

**An Evaluation of the Status of Distance Education Program in
Public and Private Higher Education Institutions at Mettu Centers:
A Comparative Analysis on Quality Issues
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Abstract:

The central intention of this research was to evaluate the status of distance education program on quality issues of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) [Public and Private HEIs] at Mettu town Centers, Ilu Abba Bora Zone. To attain this objective, comparative case study research method was employed. The subjects of the study were 113 [100 students, 3 center coordinators and 10 tutors from both HEIs]. To select the target HEIs, availability sampling technique was used to select public HEI (Jimma University/JU), simple random sampling technique was employed to select the private HEIs (St. Mary's University-College/SMUC and Rift Valley University-College/RVUC), stratified sampling followed by simple random sampling (lottery method) was used to select the students, and availability and purposive sampling techniques were employed to select center coordinators and tutors respectively. To gather the necessary data, questionnaire, interview, document analysis and observation checklist were used. The gathered data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis. The result of the study showed that with statistically significant difference between the students' satisfaction about center coordinator services of JU and private HEIs, students of private HEIs were more satisfied than public HEI with totally no online registration service in both groups. Students at private HEIs were relatively at higher position in engaging tutorial session and teaching-learning process than JU. In both groups, the instructional interactions between tutees and tutors (part timer from anywhere) on tutorial session seems low with tutees who get little opportunity to discuss except on tutorial days. Concerning modules, quality of the modules of private HEIs looks more or less at better position than modules of JU. The study also shows that with statistically non-significant difference between the two groups, stagnantly both groups used very less technology based learning materials and instructional teaching-learning process, which inhabit the quality of distance education program. Evidence showed that students' assessments in both HEIs were only focused on assignment (30%) and final exam (70%), with poor instructional interaction and less transparency feed-back/evaluation system made by non-tutors of the institutions, and the HEIs haven't made progressive shift to the current instructional implementation. Assessment and evaluation techniques were given less emphasis to the student-centered instructional methodology, which has considerably negative impact to the quality of Ethiopian HEIs of distance education program. Thus, based on the findings of the study, implications were pointed to mitigate the aforementioned problems.

Key words: Distance education program, Higher education institution, Quality of education

I. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Education is often regarded as the most determinant factor for socio-economic development of countries. It is obvious that no countries have achieved developmental goals without successful education and training programs. For this reason, due attention is given to the provision and appropriate usage of educational facility , technology, materials, environment, organization and management so as to strengthen the effective teaching learning process /quality of education and the expansion process of education(Transitional Government of Ethiopia/TGE,1994). It is also important to note that Ethiopia has placed education at the center of its strategies for development, decentralization and various learning programs with strong polices promoting quality of educational provision (TGE, 1994:3). In Ethiopia, as one learning program, the field of distance education has changed dramatically in the time of more than the past 15 years so as to provide educational access and then contribute to the education of poverty.

Traditionally, distance education, structured learning in which the student and instructor are separated by place, and sometimes by time is currently the fastest growing form of domestic and international education (Educom Staff, 1996) and, the concept of delivering course material is shifting from the physical classroom, where all interactions are face-to-face, to the virtual classroom, where direct face-to-face contact between student-teacher and student-student are non- existent.

On the other hand, current developments in technology allow distance education programs to provide specialized courses to students in remote geographic areas with increasing interactivity between students and teachers (Terry, 2002). Some scholars define quality in terms of educational outcomes (MOE, 2006).Quality is also viewed in terms of the framework of ‘system design’ with inputs, process and outcomes (Harvey, 1994). In postmodern society, quality is viewed in terms of facilitating a user-friendly environment (Tubbs, 2005). Quality is indeed difficult to define.

