

THE ASIAN DISTANCE LEARNER

PAPER PRESENTATIONS

An effort has been made to classify the Abstracts under the Conference sub-themes to which they primarily relate, although in some cases they obviously span more than one sub-theme. Those where the link to the sub-themes appeared less direct have been categorized as 'Other issues'.

Also, only author's name, institution and country have been indicated here. Where available, further details about, for example, title and Faculty/Department are included in the separate List of Participants.

Sub-theme I



Access

The promotion of access to open and distance education in Iran

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Access to higher education has been a key issue in Iran during the past three decades. Although measures have been taken by traditional post-secondary institutions to resolve this problem, the number of applicants is still much greater than the admission capacity of the state institutions.

The aim of this paper is to trace the step-by-step development of the distance teaching system of Iran in order to justify the claim that only the distance education system can respond to the persisting demand for access to tertiary education. The paper will:

- outline the higher education system of I.R. Iran in general, and distance education in particular;
- describe the achievements of the only existing distance education university – Payame Noor University (PNU) – with respect to the promotion of access to post-secondary education;
- consider the prospects for Iran's higher education system, and the critical role of PNU in this regard.

The University has played an important part in filling the gap between demand and offer at the tertiary level, and will play an even more vital role in the future if it continues to receive the government and public support it has enjoyed in the last decade.

A study on access to distance education in higher education in Iran

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One of the objectives of Payame Noor University (PNU), which began its distance education activities in 1987, is to create opportunities for people interested in higher education, especially those for whom education through the conventional mode is impossible. Its success in achieving this goal can be seen in the fact that it now has 200,000 students and 130 local Study Centres, and is the largest state university in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Higher education is the key factor in the social, economic, cultural and political development of all countries. Yet higher education institutions face many challenges. In PNU's case, the problems it faces originate in part from its own organizational structure and unnecessary regulations. Also, in its present situation, PNU will be unable to meet the future needs of a developing Iran, so the issue of access to this mode of education is significant. Both these aspects are discussed in the paper, the question of access involving a statistical comparison of students from PNU local Study Centres and from other conventional state and private universities. The effect of the higher concentration of higher education institutions in Tehran (the capital of Iran) is also considered. Overall, it is concluded that PNU, despite its difficulties, has contributed to resolving the access problem in a more equitable manner than other institutions and can play a significant role in all aspects of Iran's future development.

Towards multiculturalism: the case of Asian students' access to humanities study at the UK Open University

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This paper presents the results of a preliminary investigation into the rate at which British citizens of Asian ethnic origin enrol to study the humanities at the UK Open University (UKOU); their reasons for choosing to study these subjects; and their broad experiences of the first-level multidisciplinary course *A103: An Arts Foundation Course*, which was first presented by the Faculty of Arts in 1998. Data were derived from the analysis of past and current enrolment/withdrawal figures and from questionnaire responses.

These data are compared to the outcomes of a similar investigation into the whole population of an earlier version of the course, with the aim of identifying any differences between the groups in study orientation and experience, so that the Faculty may better address its multicultural responsibilities. Towards this end, issues in need of further investigation are identified.

The role of China's Radio and Television University in lifelong education: the present and future

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The need for lifelong education is an inevitable outcome of social and educational development. The continuous thoroughgoing reform of China's economic and political systems has brought about a favourable environment for lifelong education.

However, in breaking away from the constraints of old ideas and systems, many issues still need to be considered. This paper deals first with making comprehensive use of distance education in order to provide education to all members of the community, and the role of China's Radio and Television University (CRTVU) in the learning society. It considers also the provision of a quality service for self-study, involving:

- the restructuring of the education system and the use of computers;
- the development of the teaching staff;
- the use of educational resources from all walks of life.

Finally, it presents a future model of CRTVU to fulfil its role in lifelong education and the learning society.

Access and equity: the needs of the disadvantaged

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Secretary-General

Asian Association of Open Universities

Many in the Western developed world may not fully realize that access to open and distance education (ODE) can be a serious problem; after all, since there are no rigid entrance requirements, any potential learner can gain entry. However, when conditions in Third World countries – especially developing countries in Asia – are considered, a substantially different picture emerges. A country such as India, which shelters almost half of the world's illiterates, has a serious problem of access to education, including ODE. While the difficulty may be minimal in the urban areas which account for roughly one-third of India's population, the situation in the rural and semi-urban areas, with almost 70% of the population, is significantly different. The problem is further accentuated by the existence of large numbers of disadvantaged people.

The problem of access arises from a multiplicity of social, economic and cultural factors, including certain conditions peculiar to Indian rural society which dampen motivation and incentive. Also, no serious effort has been made by the powers that be to expand access and reduce inequity in educational opportunities, especially for the disadvantaged – who constitute a substantial section of India's population.

This paper attempts to identify disadvantaged groups, and relate the problems of access and, to some extent, inequity to their illiteracy/semi-literacy, lack of specialized skills, physical incapacity for better productivity and lack of adequate motivation for acquiring higher education/skills. Finally, the limitations of the conventional system are discussed and a case is made for a special Access-Initiative (AI) by Indian open universities.

Are the teaching, learning and assessment methods of the UK Open University culturally biased?

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The UK Open University (UKOU) was founded on the basis of being 'open as to people, open as to places, open as to methods and open as to ideas'. However, recent market research conducted by the University has found that the brand name is perceived as predominantly white, middle-aged and middle-class. Such an image may deter potential students from studying with the University. The aim of this paper is to identify to what extent these images may be influencing Asian student recruitment.

Researchers such as Ho (1986) have suggested that traditionally Asian students, and particularly Chinese students, place emphasis on obedience and dependence. This would imply the need for a prescriptive rather than a constructivist approach to learning. Asian students may, therefore, be deterred or encouraged by the style of teaching and learning offered by institutions. Kember *et al.* (1992) suggested that students who are able to integrate with the social systems find it easier to come to terms with their academic demands.

This discussion paper looks at the recruitment of Asian students within the UKOU and questions whether the design of the University's structure inhibits or encourages enrolment of students from culturally diverse backgrounds. The teaching, learning and assessment methods, and the research currently available on cultural differences in educational expectations, are examined – on the basis of which it is hoped to establish policy guidelines.

An analysis of the need for distance education in Shanghai

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The need for lifelong learning changes according to economic, technological and social conditions. So, it is imperative for distance education institutions to base their policy-making and future development on regular investigation and analysis of a society's need for a distance approach to teaching and learning.

This paper focuses on a recent study of the needs of the citizens of Shanghai for distance education carried out by the Shanghai Television University and advances some proposals on how to satisfy them.

More study chances for laid-off workers

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China is now experiencing unprecedented reform, which has resulted in many workers losing their jobs. To meet society's needs, China's Radio and Television University (CRTVU) can play a major role in study opportunities to help them find employment.

The key to accelerating re-employment for laid-off workers lies in:

- raising their level of knowledge and skills;
- helping them to master new skills;
- strengthening their competitive attitudes.

As a modern open and distance university, CRTVU is characterized by flexible methods of study and a national coverage which make it very convenient for the laid-off workers to train themselves and seek re-employment. The University intends to train them:

- to master practical skills by providing short-term training courses, and to raise their knowledge levels, sometimes in cooperation with other agencies;
- to be confident, to re-think their attitudes towards work and to clarify how to fit into today's harsh reality.

Basic skills training will be provided in, for example, writing and foreign languages; and there will be more specialized training in mastering new skills which will make them competitive for their return to work.

In short, CRTVU can play a major role in promoting re-employment and, in so doing, develop yet further the nation's open education system.

Distance education for the backward areas of China: the case of Ningxia

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With the arrival of the information age, the pace of industrialization has accelerated greatly. However, in some backward areas, the transformation from an agricultural society to an industrialized one remains to be accomplished, and the task of speeding up this process needs to be addressed.

Due to its flexibility, wide geographical coverage and lower costs, distance education has now established itself firmly in the field of education. This approach to teaching and learning is suitable not only for economic development but also for the situation of learners in less developed areas. This paper discusses guidelines for applying distance education in Ningxia, in the north-west of China, based on its level of economic and social development. It focuses on the characteristics of the learners, the instructional materials, media use and management of the system. These guidelines may be of value for developing distance education in other backward areas.

The functions of the Radio and Television University system in China's Open University of the future

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The Radio and Television Universities (RTVUs) are one of the main forms of distance education in China. After two decades of development, the RTVUs have formed a modern distance education system with Chinese characteristics and strengths. They make a major contribution to extending the scale of higher education by training a large number of qualified professional personnel for economic and social development.

This paper analyses the current RTVU system and then examines how it can build on its strengths to play an even more significant role in national development in the 21st century. It focuses on two main issues:

- The achievements of the RTVUs since 1979;
- The need to use modern electronic teaching media to promote open distance education in China in the future.

Sub-theme 2



Students' experience of learning

Factors that influence the learning behaviour and success of distance education students

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This study sought to determine the factors that influence the learning behaviour and success of distance education (DE) students. Nine-hundred students distributed in 12 Learning Centres throughout the Philippines were involved in this study, and data-gathering instruments included a self-rating scale on learning behaviour, a survey questionnaire on personal characteristics, and rating scales on curricular factors, support structures, psychological climate and tasks. Seven sets of relationships were investigated and the analysis focused on the following questions:

- Do learners' characteristics influence learning behaviour?
- Do learning environments influence learning behaviour?
- Do tasks learners engage in influence learning behaviour?
- Is the behaviour of different learners affected by the different tasks they undertake?
- Is the behaviour of different learners affected by different learning environments?
- Are some environmental factors more effective in supporting learners to perform certain tasks?
- Is the behaviour of learners influenced by a combination of learners' characteristics, learning environments and tasks?

The analysis showed that the behaviour of learners is influenced by a combination of their needs and abilities as modified by environmental factors and tasks they engage in. The results provide insights on how tasks and learning environments may be structured to enhance performance and how students' needs may be addressed. The study also provides an empirical basis for designing strategies to ensure effective support systems in distance education.

Counselling sessions as support for distance education students

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In Payame Noor University (PNU) at present, textbooks and counselling sessions are the only means adopted for helping learners to overcome the difficulties they face in their studies. The time allocated to counselling sessions is limited, and how they should be run has been a matter of constant debate among instructors. Some see these classes as intensive and, therefore, focus on teaching the learners rather than enhancing the process of learning.

This emphasis on teaching rather than learning results in the failure of a large number of students in their examinations, in particular in science and mathematics subjects. For example, on average, only 50 per cent of those attending the final mathematics examinations are successful in passing the courses for which they registered. The systematic nature of mathematics and coherence of relevant theorems are among the reasons which the instructors usually cite as explanations for this high failure rate.

The purpose of this article is to develop a model for overcoming this problem, drawing on many years of experience of counselling in different mathematics courses. The principles of the model are based on the nature of mathematics on the one hand and the philosophy of such systems on the other. By applying it, students will have a key role even in organizing mathematical concepts, formulating relevant theorems and solving problems. In fact, in this model, mathematics is not only learned but also created. Since learning to learn is the most important pillar of education, motivating students to ask and think, and guiding them to solve problems themselves, are the main roles an instructor should play in counselling sessions. This paper illustrates the application of this approach using examples from the specialized subjects of algebra and analysis.

Reflections on a comparative study of distance learners

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Distance teaching institutions in different parts of the world are adopting increasingly diverse means to organize and present their teaching. Nevertheless, from the students' perspective, many still do share some common features. Courses are normally studied part-time, in isolation from other students, using one or more media, with limited tutorial support and with most study taking place at home. The question is: how important are students' study environments in relation to the effect of other factors which may influence their approaches to learning?

This paper outlines a comparative study which involved students of the Open University of Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom Open University. Details of study environments were collected from both sets of students, and a modified version of the Entwistle and Tait 'Approaches to Learning Inventory' was administered to both groups. Factor analysis identified major approaches to study used by each set of students. Selected findings are discussed and key results are identified for such studies in the future.

National culture and learning style in distance education: a conceptual integration

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While distance learning is a popular delivery mode for education in the West, it is still perceived as 'unconventional' by many people in Hong Kong, who are more prepared to accept the traditional face-to-face type of teaching. One of the underlying explanations is the cultural differences between the East and the West. Recent studies have demonstrated that Chinese learners perceive education differently from their Western counterparts and also tend to adopt different approaches to learning.

Previous educational research has often used 'collectivism' as a major cultural dimension that distinguishes students' learning styles in different national cultures. However, the concept of culture is multidimensional. This paper attempts to explore the relationship between cultural traits and students' learning style preferences by going beyond the collectivism dimension, with a particular focus on distance education. Using Hofstede's well-established cultural dimensions (i.e. uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, power distance and individualism/collectivism) as a framework, a series of propositions delineating the cultural impact on learning style preferences is set out and discussed.

Students' perceptions of pacing mechanisms in distance learning

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One of the characteristics of open and distance learning is the flexibility in studying which it provides to learners. However, this flexibility is limited to a considerable extent by the pacing mechanisms implemented in most distance learning (DL) systems – particularly through the setting of assignment cut-off dates, in the belief that this facilitates student learning.

The way in which a DL institution deals with late submission of students' assignments can be seen as reflecting its philosophy of adult and distance learning, though the issue is inevitably further complicated by administrative practicalities. The formulation, or reassessment, of regulations in this area requires an exploration of students' views to ensure that the practices adopted match their needs as far as possible.

This paper reports the results of a research project on students' attitudes to the use of assignment deadlines as a pacing mechanism. It involved a questionnaire survey of 355 students on a BEd(Hons) in Primary Education course at the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) – followed by interviews with a sample of respondents to explore their perceptions and preferences in greater depth.

