

ROLE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE EXPANSION OF FEMALE EDUCATION HIGHER LEVEL IN PAKISTAN A REVIEW

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*"Learning is what most adults will do for living in 21 first century".
(Perelman online reference May 11, 2009).*

ABSTRACT

The present paper investigated the role of distance education in the expansion of educational facilities for female at higher level of education in Pakistan. The findings of the study report that distance education is playing a vital role in the expansion of female education at higher level as such female who, due to some personal or social compulsions are not able to attend regular institution/university in order to enhance their educational, distance education proves to be a blessing for such females. AIOU is the pioneer in provision of distance education in Pakistan and at present it is playing a significant role in provision of better higher education facilities, especially female are enjoying from these educational facilities as the system of AIOU is flexible enough for female and it provides them equal opportunity to uplift their educational status in spite of the different hurdles in the way of getting higher education without disturbing their family or personal problems. More incentives for female on the part of AIOU for getting higher education may increase the number of female students in AIOU programs of higher education in Pakistan.

Keywords: Female; Distance Education at Higher Level; Allama Iqbal Open University; Pakistan

1. Definition of Terms
2. DE: Distance Education
3. AIOU: Allama Iqbal Open University
4. M. ED: Master of Education
5. MA.T.ED: Master Teacher Education
6. MA.SPED: Master Special Education
7. MA.DISED: Master Distance Education
8. M.A EPM: Master Educational Planning and Management
9. M: Male
10. F: Female
11. %: Percentage

INTRODUCTION: Concept of Distance Education

Distance Education is the type of education system in which the student gets education through distance means of learning like using internet, television, radio, or through mail. There is no need to attend regular classes and face to face interaction with the teacher as it is in conventional educational system. Dodds (1978) define distance education as a system that provides education/courses by correspondence, broadcasting and occasional face to face learning. In the global world of 21 first century distance education is playing an important role in developing education of different type like academic, general, technical and professional education from undergraduate to post graduate/higher level of education by providing education facilities to masses through distance educational system and thus making education accessible for all without any discrimination. Distance education is beneficial for those who have no opportunity or access to regular universities for earning a certificate or degree and through distance education they have an opportunity of continuing their education without disturbing their work/job or any other obligations.

These days there exist varieties of distance education programs. They offer independent study course through networking in which the contact of the student with the tutor/instructor is through computer/internet or through correspondence/mail. The communication of student with the teacher about learning difficulties is through conventional or electronic mail. There are also some centralized centers where students and teachers gather on notified dates where there are class sessions for short duration but if distance of the centre is farther from the students' residency or the student is unable to attend the centre due to some certain reason than the interaction is through mail. In such sessions students can share their learning difficulties with the teacher. The teacher guides and helps them about these learning difficulties. The student's learning is tested through written assignment or through computer and he/she is informed about feedback also through conventional or electronic mail. Keegan (1990) has indicated five important features of distance and conventional education. These are:

- **The quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the length of the learning process; (this distinguishes it from conventional face-to-face education);**
- **The influence of an educational organization both in the planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of student-support services (this distinguishes it from private study and teach-yourself programs);**
- **The use of technical media - print, audio, video or computer -to unite teacher and learner and carry the content of the course;**
- **The provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue (this distinguishes it from other uses of technology in education); and**
- **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, 1990 p. 44).**

Distance education is considered as an increasing effective method of instruction. According to Ajaz and Malik (2007) distance education is institutional concept of education centered round self-directed learning by means of correspondence courses with an integrated element of communication technology and facilitated with tutorial sessions, seminars etc. to meet need for enlargement of teaching force, improved professional standards and modernization of teaching methods, distance learning system provides alternative ways of gaining established qualifications. Recent innovations in the field of Information Technology are making the system of distance education even more effective. The use of computer and internet has made distance education more effective and more accessible for masses. Distance education is attractive to the multitude of learners because it has student support service whose functions include the following as expressed by Burn and Bugbee, (1993); Dillon et.al. (1992) and Peters, (1992):

- Motivate and guide learners for self-study
- Providing answers to administrative queries
- Making individualized study a reality
- Promoting effective study skills
- Providing access to resources.
Online reference retrieved on 09-05-2009).
- Objectives of Distance Education
- To provide opportunities of education to every individual of the nation without any discrimination;
- To endorse professional education opportunities for masses
- To produce skilful workers for the nation
- To enable students to raise their educational and professional standards without disturbing their work
- To introduce new concepts in curriculum like e- learning (learning through use modern distance technology)
- To preach concept of lifelong education
- To build relationship between industry and educational institution through distance e-training programs
- To work for the encouragement of the motto "Education for All".
- To delete gender disparity in provision of educational facilities for male and female.

