

Tutors' Perception on Payment Procedure and Practices of Honorarium: A Case of Bangladesh Open University

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Abstract

Perception of the stakeholder about the organization has been proven as an important factor for the development and growth of the organization. The objective of this qualitative study is to explore the perception of the tutors about the financial payment procedure and practices of honorarium of Bangladesh Open University. The sample tutors were selected from 8 tutorial centers among 20 tutorial centers of the school of education of Bangladesh Open University on random basis. Data collected from 82 samples using self-administered questionnaires and then thematic analysis is done with an inductive approach to get the views of tutors. The result shows the remuneration and honorarium paid by the university to the tutors for receiving various services is somewhat satisfactory to them. However, they express the views that there is a lot of scope for improvement in the payment procedure of remuneration. They are quite unhappy about the payment procedure in respect of timing of receiving bills, submission of bills, and communication about the payment. Tutors have expressed some recommendations to improve the existing financial payment system efficiently. If the university authority considers their views to incorporate to improve the financial payment system, the practical implication of this study will be achieved.

Keywords: Tutor in ODL, Remuneration and Honorarium, Payment System, Job Satisfaction, BOU.

Introduction

The Open University provides distance learning through correspondence ways and tutors are hired to assist the learners academically in meaningful ways. This is a very normal process in distance learning education. Learners acquire their knowledge using their self-learning material but some aspects of further acquisition of knowledge require detailed analysis which may not be achieved completely by the help of self-learning materials. Open universities use a variety of means to bridge the gap between the limitations of self-learning materials and the demand of the knowledge for learners, one of which is the provision of appointment of tutor in tutorial centers. The tutor assists a learner in his or her quest for knowledge. However, learner-centered learning is the key method of teaching in the teaching learning process of ODL because a tutor distributes knowledge according to the learner's needs. This means that the barriers that a learner encountered in acquiring knowledge using self-learning materials are the main topic of discussion in tutorial sessions. In this case, the learners' needs are the main issues and the tutor has no role

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in determining the content of discussion in the tutorial sessions. A learner has to appear at the tutorial center at a specific time on a predetermined day and face the tutor to solve the problem of specific content in order to acquire the required knowledge. A qualified tutor meets the needs of the learners according to the scope of his knowledge and predetermined areas of subject matter. Although with the advancement of technology, Open Universities are trying to provide tutorial services using ICT, they still have to arrange face-to-face tutorial services due to the learners' profile of the developing countries (Ntuli & Gumbo, 2019). In Bangladesh, most of the learners live in remote areas of the county where facilities of technologies are limited. Therefore, the role of tutors in helping the learners for acquiring knowledge through distance learning is immense and their services are an essential part of the academic activities of the university.

For any service related organization employees are the key sources to achieve the goal of the organization. For this reason many researchers have done the work to find out the factors of job satisfaction of the employee of the organization (Ahmad et al., 2010). Teachers are the core employee for achieving the objective of the university. In case of Universities which follow an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system, tutors take the place of importance as they are the main academic staff who directly interact with the students in the classrooms. Interaction between the learners and tutors is the foundation of effective learning in the OLD system (Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Zhou & Xu, 2015). Therefore, the perception of the tutors about the university is very imperative to achieve the objectives of the university. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) searched literature about the perceived organizational support like evaluation of work & care for the employees by the organization and found a positive relation between job satisfaction and performance of the employees. As the nature of the job of tutors can hinder tutors to gain satisfaction and which have an impact on the performance (Beyth-Marom et al., 2006), university authority has to be alert about the satisfaction of the tutors from every aspect of service provided to the tutors. This paper tried to explore the views of the tutors of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) about the financial payment system in respect of delivering the payment for academic services received from the tutors. This attempt will add value in providing better services to the tutor from universities and improve the relationship between tutors and university authorities.

This study only focuses on the area of financial payment which is specifically related to the tutors in providing academic services. Tutors are not the permanent faculty of the university rather they are hired on contractual basis. Tutors provide mainly tutorial services in the tutorial sessions, examine the answer scripts, organize and conduct various examinations. University authorities provide financial remuneration to the tutors for these services through bank accounts and checks after passing of a controlling mechanism. All the other academic services like preparing self-learning modules, making and moderating the questions for examination, are done by the permanent faculty of the university. This study is limited only to these areas of financial payment related to tutor of School of Education.

Problem statement

Bangladesh Open University (BOU) has been trying to improve its financial management system for many years as part of better management and organization of the university activities. Technologically the university has undergone tremendous development in recent times. Various initiatives have been taken to ensure the use of technology in all areas of the activities of university. One of the purposes of using technology is to facilitate all kinds of processes and activities of the university. Learners and teachers play a very important role in the academic activities of any university. It is more imperative in case of tutors of open universities because they are directly involved with the learners in the tutorial centers to provide the academic support. Tutor's experiences with the university have a significant impact on academic performance of the university. The financial benefits of the organization play an important role in the satisfaction of the stakeholders of any service organizations. This is especially true for open universities because none of the tutors are permanent employees of open universities. They mainly provide academic services to the university on contractual basis. Therefore, financial factors have an impact on the tutors overall activities during the academic interaction with the learners.