It was found that the pattern of submission of assignments of the students was greatly influenced by the regulations set, though these were to some extent arbitrary. The extensions that students required for assignment submission were, at least to a certain degree, related to what they perceived as 'the limit'. Moreover, their view of 'the limit' was linked to their expectation about the likelihood of approval, which in turn depended on the level of the responsible authority from whom approval had to be sought.

The paper concludes by raising some further related issues, both philosophical and practical, for distance education providers to consider when assessing this aspect of their systems; and by suggesting a limited adjustment to the OUHK's current policy in the light of the research findings.

On the use of student support services

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Self-learning is the key to success in distance and open learning (DOL), but not all DOL students develop adequate skills for independent study. To accommodate for this, student support services (SSS) are provided. Such support aims to enhance students' performance but it is unclear how far this is achieved.

This paper reports on a study aimed at evaluating students' use of some existing support services at the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK). Specifically, it studies the relationship between the academic performance of students and their use of SSS at various stages of a presentation cycle, from pre-enrolment to post-examination. Emphasis is given to course-related services such as tutoring activities and support for course assessment. For the purposes of this presentation, the discussion is based on the results of a mathematics foundation course, with final grades (involving both continuous assessment and examination results) being used as the measure of academic performance. A questionnaire survey was conducted to collect information from students about their use of existing support services. The results showed that they generally adapted well to the style of distance learning, preferred studying independently and considered tutoring services to be relatively unimportant. Moreover, high-achieving students generally planned better for their studies and relied less on continuous support than did low achievers. The findings form a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of a student support system.

Tutorials in a distance education system: student expectations and preferred approaches

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Distance education systems provide students with self-instructional materials from which they can learn independently. However, to facilitate effective learning and promote independence, they normally also have a built-in learner support system in which face-to-face tutorials are commonly an important aspect.

This study addresses the following issues:

- What are students' expectations about the role of such 'traditional' elements in a distance learning system?
- What format(s) do they prefer face-to-face sessions to take? For example, are they prepared to play an active role in the process?

These questions are of particular concern for Asian societies – such as Hong Kong – rooted in the Confucian cultural heritage in which teachers are viewed as transmitters of knowledge and teacher-student relationships are usually authoritarian.

The paper examines such issues with a sample of BEd(Hons) students at the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK). The project involves the administration of a questionnaire to two groups – one new to the system, the other having studied in the University for at least a year – and a small number of interviews. The findings from the two groups are compared with each other, and with studies from the West, and the implications for developing student understanding of the role of tutorials in a distance learning system are explored.

The learning strategies of Asian learners

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Global cooperation in distance and open learning is inevitable. However, attempts to devise an effective cooperative model of learning will be unsuccessful unless we define clearly what we mean by 'learning at a distance' and specify the most effective and appropriate strategies for Asian distance learners.

A study was conducted at Payame Noor University (PNU) in an attempt to:

- prescribe such optimum learning strategies for distance and open learners;
- provide a framework for the discussion of some pedagogical issues of cooperative learning;
- find the most appropriate methods of materials production for Asian distance learners.

Data collection involved the use of questionnaires, interviews, introspective and retrospective techniques to discover the most effective learning strategies of successful students. The model used to specify and classify the strategies was developed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), comprising metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies. In order to provide more in-depth results, the study focused on strategies in one academic area in Iran's distance education system – English language learning.

In brief, the findings of the project indicated that there are qualitative and quantitative differences between the optimum learning strategies used by Asian distance learners on the one hand, and by other distance learners and conventional students on the other. Also, the major learning strategies are to some extent teachable.

Distance learning across the East-West divide: Asian learners' experience of Western distance learning

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Since 1991, the Centre for Labour Market Studies at Leicester University in the UK has been involved in teaching postgraduates around the world through distance learning. This experience has raised academic and practical issues which are particularly interesting in the context of Asian students studying with a Western university.

Many Western stereotypes of the Asian learner result from a specific educational tradition. This tradition has resulted in the conception that 'good' learning takes place under a range of conditions, including small class sizes, varied teaching methods and a student-centred approach (Watkins and Biggs 1996). In many Asian countries the conditions often do not appear to match this conception of an appropriate learning environment (Crooks 1988; Watkins and Biggs 1996). Yet, despite this discrepancy, successful learning does take place.

The main argument propounded here is that there do seem to be differences in the ways in which Asian and Western learners approach distance learning and there is less variation in approach among Asian students than Western students. These different approaches seem to stem from the different educational traditions that the learners have been exposed to. This paper suggests that a crucial role for teachers in distance learning may be to facilitate the development of self-understanding so that learners can develop approaches which suit the context and content and, crucially, their own characteristics.

The role of the academic self-concept in distance education students

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The aim of this paper is to discuss the results obtained from a research project on the academic self-concepts of distance education students at Payame Noor University (PNU), and their relationship to success or failure.

A questionnaire was used with a sample of 490 students in two groups: a successful group and an unsuccessful group. The sampling was carried out at the Study Centres of the University scattered throughout the country. A test comparison of the two groups' mean scores was very significant ($p < .001$).

It may be concluded, then, that the academic self-concept of successful students (a positive self-concept) is significantly different from that of unsuccessful students (a negative self-concept) and is an important factor in student achievement.

An analysis of self-regulated learning in distance learners

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This study explored the self-regulated learning of distance learners and attempted to assess the generalizability of the Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) theory to the distance education context. The theoretical framework was based on:

- the SRL theory developed by Corno, Zimmerman, Schunk and Pintrich;
- the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) developed by Pintrich, Smith, Garcia and McKeachie.

Generally, the SRL research has been categorized either in terms of 'self' or 'regulation'. In this study, both these approaches were adopted. The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique was used to assess various relationships among the selected factors in the hypothesized theoretical model. The subjects consisted of 221 distance learners from 10 classes at the National Open University of Taiwan. One self-report questionnaire measuring learners' intrinsic goal orientation, extrinsic goal orientation, task value, control beliefs, self-efficacy, metacognition, time and environment management, effort management and help-seeking was administered; while academic achievement data were obtained from the mid-term and final examination scores.

The study concluded that, in a distance education context:

- value and expectancy have direct effects on metacognition;
- metacognition has a direct effect on resource management;
- expectancy has a direct effect on academic achievement;
- above all, expectancy is the most significant predictor of academic achievement.

Do distance learners have to be alone? A study of learning culture

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Distance learning is often regarded as synonymous with self-directed learning – with learners having to be autonomous and independent in their studies. However, the experience of practitioners in the field suggests that, in this respect, the situation of distance learners is similar to that of learners in traditional learning environments, except that they often feel alone. Emphasis on learner autonomy and independence is a goal that *all* educators wish to attain, but this should not be equated with 'learn by oneself'.

In Chinese culture, 'apprenticeship' has been traditionally embedded in the mechanisms of learning, so learners are more teacher-dependent than are Western learners. The teacher's functions of teaching, mentoring, advising and leading are very important to learners. Self-directed course material with many written activities and feedback that attempt to mimic real personal interaction does not satisfy the learners. Styles of learning are tied to the culture of the learners; that is, the concepts of learning, the value of teacher-learner interaction and past learning experiences have a deep influence on the process.

How can distance educators provide learning experiences that are suitable for Chinese learners who expect a 'real' teacher? Or should we prepare learners in a Chinese learning culture to adapt themselves actively to a more learner-centred approach – and, if so, how can it be achieved? Also, can a learning environment be provided in which they learn together with teachers and with other learners without losing independence?

The purpose of this paper is to explore cultural influences on learning, and how distance educators may design a learning environment to facilitate learning that is appropriate for 'culture-bound' learners. It examines also how learners may be facilitated to become more effective beyond the influence of their cultures or past learning experiences. A number of distance learners are interviewed to discover their concepts of learning, present learning styles and past learning experience; and the data are analysed in terms of the cultural context and background of the learners.

The experience of managers in postgraduate studies through distance education

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Many theories and models have been used to explain adult participation in campus-based postgraduate studies. However, recent trends indicate that more adults are enrolling in postgraduate programmes through distance education. Experts have noted that this is a paradigm shift from the traditional teacher-centred to more flexible self-directed learning.

This paper outlines a qualitative research project aimed at exploring distance learners' participation and experience in this kind of learning. It is based on extensive semi-structured interviews of five postgraduate students following a Master of Science in Human Resource Development programme at Universiti Putra Malaysia. The results of the research highlight why and how the students participated in distance learning and the experiences they underwent in studying for the same degree as on-campus students.

The role of teachers in distance and open education

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One of the main features of distance education is that the emphasis is placed on students' private study and teachers' advice.

What changes in the role of teachers does such an approach demand? In distance education systems, teachers should be:

- student-centred, helping the learners to become active in their learning;
- promoters and advisors in learning activities, not transmitters of knowledge and wisdom;
- experts in educational diagnosis, evaluating their students' learning abilities and attitudes so that they can adjust their guidance accordingly.

They should also keep adjusting themselves to new knowledge and set an example of lifelong learning for their students.

Finally, the concept of 'a teacher' in distance education is extending. They are not necessarily 'professional educational workers' and 'full-time teachers', many of them being specialists – such as engineering and technical personnel, doctors and agronomists – who are not in the field of education.

Student support services revisited: a case study of al-Quds Open University

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This paper attempts to evaluate the key components of the existing academic and administrative support services at al-Quds Open University (QOU). It considers:

- the literature on developments in student support services in open and distance education;
- QOU's institutional profile and the objectives of its student service systems;
- the results of an investigation of student needs and problems related to these services, and possible ways of remedying shortfalls in its provision.

Evaluation of the part-time student experience in Hong Kong

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A multi-institutional research team is working on a major research project, funded by the Hong Kong University Grants Committee, Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU) and the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK). The aim of the project, which extends earlier work with full-time students, is to examine the 'total experience' of part-time students, and a significant proportion of the students in the study are open learners. The presentation will be a report on progress, and will provide an opportunity for the team to discuss the project with other researchers from Hong Kong and overseas.

An investigation of Indian Open University distance learners' academic self-concepts, study habits and attitudes to distance education

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This paper presents the findings of an empirical research study conducted to investigate the academic self-concepts, study habits and attitudes towards distance education of Indian Open University distance learners in relation to their academic performance. Analysis of the background characteristics showed the varied nature of distance learners at the first degree level.

The study found, for example, that:

- They exhibited an 'above average' academic self-concept, 'good' study habits and a positive and 'above average' attitude towards distance education;
- There were significant differences in the study habits of distance learners when compared on the basis of marital status, social class, academic stream, employment status and experience in distance learning;
- There were significant differences in the academic self-concept only for the background variables of academic stream and employment status;
- There were significant attitudinal changes only between married and unmarried distance learners;
- There was a moderate positive correlation ($r=0.4714$) between academic self-concept and academic performance;
- The correlations of academic performance with study habits and attitude towards distance education were only 0.27 and 0.24 respectively, low positive relationships;
- The academic self-concept appeared to be an important predictor of the academic performance of distance learners.

The results of the study offer various suggestions for improving the performance of Open University distance learners at first degree level in India.

Student activities in distance education: the Korean experience and prospects

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Are distance education and student activities compatible? What are the reasons for student associations and circles being organized in distance teaching universities? Are there necessary and desirable types of student activities from the viewpoint of distance education? What are the appropriate policies on student activities? More specifically, what are the proper ways of meeting the needs of active students for space and facilities?

These questions are hotly debated within Korea National Open University (KNOU) where student activism has been very strong; in fact, they have been a persistent source of conflict between student associations and KNOU authorities. No consensus has been reached so far as to how to solve the recurrent 'space problem'. Obviously, there is no easy answer to such questions as they have much to do with the concept and vision of distance education itself.

In this context, this paper:

- outlines the current situation regarding student activities in KNOU and analyses their features;
- reviews KNOU's policy responses to student activities, with a focus on policy shifts;
- depicts the future prospects for student activities in the light of information technology developments and on-going changes in the student constituency;
- suggests a desirable set of policies to boost student activities and student culture.

Distance education universities cannot meet effectively the diverse academic and social needs of their students, including the necessary space and facilities, on their own. In essence, the view put forward here is that they should develop various social networking programmes for their scattered students by institutionalizing collaboration with government agencies and local communities.

Strengthening feedback in the teaching process for enhanced learning

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According to control and information theory, teaching is a control process involving the passing of information and feedback between teachers and students on an interactive basis. The major characteristic of distance education is the separation of teachers and students, which impedes the channels for information delivery and feedback. Feedback in teaching is of great significance for improving the level and quality of learning. This article explores ways of strengthening feedback in, for example, face-to-face teaching, coaching, homework correction, supervision and examinations. It also analyses how to sort out, retain and prevent distortion of information in the transfer process, and how to process and adjust information scientifically.

What makes a good distance learner? A quasi-experiment in the University of the Philippines

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Since its establishment as an autonomous campus of the University of the Philippines system, the UPOU has offered degree programmes only at the post-baccalaureate level. However, in June 1997, it was decided to begin plans for the first undergraduate programmes. To help identify the characteristics of potential undergraduate students that will lead to success on distance education (DE) courses, as well as to test the suitability of the first set of DE materials developed for the UPOU, a pilot testing of four DE courses was undertaken.

A quasi-experimental approach was used with students of residential programmes self-selecting into the project by enrolling in one DE course while studying in other residential courses. In all a total of four DE courses were offered, on which 164 students enrolled.