Research findings indicate that the student may apply different approaches in studying a course unit in distance education system, such as:

- to start straight away at the beginning and to work through the material section by section and in the sequence it is written:
- to skim through quickly, then dip into particular sections in a sequence different from that envisaged by the course team:
- to read the assignment questions first, then selectively to study the material on the basis of questions.

- **Research on student study habits and workload suggest, that many students have great difficulty in working to a prescribed study pattern, especially more complex sequence (e.g. read text, listen to audio programme, carry out experiment, view television vision, complete activities, answer self-assessment questions) Gujjar and Malik (2007).**

ROLE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN AND FEMALE EDUCATION

In Pakistan distance education is no doubt playing an important role in the expansion of education at higher level. It is appropriate to state that in Pakistan higher level of education is graduate level. Many students who want to get higher education but are unable to get admission in regular general institutions/universities due to certain reasons like personal and official compulsions or they are unable to pay high amount of fee of regular institutions or any other reason what ever it may be, the distance education is best solution and best alternative for such students. In Pakistan female are usually given very low social status. In majority areas of the country female education is not given due importance, as people consider female education just wastage of money and time. Majority of people especially in rural areas of the country people consider only male education as important. In Pakistan there is great disparity between male and female literacy rate which needs immediate measures to check the situation. Literacy rate in Pakistan is measured as 54% in which female literacy rate is 42% and in this 29% is literacy rate in rural areas. However, according to UNESCO (2007), "the gender disparity is extremely wide with male literacy over 65% and female lagging far behind with less than 40%." Similarly, the overall literacy rate for 15 and plus age group is measured to be 52% indicating disparity between male (65%) and female (38%) literacy rates (Government of Pakistan, 2007-b). online reference retrieved on 05-05-2009. It is an admitted fact that due to social limitations parents are willing to bear the expenses of the education of their sons but they are reluctant to spend money on their daughters. Because it is a male dominated society and "men head 90% of the Pakistani households" (Pakistan Integrated House Hold Surveys 2004-05).

Even in such areas where parents do want their women get education there are certain kinds of hurdles in continuing education for women like non availability of schools, colleges or universities or long distance of such institutions from women's' residence. That is why there are thousands of female in Pakistan who discontinue their education at certain level due to social pressure, economic problems, non availability of higher education institutions, long distance of higher education institutions, or due to some other house hold obligations or family problems. Like wise there are thousands of female who do not have access to higher education due to the same reasons. Some of them are able to complete their primary education and some of them are able to complete their secondary education. Generally there is a very few number of such female who are able to approach higher education and complete it. In such circumstances distance education is not less than blessing for female in Pakistan. Distance Education in Pakistan particularly suits to the female population as it provides them an opportunity to continue their studies at home. Similarly, people living in the tribal and far-flung areas where the formal education system are not established, people and especially female of the areas get an opportunity for higher education through distance education system. This system is flexible in terms of age, place and even time and is best suitable for female of any age level or living in any area. There is great difference in the enrollment rate of boys as compared to girls in Pakistan. According to UNESCO figures (Dawn, 23 Feb 2004, editorial), primary school enrolment for girls stands at 60 per cent as compared to 84 per cent for boys.

