

PAPER 13

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMONWEALTH DISTANCE EDUCATORS

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. Introduction

This paper attempts to survey the possibilities for training in distance education open to people working in this field in Commonwealth countries. These range from programmes tailor-made for the staff of specific organisations to self-study courses offered by institutions and associations both inside and outside the Commonwealth.

The training programmes covered can be divided into three broad categories:

- (a) those which take place at the organisation where the trainees work, or are offered by/for a regional group of such organisations, or take the form of a training attachment to a different distance-teaching institution;
- (b) face-to-face courses for participants from a variety of different institutions, not necessarily from a particular country or region;
- (c) training offered at a distance, generally by correspondence, and open to anybody, anywhere, who fulfils the entrance requirements (if any) and can pay the fee for materials and tuition.

The following sections comprise a catalogue of these various kinds of training, which does not, however, claim to be exhaustive.

The need for training for distance education professionals is widely and increasingly recognised. It has been well expressed by the Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific:

'... the lack of trained personnel to develop distance education materials is a stumbling block. Most of the people working in distance education have come from the formal system and are attuned to the methods of traditional education. Their new roles demand a new set of skills and attitudes. Personnel must be reoriented and retrained for their changed task. Qualified producers, scriptwriters, technical support staff and presenters are all required.'

(ROEAP Bulletin No. 26
December 1985, p.39)

Two of this Unesco Regional Office's activities are relevant in this context. Its Asian and Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development, which functions through a network of institutions in member countries, has held meetings on training needs (Pakistan, 1983)

and workshop training methods for distance education (Sri Lanka, 1984). Its plans for 1987-1991 include a proposal for 'personnel training methodology for countries recently starting distance education'. Its Regional Higher Education Consortium, a network established in 1982, has identified innovation/distance education as one of its activities. It held a training workshop in the development of distance education instructional materials in Thailand in 1985, which was attended by participants from Commonwealth countries.

The Distance Education Association of New Zealand, also, has set up a committee to review and extend training offered by institutions, as part of its goal of disseminating distance education skills more widely and improving the quality of distance learning and teaching in New Zealand.

On-the-spot training programmes for the staff of individual distance teaching institutions have been part of professional staff development ever since the governments of developing countries started asking institutions in donor countries to help them launch such institutions. The International Extension College began seconding staff to such new projects in the early 1970's, for periods of up to two years. One of the most important objectives of such secondments was to train local staff to take over the running of the project as soon as possible. Examples of such programmes will be given in the next section.

On-the-spot training does not, however, offer the staff concerned the opportunity to share their experiences or pool their resources with those of other institutions. A more recent development, which does enable this sharing to take place, is that of the regional workshop. Such workshops have so far been mostly concerned with the development of course materials, but there is no reason why they should not in future be organised for other training purposes.

Another approach to the training needs of individual institutions is for key staff members to be attached to another institution, generally in a donor country, for several weeks or months. Although this may give the people on attachment a helpful insight into the way things are done in a longer-established programme in a richer country, it may not provide them with the most relevant possible training experience.

Face-to-face, or residential, training courses for distance educators are few and far between.

The area which is really burgeoning at the moment is that of self-study courses. There are several, fairly obvious reasons for this development. First, by offering training at a distance, we are practising what we preach, doing what we claim to be able to do best, and offering students the chance to experience being distance learners themselves. Second, most distance education staff are more likely to be able to enrol in such a course than to attend a residential one, both because it will probably be much cheaper and because it can be undertaken without the necessity for leaving their posts. A third reason is that there is currently no other way of achieving a professional qualification in distance education. It is remarkable

how many of the self-study courses recently introduced, or in the process of development, offer a diploma. Clearly members of the profession feel the need for such a qualification, whether or not their employers do.

From the point of view of the institutions in the field, there appears to be a growing awareness of the need to share experiences with others, both for training and for other purposes. Such exchanges between institutions in the same region are relatively inexpensive, but sources of funding are not obvious.

More funding would also be useful for face-to-face courses bringing together people from a wide range of programmes in different parts of the world/Commonwealth. Distance education is now a sufficiently important activity to justify training courses of this type on specific topics, such as audio production, research and evaluation, printed materials, administration, and the adoption of new technology. We shall return to this suggestion in the final section of the paper.

