

**AN ASSESSMENT OF CONSTRAINTS OF DISTANCE
LEARNERS: THE CASE OF ALPHA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
AT ADDIS ABABA BRANCH**

BY

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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

The following acronyms and abbreviations are used as meant in the study.

AAU	Addis Ababa University
AUC	Alpha University College
ACDS	Alpha College of Distance Studies
BPR	Business Processing Re-engineering
DAE	Department of Adult Education
EMA	Educational Media Agency
ESDP	Educational Sector Development Program
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
IAU	International Association of Universities
ICCE	International Council on Correspondence Education
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
IICBA	International Institute for Capacity Building for Africa
MOE	Ministry of Education
PHEIs	Private Higher Education Institutions.
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region
UNESCO	United Nation Educational, Science and Cultural Organization
UNISA	University of South Africa

Abstract

The main objective of this study was to assess constraints of degree level distance learners in ACDS at Addis Ababa branch. To conduct this study, descriptive survey research design was employed. The subjects of this study were chosen using simple random and stratified random sampling procedures. To get the necessary data, questionnaire were administered to 273 sample distance learners and interviews were conducted with 15 course tutors, 5 coordinators and 3 administrators of ACDS. Besides, document inventory was made. Data analysis were made by using statistical tools such as percentages, frequencies and weighted mean to identify whether there were differences or agreement in the views of the respondents regarding the various variables. Accordingly, the analysis based on the data revealed that majority of distance learners have personal constraints such as lack of study skill, feeling of isolation and lack of motivation. Particularly, 66.8 per cent of the respondents reported that they lacked the ability to use different approaches and techniques for learning and study respectively. As to feeling of isolation of the respondents during their distance study, 63.5 per cent of the respondents asserted that they felt isolated from a teacher during their distance study. Regarding respondents motivation towards their learning, the study revealed that most of distance learners in ACDS in Addis Ababa are externally motivated. Problems identified by respondents which were related to course/instructional materials include: lack of clear indication of any prerequisite knowledge or skill for the course (68.9%), the instructional materials were not cater for different learning preferences (66.4%), the instructional materials were not visually attractive(56.4%). Besides, the study indicated that inadequate student support services, limited instructional media and inappropriate assessment methods were some of the institutional problems of distance learners. Moreover, inability to adjust job and family responsibilities with the study, financial constraints and negative attitude of the society towards distance education in general and towards learners in particular were identified as constraints of distance learners at ACDS in Addis Ababa. Thus, we can infer that personal, institutional and socio-economic constraints affect the success of distance learners at ACDS in Addis. Therefore, it is recommended that the institution should give emphasis on quality of course materials and instructional methods to motivate learners, prepare study guidelines to solve some of lack of study skills of learners, increase the interaction between learners and tutors as well as among learners to reduce feeling of isolation during their study. Besides, the institution should develop programs and services to enhance its academic status and social credibility by giving emphasis for the achievements of its educational programs and the fulfillment of learners need.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Education is a paramount importance to a nation and to humanity is beyond any doubt. Accordingly, the FDRE government is placing a particular emphasis on education with the firm belief that the long-term development of the country rests upon the expansion of quality education (MOE, 2005: 5). In addition to this, well-trained and qualified work force equipped with modern managerial, technical, research and leadership capacities play an indispensable role for the speedy development of competitive industries in the country.

However, the resources available for the development of knowledge and skilled work force is far from evenly distributed in developing countries (like Ethiopia); education has a far-reaching social impact (UNESCO, 2000). Under such conditions, it is unrealistic to expect traditional education structure and only the public sector alone to provide an adequate basis for knowledge development and production of skilled manpower.

Believing in that, the current government allowed non-formal education and training programs to be organized by various development and societal institutions in coordination with the Ministry of Education (MOE, 1994:26). The government is also encouraging private investors in tertiary education. As a result, nowadays with many field of studies government and private institutions participate in the delivery of distance education throughout the country. At present, human resource development will take first priority to take our country out of the current low level of development to an accelerated and sustained development. It is clearly stated in different policies and strategies that there is a need to build the capacity of the economically active human power (the youth and the adult) through education and training in order to increase productivity (MOE, 2008:3).

In a country like Ethiopia, with widely scattered population, more than eighty per cent of whom live in rural areas, and many of them without direct access to conventional

educational facilities, distance education has enormous potential to reach out to remote areas and to bring them in touch with education (MOE, 2005:39). Moreover, distance education promotes self-teaching and learning process to achieve specific educational objectives with greater geographical coverage than traditional face-to-face systems of education.

Despite these promises and obvious advantages of distance learning, there are problems that need to be resolved. According to Sweet (1986), problems and barriers encountered by distance learners fall into several distinct categories as personal, institutional and organizational. Sweet further specified problems like quality of instruction, hidden costs, and misuse of technology, feedback and teacher contact, student support and services, alienation and isolation and lack of experience as factors for distance students' failure.

As Perraton (2004:69) stated, it is a commonly known fact that the success rate among students of distance education is lower than that of conventional education system. Attrition rate is high and completion is poor compared with that of on-campus (Rumble, 1992:187). Perraton (1993:322) elicited a number of causes for failures of distance learners; financial constraints; and conditions not conducive to private study associated with family problems, long distances coupled with unreliable transport, and unfavorable demands at the place of work.

In the final analysis of the performance of any educational system, we can look at graduates as the outcomes of the system. Thus, what factors affect students in the teaching learning process is fundamental for any educational system. However, research studies into this area in distance education are rare. According to Mwakawago (1970:316), 'almost all the literature on correspondence education has concerned on the philosophy, methodology and administration; shying away from a very important and crucial area-the student'. Similarly, Perraton (2004:70) states that most studies in distance education focus on technology in andragogy or in the management of distance education systems. Very few studies touch on the effectiveness and success of distance learners. Thus, the question of why some students successfully study through distance education and others do not is becoming increasingly important as distance education moves from a

marginal to an integral role in provision of post-secondary education (Perraton, 2004). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess constraints that affect the success of distance learners at ACDS in Addis Ababa branch.

1. 2. Statement of the Problem

Distance education in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon. Currently within many fields of studies, government and private institutions participate in the provision of distance education. Because of their situational and functional limitations, most of the government higher education institutions are unable to accommodate distance education students (Yalew, 2004). Hence, the provision of educational opportunity through distance learning at hand is well established in Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) like AUC.

Alpha College of Distance Studies (ACDS) is the pioneer private distance education institution in Ethiopia. It was established in 1981 with a major objective of offering vocational and technical training to those Ethiopians who had no opportunity to attend regular and extension classes (AUC, 2005:1). The Ministry of Education recognized it originally as Institute of National Vocational and Technical Distance Education. Initial courses offered from 1981 to 1992 were short term training courses that led to certificates. Between 1992 and 2001, the institution provided diploma programs in Accounting and Management then in others. With the successful operation of its certificate, diploma and degree programs over 27 years since then, ACDS has now grown to Alpha University College (AUC). Nowadays the College of Distance Studies of AUC is offering distance education in more than 70 fields of studies (Eshetu, 2006). Without doubt, private institutions like AUC provide crucial service to the nation as the country struggles to increase access by giving chance for those who cannot attend regular programs.

However, according to Yalew (2004), distance learners in PHEIs faced a variety of problems that are categorized as personal, institutional and organizational. Moreover, Fisseha (2006) affirmed that lack of training, absence of various learning media, absence of close follow up to meet learners' interest were found to be some of the major hindering factors in the successful provision of distance education programs in private institutions.

Similarly, Tesfaye (2007) based on his study on Alpha and St. Mary's distance colleges in Addis Ababa, stated that the majority of the respondents from both colleges commented that there is insignificant or no tutorial support at all. Along the same line, Eshetu (2006) indicated that courses have not satisfied expectations, course materials were not delivered in time, tutorial programs were failed at times and evaluation may not have been fair as constraints of distance learners in ACDS. Moreover, from the researcher own experience as a supervisor of examinations of distance student in ACDS in different part of the country, he observed that distance students have various personal and socio-economic constraints as well.

Therefore, this study measured by a dependant variable, distance learners' success at ACDS. Out of several independent variables, that influenced the success of distance learners personal problems, institutional constraints and socio-economic constraints were considered in this study. To this end, the study attempts to answers the following basic questions:

1. What are the personal factors that affect the success of distance learners in ACDS?
2. To what extent do institutional factors influence the performance of distance learners in ACDS?
3. What are the socio-economic factors affecting distance students' success in ACDS?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General Objective

The main objective of this study is to assess the extent of personal, institutional and socio-economic constraints that influence the success of distance learners in ACDS.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

Based upon the problems to be investigated, the following specific objectives have been aimed at to be answered in the course of the study.

- To explore out personal factors that influence distance learners' success in ACDS.

- To examine the institutional learning in ACDS.
- To identify the socio-economic constraints that affect the success of distance learners in ACDS.
- To suggest possible solution to deal with the problems.

1.4. Significances of the Study

Private Higher Educational Institutions (PHEIs) are actively involved in distance education programs in various fields of study and contribute for the development of education in the country. Accordingly, AUC envisions on Ethiopian Higher Education scene realizable through open-distance (and eventually electronic) learning thereby increasing access to relevant and quality, affordable, cost-effective and flexible education and training (Eshetu, 2006). Despite all these initiatives and efforts, distance students in PHEIs faced various problems. Therefore, this study assesses constraints of distance learners in AUC. In this regard, the study may have the following contributions.

- It helps policy makers and implementers as reference in the area of distance education.
- It provides the institution (AUC) with adequate information and feedback that enable it to revise and recognize its degree distance education program based on the needs and interests of distance learners.
- It suggests solution for the major constraints of distance learners.
- The finding of this research may stimulate other researchers to conduct further study in this area and it may serve as source of review literature.

1.5. Delimitation of the study

The study was restricted to degree level distance learners of ACDS. Out of more than 15 branches of the College of Distance Studies of AUC, the study was delimited to the Addis Ababa branch for its manageability. The study was also delimited by personal, institutional and socio-economic constraints that affect distance learners success in their study. Moreover, the conclusions that were drawn concerned only degree level distance learners of ACDS in Addis Ababa branch.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

In conducting this study, the researcher faced problems, which contributed to the limitation of the study. First, the students in the cohort were all at different stages of their studies, with some at the beginning and others nearing the end. The varying levels of experience with the institution may, therefore, influence both the needs and levels of satisfaction of individual students. Secondly, financial constraint has a role in limiting the scope and depth of the study. Finally yet importantly shortage of literatures on constraints of distance learners, particularly in Ethiopian context has its contribution to the limitation of the study.

1.7. Operational Definition of Terms

Assessment: means the process by which as many data as possible are gathered and used to evaluate constraints of distance learners in ACDS.

Constraint: refers to a cause or determiner that underlies and influences performance and success of distance learners in ACDS.

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

Distance learner/student: refers to an individual whose all learning activities that are carried out where and when separated from the learning organization and the teachers for much of the learning process.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

A number of researchers and educators have made much effort in assessing constraints of distance learners. Accordingly, there is a range of literature dealing with the general problems, which might affect the success of distance learners. In this chapter, literatures that are relevant to the study will be discussed. The presentation will be made under the following two headings: overview of distance education, which focuses on definition, rationale and history of distance education and constraints of distance learners.

2.1. Distance Education: An Overview

2.1.1. Definition

Distance education has different names given to it by different authorities in different countries. According to Manjulika and Reed (1996), the terms 'distance education' and 'Home study' are used in Europe and a few places in Canada and USA; 'Independent study' is used in North America; 'off campus study' in Australia, the pacific region, and South Eastern Asian countries; and Extra-mural system in New Zealand; etc. This implies that alongside the alarming growth of literature about open and distance learning there is a 'meta-literature' about its terminology (Perraton, 2000:13). However, the generic term 'distance education' is used for all parallel systems to formal schooling and training (Zenebe, 2005:74-75).

The definition of distance education has been approached from various points of view and the emphasis has been in different elements of distance education and terminologies depending on who has formulated the definition (Perraton, 1991:14). According to Finland Ministry for Foreign Affair (1998:7), the following different elements form the basis of definitions:

- distance education in relation to traditional education
- focus on independent study
- focus on technology
- distance education as an industrial model

- structural approach
- distance education as a system

Accordingly, there are so many definitions given to distance education by different authors. For instance, Perraton (1982:4; 1991:14; 2000:13) defines distance education as “an educational process in which a significant portion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner”. Holmberg cited in Guri-Rosenblit (1999:34) defined distance education as characterized by non-contiguous communication. “The term distance education covers the various forms of study at all levels which are not under the immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture room or in on the same premises but which, nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and teaching of a support organization.” However, Desmond Keegan developed the definitions of distance education by combining the summary of different approaches. He forwarded the following defining elements of distance learning. Distance education is a form of education characterized by:

- the quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the length of learning process.
- the influence of an educational organization both in the planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of student support service.
- the use of technical media (print, audio, video or computer) to unite teacher and learner and carry out the content of the course.
- the provision of two way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue.
- the quasi-permanent absence of the learning group throughout the length of the learning process so that people are usually taught as individuals and not in groups, with the possibility of occasional meetings for both didactic and socialization purposes (Keegan, 1996:50).

Keegan's formulation is a useful one and which appears to have been generally accepted by researchers, although criticized by Garrison (1990) as being too narrow (Sampson, 2003:104).

2.1. 2. The Rationale for Distance Education

There are different reasons that are considered for the emergence of distance education. With sudden increase of population, where people are widely scattered and living at a distance could automatically be a problem to manage such groups at specified centers is one of them (Tesfaye, 2007:17). However, scattered communities, large geographical areas and difficulty of organizing a face-to-face teaching are not the only or the necessary reason to establish distance education (Rawson-Jones, 1973; cited in Amera, 2003:76). He claimed that there are countries that do not have these problems, but use distance education intensity. Therefore, distance education has emerged as an education form.

At the 9th ICCE conference Michael G. Moore submitted a paper in which he stated: "Apart from the expansion of correspondence study as forecast by sociologists and economists it will be more in demand for truly educational reasons (Lijosa, 1975:177), because there are educational needs of society that the traditional curriculum could not and cannot satisfy. In the same vein, Ejeta (2005:13) stated that following the development of technology and different field of knowledge, educational needs of human being are increasingly growing. In order to satisfy these needs of education now it is becoming apparent that the conventional organizations are actively encouraging the use of distance education as alternative means for provision of education. Therefore, distance education was, and is, a means of providing education, based on a belief in the value of education for its own sake and for professional promotion and for improving social status (Holmberg, 1981:40).

Moreover, as Keegan (1996: 211-212) stated 'the rationale for distance education does not lie in the notion that there is something wrong with conventional education that distance education should correct'. Rather many of the contemporary evaluations of distance education and its role in the future educational provision are quite favorable. In addition to that, Berg (2005:1010) stated that while correspondence instruction was seen

as a way of either augmenting the traditional university education or leading students into traditional degree programs, it was never seen as a replacement. In line with this idea, Elliot (1990:10) stated that distance education almost came to be considered an education project in itself, instead of a strategy for education projects.

To answer the reasons for the increasing importance of open and distance learning, Perraton (2004:18) gives emphasis for four things as a driver of the process. These are:

- desire to widen access;
- an intention to strength education in the interests of the economy;
- technological opportunities; and
- the hope of containing cost.

Currently, while teaching in a distance is being used in many countries in the world, there is a grater need for such a program in developing countries like ours to expand educational opportunities to cover a larger proportion of the population. According to Kabawasa and Kaunda (1973:4), several nations in Africa realized the importance of correspondence education as valuable contribution to nation building in solving the difficult problems of expanding educational opportunities for all citizens. To support this idea, Perraton (1982:9) stated that in many African countries, it was clear that the expansion of schools, within the limits imposed by finance and by the supply of teachers, could not meet the demand for education, even a generation or more. Thus, the experience of multimedia distance teaching was seen as immediately relevant to the educational needs of the third world. This implies that, despite developing and developed countries are using distance education, because of the increasing demand of the various sectors for trained manpower, developing countries need to run distance education extensively and effectively.

