative support of their respective institution adequate. Similarly the same majorities of BDU pointed out inefficient communication system (54.01%) and reluctance of administrative staff (45.01%) as their source of inconvenience. Similarly the inefficient communication system (72.26%) and reluctance of administrative staff were rated as sources of inconvenience for the majority of AUC learners.

ii) Academic Support

a) Face to Face Tutorial Contact

- ✧ The study revealed that BDU and AUC learners get face to face tutorial contacts in a semester for a course. However the majority of BDU (89.47%) and AUC (85.71%) respondents pointed out that one tutorial per semester was not adequate.

Yet the majority of BDU (87.11%) and AUC (91.75%) respondents found the available tutorial contacts significant to their learning.

- ✪ In the same manner, the study showed that that all respondents of BDU and AUC get advance information on tutorial schedules via mass media. However the majority of BDU (71.05%) and AUC (79.48%) respondents found the media inconvenient. The study revealed that the time during which tutorials are conducted is not convenient to the majority respondents of BDU (82.63%) and AUC (72.84%). Conflict of tutorial schedules with their work (53.5%&51.38%) and family responsibility (46.5%&48.62%) were the two reasons identified by the majority BDU and AUC respondents for their inconvenience with the tutorial schedule respectively.
- ✪ With regard to the venue tutorials are conducted, all respondents of both institutions indicated schools as venues for tutorial contacts. However, the majority of BDU (85.79%) and AUC (79.68%) respondents' found schools inconvenience due to crowdedness (51.84%&68.43%) and inadequate light and ventilation (48.16&31.57%) respectively.
- ✪ With regard to the duration of a tutorial for a course, the study showed that the majority of BDU (64.74%) and AUC (59.56%) respondents indicated that they get one hour and half minutes. Yet, the majority of BDU (88.16%) and AUC (66.60%) respondents pointed out that the duration is not adequate. Similarly, it is also found out that the majority of BDU (55.26%) and AUC (52.52%) respondents have ever missed tutorial contacts due to remoteness of tutorial centers (46.19%&44.01%) and personal problems (53.81%&55.94) respectively.

b) Tutors Role/Task

- ✪ Concerning tutors role/task, the majority of BDU (92.89%) and AUC (79.07%) learners pointed out that lecturing on the points of the modules and answering questions raised by learners are the most frequently accomplished tasks by their tutors. The majority of BDU (77.37%) and AUC (78.07%) respondents also agreed that their tutors have adequate knowledge of the subject. Nevertheless, in the study

it is found that none of both institutions respondents have a chance to contact their tutors in any way out side tutorial contacts.

c) *Library/Reference Service*

- ✪ With regard to the availability and convenience of library/reference service, the study revealed that none of both institutions learners do get such services. The majority of BDU (76.05%) respondents also pointed out that they encountered problems due to the absence of such services. however, the majority of AUC (52.92%) indicated that they did not encounter problem for they think that their modules are adequate (56.65%) and have access to other libraries (43.35%).

d) *Guidance and Counseling*

- ✪ All respondents of both institutions pointed out that they do not get guidance and counseling services.

5.1.1.5. *The Practice of Assessment and Feedback*

a) *Tutor Marked Assignments and Feedback*

- ✪ The study also revealed that none of BDU learners are given tutor marked assignments. But the majority of AUC (77.46%) respondents replied that all of their courses have assignments. They also pointed out that the number of tutor marked assignments are adequate (69.62%), find them significant to their learning (100%) for they motivate them to study (98.79%) and help to prepare for exam (97.59%); find the answers easily from the modules, get their evaluated assignments back (69.42%), and their assignment result account to their final grade (99.56%) comprising 30%. However a considerable majority of AUC respondents also pointed out some shortcomings as they do not get adequate information on when to submit assignments, evaluated assignments did not reach them before exam (52.75%) and are not correctly commented (63.80).