2. Training for Specific Institutions or Regions

(a) On-site Training

International Extension College (Cambridge, England)

IEC has undertaken on-site training for the following Commonwealth institutions:

Mauritius College of the Air

Botswana Extension College (now the Department of Non-formal Education)

Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre

University of Lagos

Namibian Extension Unit

South African Extension Unit

University of Nairobi

Department of Non-formal Education, Southern Highlands, Papua New Guinea

In most of these cases IEC has been active in the actual setting-up of the institution and has recruited expatriate staff to help to get the operation going and assemble and train a nucleus of local staff to continue to run it. Such training has included outside training for short periods, but most of it has taken place on-site, and has consisted of two main components.

- On-the-job training is the method by which most skills have been learned and developed by full-time staff.
- Short training workshops have been found particularly useful for part-time course writers, new to the requirements of distance education, and people preparing audio materials.

The workshop pattern of training has been IEC's main contribution to organisations which it has not set up itself.

Open University (Milton Keynes, England)

The UK Open University has also been involved in on-site training programmes, both within and outside the Commonwealth.

National Council for Education Research and Technology (New Delhi, India)

NCERT has organised a series of training seminars over the last ten years for the staff of various distance education institutions in India, on such subjects as writing, management and organisation, tutor-marking, personal contact programmes, and setting-up study centres, often with Unesco experts in attendance.

University Sains Malaysia (Penang, Malaysia)

Two British consultants assisted, from 1978, in the development of a staff training programme which included training for the off-campus programme. The programme was planned in a series of one-day workshops for academic staff and the consultants recommended the University to set-up a small unit to assist in training of academic staff. Staff of this unit were to be given a one-year full-time postgraduate course, comprising the Dundee College of Education Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Technology, plus a special project at the University of Surrey. The first two staff members appointed to the unit did this course in 1979-80. For other academics they prepared a distance-learning course equivalent to three months full-time, using correspondence materials, tutorial assistance from the University Educational Technology Unit, and a 3-4 week on-campus period.

The consultants considered that after the staff on the Dundee course had returned and the Unit had been started, the University would be able to run its own training programme, without outside assistance, except for training further unit staff and senior colleagues selected for liaison with the unit. They also felt that this programme could serve as a model for other institutions.

Later developments in staff training for USM's Off-Campus Programme are described in section 2(c) below.

(L. Elton & G. Manwaring, 'Training and Education of Teachers in Higher Education in Developing Countries', Higher Education 10, 1981.)

Distance Education Branch (Sri Lanka)

The Branch is responsible for distance education for in-service teachers at all levels. Its staff have been trained in a series of seven workshops between 1982 and 1985, organised by consultants from the Department of Education, University of Lund, Sweden. Most of these workshops have been held in Sri Lanka, using a combination of lectures, discussions and individual work. They have covered:

theory of distance education

guidance and counselling

tutoring

assignments for submission

production and media

administration

research and evaluation

The participants have included course writers, production staff, tutors, correspondence teachers and administrative staff. The training has been based on four handbooks:

for course writers

on production and administration

for tutors

for correspondence teachers.

The latter two are designed as correspondence courses, to be used by the first people trained in order to train others.

There have been additional writing workshops in between the training workshops attended by the Swedish consultants.

The consultants see a continuing need for staff training to be organised by them, particularly in organisation skills and evaluation, and for further training in Sweden to deepen the organisation's knowledge of distance education.

(Unesco Regional Office, Bulletin no. 26, December 1985

R. and A.W. Flinck, Developing Distance Education in Sri Lanka, and various earlier reports, University of Lund, 1985).

(b) Regional Workshops

International Co-operative Alliance (Geneva, Switzerland)

ICA has sponsored and organised training workshops in East and Central Africa on the development and use of correspondence instruction in cooperative education.

Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) (Singapore)

Open Learning Institute (Canada)

International Extension College (England)

These three organisations are collaborating on proposals for training in media production for distance education in Asia.

A one-week seminar will take place in Singapore in June 1987, for senior staff of distance education projects in Asia. OLI and IEC distance educators will present training possibilities and the seminar participants will draw up a programme of regional training courses over the next few years.