Wossenu and Befekadu (1999:19) refer to other studies (Kuhana, 1981; Forman and Richardson, 1977; Srisa-Au, 1981) provided the following rationales for using distance education as an alternative approach.

- *Developing countries need trained manpower to carry out their social and economic activities, and the opportunities for education in the traditional system are limited. Thus, a complementary approach to traditional system of training manpower should be the focus of attention in order to alleviate the problem.*
- *There is a high need for the vast majority of working people to have access to education on the extensive and equalitarian basis and at the same time to have a career opportunity available throughout life. Thus, distance education can reach wider student audiences and meet the needs of students who are unable to attend on-campus classes.*
- *There is a marked increase in cost-effectiveness, particularly in capital expenditure. A distance learning system is potentially more cost effective than the conventional system while teaching similar subject matter to a massive and ever increasing number of people who are widely dispersed and of low density.*

From this, we can conclude that distance education is a model of addressing education for those who for various reasons cannot get an opportunity for face-to-face instruction. In this regard, Holmberg (1981:39) asserted that the 'gate-keeper' function of formal schooling qualifications makes distance education vitally important for anybody eager to rise socially to pass the social barriers. Moreover, compared to the traditional face-to-face institution, distance education is accessible to wider audiences in a very short time, with relatively cheaper resources, and in a more effective manner.

2.1.3. History of Distance Education

2.1.3.1. Genesis

The history of distance education begins with correspondence education (Jenkins and Koul, 1991:6). As long as human beings have been able to read and write, they have sent useful and educational information to each other by means of letters, i.e. they have corresponded with each other. According to Guri-Rosenblit (1999:2), examples of an intensive exchange of letters for educational purposes have been known since ancient times while Plato and Cicero corresponded with their students.

The modern story of organized correspondence education, however, begins in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. According to Manjulika and Reed (1996:165), the earliest record of distance education has been found in 'The Boston Gazette' of 20 March, 1728, in which 'Caleb Philipps, Teachers of the New Method of short hand' advertises

that any 'person in the country eager to learn this Art, may by having the several lessons sent weekly to them, be as perfectly instructed as those that living in Boston.'

As Dodds (1991:7) stated, just like other human beings inventions, correspondence education began in several countries almost about the same time. In Sweden, first Meüller in the 1830s and then, more significantly, Hans Hermonds began to provide continuing education to students who had left their schools by sending them lessons by letter. In England, Isacc Pitman followed a similar pattern at about the same time. In the USA, Anna Eliot Ticknor, the daughter of a Harvard professor found the first correspondence instruction program in 1873 (Berg, 2005:1007).

By the end of the 19th century, several publicly funded institutions along with private colleges offering correspondence education had come into existence in many European countries and the USA (Manjulika and Reed, 1996:165). After the Revolution in Russia, one of the priorities of the revolutionary government was to increase education, from literacy to university levels. Therefore, correspondence education was rapidly attached to the task of expansion (Perraton, 1991:16).

In the second decade of twentieth century, Australia and New Zealand turned to correspondence education, in the public sector, to help to provide education to remote students. According to Manjulika and Reed (1996:166), distance education at tertiary level in Australia dated as far back as 1911 when the University of Queensland entered the fields of correspondence education.

Distance education took deep roots in several countries in the 1930s. The founding of the International Council of Correspondence Education (ICCE) in 1938 in Canada supported by the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Scotland showed that the idea got emphasis of the educationalists throughout the world (Erdos, 1970:126). In 1939, the French government established the government correspondence college, the Center National De Tele-Enseignement, to providing education to school children.

After the Second World War, the method of correspondence education was adopted to suit the particular educational needs and requirements of countries in the Afro-Asian

regions and elsewhere. The University of South Africa established in 1873 as the University of the Cape of Good Hope played very important role in the educational system of the country. It started teaching at a distance in 1946. In 1962 it was officially established as a distance teaching university through a government decree. This led the University of South Africa (UNISA) to be the first full-fledged autonomous distance teaching university (Guri-Ronseblit, 1999:4).

By 1960s, distance education considered as viable to supplement the conventional system of education and gained further recognition (Manjulika and Reed, 1996:167). The need for educational expansion led to the introduction of correspondence education in many Third world countries soon after they achieved their independence (Manjulika and Reed, 1996:167; Dodds, 1991:3; Finland Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1998:9). In India, since 1960s many universities have opened correspondence course departments both at pre-degree and degree level.

In 1970s, the great success of British Open University has enhanced the image of distance education (Knox, 1993:163; Guri-Rosenblit, 1999: 4). It also contributed to change the name of the International Council for Correspondence Education in 1982 to the International Council of Distance Education (Wossenu and Befekadu, 1999:18; Fisseha, 2006). By 1975, Open Universities of one kind or another had been set up in Canada, Germany, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, Spain and Thailand. In the late 1990s, there are over thirty open universities while a far large number of conventional universities have established open learning programs; with students numbered in tens and hundreds of thousands (Perraton, 2000:84).

2.1.3.2. Historical Development of Distance Education in Ethiopia

Although distance education is a popular and widely used concept in most of the developed and developing countries, it is still at an infancy stage in Ethiopia. One of the reasons for this could be lack of awareness about the contributions of distance education (Wossenu and Befekadu, 1999:16).

At the beginning of the 19th Century, when formal schooling introduced in the country it was challenged by insufficient and unqualified personnel (Fisseha, 2006:9). Hence, the then government took measures, among which introduction of distance education was the one. According to Tesfaye (2002:26), the initiatives to launch the distance education program in Ethiopia have stemmed from both government and private institutions.

I. Government Initiatives

The Educational Media Agency (EMA) of the Ministry of Education (MOE), traces its origin to the Audio-visual center established 1952/53 (Tilson and Demissew, 2002). The Center developed, produced and distributed audio-visual teaching aids, and even had a mobile team that traveled to villages and schools to show films and slides. In 1965, a year after the introduction of television in the country, television became the first technology for broadcasting educational programs using the facilities of the Ministry of Information. In 1969, EMA started broadcasting from its own studio. Later in 1971, educational radio broadcasting was initiated after in humble experiment using audiocassette programs in a prison in Addis Ababa (Tilson and Demissew, 2000).

In 1967, in response to the repeated demands made by different section of the society, the Addis Ababa University and Ministry of Education jointly planed to develop senior secondary correspondence courses (DAE, 1980:2). Based on this agreement, the correspondence study unit was established under the supervision of the Extension Division of Addis Ababa University until November 1976 (DAE, 1980; Tesfaye, 2002; Fisseha, 2006). However, after 1976 the department wholly and officially transformed to the MOE. Then the department (in the ministry of adult and continuing education) was responsible for the running of distance education for about eighteen years until it was eventually transferred to EMA in 1994 (DAE, 1980; Yalew, 2004).

In 1999, the postgraduate level distance training about distance education initiated by IICBA. This was a step forward in creating trained manpower in the field of distance education. To meet this felt need, the AAU agreed to undertake M.Ed distance education programs. Accordingly, based on a memorandum of understanding signed between the Federal MOE and the AAU on April 7, 1999, the AAU has launched the M.Ed distance

education program in the Faculty of Education. The program had operational for four successive cohorts and terminated in 2003 (Amare, 2006:70).

In December 2000, the MOE launched an ambitious program to update the skills of 17,000 teachers to diploma level (UNESCO-IICBA, 2003). As a result, the program was named "project 17000" (Ejeta, 2005:2). It intended to upgrade the professional and academic qualification of teachers who are teaching in the second cycle primary (Grade 5-8) to diploma level. The program has been supported with a fund aided by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) through a sponsorship of Basic Education System Overhaul (BESO/USAID). Moreover, different government higher education institutions participated in the provision of distance education. Particularly the Ethiopian Civil Service College has started distance education program, which combines printed materials with innovative technology (UNESCO-IICBA, 2003).

II. Private and NGOs Initiatives

In this regard, the first pioneer was British Tutorial College (BTC), which was based in Kenya, had opened an office in Addis Ababa as early as 1967 and offered correspondence education courses in Ethiopia (Tesfaye, 2002). In 1969, NGO initiated distance education pilot program of a non-formal education nature started by Agri-Service Ethiopia (ASE) in the current Wolayita Zone of SNNPR. ASE emerged as a corporate body of the UNADES formation (African Institute for Social and Economic Development) which then organized and operated correspondence education to farmers and women in many West African countries (Tesfaye, 2002).

Following the Educational Policy and Training of the 1994, the government encouraged private investors in tertiary education (MOE, 2005). After that, some private higher institutions are actively involved in distance education programs in various fields of studies. Among them Alpha university college, St. Mary's university college, unity university college and Admas college are the few.

In collaboration with St. Mary's University College, the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) of India provides programs leading to a Post Graduate Diploma in

Distance Education (PGDDE) and Master of Arts through Distance Education (MADE). Besides, the University of South Africa (UNISA) launched its regional learning center distance program in Ethiopia in January 2007 in Addis Ababa. All these show that nowadays distance education has got attention by private and government institutions in the educational system of Ethiopia.

2.1.3.3. Historical Development of Alpha College of Distance Studies

The College of Distance Studies of AUC is the pioneer private distance education institution in Ethiopia. It established in 1981 with the major objective of offering vocational and technical training to those Ethiopians who had no opportunity to attend day and evening classes (Eshetu, 2006; AUC, 2005). This institution was accredited by the Ministry of Education and was known by the name National Vocational and Technical Distance Education Enterprise (AUC, 2005). Similarly, as Kabawasa (1999:19) cited in Tesfaye (2002:28) stated, "Its certificate is accredited by the Ministry of Education and equivalent to the then comprehensive high school vocational stream certificate."

The initial courses it offered from 1981 to 1992 were short-term training courses that led to certificates (Eshetu, 2006). Between 1992 and 2001 the institution provided diploma programs in Accounting, Auto-Mechanics, General Mechanics, Personnel Management, Banking and Insurance, Law, Secretarial Science and Office Management, Marketing Management, and Purchasing and Supplies Management (AUC, 2005). With this institution as its foundation, Alpha Educational and Training Share Company (AETSCO) was established in 1994 (AUC, 2005). In 2002 degree programs were launched first in Accounting and Management and then in Development Management, Law, Economics, Public Administration and Development Management, and Business Management (Eshetu, 2006).

In 2005, AUC established itself from this pioneer institution by involving highly experienced and committed scholars to promote the motto of relevant, quality and affordable education (Eshetu, 2006). Today, the College of Distance Studies of AUC is offering distance education in more than 70 fields of studies. With the successful

operation of its degree, diploma and certificate programs through distance learning, the College of Distance Studied has now developed a great deal of success and popularity among the public. Its success has been reflected in the high student enrolment and quality education services offered in its more than 18 branches and more than 85 coordination offices spread throughout the country and around 30 branches in abroad (Eshetu, 2006:5). In the past over 50,000 students graduated form ACDS. Today, ACDS has about 60,000 students. This indicates the contribution of Alpha in minimizing the acute shortage of medium and high level qualified personnel in the country.

According to AUC (2005:2), now ACDS is reorganized under three departments and four Offices. These include Learning Materials Development, Printing and Distribution Department; Branch Offices Administration and Tutorial Services Department; Examination Services and Result Consolidation Department; Teacher Education and Training Director's Office; Technical and Vocational Education and Training Director's Offices; Administration and Finance Affairs Office and the Registrar Office.

Moreover, as Eshetu (2006:8) affirmed, the future goals of the college of distance studies of AUC include diversification of the training programs; launching of post-graduate studies; improvement of the quality of services; promoting research, consultancy and publication activities; building the capacity of the college; and employing new technologies (e-learning) to server distance learners.

2.2 Constraints of Distance Learners

More than traditional students, distance learners are more likely to have insecurities about learning (Knapper, 1988). Problems and barriers encountered by distance students fall into several distinct categories: personal, institutional and socio-economic.

2.2.1. Personal Constraints

For adults, study may be a significant and important part of their lives, but it rarely moves beyond being one part, which they have to balance with other things in their lives. As Evans (1994:15) stated, distance learners in terms of cognitive ability, existing stock of knowledge, skills and values, previous experiences, worldly responsibilities, and so forth are typically much more diverse and complex. These directly or indirectly hinder their

study at a distance. Therefore, in the following sections the researcher tries to assess low previous educational level, lack of study skill, feeling of isolation and motivation as constraints of distance learners.

2.2.1.1. Previous Educational Background

According to Evans (1994:23), for most distance (adult) students, schooling is something which they left behind several years ago, but it is also not uncommon to have students who have left school relatively recently and others whose school experiences were as much as several decades ago. This implies that distance students with their varying previous educational background differ in their achievements in distance education programs.

McIntosh et al., (1989:54) cited in Yared (2000) point out that there are positive correlation between the level of previous education and both the persistence and achievement of distance students. Older and better-qualified students and students already familiar with intellectual work are related to higher rate of completion and better achievement. To support this idea, Rumble (1992:89) stated that students with higher previous educational qualifications tend to do better in distance education than those with poorer qualifications.

These all showed that, those distance students who had no good previous educational background are disadvantageous in distance education. However, we should be aware that measurement of previous learning involves the dimensions of time, level and relevance (Woodley and Ashby, 1994:20).

2.2.1.2. Lack of Study Skill

Educationalists firmly believe that one's success in learning a subject largely depends on how one organizes and or plans his study programs (Kebede, 1976:30). According to Jenkins and Koul (1991:99), distance educators not only stress the importance of study skills for distance learning, but also aim to provide detailed instructions in such skills, as poor study skills are certainly a handicap for distance learners. In their research, related to the students' lack of study skills, Schollosser and Anderson (1994) cited in Yared (2000)

reported that poor time management and procrastination of distance students are important factor related to their academic failure in distance education programs.

It is important to all students to acquire good reading habits, which enable them to learn quickly and memorize effectively. Particularly distance student who have not much chance to counter-balance their shortcomings in reading and study techniques by listening to lectures and discussions, a good technique of study is greater importance to them. Along the same line, Yared (2000:28) refer to different studies (Charp, 1994, Burnt and Bugbee, 1994) asserted that greater students' autonomy especially students' ability to work independently are reported to be crucial for success in distance education.

According to Robinson and Shakespeare (1995:107), writing a study guide for distance students implies that we are handling over much of the responsibility for directing study over to them. Therefore, we need to put ourselves very much in the place of a learner who goes to start from scratch. As Kebede (1976:30) stated, a study program is particularly important for distance learner because an adult learner's time is divided among several activities. However, only working out study schemes does not help much unless a student knows how to make effective use of them. Distance learning requires self-discipline, motivation, perseverance and a lot other duties.

2.2.1.3. Feeling of Isolation and Alienation

"Isolation" as used in relation to distance learners means the "lonely situation", while studying, and the "geographical distance" that exists between the distance learner, the tutor and the institution (Kebede, 1976:39). According to Keegan (1996:149), privatization of the study process and isolation from teacher and peer group remains the central distinctive feature of distance students. These constraints make studying at a distance a difficult task for those who cannot benefit from privacy.

The distance aspect of distance learning takes away much of the social interaction that would present to traditional learning environments. Geographical isolation has been identified as one of the major problems of distance students (Meacham and Evans, 1989). According to Wood (1996), in addition to the practical problems of contacting academic

and administrative staff, and obtaining study materials, distance students suffer from the disadvantages of being unable to interact with other students and are often denied the perception that they belong to a scholarly community. This may lead to feeling of inadequacy and insecurity, and lacks of confidence in their own abilities (Wood, 1996).

Bertels (1993) cited in Yared (2000:27) described the character of most students who fail in distance education programs as student who suffer from learning in isolation. According to Mills and Tait (1996) cited in Guri-Rosenblit (1999:64) distance higher education have been engaged over the past twenty years in sustained efforts to find and put in place support systems to counterbalance the 'depersonalization' of learning and teaching and to ease student alienation from peers and tutors.

As Guri-Rosenblit (1999:64) stated, many distance educators tend to exaggerate the separation of teacher and student, and equally to overlook the profound implication that arise from the absence of peer interaction. For distance student there is no peer group against which to judge themselves and their own personal reaction to the package of materials, which affect their success in their study. This has influence on their study. In the same vein, Keegan (1994:99) stated that distance students weakly integrated into the social system of the teaching institution and feel low involvement with it. Therefore, they are at risk to keep on their study.

