

## **SWOT ANALYSIS OF MA EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME OF ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD**

**Dr. S. Manzoor Hussain SHAH  
Muazzam Ali SAQIB  
Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad,  
PAKISTAN**

### **ABSTRACT**

The major objectives of the study were to explore various internal aspects of the MA Educational Planning and Management (EPM) programme of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), Islamabad to find its strengths and weaknesses, and to look into external aspects for identifying the opportunities and threats to the programme. Based on the study, a number of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were found which provided a basis for reviewing and revising a number of components of the programme. The study explored the various aspects of MA EPM programme of AIU in the light of programme objectives as well as the national and international needs with special considerations to a distance education programme.

The finding of the study revealed recognition of a number of strengths and opportunities of the programme related to enrolment, workshops, examination, job placement, job satisfaction, and performance of the graduates in a competitive environment. At the same time, the study reflected few weaknesses and threats to the programme associated with the written assignments, tutors, study material, study tours, relevance of the curriculum to local needs, need to update the content, and revision of the curriculum. Recommendations of the study include periodically revising the curriculum, upgrading the courses books, improving the evaluation methods of assignments, introducing more activities for both learning and evaluation, and including study tours in the workshops. The study also recommended the EPPSL department to induct part-time/visiting faculty members in emergency situations to achieve the programme objectives. The researcher further recommended the EPPSL department to maintain the record of the graduates for prompt access to them for research purposes and to train the students for offering more cooperation with the researchers. More follow-up studies may be conducted to determine the viability and impact of EPM programmes of AIU on the society.

**Keywords:** Programme, Assignment, Workshop, Resource Person, Educational Planning and Management (EPM), Graduates

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education, generally, is a means of transmitting knowledge, attitudes and skills from one generation to another. According to Oxford English Dictionary (1989, p.385) education is "training and instruction designed to give knowledge and develop skills". Education in the largest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character, or physical ability of an individual.

**In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, and values from one generation to another.**

**Thus education is responsible for a permanent change in attitude and behavior of an individual that is needed for personal as well as social adjustment of an individual. Education however is not to be strictly associated with the means it is transmitted through. The main focus is on the objectives and impact of any system and mode of education. Albert Einstein is of the view that "Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school" ([www.brainyquote.com](http://www.brainyquote.com)).**

**This fact leads to discovery and invention of modern ways of education which suit every set of circumstances man has ever to come across. Non Formal Education (NFE) or more specifically Distance Education is therefore taken as emerging way of education for their flexibility and adaptability. Pakistan has a great reservoir of the agencies and organizations through which NFE programmes can be launched.**

**In Pakistan, a number of non-formal educational programmes have been initiated at times both by public and private agencies. Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), established in 1972 is the pioneer and one of the greatest non formal educational systems in Pakistan and has been imparting education under various disciplines over the last 4 decades. In AIU, the institute of education had been working since 1976. In 1984 it was changed to Faculty of Education which is successfully operating since then. The department of Educational Planning and Management (EPM) started working in 1976 in the institute of Education. MA EPM was the first master degree programme of AIU which was launched soon after the university was established, (Prospectus Faculty of Education AIU, 2010). Since then the department is getting around 200 students enrolled in MA EPM programme every year.**

**Hence for the last 35 years, AIU has been producing professionals for educational planning and management. On combining few related areas of studies the name of the department has now been changed from EPM to Educational Planning, Policy Studies and Leadership (EPPSL).**

**A programme with more than 35 years of age requires its evaluation and revision a number of times. MA EPM is the oldest master degree programme of AIU. When it was launched, there was no other master level programme in the university to be compared with and to learn from. Furthermore there was no other institution in the country offering the similar programmes; this made it even harder to understand the advantages and disadvantages associated with the programme in the current circumstances of the country and the region. Moreover no significant studies were made to analyze and evaluate the programme in the later years as well. This called for a need of reviewing and analyzing the master degree programme of EPM department. SWOT analysis is a useful way to discuss the prospects and problems of a programme like MA EPM. It is one of the modern techniques of identifying and relating the strengths and problems associated to operation of an organization.**

**The purpose of this technique is to find a base to make a strategic plan for the organization's development. SWOT Analysis has been conducted by a number of organizations and educational programmes for improving their performance and overcoming the deficiencies.**

These studies include SWOT Analysis of the department of Kinesiology & Physical Education, Michigan Technical University (MTU), Frederick Country Ag Education Programme, B.Ed programme in Govt. College of Education, Afzalpur AJK, The Department of Education, Sargodha University, and M.Ed programme of AIOU. Amir, (2010) has also conducted SWOT analysis of another advanced programme of EPM i.e. M. Phil EPM. These studies have reflected a number of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which could be considered for further strategic planning of these organizations and programmes. Hence SWOT Analysis of MA EPM programme was identified to be very important means to assess the overall viability of the programme and to develop new strategies for its development if needed.