Writers' Workshop Series, College of Adult and Distance Education, University of Nairobi, and German Foundation for International Development (DSE) (Kenya)

This series of workshops has been run twice so far, in 1985 and 1986. The programme has three stages:

1. a 2-week workshop to familiarise writers with skills needed to design a specific distance education course, to help them plan, develop and write at least one unit and be ready to field test it;
2. over the next 4 months participants field test their units and rewrite them in preparation for:
3. a 2-week editorial workshop, where writers work with editors on finalising their materials.

In 1986 the 21 participants represented eight organisations in three countries (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania). They are funded by DSE.

(c) Training Attachments

Institutions in Commonwealth countries which have offered training attachments to staff of distance education institutions from developing countries include the UK Open University, Deakin and Murdoch Universities in Australia, and the Open Learning Institute, Canada.

A detailed account of one such programme, under which course writers from the University Sains Malaysia were attached to Murdoch, Deakin or OLI, will be found in the regional paper on Asia prepared for this study (Distance Education in Commonwealth Asia, Regional Paper 2, compiled by Janet Jenkins). A total of 68 writers have participated, with Murdoch taking 16 maths and physics writers, Deakin taking 36 writers in social sciences and arts, and OLI taking 16 chemistry and biology writers and course developers.

Some of these individual attachments have been markedly more successful than others, when measured in terms of the quantity and quality of course materials produced. USM's varied experience has several lessons to offer institutions contemplating similar programmes (see Asia paper).

3. ~~Face-to-face~~ Courses

Distance Teaching in Developing Countries, International Extension College (England)

This is a 4-month course run every year at the University of London Institute of Education. It is for people working, or intending to work in distance education and it covers planning, administration, development of printed materials and radio programmes. Participants undertake an individual written project related to their work and agreed with their organisations beforehand.

The course's objectives are to enable every participant to:

- analyse an educational problem in his/her own country and determine whether distance-teaching methods are appropriate to it;
- make reasoned and informed choices between different methods of distance teaching;
- work out administrative arrangements for a distance-teaching system, including feedback and evaluation;
- write, edit or arrange the production of learning materials for a specified audience and set of objectives.

The tuition fee for the 1987 course is £3,400. This does not include accommodation costs.

Masters' Degrees in Education in Developing Countries, University of London Institute of Education, option on distance teaching taught by the International Extension College

This option is offered in three of the ULIE's Masters' programmes, all of which last twelve months. It is designed for people concerned with the planning, administration and production of distance teaching within ministries of education, higher education institutions and specialised distance-teaching organisations. It examines pedagogical

design, administrative considerations and evaluation and considers its use for non-formal as well as formal education.

The tuition fee for all three programmes is approximately £3,500.

Television Production in Education and Development, BBC Open University Production Centre (Milton Keynes, England)

This intensive three-month course has been held for the last five years. It aims to teach television production by developing the analytical, visual and management skills of participants to enable them to make relevant, informative programmes as part of multi-media education and development packages.

The course consists of lectures, exercises, seminars, programme evaluations and visits, but with the emphasis on practical work. Aimed at educators, television producers, directors and scriptwriters involved in programme making for education and development, it does not teach specialist technical skills but concentrates on production methods, direction skills and educational purposes.

In 1986 the course fee was £7,000, not including accommodation costs.

Distance Learning for Trainers, British Association for Commercial and Industrial Education

This 5-day non-residential workshop is run twice a year in London. It is designed for 'experienced trainers who are or will be engaged in the production of open or distance learning material'. It concentrates on printed text and participants have the opportunity to plan, develop and pilot test a unit of distance learning material.

Fee £690.

Distance Learner Support Workshop, British Association for Commercial and Industrial Education

This is a similarly organised workshop for trainers responsible for the selection, implementation and management of open and distance learning programmes. It aims to enable participants to identify the kind of support a distance learner needs and the skills necessary to give this support. They will design an appropriate support programme for an existing package offered by their own organisation.

Fee £660.

4. Self-study Courses

(a) Courses Already Offered

Of the 306 responses to questionnaires sent out for this enquiry, nearly 50 indicated that the institution concerned had produced training manuals for their staff. The majority of these are for course writers or for tutors, and it seems safe to assume that they

are designed for self-study. In addition, we know of the following courses which are currently available to distance educators generally.

Graduate Diploma in Distance Education, South Australian College of Advanced Education

This is a distance education course for practitioners of distance education. The first students were enrolled in 1983 and by 1985 included some from other South Pacific countries as well as Australia.