However, one important means of evaluating the quality of distance education program is analyzing the delivery of the program through the analysis of the internal environments, the input and process aspects of the quality of the program (Kishore, 1998). Having various statuses on quality of education, HEIs are pulling courses offerings through distance learning so students have opportunities to create a degree program that uses course offerings from multiple off-campus centers of distance programs. All of these emerging delivery structures bring questions about the quality of education being delivered (AACSB, 2007). For this reason, the study deals with the evaluation of distance education program of both public and private HEIs of Mettu town centers.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Distance education is one of the newest players on the field of education and it is often required or expected for maintaining current employment positions, as well as increasing opportunities for advancement and it can be used as means of generating learners' knowledge anytime and anywhere (Garrison, 2000). However, many scholars in different faculties fear distance learning is just a means of reducing their ranks, or a means to solve budget problems, the dehumanization and alienation of students as well as a loss of social and critical thinking skills (Novek, 1996). In addition, the problem for distance learning is that so far there are not the same generally accepted assessments and exercises that form the evaluation process and which would then lead to generally accepted standards (Bloom & Krathwohl, 1956).

Similarly, in the study of distance education of the project 17,000 in Oromia region of Ethiopia, Kassim (2006) identifies major findings such as unwise use of technological materials, unorganized library and laboratory services, poor service delivery (orientation, counseling), poor coordination at tutorial centers, ineffectiveness of tutorial sessions, non-commitment of tutors, lack of checking to give feedback on distance teaching learning. In recent years, the Ministry of Education has been used on and off decisions for the implementation of distance education. Consequently, from the researcher personal observation and generally accepted circulars, there are some degree programs (eg. Law and Education) that have not been offered in private HEIs but permitted to be offered in public HEIs. This inspired the researcher to evaluate the status of distance education program in HEIs with comparative analysis between public and private HEIs on quality issues at center level.

1.3 Basic Questions of the Study

Based on the stated problem, the study has attempted to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Is there statistically significant difference between the centers of students in getting satisfaction to their center coordinators?
2. Is there statistically significant difference between the two groups in students' engagement to the tutorial sessions?
3. Is there statistically significant difference between the two groups concerning quality status of modules?
4. What are the practices of students in doing assignments?
5. Is there statistically significant difference between the two groups in the provision of instructional materials?
6. How do the assessment and evaluation system have been carried on?

1.4 Purposes of the Study

The study aims at evaluating the status of distance education in HEIs that has been currently delivered at the centers of Mettu city administration. Specifically the study is targeted to:

1. examine students satisfaction with center coordinators.
2. identify students engagement to tutorial sessions.
3. look at opinions about the status of quality of modules, assignments and the teaching learning process as a whole.
4. identify the availability of instructional materials.
5. explore assessment and evaluation mechanisms of the centers.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is restricted to Mettu City Administration Ilu Abba Bora Zone, Oromia region, where there are a lot of distance education centers. It is in close proximity to the researcher so as to get resourceful information by contacting many times. Out of many aspects to be considered in the evaluation of the status of distance education programs of HEIs, this evaluation was considered as assessing the status of two major internal environment (input and process) aspects of quality of distance education. The input aspect focuses on students' satisfaction about center coordinator service, the status of quality of modules and availability of instructional materials (hard and soft copies) and library service. Whereas, students engagement on tutorial session/ teaching- learning/, assignment activities, and assessments and evaluation techniques of the program where considered as process aspects of quality of distance education. Nevertheless, assessing the external environment (output aspect) of the quality status was not considered for it is very tiresome to assess and analyze the students' grade average point (GPA) and the effectiveness of graduated employers at work place.

1.6 Significances of the Study

It is believed that the findings of this study would have immense contributions to the improvement of effective teaching- learning process of distance education programs particularly at centers so as to enhance the internal quality. Therefore, the findings of the study may have the following significance:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ It could help HEIs to develop students' services before preparing distance learning programs;
- $\frac{3}{4}$ This study may help Ministry of Education to identify ways to improve mode of delivery of distance education and formulate policies pertaining to appropriate instructional technologies and assessment choices that help to improve the internal quality

of HEIs;

- $\frac{3}{4}$ It may give possible directions to universities to improve quality distance learning that requires careful attention to learning design, effective faculty/school training, organizational commitment to adequate program support, selection of appropriate delivery technology, and a focus on the quality of student learning outcomes;
- $\frac{3}{4}$ It may throw more light to universities for developing a pedagogy that fits the chosen delivery of technology and directing sufficient resources to assessment issues; and
- $\frac{3}{4}$ The study will show directions to the Ministry of Education to set/improve standardized assessment components and evaluation procedures that enhance the quality of distance education.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

Coordinator: is a person assigned to manage all activities at tutorial center.