According to Johnsrud and Rosser (2002) organizational theorists developed some factors related to the organizational experience, like salary, communication, centralization opportunity etc., which can influence the social-psychological variables like job satisfaction, commitment to the organization and moral standard of the members of the organization. These factors can lead to turnover of the employee of the organization (Vandenberg & Nelson, 1999). Perception of the member shapes the reaction in the domain of emotional and behavioral outcomes (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). The positive perception about the university can affect the academic services of tutors and the ultimate benefits go to the learners of the university. So it is important to take their views for the development of the financial payment systems pertaining to tutors. This demanded to explore the tutors' perceptions regarding the financial payment system of the BOU in relation to financial remunerations of the tutors. This perception can contribute in the modernizing and upgrading of the payment procedure of the university along with adjustment of the rate for the honorarium. Consequently, the present study tried to explore the following main statement: *Tutors' views regarding the financial payment system which are related to their remunerations*. The main statement gave rise to the following research questions:

1. What are the tutors' views regarding the financial remuneration for their academic services?

2. What are the tutors' views regarding the process of payment for financial remuneration?
3. How do the tutors' suggestions in improving the financial system regarding their remuneration?

Methodology

Bangladesh Open University is the sole institute in Bangladesh which provides education services in open and distance learning methods. This paper represents the first empirical work to investigate the perception of the tutors about the payment of honorarium and remuneration in the open and distance education system of Bangladesh. As this paper tried to understand the perceptions of the tutors regarding the financial payment of a unique institute, intrinsic case study methods are used to explore the issues. According to Mcmillan and Schumacher (2014) intrinsic case studies used to examine unique individuals, groups, or events. Therefore the case study method is more appropriate for this study as it is focusing on only one group of tutors of the School of Educations of BOU.

This study is a descriptive study and data is collected through to a survey questionnaire which is widely used in qualitative research. People's perception and view can be collected through survey data (Wellington, 2015). For identifying the phenomena and events, an exploratory research design is used. The outcome of the research is influenced by the research design (Manogharan et al., 2018). For this reason, this study only focuses on the views of the tutors who are directly involved with the payment process. Data collected from a wide range of samples as the right sample can also influence the outcomes of the study (Wellington, 2015). Sample selected from a subset of the population of 20 (twenty) study centers, with non-probability sampling method, where the respondents are the tutors of the 8(eight) institutes situated in the eight divisional cities of Bangladesh and provides tutorial services to the learners of School of Education. Following table 1 summarizes the sample of the study.

Table 1: Summary of sample participated in the study

SL.	Name of the Institutes	Total Teaching Faculty in the Institute	Total Number of Tutors Involved with BOU	Tutors Participated in the Study
1	Teachers Training College, Mymensingh	35	22	12
2	Teachers Training College, Chattogram	25	16	10
3	Govt. Shaheed Abdur Rob Serniabat Teachers Training College, Barishal	23	15	11
4	Teachers Training College, Khulna	32	25	12
5	Teachers Training College, Rajshahi	48	25	9
6	Teachers Training College, Sylhet	19	13	10
7	Teachers Training College, Rangpur	31	21	12
8	Teachers Training College, Dhaka	72	50	6
<i>Source: Survey in respective institutes</i>				

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The purposive sampling method is used for the convenience of the data collection. The Participants of the study are the tutors of the school of education, on contractual basis, who are directly involved in providing academic support to the learners. They get financial honorariums according to university rates for these services. Therefore, they are directly involved in the payment procedures of the university. A survey method on them can help to find the facts of a situation in a cheap way (Bell, 2010). Data collected through survey questionnaires with open ended questions, if anonymity is ensured, can provide more valuable data than face to face interviews (Wellington, 2015). In this study data collected from tutor's workplace premises and anonymity is ensured so that they become more articulate to share their perception about the subject matters. Tutors were asked about their demographic information and some open ended questions pertaining to the research questions to understand the view of the tutors about the financial payment management of BOU. A self-administrated written questionnaire provided to the tutors and they answer their questions by writing them on the questionnaire. Enough time and space is given to them to think and write their views on the script. Tutors were asked to write in detail about the views of the focused area. After getting the views of the tutors, the thematic analysis is done with an inductive approach to get the findings of the study. The result generated after carefully reading the views of the tutors and the main points, which are recurring several times when the all views are gathered all together, presented as the perception of tutors. The process of labeling, coding and categorizing have done to find the results.