In distance education, social presence can be a powerful tool in achievements of distance learners. Thus, even when learners are not having trouble, they are likely to want to share their interpretation of course materials (Thorpe, 1994:146). It helps students to understand student-tutor interaction and student-student interaction that are important in terms of student satisfaction. As Turner (1984:4) cited in Guri-Rosenblit (1999:29) stated, "There is no spell more powerful to recall the memories of college life than the word campus". This quotation implies that a campus embodies not only the distinctive physical qualifies of a university, but also its educational and social situations that distance students missing.

2.2.1.4. Motivation

According to Yared (2000: 27), studies that have confirmed student motivation to be one of the most decisive factors in determining academic performance/success in distance education programs are many. Motivation as a concept linked with learning and what people will do rather than what people can do. It is closely related to arousal, attention, anxiety, and feedback. In line with this idea, Walklin (1990) stated that motivation describes the arousal, control and sustaining of behavior necessary to satisfy a need or to attain a goal. He further claimed that a favorable attitude to learning could be developed in students provided they are motivated to achieve some goal that they have set themselves.

All learning requires a degree of motivation, self- discipline, and independence on behalf of the learner, but these aspects are more pertinent in the case of distance learning, where the student is largely self-directed and unsupervised, and expected to be more autonomous (Sampson, 2003:105). Student motivation is a key issue for the consideration of course planners. The awarding of accredited certificates may serve as a strong incentive but there are deeper problems confronting the isolated and thus easily discouraged distance students (Kabwasa and Kaunda, 1973:8). Therefore, motivation is decisive to keep distance student in the program, not to mention having them learn something successfully.

Focusing his research on the personal variables of distance students, Chacon-Dugue (1987:93) cited in Yared (2000:24) found that the level of learner motivation was a good predictor of student performance on distance education. In the same vein, Perraton (1982) asserted that for distance teaching to be effective, in the sense of retaining its students to the end of their course, they need to be highly motivated and to see the relevance of their studies to their own life and their own prospect. From this, we can infer that although motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic, intrinsic motivation is crucial for distance learners to be successful. In this regard, Boone stated that:

Motivation may be extrinsic or intrinsic...Although people can and do learn effectively with extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation is more effective in the continuation of learning and its retention over along period of time (Boone, 1985:112).

Similarly, as Knapper, et al., (2000:27-28) cited in Firdissa (2005:68) declared, learners outside the traditional system must be largely self or intrinsically motivated. From this, we can realize that extrinsic motivation is not sufficient to stimulate learning or even support acquisition of the necessary learning skills. According to Sparkes (1984) cited in Rumble (1992:28), knowledge is easy to present but will only be learnt by those who are motivated to learn. Therefore, it is easy for educational institutions to accept low completion rates as a function of students; lack of motivation and ability.

2.2.2. Institutional Constraints

According to Yared (2000), various research documents (Holmberg, 1989; Keegan, 1990; Verduin and Clark, 1991) have tried to identify the variables within a distance teaching institution that influence the academic success of its students. Among these in this section, the researcher tried to focus on instructional materials, mode of delivery, student support system and method of assessment as constraints of distance learners.

2.2.2.1. Instructional/Course Materials

Willis (1992) cited in Yared (2000:32) asserted that the effectiveness of the instructional materials is a very important variable for motivating distance students for better learning. It has been suggested that a correspondence course differ from a textbook in that it actually teaches on its own without relaying on oral clarification by an instructor (Holmberg, 1967:20). However, as Sewart (1980) cited in Keegan (1996:100) maintained that the needs of student learning at a distance demands an interactive mode in distance systems which hardly be supplied by the learning materials.

Success in distance education is dependent on sensitivity to the needs of students (Kabwasa and Kaunda, 1973:6). According to Perraton (1993:401), it is necessary not only develop courses which students can understand and enjoy but also maintaining their interest and motivation. The course developer should hope that the intrinsic interest and

worth of the subject matter would maintain the student enthusiasm. Similarly, Kebede (1976:11) stated that a course editor, while editing a course, must put himself in the position of correspondence students, that is, he must 'visualize' and 'anticipate' the various learning problems of study by correspondence courses. However, according to Robinson and Shakespeare (1995:35), in many distance courses materials student choices are highly constrained. These constraints are sometimes simply the product of tradition, to be precise, the way things needed to be in conventional courses.

White (1987) cited in Yared (2000) found that the organization of lessons in successive self-contained units (modules) promoted students' satisfaction with the course largely for it allows them to study each unit according to their self-adjusted and best suited flexible time. To support this idea, Holmberg (1967:12) stated that the idea behind the division of the material into study units is that the student should be offered a suitable quality of learning material at a time. So that he/she can regard the study of each unit as a separated task and can always survey the material to be learnt. The theory is that in this way it is possible to prevent the bulk of possibly difficult study material from intimidating him.

However, Chambers (1994:103) referred to other studies (Blacklock, 1976; Chambers, 1989) asserted that many distance learning courses found to be heavily overloaded. Therefore, the amount of work learners are expected to do critically affects the attitudes to distance courses, and their ability to complete them successfully.

The quality of the instructional materials that are used by the distance teaching institutions is found to affect the student persistence and achievement. The aspects of the instructional materials that have found to affect students performance are the successfulness of the materials in making most of their learning activities highly interactive and the materials' effectiveness in imposing a persuasive demand of active learning (Yared, 2000). In this regard, Borje Holmberg affirmed that:

It is not enough to teach the actual learning material, students' independence and critical judgment must be trained. For that reason it is advisable that correspondence schools should try stimulate students to trace information in books of various kinds, in periodic, etc by asking questions the answering of which requires parallel reading and stimulate doubts and inquisitiveness (Holmberg, 1967:25).

Similarly, using enough case studies and collaborative student projects, which are relevant to the life of the student, is repeatedly confirmed to be a major factor that determines the persistence and achievement of distance students.

It is a duty of a distance teaching institution to make the organization of a course as meaningful as possible (Kebede, 1976:10). Systematic arrangements of a course with neatness, consistency of language style and layout, good grammar and expression, accuracy in information and direction are among some of the responsibilities of an editor. To support this idea, Holmberg (1967:27) point out that all informative writing in distance course should be lucid, easy style with somewhat colloquial language and without unnecessarily abstract. On the other hand, the aesthetic aspects of the instructional materials should be considered as constraints of distance learners. In this regard, Robinson and Shakespeare (1995) sated that:

Like any other consumer object the aesthetic design of distance learning materials can add considerably to the pleasure of their use, and therefore increase the learners' motivation. If a text is pleasant to look at and handle then the learner will want to get it out from the cupboard and work with it (Robinson and Shakespeare, 1995:80).

As we can see from the above quotation, it is also important to give emphasis for visual aspect of the instructional materials as a constraint of distance learners.

2.2.2.2. Mode of Delivery

Lewis (1994:5-6) stated that, any one with experience of open distance learning planning knows that media selection has to begin with a consideration of the target learners.

Learners must be able to gain easy access to the media and to any necessary equipment. The creation of a learning centre will not be the answer, unless this is physically close to the learners and matches their lifestyle. Distance learning is more likely to be effective, if individual learners can make use of control over the media being used in order to interact with the educational content of the media (Kirkwood, 1994:70).

In all distance education programs, the distribution of course modules to students must be effective to attain a greater chance of success for student. As Mwakawago (1970:317-318) stated in all the countries in which correspondence instruction is used effectively as sound communication systems (good roads, regular railway connections and efficient postal services and telecommunications) are fulfilled. However, in Africa correspondence instruction was discouraged due to deficiency of the means of communications, so that the rate of dropout is significantly higher. Along the same line, Zenebe (2006:186) stated that given the low level of rural development in Ethiopia, the challenges posed by poor infrastructure supply (transport and communication) should be countered by some alternative means of distribution to benefit students.

According to Lewis (1994), the media issue is single out early on and the choice is made on technical potential rather than the likely circumstances of use. However, the past three decades are spent with the technological aspects of media applications designed carelessly of the needs of students and their tutors. Similarly, Kirkwood (1994) stated that the extent to which learners could control and interact with media technologies vary in a number of ways: the easy and flexibility of use, the level of interactivity and the extent to which dialogue is made possible. Factors such as these may have a bearing on the selection of media suitable for a particular purpose or group of learners. In the same vein, Woodley and Ashby (1994:20) asserted that the prospective student have access to equipment (phones, tape-recorders, video-recorders, computers, etc.,) on the courses is another factor that will affect how students react to courses or impact on the support offered to students.

Perraton (1982:25) asserted that both practice and theory confirmed that there are benefits for good teaching, and keeping up students' motivation, in using a variety of media. The

method of presentation needs to much the kind of knowledge. Thus, video, color slides, etc can be used for natural history; print for mathematical data; audio for music, etc., (Rumble, 1992:28). As Kabwasa and Kaunda (1973) lack of available materials, inefficient mailing systems, etc., are a frequently encountered problems in Africa, one which could be counter balanced by increasing library facilities including the provision of mobile libraries, a heavier reliance on study groups to circulate materials, and the development of educational tapes, slides and films.

2.2.2.3. Student Support System

Several researchers (Moore, 1987; Keegan, 1990; Manjulika and Reddy, 1996) cited in Yared (2003) confirmed that the quality of the learners' support system in a distance education program to be a decisive factor that determines student success in the program. However, as Ejeta (2005) stated, the quality of services that distance teaching universities offered to students with regard to material distribution, evaluation of assessment responses and turn-around time and academic counseling is gradually deteriorating.

According to Guri-Rosenblit (1999-25-26), it became evident that completion rate in distance teaching systems depending upon effective support mechanism. In line with this idea, Keegan (1996:151) stated that dropout in distance education can be solved by the provision of adequate support services. He further points out that where student support is not enough, students should understand that distance study might be constantly burdened with the risk of discrimination. Similarly, Melton (2002:129) asserted that, when students come across problems with their day-to-day studies they are likely to want immediate support. Nevertheless, if they have to wait for a tutorial at the end of the month to obtain answers to their questions, they are likely to feel very frustrated. Delaying answers/corrections of assignments and replies to question can diminish the motivation of students (Kebede, 1976:27).

Guri-Rosenblit (1999) posed that effective student support system is essential especially for students from disadvantage background. On the other hand, Rumble (1992:89) argued that 'while motivated, highly intelligent students, provided they have access to satisfactory and appropriate learning materials, the majority of distance students need

some degree of support with their studies'. To support this idea, Jenkins (2004:57) affirmed that learners in distance education tend to be those who fail to obtain places in formal schools and universities and academically less successful. Accordingly, many will need a high level of learning support.

However, as Farrell, et. al., (2004:161) stated, one of the constraint force for distance student is that learner support system are still not providing the level of services that is available to the 'on-campus' learner. One of the difficulties to provide student support is due to a shortage of qualified tutors (Jenkins, 2004). Research conducted by Ashcroft and Peacock (1993) cited in Ashcroft and Foreman-Peak (1994:149) showed that tutors who understand mature students' anxieties about assessed work, enquired about their study skill needs and capitalized upon the experiences that student had brought with them were able to contribute to their success. Along the same line, Evans (1994:114) declared that encountered with much younger and less experienced tutors could be upsetting for students.

Student support services take a wide variety of forms, but frequently offer students the opportunity to visit study centers for tutorial and counseling, to meet follow students, and to use facilities unavailable to them at home are some of them. Yared (2000:37-38) referring to (Wills, 1992), pointed out major elements of student support that have direct influence on determining retention and achievement of distance student. These include:

- Giving adequate advice to candidate and applicants before they embark on a course.
- Once students are in the system the provision of rapid, appropriate and effective advice and counseling.
- The student support that creates an atmosphere that is supportive and encourages continuing membership of the learning group.

Moreover, Melton (2002:128) stated that, in studying the type of student support systems we will need to take into account the following issues as constraints of distance learners.

- the appropriateness of the support provided;
- easy of access to the support required;
- continuity of support;
- skills required to make use of the support provided; and
- the costs concerned in providing the support.

Therefore, giving emphasis for the availability and the effectiveness of the basic elements of any student support system in distance education as the major variables that affect students' performance is vital.

2.2.2.4. Methods of Assessment

In a traditional classroom, teachers use a variety of means, some formal (quizzes, tests, etc.), and some informal (they pose questions, monitor body language and facial expression, etc.), to evaluate students' learning and assign grades. However, the situation becomes more complex in a distance learning environment. Educators have to identify what they want distant student to know and successfully integrate in the educational material. Furthermore, distance education itself imposes several problems such as the difficulty in user identification or the absence of proper evaluation methods. Consequently, this could be constraints of distance learners.

According to Rumble (1992:66), assessment in distance education has two possible functions. The first is to provide help to the student in the form of comments on his/her work. The second is to grade the students work for assessment purpose. However, according to Brown, et al., (1994:38) cited in Ferdissa (2005:69), the present assessment procedures in many distance learning institutions are inadequate and do not motivate the learners to pursue and/or succeed in their learning.

Directly copying from course materials in answering questions and depending on the assistance of others in working assignments is difficult to detect in distance education. Moreover, as Brown, et. al., (1994:33) cited in Ferdissa (2005:68-69) indicated, in recent years students have become much more strategic in their studying patterns, rarely studying for love of learning alone, but concentrating their energies on what will get them

better course grades. This implies that if formative assessment is not implemented as evaluation procedure in all courses, then its effects will be promoting their 'extrinsic, mark-driven motivation'. This leads student to be passive as well as individuals who neither work independently nor think critically (Kebede, 1976:27).

As Cormier and Daniel (1975:237) stated, self-assessment questions obviously give results that are content-referenced since, by their very nature, they exclude comparison with other students. However, a good self-assessment question should not only indicate to the student whether he has mastered the content which the question covers but also, in the event that this mastery is less than total, show him what he has failed to understand and what to do about it. Moreover, Race (2005:141) confirmed that diversifying the means of assessment is needed to allow all learners the chance to display their full potential, without being unduly limited by what happens to be measured by just one or two favored assessment formats. However, Ryan (2004:164) argued several distance education institutions have elementary self-assessment tests that are designed to help students realistically appraise their capacity to undertake a distance course.

Assessment serves a critical feedback role in the educational process. It has not simply been the end of learning but has been an important component in the design of the learning process itself and an essential tool in facilitating learning (Raggatt, 1994:137). In relation to that, Phil Race (2005) stated that:

Assessment can be described as the engine that drives learning. Feedback can be thought of as the lubricant that keeps the engine running smoothly. Without either assessment or feedback, or both, not much learning happens. For learners, if something is not going to be assessed, a clear message is received that it is not worth their spending time to learn it (Race, 2005:140).

It is therefore important to link assessment very strongly to intended learning outcomes to encourage and to succeed distance learners study.

The written assessment from distance student can serve as a feedback; it has mainly two purposes: first to help the distance school evaluate the course in relation to its objectives,

second to follow up the learning progress of the students (Kebede, 1976:27). Therefore, assignments should be marked as quickly as possible and returned to the student with the tutors' comments. As Rekkedal (1983) cited in Rumble (1992:66) there is evidence of a correlation between student drop-out and long assignment turn-round times.

2.2.3. Socioeconomic Constraints

2.2.3.1. Unable to Balance Work and Family Responsibilities with Study

According to Perraton and Lentell (2004), there are survey evidences that have consistently confirmed that the majority of distance students in most countries are working adults. Although work and study can be mutually beneficial, there are many tensions which most adults students have to resolve as they try to complete their studies and earn a living (Evan, 1994:88). In this regard, Phythian and Clements (1982) cited in Yared (2000:46) indicated that adult distance students complain that their studies are disrupted by their work by involving in work duties in out-of work time and being physically and mentally exhausted to study due to excessive work load. In line with this idea, Knowles (1980) states that "distance learners are either time-bound due to work or travel schedules or location-bound due to geographic or family responsibilities".

From this, we can understand that balancing work and study is often problematic for distance students. Students who withdraw from their courses also show that work related pressures are a common reason for their withdrawals (Evan, 1994:92). To support this idea, Rumble (1992:89) asserted, "Those who find it difficult to reconcile the conflicting demands of their jobs, family and studies tend to do less well". Therefore, the problems learners face in balancing work and study are important ones to be considered as constraints.