Distance education: education or training courses delivered to remote (off-campus) sites.

E valuation: is the process of using information to judge the internal quality (input and process) status of educational program.

Tutees/Students: are trainees or distance learners in the distance education program.

1.8 Abbreviations Used in this Study

H E I s: Higher Education Institutions

I T: Information Communications

J U: Jimma University

R V U C: Rivet Valley University-College.

S M U C: St. Mary's University-College

T G E: Translational Government of Ethiopia

II. Research Design and Methodology

2.1 Research Method

In this study a comparative case study research method was used. Because in this investigation the main aim was to evaluate both in breadth and depth the status of distance education programs with comparative analysis between the public and private HEIs centers in Mattu town Administration.

2.2 Sources of Data

Primary data sources include students, center coordinators and tutors. The secondary data sources were modules, assignments, reports, student records with respect to activities done at centers.

2.3 Samples and Sampling Techniques

To keep the fair distribution of sampled centers, the researcher used the simple random sampling (lottery method) technique to select two (40%) centers (SMUC and RVUC) from five private HEIs, and availability sampling was employed to choose one center of public HEI (Jimma University/JU) for it is the only public University that offers distance program at Mettu town. First, stratified sampling was used to divide the total students of each center into two groups (public HEI and private HEIs). Second, equal proportion of sample size (40%), 100 third year students of public HEI and 60 third year students of private HEIs were identified from each group of the institutions. This is because of their stay for three years in the institutions so that they can provide resourceful information about the program. Purposive sampling was used to select 10 tutors, for they are part timer and not regularly found at the center area, and availability sampling was used to select 3 center coordinators for they are the only administrative representative and key persons of the centers. Thus, the subject of the study is 173.

2.4 Data Gathering Instruments

The questionnaire having both close-ended and open-ended items was used; the close-ended items of the questionnaire were based on the Likert-type opinion of five scales. In addition, 7, 5 and 4 set of interviews for center coordinators, tutors and tutees/students respectively, and unstructured observation were used to investigate activities relevant to answering the research questions. Furthermore, document analyses were carried out on tutors' portfolios, annual plan, assignments, modules, exams, schedules and other documents.

2.5 Procedure and Data Analysis Strategy

The instruments were constructed by the researcher on the bases of theoretical knowledge from the review of related literature and their relevance to acquire the necessary data. After developing the data collecting instruments, the researcher has given them to two instructors of Mettu College of Teacher Education so as to improve the validity of the questionnaire and interviews. And then a pilot test of those instruments was made in both groups of 20 students-respondents to make the instruments dependability and to be finally used in the actual study with the overall Cronbach's alpha 0.87.

The data obtained from close- ended questionnaire were first edited, categorized, tabulated, and finally described by using various statistical techniques. Data gathered through the close-ended questionnaire were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean, frequency distribution percentage was used to describe categorical data regarding students’ responses about assignment, assessment and evaluation. Standard deviation, mean and t-test were used to describe the comparative analysis of statistical significance relationships between public and private HEIs at 0.05 confidence levels. Quantitative data were also analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 15.0 version. Finally, data gathered through interviews, document analysis, open-ended questionnaires and observation techniques were analyzed qualitatively.

III. Analysis and Research Findings

This part of the paper deals with the presentation and analysis of data collected from the respondents to address the basic research questions.

