



Policy and Practice in Asian Distance Education. Tian Belawati and Jon Baggailey (eds). SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, B1/I-1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044 and International Development Research Centre, P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, ON, Canada K1G 3H9. 2010. xxvi + 260 pp. Price: Rs 650.

Due to limitations of the formal system of education in reaching out to everyone, policy makers were attracted towards non-conventional modes of education for providing nonresidential studies, like correspondence courses. The distance education mode, in which it is not necessary to bring all the students together to listen, was considered worthwhile. However, in the distance education system, occasional meetings between the teacher and the student are planned. These meetings are popularly known as personal contact programmes (PCPs). This system of education is suitable for persons who want to enhance their qualifications, but are not in a position to attend classes on a regular basis. Such distance courses proved to be a boon for the people with fulltime jobs as well as those desirous of pursuing higher education. As a result, a large number of employed persons, professionals, entrepreneurs, jobless youth, school teachers, housewives and retired persons seek admission to distance education study programmes.

Distance education in Asia and the Pacific has been booming in the past few decades in order to respond to the increasing demand for highly trained human resources for socioeconomic development in the region. The Governments of each nation have paid special attention to the possibilities of distance learning in higher education.

This book is a collection of articles written by the members of the PANDora and is divided into five sections.

Section I comprises three articles which introduce some concepts regarding open and distance learning. The article on 'conceptual origins' discusses the evolution of open and distance learning (ODL), which combines the methodologies of distance education with the concepts of open and flexible learning. The second article on 'financial management' illustrates some of the issues in funding and cost classification required in open and distance learning. It illustrates by considering an open university called Universitas Terbuka (UT) in Indonesia, the budgeting and cost procedures of the university for 2006. It is almost like a financial statement of the university. This will be a model for any open university budgeting. The third article covers some of the major professional associations in ODL. Four international and six regional associations of Asia are described with their activities in distance education and their respective funding.

Section II discusses five articles on the evaluation and assessment in distance education. The first article talks about the *cost-effectiveness* in distance education and gives illustrations by reconsidering the practices of UT. It further provides the cost-effective analysis and demonstrates how these tools are helpful for the decision-makers to estimate cost per student, selection of teaching strategies, teacher training programmes, etc. The next article discusses the standard, reflexive model of *quality assurance* (QA), and its role in high standards in distance education. It uses the Shewhart cycle paradigms for QA management. An example of QA implementation is provided to demonstrate how the staff members can improve their activities in terms of 'best practices' which are identified as essential for distance education. Some of the procedures used to assess the performance of students are given in next article on *student assessment*. These are the same as regular education, though involving different work-loads and safeguards. The next article provides the principles and methods of electronic assessment in education, and the challenges faced by the institutions in implementing them. The design analysis and reporting of evaluation studies on distance education are illustrated in the last article. The measures and safeguards

given in this article ensure that the submitted reports are as accurate, original, valid and reliable.

Section III describes media usage in distance education. The first article gives the media usage history. It describes the 1970s and 1980s multimedia models, and also the latest web-based, flexible learning models used in distance education. It briefly highlights the five generations of distance education technology. The second article illustrates the principles and procedures for the production of print and audio materials in distance education with the example of UT. The next article talks about the broadcast TV and on-broadcast video introduction and their success in distance education. The fourth article covers the selection and use of learning management system (LMS) for teaching online, and the final article on production of SMS materials provides details about cell-phone and SMS-based distance education.

Section IV demonstrates some of the principles of distance education implementation. The first article focuses on the problems of internet-based distance education. It discusses the cases of online accessibility, affordability and models suitable for different countries in South Asia. The second article summarizes the adult learning theories, and also a couple of classroom models for adult learning. The next article discusses methods of course material development strategies with an illustration of Wawasan Open University course development model. The final article highlights the importance of gender issues and sensitivity in various design aspects of distance education.

Section V illustrates some of the examples of distance, and open and distance education institutions like China Open University, Korean Open University, Indonesian Open University, Thailand Open University, Virtual Open University of Pakistan and Malaysian Open university. In all these universities open and distance education programmes have been discussed and the objectives, administrative policies, quality assurance schemes, etc. have been highlighted.

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