Balancing work and study can be relatively easy if employers have policies for supporting study and put them into practice. However, for many distance students study is something that occurs outside of work as a private activity, and work has to be given its necessary priority (Evans, 1994:88). Similarly, Woodley and Ashby (1994:20) stated that barriers might inhibit successful course completion for distance learners are unsupportive employer, difficulties with fees and highly mobile job. Mood (1995) cited in Sara Guri-

Rosenblit (1999), recapped the difficulty of balancing work and study as constraints of distance learners as follow:

It is easy to procrastinate, easy to convince oneself that other duties must be completed before studying. Work can easily take precedence over study for many distance students. After all, it is work that pays the bills....and therefore many students believe it must come first. A sudden deadline at work can take precedence over a class assignment. An unexpected out-of-town trip can eliminate three evenings planned for study, and increased pressure and stress at work can make concentrating on textbooks difficult (Mood, 1995 cited in, Guri-Rosenblit: 1999:94).

From the above quotation, we can deduce that the problem for most distance students is trying to coordinate the schedules of work, family life and their study.

2.2.3.2. Financial Constraints

According to Jenkins (2004:57), economic constraints make complex the difficulty of distance learners. Distance education institutions usually require learners to pay part of the cost of learning. Some early dropout may be because the initial courses do not live up to expectations, or because people cannot afford to continue. There are also costs of study materials, of communications, of travel to tutorials, of nights spent away from home at tutorials or residential courses (Evans, 1994:43). These costs tend to be heaviest on the more remote and isolated learners who are often the most disadvantaged (Jenkins, 2004:58).

Evans (1994:43) stated that sometimes distance students have the choice of whether they attend tutorials or not. This has the advantage of leaving the decision to the students. However, the monetary cost of voluntary attendance is something, which in fact removes the choice from those who have insufficient money to attend. This showed that “for distance students, the requirement to attend tutorials may have been removed by the institution, but the choice is also removed by the cost” (Evans, 1994).

According to Evans (1994:39), based on his case studies one of the points, which shows up from students’ reactions to charges, is that the students appear to be very cost-

sensitive, even to the extent that they will set aside the potential intrinsic and extrinsic gains of continuing their education because of the increased cost they will acquire. In addition, there is considerable disaffection when increased costs are imposed mid-course.

Time is also costly for distance learners (Jenkins, 2004:57). Many students cannot find enough of it unless they take time of paid work. Along the same line, Perraton (1993:396) affirmed that there are 'real opportunity costs' for students following courses at a distance. He added, "Some of those costs can be calculated in terms of lost earnings". Nevertheless, there were also considerable costs in time that would not otherwise have been devoted to paid work. Similarly, Yared (2000:47) referred to many studies (Cross, 1982; Holmberg, 1989; and Keegan, 1990) affirmed that financial constraints and health reasons were common problems that are barriers for the learning of distance students.

2.2.3.3. Attitude of the Society towards distance Education

According to Keegan (1994:31), the scale of possible attitudes of the society on distance students reach from patronizing pity and derision for poor guys to the firm passion that the economic feature of society depends on the qualification of numerous distance students who work and study at the same time. He further claims that this differs considerably from country to country and depends on the achievement of the correspondence schools and the social structures and traditions of a given country (Keegan, 1994).

As Abdullah (2004:68) stated the tradition of getting an education by going to school and university still has strong hold in the society of developing countries. It is rare to see social recognition gave upon individuals from distance education speak proudly of themselves as being a 'distance-learner'. Thus, this might have impact on the success of distance learners in their study. To support this idea, Keegan (1994:31) stated that the motivation of distance students is influenced by the way in which they are looking upon by society.

Despite the many benefits and advantages of distance learning for the productivity and economic development of nations, the general perception about distance education in

developing countries has not been entirely positive (Abdullah, 2004:69). According to Knox (1993:167), there has been a social, political and economic reason why distance education has to fail to fulfill its educational opportunities in developing countries and devalued. Some of these reasons are unemployment, competition for jobs and 'diploma disease'-unhealthy emphasis on certificates. Out of this, we can conclude that distance students appear to be disadvantageous due to society's perception in distance education. This could be a constraint for their study.

In general, series of studies have shown that personal, institutional, socio-economic problems are found to be a barrier and have a considerable impact on distance learners' success rate.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study mainly used descriptive survey research method. This is chosen because survey method helps to obtain first hand information and enables the researcher to have multiple methods of gathering information. It also permits to gather information from a large sample of people relatively quickly and inexpensively. Moreover, it permits the researcher to summarize the characteristics of different groups or to measure their attitudes and opinions toward some issues (Ary, et. al., 2002:25).

3.2. Sources of Data

The main sources of data for this study comprises selected degree level distance learners of ACDS in Addis Ababa, course tutors of the Addis Ababa branch, coordinators and administrators of ACDS. Moreover, as a secondary source of data the researcher used document inventory (exam request forms, modules, student study guides, evaluation of tutors list, tutorial and exam programs, written rules and regulation of ACDS to analyze the relevance of the information presented.

3.3. Population and Sampling

Currently, the Addis Ababa branch of ACDS has 7704 degree level students under 15 departments. For the purpose of this study, only eight (53%) departments consisting of 937 students were selected using simple random sampling technique. All of them are target population for this study. In order to make the study manageable, 273 sample students were selected using stratified random sampling technique and simple random sampling method from the eight departments. According to Ary, et al., (2002:167), we choose the procedure of stratified random sampling according to the nature of the research question. If the emphasis is on the type of differences among the strata, we select equal percentage of cases from-each. If the characteristics of the entire population are our main concern, proportional stratified random sampling is more appropriate. Besides, the major advantage of stratified sampling is that it guarantees representation of defined groups in the population (Ary, et. al., 2002:167).

Those students who had been enrolled in the program starting from 2004/05 academic year in all eight departments were included in the study and those students who did not attend the program at least for a term excluded from the study, believing that they would not be important source of the study. This was one of the results of feedback of the pilot study.

In addition, 15 course tutors were selected using availability sampling method. Furthermore, five coordinators and three administrators of ACDS were included as the subject of the study for additional information.

3.4. Instruments for Data Collection

The researcher used questionnaires and interview for data collection. Besides, assessment of related documents used as dependable data gathering tool.

3.4.1. Questionnaire

A questionnaire has been prepared based on the reviewed literature of the study. This was to inquire the sampled distance education students about their personal learning constraints; institutional and socio-economic problems that hinder their success in distance learning.

Draft questionnaires were prepared and given to the advisor and two experts (one who has MA degree in curriculum and instruction and another in EdPM) to check the relevance and the clarity of the items. Before the data gathering, the researcher made field-test of the instruments to identify ambiguities, misunderstandings, or other inadequacies. The questionnaires were piloted in the centre (Addis Ababa) for 30 students during the tutorial session. Then, based on the information obtained from the respondents some items were restated as required.

3.4.2 Interview

A semi-structured interview guide was prepared based on the reviewed literature of the study to inquire the course tutors in the branch about the major constraints that affect the

success of distance learners. Similarly, a semi-structured interview guide was prepared for the coordinators and administrator staff of ACDS.

3.4.3. Document Inventory

As a dependable data gathering tool, the researcher used document inventory. In this regard, exam request forms, modules, students' study guides, list of evaluation of tutors, tutorial and exam programs and written rule and regulation of the university college had been assessed to analyze the relevance of the information presented.

3.5. The Data Collection Procedures

The data collection was carried out in the Addis Ababa branch of ACDS by the researcher and his assistants. Initially, the assistants were well oriented on the objectives of the study and instruments employed. All the necessary data were collected in two rounds. During the first round the researcher collected data from four departments in the last weeks of October 2008 and in November 2008. In the second round, (November 2008) data were collected from the remaining four departments.

Giving attention to the number of questions and the situation of distance learners, the researcher allowed the respondents to fill the questionnaire at their home and returned to the concerned body. However, out of 273 distributed questionnaires, 22 questionnaires were unreturned. The rest 251 questionnaires were filled in and returned. Among these 10 questionnaires were discarded due to improper filling by respondents. People are sometimes reluctant to answer questions about attitudes, preferences, motives, behavior, personal feelings, and the like (Ary, et al., 2002:397). As a result, 241 sample students' data were analyzed in this study.

In addition, the researcher had made appointments with 15 course tutors, five coordinators and three administrative staff of ACDS to conduct interviews. Simultaneously, the researcher analyzed some important documents relevant to the study.

3.6. Techniques of Data Analysis

Surveys typically do not require complex statistical analysis. Data analysis may simply consist of determining the frequencies and percentages of responses for the questions of the study (Ary, et. al., 2002:410). Thus, all the close-ended questions of the questionnaire were quantitatively analyzed. Accordingly, analyses of simple frequency, percentage and weighted mean supplemented with descriptive statistics have been employed. The open-ended questions were also qualitatively analyzed and interpreted.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter examines the presentation and discussion of the data obtained through questionnaire, interview and document inventory. The first part of this chapter deals with important personal data of the respondents; and the second part deals with the analysis of questionnaire about constraints of distance learners supplemented by the interviews and document inventory.

4.1. Personal Characteristics of the Respondents

Participants in the study included 241-degree level distance learners.

Table 1: Age-sex categories of respondents

No	Age category	Male		Female		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	<20 years	-	-	3	1.2	3	1.2
2	21-30 years	43	17.8	37	15.4	80	33.2
3	31-40 years	64	26.6	31	12.9	95	39.4
4	41-50 years	51	21.2	8	3.3	59	24.5
5	>51 years	3	1.2	1	0.4	4	1.7
Total		161	66.8	80	33.2	241	100

As it is shown in Table 1, the respondents were comprised of 161 males (66.8%) and 80 females (33.2%). As to the breakdown of age ranges for respondents, ages ranged from 31 to 40 comprised the large number of respondents (39.4%). Ages ranged from 21 to 30 comprised 80 respondents (33.2%) which was the second largest group of respondents. Respondents whose ages ranged from 41 to 50 comprised 59 respondents (24.5%). The two extreme age categories of respondents, less than 20 years old and more than 51 years old comprised 3 (1.2%) and 4 (1.7%) respondents respectively.

Table 2: Work experience of the respondents

No.	Work experience	Male		Female		Total	
		No.	%	No	%	No.	%
1	<5 years	38	15.8	20	8.2	58	24
2	6-10 years	26	10.8	29	12	55	22.8
3	11-15 years	44	18.2	20	8.2	64	26.6
4	16-20 years	26	10.8	5	2	31	12.9
5	21-25 years	18	7.5	3	1.2	21	8.7
6	>26 years	9	3.7	3	1.2	12	5
Total		161	66.8	80	33.2	241	100

As it is depicted in Table 2, 26.6 per cent of the respondents had 11 to 15 years of work experience, 24 per cent of the respondents had less than 5 years of working experience. Besides, 22.8 per cent of the respondents had 6 to 10 years of working experience and 12.9 per cent of the respondents have 16 to 20 years of working experience. Moreover, those respondents whose work experience ranged from 21 to 25 years comprised 8.7 per cent and those respondents whose work experience greater than 26 years comprised 5 per cent.

Table 3: Marital status of the respondents

No.	Marital status	Frequency	%
1	Married	132	54.8
2	Single	102	42.3
3	Divorced	7	2.9
Total		241	100.0

As it is shown in Table 3, 54.8 per cent of the respondents were married, 42.3 per cent of the respondents were single and 2.9 per cent of the respondents were divorced.

Table 4: Departments of the respondents

No.	Departments	Male		Female		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Development Management	72	29.8	35	14.5	107	44.4
2	EdPM	40	16.5	29	12	69	28.6
3	Geography	4	1.6	3	1.2	7	2.9
4	Language	17	7	2	0.8	19	7.9
5	Marketing Management	12	4.9	5	2.1	17	7.1
6	Mathematics	5	2	-	-	5	2.1
7	Procurement and Supply Management	11	4.5	3	1.2	14	5.8
8	Secretary Science and Office Management	-	-	3	1.2	3	1.2
Total		161	66.8	80	33.2	241	100

As it is presented in Table 4, the participants in this study composed of 44.4 per cent were from Development Management, 28.6 per cent of the respondents were from EdPM, 2.9 per cent of the respondents were from Geography, 7.9 per cent of the respondents were from Language, 7.1 per cent of the respondents were from Marketing Management, 2.1 per cent of the respondents were from Mathematics, 5.8 per cent of the respondents were from Procurement and Supply Management, and 1.2 per cent of the respondents were from Secretary Science and Office Management.

From this we can concluded that distance learners in ACDS in Addis Ababa branch are older than conventional students and they are more likely to be males. Besides, they tend to have family and job responsibilities that prohibit them from attending conventional classes.

Many research findings on characteristics of distance learners supported this finding. As Holmberg (1995) stated, there is “no evidence to indicate that distance students should be regarded as homogenous group”, however; many distance students do share broad demographic and situational similarities such as age, gender, educational background, and location and life roles. Although the methods of reporting students’ ages vary from study to study, researchers agree that distance education students are, on average, older than typical undergraduate students (Thompson, 1998). Most studies of distance learners

in North American higher education report that more women than men are enrolled in courses delivered at a distance. However, comparative enrollment of women and men varies considerably in other parts of the world, perhaps reflecting cultural differences (Thompson, 1998). In addition to filling the role of students, most distance learners also fill the role of worker and spouse. In the same vein, Keegan(1996:149) referring to the major findings of Field's(1982) analysis of Open University of UK students, stated that distance students tend to be gainfully employed, have less prior education, are older comparing with traditional university undergraduates.

4.2. Personal Constraints of Distance Learners

Distance education is largely characterized by individuals learning as opposed to the group learning that is common in the traditional education. Thus, the study on the relevant characteristic variable within the individual distance students that affects the success of distance learners become important. Accordingly, in this section, distance students' personal constraints that affect their success in AUC in Addis Ababa branch are discussed here. For the sake of convenience, these personal problems of distance learners grouped under four categories. These are low previous educational background, lack of study skill, feeling of isolation and motivation.

4.2.1. Previous educational background

To examine the adequacy of the respondents' prior learning level for their present distance study, four aspects of learners' previous education background were assessed. These include, learners' previous education level before just started distance program, the time they spent between the previous education and the current study, the relevance of their previous education to the present one and in fact the adequacy of their prior knowledge to their present study. The table below addresses these issues.

Table 5: Previous educational backgrounds of the respondents

Question Items	Response	Frequency	%
1. What was your level of education before you just started distance learning?	12 complete	41	17
	Certificate	8	3.3
	Diploma	161	66.8
	Degree	30	12.5
	MA/MSc and above	1	0.4
	Total	241	100
2. How many years did you spend to start your distance learning after the completion of your previous education?	One year	44	18.3
	2-5 years	63	26.1
	6-10 years	103	42.7
	>11 years	31	12.9
	Total	241	100.0
3. Is your educational background has relevance to your present learning?	Yes	109	45.2
	No	132	54.8
	Total	241	100.0
4. How do you evaluate your prior learning in meeting the academic requirement of your distance study?	Adequate	92	38.2
	Somewhat adequate	87	36.1
	Inadequate	62	25.7
	Total	241	100.0

As can be seen from Table 5, 66.8 per cent of the respondents confirmed that their prior educational level was diploma, 42.7 per cent of the respondents declared that, they spent six to ten years to start their distance study and 54.8 per cent of the respondents stated that their present study has no relevance with their previous educational background. In this respect, for the open-ended question, "Is there a problem that irrelevance of your previous educational background created on your current study?" One of the respondents reported that since he had natural science background, he got problems to read critically, rehearse, and comprehend different theories in his current Study. In contrary, 38.2 per cent of the respondents acknowledged that their prior academic level is adequate for their present study. Besides, 36.1 per cent of the respondents reported that their prior learning was somewhat inadequate to meet the academic requirement of their distance study. On the other hand, 25.7 per cent of the respondents declared that their prior learning was inadequate to meet the academic requirement of their current distance study.

Accordingly, with lower educational background, unrelated field of study and return to distance learning after spending a long time may be a constraint for distance learners' success in ACDS in Addis Ababa.