Table 1: Students’ Satisfaction about Center Coordinators Service

No	Items	HEIs	Mean	St.de v.	t-value	p-value
1	Registration and scheduling	Public Private	2.19 5.00	.73 .00	29.6*	.00
2	Getting academic advisement	Public Private	2.62 5.00	.788 .00	23.3*	.00
3	Fee payments	Public Private	2.01 5.00	1.12 .00	20.5*	.00
4	Availability of various courses	Public Private	2.29 5.00	.76 .00	27.2*	.00
5	Communication effectiveness	Public Private	2.17 5.00	.81 .00	26.7*	.00
6	Getting full information	Public Private	2.16 4.58	1.04 .49	16.8*	.00
7	well organized management	Public Private	1.53 4.00	.50 .00	38.0*	.00
8	Effectiveness of the managerial skill of the coordinator	Public Private	1.78 3.98	.41 .12	39.8*	.00
9	Facilitating tutorial session	Public Private	1.99 4.58	.65 .49	26.3*	.00

*p< 0.05, df= 158

As can be seen from table 1, the t- test result ($t < 39.8$, $df=158$ and $p < 0.05$) shows that there were statistically significant differences between two groups of activities done by center coordinators. Similarly, from the mean values of the groups it is possible to understand that students of private HEIs have got better satisfaction in getting advice, well organized management, necessary information and managerial skills of the center coordinators than JU. In line with this, the observation result also realized this fact. That is, private HEIs have assigned young center coordinators, who have better managerial activities so as to manage the centers effectively, whereas, Jimma University (JU) has assigned the retrieved or aged man as a coordinator, who may show less managerial activities than private HEIs. However, in postmodern society, quality is viewed in terms of facilitating a user-friendly environment (Tubbs, 2005). This does mean that, less managerial activities may reduce the quality of the institution. The observation results show that both groups of institutions stagnantly used face- to- face registration. Nevertheless, the provision of on-line advice about the range and content of courses, the application and registration processes are important for the first contacts with the administrative system (Boyd 2002).

Table 2: Students’ Engagement on Tutorial Session/ Teaching - Learning

No	Items	HEIs	Mean	St.dev.	t-value	p-value
1	I attend tutorial session regularly	Public Private	3.37 3.40	.48 .49	.37**	.70
2	Tutorial section is satisfactory	Public Private	1.53 2.51	.80 1.1	6.4*	.00
3	Tutors ability to present learning Materials	Public Private	2.12 2.51	.68 .50	3.8*	.00
4	Interaction between tutees and tutors	Public Private	2.60 2.68	.69 .72	.72**	.47
5	Course coverage during tutorial session	Public Private	2.52 2.55	.50 .50	.36**	.71
6	Adequacy of tutors’ subject mastery	Public Private	2.47 3.21	.50 .78	7.3*	.00
7	Tutorial section is fixed	Public Private	3.92 3.70	.39 .80	2.3*	.02
8	Counseling and guidance service	Public Private	2.09 3.73	1.19 1.35	8.0*	.00
9	Getting time and opportunity to discuss with	Public Private	1.160 1.88	.48 .99	6.1*	.00

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p > 0.05$ and $df = 158$

Table 2 of the t-test result ($t < 0.72$, $df = 158$ and $p > 0.05$) indicates that there were statistically no significant difference between the two groups in engaging students on tutorial session of the

teaching learning process. This implies that students of both groups were relatively almost at similar position in attending the tutorial session and getting chances to cover the courses through the tutorial session and to interact with their tutors.

On the other hand, the result ($t > 2.3$, $df=158$ and $p < 0.05$) of table 2 points out that statistically

Furthermore, from the researcher's personal observation and interview conducted at both centers of HEIs, the tutorial session were given by tutors, who were not from the main campus, but rather from anywhere. Particularly, at JU center, some of them have been teaching unrelated courses (for example, the one who has Bachelor Degree in Geography can be invited to teach sociology or Civics with less or no ability and skills to present the learning materials) . Such kind of institutional experience may have negative impact on the quality of distance education program being delivered. Likewise, from observational analysis, JU has no regular attendance during the tutorial sessions to check student presence. When interviewed, some students from JU said that, they have been registered and paid fees per credit hours so as to get satisfactory subject matter knowledge from tutorial session of the program; however; the delivery system of the tutorial session was below our expectation to get useful teaching-learning experience (Interviewed on 22 nd April, 2012).

