

# Distance Education



**AGENCY FOR NATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**  
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# Contents

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1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	Brief History of Distance Education	3
3.0	Benefits of Studying by Distance	5
4.0	Why distance education is good for you?	6
5.0	Types of courses	7
6.0	Choosing the right University	7
7.0	Are you suited to Distance Education?	9
8.0	Distance Education through ALDEC	11
9.0	Funding your studies	12

## 1.0 Introduction

Distance Education refers to an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is by geographical distance or time, often supported by communication technology.

The potentials offered by distance education enable individuals and the society in general to access reasonably priced and quality education without having too many interruptions to their usual routines.

## 2.0 Brief History of Distance Education

Distance education or correspondence education as it was previously known started as soon as people could read and write. The first known correspondence education was through the letters of St Paul to teach religious education.

The second period is what was called the correspondence education period dating back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this period there was a heavy reliance on print materials and correspondence through the post. This type of education was primarily used to reach students living in isolated places and it spread very quickly in countries like America and some European countries. The use of correspondence education then progressed steadily in countries like Australia, New Zealand and later on to other countries upon their independence.



The third period of distance education is distinguished by the use of radio and television as a one way communication

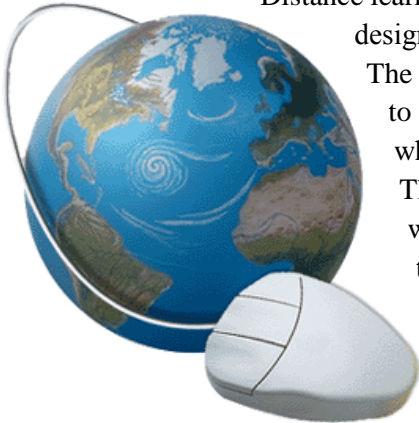
process. Radio broadcast was first introduced in schools towards the twentieth century as support to classroom teachers. Later it was used to enrich the correspondence programme. This period of radio programme was very significant as it was during this period that the name correspondence education was changed to distance education. During this period, although popular, distance education was still seen as inferior to studying through face to face.

In the 1960s television broadcasting was introduced together with correspondence and occasional face to face tuition in order to produce a more comprehensive, effective and far reaching part-time education system. At the same time in 1963 the first open university was launched in Britain, the British Open University. This marked a significant breakthrough which brought a new vision in the developing history of distance education. The British Open University was perceived as the institution that brought the much needed respect in distance education by being the most innovative education organisation in the world. The success of the British Open University led to many other open universities in India and South Africa. Parallel to these open universities saw the successes of non-university distance teaching institutions with the assistance of the International Extension College. This saw a vast increase in distance education courses making 1970 and 1980 the decades of Distance Education.

Internet communication marks the new era of distance education and improving upon its appellation to ODL/ODEL (open and distance learning) as e-learning is the dominant method used in distance education. Most distance universities are doing away with print materials or are using print materials only as a component for the course. These new changes have brought significant progress in how distance courses are being transmitted to students. The courses

materials can be provided through the internet either in print and synchronously and asynchronously in form of lectures. Assignments can be forwarded through the internet and will get to the university in very short delay. The accessibility of internet around the country means that open and distance education is the best possible method to gain access to education in the modern world.

### 3.0 Benefits of Studying by Distance



Distance learning courses are student centred and are designed with the student's needs in **focus**.

The materials are interactive and allows you to engage in active reading and writing in which feedback is give after each chapter. The course materials are designed in such a way so as to make up for the absence of teachers/lecturers. Moreover, universities also provide you with online tutors to answer to any queries that you may have.

Online universities also make available chat rooms and online forums to facilitate discussions about topics of interest or difficulties. Forums will also help you to overcome your isolation and shed light on any queries that you may have. Forums are visited by students and tutors sharing the different modules you are enrolled in and this can create a huge network. Anyone can start a forum and any time you have a query you can post it online and someone somewhere is bound to come to your rescue. If you feel intimidated by using the forums to post your queries, you can simply send an email to the tutor responsible for the module. In

most universities there are very efficient mechanisms to ensure that your queries are responded to with very short delays.

## **4.0 Why distance education is good for you?**

DL gives you greater access and opportunities to study more subjects and reach out to programmes that are not available in your immediate locality.



It is flexible, as a distance learner you will be able to study within your own environment and time. You do not have to be restricted by rigid schedules.

You will have no face to face lectures to attend or physical contact with other students you will have a wider range of networking possibilities.

Distance learning courses allow you to work at your own pace. You will be given due dates when the assignments need to be submitted.