## **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Educational Planning and Management (EPM) a Comprehensive Approach**

Planning and management in education are the interrelated acts for achieving the educational objectives. The process of planning contributes to achieve the objectives by making advance preparations for the purpose where as management contributes by directing and controlling the implementation (Pervaiz, 2007 p.37). Planning is a complex process which requires a large number of factors to be considered. According to Haddad (1995, p.7). Planning entails a variety of processes, from the analysis of the present situation, the generation and assessment of policy options, to the careful preparation and monitoring of policy implementation, eventually leading to the redefinition of a new policy cycle. A variety of players intervene in these processes and if their interests are not carefully assessed and taken care of, then the policy or the plan will have every chance of failing. ([www.unesco.org/education](http://www.unesco.org/education))It is therefore necessary that planning should always be considered keeping in view all its complicated processes. The scope of planning is not limited to the traditional institutionalized setup anymore. While discussing the scope of educational planning as quoted by Haddad (1995, p.5), Hallak further stated:

The scope of educational planning has been broadened. In addition to the formal system of education, it is now applied to all other important educational efforts in non formal settings. Attention to the growth and expansion of educational systems is being complemented and sometimes even replaced by a growing concern for the quality of the entire educational process and for the control of its results.

Educational Planning is now considered to be an important factor towards educational development and should therefore be given significant role in the overall planning of education. According to (Prakash, V. 2008, p.1) a Working Party Report of the UNESCO states, "... educational planning is not an isolated activity ... it must be undertaken in the framework of comprehensive development planning, and must be viewed in the larger context of all the steps required for effective educational development."

## **EPM IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**

A large number of organizations, societies and forums have been established for the purpose of planning and management in education both for national and international needs. It is therefore of great importance to study the various activities and organizations of educational planning and management before one proceeds to evaluate any study program related to educational planning and management.

The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), The International Society for Educational Planning (ISEP), and The Academy of Educational Planning and management (AEPAM) are few of the institutes working in the field of EPM in collaboration with UNESCO and other related organizations. ( [www.aepam.edu.pk](http://www.aepam.edu.pk)).

In order to understand how an EPM program for a university should be developed to serve especially in developing countries, it is useful to study the guidelines or objectives of various related agencies and universities educating EPM. A number of institutions/universities in developing countries are offering programmes of EPM at undergraduate and graduate level.

These institutes include Bahir Dar University Ethiopia ([www.bdu.edu.et](http://www.bdu.edu.et)), National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) India ([www.nuepa.org](http://www.nuepa.org)), American University of Beirut (AUB) ([www.aub.edu.lb](http://www.aub.edu.lb)), University of Education (UE) Pakistan ([www.ue.edu.pk](http://www.ue.edu.pk)), Superior Group of Colleges, Pakistan ([www.superior.edu.pk](http://www.superior.edu.pk)), National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Pakistan ([www.numl.edu.pk](http://www.numl.edu.pk)), and Allama Iqbal Open University (AIIOU) Pakistan([www.aiou.edu.pk](http://www.aiou.edu.pk)). Most of the universities have almost similar aims and objectives that can best be represented by the aims and objectives of Advanced Training Programme of IIEP.

### **ADVANCED TRAINING PROGRAMME (ATP), IIEP**

Through annual Advanced Training Programme (ATP) launched in 1965, IIEP trains educational planners and managers to analyze education systems, formulate policies, develop plans and programmes, and manage and monitor their implementation. The ATP started as a certificate programme in 1965 and, following its success and considerable demands from member states, the institute introduced a diploma in 1999. Since 2002, the IIEP Advanced Training Programme provides a master's degree option, open to those who obtain the required scores in the courses.([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org), p.2)The advanced training programme of IIEP aims at:

- Reviewing theories and approaches in current educational planning and management
- Strengthening core competencies in sector diagnosis and policy formulation
- Developing skills for strategic management and leadership in education
- Providing tools for building and using information systems for decision making and educational policy analysis
- Developing skills for monitoring and evaluating educational programmes and projects
- Developing competencies for undertaking educational research
- Fostering comparative perspectives on education through course work, interaction with other trainees from different parts of the world, and study visits to two UNESCO Member States. ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org), p. 3)

### **FUNDAMENTALS OF EPM**

In order to identify the real up-to-date issues in educational planning and policy making in different parts of the world, to support IIEP an editorial board has been appointed, composed of two general editors and associate editors from different regions, all professionals of high repute in their own field.

At the first meeting of this new editorial board in January 1990, its members identified key topics to be covered in the coming issues under the following headings:

- Education and development
  - Equity considerations
  - Quality of education
  - Structure, administration and management of education
  - Curriculum
  - Cost and financing of education
  - Planning techniques and approaches
  - Information systems, monitoring and evaluation
- [www.unesco.org/education](http://www.unesco.org/education)

## SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) came from the research conducted by Albert S Humphrey and his team at Stanford Research Institute from 1960-1970. The research was funded by the fortune 500 companies to find out why corporate planning failed and what could be done about this failure. Albert S Humphrey is therefore considered to be the founder of SWOT Analysis. ([www.businessballs.com](http://www.businessballs.com)) SWOT profile uses a very simple framework as shown in the following figure.

	Positive	Negative
Internal Factors	Strengths	Weaknesses
External Factors	Opportunities	Threats

Figure: 1  
[www.entrepreneurstoolkit.org](http://www.entrepreneurstoolkit.org)

An important advantage of SWOT Analysis is its simplicity; most of the stakeholders can understand the findings of SWOT Analysis without necessarily having much technical knowledge. It further makes it easy to relate the findings, draw conclusions, and develop new strategies in a very simple way. Thus one of the most important merits of SWOT

Analysis is that it does not require any specific qualification or technical experience for utilizing its outcomes. The attractions of SWOT Analysis are that this technique is familiar and easily understandable by users and it provides a good structuring device for sorting out ideas about the future and an organization's ability to exploit that future.