The secondary school enrolment ratio is even more discouraging, 32 per cent for females and 46 per cent males. Regular school attendance for female students is estimated at 41 per cent while that for male students is 50 per cent. The following table informs us about clearly female involvement rate in education in Pakistan:

Table: 1
Gender - Wise Number of Educational Institutions as enrolled in 2005-06

Category of Institution	Total Number of Institutions	Female	Total Enrolment	Female Enrolment
Primary /middle/elementary	1,57600 39,400	45,900 7,800	2,52,26,000 53,18000	1,09,44,000 21,89,000
Secondary Schools/ Higher Secondary/ Intermediate	22,900 2996	3,900 1132	21, 81,000 853,535	9, 02000 427,803
Degree Colleges	1135	438	325,993	198,208
Secondary Vocational	643	258	1, 81,000	39,000
Arts & Science Colleges	1,208	529	10, 47,000	52, 2000
Professional Colleges	431	24	2, 07290	50,500
Universities/ Degree Awarding Institutions	116	4	4, 24,012	1, 78,983

Source: Pakistan Education Statistics 2005-06; & Economic Survey of Pakistan 2006-07.
(As mentioned in Dr. Hussain and et. al. on line reference retrieved on 05-05-2009 from www.google.com)

It is obvious from the above table that facilities of education for female are not encouraging. There are many reasons for these differences for example unawareness about the importance of female education, inequality of the status of male and female and behaviour of male towards female education, non availability of higher education institutions for female, low economic status, burden of house hold responsibilities especially the thinking and behavior of male towards female education and in such a situation where the life of women is not safe even at school level that is elementary or secondary level, where girls schools of female are being burnt by male member of the society.

In such circumstances it is obvious that it is to a great extent impossible for female to attend regular school or college level, especially institutions of higher education. The only alternative that remains for women for improving their educational status is the distance education system in which there is no need to attend any regular classes at the campus.

It is apparent that any social change can be happened only through education and it will be more beneficial if is female education. Education itself is a social process, in which thinking and behavior of individuals are reshaped according to desirable social and moral values.

According to Dr. Hussain and et al (online reference 2009) at university level male participation is greater than female as it is 58% for males and 42% for females. It is the case with professional institutions with 69% male enrolment and 31% female enrolment, but in technical vocational institutions it is 62% for males

and 38% for females, in teacher training institutions it is 66% and 34% for male and female respectively.

In such circumstances distance education is providing opportunities for female in Pakistan for continuing education from secondary school certificate (SSC) to post graduate level. Some universities of public and private sectors are playing their role in providing distance education facilities. Among these institutions Allama Iqbal Open University and Virtual University are the major institutions in Pakistan in distance education area. The present article was an attempt to review the role of distance education for the expansion of female higher education in Pakistan.

Role of AIOU in the Expansion of Distance Education in Pakistan

AIOU is the Asia's first Open University. It was established in 1974 with the name of Peoples' Open University, renamed in 1977 as Allama Iqbal Open University in order to make education facilities accessible to those masses who could not afford to enroll in regular institutions as well to those who are not granted permission (like female) due some social conditions/ compulsions or household problems and to those who are not able to attend any regular college university due to their work place conditions/compulsions.

Objectives of AIOU

- The University was established as a distance education institution with the purpose to:-
- Provide educational facilities to the people who cannot leave their homes and places of job;
- Provide facilities to the masses for their educational uplift;
- Provide facilities for the training of teachers;
- Provide education to all without any discrimination.

Philosophical foundation of the Allama Iqbal Open University lies in its "OPENNESS" system. This University, as a unique institution in the country, reaches the doorsteps of those who wish to broaden their horizons of Knowledge or upgrade their occupational skills while in conventional and formal system the students go to the University for Studies. Moreover this is the only university of Pakistan whose Jurisdiction touches the geographical boundaries of Pakistan. (Online reference retrieved on 10-05-2009). At present AIOU is offering 700 course of different level. It has 25 departments in its main campus which is situated at H-8 sector of Islamabad. There are nine regional campuses and 25 regional centers of AIOU.

Detail of Programs that AOIU is Offering at Present

The University has introduced a wide range of undergraduate, graduate, Master's, M. Phil, and Doctoral Programs. Teacher training programs organized by AIOU are a necessary tool in the challenge of properly training Pakistan's teachers to build the knowledge of tomorrow's Pakistanis. They are especially important since they fill the needs of women and the rural populations of Pakistan, where traditionally, education and literacy have lagged far behind their urban counterparts. Online reference retrieved on 5/10/2009. These programs have given distinction to the University in relation to other educational institutions of Pakistan as it caters to the need of all age groups and levels of education. These programs are enlisted below:

PhD Programmes Based on M.Phil Degree

- Iqbal Studies
- Urdu
- Mass Communication*
- Distance and Non-Formal Education (DNFE)
- Teacher Education (Secondary)
- Educational Planning and Management (EPM)
- Special Education
- Agricultural Extension
- Statistics*
- Mathematics*
- Islamic Studies
- Arabic

Based on Master Degree

- Mass Communication*
- Distance and Non-Formal Education (DNFE)
- Teacher Education (Secondary)
- Educational Planning and Management (EPM)
- Special Education
- Food and Nutrition
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Statistics*
- Islamic Studies

M. Phil Programmes

- Islamic Studies
- Iqbal Studies
- Urdu
- Teacher Education (Secondary)
- Educational Planning and Management
- Distance and Non-formal Education
- Special Education 8. Mass Communication
- Statistics
- Economics
- Chemistry
- Food and Nutrition
- Pakistani Languages and Literature

M. Sc. (Hon.) 17 – Year Education

- **Agriculture Extension (Regular classes at main campus,**
- **Live Stock Management AIOU, Islamabad)**
- **Rural Development (For continuing students only)**

MA/MSc 16-Year Education Master of Science (M.Sc.)

- **Pakistan Studies**
- **Mass Communication**
- **Economics**
- **Community Health and Nutrition**
- **Physics**
- **Forestry Extension**
- **Environmental Design**
- **Sociology**
- **Mathematics**
- **Chemistry**
- **Statistics**
- **Women Studies**

Master of Arts (M.A.)

- **Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)**
- **History**
- **Islamic Studies**
- **Arabic**
- **Urdu**
- **Teacher Education**
- **Educational Planning and Management (EPM)**
- **Distance and Non-Formal Education**
- **Special Education**
- **Business Administration (MBA)**
- **MBA (Banking & Finance)**
- **MBA (Information Technology)**
- **Commonwealth Executive MBA**
- **Commonwealth Executive MPA**
- **Library and Information Sciences (MLIS)**

*** Programmes being offered in near future M.Ed Programme**

- **Teacher Education (Secondary)**
- **Distance and Non-formal Education**
- **Special Education**
- **Science Education**

Postgraduate Diplomas (PGD)

- **Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)**
- **Dietetics (For Dieticians)**
- **Nutrition (For Physicians)**
- **Women Studies***
- **Mass Communication**

- Educational Planning and Management (EPM)
- Computer Science (Online)
- Commonwealth Executive Business Administration
- Commonwealth Executive Public Administration
- Environmental Design
- Youth in Development Work (only at Rawalpindi/Islamabad)

Teacher Education Programmes

- 1. Bachelor of Education (B.Ed General)
- 2. Bachelor of Education (B.Ed Arabic)
- 3. Certificate of Teaching (CT)
- 4. Diploma in Education (10+3 Model)
- 5. Primary Teaching Certificate (PTC)
- 6. Arabic Teachers Training Course (ATTC)

Bachelor Degree Programmes

- B.A. (General)
- B.Com. (Commerce)
- B.B.A. (Business Administration) (Regular classes)
- B.M.C. (Bachelor of Mass Communication)
- B.L.S. (Bachelor of Library & Information Sciences)
- B.A. (Dars-e-Nizami)
- Bachelor of Engineering (Telecommunication)
- Bachelor of Technology (Automobile)*
- Foundation Semester (BS-CS) (For below 45% marks at intermediate level)
- Bachelor of Science (Computer Science) BS (CS)
- B.Sc. in Vision Sciences

Diplomas (Undergraduate)

- Vision Sciences leading to B.Sc.
- Computer Graphics

Secondary School Certificate (SSC)

- H.S.S.C (General)
- H.S.S.C. (I.Com)
- H.S.S.C. Dars-i-Nizami.
- F.Sc. Family and Community Health
- Home Economics
- F.Sc. Pre-Medical
- F.Sc. Pre-Engineering

SSC (Matric)

- 1. S.S.C (General)
- 2. S.S.C (Dars-e-Nizami)
- 3. S.S.C (Health)
- 4. S.S.C (Home Economics)

Middle Education This programme is under Pilot launching at two different provinces

Certificate Level Courses

- 1. Certificate in Librarianship
- 2. French Online
- 3. Selling of Home Made Products
- 4. Arabic Bol Chaal
- 5. Al-Lisan-ul-Arabi
- 6. Computer Graphics

Another feature of the University's programmes is the provision of non-credit courses of six-month duration, which mainly of three type's i.e.

