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## **Open learning: the concept, the creation of an open learning scheme, current trends and the future**

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Open Learning: the Concept, the Creation of an  
Open Learning Scheme, Current Trends and the Future

by

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fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the  
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## ABSTRACT

This work commences with an examination of the concept of open learning and its historical development in Britain. This is followed by the provision of a step-by-step guide to creating an open learning scheme and the application of the criteria (designed by the author), which <sup>MUST</sup> most exist in order to ensure true openness in learning schemes, to two existing open learning schemes. The penultimate chapter examines the current trend within industrial and commercial sectors, of adopting open learning methods as a tool for employee training and the concern this trend has caused to many of those committed to the concept of open learning. The final chapter addresses the issue of the future of open learning, with special reference to the implications of the arrival of 1992 and the single market.

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This dissertation is dedicated with much love and thanks to my parents.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

APT'S	Areas of Priority Treatment
CET	Council for Educational Technology
F.E.	Further Education
GOLD	Gloucestershire Open Learning Desk (situated at Stroud Public Library)
LEA	Local Education Authority
MARIS-NET	Materials and Resources Information Service Network
MSC	Manpower Services Commission
NCET	National Council for Educational Technology
NEC	National Extension College
OCN'S	Open College Networks
OU	Open University
SAQ	Student Assessed Questions
SOLE	Strathclyde Open Learning Experiment
TAQ	Tutor Assessed Questions
WEA	Workers' Educational Association



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Open Learning is an exciting concept designed to break down barriers to educational provision and allow individuals to take control of their own learning experiences.

Open Learning methods have been around in educational circles, in a variety of different forms, for a number of years. In the last few years, Open Learning's net has widened to embrace the industrial and commercial sectors, becoming an effective tool for staff training.

This work explores the concept and history of Open Learning, the issues involved in setting up an Open Learning scheme, the criteria which must be satisfied in order to ensure a scheme is truly open, current trends in Open Learning and the future of Open Learning.

An outline of the contents of each chapter is presented below:

## Chapter II Open Learning : The Concept and

### Historical Development.

This chapter analyses the concept of Open Learning, including a discussion revolving around the plethora of terms used to describe forms of 'Open' Learning. The theory of Open Learning is followed by an account of the historical development of Open Learning in Britain.

## Chapter III Setting up an Open Learning Scheme.

This chapter presents step-by-step the different issues that need to be discussed and implemented in order to establish a successful Open Learning scheme.

The various issues are placed into the relevant sections within this chapter and in turn these sections are arranged in the order in which it is felt that it is most likely that developers of Open Learning schemes will be confronted by them. This chapter is designed to be a practical handbook for those creating Open Learning schemes.

## Chapter IV Criteria for True Openness in Open

### Learning Schemes.

This chapter reiterates the two main aims of Open Learning schemes, i.e. open access and a learner-centred learning experience.

The author has created two sets of criteria in order to ensure the achievement of each of these aims.

As a practical experiment, the criteria have been applied to two existing Open Learning schemes, in order to assess the openness of these schemes. The criteria for open access are applied to the Gloucestershire Open Learning Desk (GOLD) and the criteria for a learner-centred learning experience are applied to the Strathclyde Open Learning Experiment (SOLE).

Not all Open Learning schemes are completely successful and this situation is highlighted, in the last section of this chapter, using IBM UK Limited's Havant Plant, as a case study.

#### Chapter V Open Learning : A change of Direction?

This chapter examines the adoption of Open Learning methods by the industrial and commercial sectors and the apparent change of direction that Open Learning has taken.

The desirability of complete openness in learning schemes is also debated.

## Chapter VI The Future of Open Learning.

This chapter examines the future of Open Learning, with special reference to the implications and opportunities that may occur with the arrival of 1992 and the single market.

## CHAPTER II.

OPEN LEARNING: THE CONCEPT AND  
HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

## OPEN LEARNING : THE CONCEPT

"Open Learning is an impressive phrase to which a range of meanings can be, and is attached. It eludes definition. But as an inscription to be carried in procession on a banner, gathering adherents and enthusiasm, it has great potential."<sup>(1)</sup>

This commentary on Open Learning, although somewhat cynical in tone, does serve to illustrate the present state of affairs amongst those involved in the world of Open Learning.

Much of the philosophy and many of the practices involved in Open Learning have evolved from the long established tradition of adult learning through correspondence courses and distance learning schemes. (The historical development of Open Learning will be discussed further on in this chapter.) What is confusing is the extent to which experts differ on what actually constitutes Open Learning. Most would agree that the two key aims of Open Learning are:

- (1) To break down the barriers to learning which exist for a large percentage of the adult population.
- (2) To centre the learning experience around the learner and his or her specific needs.

The barriers to learning can take some or all of the following forms:-

(a) Geographical Barriers

- i) no local college or other educational institution exists.
- ii) the travelling distance to other educational institutions is too great to be attempted on a regular basis.

(b) Social Barriers

- i) family commitments, for example the care of children or elderly relatives who can not be left alone, while the learner attends a college course.
- ii) health reasons which render attendance at an educational institution impossible.