The reason why it has become so widely known is because of its inherent attractions, which include the facts that the technique is simple enough in concept to be immediately and readily accessible to managers.

And finally SWOT analysis provides us with a device to structure the awkward mixture of quantitative and qualitative information, of familiar and unfamiliar facts, of known and half-known understandings that marks strategic marketing planning. (Piercy & Giles, 1989, p.6)

The SWOT analysis is self-assessment data collection exercise for an organization. It should be followed by more comprehensive analysis which feed into a strategic plan.

This should consider how to build on strengths, address the weaknesses, make the most of the opportunities identified, or reduce the impact of potential threats.  
([www.beecoop.co.uk](http://www.beecoop.co.uk))

## **SWOT ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

According to Hunter Taylor ([www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com)), the following questions/factors should be kept in mind while identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for SWOT Analysis of educational institutions.

### **Strengths/Weaknesses**

An institution can identify its strengths by asking questions such as "What does the institution do better than anyone else" or "What advantages does the institution have?" A weakness for an academic institution could be its course offerings.

For example, online institutions do not offer as many diverse courses as traditional brick-and-mortar institutions.

### **Opportunities/Threats**

What societal trends is occurring that the institution is not taking advantage of or what opportunities are being missed? An opportunity for an institution could be to offer courses to senior adults. A decrease in financial aid funding could affect a institution's budget.

### **Factors Specific to Study Programmes**

In SWOT analysis for managing vocational and technical education (VTE) programmes for improved efficiency in Nigeria, Adepoju and Famade (p.359) suggested that SWOT should cover all of the following areas, each of which may be a source of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats.

#### **Internal Environment of the Institution**

The internal environment of the institution provides a number of factors that normally are related to strengths and weakness of the study programme. These factors include faculty and staff, classrooms, laboratories and facilities (the learning environment), current students, operating budget, various committees, and research programmes.

#### **External Environment of the Institution**

The external factors which are usually related to opportunities and threats to the programme include prospective employers of graduates, parents and families of students, competing colleges, preparatory high schools, population demographics, and funding agencies (Adepoju and Famade, 2010, p.359)

### **Some SWOT Studies on Educational Programmes**

SWOT analysis being a very useful technique has been practiced by innumerable organizations to find out their positive and negative aspects and to utilize the findings for organization's development. Some of the important SWOT studies conducted by different organizations are presented as follows. This would certainly a useful attempt to understand how SWOT analysis has been applied and utilized by various organizations.

#### **SWOT Analysis on the national Lifelong Learning (LLL) Strategies of Slovak Republic**

In Slovakia, the SWOT analysis in term of lifelong learning (LLL) and lifelong guidance (LLG) was created in years 2004-2006. This original SWOT analysis is the part of the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance. The original SWOT analysis was elaborated as the basis for the creation of the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance. This study led to certain findings in terms of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. ([www.cbi-nlls.net](http://www.cbi-nlls.net))

#### **SWOT Analysis for Frederick County Ag Education Programs**

In 2008 The Agricultural Education Program Advisory Committee (PAC) decided to conduct Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis for the Agriculture Education programs in Frederick County. A number of important discoveries were found on the basis of this study. ([www.discoverfrederickmd.com](http://www.discoverfrederickmd.com))

#### **SWOT Analysis of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) Programmes in Nigeria**

In 2010, a research paper "The application of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis for managing vocational and technical education (VTE) programmes for improved efficiency in Nigeria" was developed by Adepoju and Famade. In the context of this paper, SWOT was presented for use as a decision-making strategy. An insight into the wide range of the potential applications of SWOT analysis was also the thrust of the paper. As conclusion, the SWOT Analysis was identified as very useful tool for decision making. ([www.academicjournals.org](http://www.academicjournals.org))

#### **SWOT Analysis of Michigan Technological University (MTU)**

The self study report of Michigan Technological University (MTU) highlights different points which were identified in the SWOT Analysis. On the basis of these finding a detailed action plan was developed which was to be integrated into the strategic planning process for 1998/99. ([www.admin.mtu.edu](http://www.admin.mtu.edu))

#### **SWOT Analysis of M.Ed Programme of AIU**

SWOT analysis of M.Ed. Programme of AIU was presented by Tahir (2009). The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats found in the study provided a base for improvements in the programme where needed. ([www.scribd.com](http://www.scribd.com))

#### **SWOT Analysis of M.Phil EPM programme of Allama Iqbal Open University**

SWOT analysis of M.Phil EPM programme of AIU was conducted by Shazia Amer (2010).

The major Objectives of the study were to asses the impact of EPM training on the performance of graduates and to identify the contribution of the programme towards better placement of graduates.