Findings

In total eighty two (82) participants participated in this study who are the tutors of 8 tutorial centers of the School of Education (SoE), Bangladesh Open University. All of the teachers are involved in the B. Ed. and M. Ed. programs conducted by the SoE. They are mainly permanent employees of the Teachers Training Colleges established by the government in different divisions of the country and which is also used as the place of tutorial centers for the learners of SoE. Most of the tutors worked as a tutor for SoE for a long time and have vast experience in the education fields. Participants were told the purpose of the study in detail and were assured about the confidentiality of their information. The demographic information of the participants presented in the following table 2:

Table 2: Summary of the demographic information of the participants

Variables	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	62	75.5
	Female	20	24.4
Age	31-40	13	15
	41-50	39	47.5
	51 and above	30	37.5

*Designation	Lecturer	42	51.9
	Assistant professor	26	32.1
	Associate Professor	10	12.3
	Professor	3	3.7
*Educational qualification	Bachelor	2	2.5
	Masters	71	87.7
	M. Phil	1	1.2
	PhD	4	4.9
	Others	3	3.7
Tutor of Program	B. Ed.	50	61
	M. Ed.	32	100
Average Professional Experiences			18.68 Years
Average years of involvement with Open University			14.31 Years
* 1 data is missing			

Source: Survey results

Research Question 1:

The tutors showed somewhat positive views with the current financial remuneration paid for the tutorial sessions and exam related activities but most of the tutors have expressed the need to increase the financial allocation from the university to the tutorial center for conducting the exams of the learners. It is to be noted that the remuneration & honorarium of tutors have recently been doubled to match in line with remuneration of other universities but the allocation for conducting examination related activities has not been increased in that proportion. Tutors also criticize that the policy regarding expenses for conducting examination related activities is not properly implemented. A tutor stated:

Needed to proper implementation of the rules those have been passed. Such as increasing the allocation of expenses regarding examinations has appeared in the paper but not implemented in practice.

Other tutor stated:

Need to increase the remuneration related with exam management.

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Other tutor demanded:

Allocate more funds to meet the expenses for the examination.

However, the opinion regarding the increase of the honorarium and remuneration of the tutor has also come from some of tutors. A tutor stated:

If remuneration of the tutors increases and the payment done in a timely manner, the quality of the service of the tutors will be increased.

According to (Shoaib et al., 2009) salaries and other benefits in any type of organization play an important role in job satisfaction of employees as they provide them with the necessities of life. The high amount of remuneration can bring satisfaction about the work of the tutors and that can have influence in the performance of academic services of the tutors. Remuneration also plays an important role in educators' commitment toward the organization along with their job satisfaction (Tettey, 2006). Therefore the university should regularly revise and adjust the rate of remuneration with the industry standards.

Research Question 2:

By exploring the views of the tutors discreetly, this study tries to understand the perception of the tutor about the payment procedure since that will help to develop strategies for payment procedure. Although the tutors have positive perception with the rate of honorarium and remuneration, they have given quite negative opinions about the payment process of that. Almost all the tutor has expressed dissatisfaction with the payment process. Since the tutors are not permanent employees of the BOU, they provide comparative views on the delivery process by conducting a comparative analysis of the honorarium and remuneration system of the organizations where they worked as permanent employees. However, as BOU is the sole university in Bangladesh which provides the academic services in ODL, there is no scope of comparing the remunerations and honorarium along with payment procedures.

Tutors think that there is a lot of scope to develop the process of payment procedure of BOU. Tutors have to prepare the bill after providing academic services to the university and then submit it through online or in paper format to the Accounts division. Some bills can be sent through online but some bills must be submitted in printed paper. However every bill, even those bills which are submitted online, needed to print and must be sent in printing format to the Accounts division. Therefore it cannot be said that the billing system is automated and that is the main source of frustration of the tutors. The tutors mainly commented on the following issues regarding the payment process:

Timing of receiving bills: Almost all the tutors expressed the negative views about the timing of payment of remuneration after submission of the bill. Sometimes it

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takes year to get the payment after providing the academic services by the tutors. A tutor stated:

Pay remunerations bills on time

Many tutors express the same views:

All remuneration should be paid in timely manners.

Bill Submission: All tutors agreed on one opinion that they want to send their bill through online. The system of the university forces them to submit bills in paper format. They want full automation for the submission of the bills. A tutor stated:

Receiving a bill through online and delivering it in the right time is needed.

Other tutor recommended:

A Fully automated online billing system must be introduced. Don't want to keep any hardcopies of bills in the billing process. Bill related messages should be sent on mobile.....

Tutors are concerned about the complexity of the billing system. A tutor demanded:

Simplify the billing process....