Consistent with the above findings, an interview conducted with fifteen tutors, ten of them agreed that the lower the previous educational level of the learner the higher the chance to face difficulties in understanding the lessons and in organizing their assignments. Besides, these tutors agreed that those distance learner who were far from educational system for a long time and those distance learners who have previous educational background, which is not relevant to their present study, are less successful in their distance learning.

Several research works have reported similar results with the above findings of the study. More specifically Sewart (1991:156) reported that distance students who are returning to study after a number of years, the concept and practice of their previous learning is somewhat clouded. They have an experience of life and work and hence a framework into which their new learning has to be set is a factor for their success.

4.2.2. Lack of Study Skills

The participant in this study were also inquired whether they faced problems, in the course of their study, due to lacking major aspects of the study skills. These include, planning and organizing of study program; effective reading skill, ability to take notes; using different approaches of study techniques; skills in writing well organized assignments, ability to work independently and self-directness and perseverance. The results obtained pertaining to the above aspects of study skills are given in the table below.

Table 6: Lack of study skills

No.	Major problems	Yes	%	No	%
1	Planning and organization of study program	143	59.3	98	40.7
2	Ability to take notes	115	47.7	126	52.3
3	Using different approaches to learning	161	66.8	80	33.2
4	Effective reading skill	111	46.1	130	53.9
5	Skills in writing well organized assignments	135	56	106	44
6	Ability to work independently	133	55.2	108	44.8
7	Self-directness and perseverance	140	58.1	101	41.9

As it is shown in Table 6, of the seven aspects of the study skills, the majority of respondents reported that they face a major problem due to lack of the five aspects of the study skills. That is, 59.3 per cent of the respondents acknowledged that they have problems in planning and organization of the study program, 66.8 per cent of the respondents affirmed that they lack using different approaches of study techniques. Moreover, 56 per cent of the respondents showed that they had lack of skills in writing well organized assignment, 55.2 per cent of the respondents reported that they had problems in ability to work independently; and 58.1 per cent of the respondents affirmed that they lack self-directness and perseverance in their study.

The results of the interview conducted with tutors also support the above finding. Majority of the interviewed tutors (twelve of the fifteen interviewed tutors) confirmed that the most common study skill problems of distance learners were their inability to plan and organize their study programs, inability to use different techniques of study and lack of ability to write assignments in well-organized way. From this, we can conclude that lack of appropriate study skills is the major constraints of distance learners in ACDS at Addis Ababa branch.

The research findings on the study skills of distance students showed that lack of study skill is the major problem for distance learners not to be successful in their study. According to Wood (1996), study materials must take into account the significant portion of students who enroll with little or no experience of distance study. These students are at

risk of dropping out unless they develop study skills as rapidly as possible. As Rumble (1992) stated students who fail to progress in studying regularly and who become dormant for a time, are less likely to succeed than those who keep studying steadily. Similarly, as Watkins (2005:794) asserted, from developing time management skills to learning how to take effective notes, students who develop functional study habits and learning skills are more likely to have a successful learning experience and continue their enrollment.

4.2.3. Feeling of Isolation

The subjects in this study were also asked whether they feel isolated and alienated due to the situations of distance education. These include isolation from a teacher; absence of peer interaction; privatization of the study process and less social interaction with a teaching institution. The results gained from the data are given in the table below.

Table 7: Feeling of isolation and alienation

No.	Conditions	Yes	%	No	%
1	Isolation from a teacher	153	63.5	88	36.5
2	Absence of peer interaction	123	51	118	49
3	Privatization of the study process	118	49	123	51
4	Less social interaction with the teaching institution	122	50.6	119	49.4

As it is indicated in Table 7, of the four conditions of distance education, majority of the respondents agreed on the three conditions that they felt isolated and alienated. That means, 63.5 per cent of the responds acknowledged that they felt isolated from a teacher in their distance learning; 51 per cent of the respondents confirmed that they felt absence of peer interaction in their distance study, and 50.6 per cent of the respondents agreed that they feel alienated owing to less social interaction with the teaching institution. Thus, the research findings of the study showed that feeling of isolation and alienation is a constraint of distance students for their study.

Similarly, an interview conducted with one of the coordinators indicated that distance learners affected by feeling of isolation due to conditions of distance education. Since

learning is socially constructed activity, in the case of learning to achieve a particular goal in distance education, social interaction continues to play a great role in successful learning. However, in ACDS feeling of isolation and alienation affected the success of distance learners in their study.

Other research studies like Gibson and Graff (1992) cited in Thompson (1998) also indicated that successful students in distance education exhibited lower level of peer affiliation and high level of confidence in their performance and competence, while non-completers showed higher peer affiliation and less confidence in their knowledge, skill and ability to reach their goal of degree completion. According to Guri-Rosenblit (1999:87), in distance education, students may often experience feelings of extreme isolation. For many, the greatest drawback of studying at a distance might be the lack of interactivity with peers, the missing out of the enjoyment of campus life. Guri-Rosenblit goes on to state that isolation from fellow students is a severe limitation of distance education, and is of not lesser effect than remoteness from the teacher.

4.2.4. Motivation

To examine the motivation of distance students in AUC in Addis Ababa branch, two types of questions were prepared. The first one is to assess the internal (intrinsic) motivation and the second to assess the external (extrinsic) motivation of distance learner. The results obtained about the two types of motivation given in Table 8 and Table 9 below.

Table 8: Behavioral qualities/ motivations of respondents

No	Behavioral qualities/motivations	Yes	%	No	%
1	Ability commits oneself to study as required	104	43.2	137	56.8
2	Willingness to understand the lessons of learning in each subject matter	123	51	118	49
3	Willing to raise questions to tutors whenever necessary	117	48.5	124	51.5
4	Willing to attend tutorials and actively participate in discussions	103	42.7	138	57.3
5	Able to submit assignment on due date and ready to get feedbacks	110	45.6	131	54.4
6	Preparation for exams	129	53.5	112	46.5

As it is shown in Table 8, from six behavioral qualities (internal motivations) majority of the respondents showed that they were lacking behavioral qualities in four of them. That is, 56.8 per cent of the respondents showed that they were not motivated to commit themselves to their study as required; 51.5 per cent of the respondents reported that they were not willing to raise questions to their tutors. Moreover, 57.3 per cent of the respondents showed that they were not willing to attend tutorials and actively participate in face-to-face class discussion, and 54.4 per cent of the respondents acknowledged that they were not able to submit assignment on due date and ready to get feedbacks. The above findings seem to indicate that distance learners' internal motivation is a constraint for their study in AUC in Addis Ababa branch.

Consistent with the above findings almost all tutors (fourteen out of fifteen) stated that majority of distance learners are not motivated to commit themselves to their study as required. In addition, a tutor explained the issue as follow: "When distance learners come to face-to-face sessions, they don't read the intended contents of the lesson. They expect a spoon feed type of learning rather than discuss the lessons in class."

Similarly, an interview conducted with one of the coordinators and tutors of the university college affirmed that most of the assignment of his distance students reached him out of the due date of the assignment return time, mainly due to the carelessness of distance learners.

Concerning the second motivational question, what aspects motivate the respondents to attend the program; majority of the respondents focus on the three among the seven options. Table 9 shows the reasons respondents gave within the specified categories.

Table 9: Respondents' reasons for attending the program

No.	Reasons for attending the program	No.*	%
1	to obtain degree	215	89.2
2	to be eligible for promotion	194	80.4
3	to obtain employment or job security	112	46.4
4	to upgrade knowledge	96	39.8
5	to improve salary	134	55.6
6	to develop professionally	68	28.2
7	to personal enrichment	82	34

**The number of responses exceeds the total number of the respondents due to multiple responses*

As one can see from the data in Table 9, the respondents were principally concerned with the status and utilitarian aspect of improving their qualifications. Most of them interested in becoming graduates (that is, holding a degree) and/or obtaining a promotion, secure employment or increase income. Thus, it seems clear from this data that many distance learners in ACDS in Addis Ababa are unlikely to attend the program if the external motivational factors (increment of salary and promotion, etc.) are missing.

Compatible with the above data, interviews conducted with majority of tutors, coordinators and administrative staffs affirmed that majority of distance learners are externally motivated. In this regard, one of the tutors said that:

Since they are paying, distance learners in this college [ACDS] thought that they would simply get a degree. When they score "C" and below grades for a course, they ask why giving emphasis on the payment of their money rather than to get good result in their own effort.

Similarly, one of the administrators commented that many distance learners appreciate the university college assuming what they would get in the future like promotion and change of their job rather than focusing on their professional development and improvement of their knowledge. In addition to, one of the coordinators of ACDS stated that although many distance learners attend the program either internally or externally motivated, nowadays after the coming of BPR majority of the participants in the program are externally motivated. Thus, it is clear that with mere external motivation distance

learners could not be successful in their study unless they develop internal motivation towards their study.

Many researches supported this finding. Ghatala (1975:211) stated that adults particularly in non-traditional form of study are free to set their own learning goals. Many adults, especially those engaged in distance education, are some likely capable in setting realistic goals. However, most may not proficient and have a high probability of resulting in non-completion of a particular course or, more drastically, termination of all education endeavors. Moreover, Morgan (1991) suggest that distance students who are not confident and motivated about their learning tend to concentrate on memorizing facts and details in order to complete assignments and write exams. As a result, they end up with a poor understanding of course materials.

4.3. Institutional Constraints

In this section, the constraints that affect the success of distance learners primarily due to the distance teaching institution (here means ACDS) examined. These institutional constraints discussed under the four major parts of distance education systems. These are instructional/course materials, mode of delivery of instructional materials and learning, the student support system and methods of assessment.

4.3.1. Instructional/Course Materials

The instructional materials play an important role in distance instruction. Thus, the aspects of the course materials that assumed to have a greater influence upon the success of distance learners in AUC examined. Therefore, an attempt was made to find out whether or not the instructional materials fulfilled the twelve quality indicators of distance instructional materials categorizing into three major parts, as intended learning outcomes; structure and layout, and learning design; and active learning. The results obtained about quality of instructional materials are given below in Table 10.

Table 10: Quality of instructional/course materials

No.	Items	Yes	%	No	%
1	Is there a clear indication of any prerequisite knowledge or skill?	75	31.1	166	68.9
2	Are the intended learning outcomes stated clearly?	171	71	70	29
3	Are the intended learning outcomes presented in a meaningful and relevant way?	182	75.5	59	24.5
4	Are the instructional materials catering for different learning preference?	81	33.6	160	66.4
5	Are the instructional materials visually attractive?	105	43.6	136	56.4
6	Is there sufficient white space in the instructional materials?	121	50.2	120	49.8
7	Is the material broken into manageable study units?	103	42.7	138	57.3
8	Are the materials encouraged deep learning rather than surface learning?	86	35.7	155	64.3
9	Are there plenty of self-assessment tasks?	71	29.5	170	70.5
10	Are the tasks clear and unambiguous?	149	61.8	92	38.2
11	Are the questions inviting?	178	73.9	63	26.1
12	Is the task practically possible for distance learners?	174	72.2	67	27.8

Table 10 shows that among the twelve quality indicators of instructional materials, five of them did not carry out in ACDS's institutional materials referring to the responses of the respondents. 68.9 per cent of the respondents indicated that there were no clear indications of any prerequisite knowledge or skill in the instructional materials; 66.4 per cent of the respondents indicated that the instructional materials were not taking into account different learning preferences. Moreover, 56.4 per cent of the respondents acknowledged that the instructional materials were not visually attractive, 57.3 per cent of the respondents confirmed that the instructional materials were not broken into manageable units. Besides, 64.3 per cent of the respondents claimed that the instructional

materials were not encouraging deep learning and 70.5 per cent of the respondents claimed that there were no plenty of self-assessment tasks in the instructional materials.

Contrary to this finding, majority of the tutors, coordinators and administrators during the interview sessions claimed that the instructional materials of ACDS are well designed, condensed and interactive. One of the administrators supported this idea by saying “our distance instructional materials are used by different private and government colleges and universities due to their quality”. In fact some of the coordinators and administrators were accepted some of the problems regarding preparation of instructional materials. One of the coordinators stated:

Previously to be cost-effective, the font of letters and spaces in the instructional materials were minimized. This creates problems on our distance learners to interact with it. However, because of series comments of the learners the institution is trying to improve.

Moreover, the researcher conducted some document inventory activities on some of the modules and course writers’ guide. Accordingly, he observed that most of the instructional materials are not visually attractive, pictorial, handy and durable. Besides, even though the course writers’ guide is well prepared by the institution, the whole procedures in the guidelines were not implemented in the instructional materials. In addition, from document inventory of current study findings on two instructional materials of the institution, the researcher identified that the instructional materials have no unit/course introduction; there is no clear time allocation for topics in the instructional materials. Moreover, although there were in-text activity questions, they were not enough for distance learners to assess themselves.

Thus, distance learners with limited contact to a tutor, absence of peer interaction and job and family responsibilities, problems in instructional materials mean another obstacle to their study. Although some of the criteria of distance instructional materials were fulfilled in the institution, the above problems related with the course materials could be constraints to distance learners in ACDS.

4.3.2. Mode of Delivery of Instructional Materials

An attempt was made to assess whether the instructional materials delivered on time for distance learners or not and what kind of problem they faced due to delay of the instructional materials in AUC. The results obtained are presented in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Mode of delivery and means of communication

Items	Responses	Frequency	%
1. Do you get the instructional materials delivered in time?	Always	87	36.1
	Sometimes	121	50.2
	Never	33	13.7
	Total	241	100.0
2. What means of communication did you use to communicate with the institutions?	through postal service	68	28.2
	physical presence	105	43.6
	by telephone	68	28.2
	Total	241	100.0

As it is shown in Table 11, 50.2 per cent of the respondents reported that they were not sometimes delivered the instructional materials in time and 13.7 per cent of the respondents reported that they were not delivered the instructional materials in time.

An interview conducted with one of the administrators showed that the university college previously used post office to deliver instructional materials to learners. However, due to the unreliable nature of the postal system and delay, nowadays the university college is forced to use its own coordinating offices for the distribution of instructional materials. Moreover, one of the coordinators said, “currently unless there is a problem in preparation and printing of instructional materials there is no as such a problem related to mode of delivery of instructional materials to learners”.

Related to the above issue, the study also tried to assess what means of communication distance learners use to contact with the institution (ACDS). The results obtained are indicated in Table 11, in item number two above. As it is exhibited in Table 11, 44 per cent of the respondents reported that they communicated in physical presence (face-to-face) with the institution, 28.2 per cent of the respondents reported that they communicated through postal service with the institution and 28.2 per cent of the

respondents acknowledged that they have used telephone to communicate with the institution.

The data showed that distance learners in AUC had problems in communicating with the institution through post and/or by telephone that in fact forced them to come in the center for every aspect of their problems. Consistent with this idea, one of the coordinators expressed the problem during an interview in this way:

Since we have no special telephone information desk, we cannot host every call in a day by office phones. So we are forced to communicate with at least fifteen callers in a day. For that's reason, those who did not get the chance, obliged to come into the branch for information they need and for their problems.

Moreover, one of the administrators stated that since using telephone always is costly and due to unreliable nature of the postal system most of distance learners of ACDS in Addis Ababa use physical presence to communicate with the institution. He added that, the institution communicated with students through E-mails in fact, with those who have access to E-mails.

Table 12: Effects of delay of instructional materials on respondents

No.	Effects of delay of instructional materials	No.*	%
1	Unable to cover a module	228	94.6
2	More load	203	84.2
3	Low performance	154	63.9
4	Delay in graduation	56	23.2

**The number of responses exceeds the total number of the respondents due to multiple responses*

As Table 12 shows, 94.6 per cent of the respondents affirmed that they were unable to cover the module due to the delay of the instructional materials; 84.2 per cent of the respondents reported that they faced more load. Besides, 63.9 per cent of the respondents claimed that they scored low results and 23.2 per cent of the respondents stated that they were delayed in graduation because of delay of instructional materials. Therefore, from

this we can understand that mode of delivery of instructional materials of the institution is a constraint for distance learners in AUC in Addis Ababa.