The results at the end of the semester showed that performance in the DE courses depended on several factors – namely the year level of the students, the manner by which the students qualified for the University in the first place and the course itself e.g.

- First-year students in general did poorly compared with more experienced students;
- Those who entered the University by transferring from another institution rather than by qualifying through the UP College Admission Test did less well than those who were direct entrants.

Follow-up focus group discussions with the study participants revealed that older students in the higher-level courses achieved better because they were able to adjust to the pace of the modules. They were more mature in outlook and were more ready for independent learning. In contrast, the first-year students had difficulty with time management, in addition to problems with the subject matter in general.

The findings of the study guided UPOU in its decision to offer the first undergraduate DE programme to more mature students (20 years and older) and to conduct an Assessment Test as a basis for their admission.

The 'open-entrance' trial programme: establishing a learning support system at China RTVUs

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Course materials, the learning mode and learning support systems are generally believed to be of vital importance to successful distance learning. In September 1995, China's Radio and Television Universities (RTVUs) launched a new 'open-entrance' trial programme, in which students did not have to take an examination and were allowed eight years to complete their studies.

In December 1995 and May 1997, the China Central Radio and Television University (CRTVU), which is the teaching and administrative headquarters of China RTVUs, carried out two large-scale research projects on this trial programme. This paper reports their main findings, focusing on the adequacy of the learning support services provided by the RTVUs. The research results showed that some positive changes had been made to facilitate students' self-study in this new 'open-entrance' programme. However, what was provided was far from being perfect. It is suggested that some local RTVUs with good teaching conditions should be turned into distance learning centres to provide comprehensive support services to students rather than just offering tutorials as they do at present.

A comparative study of courses from Indira Gandhi Open University and university correspondence courses in Orissa State, India

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Orissa, a state in Eastern India, provides opportunities for distance education (DE) through correspondence courses offered by Utkal and Berhampur Universities as well as through various programmes from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). IGNOU utilizes a wider variety of media in its teaching and provides more comprehensive academic counselling through its Study Centres. How do the reactions of students and teachers/counsellors in these two systems compare, and how far do the systems differ in their openness?

This paper outlines the results of a survey of both students (N=400) and teachers/counsellors (N=95) in the two systems, using questionnaires and an Openness Scale. The main findings were that:

- Students depended heavily on print-based materials in both forms of DE.
- There was irregularity in the despatch of materials in both systems, which had adverse effects on learning. However, the majority of IGNOU learners and teachers viewed the course materials, media facilities and support materials as relevant. While the materials in the correspondence courses were rated highly by most students/teachers, the lack of reinforcement through multi-media approaches was commented on.
- Most IGNOU students rated their contact sessions and academic counselling programmes as 'average' while, in contrast, the majority of the students and teachers on the correspondence courses had a high opinion of their personal contact programmes.
- Most students and teachers in both systems appreciated the role of assignments and projects in improving their learning and assessment, but in both cases – and especially in the correspondence courses – the feedback mechanisms were not rated positively.
- The correspondence courses were found to be 'least open', while IGNOU was 'open to some extent'; and, while significant differences existed between the two forms of DE, neither was seen as providing complete openness.

Approaches to learning of school teachers studying distance education courses in educational psychology

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The Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) developed by Biggs is frequently used to monitor university students' approaches to study. In this project, a slightly modified version of the questionnaire was given to a sample of school teachers studying distance education courses in educational psychology at the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) – two at Bachelor's degree level, the other a Master of Education course. The students completed the questionnaire twice, at the beginning of the course and after their examinations. In addition to the SPQ, some questions were asked about the participants' approaches to teaching, and data on their attainment in their OUHK courses were also collected.

The results showed that:

- distance education students' approaches to learning were comparable to those of traditional university students taking education courses;
- response set in making choices on Likert-scale items may have created spurious correlation patterns;
- with path analysis, a four-factor model may provide satisfactory explanations of the questionnaire scores and course results;
- according to the four-factor path model, the ways these teachers worked in schools were related to their approaches to learning;
- there were correlation patterns related to the changes in approaches to learning over the academic year;
- there was a significant correlation between an achieving approach at the end of the course and attainment in continuous assessment.

This paper describes and attempts to explain the above patterns.

The learning support system for open distance higher education in an undeveloped area

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This paper draws on the experience of Gansu Radio and Television University in north-west China in examining how best to develop open distance education – especially its learner support system – in an undeveloped area. It considers issues such as:

- the adaptation of the system and its teaching methods to the local context, for the optimum social and educational effect;
- the provision of appropriate services for students with different needs, to help them overcome any difficulties they face in self-study;
- enhancing teaching by combining traditional materials/teaching with the use of modern information technology;
- the role of teachers in open distance systems.

Surveying student satisfaction with their learning experiences at the Open University of Hong Kong

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The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK), like many other universities, conducts a student course evaluation at the end of each semester. The questionnaire used in this evaluation asks about students' satisfaction with course materials, with student support mechanisms, and with assessment practice. The exercise is designed to give course-specific feedback to OUHK course coordinators, enabling them to improve the presentation of the courses they administer.

What this survey exercise does not do well – as it was not designed to do so – is to address more fundamental aspects of student satisfaction with the flexible, self-directed mode of study which OUHK's distance learning courses offer. Previous research, such as a study by Fan and Chan (1997), has suggested that students who feel inadequately prepared for or insufficiently committed to study in a distance learning mode are more likely to discontinue their studies. Along with identifying student concerns about the way a particular course is structured or administered, a student evaluation can usefully review aspects of students' broader feelings about, and concerns over, the mode of study they are required to adopt at an institution like the OUHK. The institution can respond by, for instance, reviewing the relative emphasis it gives to different means of student support, or by reconsidering the nature of the orientation it offers to incoming students.

This paper reports on an experimental administration in August 1998 of a revised and expanded student course evaluation survey of students completing OUHK courses. The expanded survey asked about students' experiences with flexible, self-directed learning as a mode of study and the particular forms of student support which the OUHK makes available. Implications of the survey's findings for the activities of the OUHK, as well as broader implications for distance learning, are discussed.

Psychological consultation in teaching

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Teaching is an interactive activity involving teachers and learners. The purpose of this paper is to explore ways of improving the quality of teaching by analysing both the advantages and difficulties of teachers and the problems learners face in their studies. In so doing, the idea of introducing psychological consultation into teaching is examined. The need for psychological consultation, its methods and the ways in which it can improve teaching quality are considered.

Catering for students' needs

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Nanjing Radio and Television University is one of the RTVUs which participated in the second-round pilot project on 'open-entrance' students in 1996. Half a year later, 80.72% of the students majoring in financial accounting sat for the national examination for three courses, and 39.62% passed; and for English, in which only one course was required to be examined at the provincial level, 91.5% participated and 82.9% passed. In general, the trial work went smoothly and had a satisfactory outcome.

Nanjing RTVU's involvement in the project focused mainly on four aspects:

- Opening up access to help to reduce the discrepancy between the supply of and demand for education;
- Organizing face-to-face teaching, without any rigid rules governing time and location;
- Reinforcing audio-visual teaching by, for example, providing an AV reading room which is open in the evenings and at weekends, and allowing students to borrow audio-visual tapes free of charge;
- Enhancing teaching services and administration by, for instance, providing unit tests, review exercises and simulated tests to students. When they face any problems, students can either consult their teachers personally or send 'Question Cards' to them.

In short, in order to cater for students' needs to the greatest possible extent, the University has adopted a series of measures, and actively explored others, which have achieved satisfactory results.

Sub-theme 3



Developing course materials

Designing multi-media teaching materials for Asian distance learners

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Compiling the teaching materials is the key step in distance education, and it is urgent that in Asian education these materials are suitable for Asian distance learners.

This article considers the following types of material, drawing illustrative examples from courses on Chinese and Min culture:

- The main teaching material – written material for teachers to use and students to read for examination purposes;
- Reference material – written to expand students' fields of vision and develop their thinking (not for examination). This includes: talks given by experts on the content of the courses; classic articles from China and abroad; and suggestions on study methods;
- Study Guides for the course, including its syllabus, guidance on understanding its content, questions and exercises, and suggestion for teaching activities;
- video material to help explain in detail the key points and difficulties of the main material;
- audio material, for purposes which the written and video material cannot handle so well;
- computer-assisted instruction of various types.

Each of these six kinds of teaching material has its own characteristics – systematically organized written materials, audio-visual material focusing on key points and difficulties, and CAI for the purpose of consolidation – which together help to ensure the fulfilment of the teaching objectives.

Developing course materials: the experience of Bangladesh Open University

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A new member of the mega-universities, Bangladesh Open University (BOU) introduced a course team approach for developing effective course materials for distance students. BOU uses printed coursebooks, study guides, radio and television broadcasts, audio-cassettes and occasional face-to-face tutorials. Its course teams comprise specialist course writers and editors, trained style editors, graphic designers, illustrators, audio-visual producers and anonymous referees. An editorial board or preview committee is responsible for the final approval for publishing or broadcasting materials for students. This approach has proved to be effective, but complicated and time-consuming. This paper focuses on the processes of BOU course materials development, taking into account their strengths and weaknesses.

Key elements in improving the teaching of minority languages at a distance

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It is important to improve the quality of teaching of minority languages and several measures are required to do so, such as:

- Assembling a team of experts from Radio and Television Universities' (RTVUs) branch schools or work centres and providing financial support to them to develop coursebooks and audio-visual materials of a high standard on this subject;
- Providing additional training to minority language teachers including, for example, further study and lectures/seminars on the teaching of their subject, and on distance education techniques, the contribution of technology to teaching/learning etc;
- Monitoring the work of teachers of minority languages closely to establish a reasonable workload, and instituting a system of rewards and 'punishments';
- Building up a pool of teaching syllabuses/plans and assessment items, and ensuring that the latter are graded objectively.

To facilitate the effective management of the above measures, practical steps must also be taken to increase staffing in the related areas.

Matching provision to needs

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The learning experiences of distance learners, it has been argued, are different from those of students in conventional educational institutions. Assumptions about the particular settings for study, needs and styles of learning of students in a distance education system have prompted different types of approaches to course development.

However, for social and academic reasons, the Asian distance learner is further removed from the contexts theorized about due to differential access to learning provision and the lack of a common learning environment.

This paper examines the course development process in a course designed for an undergraduate programme of study. It reflects on the following issues:

- how far learners' expectations of learning are matched by the assumptions of the course developers;
- to what extent it is necessary to revisit this aspect when preparing course packages.

Asian learners, Western models: some discontinuities and issues for distance educators

Bernadette Robinson

Independent consultant on open and distance learning

Many of the models and values in distance education emanate from Western industrialized countries. These may or may not match the characteristics, contexts and cultures of Asian learners. Though similar terms and concepts in distance education have international usage, they can mean very different things in different countries and cultures.

This paper identifies the discontinuities that arise between Western models and values in distance education and those existing in the People's Republic of China. The nature of teaching and learning in China, its underpinning values, and the roles of teachers and learners are examined. These are compared with the models and values found in the literature on distance education. One difference in teaching and learning across cultures, and in transferring models of learning and assessment, relates to the nature of academic discourse. If globalization is to be more than Westernization, distance educators need to build better bridges into and out of cultures of learning in different countries. To assist this, more comparative research is needed on cultural aspects of open and distance learning.

Learning about learning: a focus on problem-based learning in distance education

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This paper describes the first phase of a project currently being undertaken by the Centre for Research in Distance and Adult Learning at the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK). The project has two aims:

- to investigate the use of problem-based learning in distance education in Hong Kong;
- to create an interdisciplinary forum in which colleagues will conduct action research projects that are independent and related to their specific discipline areas but also connected to the general theme of problem-based learning.

The project is being conducted in two phases:

- Since April 1998, interested staff have been attending a series of lunch-time discussion meetings in which they are introduced to the philosophies of problem-based learning and invited to share their ideas about how they could incorporate this approach into their own course design, and the issues and questions of concern to them;
- From October 1998, participants will identify ways in which they can integrate problem-based learning into their own course delivery and undertake small-scale individual or joint action research projects to investigate the issues they have raised in the first phase of the project.

Sub-theme 4



Technological support

Internet-based delivery systems for distance learning

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When markets and technology change dramatically over a relatively short period of time, traditional distance education institutions face fundamental challenges. This paper concentrates on the challenges that the Internet presents in terms of course design, learning strategies and teacher roles on the one side – and costs on the other. So far, the Internet is too expensive to be used as a commercially viable mode of delivery in distance education. The NKS projects run so far have been a drain on its resources in 95% of the cases. At the NKS, we are now developing standardized platforms, or templates, which may enable us to design new distance education courses for Internet-based dissemination within acceptable economic parameters. The challenge is to develop this concept without compromising the quality standards which we are obliged to follow.

Challenges and international opportunities for on-line study: collaborative learning in a virtual classroom

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Australia

Mel Muchnik
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USA

What happens when students develop assignments with students 14,000 kilometres away? This paper describes how a core University of South Australia Communications course has intersected its assessment, via the Web, with students studying similar course content in America and Sydney (with plans to extend involvement to students in Malaysia and London in October, 1998). On-line debates were the fundamental assessment mechanism, with the group collaboration inherent in debate preparation also providing a springboard for outcomes beyond the academic parameters of the subject content. The overwhelming majority of students found their geographically and culturally diverse groups provided the basis for a far richer learning experience than they had previously encountered. The paper considers the nature of the on-line collaboration, the dynamics of the virtual classroom, and the international possibilities of Web-based study.