- Functional Non-credit Courses
- Technical Course
- Agricultural Course

Open Tech. Courses (Non-credit) The University has been offering over 43 courses in this programme. (For students of Rawalpindi & Islamabad only)

Short Term Educational Programmes (STEPS) The University has developed and launched about 90 STEPS courses in the following areas of studies:

- Management Sciences (22 courses)
- Social Sciences (15 courses)
- Hotel Services (05 courses)
- Community Education (17 courses)
- Agricultural Courses (06 courses).Source: Annual report of vice chancellor 2007-2008

The main components of their programs through use of following methods: AIOU Delivery Procedure of Educational and Professional Programs contains on Correspondence Material(Books/audio cassette), Broadcasting of Educational Programs on Television and Radio, Satellite Transmission, Online Teaching, Video Conferencing, Tutorial groups, Face- to- Face teaching. AIOU Evaluation/Assessment System: Group Training Workshop, Internship/Teaching Practice /Course Assignments Final Examination.

Years- wise Enrolment at AIOU:

2003-04 =1417356
2004-05 = 1803086
2005-06 = 1910491
2006-07 = 2417181
2007-08 = 2982420

Finance and Budget at AIOU

Expense (Rs. in Million)

2003-04 1001.335 718.038
2004-05 1088.387 805.467
2005-06 1384.336 1019.226
2006-07 1756.238 1161.808
2007-08 1921.848 1430.048 (Source: Online reference retrieved on 09-05-2009 from www.aiou.edu.pk.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION CENTRE (REC) OF AIOU

The primary focus of research and evaluation is the determination of effectiveness, quality assurance and evaluation of all aspects of the AIOU System (both formative and summative, courses and their effectiveness, Tutorial support system, Assessment system, Student problems, Methods of course production, Cost effectiveness of courses, Out-come of courses and programmes, admissions, drop out, pass rate, student characteristics. It is done through surveys, academic research advice and institutional Problems and Coordination. Compilation of various Statistical Supplements/queries, preparation of Introductory Brochure and Mini Prospectus of Educational Programmes of AIOU, Vice Chancellors' Annual Report etc. and the publication of the journals i.e. Pakistan Journal of Education (PJE) and Ilm Ki Roshni are the other regular/permanent activities of REC. (Online reference 10-05-2009).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is need to expand the education facilities at higher level especially for female through distance education services. It is the pressure of some social and cultural restrictions majority of female are unable to approach higher education in Pakistan. The only option for majority of female for getting higher education is through distance education system. So the present study was an effort in the field to review the role of distance education in expansion of female education at higher level in Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study were the followings:

- To study the concept of Distance Education;
- To explain the objectives of Distance Education;
- To study the role Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in the expansion of education in Pakistan;
- To explore the enrolment of female in higher education programs of AIOU during period 2004-2008;
- To explore programs offered by faculty of education of AIOU;

Research Questions

The present study aims to find out answer to the following questions:

- What is distance education?
- What are the objectives of distance education?
- What is the role of AIOU in the expansion of higher education in Pakistan?
- What is the status of enrolment of female in higher education programs of AIOU?
- What is the delivery procedure of Distance Education (DE) system in Pakistan?
- What are the master level programs offered by faculty of education AIOU in Pakistan?
- What is enrollment rate of female students in master level programs of AIOU of faculty of education?
- Whether DE is specifically beneficial for female students in Pakistan scenario?