Table 3: Tutees/Students Responses about the Quality of Modules

No	Items	HEIs	Mean	St. dev.	t-value	p-value
1	Contents were written with clear learning objectives	Public Private	4.00 3.93	.00 .51	1.29**	.19
2	Modules have been readable	Public Private	2.22 3.00	.78 .00	7.67*	.00 .00
3	Modules are attractive and written precisely.	Public Private	2.67 3.71	.47 .69	11.36*	.00
4	The contents were easily understandable	Public Private	3.18 3.56	.38 .49	5.48*	.00
5	Activities were relevant to contents in the module	Public Private	3.00 3.18	.00 .39	4.70*	.00
6	Assignments were relevant to contents in the module	Public Private	2.91 3.83	1.08 .37	6.36*	.00
7	The language of the modules is simple and easy	Public Private	3.00 3.61	.00 .49	12.60*	.00

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p > 0.05$ and $df = 158$

From table 3 the result of the analysis ($t = 1.29$, $df = 158$ and $p > 0.05$) indicates that there is statistically no significant difference between the two groups in writing the modules with learning objectives. That means, both groups have written the contents of the modules with clear learning objectives above expected standards as the mean scores indicated.

Nevertheless, table 3 analysis ($t > 4.70$, $df = 158$ and $p < 0.05$) shows that there were statistically significant difference between the two groups on the quality of modules. This directly implied that the modules of the private HEIs were more or less at better position to be readable, attractive, motivating, written with simple language and easily understandable contents and assignments were related to the modules than those of JU. Yet, the provision of course materials (quality modules), will enhance the quality of global world of teaching learning in distance education (Garrison, 1989). Thus, one can say that, the quality of modules may have positive impact on the quality of the teaching-learning and the success of distance learning program. Similarly, from my personal observation, particularly and relatively, the modules SMUC have been written as book standard with hard cover and attractive for everybody to read than the modules, which look hand out of JU and RVUC.

Chart1: Students' Responses about Assignment

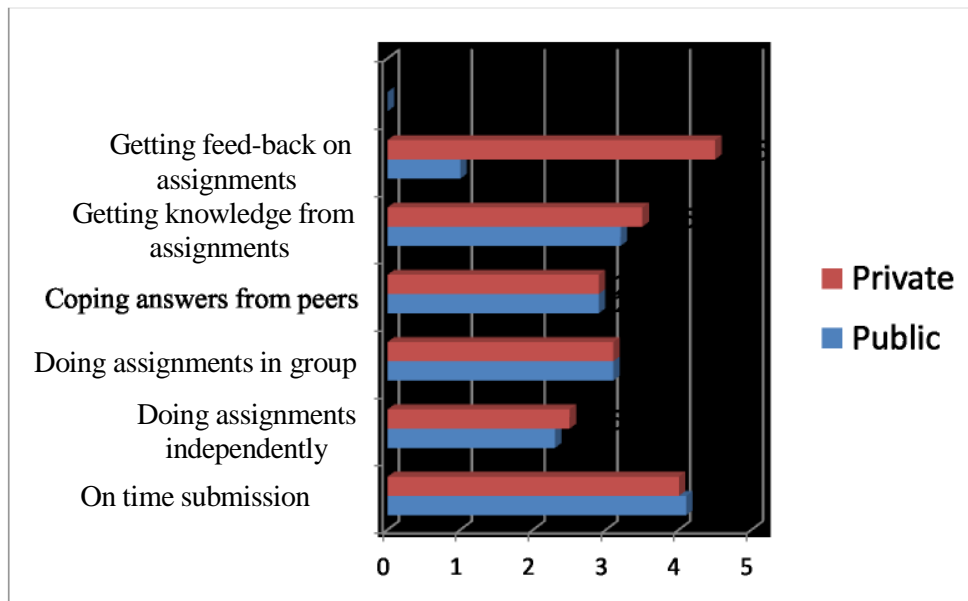


Chart 2 illustrates that students' responses about assignment ($M < 3.0$) below the average result of the five scales of Likert. Students of both groups showed fewer efforts in doing assignments independently and to some extent they have focused on copying answers from peers. They also considered their assignments as group work. The students of both groups have replied as they engaged in some subject matter knowledge in relation to the assignment given per courses. Private HEIs have given feed-back on assignments ($M=4.5$), whereas JU has given very less concern about the feed-back ($M=1$) of the assignments to their students. In the same way, the result of interview analysis revealed this fact. Yet, the quality of distance learning program may include various interactions with clear feedback, which provides strong motivation for the learners. In doing assignment, the result of the mean score shows students of two groups were not focused to practice independently.