The development of a low-cost, low-end Web-based distance learning and student support system

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A low-cost Intel Pentium personal computer and Microsoft Windows 95-based freeware and shareware were used to implement tools for learning and student support in the following science and arts courses: one computer science course MT366 *Computer and Network Architecture*; an arts course AC291 *Logic and Methodology*; and a social science course *Democratic Government and Politics*.

The learning aspect of the project used Web-based interactive multimedia (sound, animation and video) for the arts students to learn basic logic; while the student support element included Web-based on-line synchronous and asynchronous conferences and chats. Other features were supplementary multimedia course materials on-line and in CD-ROM.

This paper evaluates the cost-effectiveness of using low-end computer hardware and software for on-line distance learning, assessment and student support. It also compares the reactions to, and use of, educational technologies by science and arts students. It will be of particular interest to those who would like to develop Web-based teaching and student support systems using low-end computer equipment.

Towards the optimal use of an Internet-based system of distance education for technical teachers' training and education

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In India, Regional Technical Teachers' Training Institutes are responsible for carrying out the function of updating the knowledge, attitudes and skills of technical teachers (in the main, Polytechnic teachers) who produce technicians for industry. The conventional education system, however, has placed a number of constraints on the Institutes in fulfilling their role, such as reluctance to release teachers for training. The use of an Internet-based system is necessary to:

- overcome these difficulties;
- establish uniformity in standards throughout the region;
- reduce costs.

However, the lack of adequate infrastructural facilities and a natural conservatism in teaching methods cannot be overlooked. This paper attempts to outline how an Internet-based distance education system can be best introduced in such a context.

Meeting the information needs of Indian distance learners through resource sharing and networking of libraries

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India

Distance education has been described as being more a process of learning than of teaching, highlighting the self-direction and effort required of students. The library system of an Open University or distance education institution – comprising the central library, and Study and Regional Centre libraries – is committed to providing an independent learning environment for students; but, with the limited finances available, such a library system alone cannot fulfil the information needs of the learners who are isolated and widely spread geographically. A collaborative effort among all institutions in distance education is, therefore, vital.

This paper presents an in-depth study of the current library and information systems in Indian Open Universities, emphasizes the need for resource sharing throughout the country, and advocates networking of libraries to facilitate the extension of library and information services to distance learners.

Design strategies for developing Web-based training courses in a Korean context

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Korea

Web-based training can be viewed as an innovative distance education approach for delivering training to audiences in different places and/or at different times. Related research and case studies show that virtual training via the Web provides an opportunity to develop new learning experiences for trainees by managing self-directed learning and sharing information and ideas in a cooperative and collaborative manner.

This paper presents design principles and strategies for developing Web-based virtual training courses which incorporate social interaction and collaborative learning strategies into a self-directed learning environment in a Korean corporate context. Problem-based learning based upon constructivism, resource-based learning related to inquiry training, self-directed learning as a principle of adult learning and reflective thinking were identified as the main principles for designing and developing Web-based virtual training courses.

Applying these design principles and strategies, the development process and products of two Web-based virtual training courses based on the Network-Based Instructional Systems Development model (NBISD model) are presented.

Networked learning: the fusion of self-paced and cooperative learning

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This study is concerned with an innovation at the National Open University in which learning via a computer network replaced face-to-face classroom teaching. In addition, the distance learners were not only self-paced, but also engaged in cooperative learning.

The research methods focused on analysis of Bulletin Board System (BBS) messages in terms of the students' and instructor's participation rates, message intents, and interaction frequencies. A questionnaire was administered and interviews were conducted in the middle and at the end of the semester. The differences in the responses at these two points of time are investigated. Also, the outcomes of the cooperative learning are explored from both emotional and cognitive perspectives, and assessed as an index of satisfaction.

The major results of using networked learning were:

- Since students can interact with the instructor or their classmates at any time or place, networked learning can push students to learn on schedule.
- It can take a considerable time to get all the students 'hooked' on the BBS.
- Networked learning can be facilitated when a network expert, an enthusiast, or a course helper is involved.
- Students must be encouraged to interact, and rules regarding whether interactions are private or public must be laid down – otherwise, BBS becomes a 'showplace'.
- Assignments for cooperative learning must be designed in such a way as to be meaningful and feasible.
- Self-grouping results in the formation of low-ability groups who feel distress, which may reveal that grouping affects the outcomes of cooperative learning via the network.

Reflections on a telecom-education programme

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Advances in information technology challenge traditional concepts and methods of teaching and promote educational reform.

This paper outlines progress in the development of a telecom-education project for real-time, multi-media interactive education at Tongji University. It focuses on, for example:

- the basic characteristics of the system;
- the ways in which it will improve the current self-study examination and traditional correspondence education;
- its potential for extension to full-time undergraduate and post-graduate teaching;
- its possible role in reducing the gap between developed and developing countries.

Such an innovation will require major changes in the attitudes of many traditionally-minded teachers and administrators, and possible ways of achieving this are considered.

Independent language learning on the Internet: possible? practical?

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For many students in Asian distance learning institutions, the challenges of studying are exacerbated by problems of accessing educational texts that are not in their native languages. One way in which these institutions can help their students manage this problem is to provide them with language support on the Internet.

This paper puts forward some suggestions for the design of such an Internet site based on the literature on independent language learning, and describes how these design features have been incorporated into the Internet site of the Centre for Independent Language Learning of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. A review of the literature on independent language learning that can be applied to learning on the Internet gives rise to the hope that it is both possible and practical.

Using videoconferencing in distance education: a feasibility analysis at Anadolu University

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Increasing interactivity is one of the main issues in distance education systems. Today's computer and communication technologies provide vast possibilities for improving this aspect of distance learning. Videoconferencing technology, by providing two-way, high-speed digital audio and video connections, is a potential option for solving the interactivity problem. Anadolu University is considering the use of videoconferencing to improve its student support and tutoring systems, and research is being conducted to investigate its potential benefits. This paper describes the Anadolu University distance education system briefly, and then discusses the technical and economic feasibility of establishing a videoconferencing network.

INSET through INSAT: the Indian experience

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In India, there has been an impressive increase in the number of institutions since independence. In addition to approximately 7,600,000 elementary and 95,000 secondary/senior secondary schools, there are at present 424 District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), 18 State Institutes of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) and 73 Operational Centres of Teacher Education (CTEs)/34 (IASEs). Faculty members of all these institutions require both induction level and refresher training on content and pedagogy in their related areas. Traditional face-to-face training fails miserably to cover such a huge and heterogenous target group. The need for some alternative training technology with a greater multiplier effect has always been felt by institutions involved in teacher training at various levels. This has led to the use of one-way video and two-way audio interactive teacher training through teleconferencing by one of the premier institutions of the country – the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

The NCERT has been utilizing alternative distance-mode technology for in-service training of primary teachers under the Special Orientation of Teachers (SOPT) Scheme since 1996, and has provided training to approximately 2,250 primary teachers in two such programmes, each lasting seven days. Another five-day training programme was organized for 700 teachers from Karnataka on mathematics teaching at the primary level. Encouraged by the success of these programmes, the Department of Teacher Education and Extension of NCERT decided to expand and diversify the use of teleconferencing for orienting teacher educators and organized a five-day orientation programme in 1997 in which 500 faculty members of DIETs in Madhya Pradesh were given training on their various roles and functions.

This paper discusses the success of these experiments, and gives a detailed description of the techniques adopted in the orientation of the DIET faculty.

Media and technological support for the academic programmes of Bangladesh Open University

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This paper attempts to describe the present media and technological support for different academic programmes of the Bangladesh Open University (BOU), a recently established distance and open learning institution.

Like many other open universities, especially in developing countries, the BOU has not yet used many advanced technologies such as audio-graphics, teleconferencing, videoconferencing, computer conferencing and the Internet because of cost factors and low access. At present the University employs print, radio, audio-cassettes and television broadcast media, and face-to-face tuition. However, it has introduced limited use of the Internet and e-mail, providing a network between the main campus and its 10 Regional Centres – though, at present, these facilities are only for academics and related staff. The BOU is planning to provide teleconferencing to teach its students in the near future. It is suggested that more technological support, especially through audioconferencing, videoconferencing and computer technology, is necessary for delivering the academic programmes of the BOU.

Technological and social support for Asian postgraduate students: a case study

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Australian universities have a growing and significant proportion of Asian students undertaking postgraduate qualifications in Australia. The increased use of open learning approaches such as distance education and computer-based technologies has required support structures and facilities for overseas postgraduate students which are different from those used in the past. The Northern Territory University, located at Darwin, has a cohort of students from China (mainly Xi'an) undertaking Master of Education, Master of Applied Linguistics and Doctor of Teaching degrees. To facilitate access to resources and facilities for these and other postgraduate students, a technology-based study and resource room has been provided. This paper describes the use of this learning space, including the pedagogical and social outcomes and their implications.

Computer-assisted instruction in China's Radio and Television Universities

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After two decades of effort, the China Central Radio and Television University (CCRTVU) has formed a modern distance education system with Chinese characteristics. Its main features and advantages are:

- The Radio and Television Universities (RTVUs) can select and invite eminent professors, specialists and scholars from throughout the country as the main writers and presenters of their courses;
- They can use modern teaching media to conduct multi-media instruction;
- They are responsible for setting the end-of-term examinations for nationally unified courses to ensure teaching quality;
- They achieve high efficiency by overall planning, operating at different levels, bringing both central and local initiatives into play and making full use of their systemic potentials.

The RTVUs are oriented towards grass-roots units, rural areas, remote areas and minority nationality regions and have established operational mechanisms to meet the needs of national and local economic development, with degree and non-degree programmes developing hand-in-hand. The RTVUs have become an important component in China's higher education system, making major contributions to:

- expanding its scale by training a large number of qualified professional personnel for economic reconstruction and social development;
- adjusting the proportion of university graduates at different levels, changing the structure of its specialities and disciplines and improving the imbalance in its geographical distribution.

Perfect TV and imperfect response: the University of the Air broadcasts its programmes nationwide via satellite

Kazuo Takahashi

The University of the Air
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In January 1998, PerfectTV, a digital satellite broadcasting company, started broadcasting the programmes of the University of the Air throughout Japan. Hitherto its broadcasts could reach only the area in and around Tokyo, but overnight it gained half a million new subscribers as potential students.

This has meant that the University of the Air is now required to offer academic support to a student body, which is expected to reach 100,000 within three years, scattered around the entire country. How should the University cope with this new demand? The strategy it has adopted involves a two-pronged approach involving centralization and devolution. On the one hand, more authority for day-to-day decision-making is being transferred from its Faculty meetings to the University President. But, at the same time, there is devolution of some decision-making to the 49 Study Centres around Japan which have their local needs. The ways in which these seemingly contradictory developments are being implemented in the University are considered.

Learning support via the Web: how do I know it made a difference?

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In an effort to enhance the management of distance learning (DL) courses and student learning, the authors have been using the Internet to supplement the delivery of DL courses since 1994. In Web-enhanced education, the landscape has been changing with easier access to the Internet and more support tools available on it. However, using such technology alone is not enough, as often what works for one group of users may not work for another.

This paper aims to share the authors' experience of using the Web to support student learning in Australia and Hong Kong, and examines the technological, educational and cultural aspects involved. The paper covers the evolution of the student learning support approach used by the authors in Australia and the more recent use of a locally-enhanced Web Bulletin Board and e-mail server system to support asynchronous communication among staff and students at the Open University of Hong Kong. More specifically, it describes the current communications architecture of the system being used, its features, aims, objectives, research methodology and analyses of the contents of the thread postings. It focuses particularly on the fundamental issue in using the system: how do I know the support facility made a difference?

Experience, in the form of knowledge, is one of the most valuable ingredients in the successful implementation of a student support system. The voice of experience offered in this paper should be of interest to colleagues who are considering the use of a technological-educational-cultural (TEC) triangulation model for the on-line support of Asian learners.

Sub-theme 5



Institutional collaboration

Collaborative distance education in Asia: a strategic alliance model

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IMC Technologies was established as a private education provider in Singapore in 1996 by a group of experienced professional architects, engineers and academics. Their goal was to provide flexible opportunities for working people to upgrade their skills and knowledge in the different fields of technology in ways which recognized their prior training, their work aspirations and their workplace environment. Traditional patterns of distance education delivery in Asia, in which a local agent acts simply as a broker of another institution's programmes, did not meet their criteria of educational programmes tailored to local needs, with added local value.

During its 25-year history, Deakin University in Australia has developed distance education programmes with high-quality learning resources, interactive communication technologies, and academic and administrative support systems designed to provide a student-centred learning environment. Through its Faculty of Science and Technology, it has offered Bachelor and post-graduate coursework degree programmes in architecture, building, computing, engineering, technology, and marine, freshwater and environmental science in distance learning as well as campus-based modes. In expanding its offerings into the Asian region, the Faculty made the strategic decision that the support needs of those studying technology-related subjects at a distance would best be met by strategic alliances with local education providers who shared Deakin's commitment to student-centred delivery.

In 1997 IMC and Deakin commenced joint delivery of Deakin technology programmes in Singapore. This paper uses a strategic alliance model to describe the upfront investment of intellectual and financial capital and the management approaches involved in this joint operation. It explores the technology diffusion dimensions of the arrangement, and summarizes the benefits to the Asian distance learner of this unique collaborative partnership approach to technology education delivery in a competitive Asian environment.