b) Exams and Feedback

- ✧ Regarding exam and feed back, the study showed that all learners of both institutions sit for exam per their institutions exam calendar. However the majority of BDU (52.81%) and AUC (65.39%) respondents indicated that the exam calendar is inconvenient for it conflicts with their work (57.21%&59.08%) and family responsibilities (42.79%&40.92%) respectively.
- ✧ The study also indicated that to the majority of BDU (67.37%) respondents the numbers of questions in exam do not cover the learning contents of the course. Whereas the majority of AUC (80.08%) indicated that the exam questions do cover the learning contents of the course. All of BDU respondents indicated that True-False, choice and matching items frequently appear in their exams, while all of AUC respondents indicated that True-False, choice, matching, essay and short answer types of question frequently appear.
- ✧ With regard to clarity and typographic error, the study showed that majority respondents of BDU (73.16%) and AUC (71.23%) indicated that their exam questions have clarity and free from typographic error, similarly the majority of BDU (78.16%&86.05%) and AUC (76.26%&83.05%) respondents indicated that the time allotted in exam is adequate and questions in exam are quantified respectively.
- ✧ The study also revealed that the majority of AUC respondents indicated that they did not find the exam hall convenient (55.94%) for they are crowded and have no adequate light and ventilation. where as the majority of BDU (77.37%) respondents found the hall convenient. Similarly it is also indicated by the majority respondents of BDU (52.89%) and AUC (60.16%) that exams are properly administered. However all of BDU and AUC respondents indicated that they did not get their exam results evaluated back. Yet the majority of BDU (62.11% &64.47%) and AUC (72.23%&78.27%) indicated that their respective institutions provide them a chance to appeal for their exam results and sit for re-exam respectively.

5.2. Conclusions

Based on the major research findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Distance education involves the utilization of two way communication technologies. However reliance of both institutions predominantly on one way technology, print, characterizes the distance education of AUC and BDU as correspondence schools, and it would have negative impact on the academic performance of distance learners since print has its own limitations.
2. The success of distance learning is dependent on the establishment of efficient and effective course material distribution system capable of meeting and satisfying the specific requirements of distance learners. However the fact that there was lack of such a system in both higher education institutions creates anxiety and uncertainty in the minds of learners as to how and when to receive course materials and often leads them to lose interest in the learning process or ultimately lead to dropouts from the program.
3. A distance learning material that is not developed by taking into account of the inherent characteristics of distance teaching and distance learners often creates a sense of confusion and lose of interest among learners as a result of which learners performance will be poor or forced to drop out of the program.
4. Failure to provide various and adequate administrative, academic and guidance and counseling services to distance learners whenever they want and in what ever they can create feelings of isolation, helplessness and lose of learning interest among distance learners which ultimately leads them to drop out of the program.
5. Face to face tutoring that is not planned and conducted in to consideration of distance learners time and venue of preference; inadequate duration to cover the contents; conducted by unskilled tutors often leads to absenteeism of learners during tutorial sessions and denies learners the chance of reaping the potential benefits associated with proper, planned and adequate face to face tutoring activities.

6. Assessment and feedback practice that do not allow learners to get adequate information on the process; inconvenient to learners time and venue of preference often affects the distance teaching process in general and students performance in particular.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the major findings of the research, the researcher would like to forward the following recommendations:

1. Concerning the Convenience of Course Material Distribution System

- ✪ Since each media has its own strengths and limitations, reliance on a single medium is not advisable. Therefore, the concerned bodies of both institutions should find alternative to use other media like audio, audio visual materials and the internet.
- ✪ With regard to the course material distribution system, concerned bodies in the institutions under study are recommended to be aware of and utilize other distribution systems that could address the varied demands of distance learners. To this end, both higher education institutions should employ such material distribution systems like mail system, courier, and online delivery by developing the required infrastructure.

2. The Quality of Distance Learning Materials

- ✪ The design and developing of courses materials for distance learning requires its own expertise and skill. To this end the concerned bodies in BDU need to revise their modules and rewritten or developed again by experts who have the skill and experience in developing distance learning materials. As to AUC, the concerned bodies are also advised to revise their modules by incorporating indication of explicit study time and structured spaces that help learners to write their answers while they are reading the module.

3. The Availability and Adequacy of Learner Support Services

i) Administrative Support

- ✧ In the process of learning distance learners may face administrative problems and they should also be allowed to get such supports whenever they need in every ways they can. Therefore concerned bodies of both institutions should find options and media that could address the special needs of distance learners. Regarding this, institutions are advised to establish an efficient communication line between the institution and their learners.
- ✧ Moreover effort should be made by concerned bodies of both institutions to organize their administrative staffs with personnel who have adequate knowledge of the specific requirement of distance learners.

ii) Academic Support

a) Face to Face Tutorial Contact

- ✧ The media that institutions use to inform their learners about tutorial schedule should be convenient and accessible to all learners. Therefore in addition to the mass media, like radio and television, concerned authorities of both institutions should find other alternatives such mail, email or phone to inform their learners.
- ✧ Both institutions are also recommended to increase the contact and duration of tutorial contact per to their learners demands.
- ✧ Moreover in order to solve their learners' absenteeism in tutorial contacts, concerned bodies of both institutions are advised to make prior need assessment of their learners' time of preference.
- ✧ Last but not least both institutions are advised to arrange adequate and convenient tutorial rooms per students' number.