The study focused on the following assumptions about each of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

## **NON FORMAL EDUCATION (NFE)**

As the programme under consideration i.e. MA EPM of AIOU is launched through distance learning under Non Formal Education (NFE) system, it is necessary to understand the important features and considerations to NFE particularly in Pakistan. According to Mujahid and Iqbal (2004, p.8) the non formal education in Pakistan is introduced as:

Technically, non-formal education comprises all those educational activities (at all levels such as primary education, vocational training, adult literacy, functional literacy, etc.) which fall "outside" the purview of the formal standardized education system, endorsed by the Government of Pakistan or an international examination syndicate/board. In Pakistan, non-formal education is generally provided through:

- Non-formal basic education community or "home schools";
- Vocational/skill training centres/institutes;
- Adult literacy/functional literacy centres; and
- "Deeni madrassah" or religious schools.([www.paklife.net](http://www.paklife.net))

## **IMPORTANT FEATURES OF DISTANCE LEARNING**

As the programme under consideration i.e. MA EPM of AIOU is launched through distance learning under Non Formal Education (NFE) system, it is useful to understand the important features and considerations to distance learning system.

As stated by Dib (1988, p.4), the three universally accepted features of distance learning are as follows:

- Typical of the whole distance study is that it is based on non-contiguous communication, i.e., the learner is at a distance from the teacher for much, most or even all of the time during the teaching-learning process.
- A pre-produced course, as self-instructional as possible, printed and/or consisting of presentation brought about by other means than print (audio or video-tapes, radio or TV programmes, etc.) guides the study.
- Organized non-contiguous two-way communication is a constitutive element of distance study. It is in most cases principally brought about by assignments for submission for the students to solve and answer and for the tutors to comment on (in writing or on audio-tape), but freer forms of communication also occur.

### **Basic Responsibilities of Distance Learning Programme**

As the basic responsibilities, a distance learning system or programme should effectively manage certain activities. These activities are performed to ensure the smooth operation of the programme and achievement of the objectives of the programme.

As mentioned by Dib (1988, p.4), distance learning is comprised of the development and technical production of distance study courses, the distribution of course materials, the non-contiguous two-way communication between students and tutors/counselors, and record-keeping.



In some case, other activities may be required, as for instance course certificate, examination and degrees, and supplementary face-to-face contacts between students and tutors/counselors.

### **Key Assessment Areas-Concluded from the Literature**

In connection to the literature reviewed above, the SWOT Analysis of MA EPM programme would be based on the following assumed areas for identification of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the programme.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

The strengths and weakness of the programme may be studied with reference to:

- **Factors related to general perception about the programme: what people know about the programme and how they rate it among the other similar programmes.**
- **Factors regarding the access to the programme: it includes the publicity, admission criteria and admission process.**
- **Quality of curriculum, faculty, and the overall teaching learning environment**
- **Relevance of the curriculum to the national needs and objectives: it provides a base for measuring the impact of the programme on the education system.**
- **Suitability of the students to the requirements, expectations, and demands of the programme: it determines whether the students can easily meet the requirements for understanding the content, and practicing the various activities of the programme.**
- **Factors related to completion of the programme and dropouts: it deals with the factors related to successful completion of the programme and also the reasons and remedies of the dropout problems.**
- **Extent of achieving the objectives: the level and the extent to which the programme is useful in achieving the objectives specified in the curriculum.**

### **Opportunities and Threats**

The following important points may be considered while identifying the opportunities and opportunities to the programme:

- **University's management structure and facilities: it deals with the coordination and integration with other programmes, and also the overall circumstances and rules of the university associated with the students' future.**
- **Factors related to further education and job placement**
- **New emerging institutions with identical programmes**
- **Trends of the society**
- **National needs and circumstances: it deals with the significance and importance of the programme at national level. It also includes the problems related to recognition of the programme when compared with the equivalent programmes of other universities or in other fields.**

- **International needs and circumstances: whether the programme addresses the problems and issues of international community or is related to national need only. It also included the relevance of the international efforts and researches in EPM with the content of the programme.**
- **Effects of development in educational technology: it attempts to determine the extent to which the programme strategies are suitable to the emerging instructional technologies.**
- **Formal versus Non Formal conflicts and perception of the job offering agencies: it covers the likely conflicts in the systems of formal and non-formal education. This also includes the general perception about the quality, methods, teachers, study hours, and most of all the devotion and caliber of the clientele in both the system.**

The key assessment areas identified above are useful to proceed for developing a research tool and analyzing the data obtained through it for evaluating the programme i.e. MA EPM programme of AIOU, through SWOT analysis.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the study were to:

- **Assess the strengths of MA EPM Programme of AIOU**
- **Point out the weaknesses, if any, in MA EPM Programme**
- **Identify opportunities to meet the future managerial requirements for further expansion, and accessibility of the programme**
- **Analyze the problems and external constraints, if any, of the MA EPM Programme**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The population of the study comprises 266 graduates of MA EPM program of the sessions 2007-2009, 2008-2010, and 2009-2011. Many of the addresses of the graduates provided by EPPSL department of AIOU were related to their work positions. Due to changes in jobs, transfers, or shifting of the offices, these addresses were likely to be changed over the period of many years.

Therefore the researcher did not have equal chances to approach each and every member of the population after their graduation. This limitation called for a need of convenience sampling and the graduates with permanent addresses were considered to be conveniently accessible by the researcher. In view to the above, 38% of the population i.e. 100 graduates with permanent addresses were selected to comprise the sample of the study.