Institutional collaboration to meet the needs of the open learner in India

John Sahayam Chelliah
Madurai Kamaraj Open University
India

The conventional on-campus mode of education is inadequate to accommodate the ever-increasing societal demands for education. Open learning systems are the only alternative to meet the educational requirements of Indian society. However, the Universities which offer distance education programmes in India currently face a variety of challenges:

- The development of job-oriented courses;
- Catering for the needs of the increasing number of students for whom the doors of the formal educational institutions are permanently closed;
- Extending education to the rural areas with limited equipment and resources;
- The need for financial and administrative autonomy to ensure that they provide a quality service;
- Using electronic media to widen the range of students catered for, with minimum expenditure;
- Developing a high-quality faculty for distance learning;
- Introducing quality improvement in the management of the programmes;
- Establishing a centre for inter-institute cooperation on an international basis;
- Consolidating and developing research programmes involving the production of books, periodicals, cassettes and films.

It is argued that, overall, there is a waste of natural resources in distance education in India through duplication of effort. To avoid this, serious consideration needs to be given to resource sharing among institutions in terms of, for example, cooperative materials development, a common Information Centre for students, a common library system, a computer conferencing network, a collaborative research programme and flexible use of staff and buildings.

Institutional collaboration in meeting the needs of the Asian distance learner

John Cribbin

The University of Hong Kong
Hong Kong SAR, China

In the decade from 1987, the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPACE) in the University of Hong Kong has entered into a number of relationships with overseas universities in order to meet demand in Hong Kong. Historically, some overseas partnerships go back even further. For example, SPACE, as the former Department of Extra-mural Studies, offered preparatory courses for the London external degree from the 1950s. At that time this was the only route in Hong Kong to qualify as a lawyer and these courses provided the foundation for the establishment of the Law Department, later Law Faculty, at the University of Hong Kong.

Courses have generally been developed in response to perceived demands in the Hong Kong community and now cover a wide range of professional areas. While University policy is to look for the localization of awards wherever possible, it recognizes that overseas expertise – particularly in the form of technology transfer and in keeping abreast of the latest developments – is important in a number of areas so that Hong Kong has the benefit of the international dimension. In all cases, SPACE looks to form academic partnerships in the delivery of courses such that locally relevant content can be included. Often this takes the form of delivery through local tutorial support but can also involve the preparation of materials developed by the University.

This paper describes the process of programme development and gives examples of successful collaborative ventures which meet Hong Kong needs. It also refers to criteria for evaluating institutional collaboration proposals for ongoing evaluation through appropriate quality assurance procedures. The question of whether meeting market demand is the same as meeting the needs of the Asian distance learner is also addressed.

The Open University Development Programme: a partnership between the UK Open University and the Singapore Institute of Management

Anne Floyd

The Open University
The United Kingdom

In the early 90s, the Singapore Government was looking for ways of developing its higher education system through the introduction of open/distance learning, and approached the UK Open University (UKOU) with a proposal to implement this through a partnership between it and the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM). The result is the Open University Development Programme (OUDP), which has now been in place for five years and has just produced its first cohort of 334 graduates. An important aspect of OUDP is that all students in the Programme are full students of the UKOU, and the degrees they obtain are UKOU degrees.

This paper reflects on the experience of these 'Asian distance learners' with courses and systems primarily designed for UK students, and on the experience of two very different institutions on opposite sides of the world as we learned together how to make this partnership work. It begins with a brief history, by way of background, and then goes on to explain how the OUDP operates, covering such matters as the choice of curriculum, the adaptation of courses to suit the Singapore context, learner support systems and quality assurance processes.

Both the UKOU and SIM have learned a great deal from the experience of the last five years, and have dealt with many challenges together and separately. The remainder of the paper discusses some of these, including the alignment of curriculum development plans in the two institutions, the differences in entry requirements and degree structures in the UK and Singapore settings, variations in performance patterns in the two contexts, and the different approaches to learner support.

Plans for future developments are then briefly outlined.

Institutional collaboration in meeting the needs of distance learners: issues and implications

Deeksha Kapur

Indira Gandhi National Open University
India

In India, there have been a few examples of co-operation among institutions on matters such as the sharing of learning material and Study Centres, but inter-institutional collaboration on the development of distance education courses has been relatively rare.

Impelled by a variety of forces – economic, social, technological and educational – the pressure for regional and non-regional collaboration and networking among institutions is increasing. In the context of a growing number of students, with their varied demands and needs, institutional collaboration is perhaps the only realistic means of continuing to provide adequate services to the target student population.

This paper seeks to explore the following issues drawing on the experience of Indira Gandhi National Open University.

- What are the basic tenets of collaboration?
- What are the collaboration modes that open universities seek?
- What are the areas in which institutional collaboration should be sought?
- What are the possibilities for collaboration with government/NGOs/industry?
- To what extent can local, cross-regional collaboration/networking among institutions be effective?
- In what ways can communications technology facilitate institutional networking and collaboration?

Indira Gandhi National Open University and partner institutions: a marriage of convenience

Ranga Nath Nandyal

Indira Gandhi National Open University
India

Institutions, like human beings, go through different phases and varied stages in their lives. In its initial phase, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) depended solely on its Study Centres. This approach helped the University in the following ways:

- The Study Centres provided the 'local face' to the students of a University whose headquarters are situated in New Delhi;
- The reputation of the host college/University gave credibility to the IGNOU programmes;
- IGNOU and its students had an access point for meeting to discuss the teaching/learning materials.

As the enrolment increased, the number of academic programmes multiplied, giving rise to new issues and problems. Consequently, IGNOU decided to diversify its delivery channels. One of the segments of the Diversified Delivery System (DDS) is 'Partner Institutions', with educational/training institutions located in different parts of India functioning as partners of IGNOU in the delivery of its programmes.

This paper considers:

- which institutions are suitable as partner institutions;
- the functions of partner institutions;
- the monitoring of their activities.

It is argued that the sharing of resources (teaching materials, facilities, technology) with partner institutions will benefit learners by:

- improving geographical access in a cost-effective way;
- enhancing the relevance of the materials to local needs.

Shared use of course materials among AAOU members

Daiichiro Sugimoto
The University of the Air
Japan

The preparation of course materials in video form is one of the most important and demanding tasks in distance education. They tend to take two forms – for courses on compulsory subjects such as mathematics and linguistics, and for theme-oriented lectures intended to broaden students' interests. In the former case, some components may be shared despite the different backgrounds of students in particular countries and regions. In the latter, a videotape can easily be shared and re-broadcast as it stands.

Shared use of materials will be more effective for the following programmes;

- science, containing many photographs and images of observations and/or laboratory experiments;
- nature, culture and history of particular countries;
- visits to facilities and monuments specific to the country concerned.

Their production requires videotaping on location, so the cost is substantial. The production of such international versions of videotapes was supported in part by the Society for the Promotion of the University of the Air. This programme is only at its initial/trial stage, and the possibility of sharing among AAOU members, including consideration of the issues of language and copyright, are discussed.

Some related video clips will also be shown.

An evaluation report for the AT&T project 'Communicate & Learn'

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East China Normal University
China

Jef Moonen
University of Twente
The Netherlands

'Communicate & Learn' is a collaborative project between East China Normal University and the University of Twente, the Netherlands, supported by the AT&T Foundation. The objectives of the project are to re-design and implement two distance courses in the field of educational technology for use in a networked learning environment in China.

This paper describes the background to the project, and its major objectives and organization. The benefits and problems of international institutional cooperation and transfer of knowledge between different institutions are also considered.



Other issues

A conceptual framework for analysing learner populations in distance education

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China

The aim of this paper is to formulate a new conceptual framework for analysing learner groups in distance education based on a literature survey and critical reflection. It starts by considering the relationship between learner population analysis in distance education and consumer analysis in economics and commerce, followed by a brief literature survey on the study of learner populations in the international distance education literature. Then the paper examines some selected analytical frameworks for studying learner groups and their implications for distance education. Finally, a newly formulated conceptual framework for analysing learner populations in distance education is proposed, comprising seven types of data: general, demographic, sociological, geographic, situational, motivational, and perceptions of distance education. Their implications for policy-making, management and distance teaching and learning are considered, and the significance of learner population analysis and its relevance to the quality of distance education are highlighted.

Reflections on teaching participatory research-based higher degree programmes at a distance in Malaysia and Thailand

Terry Evans and Colin Henry

Deakin University
Australia

For the past three years, staff in the Faculty of Education at Deakin University have been involved in teaching, principally off-campus, Master of Education (MEd) and Doctor of Education (EdD) programmes in, respectively, Malaysia and Thailand. Participatory research is an element of both programmes, especially in the EdD programme which is a research degree aimed at making a significant contribution to the development of professional practice. This paper raises questions and issues as they appear to us, as people involved in these programmes, from an Australian (Western) perspective. It addresses matters of culture and critique, cultural and personal relations, culture and non-didactic pedagogies, and culture and alternative research paradigms. Practical matters concerning language, time and funding are also raised, together with issues related to the internationalization or globalization of education arising from our experiences.

Contextualizing research methodologies in distance and open learning in Asia

Olugbemiro Jegede

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The literature is replete with accounts of the gap between research and practice, resulting in part from the limited apparent benefit practitioners and policy-makers get from educational research results. Some of the reasons for this include:

- a lack of focus on issues of immediate relevance;
- the ways in which research results are communicated;
- the appropriateness of the methodologies used.

One school of thought argues that the methodology an educational research project uses dictates all subsequent issues and decisions regarding the usefulness or otherwise of the results. As research is becoming increasingly important in the effort to deliver effective instruction at a distance, the issue of the 'right' methodology for distance and open learning research must be critically examined with a view to deciding what is appropriate and effective in the current changing climate of research.

This paper discusses the relative merits, relevance and usefulness of quantitative, qualitative and deconstructive methodological frameworks in distance and open learning research. It also argues against accepting one particular methodology and theory as the answer to how to conduct distance and open learning research in a poststructuralist era. The discussion and argument draws heavily on the practice of distance and open education in Asia.

Distance education for Asian women: issues and prospects

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Distance education is generally seen as being particularly suitable for women and there are data to prove that they prefer this mode of teaching and learning; in India, 34.3% enrol in distance education institutions as compared to 29.6% who opt for on-campus study (UGC Report). Yet in open universities on the Indian sub-continent, only about 20% of their enrolment are women. What are reasons for this, and how can open and distance education be made more accessible to Asian women?

This paper first conceptualizes the category 'Asian woman distance learners', highlighting the socio-cultural factors which make them different from their sisters in the West. Within this context, the following questions – all of which have a direct bearing on making distance education relevant to women learners – are raised:

- How can more Asian women learners be attracted to the distance education system?
- Having attracted them, how can they be retained? (Research indicates that women have higher drop-out rates than men.)
- Should there be specific programmes targeted at woman learners?
- How can their varied needs be catered for?
- Would feminist pedagogy be useful, and what kind of research would feed into women-friendly curriculum development?

While the data analysed are taken from the Indian context, the insights derived have implications for institutional policies for making distance and open education women-friendly all over Asia.

Chinese students' judgement of plagiarism

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Plagiarism is not only a thorny issue confronting teaching staff at many tertiary institutions, but is also a stumbling block to students' learning. Recent research has suggested that the basic problem lies in how students interpret plagiarism, and that their interpretations determine how they handle the intellectual property of others. This paper reports on a study which aimed to explore how Chinese distance learners in Hong Kong make judgements about plagiarism.

The study was built on the theoretical framework that plagiarism entails one or more of three key elements: 'copying others' ideas', 'copying others' language', and 'inadequate acknowledgement of others' work'. Four text samples were designed to gather information about subjects' understanding of plagiarism. Three of the texts included plagiarised parts, each exhibiting one of these three key elements, while the other text did not. All 359 subjects were undergraduate students learning through a distance mode, were Chinese, and had been in Hong Kong for more than seven years. They were asked to read the text samples, to judge whether each of them involved plagiarism and then, as far as possible, to explain their judgements.

The results showed that more than 90% of the subjects were confused about the concept of plagiarism. Of the three key elements, subjects seemed to have greatest difficulty with 'copying others' ideas'. The results suggest that Chinese learners commit plagiarism for reasons other than misunderstanding of the mechanics of documentation. This paper also argues that the Chinese learners' interpretation of plagiarism is closely linked to the nature of Chinese culture and traditional Chinese beliefs about education.

Staff development in institutions: indicators from Asian contexts

Fred Lockwood
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The United Kingdom

Three years ago, David Hawkridge spoke of his concern regarding the *globalization, commodication and electronification* of knowledge available in open and distance learning contexts (Hawkridge 1995). He also speculated upon the *liberation* that the availability of such materials may bring as well as the *domination* that was feared. At about the same time, Sue Pendell was speaking of her concern associated with merely transporting teaching materials and approaches created in one culture to a different culture (Pendell 1995). These concerns and sentiments are of major concern in the Asian context.

In the last three years there has been increasing evidence of globalization, commodication and electronification with materials developed in one culture being offered to learners in Asian contexts. However, there has been increasing evidence that academic staff are sensitive to the needs of their learners and the appropriateness of imported materials and systems. In a forthcoming book (Peters 1998), Otto Peters not only explores the pedagogical basis of open and distance learning but illustrates how different cultures have developed systems that reflect their history of teaching and learning.

This paper reviews the background to both the pedagogical concerns and those of liberation and domination in the Asian context. It suggests that staff development activities (Latchem and Lockwood 1998) can play a major part in creating an appropriate environment for the benefit of Asian learners and teachers. Examples of staff development in action will be drawn from distance learning institutions in Australasia, Hong Kong, Malaysia and India.

Tendencies in the development of open and distance education

Lou Yifeng

Shanghai Academy of Educational Science
China

Arguments still exist about the precise definition of distance and open learning, but central to such flexible, multi-media systems should be:

- a focus on the learner – not the teacher, classroom or textbook;
- the transformation of teachers into designers of student-centred materials, and advisers and managers of learning.