Communication about payment: Tutors have expressed frustration over the communication with respected authority about the bills. They face a lot of problems because they do not have the means to contact any specific person to solve the problems with the bills. They also don't understand that they received the bill for academic service as they did not receive any message from the university on mobile or any other means after the authority paid the bill. They are interested in receiving all the services related to the bill done at the respective regional center. In this case, if a specific person is accountable for the responsibility in the regional center regarding bills, they can get all the solutions by contacting that person. A payment system will only be effective if the process is simple and understandable and self-explanatory. If the employee is not informed about the payment system, he will misunderstand the payment system. To increase the effectiveness of the payment system, they need to know what the payment system is designed for or why it is justified (Armstrong et al., 2007). Even a Good reward system can de-motivate an employee because of misunderstanding about it. An employee must feel that he is well paid according to his contribution in his workplace. A tutor stated:

Direct communication with the accounts division must be established in case of bill payment. Inform the tutors about the amount paid at least for those bills which are submitted through online.

If tutors could express their grievances regarding any procedure of the billing system, they can be mentally satisfied. Psychological well-being of the employees on the job could transform into better job performance which is crucial for any type of organization (Nelson, 2006). Direct communication can establish the channel for expression of the tutors suffering regarding the bill payment system and can eliminate the problems immediately.

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A tutor wanted:

....To gets rid of harassment in every step to get the remuneration bill.

A tutor demanded:

Send SMS from BOU after payment of the bills.

A tutor felt:

In order to improve financial management, it is necessary to eliminate the delay and settle the payments of remunerations as early as possible. In this case, it is necessary to increase the overall financial management capacity of the regional center.

A tutor mentioned:

It is helpful to understand which bill I got by sending a message on my personal mobile along with sending the money in the bank.

Tutors are the human capital of the university. According to Ahmad et al.(2010)in the service industry, employees of the organization are interacting with the clients directly and for this reason the positive perception about the organization has a direct influence of the profitability on the organization. Similarly, tutors are directly involved with the learners of the university and their perception has an influence on the delivery of academic services. Therefore, authorities should pay attention to the tutors' negative views to achieve the objective of the university.

Research Question 3:

Tutors have given very specific recommendations for the development of the financial payment procedures of BOU in relation to tutor's payment. According to tutors views the automation of the payment procedure can solve all the problems regarding payment management. Tutors have advised the authority to specify the responsibilities of the responsible person in the system. The maximum timing to get the bills must be specified after submission of the bills. Any process can be made effective and efficient by setting the right person in the right place. Increasing the manpower of the accounts division can also improve the situation. They also suggest observing the payment management of other universities for updating the system. A Tutor Stated:

It is essential to streamline the Accounts division for financial payment management. Manpower needs to be recruited and existing manpower needs to be trained for providing services in efficient manners. Financial payment management of the National University can be observed as an example.

Other tutor expected the integration of the technologies in the payment procedure:

Transform the manual financial system into an online financial system.

A tutor recommended:

.....it is recommended to eliminate the harassment in paying the bill.

Following table 3 summarize the findings of the study.

Table 3: Summary of the key findings

		Key Findings
Research Question 01	Tutors' views on financial remuneration	• Honorarium and remuneration rates fixed by the university are equitable according to current practice in other universities. • Increase of Honorarium can help to improve the quality services.
Research Question 02	Tutors' views regarding the process of payment	There is lots of scope in improvement of payment process of honorariums in respect of: • timing of receiving honorariums; • submission of bills; and • communication regarding process of payments of bills.
Research Question 03	Tutors' suggestions in improving the financial system	• Paperless automated payment procedure can radically improve the situation. • Set maximum time for receiving payment after providing services.

Source: Survey results

Conclusion

In exploring the tutors' views about the financial payment management of BOU in respect of the payment system for the tutors for academic services, this paper finds mainly three aspects: positive perception, negative perception and recommendation about the financial payment procedures. Tutors have shown positive views about the remuneration rate fixed by the University for the academic services. However, they have expressed negative views about the fund allocated for the expenses for conducting examination related activities. Moreover, the perception of tutors about honorarium couldn't be capitalized due to various difficulties in the payment procedure of honorarium. They demanded elimination of the difficulties and simplifying the process of the payment procedure. They also recommended going for full automation of the payment management to make it efficient and effective. If the communication between the tutors and the account division can be established, many problems could be solved immediately. University authorities can use the help of ICT in this regard. This paper contributes knowledge by highlighting the views of the tutor in the payment procedure of university and as improvement of the organization is a

continuous process, university authority can incorporate tutors' views to improve the system to run more effectively. There is scope for further research based on the findings of this research. The perception of the tutors can influence the satisfaction level of the tutors. A study to measure the satisfaction of the tutors and its impact on the performance in providing academic services could help to redesign the remuneration and payment procedure of the BOU.

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