Thus the sample of the study comprised 100 MA EPM graduates of AIOU of the sessions starting in;

- **2007,**
- **2008, and**
- **2009 through convenient sampling.**

A detailed questionnaire was developed as research tool after consulting the relevant literature and experts in the field of education. This questionnaire had 30 closed form statements and 3 open-ended questions. The collection of data was conducted through mailed questionnaires. The questionnaire was sent along with a return envelope and a covering letter to each of the respondents at the addresses obtained from EPPSL department of AIOU. Some of the respondents were also contacted personally or through email. As a result 81 out of 100 respondents returned the filled questionnaires which provided the data for analysis and conclusion.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The data obtained through the questionnaire was tabulated separately for each of the items in the questionnaire. After frequency distribution of the responses for each item, these data were then taken through appropriate statistical treatments including percentage and arithmetic mean with the help of Microsoft Excel (a computer application).

## **FINDINGS**

The analysis of the data directed towards the findings of the study which comprise the following facts.

Ninty three percent of the respondents agreed that MA EPM of AIOU was one of the prestigious distance learning programmes in Pakistan whereas 5% of them disagreed and 2% of the respondents were uncertain about the statement. 80% of the respondents were of the opinion that the admission criteria ensured the potential required for successful completion of the programme whereas 7% disagreed and 13% were uncertain about the statement. 67% of the respondents said that MA EPM of AIOU was comparatively a low-cost programme whereas 22% disagreed with the statement and 11% were uncertain about it. 65% of the respondents agreed that the programme was useful for remote area students also along with others. 21% disagreed with it and 14% were uncertain about the statement. 86% of the respondents said that the faculty of EPPSL department of AIOU was highly qualified. 6% disagreed with the statement and 7% of them were uncertain. 93% of the respondents were of the opinion that the workshops of the program were effective and useful for students' learning.

5% disagreed with the statement and 2% of the respondents remained uncertain. 91% of the respondents agreed that the programme was offering equal opportunity to both the genders whereas 4% disagreed and 5% were uncertain about the statement.

Fifty three percent of the respondents were in the favor that the EPPSL department addressed the academic problems of the students. 20% disagreed and a 27% remained uncertain about the statement. 41% of the respondents supported the statement that the printing quality of the study material was up to the mark. 42% respondents disagreed with the statement and 17% remained uncertain about it. 36% of the respondents supported the statement that the content of the study material was up to date whereas 51% of the respondents disagreed with the statement and 14% were uncertain about it. 75% of the respondents were satisfied that the program offered student-teacher interaction to a reasonable extent. 14% of them disagreed whereas 11% were uncertain about the statement. 41% of the respondents supported the statement that the assignments were properly evaluated by the tutors.

44% respondents disagreed with the statement whereas 15% of them were uncertain. 52% of the respondents agreed that the workshop schedule was suitable to the circumstances of working students whereas 36% disagreed and 12% of them remained uncertain about it. 63% of the respondents agreed that the strength of the students in the workshop was appropriate for their better learning. 26% disagreed whereas 11% were uncertain about the statement. 80% agreed that the workshops were organized to obtain maximum benefit from the recourse persons whereas 16% disagreed and 4% of them were uncertain about the statement.

Thirteen percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that the workshops offered a chance to visit different planning and management organizations whereas 73% supported the statement and 14% remained uncertain about it. 93% of the respondents said that the conduct of final examination at the end of the workshop was a useful step whereas 2% of them disagreed and 5% remained uncertain about the statement. 74% of the respondents agreed that the MA EPM graduates of AIOU are comparatively preferred for higher education in EPM. 10% of them disagreed whereas 16% remained uncertain about the statement. 46% of the respondents said that the MA EPM graduates of AIOU are comparatively preferred for administrative and managerial jobs. 21% disagreed whereas 33% were uncertain about the statement. 81% of the respondents agreed with a need of more EPM graduates due to the increasing demand of education at all levels. 13% disagreed whereas 6% remained uncertain about the statement. 74% of the respondents agreed with increasing need of EPM graduates in the country due to new Education Policy/ Education Sector Reforms. 12% of them disagreed whereas 14% remained uncertain about the statement. 54% of the respondents agreed that the programme encouraged the students to proceed for research whereas 28% disagreed and 17% were uncertain about the statement. 74% of the respondents agreed that after completion of the programme, the graduates felt a significant elevation in their position or status. 10% disagreed with the statement and 16% were uncertain about it. 70% of the respondents agreed that the inter-personal skills produced by the programme were according to the need of the day whereas 12% disagreed with it and 17% of them were uncertain.

Forty eight percent respondents agreed that candidates prefer a formal system for MA EPM instead of distance learning. 19% of them disagreed whereas 33% were uncertain about the statement. 68% of the respondents agreed that the EPM courses offered by AIOU were equally effective as in new emerging universities. 11% of them disagreed whereas 21% were uncertain about it.

70% of the respondents believed the programme to maintain its effectiveness in a competitive environment with other universities.

19% disagreed whereas 11% were uncertain about it. 76% of the respondents agreed that the programme sustained its popularity even with high dropout rate whereas 7% disagreed and 17% remained uncertain about the statement.

51% respondents supported the statement that employers accepted the MA EPM degree as a professional degree for teaching jobs. 26% of the respondents disagreed and 23% were uncertain about the statement. 21% of the respondents agreed that the number of faculty members was adequate for achieving the programme objectives in emergency situations.

Fifty six percent disagreed with the statement and 23% remained uncertain about it. As far as the suggestions to improve the curriculum are concerned, 79% of the respondents suggested periodic evaluation and revision of the curriculum to make the curriculum relevant to local needs and problems.