Delimitations of the Study

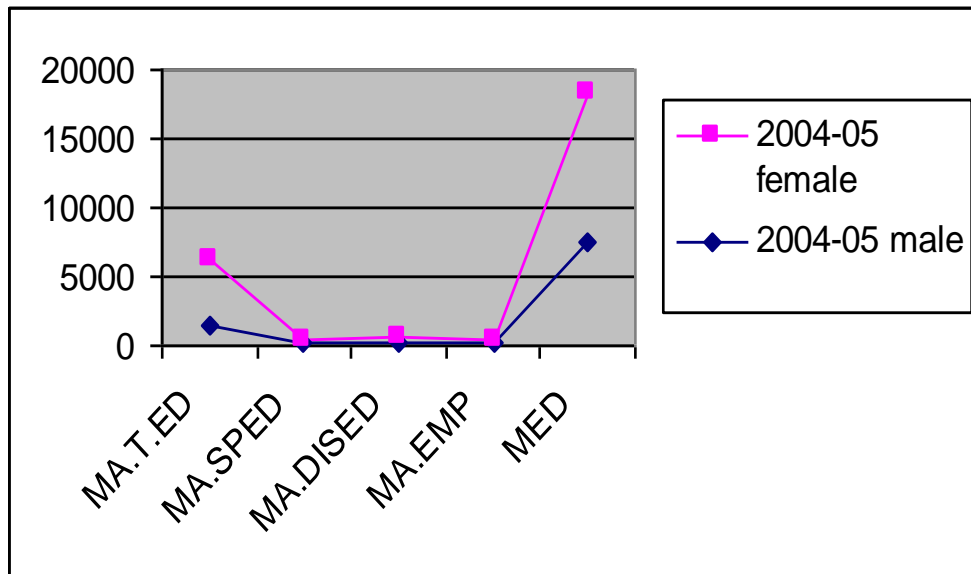
- Due to time and financial constraints the present study was delimited to the following factors:
- to conduct only desk review analysis of the literature available in shape of research books, articles, encyclopedias, reports or other available documents about role of distance education in Expansion of Female Education at Higher Level in Pakistan;
- To the role of AIOU in expansion of female education at higher level in Pakistan.
- To the master level programs of AIOU;
- Then it was delimited to the master level programs of master level offered by the faculty of education of AIOU.

Design of the Study

It was a theoretical research based desk review study in which a review of related literature regarding role of distance education in the expansion of female education at higher level in Pakistan was done.

The researcher also contact the concerned authorities of AIOU main campus Islamabad involved in distance in order to get latest information in the field and information about the number of students enrolled during 2004-2008 was obtained by personally visiting the research and evaluation center of AIOU. Internet research was also used to get latest relevant information about the area of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF RESULTS

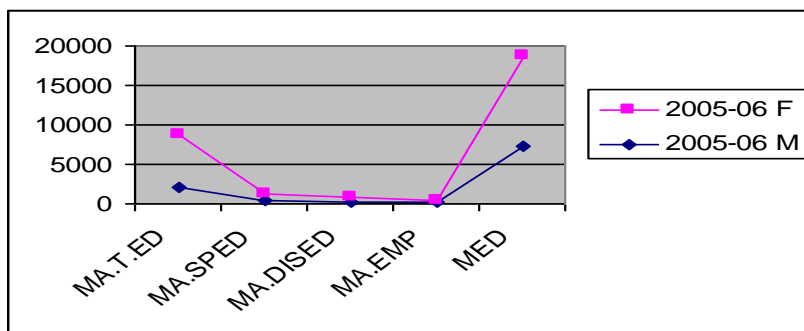


Graph: Admission 2004-05

**Table: 2
Admission 2004-05**

PROGRM CATEGORY	2004-	2004-	total	Percentage %	
	05 Male	05 female		male	female
MA.T.ED	1461	4726	6187	23.61	76.38
MA.SPED	172	293	465	36.98	63.01
MA.DISED	214	456	670	31.84	68.05
MA.EMP	239	258	497	40.08	51.91
MED	7521	10820	18341	41.00	58.99

Table: 1 depicts the situation of admission in AIOU master level programs in education faculty during 2004-2005 session. In M.A Teacher education the percentage for male is 23.61 percent whereas for female it is 76.38 percent which higher, in M.A special education the percentage is 36.98 for male and 63.01 for female, and 31.84 for male and 68.05 for female in M. A distance education which again is higher on female side in each program. It means that more female are enrolled in AIOU higher education programs than male. Graph No. 1 also shows the same picture. The same results can be viewed in number of enrolment in M.A EPM and M. Ed programs.