The diploma is equivalent to a one-year full-time course, but is available only over three years to part-time students. There are seven units, but we do not know how many assignments have to be submitted for assessment. At the end of the course students undertake a project equivalent to a double unit.

For copyright reasons the South Australian College has been unwilling to provide us with samples of the course materials. But we know from published articles about it that it is primarily print-based, using audio cassettes, colour slides and video cassettes as supplementary materials where appropriate. The course was developed by a course team whose membership changed over time and between units.

We do not know what the fee for the course is or what the enrolment criteria are for overseas students.

Diploma in Correspondence Education, Association of European Correspondence Schools

This course aims to enable correspondence educators to increase their knowledge and enhance their professional status. There are seven modules available:

- essentials of distance learning
- course for administrators
- course for counsellors
- course for editors
- course on marketing
- course for tutors
- course for writers, Parts I and II

The fee for each module is US\$50, and there are no formal entry qualifications. 30-60 hours of study are required for each module and they may be studied in any order. Each has between two and six assignments to be submitted to a tutor for grading. After completing the assignments in three modules (which must include Essentials of Distance Education), students may apply for the Certificate in Correspondence Education and are eligible to take a written

examination or write a dissertation for the Diploma.

Tuition is normally in English but it is sometimes possible to arrange to write in another language.

Essentials of Distance Education, Borje Holmberg, Fernuniversitat (ZIFF), (West Germany)

This is a printed distance-study course designed "to be useful both to people who study education in a scholarly way and to practitioners in distance study and adult education generally". The author has also described it as a curriculum largely of post-graduate character. There is no indication of the time the student should expect to devote to the course, in terms either of study hours or months. There are five units, with an assignment for submission at the end of each.

We have no information of the cost to the student of enrolling on this course, which is available in both English and German versions.

Tutor Orientation and Training Package, Open Learning Institute (British Columbia, Canada).

This package of five manuals and eight audio cassettes has been designed to guide instructors who provide tuition for students enrolled in distance education programmes. The manuals, entitled Tutor Administration Manual, Tutor Orientation Manual, Tutoring by Telephone, Audio Teleconferencing for Distance Education Tutors, and Assessing Student Assignments, are presented in a 3-ring binder with a cassette holder in which the eight audio tapes are mounted. The manuals incorporate practice exercises and their answer keys.

The cost of the package is not known.

Training Manuals for Distance Education, International Extension College

This is a series of manuals aimed at those who have limited resources at their disposal:

Writing for Distance Education	£10
Practical Research in Distance Teaching: A handbook for developing countries	£18
The Administration of Distance Teaching Institutions	£18
Course Development: a manual for editors of distance teaching materials (published jointly with the Commonwealth Secretariat)	£10

Writing for Distance Education includes exercises, intext questions and checking activities. The administration and course development manuals can be used for self-study, by people working in groups or

training workshops or as a correspondence course with IEC tuition. So far there have been very few correspondence students for these manuals.

Open Learning Guides, Council for Educational Technology (London, England)

Open Learning in Action	£12
How to Help Learners Assess their Progress	£7
How to Tutor and Support Learners	£7
What is Open Learning?	£9
How to Develop and Manage an Open Learning Scheme	£7
How to Communicate with the Learner	£8
How to Manage the Production Process	£9
How to Find and Adapt Materials and Select Media	£8

Training Courses in Open Learning, Scottish Training and Support Unit (Dundee, Scotland)

SCOTTSSU has produced a number of open learning packages to support Open Tech projects. These are as follows:

- Learning about Open Learning
- Writing Open Learning Material
- Tutoring Open Learning Schemes
- Delivery of Open Learning Material
- Evaluating Open Learning Schemes
- Adapting Material for Open Learning

Tutor support is available for all except the first. The cost varies from £20 (£50 including tutoring) for tutoring or evaluation, to £25 (£90 including tutoring) for writing. The courses are designed for distance study, but we do not know how many hours of study they are expected to take. Some parts are more appropriate than others for use outside the Open Tech framework.

Diploma in Educational Technology, Dundee College of Education

Dundee College offers a range of related courses, all at a distance, of which the Diploma is the longest (maximum time four years). It includes elements which can be studied separately for a certificate in the design of courses and a certificate in the design of materials.