57% of the respondents suggested enriching the curriculum with latest information and advanced courses to meet international standards. 30% of the respondents also suggested that a variety of learning experiences and a Practical approach may be introduced in the curriculum. 23% of the candidates suggested improving the quality of the textbook in order to present the content in a simple and easy way. In order to improve the evaluation criteria, 30% of the respondents proposed to improve the quality of the Assignment component to ensure proper evaluation and guidance of the students. 27% were of the opinion to introduce activity based evaluation including presentations, projects etc. instead of mere written examination system. For general comments about the programme, majority 59% of the respondents rated it as an effective and helpful programme for managers.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Objective No: 1**

Based on the findings of the research, the following conclusions were drawn about MA EPM programme of AIOU. MA EPM programme was considered to be prestigious distance learning programme in Pakistan with a reasonable student-teacher interaction.

The programme was comparatively low-cost and the admission criteria of the programme were sound enough to ensure the potential required for successful completion.

The programme was equally useful for both the genders as well as the students of remote areas. The faculty of the EPPSL department was highly qualified and the EPPSL department was supportive to the students in their academic problems. The programme offered equally effective courses as in new emerging universities and encouraged the students to proceed for research.

The group-study workshops of the programme were of appropriate group size, properly scheduled to be manageable for working students, useful in students' learning, and organized to get maximum benefit from the resource persons. T

he conduct of final examination at the end of the workshop of each course was also taken as a very useful step. The interpersonal skills produced by the programme were according to the need of the day. The programme sustained its popularity even with high dropout rate and maintained its effectiveness in a competitive environment with other universities.

### **Objective No: 2**

The printing quality of the study material was not up to the mark as per the expectations of the students. The content was also found to be out-dated. It was also found that the written assignments were not properly evaluated by the tutors. The research further showed that there were no provision of study tours to different planning and management organization during the workshops.

### **Objective No: 3**

MA EPM graduates of AIOU were comparatively preferred for higher studies and the jobs related to management and administration in education. More EPM graduates were needed due to increasing demand of education at all levels. The degree of MA EPM was accepted by the employers for teaching jobs as well. Moreover the need of more EPM graduates due to education sector reforms/policies was also considered to be an opportunity for the graduates. The graduates felt a significant elevation in their position or status after completing the programme.

### **Objective No: 4**

The candidates willing for enrolling in MA EPM programme prefer a formal system of education over distance education system which was concluded to be a threat to the MA EPM programme of AIOU. It was also found that the number of faculty members is not adequate for achieving the programme objectives in emergency situations. In connection to the improvement in the curriculum, it was concluded that there was a need of continuous revision of the curriculum on periodic basis. It was suggested to modify the curriculum to suit the local needs and problems, and to include the latest information and advanced courses to meet international standards.

It was also suggested to introduce a practical approach and a variety of activities to improve the curriculum. The text books were required to be improved to present the content in simple and easy way.

## **OVERALL CONCLUSIONS**

As far as the evaluation criteria are concerned, it was found that the assignment component needed improvements especially in evaluating them, and giving feedback to the students. It was also found that the respondents felt a need of introducing activity based evaluation instead of the written examination only. As general remarks about the programme, it was found that the graduates rated the MA EPM programme as an effective programme being helpful to managers.

The printing quality of the study material may be improved and the content may be presented in a simpler and easier way.

The curriculum may be enriched with the updated content and advanced courses to meet international standards. The curriculum may periodically be revised to focus on the local needs and problems of the society. The tutors may be instructed to be more dedicated for evaluating the assignments and providing the feed back to the students. Provision of study tours to different planning and management organizations may be offered during the workshops.

Activity based evaluating techniques may be introduced in addition to mere written examination system. In order to compete with the similar programmes of formal education system, a variety of the learning activities and a practical approach may be introduced to make the programme attractive and interesting. The provision of temporarily appointed/visiting faculty members may be granted by the university administration to achieve the programme objectives in emergency situations. Record of EPM graduates may be maintained by the EPPSL department to ensure prompt access to the information about the graduates for research activity. The EPM students may be trained to cooperate in research activities in related fields.

Similar researches may be conducted to find the viability of other programmes i.e. PGD, MS Leading to PhD, and PhD, in EPPSL department of AIOU.

More follow-up studies may be conducted to determine the impact of EPM programmes of AIOU on the society

#### **BIODATA and CONTACT ADDRESSES of the AUTHORS**



**Dr. Syed Manzoor H. SHAH** is Ass. Professor in the EPPSL department, Faculty of Education, at Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad Pakistan. He carries 18 years teaching and research experience. Dr Shah possesses vast experience of educational planning, projectization, educational research, in service teachers training programs, Population studies and micro teaching skills etc. He received his Doctorate Degree in Education (Educational Planning and Management) from AIOU Islamabad, Pakistan. Dr Shah has been working as Coordinator with NORAD, UNICEF and UNESCO in their different projects. He has also developed different training modules for the tutors, senior tutors and teachers students of these projects.

**Dr. S. Manzoor Hussain SHAH**  
Asstt. Professor, EPPSL, AIOU Islamabad, PAKISTAN  
Phone : + 92 51 9057716  
Mobile : + 92 3025439121  
Fax : + 92 51 9250059  
Email: [drmhshaah@gmail.com](mailto:drmhshaah@gmail.com)



**Mr. Muazzam Ali SAQIB** is M. A Educational Planning and Management from Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad and is currently working as Lecturer in Cadet College Hassanabadal.