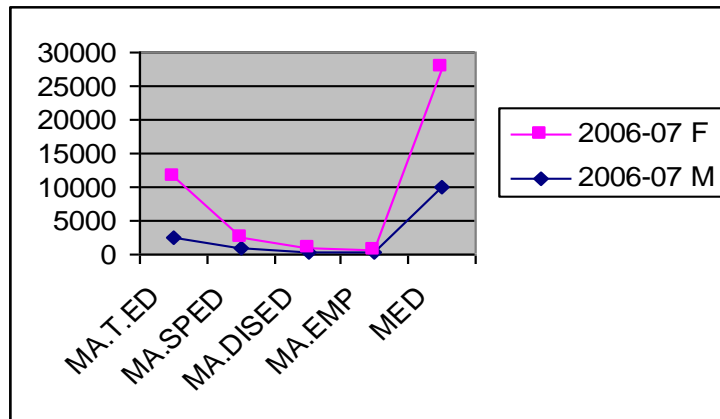


**Graph: 2
Admission 2005-06**

**Table: 3
Admission 2005-06**

PROGRM CATEGORY	2005-06	2005-06	total	percentage	
	Male	Female		male	female
MA.T.ED	1999	6811	8810	22.69	77.30
MA.SPED	433	768	1201	30.05	63.94
MA.DISED	278	526	804	34.57	65.42
MA.EMP	255	252	507	50.29	49.7
MED	7238	11564	18802	38.49	61.5

Table: 2 explains the situation of admission in AIOU master level programs in education faculty during 2005-2006 session. In M.A Teacher education the percentage for male is 22.69 percent whereas for female it is 77.30 percent which higher, in M.A special education the percentage is 30.05 for male and 63.94 for female, and 34.57 for male and 65.42 for female in M. A distance education which again is higher on female side in each program. The same results can be viewed in number of enrolment in M.A EPM and M. Ed programs. The picture shows that more female are benefiting from AIOU higher education programs than male. The same picture can be seen in graph No.2.



Graph: 3
Admission 2006-07

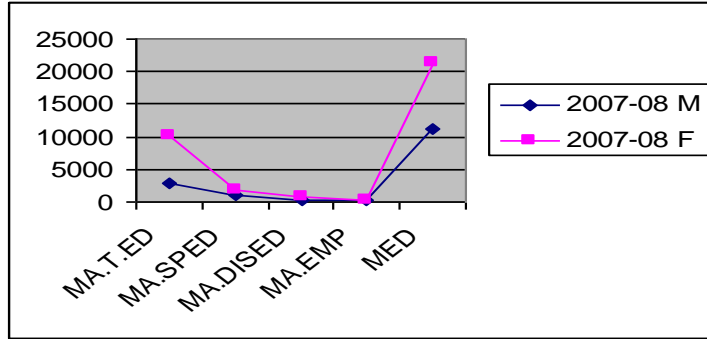
Table: 4
Admission 2006-7

PROGRM	2006-07 Male	2006-07 Female	total	percentage male	percentage female
MA.T.ED	2492	9017	11509	21.65	78.34
MA.SPED	829	1534	2363	35.08	64.91
MA.DISED	288	709	997	28.88	71.11
MA.EMP	278	284	562	49.46	50.53
MED	10065	17767	27832	36.16	63.83

Table: 4 explains the situation of admission in AIOU master level programs in education faculty during 2006-2007 session.

In M.A Teacher education the percentage for male is 21.65 percent whereas for female it is 78.34 percent which higher, in M.A special education the percentage is 35.08 for male and 64.91 for female, and 28.88 for male and 71.11 for female in M. A distance education which again is higher on female side in each program. The same results are shown in M.A EPM and M. Ed programs.

The picture shows that more female are benefiting from AIOU higher education programs than male. The same picture can be seen in graph No.3.