In line with this, the document analysis showed that particularly, SMUC has used the strategy that the previous year assignments given per courses were completely changed by another per semester/year to year so as to minimize copying of answers from previously done assignments. Whereas, both JU and RVUC have used the same type of assignment for the given course repeatedly, that may invite students not to do assignments individually but copy from drafts of the previous year students. Hence, relatively, it is possible to say that SMUC has been at high quality status in using effective mechanisms in assessing their students through assignment as one component of assessment.

Table 4: Availability of Instructional Materials

NO	Items	HEIs	Mean	St. dev.	t-vale	P-value
1	Modules	Public	1.00	.00	2.28*	.02
		Private	.95	.21		
2	Library/ book store	Public	.00	.00	1.84**	.06
		Private	.03	.18		
3	IT support /internet access	Public	.02	.14	.52* *	.60
		Private	.03	.18		
4	Recorded audio/ video	Public	.01	.10	.36* *	.71
		Private	.01	.12		
5	Video conferencing	Public	.01	.10	.36**	.71
		Private	.01	.12		
6	On-line communication	Public	.01	.10	.36* *	.71
		Private	.01	.12		
7	Television broad cast	Public	.01	.10	.36**	.71
		Private	.01	.12		

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p > 0.05$ and $df = 158$

From Table 4, the result ($t = 2.28$, $df = 158$ and $P < 0.05$) show there were statistically significant differences between the two groups of HEIs. This implies that JU has adequate modules as learning materials than private HEIs. On the other hand, the analysis results ($t < 0.52$, $df = 158$ and $P > 0.05$) indicate that there were statistically non-significant differences between both HEIs in availability of instructional materials. This showed that both groups have inadequacy of Information Technology (IT) support, video conferencing, television broad cast, library and on-line communication as instructional materials to implement the program. In addition to the response of the target population, the observation made on both HEIs shows those facilities such as the provision of library, utilization of teleconferencing, videotape, interactive television courses, internet access and the above listed facilities except modules are totally absent. Yet, the support services include access to library materials facilities, delivery of course materials (modules), and access of technology enhances the quality of global world of teaching learning in distance education (Garrison, 1989). Thus one can say that using only modules as an instructional material may leads to less quality delivery of distance education at the centers of both groups.

From the document analysis and interview result of the respondents both groups of HEIs have used the same approaches of assessment techniques with 30% assignment and 70% final examination so as to evaluate their students. However in distance learning, assessment choice should support intended learning outcomes, but they also should be consistent with desired learning approaches (eg., individual vs. group- based learning and integrated vs. isolated subject approaches) formative assessment of students (eg., projects and individual assessments and encouraging students to learn through application), and summative assessments through formal examination or testing, to measure the attainment of knowledge and skills at specific points of the program (AACSB, 2007), so as to enhance the quality of learning program.

Regarding the marks of the students, none of the respondents (0%) from JU replied they get and know their marks before they receive their grades. Whereas, respondents (51%) from public HEIs were able to know their marks to some extent before they received their marks. Hence, private HEIs are at higher position to show marks of the assessments before the students receive their marks than JU. Concerning the evaluation system, the result of Chart 2 indicates that all student respondents from both groups replied that their grades were absolutely not done/awarded by their tutors (from anywhere), who were carried out the tutorial session on the tutorial day but, assessment and evaluation system were done by other bodies (non-tutors of the main campus). Indeed such activity may reduce the quality of assessment and evaluation system of HEIs as a whole.

Generally, from the other side, assignments and examinations were not prepared by tutors of both groups, which are not pedagogically supported. Hence, it is possible to say that there is a gap that shows less quality of assessment and evaluation system at Metu town centers of the HEIs under which the study is investigated.