**Muazzam Ali SAQIB**  
Lecturer, Cadet College Hassanabadal,  
Punjab, PAKISTAN  
Phone : + 92 3335508018  
Email: [muazzam.saqib@gmail.com](mailto:muazzam.saqib@gmail.com)

#### **REFERENCES**

Adepoju, & Famade (2010). Educational Research and Reviews. Vol 5(7). Retrieved f [www.academicjournals.org/err/PDF/Pdf 2010/July/Adepoju and famade.pdf](http://www.academicjournals.org/err/PDF/Pdf%202010/July/Adepoju%20and%20famade.pdf) on June 03, 2012 at 16:32

AIOU. (2009). Prospectus of Faculty of Education. AIOU.

Amer, S. (2010). SWOT analysis of M. Phil EPM program of AIOU (M.Phil thesis). AIOU.

Dib, C. Z. (1988). *Cooperative Networks in Physics Education - Conference Proceedings 173*. New York: American Institute of Physics

Haddad, W. D., & Demsky T. (1995). *Education policy-planning process, an applied framework*. Paris: UNESCO.

Mujahid and Iqbal. (2004). *NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN Issues in Resource Oxford Advance Learners English Dictionary (1989)*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Piercy, N., & Giles, W. (1989). 'Making SWOT Analysis Work', *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*. Vol 7(5/6), 5-7.

Prakash, V. (2008). *Directions in Educational Planning Changing Landscape of Educational Planning in India*. Paris: IIEP

Pervaiz, R. (2007). *Basic Concepts of Educational Planning*. Islamabad: AIOU.

Teddle, C., & Yu, F. (2007). *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*. Vol 1(1).

## WEBLIOGRAPHY

<http://mmr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/1/1/77> on October 10, 2012  
[www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/education.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/education.html), retrieved on July 26, 2011  
[www.businessballs.com/swotanalysisfreetemplate.htm](http://www.businessballs.com/swotanalysisfreetemplate.htm), retrieved on July 26, 2011  
[www.admin.mtu.edu/admin/nca/report/ch10/ch10p5.htm](http://www.admin.mtu.edu/admin/nca/report/ch10/ch10p5.htm), retrieved on July 26, 2011  
[www.discoverfrederickmd.com/documents/SWOTAnalysisforFrederickCountyAgPrograms10-31-08.pdf](http://www.discoverfrederickmd.com/documents/SWOTAnalysisforFrederickCountyAgPrograms10-31-08.pdf), retrieved on July 26, 2011  
[www.scribd.com/doc/14051667/SWOT-Analysis-AJK-College-oF-Education-By-Naqeeb-ul-Khlil-Shaheen](http://www.scribd.com/doc/14051667/SWOT-Analysis-AJK-College-oF-Education-By-Naqeeb-ul-Khlil-Shaheen), retrieved on July 26, 2011  
[www.scribd.com/doc/14050793/SWOT-Analysis-M-Ed-Program-Allam-Iqbal-Open-By-Abdul-Ghaffar-Tahir](http://www.scribd.com/doc/14050793/SWOT-Analysis-M-Ed-Program-Allam-Iqbal-Open-By-Abdul-Ghaffar-Tahir), retrieved on July 26, 2011  
[www.paklife.net/nfer\\_library/Reports/4-36.pdf](http://www.paklife.net/nfer_library/Reports/4-36.pdf), retrieved on July 26, 2011  
[www.unesco.org/iiep/PDF/announcement.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/iiep/PDF/announcement.pdf), retrieved on January 09, 2012  
[www.iseip.info](http://www.iseip.info), retrieved on January 09, 2012  
[www.aepam.edu.pk](http://www.aepam.edu.pk), retrieved on January 09, 2012  
[www.unesco.org/iiep/PDF/pubs/Fund84.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/iiep/PDF/pubs/Fund84.pdf), retrieved on January 09, 2012  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahir\\_Dar\\_University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahir_Dar_University), retrieved on January 09, 2012  
[www.bdu.edu.et/index.php/febs-postgraduate/199-streams-febs-postgraduate/114](http://www.bdu.edu.et/index.php/febs-postgraduate/199-streams-febs-postgraduate/114), retrieved on January 09, 2012  
[www.nuepa.org](http://www.nuepa.org), retrieved on January 09, 2012  
[www.aub.edu.lb/fas/dep/Pages/postba.aspx](http://www.aub.edu.lb/fas/dep/Pages/postba.aspx), retrieved on January 09, 2012  
[www.ue.edu.pk/programmes.asp](http://www.ue.edu.pk/programmes.asp), retrieved on January 09, 2012  
[www.superior.edu.pk/MEL.asp](http://www.superior.edu.pk/MEL.asp), retrieved on January 15, 2012  
[www.numl.edu.pk/ma-epm.aspx](http://www.numl.edu.pk/ma-epm.aspx), retrieved on January 15, 2012  
[www.aiou.edu.pk/DeptDetail.asp?DeptID=43](http://www.aiou.edu.pk/DeptDetail.asp?DeptID=43), retrieved on January 15, 2012  
[www.businessballs.com/swotanalysisfreetemplate.htm#SWOT analysis inventors, origins and history of SWOT analysis](http://www.businessballs.com/swotanalysisfreetemplate.htm#SWOT%20analysis%20inventors%20origins%20and%20history%20of%20SWOT%20analysis), retrieved on January 15, 2012  
[www.entrepreneurstoolkit.org/index.php?title=File%3ASWOT.jpg](http://www.entrepreneurstoolkit.org/index.php?title=File%3ASWOT.jpg), retrieved on January 15, 2012  
[www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Research\\_Challenges\\_and\\_Trends/pdf/symposium/VedPrakash.pdf](http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Research_Challenges_and_Trends/pdf/symposium/VedPrakash.pdf), retrieved on May 17, 2012  
[www.beecoop.co.uk/cms/sites/teacher.beecoop.co.uk/files/brandswothow.pdf](http://www.beecoop.co.uk/cms/sites/teacher.beecoop.co.uk/files/brandswothow.pdf), retrieved on June 03, 2012  
[www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC\\_05.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05.htm), retrieved on June 03, 2012  
[www.academicjournals.org/err/PDF/Pdf 2010/July/Adepoju and famade.pdf](http://www.academicjournals.org/err/PDF/Pdf%202010/July/Adepoju%20and%20famade.pdf), retrieved on June 03, 2012  
[www.ehow.com/facts\\_5305133\\_academic-swot-analysis.html](http://www.ehow.com/facts_5305133_academic-swot-analysis.html), retrieved on June 03, 2012  
[www.cbi-nlls.net/OIP/cbinlls.nsf/0/26C6C45E01191EA7C12577170071924F/\\$file/04 SWOT%20Analysis%20Slovak%20Republic.pdf](http://www.cbi-nlls.net/OIP/cbinlls.nsf/0/26C6C45E01191EA7C12577170071924F/$file/04_SWOT%20Analysis%20Slovak%20Republic.pdf), retrieved on June 03, 2012  
[www.admin.mtu.edu/admin/nca/report/ch7/ch7p5.htm](http://www.admin.mtu.edu/admin/nca/report/ch7/ch7p5.htm), retrieved on June 03, 2012  
[www.techne-dib.com.br/downloads/6.pdf](http://www.techne-dib.com.br/downloads/6.pdf), retrieved on June 03, 2012  
[www.unesco.org/education/pdf/11\\_200.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/11_200.pdf), retrieved on June 03, 2012