4.3.3. The Students Support System

Students support is a key issue in the provision of distance education as one way to counter balance the absence of dialogue in distance learning. Thus in this section the aspects of the student support system which affect the success of distance learners in AUC in Addis Ababa branch were focused. These include availability of other learning media, rather than print media, how often tutors give feedback and counseling, how many tutorial sessions conducted for a course in a term and quality of tutors.

Although the course materials in distance education are supposed to be sufficient, access to other resources can only enrich students’ learning experience. Thus, an attempt was made to assess whether there were other instructional media for distance learners in AUC in Addis Ababa. The results obtained are displayed in Table 13.

Table 13: Student support services

Question Items	Responses	Frequency	%
1. What learning media are available other than print media (modules)?	Radio transmission	9	3.7
	Audio cassettes	21	8.7
	Television/video	5	2.1
	Online/network	2	0.8
	No other media	204	84.7
	Total	241	100.0
2. How many tutorial sessions are conducted for a course in a term?	Four	10	4.1
	Three	14	5.8
	Two	104	43.2
	One	113	46.9
	Total	241	100.0
3. How often do you get counseling in your distance learning in the institution?	Always	18	7.5
	Most of the time	20	8.3
	Sometimes	55	22.8
	Rarely	59	24.5
	Not at all	89	36.9
	Total	241	100.0

As it is shown in Table 13, 84.7% of the respondents reported that no other media used other than print media during their study in the university college. Thus, it is easy to conclude that distance learners who are dependent only on modules (print media) could not be successful to acquire the intended learning outcomes. Moreover, as it is depicted in Table 13, majority of the respondents (46.9%) reported that only one tutorial session was conducted in a term for a course. However, 43.2 per cent of the respondents declared that they attended only two tutorial sessions in a term for a course.

It is a well-known fact that tutorial (face-to-face) session is one of the major chances of distance learners to interact with tutors and among themselves. Thus, it is important for them to be successful in their study. However, as it is shown in Table 13, tutorial sessions in ACDS in Addis Ababa were not adequate for distance learners. Thus, it might be a constraint for them to accomplish their study. Moreover, although counseling is vital for distance learners for their success and persistence in their study, as it is shown in Table 13, 36.9 per cent of the respondents reported that they did not get any kind of counseling from the institution during their study.

An interview conducted with tutors, coordinators and administrators find out somewhat similar findings. Most of the interviewee affirmed that there are only two tutorial sessions for a course in a semester in the university college. In fact, according to some interviewees though there is a schedule, sometimes the programs failed for some courses. Besides, an interview conducted with one of the coordinators indicated that the tutorial for a course has two hours period and tutors use forty minutes for briefing and introduction, fifty minutes for discussion and the last thirty minuets for counseling regarding study skills and other issues of distant students. The coordinator goes on to state that for all these activities, the duration of the tutorials period is not enough. As a result, those willing tutors extended the time for learners whereas some tutors asked additional payment from the learners. Similarly, an interview conducted with one of the administrators also indicted that those willing distance learners come together and organize additional tutorial programs with their own expense. Thus, it is easy to conclude that, tutorial programs both in frequency and duration in ACDS in Addis Ababa is not adequate for distance learners to accomplish their study.

Research studies such as Rumble (1992:17) confirmed that the isolation of distance learners means that teachers and students have little opportunity to discuss how well the latter are doing. One way of providing such opportunities is through face-to-face tutorials, but for cost reasons, it is not usual to build many of these into distance courses.

In addition, the study tried to assess availability and use of learning resource materials for distance learners in the branch. Table 14 addresses this issue.

Table 14: Availability of additional learning materials

No	Learning resources in the branch	Yes	%	No	%
1	Is there a library in the branch?	129	53.5	112	46.5
2	Are there sufficient reference materials in the branch?	60	24.9	181	75.1
3	Are there audio/video room facilities?	14	5.8	227	94.2
4	Do have an access to computer?	27	11.2	214	88.8

Table 14 depicts that 75.1 per cent of the respondents reported that there were no sufficient reference materials in the branch meanwhile 94.2 per cent of the respondents affirmed that there were no audio/video room facilities in the branch. Besides, 88.8 per cent of the respondents acknowledged that they did not have access to computers in the branch. Thus, it is not possible to distance learners to be successful only using modules for their distance learning, unless other learning resource materials support it. Therefore, it is easy to say that distance learners in AUC in Addis Ababa faced difficulty in getting supplementary and reference materials to enrich their understanding or to do their assignments indicated in their modules.

Tutors in distance education are important, as a classroom teacher is vital in conventional education. They serve, as academic counselors who periodically meet learners, identified further areas of attention in their study and particularly explain and make clear ideas to student that are not clear in their self-study. Hence, the study tries to assess the quality of tutors in AUC in Addis Ababa. Accordingly, ten items showing the quality or teaching effectiveness of tutors are prepared on Five-point Likert-scale. That means: 5 = represented "Excellent", 4 = represented "Very good", 3 = represented "Good", 2 =

represented “Fair”, 1= represented “Poor”. Thus, for respondents the weighted mean of their rating for each item calculated as indicated in Table 15.

Table 15: Teaching effectiveness of tutors as rated by respondents

No	Items	No.	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Knowledge on the subject matter	241	3.51	1.092
2	Teaching skill and preparation	241	2.57	1.070
3	Punctuality	241	3.00	1.225
4	Enthusiasm	241	2.82	1.043
5	Encourage more student participation	241	2.49	1.249
6	Helping less achieving students	241	2.39	1.086
7	Attempts to take the students’ personal experience as the basis for discussion	241	2.40	1.221
8	Skill of exam preparation	241	3.03	1.313
9	Supportive and tolerate	241	2.50	1.180
10	Ability in counseling	241	2.51	1.118
<i>Weighted mean = 2.8</i>				

As shown in Table 15, the majority of respondents indicated that most of the tutors had no skill in teaching effectively. As the data shows above from ten indicators of quality of tutors, the respondents’ rated for six of them below the weighted mean in five Point Likert-scales. This implies that majority of the tutors in AUC in Addis Ababa had inadequacies in teaching skill and preparation, in encouraging student participation in face-to-face session, in taking the student personal experience as the source of discussion. Moreover, they were not supportive and tolerate.

Moreover, an interview conducted with one of the administrators stated that tutors recruitment in the University College is based on competition. The recruitment is giving emphasis on grade, experience and training on the desired field of study of competitors’. He goes on to state “for degree courses we prefer MA/MSc graduate tutors but due to shortage of skilled man power we are forced to use degree holders and sometimes those who engaged themselves out of teaching professions as tutors”. Moreover, an interview conducted with one of the coordinators indicated that some younger tutors were rigid in

their behavior and do not appreciate distance (adult) learners. Besides, an interview conducted with one of the administrators showed that there were some irresponsible and money oriented tutors who regularly quitted tutorial sessions. As a result, students do not get the expected services from those tutors. In fact, on the country there were responsible and diligent tutors who prepared additional hand out materials for learners willingly.

In addition, an interview conducted with tutors indicated that most of them use lecture method of teaching in tutorial sessions. However, some tutors ascribed their usage of lecture method due to unwillingness of learners for discussions. Besides to that an interview conducted with most of the tutors majority of them had no the expertise how to treat adults and giving tutorials. In consistent with the point a document inventory of tutors' evaluation form of the institution showed that there was no statement that indicates the use of the principles of andragogy by tutors in their teaching in tutorial sessions (see Appendix 4). Thus, although tutors play key role in the success of distance learners, they did not contribute their role for the success of distance learners in ACDS in Addis Ababa due to their quality.

Meanwhile several research findings supported the poor qualities of tutors as constraints of distance learners. Guri-Rosenblit (1999:91) indicated that since most tutors, counselors in distance teaching universities are mostly part-timers, the quality, and academic labour continues to be an important issue. She goes on to state that "tutors, it might be said, possess less knowledge and skill than traditional academics. And such a fact might affect students' learning". Knowles (1980:50) also asserted, "If adults' experience is not used, or its worth is minimized in adult learning, it is not just experience is being rejected-adults feel rejected as person". Moreover, Whitefield(2005) revealed that taking a pedagogical approach to the process of tutorial in distance learning will most likely seem patronizing to the adult learners which deteriorating the adult self-directed personality and affect their learning.

4.3.4. Methods of Assessment

Assessment has considerable power to encourage learning in distance education either in reviewing progress across the whole program or in particular course as a feedback.

Accordingly, in this section, the findings of the study concerning methods of assessment to evaluate distance learners, the number of assignment learners required to submit for a course and how did they work their assignments were examined as constraints of distance learners in AUC in the Addis Ababa branch. The results obtained on the issue are depicted below in Table 16.

Table 16: Methods of assessment

Question Items	Responses	Frequency	%
1. What methods are employed to assess the academic achievement of distance learners?	Worksheet	73	30.3
	Final exam	71	29.5
	Project work	10	4.1
	All	87	36.1
	Total	241	100.0
2. How many assignments do you submit for a course in a term?	Three	27	11.2
	Two	36	14.9
	One	161	66.8
	None	17	7.1
	Total	241	100.0
3. How do you work your assignments?	with my own effort	152	63.1
	depending on the assistance of others	42	17.4
	collaborate with my colleagues	47	19.5
	Total	241	100.0
4. To what extent are you satisfied with the mark /grade assigned to your assignment/exam?	Fully	62	25.7
	Moderately	40	16.6
	To some extent	120	49.8
	Not at all	19	7.9
	Total	241	100.0

As it is indicated in Table 16, 36.1 per cent of the respondents reported that assignment for submissions (worksheet), project work and final exam were employed to assess the academic achievements of distance learners. Meanwhile 30.3 per cent of the respondents declared that only worksheet was employed and 29.5 per cent of the respondents affirmed that only supervised final exam was employed to evaluate distance learners. Regarding the number of assignments required to submit for a course, as it is indicated in Table 16

in question item two, 66.8 per cent of the respondents reported that they were required to submit only one assignment for a course. Concerning the question, how they did work their assignments, majority of the respondents (63.1%) acknowledged that they were doing assignments on their own efforts.

However, some of the findings obtained from learners are contrary with the findings obtained through interviews. As to an interview conducted with one of the administrators, the institution (ACDS) used only supervised final exam to evaluate distance learners before 2006/07 academic year. However, nowadays, according to the administrator, the University College uses one home take assignment that covered 30 per cent of the evaluation and final exam that covered the remaining 70 per cent. An interview conducted with one of the coordinators and tutors found out that majority of distance learners did not work the assignments in their own effort. The coordinator explained the condition as follow:

We are using worksheets (assignments for submission) to evaluate distance learners but it is difficult to judge whose work is it. Most of distance learners are copying from each other. The situation is exacerbated because similar worksheets are used for different terms. As a result, a student able to copy answers from the previous marked assignment worksheets. Because of this, the institution forced to change worksheets in terms.

Besides, an interview conducted with most of the tutors indicated that majority of the worksheets' answers are similar even though they were in different handwriting. Sometimes there were occasions that answer sheets were similar from page to page. In those conditions, it was boring to read similar answers for different worksheets.

Meanwhile, the subjects in this study were also asked if the nature of assessments fulfilled six criteria based on five Point Likert-scales. The scales the subjects were made to use were defined as follow: Give 5 = if your response is "strongly agree", 4 = if your response is "agree", 3 = if your response is "undecided", 2 = if your response is "disagree" and 1 = if your response is "strongly disagree"

For the respondents’ response, the weighted mean of their ratings of each item was calculated as indicated in Table 17 below.

Table 17: Quality of Assessments as rated by respondents

No	Items	No.	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Linked with intended learning outcomes	241	3.73	1.067
2	Carefully designed questions	241	3.59	1.073
3	Use diversified methods of assessment	241	3.01	1.225
4	Giving written feedbacks	241	2.80	1.317
5	Marks registered and documented properly	241	2.40	1.432
6	Answer sheets and grade reports return properly	241	2.23	1.418
<i>Weighted mean = 3</i>				

As it is shown in Table 17, the mean of respondents’ ratings of the items for nature of assessments in giving written feedbacks, in registration of marks properly and in returning of answers sheets and grade reports properly to learners indicted below the weighted mean. This implies that absence of written feedback in assessment worksheets, improper documentation of marks and unable to get marked answer sheets and grade reports were constraints of distance learners in AUC in Addis Ababa branch.

4.4. Socio-economic Constraints

Although distance learning is an excellent method of reaching out the adult learners, because of competing priorities of work and home with study, financial problems during their study and less value given by the society towards distance education are all barriers to successful distance learning. Thus, this study examined whether or not these issues were constraints for distance learners.

4.4.1. Unable to Balance Job and Family Responsibilities with Study

Demanding professional commitment and family responsibilities of many adult (distance) learners often make attending tutorials, spending a lot of time to study and to working

assignments unrealistic proposition. Thus, this study tried to assess this issue and the results obtained are given below in Table 18.

Table 18: Job and family commitments of respondents

No.	Obstacles	Yes	%	No	%
1	Involvement in household chores	137	56.8	104	43.2
2	Obstacle from spouse	97	40.2	144	59.8
3	Involvement in work duties	144	59.8	97	40.2
4	Being physically and mentally exhausted due to excessive work	152	63.1	89	36.9
5	Unsupportive employer	115	47.7	126	52.3
6	Engaged in highly mobile job	138	57.3	103	42.7
7	Involvement in social participations	142	58.9	99	41.1

As it is shown in Table 18, 56.8 per cent of the respondents indicated that involvement in the household duties was obstacle for their study. Similarly, 59.8 per cent of the respondents affirmed that involvement in work duties in out of work time as a constraint for study. Besides, 63.1 per cent of the respondents agreed that being exhausted physically and mentally because of excessive work created influence on their study. Moreover, 57.3 per cent of the respondents reported that engagement in highly mobile job was a problem for their study 58.9 per cent of the respondents also reported the involvement in social and community participations took their time of study. Therefore, unable to adjust their study time with job and family responsibilities was one of the constraints of distance learners in AUC in Addis Ababa.

Furthermore, investigation, which demanded the respondents to indicate what kind of problems they faced due to unable to balance their job and family responsibilities with their study was made. The results obtained are put in Table 19 below.

Table 19: Problems faced by respondents

No.	Problems faced	No.*	%
1	Delay in submission of assignment	214	88.7
2	Not attending tutorial sessions	207	85.8
3	Poor performance/results	92	38.1
4	Not attending final examination	56	23.2
5	Quitting distance learning	43	17.8

**The numbers of responses exceed the total number of the respondents due to multiple responses*

As it is indicated in Table 19, majority of the respondents rated that problems such as in delay in submissions of assignments(88.7%), unable to attending tutorial sessions(85.8%) and scoring poor results in their study(38.1%) as the major ones.

An interview conducted with tutors, coordinators and administrators supported the above results. Most of the interviewee stated that distance learners face job and family related problems that can be constraints for their distance study in the institution. As one tutor indicated, many distance learners are unable to submit assignments on due date and even forced to drop courses due to their jammed time of job and family responsibilities. Similarly, an interview conducted with one of the administrators confirmed that most distance learners did not get permission for tutorials and exams from their bosses even though the institutions wrote supportive letters to employers. As a result, distance learners hesitated to attend tutorial sessions and exams.

4.2.3.2. Financial Constraints

The study also requested the respondents to indicate whether they faced any financial problems in their study or not, whether they encountered increase of costs by teaching institution or not and whether they lost their earning by taking time of their paid work due to their distance study or not. The results obtained are depicted in Table 20.

Table 20: Financial constraints

Question Items	Responses	Frequency	%
1. Have you ever faced any financial problems in your distance study?	Yes	143	59.3
	No	98	40.7
	Total	241	100.0
2. Have you ever encountered increase of costs by the institution in the mid-course of your study?	Yes	75	31.1
	No	166	68.9
	Total	241	100.0
3. Have you ever lost your earning by taking time of your paid work due to your distance learning?	Yes	137	56.8
	No	104	43.2
	Total	241	100.0

As can be seen from Table 20, 59.3 per cent of the respondents reported that they faced financial problems in their distance study. Requested to indicate if they lost their earning due to their distance study, 56.8 per cent of the respondents reported that they lost their income due to spending their time of paid work for their distance study. Thus, from this we can deduce that financial constraints were major problems for distance learners in AUC in Addis Ababa.