This paper discusses the following aspects of distance/open systems:

- the characteristics of the learners, and the learning materials;
- effective management;
- the provision of support to students;
- the evaluation of quality.

Whose baby is a distance learner?

Krishnapillai Murugan

University of the West Indies
West Indies

S Savithri

University of Delhi
India

The literature in the field abounds with claims that distance education is a student-centred system of teaching/learning. However, an unbiased scrutiny of current practice in distance education (and its academically less acknowledged earlier version, correspondence education) particularly in India suggests that the term 'student-centredness' has been badly abused. Similarly, the assertion that distance education has undergone a 'paradigm shift' is confusing because of its varied interpretations.

This paper attempts to raise for serious debate several fundamental questions that emerge in this context, such as:

- can distance education be student-centred in any absolute sense?
- if distance learners are likened to 'educational clients', does distance education really satisfy their needs?
- are distance learners ostracized twice – socio-economically when they are denied higher education, and then academically when the institutions provide ready-made, not custom-designed, courses?

The discussion is based largely on the current practices of correspondence/distance education in India. Even after nearly four decades, the course production process and student support systems show little change. And, more serious, the theory underlying practice at the Indira Gandhi National Open University, despite its unique status and phenomenal growth since 1985, is no different from that of its 'older cousins'. Consequently, distance learners feel a sense of being unwanted. Doubtless, distance education institutions in India will continue to grow, but the student voice must be listened to carefully, before the ever-growing system jeopardizes national development by producing a generation with degrees which are irrelevant to the needs of the market.

Continuing education for health professionals in Asia

Roderic Underwood and Eileen Thompson
Edith Cowan University
Australia

Edith Cowan University has been providing continuing education for health professionals by distance learning for more than 20 years. Currently, the University offers postgraduate studies in fields such as medicine, nursing, public health and health services management. These programmes are delivered to several countries in Asia including Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Characteristics of the distance learning model that has been developed are described and the strengths and limitations of distance learning as a mode of continuing education for Asian health professionals are evaluated. Issues such as the development of a culturally relevant curriculum are discussed, and the application of modern educational technology to distance learning for health professionals is reviewed.

Distance education in China for the 21st century

Yang Yongqiu
Hunan Radio and Television University
China

China has already set itself an important strategy and target to 'prosper through science and education' and 'give priority to the development of education'. In order to meet the country's need for development, distance education must be reformed for the 21st century. This should involve making the Radio and Television Universities more open and modernizing their teaching. To be more specific, our educational ideology must be transformed and updated; and our system must be reformed to meet the needs of economic reconstruction and social development. This will involve

- establishing a relevant distance education curriculum for the 21st century;
- reforming the management of teaching;
- establishing a macro-control and evaluation system for teaching quality.

Careers and activities of female graduates of the University of the Air

Keiichi Yoshimoto

Kyushu University

Japan

This paper analyses the results of a survey of female graduates of the University of the Air in Japan (UAJ). The survey, carried out in 1995 on volunteers, aimed to explore their career paths after graduation.

While many surveys of UAJ students and graduates have been carried out, few have focused on occupational outcomes, because Japanese employment practices prefer the recruitment of young, new graduates. UAJ students vary widely in age, work experience, and motivation. Therefore, although the University has had 12,000 graduates since 1989, their recognition in the labour market is still unclear. The situation is even more complicated for women as their labour participation and reparticipation rates are affected by their gender roles in child-care. The University's student population includes many adult females who, having fulfilled their child-care role, want to get a new job through higher education. However, UAJ has only one faculty, Arts and Science, and its courses may not be suitable for job-oriented students.

The results of the survey showed that, despite the various difficulties noted above, many female graduates found new jobs or were promoted after completing their degrees, and others took up volunteer work in various fields or continued their studies.

THE ASIAN
DISTANCE
LEARNER

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Factors influencing the effectiveness of student learning

S F Chan and P M Ng

The Open University of Hong Kong

Hong Kong SAR, China

Considerable effort has been expended in attempting to improve teachers' teaching skills, students' learning techniques and teacher-student interaction, as greater understanding of the key attributes of effective teaching and learning could revitalize the existing education system. In view of this, a survey was conducted to identify factors which influence the effectiveness of the learning process and their relationships to the nature of subjects studied.

This poster presentation focuses on the analysis of some *hygiene* and *motivation* factors which are considered important to students from different sample groups, and which can have a positive impact on their learning. Understanding the influence of such factors can give educational institutions insights into aspects of their students' behaviour and help them to improve the learning environment.

The impact of a socialist market economy on the reform and development of distance education and its quality control

Chen Han-rong

Zhongshan University

China

This poster presentation analyses the developmental trends in distance education in China under the influence of a socialist market economy. Distance education has:

- become more productive, operating like an industrial enterprise;
- reformed its management and investment mechanisms;
- strengthened its competitiveness and gained reasonable profits.

Overall, at the turn of the century, China's distance education system has opened itself to the outside world and is being modernized in a competitive educational market; and this process has brought considerable benefits to its learners.

Several proposals are also made for ways of improving quality control to:

- provide learners with more opportunities for distance study;
- offer students better conditions for their studies;
- provide higher standards of teaching and administrative services – and thus improve the quality of learning.

Perceptions of distance learning in Hong Kong and Mainland China

Ted Chen, Y K Ip and Alan Au

The Open University of Hong Kong
Hong Kong SAR, China

This poster presentation is a preliminary case study of the perceptions and attitudes of tertiary faculty members and students towards distance learning in the Hong Kong SAR and Mainland China, as an aid to understanding students' needs and expectations.

The study involved interviewing a sample of academics in the field of business administration from Hong Kong (The Open University of Hong Kong) and Mainland China (Fuzhou University) who had experience in distance education. On the basis of the academics' views and feedback from students, it appeared that Hong Kong students:

- welcome lectures as a supplement to course materials, although they do not want lectures/tutorials to be compulsory;
- appreciate very much the flexibility and 'second chance' provided by distance education.

As regards the Mainland,

- both students and academics believe that lectures and tutorials should be provided as often as possible, even in a distance programme;
- students tend to be able to afford more time for part-time study;
- students find the use of illustrative case studies of decision processes very novel and helpful;
- academics are resistant to being moderated under any quality assurance system.

Based on these preliminary findings, a questionnaire will be designed and administered to study student perceptions and attitudes on such issues in greater depth.

Offering learners more opportunities: educational reform in Shanghai Television University

Deng Jiaotong

Shanghai Television University
China

In Shanghai, there is a greater demand for qualified personnel than ever before due to rapid developments in economic restructuring and the reorientation of the city's functions. Education has, therefore, become a major issue, drawing attention from all parts of society. In order to provide more opportunities for learners to receive the education they need, accelerating the development of open and distance education is essential.

For decades, Shanghai Television University (STVU) has been making full use of contemporary techniques in distance education to offer a variety of courses and programmes to meet societal needs, including degree-level education, vocational training, continuing education, cadre education and education for the elderly. In so doing, it has played an important and unique role in expanding higher education, and in popularizing non-degree and general education to the benefit of the residents of the city.

This poster presentation gives an introduction to STVU's development, and considers its administrative structure, teaching methods and courses/programmes – as well as their effects and results.

The cultural integration of national societies through Asian distance education programmes

G S L Devra
Kota Open University
India

Human societies persist over time, held together by several mechanisms of integration, not necessarily always within the prescribed political and geographical limits of a nation state. Today, we hear increasingly about: transnational institutions, border cultures, the disintegration or formation of new state orders, sub-cultures and sub-nationalism, multiculturalism and the creolization of the world. The difficulty of identifying the frontiers of national societies in the face of their members' growing involvement at the global level and participation in the activities of different cultures is now apparent. Culture, in relation to the nation state, may urge either an over-inclusive or under-inclusive integration, in the former case possibly acting in the service not only of national societies but of sub-continental, continental, global and transnational entities.

This poster presentation will focus on the role of distance education in such processes in Asia.

The impact of audio-visual media on distance learners

A S Guha
Indira Gandhi National Open University
India

This poster presentation first defines 'the distance learner' in a broad sense, encompassing:

- students in open learning systems at university and school level;
- learners in Literacy Programmes;
- students pursuing vocational/practical Extension Studies.

It then attempts to show how the media – radio and television broadcasts, and audio- and videocassettes – can be integrated meaningfully with the learning and cultural processes of these different target groups. The importance of research and feedback is stressed, as is the need to take into account the media habits of the groups concerned.

Developing course materials for distance learners: a case study of Kota Open University

L N Gupta

Kota Open University

India

Developing quality course materials for a heterogeneous student population forms the core task of distance education. In going through the processes of planning, preparing and distributing the materials, an integrated approach focusing on, for example, efficiency, productivity, economy and cost benefits must be adopted. Attention must be paid to the avoidance of overlap in course content; and the updating of courses, including the use of the latest information technology and multi-media, should be a regular feature.

This paper presentation considers the procedures employed at Kota Open University (KOU) for the development of courses related to local/regional conditions, and suggests ways in which they might be improved.

Evaluation of a distance education course in human sexuality

T Edward Hannah

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Canada

The course *Sexual Behaviour* has been taught as an on-campus lecture course at Memorial University of Newfoundland for approximately 20 years. An earlier 'distance education' version was prepared and delivered via educational television. In addition to the on-campus format, it is now being offered as a multi-component distance education course including a manual, a textbook, a book of readings consisting of relevant magazine and newspaper articles, a set of self-assessment exercises, and a Website with Internet resources and Web conferencing. From an initial enrolment of 50, numbers have doubled and have been 'capped' at 100 students, with upwards of 50 or more on the waiting list.

'Off-campus' students make up a significant proportion of the enrolment in the course, and the present evaluation was undertaken to determine some of the demographics of these distance learners. The evaluation assessed their reasons for enrolling in the distance education format as opposed to the standard lecture course, their beliefs about the workload, and their views on the various course components, with particular attention to their use of the Web resources and conferencing facilities. Overall, the course received a very favourable evaluation. Students were mostly female, took the course upon recommendation of a friend (and in turn would recommend it to their own friends), believed the workload was heavy but worth the effort, thought the book of readings could be dropped, and felt they had learned a great deal. Reasons for *not* using the Internet resources and Web conferencing facilities included lack of Internet access, time and interest. The results of the evaluation are considered in terms of the changing nature of post-secondary education, locally and globally, as well as the changing characteristics of the typical undergraduate student.

Open and distance learning for lifelong education

Huang Zhen Pian

Xiamen Radio and Television University

China

With the development of the information age, there will be an increased demand for education; and the application of modern technologies will promote the rapid expansion of open and distance education (ODE) – to the benefit of the economy and society as a whole.

In the 21st century, ODE will play a very significant role in:

- promoting lifelong education;
- building up a learning society;
- helping to develop the understanding and skills needed for modern reconstruction.

Ensuring that ODE provision is of a high quality is a common cause for all educators, policy-makers and leaders in business and other aspects of life.

The Asian learner and the global context of distance education

Anam Jaitly

Kota Open University

India

Asian learners are essentially holistic in their attitudes, assimilatory in their reasoning and appreciative of the multiple ways leading to the discernment of reality. They combine intuition with analysis and desire a commonsense approach to both life and education. For them, 'praxis' is as important as a scientific method; and they try to move beyond science to come to terms with larger-than-life issues and facts of wisdom.

Asian 'texts' for learning reflect these features. The narratives usually follow a pattern of 'story telling', with the 'lessons' derived from them relating to the given context but at the same time transcending it to arrive at a wider, rather universalist, mode of existence. The learning so gained is essentially life-embracing and tradition-upholding. Thus, the texts cumulatively cater to knowledge, life and the cultural traditions in varying proportions.

The readiness of Asian learners to meet, converse with and influence the 'universal' makes them fit to be partners in the global journey of distance education. However, globalization, insofar as it marks access to a world market, has a tendency to standardize individuals and their needs. The globalizing technology of distance education must keep intact the cultural distinctiveness of Asian learners. It is only in this way that the distant glimpse of cultural universalism can be obtained. A 'Eurocentric' curriculum will demotivate them for learning, and tradition-cutting strategies in the wake of modernity or any other standardized global identity will simply not work.

This poster presentation argues, therefore, that the success and viability of distance education in Asia will depend on how far technology and the curricula can accommodate to the cultural context of the Asian learner. A reconciliatory approach to learning – which is crucial for the Asian learner – is proposed.

Networking of learning resources for training primary school teachers through distance learning: the Indian experience

Sitansu Sekhar Jena

Indira Gandhi National Open University

India

Over 10 per cent of India's three million teachers at the primary and upper primary school levels have not received any formal training; and, until recently, little has been done to address the continuing training needs of all teachers to upgrade/refresh their professional competencies and familiarize them with contemporary pedagogical issues.

In India, it is now recognized that multi-media distance education approaches have a greater potential than traditional methods for providing cost-effective education and training for large numbers. This is particularly the case with primary school teachers as distance systems remove the need for them to leave their workplace and are well suited to effective transfer of training experiences to classroom practice.

To cope with the large-scale need for teacher development, strategies are required to create a 'workable network system' for optimal use of the extensive print and non-print resources available in institutions at state and district levels. A model of networking based on collaborative and partnership principles will make a major contribution to facilitating the regular training of primary school teachers through a distance mode.