b) Tutors Role/Task

- ✧ Tutors are one part of learners' support system in the distance learning. In order to carry out their roles, however, concerned bodies of both institutions are advised to provide proper and planned training to their respective tutors.

c) Library/Reference Service

- ✧ As a learner support system, distance education institutions should provide library/reference services to their learners. With this regard both institutions should provide such services either by establishing their own system or creating partnership with other institutions in their locality.

d) Guidance and Counseling

- ✧ To solve emotional and personal problems of distance learners, a distance education providing institution needs to have a guidance and counseling system so do both institutions under study. This can be done, institutions are recommended, by creating a separate guidance and counseling service or by training tutors to play the role of guidance and counselors.

4. The Practice of Assessment and Feedback

a) Tutor Marked Assignments and Feedback

- ✧ Assessment and feedback in distance learning is crucial for it helps to measure and improve learners' progress. To this end, concerned bodies of both institutions are advised to incorporate other assessment devices like assessment by portfolio, online assessment, etc.
- ✧ Tutor marked assignments, one of the most widely used assessment devices in distance learning, are useful for not only they motivate distance learners to study but also prepare them for exam. To this end, no matter what problems face, the concerned bodies in BDU should resume sending of tutor marked assignments.

- ✦ Provision of adequate information on when and how to submit assignments and timely and proper evaluation and commenting of assignments are crucial activities to reap the potential benefits associated with tutor marked assignments. To this end, concerned bodies in AUC should find alternative and convenient media like email, mail, phone to announce the date and procedure of submitting assignments. Existence and extensive utilization of various media also help timely submission and sending of properly commented assignments to learners on time.

b) Exams and Feedback

- ✦ Since distance learners come from different backgrounds, systems should be flexible in a way that they meet their learners demand. To this end, concerned bodies of both institutions are recommended to make prior need assessment while preparing the exam schedule.
- ✦ Besides students result is dependent on the proper preparation of exam questions. To this end concerned bodies in BDU are advised to revise their exam questions by incorporating different type of question items and making them capable of measuring the learning contents of the course.
- ✦ Last but not least, since the situation and setting where exam conducted affect students results, both institutions are recommended to prepare exam halls with adequate light and ventilation and adequate seats per students number.

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Alpha University College Distance Education Program Leaflet

Bahir Dar University Distance Education Program Leaflet

Appendix - A

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

School of Graduate Studies

College of Education

Department of Curriculum and Teachers Professional Development Studies

Adult and Lifelong Learning Unit

Questionnaire to be filled by Distance Students

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information on the practice of tertiary level distance education in private and public higher education institutions of Ethiopia. To achieve its purpose your genuine responses are crucial. All the information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and only be used for this research purpose.

Thank you in Advance

Direction

1. Do not write your name.
2. Please put the mark **X** for optional questions
3. Except for question mutually exclusive alternatives (yes or no), you may give more than one answer to questions if you think it should be so.
4. For open ended questions, please give your responses concisely and in legible hand writing.
5. Pleasing, never leave any question unresponded.

PERSONAL DATA

Sex: a) Male b) Female

Age: a) 18-25 b) 26-30 c) 31-35 d) 36-40 e) above 40

Employment Status: a) Employed b) Unemployed

SECTION 1: ISSUES RELATED TO MODES OF DELIVERY

1. Which media does your institution utilize in the distance education program?(more than one answer is possible)
 - a. Print/modules
 - b. Video
 - c. Audio-Video
 - d. ICT
2. If your answer to the above question is a, where do you get the module?
 - a. Distance education center
 - b. Via tutors
 - c. Via courier
 - d. Via mail box
 - e. Online
3. If your answer to question 2 is A, is the module distribution method convenient to you?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. If your answer to question3 is No, what problems did you encounter? (more than one answer is possible)
 - a. Delay of modules
 - b. Remoteness of distance education centers
 - c. Shortage/incomplete of modules
 - d. Bureaucracy in the center
 - e. Required to pay additional fee
 - f. Other, please specify-----

**SECTION 2: ISSUES RELATED TO QUALITY OF DITSNCE
LEARNING MATERIALS**

The following 14 questions are supposed to measure the quality of distance learning materials/modules of your institution. Please answer all questions by putting a tick mark in the appropriate grid