Pertinent to their financial problems, respondents requested to indicate various costs that caused their financial problems. The data obtained from respondents' responses depicted in Table 21 below.

Table 21: Costs of respondents in their distance study

No.	Costs	No.*	%
1	Learning cost	108	44.8
2	Study materials costs	189	78.4
3	Communication (telephone and post)	211	87.5
4	Cost of travel to tutorials and exam	145	60.1

**The number of responses exceeds the total number of the respondents due to multiple responses*

As it is exhibited in Table 21, majority of the respondents indicated that cost of communications(87.5%), study materials costs(78.4%) and cost of travel to tutorials and exam centers(60.1%) mainly create financial problems in their study.

Moreover, an interview conducted with one of the coordinators indicated that though distance education is cost effective comparing to conventional education, many distance learners faced financial problems in the institution. Meanwhile one of the administrators indicated the institution sponsored more than 500 students who encountered financial problems but scored good results in their study. Similarly, one of the coordinators indicated that if students were in shortage of money, the college would give the chance to pay their fees until examination. He goes on to state that some students also get credits from their working institutions that resolve financial problems of their study.

4.2.3.3. Attitude of the Society towards Distance Education

The participants in this study also requested to indicate what kind of attitude the society has on distance education. The results obtained display in Table 22 below.

Table 22: Attitude of the Society towards distance education

Question Items	Responses	Frequency	%
1. Do you think that the society has negative attitude for distance learning?	Yes	141	58.5
	No	100	41.5
	Total	241	100.0
2. How do you rate yourself as distance student with respect to regular students?	as inferior	112	46.5
	as equal	103	42.7
	as superior	26	10.8
	Total	241	100.0

As it is shown in Table 22, 58.5 per cent of the respondents indicated that the society had negative attitude towards distance education. Further investigation, which demanded the respondents to specify what kind of impact create on them, was made. Accordingly, most of the subjects acknowledged that this negative attitude of the society affect their self-confidence. As one of the respondents explained, because of discouragement of his colleagues in work places, he forced to attend another extension class. Similarly, one of the respondents indicated that the society thought that distance mode of delivery is not

good and gave a nickname “wenchif” education. Thus, this affected his confidence being a distance student. Moreover, one of the respondents giving emphasis for the common saying, “Let an educated person kills me except through distance mode” of the society, he affirmed that it affected his motivation to attend the program. Therefore, it is easy to conclude that the negative attitudes of the society towards distance education and less value given to distance learners are the major constraints of distance learners in AUC in Addis Ababa.

In addition, an interview conducted with one of the administrators also indicated that the society has negative attitude on distance education. He goes on to state that even higher government officials and educated individuals had no good attitude towards distance education. This could be a constraint to distance graduate to get employment opportunities. Stockholders simply consider that obtaining a degree through distance mode as inferior to conventional one and giving priority to the latter during screening stage. Thus, this influenced the employability of distance learners and it has its own implication for those who exist in the program.

As Rumble (1992), a survey of employers conducted by the British Open University showed that half of them felt the university’s degree was worse. They thought that primarily because the degree was not obtained in an intellectual or academic environment and the degree is modular and not the outcome of a period of concentrated study.

Finally, in this study respondents were requested to suggest what they think to be solutions for the constraints of distance learners. They enumerated the following suggestions:

- Distance learner should improve their study habit, they should have self-respect for themselves, and they should be diligent and self-directed.
- The course materials should be attractive, easy to comprehend and delivered on time.
- Multi-media mode of delivery such as radio, audio cassettes, video and other supporting materials should be used in addition to modules.

- The institution should select effective and experienced tutors. Improve the quality of tutors through short-term trainings, particularly those inexperienced tutors.
- Additional tutorial sessions should be arranged to enhance the interaction between tutors and learners as well as among learners.
- Exam and assignment papers should be kept properly. Grade reports and results should be prepared and delivered on time. Senior essay should be part of the requirement for evaluation.
- Recording of grades and attendance should be improved. There should be computerized documentation system.
- The submission of assignment dates should be flexible and the assignment and final exam should cover different content of the instructional materials (modules) to reduce burdens/overload of distance learners.
- Improve handling of distance learners since we are adult. Bureaucracy should not be there when distance learners needed information and solutions for their problems.
- The institution should share experiences from other distance teaching colleges for the achievements of its educational programs and the fulfillment of learners need.
- The government and the concerned body should make strict follow up on private colleges and should give equal recognition with government educational institutions to change the attitude of the society towards distance education.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to gain some insight into the personal, institutional and socio-economic problems affecting degree level distance learners in AUC in Addis Ababa. This section summarizes the major findings and draw conclusions and recommendations.

5.1. Summary of the Findings

- In this study, a descriptive survey method of research was employed. To collect the necessary data, questionnaire, interview, and document inventory were used as instrument for the study. The subjects for this study were identified using random and stratified random sampling procedures.
- As it is shown in this study, the degree level distance learners in AUC were mainly adults and 39.4 per cent of the respondents were between the age of 30 and 39. It was found that, the majority of learners were male (66.8%), married (54%), and 26.5 percent of the respondents had work experience ranging from 11 to 15 years.
- As to the departmentalization of respondents, it was found out that 44.3% from Development Management, 28.5% from EDPM, 2.8% from Geography, 7.8% from Language, 6.9% from Marketing Management, 2% from Mathematics, 5.7% from Procurement and Supply Management, and 1.2% from Secretary Science and Office Management.
- It was found out in the study that 66.8 per cent of the respondents had diploma just before starting distance learning. Forty three per cent of the respondents spent 6 to 10 years to start their distance learning. Besides, majority of the respondents (54.8%) affirmed that their previous education had no relevance to their current study, but 38.2 per cent of the respondents acknowledged that they had somewhat adequate prior learning to their current study.

- According to the findings of the study, majority of distance learners in AUC in Addis Ababa had lack of study skills. Particularly, 66.8 per cent of the respondents reported that they lacked the ability to use different approaches and techniques for learning and study respectively. Moreover, 59.3 per cent of the respondents showed that they had problems in planning and organization of study program or time management. Similarly, 56 per cent of the respondents acknowledged that they lacked skills in writing well organized assignments. 58.1 per cent of the respondents also revealed that they had difficulties in self-discipline and perseverance.

- As to feeling of isolation of the respondents during their distance study, 63.5 per cent of the respondents asserted that they felt isolated from a teacher during their distance study. In addition, 51 per cent of the respondents showed that they felt isolated and alienated due to the absence of peer interaction during their distance study. Finally yet importantly, 50.6 per cent of the respondents revealed that less social interaction with the teaching institution had effect on their distance learning.

- Regarding respondents motivation towards their learning, the study revealed that most of distance learners in ACDS in Addis Ababa are externally motivated. Accordingly, 57.3 per cent of the respondents reported that they lacked behavioral quality to be willing to attend tutorials and actively participate in discussions. Besides, 56.8 per cent of the respondents reported that they lacked motivation to commit themselves to their study as required. Moreover, 54.4 per cent of the respondents acknowledged that they were not motivated to submit assessments on due date and ready to get feedbacks. In addition, most of the respondents reported that they are attending the program either to obtain a degree, to be eligible for promotion or to improve their salary.

- Problems identified by respondents which were related to course/instructional materials include: lack of clear indication of any prerequisite knowledge or skill for the course (68.9%), the instructional materials were not cater for different

learning preferences (66.4%), the instructional materials were not visually attractive(56.4%). Besides, the instructional materials are not broken into manageable study units (57.3), the instructional materials encourage surface learning rather than deep learning (64.3%) and there were no plenty of self-assessment tasks in the course materials (70.5%).

- As to the mode of delivery of instructional materials, 50.2 per cent of the respondents reported that they were sometimes delivered the instructional materials in time, 36.1 per cent of the respondents confirmed that they were always delivered the course materials in time. However, 13.7 per cent of the respondents claimed that they were never delivered the instructional materials in time. Besides, those respondents who claimed that they were never delivered the instructional materials in time, confirmed that unable to cover a module, faced more load on their study and score low performance due to delay of instructional materials their major problems.
- Concerning means of communication of respondents with the institution (AUC), 43.6 per cent of the respondents reported that they communicated with the institution by physical presence, 28.2 per cent of the respondents revealed that they communicated with the institution through postal service. Similarly, 28.2% of the respondents affirmed that they communicated with institution by telephone.
- According to the study, limited learning media (i.e. only print media), in adequate counseling service, inadequate tutorial sessions, lack of additional learning resources materials and poor quality of tutors are constraints of distance learners in AUC regarding the student support services. Specifically, 84.6 per cent of the respondents confirmed that there were no other learning media except print media, 46.9 per cent of the respondents reported that there was only one tutorial session for a course in a term. Besides, 36.9 per cent of the respondents revealed that they did not get any counseling service from either their tutor or any concerned body of the institution. Moreover, 94.2 per cent of the respondents reported that there were no audio/video room facilities in the branch and 75.1 per

cent of the respondents acknowledged that there were no sufficient reference materials in the branch. Regarding the quality or teaching effectiveness of tutors in face-to-face session, the results from respondents for five point Likert Scale showed under the weighted mean for seven items out of ten items that indicate tutors teaching effectiveness.

- In this study, it was revealed that worksheets and final exam are methods employed to assess academic achievements of distance learners (36.1%). The study also found out that only one assignment distance learners required to submit for a course in a semester (58.5%).
- Concerning how respondents did work their assignments, majority of the respondents claimed that they worked with their own effort (63.1%). As to what extents were they satisfied with the mark/grade assigned to their assignment/exam, 49.8 per cent of the respondents are satisfied to some extent. The impact of the mature of assessment was also evaluated. In this regard, the Weighted mean value indicated that absence of written feedback, improper registration of marks /grades and unable to get answer sheets and grade report on time were major constraints regarding assessment methods.
- Except two cases (59.8 % and 52.3%), more than 50 per cent of the respondents reported that they were unable to adjust their job and family responsibilities with their study. Due to involvement in household works (56.8%), involvement in work duties (59.8%) became exhausted physically and mentally because of excessive work (63.1%), involving in highly mobile job (57.3) and involvement in social and community participations (58.9%). Most of the respondents indicated that delay in submission of assignments, unable to attend tutorial sessions and poor performance faced during their study due to workloads and family responsibilities.
- According to this study, 59.3 per cent of the respondents revealed that they faced financial problems during their distance study. The majority of the respondents

ascribed their financial problems to costs of communication (87.5%), study materials costs (78.4%) and costs of travel to tutorials and exam centers (60.1%). However, 68.9 per cent of the respondents confirmed that they did not encounter increase of costs by the institution (AUC) in the mid-course of their study. Nevertheless, 56.8 per cent of the respondents revealed that they lost their earnings/income by taking time of their paid work or their business due to their distance study.

- This study revealed that negative attitude of the society towards distance education has effect on the success of distance learners. In this regards, 58.5 per cent of the respondents reported that the society had given less value to distance learners. As to the majority of the respondents, this affected their moral and confidence in their distance learning. Meanwhile, 46.5 per cent of the respondents indicated that they rated themselves as inferior, 42.7 per cent as equal and 10.8 per cent as superior with respect to conventional students.

5.2. Conclusions

Based of the findings presumed from the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

As the review of the related literature and the results of the study showed, personal constraints are factors influencing the achievement and success of distance learners. Lack of study skills, feeling of isolation and lack of motivation particularly intrinsic motivation have been major constraints of degree level distance learners of ACDS in Addis Ababa branch.

The study disclosed that institutional problems that related with instructional materials, mode of delivery, student support services and methods of assessment are major constraints of distance learners during their study. The finding of the study further revealed that limited means of mode of delivery of instructional materials and inadequate means of communication created problems such as unable to cover a module, exposed to more load and low performance in distance learners. Moreover, Lack of counseling service, limited tutorial sessions, lack of additional learning materials and poor quality of

tutors in teaching effectiveness were major constraints of distance learners in ACDS regarding the student support services.

The review of the related literature supported by the findings of the study indicated that socio-economic problems influenced the success of distance learners. Job and family responsibilities cause difficulties for distance learners of ACDS to adjust themselves with distance study. Financial problems due to costs of travel into tutorial and exam centers, costs of communication, and lose of their income because of spending their paid work time for distance learning were major financial constraints of distance learners. Besides, negative attitude of the society towards distance education discourage and create low confidence on distance learners.

5.3. Recommendations

The following recommendations are forwarded to alleviate the problems that hampered the success of degree level distance learners in AUC in Addis Ababa branch.

1. In essence, unable to attend a conventional institution, scheduling conflicts, etc., are what motivates students to choose distance education courses. However, it is important to note that distance education is not for everyone. Distance education courses are usually more time consuming and more demanding than traditional courses. It is therefore, important for the institution (AUC) to provide students with resources and counseling that will help them decide if distance education courses are rights for them. Counselors, academic advisors, course designers and administrators of the institution should develop a diagnostic and remedial program to assist students in organizing their time and energy toward a successful completion of their study program.
2. Distance education appears to be in unique position to serve diverse and adult learners who cannot participate in the traditional classroom setting. The findings of the study indicated that personal constraints were the major problems for distance learners. Thus, it is important to:

- a. Address the questions of who its learners are and what their needs are.
 - b. Determine how those needs can be met with regard to constraints of costs, technologies and geography.
 - c. Find appropriate ways of accommodating different style of learning and different needs of students from many various backgrounds, with different achievements on entry and study behaviors.
3. While it is apparent that a large number of methods could be used for delivering distance education, in practice print remains to be the bases of a large majority of distance programs. Developing high-level study material requires heavy investment in human capital, time and money, but cultivates and develops the self-esteem of learners. The findings of the study further revealed that certain aspects of the instructional materials of the institution were constraints for distance learners. Thus, it is recommended that the institution should:
 - a) Prepare learning materials/ modules in such a way that learners can easily and fully understand and utilize them.
 - b) Encourage practices such as timely distribution of courses materials and assignments to learners on time schedule.
 - c) Since the majority of distance learners are adults, the development of the course materials should take the recent best practices in curriculum development for effective learning by adults into considerations.
 - d) Existing course modules need to be printed at reasonably good standard to make them attractive and handy for learners.
4. The study revealed that distance learners feel isolated and alienated during their study. Thus, the loneliness of distance learners can be effectively compensated by creating opportunities for them to meet their tutors in person, discuss their problem, and exchange their views with other students. Therefore, the institution should facilitate availability of tutors in tutorial sessions and other conditions and create opportunities for learners to interact among themselves.

5. High self-motivation is required to complete distance courses because the day-to-day contact with instructors and other students is typically lacking. However, the study revealed that majority of distance learners lacked self-motivation. Therefore, tutors should motivate distance students by providing consistent and timely feedbacks, encouraging discussion among students, being well prepared for tutorial sessions, and by encouraging and reinforcing effective student study habit.
6. Nowadays, the information age challenges educators to rethink the strategies that they employ teaching distance learners. Educational quality can also be enhanced by the careful use of new information communication technologies in supporting the teaching learning process. However, the study showed that limited instructional media was one of the constraints of distance learners in the institution. Therefore, the institution (AUC) should:
 - a. Attempt to select the technology that well best meet its goals and objectives, that is available, user friendly, and that will be educationally sound as well as cost effective.
 - b. Introduce other technologies like audio, video, computer and internet for effective performance of distance learners.
 - c. Provide supplementary reading materials using audio cassettes and CD-ROMs.
7. Tutorial programs are meant to compensate the separation of learners from the teacher and to give the learners a chance to clarify their doubts and seek academic related counseling. However, the study discovered that inadequate tutorial sessions and quality of tutors were constraints of distance learners. Therefore, the frequency and duration of tutorial programs in the institution should be increased and the institution should give short-term trainings for tutors on how to teach and treat adult learners.
8. Tutors can maintain student self-esteem by providing timely feedback. It is critical for tutors to respond to student questions, assignments and concerns in a personalized and pleasant manner, using appropriate technology. Informative comment that elaborate on the individual learner's performance and suggest areas for improvement

are essentially helpful. Thus, timely feedback to learners' assignment is an essential factor for learners' achievement for degree level distance learners. Therefore, the institution should:

- a) Encourage tutors to correct the assignments in time.
- b) Send timely feedback of the assignments to distance learners.
- c) Facilitate that tutors spend significant time writing constructive and supportive comments to each distance learner's assignment.
- d) Encourage learners to submit their assignment in time and to get feedbacks.