Teaching Persian studies at Payame Noor University

Syed M Bagher Kamaladdini

Payame Noor University

I.R. Iran

This poster presentation first outlines the development of distance education in Iran, particularly at Payame Noor Open University (PNU) which was established in 1987 and now has about 180,000 students.

It then focuses on PNU's teaching of Human Sciences, especially general Persian and Persian Literature, in which the graduation rate has been much higher than in the Basic Sciences.

While students find the textbooks and tutorials (eight hours per semester) very helpful, it is argued that the effectiveness of Persian studies courses could be enhanced by greater use of audio-visual media to improve, for example, students' pronunciation of Persian phrases, poetry etc. A library collection of relevant books and magazines is also necessary.

Developing course materials for in-service nurses

Bimla Kapoor

Indira Gandhi National Open University
India

This poster presentation outlines the post-basic BSc nursing programme launched by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in 1994 for nurses with General Nursing and Midwifery training. It considers the nursing scenario in India, and then analyses the processes of:

- course planning, involving Advisory and Experts' Committees;
- course preparation and development, using writers with expertise from the conventional system;
- implementation and evaluation.

Particular emphasis is placed on the practical learning experiences provided, with learners being placed under the guidance of supervisors in hospitals and primary health care centres.

Feedback on the multi-media course materials and practical sections – which has been gathered from a variety of sources (e.g. students, academic counsellors and evaluators) – has been very positive, and the materials are in demand in colleges of nursing in India and neighbouring countries.

Developing course material for Asian distance learners: the experience of Kota Open University

Yaqub Ali Khan

Kota Open University
India

Since the course materials are pivotal to the success of a distance learning enterprise, it is vital to ensure that they are of high quality and meet the needs of learners. This poster presentation reviews Kota Open University's (KOU) procedures for course development and assesses the suitability of the materials on the basis of the 'ideal models' proposed by Knowles (1970) and Deming (1986), which include:

- 1 an expert committee
- 2 a course team
- 3 a course editor
- 4 an assessor
- 5 a language expert
- 6 internal faculty members
- 7 a revision committee

Information gathered from official records and contacts with tutors, counsellors and learners revealed that the KOU system lacks adequate provision for 3, 4 and 7 above – and that the quality could be improved also by enhancing the cohesion and visual presentation of the materials, using illustrations, improving accuracy and updating and including more, accurate, evaluative questions.

Training of auxiliary health workers through a distance mode

Pity Koul

Indira Gandhi National Open University
India

Although there have been improvements in health care services in India, the situation remains unsatisfactory in general, partly because of the inadequate training of Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANM)/Health Workers Female (HWF) at the grassroots level. To be effective, such workers require continuous updating and broadening of their knowledge and skills, but there are inadequate resources to meet this requirement by traditional means.

In response to this need, the School of Health Sciences at Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is in the process of developing a one-year certificate programme for ANM/HWF which covers all aspects of their work. It will be open to ANM/HWF with two years' experience, will deal with both theory and practice and will be offered through identified ANM/HWF training schools for 'hands-on' training. For such a skills-oriented programme, tutorial support, guidance and counselling, an intensive practical contact programme and satellite transmission electronic media will be used to supplement the course material.

A survey on computer-based mathematics learning

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In order to collect local adult learners' experience in, and perceptions of, using computers to handle mathematics, a questionnaire was distributed to two groups of students at the OUHK and to a group of pre-service teachers at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. The two groups of OUHK students were registered on either a middle- or higher-level mathematics course, as part of either a Mathematics or Education degree. The OUHK students on the higher-level course are supplied with a computer disk to experiment with different patterns in mathematics design. Those on the middle-level course may not have had experience in using computers to study mathematics; while the pre-service teachers at HKIEd are younger adults whose computer experience reflects the current computer education level in local schools.

The findings indicated that:

- The subjects are more experienced in programming languages than in using CAI to learn mathematics;
- Some students have even used a variety of tools in learning mathematics;
- Almost all of them anticipate a computer-based mathematics learning environment in the near future;
- They tend to believe that computer software must have significance for computation;
- Although only some of the middle-level mathematics students had applied computer software to the understanding of mathematical concepts, all three groups tended to agree that computer environments in future should help to clarify mathematical concepts.

These results should be of value for the development of future mathematics foundation courses.

A comparative study of the administrative styles, educational processes and outcomes of selected Asian open universities

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China

This paper addresses three major research questions:

- How do Asian open universities differ from each other and from their counterparts in other regions of the world?
- What differing outcomes are apparent, and what is responsible for those differences?
- What best practices in instructional design, the use of communications technology and the consideration of cultural and political factors, especially language, can be learned from the open universities?

Web-conferencing, questionnaire survey and face-to-face interview methods were employed in a three-stage procedure to collect the data for the study. All the open and distance universities in Asia formed the population, and six were sampled using a stratified simple sampling technique. Using each university as a unit for data collection, several university officials were interviewed. The paper discusses the results and draws out similarities and differences among the higher education open institutions. The implications for management and the delivery of instruction at a distance are discussed.

Linux and related freeware for distance learning

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Linux is a free UNIX-clone that runs on a variety of hardware platforms including PC-compatible computers. It is the only operating system except Windows NT that is growing in corporate markets (see Datapro charts: <http://www.redhat.com/redhat/datapro.html>). A lot of freeware can be run on this Linux platform which is potentially useful in a distance learning environment. It includes student accounts for email, student homepage hosting, a web server providing course materials on the web and a database that stores student-related information. Since it is so useful, large computer companies such as Oracle, Sybase, Informix and Corel have made or announced their intention of making their products available for the platform.

A Linux server was set up and found to be stable enough for everyday use. There are more than 2000 student accounts, and the main use is email, homepage creation and web browsing. Since the price of PC hardware is low and the software is free, it is a good alternative to expensive UNIX workstations and NT servers. However, different technical problems were encountered, but we solved them. They were mainly related to the discrepancy in the advances of hardware technology and the upgrading of the software. Nowadays, different distributions of Linux have improved a lot and most of the technical problems are gone. It will be one of the major platforms for servers which can provide different services for distance learning students, including electronic delivery of courses. It is also good for desktop use, if good commercial office applications are available.

On social support for China's self-taught higher education examinations programme

Liu Junzhen

The Self-Taught Higher Education Examinations
Office of the Ministry of Education
China

Introduced in 1981, the self-taught higher education examinations programme is a national system governing examinations arranged for self-taught learners for the purpose of obtaining higher education diplomas. This important component of China's higher education system is marked by the integration of self-study and social support. As such, it has unique characteristics that distinguish it from ordinary higher education and higher education for adults. Open and flexible, it generates greater benefits with less investment. The element of social support, which figures prominently, serves to ensure the quality of the system.

This poster presentation explains the multi-layered social support activities in the self-taught higher education examinations programme by detailing its major sponsors, forms and contents.

Guaranteeing the quality of graduation projects and theses

Lü Tong

Changchun Radio and Television University
China

In RTVUs, the graduation projects for science and engineering, and theses for arts and economics, form a very important component of teaching/learning. To raise the quality of such graduation papers, attention needs to be paid to:

- choosing a good topic;
- careful direction from tutors;
- preparatory field work.

It is also essential to establish a 'quality guarantee' system encompassing: aims; quality operations; quality control; and a quality examining system. To ensure success, a close analysis and control of the various factors involved is required.

The design, development and application of CAI in distance education

Luo Ji

Yunan Radio and Television University
China

The application of modern educational technology in open and distance education is essential in this information age. The inclusion of multi-media interactive CAI software as a course component can:

- assist in teaching (e.g. for guiding learning, and for demonstrations, virtual experiments etc);
- improve the effectiveness and quality of learning.

This poster presentation is concerned with the design, methods of development and effects of using CAI as practised at Yunan Radio and Television University. Based on the University's experience, it can be concluded that:

- Learners welcome CAI courseware as it leads to greater understanding of course content;
- The most effective materials for distance learners are the main teaching materials/textbooks and CAI courseware for guidance;
- This approach to distance teaching needs financial and technological support;
- Multi-media CAI courseware can be used widely in computer network teaching in open and distance education.

Distance education – the best choice for Xinjiang

Ma Er Dan

Xinjiang Radio and Television University
China

This poster presentation outlines the potential of distance education in Xinjiang – a vast territory with many minority nationalities living in it. While economic progress has led to various educational developments, a distance approach to teaching and learning is viewed as the best choice; and the system adopted should utilize satellite transmission, computer networks and other educational media.

Improving the distance teaching of mathematics

Ryosuke Nagaoka
The University of the Air
Japan

As in other East Asian countries with a Confucian tradition and a competitive selection system, young people in Japan are generally eager to study mathematics. However, at secondary school level, the subject is taught in a very teacher-centred way with the focus on *how* to solve problems, not on their theoretical implications. Consequently, the students do not develop real mathematical understanding. Even worse, this failure to help students understand theoretical aspects of the subject continues in university teaching.

To remedy this situation distance teaching courses should include audio-visual media which motivate students and deal with key theoretical points in a way which cannot be handled so effectively through textbooks. The latter also need to be made more attractive for students learning on their own.

The impact of a university title on student enrolment

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The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) was established as the Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong in 1989. From its inception, it presented degree programmes and, in effect, operated at the level and with the quality of a university except in name. After a stringent process of academic accreditation, it acquired its present university title on 30 May 1997. While this re-titling marked the formal recognition by the Hong Kong Government of its status and academic standing, the University did not need to change its provision or the quality of its programmes as it had been functioning at university standard already.

This poster presentation attempts to assess the impact of the change in title on the enrolment behaviour of students by analysing the following data over the last five years:

- Course places per student
- Registration rates (registrants/applicants)
- Acceptance rates (acceptance/offer of courses)
- The responses from students and potential applicants to survey questionnaires.

In addition, in-depth interviews with students were conducted to provide further understanding of their enrolment behaviour.

The findings provide interesting insights into how OUHK students perceived the title 'university' which may be of relevance to other institutions undergoing a similar change.

The best ways to learn translation in distance education

Emily Poon Wai-yee

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This paper describes an investigation of students' methods of adapting and reacting to different types of text or situations in translation courses. Specifically, it reports the results of a pilot study with two translation courses at the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK).

The purpose of the study is to explore ways in which translation students cope with the mode of distance learning that is student-centred and text-oriented, instead of teacher-centred as in conventional institutions. In translation courses, it is important that 'the teacher provides the student with tools, not for producing the ideal translation but dealing with text-specific and situation-specific variables and for producing an optimal translation under the given circumstances' (Kiraly 1995).

In addition to translation theories, students in the OUHK courses are equipped with skills or 'tools' that they can apply to unfamiliar situations. These tools enable them to be aware of the requirements of a good translator, the characteristics or focus of the kind of texts they are translating and reasons for a particular expression or method of translation.

This paper outlines the results of a questionnaire designed to collect information about how students use these tools to respond to different types of situations. It compares high achievers' and low achievers' responses in areas such as:

- the translation difficulties they have;
- how much the translation principles and skills they have learned can be applied to translation practice;
- what approaches they use in applying the tools to the translation situations;
- what support and facilities they need in order to improve their translation practices.

Based on the questionnaire outcomes, recommendations are made about ways to help students to achieve academic excellence in the sense that they know how to solve different translation problems and what translation approaches should be adopted under different circumstances.

Distance learning for teacher education in China: an approach to international collaboration

Patricia Potts

The Open University
The United Kingdom

This poster presentation focuses on overcoming barriers to the development of distance learning for teachers in China, where the upgrading and updating of professional education is required urgently and on a huge scale.

Experience in the UK Open University and in projects in China over the last 10 years is drawn on to raise issues which affect the expansion of distance learning in China – such as the lower status of accessible institutions and part-time study, and the costs of integrated multi-media production. Information is also provided on some recent Chinese initiatives – a course for teachers in poorer provinces, one for pre-school teachers and a part-time postgraduate course – and ways in which these could be developed on a larger scale are considered. Finally, a model of collaboration which could support the development of appropriate courses for Asian distance learners is presented.

There will be an opportunity to listen to what Chinese educators have to say about distance learning and to record views and experiences on videotape.

Supporting the Filipino distance learner

Myrna S Rodriguez

The University of the Philippines Open University
The Philippines

As a mode of learning, distance education is very novel for Filipino learners. Difficulties in adapting to this new approach to learning were found to affect the performance of some distance education students at the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU), particularly in the first semester of their studies.

This poster presentation considers the academic and non-academic factors which may result in students dropping out, and the corresponding support which the UPOU provides to encourage students to continue and complete their programmes.

The Asian learner's access to open and distance education

Rita Sarkar

Indira Gandhi National Open University
India

This paper presentation highlights the innovative approach adopted by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in upgrading diploma nurses to degree level (BSc Nursing).

The learners, who are scattered throughout India, study through print, audio-visual materials and teleconferencing, and counselling and practical sessions are provided at about 400 Study Centres. Also, during the programme they are placed in hospitals and Primary Health Centres.

IGNOU is the only University in the country offering such an in-service distance education programme which, it hopes, will enhance the knowledge and skills of a substantial number of nurses and so contribute to meeting the changing health needs of society.

Students in China's Radio and Television Universities

Tao Zunshi

Guizhou Radio and Television University
China

China's Radio and Television Universities (RTVUs) form an open and distance education system which is composed of: the China Central Radio and Television University (CCRTVU); RTVUs at provincial, city and county levels; and teaching classes. On the basis of graph theory, this huge nation-wide system is a tree structure. The connections among the nodes in the tree system allow the students (leaf nodes), who are situated at the base of the system structure, to get support and help from RTVUs at all levels (root node and branch nodes).