## APPENDICES



## Appendix-A

**Table: 1**  
**Response of the Graduates**

Statements	Response (Percentage)		
	A	D	U
1. MA EPM of AIOU is one of the prestigious Distance Learning Programmes in Pakistan.	93	5	2
2. The admission criteria ensure the potential required for successful completion of the programme.	80	7	13
3. MA EPM of AIOU is comparatively a low-cost programme.	67	22	11
4. The programme is useful for remote area students as well.	65	21	14
5. The faculty of EPPSL department of AIOU is highly qualified.	86	6	7
6. The workshop of the program is effective and useful in students' learning.	93	5	2
7. The programme offers equal opportunity to both the genders.	91	4	5
8. The EPPSL department addresses the academic problems of the students.	53	20	27
9. The printing quality of the study material is up to the mark.	41	42	17
10. The content of the study material is up to date.	36	51	14
11. The program offers reasonable student-teacher interaction.	75	14	11
12. The assignments are properly evaluated by the tutors	41	44	15
13. The workshop schedule suits the circumstances of working students.	52	36	12
14. The strength of the students in the workshop is appropriate for their better learning.	63	26	11
15. The workshops are organized to obtain maximum benefit from the recourse persons.	80	16	4
16. The workshops offer a chance to visit the different planning and management Orgn.	13	73	14
17. The conduct of final examination at the end of the workshop is a useful step.	93	2	5
18. The MA EPM graduates of AIOU are comparatively preferred for higher education in EPM.	74	10	16
19. The MA EPM graduates of AIOU are comparatively preferred for administrative and managerial jobs.	46	21	33
20. More EPM graduates are needed to respond to the increasing demand of education (at all levels).	81	13	6
21. The New Education Policy/ Education Sector Reforms call for the need of more EPM graduates in the country.	74	12	14
22. The Programme encourages the students to proceed for research.	54	28	17
23. The graduates feel a significant elevation in their position/status after completing the programme.	74	10	16
24. The inter-personal skills produced by the programme fulfill the need of the day.	70	12	17
25. Candidates prefer a formal system for MA EPM.	48	19	33
26. AIOU offers equally effective courses as in new emerging universities.	68	11	21
27. The programme maintains its effectiveness in a competitive environment with other Univ.	70	19	11
28. The programme sustains its popularity even with high dropout rate.	76	7	17
29. The employers accept MA EPM degree as a professional degree for teaching jobs.	51	26	23
30. The number of faculty members is adequate for achieving the programme objectives in emergency situations.	21	56	23

## Appendix-B

**Table: 2**  
**Open ended questions (Suggestions/Comments of the Graduates)**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Suggestions/Comments</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Periodically revise the curriculum to focus on local needs and problems.</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>The programme is effective and very helpful for managers.</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Enrich the curriculum with latest information and advance courses to meet international standards.</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Introduce variety of learning experiences and practical approach.</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Improve the quality of assignment component to ensure proper evaluation and guidance for the students.</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Introduce activity based evaluation techniques instead of written examination only.</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Improve quality of the textbooks to present the content in simple and easy way.</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>23</b>