You are able to control when, where and how you want to schedule your study. This is very important to working parents who can schedule studies around work and child care.

Online courses typically cost less to run than face to face courses as there are less expenses incurred by universities. The savings are therefore passed on to you as students by making the courses cheaper.

Another huge advantage of getting online education is that there is no need to travel to and from class every single day.

## **5.0 Types of courses**

Courses are academically or vocationally oriented. Both types of courses will enhance your knowledge and skills in your career. Vocationally oriented courses provide you with hands on knowledge and new development in the field which can help you to improve in your career. These types of courses have integrated practical activities which can be performed in the place of work.

## **6.0 Choosing the right University**

Distance education universities vary in types and sizes and it is very important to ensure the course or university you choose is credible and accredited by reputable accreditation bodies. If you are not sure, you should seek assistance from the Seychelles Qualification Authority (SQA) and other institutions such as ALDEC and ANHRD for a list of institutions they are familiar with. This is very crucial as you do not want to spend years on a course only to find that it is not recognized in your country or place of employment.

When choosing your course it is also essential to ensure that the course is really by distance as terminologies used by distance



universities can vary from institution to institution. Part-time study does not always mean by distance but can be courses which are held face to face after working hours or during study break.

It is also advisable to read information given on courses and be clear about what is expected of you. Some courses carry compulsory practical components which have to be completed in certain designated countries or in countries of origin only. Such courses if opted for have to be carefully planned to allow time and money for travelling.



Below is a list of accredited distance learning universities where Seychelles students have studied

- Edith Cowan University
- Embry Riddle Aeronautical University
- Griggs University
- Maastricht School of Management
- Marconi University
- Mauritius College of the Air
- Northumbria University
- Oxford College
- Open University of Mauritius
- Staffordshire University
- The College of Estate Management

- University of South Africa (UNISA)
- Universit? de Rouan
- Universit? Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris
- University of Bath
- University of Derby
- University of Kwazulu Natal
- University of Leicester
- University of London
- University of Strathclyde
- University of Sunderland
- University of Turin
- University of Bath
- Edith Cowan University Perth, Australia

## **7.0 Are you suited to Distance Education?**

The first and most critical consideration for distance learning is to do a self-assessment of your educational goals.

- What do I want to accomplish?
- Am I just beginning my education or am I adding on to my present degree?
- Am I seeking a second degree?
- Am I just trying a course or two to see if I can study by distance with the idea of continuing towards a degree later?

Once you have been able to determine your goals you should think of the skills that will enable you to work successfully. You should ask yourself the following questions:



- Do I have the discipline to organise my own time and remain focus on my course work without letting other distractions crowd out my time?
- How computer literate am I?
- How good am I on the Internet?
- Am I comfortable with emails, chat rooms and discussion groups?

The next level of your self-assessment is to look at your strength and weakness as a learner. Distance learning is very much different from attending on campus face to face classes. You will find yourself very much on your own and you will have to rely on your own effort to complete the assigned work.

As a distance learner you should possess the following characteristics:

- A self-driven and self-motivated person

- Hardworking and diligent
- Committed to take responsibility for your own studies
- Love reading and writing and
- An independent learner

The above characteristics are important but they are not enough to enable you to succeed. It is very important for you have:

- A place to study
- Time to study
- Good reading and writing skills
- Support from your family and friends

## **8.0 Distance Education through ALDEC**

ALDEC is responsible for managing adult education in the country. Part of its role is to assist individuals who opt to study by distance to enrol in reputable overseas institutions. ALDEC also facilitates access to distance programmes offered by the University of South Africa (UNISA) through an agreement signed with the institution.

ALDEC offers the following services:

- Assist you in identifying suitable courses
- Verify and certify your application documents
- Assist you in your applications and registration processes
- Provide you with any other queries that you may have.

## 9.0 Funding your studies

Distance education courses are relatively cheap compared to full time study on campus. Cost of courses vary from university to university and it is important that you study courses cost very carefully. Some universities provide the course fees for the whole course and offer you opportunities to pay by instalments whilst others will allow you to pay per module as you go along. Universities giving the second type of payment plan tend to increase their module fees regularly and therefore the longer you remain on the course, the more costly it will be for you.

- You need to plan your budget carefully in order to ensure enough money is available for study fees and to buy books.
- You can also obtain a loan from your bank to fund your studies or better still you can obtain a Government of Seychelles Scholarship if the course you want to study is of national needs.

For more information on scholarship and information on such courses please visit our website.: [www.nhrdc.sc](http://www.nhrdc.sc) or contact us:

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