The annual fee for overseas students is £1250. It is possible to complete the college diploma with no attendance requirement, but a minimum of eight days' attendance is needed for the award of a Council for National Academic Awards diploma.

This is a postgraduate course in curriculum development which happens to be taught at a distance, not a course designed for distance educators. Although it uses 'the educational technology approach' and deals with distance learning, along with other methods, under 'course design and teaching methods' (itself one of eight study packages), it makes no claim to be appropriate for the training of distance educators.

Practice of Higher Education, Institute of Educational Development, University of Surrey (England)

This is a Diploma/MSc course for teachers in higher education which is taught at a distance, not a course designed for distance educators. It consists of four compulsory modules and eight optional ones. Participants must pass in five modules and an individual project for the award of the Diploma. They must pass two further modules and a research dissertation for the MSc. One of the optional modules is Distance Learning (a module can require up to 120 hours of work).

Normal completion of the Diploma is expected to take two years and a further 18 months to 2 years is needed for the MSc. The fees are £650 for the Diploma and an additional £360 for the MSc.

(b) Courses in the Process of Development

Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association

ASPESA is preparing a staff development package (no details available).

(ASPESA News, 12.:2, August 1986)

Indira Gandhi National Open University (New Delhi, India)

IGNOU plans to offer a Diploma in distance education from January 1987, designed primarily for tutors. This is to be followed by a Masters' degree, from 1988, aimed more at full-time professionals in distance education, and including training in such areas as course development and writing.

Diploma in Education, Massey University (New Zealand)

From 1988 Massey University will offer distance education for people working in distance education, as part of a postgraduate diploma. There will be courses in phenomenology and course design, but no more details are available at present.

Diploma Course in Distance Education, Deakin University (Victoria, Australia)

We understand that Deakin University's Distance Education Unit offers such a course, but we have no more information about it.

External Diploma in Distance Education, International Extension College and University of London Institute of Education (England)

This proposed course has so far only been approved in principle by the Committee for External Degrees of the University of London.

Its aims would be:

- to enable students to obtain a broad knowledge of distance education practice at various educational levels, and of the media combinations and administrative and organisational patterns commonly used;
- to provide students with an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of various distance education approaches and enable them to determine the appropriateness of such approaches to particular educational purposes;
- to equip students with essential skills in course materials development for distance education and in the administration of distance teaching institutions.

The programme would be aimed, in the first instance, at students who had successfully completed the IEC/ULIE short course in distance teaching. It might, at a later stage, be open to students whose experience and/or alternative training in distance education could be deemed to exempt them from the need to attend such a course. Its target audience would therefore be senior administrative or professional staff of distance teaching institutions or experienced educationists who are destined to become distance educators.

The Diploma Course would have four elements:

1. The development of distance education and its present status (policy and practice).
2. The general principles of distance education: the learning system, the administrative system and the assessment system.
3. Adult learning and educational communication.

4. Educational development: policy and innovation.

The possibility of extending this programme to Masters' level courses is also under discussion.

5. Recommendations

The information presented in this paper shows that a wide range of methods are currently used to train distance educators. To some extent, at least, a choice is available to institutions and individuals seeking training.

Judging by the number of programmes reported in the previous section on self-study courses under development, distance educators are particularly interested in developing and using distance materials for training. We would therefore recommend that support be given to the development of such training materials. A useful first step would be to organise an examination of those which are already available, including as many as possible of those produced by distance education institutions for their own internal use. From such a study a list could be compiled of recommended materials, and it might even be possible to group some of them together into a complete course.

We would also suggest that more staff training could usefully be undertaken on a regional basis by groups of institutions in Commonwealth countries. Specific short courses could be organised on some of the following topics:

writing	counselling
audio production	editing
video production	print production
tutor training	research and evaluation
administration	new technology

The importance of training key staff members to train others in their turn should be borne in mind when planning either distance or face-to-face training activities.

Exchanges of staff between organisations are valuable. So far, these have mostly been organised between developed and developing countries. We would recommend the introduction of more exchanges between institutions within the same region. Relatively short visits of this kind would be less expensive and would be likely to contribute more to the training of intermediate level staff.

One of these recommendations calls for more than a relatively small boost to get new initiatives started. In particular, the establishment of regional training links and programmes is a much more feasible objective than the implementation of a centrally designed Commonwealth distance education training programme.