No	ITEM	NO	YES
1	Are learning outcomes clearly stated in the modules?		
2	Do your modules provide you with study advice?		
3	Are they written in friendly manner?		
4	Do your modules have adequate of examples?		
5	Do your modules provide you with lots of activities with feedbacks?		
6	Are the contents of modules arranged in a logically sequenced manner??		
7	Do your modules have an indication of time?		
8	Do your modules have structured spaces so that you can write the responses of the activities?		
9	Do your modules have the necessary illustrations, pictures and diagrams?		
10	Do your modules have self marked progress tests?		
11	Is the language level of your module appropriate to your level?		
12	Are your modules written with the consideration of the contexts in which you live?		
13	Are your modules free from any racial, cultural or sexist stereotyping?		
14	Are your modules durable and portable?		

SECTION 3: ISSUES RELATED TO LEARNERS SUPPORT SYSTEM

3.1. *Issues Related to the Availability and Adequacy of Administrative Support*

1. Do you get administrative support from your institution?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. If your answer to question 1 is yes, what type are they? (more than one answer is possible)
 - a. Information on registration process
 - b. Information on academic fee
 - c. Information on start and end of course
 - d. Information on institutional rules and regulations
 - e. Information on rights and responsibilities of learners
 - f. Other, please specify-----
3. When do you get the administrative support?
 - a. whenever you ask
 - b. by the time of registration
 - c. Other, please specify-----
4. How do you get the administrative supports?
 - a. Phone
 - b. Email
 - c. leaflets/broachers
 - d. mass media
 - e. Other, please specify-----
5. Do you generally find the administrative support of the institution adequate to your learning?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

6. If your answer for the above question is No, why? (more than one answer is possible)
- a. There are no adequate staff
 - b. Administrative staffs are reluctant to help
 - c. The communication line is not working
 - d. Other, please specify-----

3.2 *Issues Related to Face to Face Tutorial Contacts*

1. Do you get face to face tutorial contacts?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. If your answer to question 1 is yes, how many tutorial contacts do you get for a course in a semester?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4 and above
3. Do you think the tutorial contacts are adequate?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. Do you find tutorial contacts significant to your learning?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. Do you get advance information on tutorial schedule?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. If your answer for question 5 is yes, how do you get the information?
 - a. Institutions notice board
 - b. Mass media
 - c. Personal message from the institution
 - d. Other, please specify-----
7. Based on you answer for question 6, is the method convenient to you?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. If your answer for question 1 is yes, when does the library gives service?
 - a. Weekends
 - b. Working days
 - c. During face to face tutorial contacts
 - d. Other, please specify-----
3. Based on your response to the above question, is the opening time convenient for you?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. If your answer for question 1 is No, did you encounter problem in your leaning?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. If your answer for question 5 is No, why?
 - a. You can use other libraries at your nearby
 - b. The modules are enough by themselves
 - c. Other, please specify-----

3.4 Learners response to the Availability and Adequacy of guidance and counseling Services

1. Do you get guidance and counseling services at your institution?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. If your answer for question 1 is yes, what type is it? (more than one answer is possible)
 - a. Counseling on your personal problems
 - b. Advise on how to study
 - c. Advise on how to prepare for exam
 - d. Advise on career and further study
 - e. Other, please specify-----
3. When do you get the above guidance and counseling service?
 - a. Whenever you ask
 - b. During face to face tutorial contact
 - c. Other, please specify-----

4. If your answer for question 3 is A, how do you get? (more than one answer is possible)
- a. Phone
 - b. Email
 - c. mail/post
 - d. Other, please specify-----
5. Do you generally think the guidance and counseling service of your institution adequate?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

SECTION 4: ISSUES RELATED TO ASSESMENT AND FEEDBACK

4.1 Issues related to Assignment and Feedback

1. How many tutor marked assignments are you given in a semester?
- a. None
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3 and above
2. If your answer to the above question is A the number tutor marked assignments?
- a. Excessive
 - b. Adequate
 - c. Inadequate
3. Do you find assignments significant to your learning?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
4. If your answer for question 3 is Yes, they are because?(more than one answer is possible)
- a. They have motivational value
 - b. Prepare you for final exam
 - c. Other, please specify-----