V. Conclusions and Implications

Based on the analyses, the following conclusions and implications were made:

1. Regarding students satisfaction about center coordinators service, private HEIs' students have got better necessary information, advice, effective administrative communication and the like than the administrative service given by JU center coordinator. Strengthening the administrative service of the center coordinator will improve quality of support service in the institution, because the effectiveness of administrative services is one of indicators of input aspects of quality of education.
2. The research finding showed that student engagement to the tutorial session and teaching-learning of JU seems at lower position than private HEIs. Hence, quality of education may not come without effective student engagement in tutorial session with subject matter instructors. Engaging students in tutorial session and teaching learning process by making effective instructional interaction between tutors and students will bring significant change in the quality of education being delivered. Also inviting tutors with subject mastery during tutorial session should improve the quality of teaching-learning process.
3. Concerning the students' responses about the modules, the quality statuses of modules of SMUC were relatively at higher position than that of JU and RVUC. Less quality of learning materials may affect the effectiveness of teaching learning process. However, the provision of quality modules would enhance the quality of global world of teaching learning in distance education (Garrison, 1989). Indeed providing attractive, readable, easily understandable modules to the learner, improve the quality of teaching learning process.
4. The result of the study showed that JU and RVUC have used repeatedly the same types of assignments from semester to semester. And JU has not given any feed-back regarding assignments and examinations. This may have negative impact on students' psychological learning, which leads to less effectiveness of the learners. In reality, if students get feed-backs, they will be motivated and given opportunity to increase their performance in the learning process, which may improve quality of education at the institution. Similarly, using various types of assignment components per course, students may minimize the duplication or coping of answers from previously done assignments. That is to some extent the students tried to do their best in doing assignments, which can give moderate contributions to the quality of education.
5. Regarding instruction materials, JU was at higher position in distributing sufficient modules than private HEIs. The study also reveals that both groups have used only modules as instructional materials for their teaching learning programs. However, support services include access to library facilities, delivery of course materials (modules), counseling, tutoring provision of information and access of technology based teaching learning enhances the quality of global world of teaching learning in distance education (Garrison, 1989). If they use IT based instructional materials for their teaching learning process with various modes of delivery and online registration process, they may be able to meet the needs of distance

learners, and indeed they should add a great value to their quality of education and they should be definitely competent in the world. Similarly, if RVUC and SMUC provide adequate modules, students should be timely benefited and engaged in an increased quality of teaching learning process of distance education.

6. The finding of the investigation showed that assessment and evaluation systems were made by non-tutors. Students of both groups were getting less satisfaction to restricted assessment component [assignment (30%) and final examination (70%)] which contradicts with the fundamental choice of formative and summative assessments. These kinds of assessments are pedagogically not supported to bring the expected quality of education. In doing assignment, the result of the mean score shows students of two groups were not focused to practice independently. Besides, the evaluation of all students of both groups was done by non-tutors of the main campus. Furthermore, all respondents of JU replied that they did not know their marks before they received their grades. On the other hand, if assessment policy which supports the intended learning outcomes is set by Ministry of Education, the students may get satisfaction and they will become well educated, productive and competing people in the country. Hence, using the strategy that tutorial session, assessment and evaluation system made by subject matter instructor, and caring proper evaluation through different approaches of assessment techniques would greatly improve the quality of teaching learning process of both groups. This is because if both formative and summative assessments carried by the subject matter instructor, it will be able to measure the attainment of knowledge and skills at specific points of the program so as to enhance the quality of distance education program.
7. In general, since Ethiopia has been moved to the industrial zone, the quality of distance learning requires careful attention to learning design, effective faculty learning, organizational commitment to adequate program support, selection of appropriate delivery of technology, and focus on students learning outcome. Definitely, the country needs well trained man power in the fields of distance education program. Thus, instead of using off and on system if systematic evaluation and guidance system are done by Ministry of Education in the input and process aspects of distance learning program (e.g., preparation, delivery and assessment of learning experience etc.) progressively, the quality of distance education in Ethiopia will be effectively improved to the expected status.
8. Since the study primarily depended on self-reported respondents of the respondents, the quality status of the modules of both groups can be further investigated by applying text analysis as a research type.

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