The CCRTVU builds up a 'national team' for Chinese higher education by choosing the best chief editors and lecturers from all over the country. Some key features of the system are as follows:

- The publication and distribution sub-system for printed materials and broadcasting sub-system for audio-visual materials provide high-quality teaching for the students.
- To a certain degree, the course coordinators and face-to-face tutors reduce the problem of lack of feedback caused by student-teacher separation in time and place.
- By using flexible means of registration, RTVUs provide convenience for on-the-job students.

A student on-line registration system

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Motorola Inc.

Hong Kong SAR, China

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The Open University of Hong Kong

Hong Kong SAR, China

S B Wong

Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Hong Kong SAR, China

This poster presentation describes the prototype On-line Student Registration System of the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK). This system aims to adopt the best practices from recent developments in communication and information technologies to make the registration process flexible and convenient for students. First, a survey of the current OUHK registration procedures and various on-line university registration systems available on the Internet were studied; then a new scheme was designed for the OUHK environment. Thus, a prototype on-line working model of the registration database system was developed in which students and staff can access the system from anywhere and at any time through the Internet by using a WWW browser.

The system includes HTML forms and a CGI database interface. The WWW front-end is based on the Netscape Navigator or Internet Explorer, and the back-end is the Oracle 7 Server which interfaces with the mainframe Oracle database with student records. The functions of the system include:

- online queries about course information;
- on-line registration;
- student registration and individual course status;
- fee payment verification;
- the registration results.

The usual stages of a database application lifecycle were followed in the inherent design. The main activities consisted of database planning, system definition, requirements collection and analysis, database design, DBMS selection, application design, prototyping and testing; the data conversion and loading, testing and operational maintenance will be carried after the feasibility of the prototype has been demonstrated. The requirements collection phase involved interviewing students and staff; and the course fee payment scheme validating and confirming the students' registration is unique to the OUHK.

The system has just be completed and is being beta-tested by end-users and administrative staff.

The need for multilingualism in foreign language teaching in Asian open universities

Wang Guang-qu
Jiangsu Television University
China

While the general objective of meeting training and professional needs through open education is highly appropriate, open universities in Asia need to rethink their current teaching of foreign languages. The focus on English monolingualism clearly cannot keep abreast of economic development; several foreign languages are required in external economic exchange and co-operation among the countries of Asia.

This poster presentation suggests that, in foreign language teaching, Asian open universities should introduce into their curricula courses on Esperanto, the optimum international common language, and other required languages.

Communication and learner development

Wen Hai Chang, Zhou Wen Lin and Li Zi Qiang
Henan Radio and Television University
China

Based on extensive experience, and on research comparing distance and traditional classroom education, this poster presentation argues that increased communication among students in distance education systems in China would improve their learning. More frequent exchange of information and experience among learners about course content, study methods etc. can be beneficial to their growth and development as learners. Strategies for promoting such communication among distance education students are proposed.

Teaching and learning at Chongqing Radio and Television University

Xu Xiu Qing

Chongqing Radio and Television University
China

Chongqing Radio and Television University (RTVU) is one of the RTVUs at the provincial level in China. This poster presentation focuses on outlining the following aspects of the system:

- the ways in which students are classified;
- the student learning activities;
- the organizational structure of China's RTVUs;
- RTVU course provision.

It also analyses the constraints which threaten the future development of this multi-media network, such as:

- the failure of some of the Central RTVU's television programmes to arouse student interest in their studies;
- the need for development of part-time faculty staff;
- the over-reliance on group tuition;
- the 'closed door' policy for admission and lack of a credit transfer system.

The philosophy of ISO 9000 quality assurance in adult education

Zhang Renjie and Xiao Zhongsi

Guangzhou Normal University
China

In mainland China, adult education for academic qualifications has long been considered simply as a supplement and extension to general education for academic qualifications, with the same or similar quality standards being applied to the programmes; little importance has been attached to adults' characteristics and needs.

This poster presentation outlines the philosophy underlying ISO 9000 standards and relates it to quality assurance in 'academic' adult education in China. Issues such as students' motivation for study and the need to meet employers' demands for qualified personnel are explored.

Student-centred practice for ‘open-entrance’ students

Zhao Jiangjun

Hunan Radio and Television University
China

In an effort to extend access and adopt a more student-centred approach, China’s Radio and Television University piloted an ‘open-entrance’ system in 24 provinces, involving more than 28,000 students.

This poster presentation focuses on the project’s achievements and difficulties in relation to, for example:

- the use of multi-media instructional material;
- the balance between ‘guided’ study and self-study;
- building up the tele-education network;
- enhancing support to students.

It considers also how the ‘open-entrance’ system can be implemented more widely.

The potential for expansion of distance education in China

Zhao Zhong-shan

Jilin Radio and Television University
China

The general goal of the reform of Chinese education for the 21st century is to set up a socialist education system with distinctive Chinese features. The training and development of professional skills necessary to fulfil this objective offer the opportunity for a gradual but extensive expansion of distance education – and, indeed, require it if this mission is to be fulfilled.

The present conditions favour such a development. Distance education is supported by government at all levels; it has become a major component in the educational system; and developments in technology can play a major role in extending its use for education and training.

Open and distance education: opportunities for lifelong learners

Zhu Xuewen

Shanghai Television University

China

Education, as a kind of social activity, originates from social needs and in turn promotes social development. The widespread expansion of open and distance education has greatly changed the spatial and temporal contexts of education and promises a better future for education systems in satisfying social and individual needs.

Since the 1990s, Shanghai has been undergoing major changes in its economy, society and culture due to the reform and development strategies of the State and the Shanghai Municipal Government. The increased need for diversified learning opportunities has contributed greatly to the establishment of an open lifelong education system.

This poster presentation describes the development of lifelong learning in Shanghai and its current provision of open and distance education for people of different ages and in different trades and professions. Its coverage is examined in terms of the learner population and its fields and levels of study, so as to put forward some practical suggestions about how it could make an even greater contribution to lifelong learning and society.

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Contents

PAPER PRESENTATIONS

1

Sub-theme 1: Access

3

The promotion of access to open and distance education in Iran

5

A study on access to distance education in higher education in Iran

5

Towards multiculturalism: the case of Asian students' access to humanities study at the UK Open University

6

The role of China's Radio and Television University in lifelong education: the present and future

6

Access and equity: the needs of the disadvantaged

7

Are the teaching, learning and assessment methods of the UK Open University culturally biased?

7

An analysis of the need for distance education in Shanghai

8

More study chances for laid-off workers

8

Distance education for the backward areas of China: the case of Ningxia

9

The functions of the Radio and Television University system in China's Open University of the future

9

Sub-theme 2: Students' experience of learning

11

Factors that influence the learning behaviour and success of distance education students

13

Counselling sessions as support for distance education students

13

Reflections on a comparative study of distance learners

14

National culture and learning style in distance education: a conceptual integration

14

Students' perceptions of pacing mechanisms in distance learning

15

On the use of student support services

15

Tutorials in a distance education system: student expectations and preferred approaches

16

The learning strategies of Asian learners

16

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Distance learning across the East-West divide: Asian learners' experience of Western distance learning | 17 |
| The role of the academic self-concept in distance education students | 17 |
| An analysis of self-regulated learning in distance learners | 18 |
| Do distance learners have to be alone? A study of learning culture | 18 |
| The experience of managers in postgraduate studies through distance education | 19 |
| The role of teachers in distance and open education | 19 |
| Student support services revisited: a case study of al-Quds Open University | 20 |
| Evaluation of the part-time student experience in Hong Kong | 20 |
| An investigation of Indian Open University distance learners' academic self-concepts, study habits and attitudes to distance education | 21 |
| Student activities in distance education: the Korean experience and prospects | 21 |
| Strengthening feedback in the teaching process for enhanced learning | 22 |
| What makes a good distance learner? A quasi-experiment in the University of the Philippines | 22 |
| The 'open-entrance' trial programme: establishing a learning support system at China RTVUs | 23 |
| A comparative study of courses from Indira Gandhi Open University and university correspondence courses in Orissa State, India | 23 |
| Approaches to learning of school teachers studying distance education courses in educational psychology | 24 |
| The learning support system for open distance higher education in an undeveloped area | 24 |
| Surveying student satisfaction with their learning experiences at the Open University of Hong Kong | 25 |
| Psychological consultation in teaching | 25 |
| Catering for students' needs | 26 |
| Sub-theme 3: Developing course materials | 27 |
| Designing multi-media teaching materials for Asian distance learners | 29 |
| Developing course materials: the experience of Bangladesh Open University | 29 |
| Key elements in improving the teaching of minority languages at a distance | 30 |
| Matching provision to needs | 30 |
| Asian learners, Western models: some discontinuities and issues for distance educators | 31 |
| Learning about learning: a focus on problem-based learning in distance education | 31 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Sub-theme 4: Technological support | 33 |
| Internet-based delivery systems for distance learning | 35 |
| Challenges and international opportunities for on-line study: collaborative learning in a virtual classroom | 35 |
| The development of a low-cost, low-end Web-based distance learning and student support system | 36 |
| Towards the optimal use of an Internet-based system of distance education for technical teachers' training and education | 36 |
| Meeting the information needs of Indian distance learners through resource sharing and networking of libraries | 37 |
| Design strategies for developing Web-based training courses in a Korean context | 37 |
| Networked learning: the fusion of self-paced and cooperative learning | 38 |
| Reflections on a telecom-education programme | 38 |
| Independent language learning on the Internet: possible? practical? | 39 |
| Using videoconferencing in distance education: a feasibility analysis at Anadolu University | 39 |
| INSET through INSAT: the Indian experience | 40 |
| Media and technological support for the academic programmes of Bangladesh Open University | 40 |
| Technological and social support for Asian postgraduate students: a case study | 41 |
| Computer-assisted instruction in China's Radio and Television Universities | 41 |
| Perfect TV and imperfect response: the University of the Air broadcasts its programmes nationwide via satellite | 42 |
| Learning support via the Web: how do I know it made a difference? | 42 |
| Sub-theme 5: Institutional collaboration | 43 |
| Collaborative distance education in Asia: a strategic alliance model | 45 |
| Institutional collaboration to meet the needs of the open learner in India | 45 |
| Institutional collaboration in meeting the needs of the Asian distance learner | 46 |
| The Open University Development Programme: a partnership between the UK Open University and the Singapore Institute of Management | 46 |
| Institutional collaboration in meeting the needs of distance learners: issues and implications | 47 |
| Indira Gandhi National Open University and partner institutions: a marriage of convenience | 47 |
| Shared use of course materials among AAOU members | 48 |
| An evaluation report for the AT&T project 'Communicate & Learn' | 48 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Other issues | 49 |
| A conceptual framework for analysing learner populations in distance education | 51 |
| Reflections on teaching participatory research-based higher degree programmes at a distance in Malaysia and Thailand | 51 |
| Contextualizing research methodologies in distance and open learning in Asia | 52 |
| Distance education for Asian women: issues and prospects | 52 |
| Chinese students' judgement of plagiarism | 53 |
| Staff development in institutions: indicators from Asian contexts | 53 |
| Tendencies in the development of open and distance education | 54 |
| Whose baby is a distance learner? | 54 |
| Continuing education for health professionals in Asia | 55 |
| Distance education in China for the 21st century | 55 |
| Careers and activities of female graduates of the University of the Air | 56 |
| POSTER PRESENTATIONS | 57 |
| Factors influencing the effectiveness of student learning | 59 |
| The impact of a socialist market economy on the reform and development of distance education and its quality control | 59 |
| Perceptions of distance learning in Hong Kong and Mainland China | 60 |
| Offering learners more opportunities: educational reform in Shanghai Television University | 60 |
| The cultural integration of national societies through Asian distance education programmes | 61 |
| The impact of audio-visual media on distance learners | 61 |
| Developing course materials for distance learners: a case study of Kota Open University | 62 |
| Evaluation of a distance education course in human sexuality | 62 |
| Open and distance learning for lifelong education | 63 |
| The Asian learner and the global context of distance education | 63 |
| Networking of learning resources for training primary school teachers through distance learning: the Indian experience | 64 |
| Teaching Persian studies at Payame Noor University | 64 |
| Developing course materials for in-service nurses | 65 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Developing course material for Asian distance learners: the experience of Kota Open University | 65 |
| Training of auxiliary health workers through a distance mode | 66 |
| A survey on computer-based mathematics learning | 66 |
| A comparative study of the administrative styles, educational processes and outcomes of selected Asian open universities | 67 |
| Linux and related freeware for distance learning | 67 |
| On social support for China's self-taught higher education examinations programme | 68 |
| Guaranteeing the quality of graduation projects and theses | 68 |
| The design, development and application of CAI in distance education | 69 |
| Distance education – the best choice for Xinjiang | 69 |
| Improving the distance teaching of mathematics | 70 |
| The impact of a university title on student enrolment | 70 |
| The best ways to learn translation in distance education | 71 |
| Distance learning for teacher education in China: an approach to international collaboration | 71 |
| Supporting the Filipino distance learner | 72 |
| The Asian learner's access to open and distance education | 72 |
| Students in China's Radio and Television Universities | 73 |
| A student on-line registration system | 73 |
| The need for multilingualism in foreign language teaching in Asian open universities | 74 |
| Communication and learner development | 74 |
| Teaching and learning at Chongqing Radio and Television University | 75 |
| The philosophy of ISO 9000 quality assurance in adult education | 75 |
| Student-centred practice for 'open-entrance' students | 76 |
| The potential for expansion of distance education in China | 76 |
| Open and distance education: opportunities for lifelong learners | 77 |

ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS



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