4.2 Issues related to Exam and Feedback

1. When do you sit for exams?
 - a. On the schedule fixed by the institution
 - b. Whenever you are ready or choose
 - c. Other, please specify-----
2. If your answer for question 1 is A, is the time convenient for you?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. If your answer for question 2 is No, it is because(more than one answer is possible)
 - a. Exam schedule conflicts with your work
 - b. Exam schedule conflicts with your family responsibility
 - c. Exam schedule conflicts with your religion
 - d. Other, please specify-----
4. Do you think the number of questions in exam cover the learning contents of the course
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. Which type of question items mostly appear in your exams? (more than one answer is possible)
 - a. True/False
 - b. Multiple Choice
 - c. Matching
 - d. Fill in the Blank
 - e. Essay
 - f. Other, please specify-----
6. Are the questions in the exam clear and simple to understand with no typographic error
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. Is the time allotted for exam adequate?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

8. Are the mark of each question in your exam quantified
- a. Yes b. No
9. Do you find the exam hall convenient?
- a. Yes b. No
10. If your answer to question 10 is No, what problems did you encounter? (more than one answer is possible)
- a. Broken desks
- b. Crowdedness
- c. No ventilation/light
- d. Other, please specify-----
11. Do you think all of the exams are properly administered?
- a. Yes b. No
12. If your answer for question 11 is No, what problems did you observe? (more than one answer is possible)
- a. Loose security of exams
- b. Leniency of invigilators
- c. Loose security of answer sheets
- d. Unfair marking of exams
- e. Other, please specify-----
13. Do you get your exam papers evaluated back?
- a. Yes b. No
14. If your answer for question 13 is Yes, within what time do you get them?
- a. After 15 days
- b. After 1 month
- c. After 2 month
- d. Other, please specify-----
15. Are your exam papers properly commented and evaluated?
- a. Yes b. No

16. Is there any opportunity to appeal for your results?

a. Yes

b. No

17. Does your institution provide you with a chance for re -exam?

a. Yes

b. No

Appendix - B

Interview Guide with Center Coordinators

Objective

The objective of this interview guide is to gather relevant data for the study on a comparative study of the practice of tertiary distance education in selected public (Bahir Dar University) and private (Alpha University College) higher education institutions of Ethiopia. To achieve its purpose, your genuine responses are crucial and all the information you provide will be used for this research purpose only.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

1. Would you please tell me:
 - 1.1. your age-----
 - 1.2. educational qualification-----
 - 1.3. Have you ever attended any training on distance education? If yes, in what area and for how long?
2. Could you please tell me the institutional history, admission policy, academic fee, etc of your institution?
3. What type of media does your institution utilize in the distance program? And why you choose such media?
4. What approach do you use to distribute course materials to your learners? Why you chose such method? Do you think the method is convenient to your learners?
5. What type of learner support services do you provide to your distance learners? Are they adequate?
6. Could you please tell me the assessment and feedback practice of your institution?
7. Is there anything you want to add with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of your institution?

Appendix - C

Interview Guide with tutors

Objective

The objective of this interview guide is to gather relevant data for the study on a comparative study of the practice of tertiary distance education in selected public (Bahir Dar University) and private (Alpha University College) higher education institutions of Ethiopia. To achieve its purpose, your genuine responses are crucial and all the information you provide will be used for this research purpose only.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

1. Would you please tell me:
 - 1.1 your age-----
 - 1.2 educational qualification-----
 - 1.3 Have you ever attended any training on distance education? If yes, what in what area and for how long? On what basis are you employed?
2. What major tasks do you accomplish as a tutor?
3. How do you evaluate the course materials of the institution in terms of its content, structure and organization?
4. What challenges did you face while conducting face to face tutorial sessions?
5. Is there anything you want to add with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of the institutions distance program?

Appendix - D

Tutorial classroom Observation checklist

Date.....

Name of tutorial Center -----

No of Attendants: Male.....

Female.....

<i>No</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
1	<i>Convenience of tutorial centers</i>		
	a. Are there adequate desks?		
	b. Is the room well ventilated?		
	c. Is there adequate light?		
2	<i>Tutors Role</i>		
	a. Lecturing contents of the module		
	b. Guidance and counseling learners		
	c. Answering students questions		
	d. Do tutors have adequate time to cover their lesson?		
3	<i>Learners Activity during tutorials</i>		
	a. Do they ask questions?		
	b. Do they participate in answering questions?		
	c. Are they punctual?		

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been dully acknowledged.

Name: *Tamara Kondenev*

Signature: 

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university advisor

Name: *Dr. Debu Wirthu*

Signature: 

Date of Approval: *20.02.09*