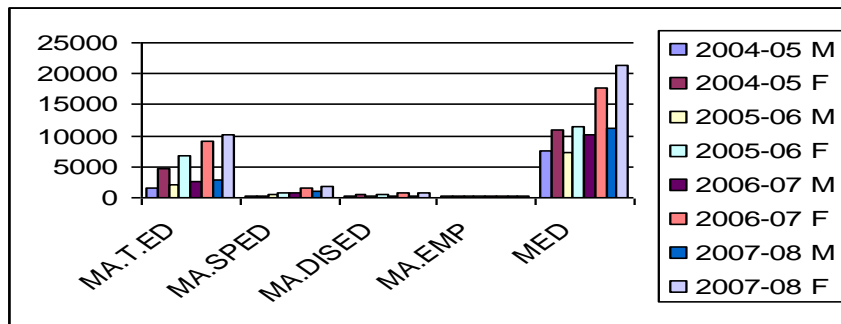


Graph: 4
Admission 2007-08

Table: 5
Admission 2007-8

PROGRM CATEGORY	2007-08	2007-08	total	percentage	
	Male	Female		male	Female
MA.T.ED	2953	10226	13179	22.40	77.61
MA.SPED	982	1897	2879	34.10	65.89
MA.DISED	315	877	1192	26.42	73.57
MA.EMP	292	331	623	46.86	53.13
MED	11092	21336	32428	34.2	65.79

Table: 4 explains the situation of admission in AIU master level programs in education faculty during 2007-2008 session. In M.A Teacher education the percentage for male is 22.40 percent whereas for female it is 77.61 percent which higher, in M.A special education the percentage is 34.10 for male and 65.89 for female, and 26.42 for male and 73.57 for female in M. A distance education which again is higher on female. The same results can be viewed in number of enrolment in M.A EPM and M. Ed programs. The picture shows that more female are benefiting from AIU higher education programs than male. The same picture can be seen in graph No.4.



Graph: 5
Overall Admission Strength from 2004-2008

Table: 6
Over all Percentage for Male and Female Admission from 2004-2008

PROGRM	2004-05		2005-06		2006-07		2007-08	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
MA.T.ED	23.61%	76.38%	22.69%	77.30%	21.65%	78.34%	22.40%	77.61%
MA.SPED	36.98%	63.01%	30.05%	63.94%	35.08%	64.91%	34.10%	65.89%
MA.DISED	31.84%	68.05%	34.57%	65.42%	28.88%	71.11%	26.42%	73.57%
MA.EMP	40.08%	51.91%	50.29%	49.70%	49.46%	50.53%	46.86%	53.13%
MED	41.00%	58.99%	38.49%	61.50%	36.16%	63.83%	34.2%	65.79%

The above table No. 5 depicts the picture of number of male and female students in AIOU master level programs of education faculty during the period 2004-2008. It is obvious from the above data the number of female students is significant higher in each program of master in education of AIOU. If we compare the number of female students in different areas of master in education programs then it is significant higher in each session in M.A teacher education. The next significant higher number of female students is in M.A distance education and M. Ed program.

CONCLUSIONS

It is obvious from above information that distance education is the single tool for female in Pakistan for enrichment of their educational status. Distance education system is becoming increasingly popular in Pakistan especially for female students. It provides equal chance for individuals living in any area. Gender disparity which a great issue regarding provision of education facilities in Pakistan, the distance education system is the best solution to such issues. It is apparent from above results that distance education is the main source for female for enhancement of their educational standards. In this direction it is the AIOU which playing a major and remarkable role for expansion of higher education in the country as more and more females are enjoying the right of getting higher education through distance education system of AIOU and this is depicted from the number of female students that are increasing yearly in each programs of master level.

At the same time it is also clear that number of male enrolled in master in education level programs is less than female enrolled for master in education programs. It is due to the reason that there are great opportunities for male for getting higher education through formal system of education and parents are willingly ready to spend on their sons. Then the next reason is that now the female have come to know that it is essential for them to up grade their educational standards and if it is not possible through formal system then they ready to up grade it through distance education system.

Flexible system of AIOU makes it convenient for female to continue their education even in all kind of their family matter. Female of all age level without any discrimination are eligible for admission in different programs of AIOU.

AIOU programs are according to the need of global changes and their delivery system best suits the needs of female. It is noticeable from discussion that provision of extensive opportunities of distance education at higher level for female can raise their social status in the society like Pakistan. Although AIOU at present is playing a remarkable role in the expansion of higher education facilities for female, however it is suggested that for better provision of higher education facilities, AIOU may open more regional centers even in villages in order to guide female for selection of subjects and in solving educational/learning difficulties. AIOU can introduce scholarship scheme especially for needy female for the purpose of encouraging and invoking them for getting higher education.

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