9. Since distance-learning students are usually busy with family and job responsibilities, they do not have a lot of time to figure out the details of assignments and course logistics. Thus, the institution (AUC) makes sure that it provides a complete and detailed syllabus. Moreover, the institution should be flexible with student requests, be understanding, and make reasonable accommodations.
10. The institution should develop programs and services to enhance its academic status and social credibility and to enhance student satisfaction and commitment by giving emphasis for the achievements of its educational programs and the fulfillment of learners need.

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Appendences

Appendix A: Questionnaire filled by Distance Learners

Appendix B: Interview Guides for Course Tutors

Appendix C: Interview Guides for Coordinators and Administrators

Appendix D: Tutors Evaluation List of the Institution

Appendix A: Questionnaire to be filled by distance learners

College of Education
School of Graduate Studies
Addis Ababa University
Department of Curriculum and Teachers Professional Development Studies
Adult and Lifelong Learning unit
Questionnaire to be filled by distance Learners

Objective

The main objective of this questionnaire is to collect primary data for the study on '*An Assessment of Constraints of Distance Learners: The Case of Alpha University College in Addis Ababa*'. Moreover, the study focuses on personal, institutional, socio economic problems of distance students. It is initiated to obtain the necessary data from you, as a vital source of information for this study. Thus, your frank and genuine response will contribute much to the study. Be confident that the information you provided will be kept confidential and used **only** for academic purpose.

Direction

- i) No need of writing your name
- ii) Please, indicate your response by putting a tick (✓) Marks where appropriate, and give short and clear answers in space provided for question items that require your opinion.

Thank you in advance!

Part I. General Information

1. Place

Region _____ Zone _____ Woreda _____ city/town _____

2. Sex 1. Male ☐ 2. Female ☐

3. Age

1. <20 years ☐ 4. 41-50 years ☐

2. 21-30 years ☐ 5. > 51 years ☐

3. 31-40 years ☐

4. Marital Status

1. Married ☐ 2. Single ☐ 3. Divorced ☐

5. Work experience (in years)

1. < 5 years ☐ 4. 16-20 years ☐

2. 6-10 years ☐ 5. 21-25 years ☐

3. 11-15 years ☐ 6. > 26 years ☐

6. Department _____

Part II. Personal Constraints

2.1. Previous Educational Background

2.1.1. What was your level of education before you just started distance learning?

1. Twelve/preparatory complete ☐ 4. Degree ☐

2. Certificate ☐ 5. MA/MSc and above ☐

3. Diploma ☐ 6. If any other _____

2.1.2. How many years you spent to start your distance learning after completion of your previous education?

1. One year ☐ 3. 6-10 years ☐

2. 2-5 years ☐ 4. > 11 years ☐

2.1.3. Is your previous educational background has relevance to your present learning?

1. Yes ☐

2. No ☐

2.1.4. If your response for Q. 2.1.3 is 'No', is there a problem that creates on you?

Please specify _____

2.1.5. How do you evaluate your prior learning (academic) level in meeting the academic requirement of your distance learning?

1. Adequate ☐ 2. Somewhat adequate ☐ 3. Inadequate ☐

2.2. Lack of Study Skill

2.2.1. Please, indicate if you have a problem in lacking the following study skills for your distance learning by making a tick (✓) mark in the appropriate box (i.e. tick in 'Yes' if you have a problem in study skill and tick in 'No' if you don't have).

S.N	Major problems	Yes	No
1	Planning and organization of study program(Good time management and ability to use your out-of-work-time to study your course material)		
2	using different approaches to learning and using good techniques of study		
3	ability to take notes and locate learning resources		
4	effective reading skill		
5	skills in writing well organized report for your assignment		
6	ability to work independently		
7	self-discipline, motivation and perseverance		

2.3. Feeling of Isolation and Alienation

2.3.1. Please indicate if you have a problem with the following conditions of distance education by making a tick (✓) mark in the appropriate box (i.e. tick "Yes" if you have the problem and "No" if you do not have).

S.N	Conditions	Yes	No
1	Isolation from a teacher		
2	Absence of peer interaction		
3	privatization of the study process		
4	Less interaction into the social system of the teaching institution		

2.4. Motivation

2.4.1. Please indicate if you have the following behavioral qualities or motivations by making a tick (✓) mark in the appropriate box (i.e. tick "Yes" if you have the quality and "No" if you don't have).

S.N	Items	Yes	No
1	Able to commit myself to my study as required		
2	ready in understanding the subject matter in each lesson of learning		
3	willing to raise questions to my tutor whenever necessary		
4	Willing to attend and actively participate in class room discussion during the face-to-face tutorial session		
5	able to submit assignment on due date and ready to get feedbacks		
6	Preparation for exams		

2.4.2. What aspects motivate you to attend the program? (More than one answer is possible)

1. ☐ to obtain degree
2. ☐ to eligible for promotion
3. ☐ to obtain (re) employment or job security
4. ☐ to upgrade knowledge
5. ☐ to improve salary
6. ☐ to develop professionally
7. ☐ to personal enrichment

Part III. Institutional Constraints

3.1. Instructional /course materials

3.1.1. Below questions are needing your response concerning the quality of instructional/course materials. Please give your response making a tick (✓) mark in the appropriate box.

S.N	Items	Yes	No
Intended Learning Outcomes			
1	Is there a clear indication of any prerequisite knowledge or skill?		
2	Are the intended learning outcomes stated clearly?		
3	Are the intended learning outcomes presented in a meaningful and relevant way?		
Structure, Layout and Learning design			
4	Are the instructional materials catering for different learning preferences?		
5	Are the materials visually attractive		
6	Is there sufficient white space in the materials?		
7	Is the material broken into manageable chunks (division of materials into study units)?		
Learning by doing (active learning)			
8	Are the materials encouraged deep learning rather than surface learning?		
9	Are there plenty of self-assessment tasks to do?		
10	Are the tasks clear and unambiguous?		
11	Are the questions and tasks inviting?		
12	Is the task practically possible for distance learners?		

3.2. Mode of Delivery and means of communication

3.2.1. Do you get the instructional materials delivered in time?

1. Always ☐ 2. Sometimes ☐ 3. Never ☐

3.2.2. If your response Q. 2.3.1 is 'Never' what does it result in your learning? [More than one answer is possible]

1. Delay in graduation ☐ 2. More load ☐
3. Unable to cover a module ☐ 4. Low performance ☐
5. If any others _____

3.2.3. What means of communication do you most use to contact with the institution?

1. Through postal service ☐ 3. By telephone ☐
2. Physical presence (face-to-face) ☐ 4. If any other _____

3.2.4. What learning media are available other than print media (Modules)? Put a tick (✓) mark.

1. Radio transmissions ☐ 4. Online/ network ☐
2. Tape Cassettes ☐ 5. No other media ☐
3. Television/video ☐

3.3. Student Support System

3.3.1. How often do you get counseling service from the institution?

1. ☐ Always (whenever there is the need)
2. ☐ Most of the time
3. ☐ Sometimes
4. ☐ Rarely (seldom)
5. ☐ Not at all

3.3.2. How many tutorial sessions are conducted in a term/semester?

1. Four ☐ 2. Three ☐ 3. Two ☐ 4. One ☐

3.3.3. Availability and use of learning resource materials. Please mark a tick (✓) mark in the box.

S.N	<i>Types of learning resources (materials) in the branch</i>	Yes	No
1	Is there a library in the branch?		
2	Are there sufficient reference materials in the branch?		
3	Are there audio/video room facilities in the branch?		
4	Do you have an access to computer/ internet facilities in the branch?		

3.3.4. The statements listed below are about related to teaching effectiveness of tutors. Please rate their level of performance. The numbers indicate (5= **Excellent**, 4= **V. good**, 3= **good**, 2= **fair**, 1= **poor**)

S.N	Statements	Rank				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	Knowledge on the subject matter					
2	Teaching skill and preparation					
3	Punctuality					
4	Enthusiasm					
5	Encourage more student participation					
6	Helping less achieving students					
7	Attempt to take the students' personal experience as the basis for discussion in face-to-face session.					
8	Skill of exam preparation					
9	Supportive and tolerate to the student problem					
10	Ability in counseling					

3.4. Methods of Assessment

3.4.1. What methods are employed to assess the academic achievement of distance learners?

1. ☐ Worksheet (assignment for submission)
2. ☐ Final examination
3. ☐ Project work
4. ☐ All
5. Others if any _____

3.4.2. How many assignments do you submit for a course in a term?

1. Three ☐
2. Two ☐
3. One ☐
4. None ☐

3.4.3. How do you work your assignments?

1. ☐ with my own effort
2. ☐ Depending on the assistance of others
3. ☐ Collaborate with my colleagues
4. If any other _____

3.4.4. To what extent are you satisfied with the mark/grade assigned to your assignment/exam?

1. Fully ☐

3. To some extent ☐

2. Moderately ☐

4. Not at all ☐

3.4.5. Below are statements, which need your response, concerning the nature of continuous assessment. Please give your response by putting a tick (✓) mark. The numbers indicate (5=Strongly agree, 4= Agree, 3=Undecided, 2= Disagree 1=Strongly disagree).

S.N	Statements	Rank				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	Linked with intended learning outcomes					
2	Carefully designed questions					
3	Use diversified methods of assessment					
4	Giving written feedback					
5	Marks registered properly					
6	Answer sheets returned properly					

Part IV. Socio-economic Constraints

4.1. Balancing work and family responsibilities with study

4.1.1. As various literatures suggest, the following are some of work and family responsibility related factors that might affect distance students success in their learning. Please, indicate if you have the following problems by making a tick (✓) mark in the appropriate box (i.e. tick 'Yes' if you have the problems and 'No' if you don't have).

S.N	Obstacles	Yes	No
1	Involvement in household chores		
2	Obstacle from spouse and other family members		
3	Involvement in work duties in out-of-work time		
4	Being physically and mentally exhausted due to excessive work		
5	Unsupportive employer (unable to get permission from ones boss)		
6	Engaged in highly mobile job		
7	Involvement in social and community participation		

4.1.2. What kind of problems have you faced due to unable to balance work and family responsibilities with your study? {More than one answer is possible}

1. ☐ Delay in submission of assignment

2. ☐ Not attending tutorial sessions.

3. ☐ Not attending final examination

4. ☐ Poor performance/results

5. ☐ Quitting distance learning

6. If any other _____

4.2. Financial Constraints

4.2.1. Have you ever faced any financial problems in your distance study?

1. Yes ☐

2. No ☐

4.2.2. If your response to Q. 4.2.1 is 'yes', please indicate to the following costs by putting a tick (✓) mark.

1. ☐ Learning cost

2. ☐ Study material costs

3. ☐ Communication (telephone and post) costs

4. ☐ Cost of travel to tutorials and exam centers

5. If other please specify _____

4.2.3. Have you ever encountered increase of costs by the institution in the mid-course of your study?

1. Yes ☐

2. No ☐

4.2.4. Have you ever lost your earning (salary, wage, income) by taking time of your paid work due to your distance learning?

1. Yes ☐

2. No ☐

4.3 Negative Attitude of the Society

4.3.1. Do you think that the society has negative attitude for distance learners?

1. Yes ☐

2. No ☐

4.3.2. If your response to Q. 4.3.1 is 'Yes', what kind of impact creates on you? Please specify_____

4.3.3. How do you rate your self as distance student with respect to regular (conventional) students?

1. ☐ as inferior (lesser)

2. ☐ as equal

3. ☐ as superior (higher)

4. If any other_____

5. What do you suggest to solve/reduce constraints of distance learners?

Appendix B: Interview Guides for Course Tutors

College of Education School of Graduate Studies

Addis Ababa University

Department of Curriculum and Teachers Professional

Development Studies

Adult and Lifelong Learning unit

Interview Guide for course Tutors

Objective

The main purpose of the study is to gather information on the constraints of AUC distance learners in Addis Ababa. Thus, as a tutor of the college, it is hoped that the success of the study depends mainly on the information you provide.

Therefore,

1. Would you please tell me what kind of personal problems, distance students encountered?
 - ✓ Concerning about their previous educational background.
 - ✓ How do you evaluate their problems in relation to lack of study skill?
 - ✓ How do you evaluate distance students' motivation and capacity to learn?
2. Would you please, explain to me institutional problems of distance students in your college?
 - ✓ Can most students follow through the instructional materials without facing problems in comprehending the basic ideas of a course? If no why?
 - ✓ In what ways the institution gives support for distance learners?
 - ✓ In dealing with assessments, what are the major problems encountered by learners?
3. What adjustments do you make in your teaching approach in your face-to-face tutorial sessions in addressing the different learning styles of your students?
4. Would you please identify major socio-economic problems of distance students?
5. What should have been done in solving some of the constraints of distance learners?
6. Do you have any other idea or suggestion on the matter?

Appendix C: Interview Guides for Coordinators and Administrators

College of Education
School of Graduate Studies
Addis Ababa University
Department of Curriculum and Teachers Professional Development Studies
Adult and Lifelong Learning unit
Interview Guide for Coordinators and Administrators

Objective

The main purpose of the study is to gather information on constraints (personal, institutional and socio-economic) of distance learners in Addis Ababa: the case of Alpha University College. Thus, as a coordinator and administrator for the implementation of the program of the University College in this centre, the information you give is much vital for the success of the study.

Thus,

1. How do you evaluate your students regarding,
 - educational level,
 - study skills, and
 - motivation, as their problems of learning?
2. Do the beneficiaries (distance learners) participate in the planning of distance education programs? If no why?
3. Would you please, explain what have been used to maintain the match between the objectives and contents of the distance course materials?
4. What kind of problems distance learners encountered to communicate with the University College?

5. What do you say regarding problems related to student support services concerning:
 - the convenience of the location of the tutorial/exam centre
 - the quality of learners support
 - tutor selection and recruitment
 - Preparedness and availability of tutors.
6. What assessment methods are you implemented? Do you think that it is convenient to student, concerning:
 - using diversified assessment methods
 - evaluation methods (grading/marking)
 - recording of marks
 - feedback and assignments turn-round time
7. How do you evaluate the socio-economic problems of your student?
8. If you have any other idea or suggestion on the matter.
9. Would you please suggest ideas that can help to improve the teaching learning process of the College of Distance Studies to reduce constraints of distance learners?

Appendix D: Tutors Evaluation List

የቱቶር መገምገሚያ ነጥቦች በቅርንጫፍ ጽ/ቤት የሚሞላ

ቱቶሩ የሚሰጠው የትምህርት አይነት _____

ተ.ቁ	የመገምገሚያ ነጥቦች	ማርክ				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	የኮሌጁን ተልዕኮ በተግባር ለማዋል ያለው ፍላጎት፤					
2.	የቱቶርያል አገልግሎት ፕሮግራምን ማክበሩ ፤					
3.	ቱቶርያል የሚሰጥበትን የመማሪያ መጽሐፍ እና ንዑስ ፈተና ገምግሞ አስተያየት ማቅረቡ፤					
4.	ያረማቸውን ንዑስ ፈተናዎች ሳይጎድል ማስረከብና ውጤቶችንም በፎርማቱ መሰረት በወቅቱ ሪፖርት ማድረጉ፤					
5.	ኮሌጁ በሚጠይቀው የሙያ ትብብርና ድጋፍ ያለው ፈቃደኝነት፤					
6.	ሙያውን በሥልጠናና በተለያዩ መንገድ ለማሻሻል ያለው ፍላጎት/ጥረት፤					

ተጨማሪ አስተያየት _____

ውጤት

ድምር _____

ማዕከላዊ ውጤት _____

የገምጋሚው

ስም _____

ፊርማ _____

ቀን _____

Declaration

I, the undersigned declare that this thesis is my original work and has never been presented for the degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged

Name Himesen Eshetu
Signature [Signature]
Date 12/02/08

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

Name: Dr. Eagavalli K.

Signature _____

Date of submission _____