(c) Educational Barriers

- i) many potential learners do not possess the formal qualifications required for enrolment in many educational institutions.
- ii) many potential learners are intimidated by the idea of approaching an educational institution for possible enrolment on a course.



(d) Financial Barriers

- i) many potential learners, as well as facing some or all of the above mentioned barriers, also face the barrier of the cost of many courses and the scarcity of available grants and bursaries.

It is the commonly agreed aim of Open Learning to break down these barriers and provide open access to learning for all, especially for those who the traditional forms of education have passed by or failed. For example, those on a low-income; members of ethnic minorities; women caring for other members of the family; the disabled and those who lack basic literacy and numeracy skills.

The second aim of Open Learning, to make the learning experience learner-centred, has superseded the issue of open access in more recent years. Open access is now taken as read and the debate has moved from what can be called the 'convenience' role of Open Learning to its more 'philosophical' role. As "A mode of learning that systematically places choices in the hands of the users",<sup>(2)</sup> i.e. the learners. This is a positive shift, especially if theory can be consistently translated into reality.

Open Learning should place control of all aspects of a student's learning into his or her own hands; learning is centred on the individual and the individual must take responsibility for his or her own learning. Open Learning endeavours to "actively promote(s) such qualities in the learner as autonomy, independence and flexibility"<sup>(3)</sup>.

One of the most commonly accepted definitions of Open Learning has been produced by R. Lewis and D. Spencer, in the series of Open Learning Guides, produced by the council for Educational Technology (CET), (since April 1988, National Council for Educational Technology (NCET))<sup>[1]</sup>

"Open Learning is a term used to describe courses flexibly designed to meet individual requirements. It is often applied to provision which tries to remove barriers that prevent attendances at more traditional courses, but it also suggests a learner-centred philosophy. Open Learning courses may be offered in a learning centre of some kind or most of the activity may be carried out away from such a centre (for example, at home). In nearly every case specially prepared or adapted materials are necessary".<sup>(4)</sup>

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[1] "The NCET is an independent public body, registered as a charity and supported by the Government. Its prime function is to support change in the ways we learn, through practical help, training publications and software."  
NCET RESOURCES 1990. Coventry: NCET, 1990

Thus open learners should be able to take responsibility for:

- what they learn (content)
- how they learn (methods; media; routes)
- where they learn (place)
- when they learn (time)
- how quickly they learn (pace)
- who to turn to for help
- whether, when and where to have their learning assessed.<sup>(5)</sup>
- what to do next after the completion of a course of study.

Often using specially prepared materials, but not always.

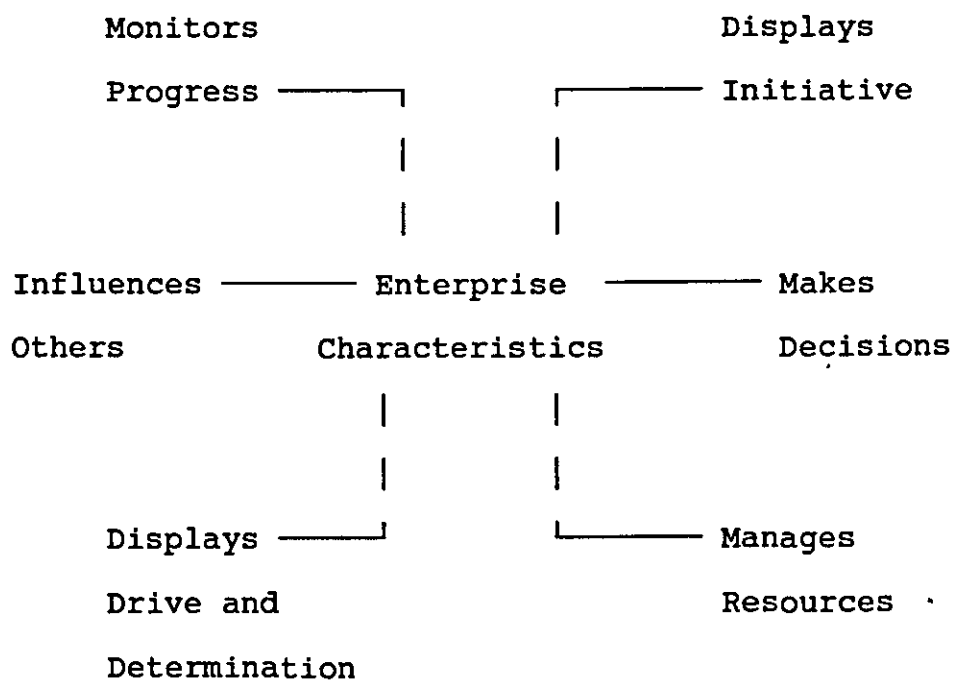
The where and when aspects have long been common to Open Learning schemes. However, it is only recently that attention has been turned to the how and what aspects of Open Learning.<sup>(6)</sup>

Increasingly Open Learning is being linked with the concept of enterprise. The open learner is said to display enterprising qualities, he or she :-

- i) creates opportunities
- ii) acquires skills which will generate wealth and resources
- iii) has the confidence to use his or her own initiative
- iv) takes advantage of change<sup>(7)</sup>

These enterprise qualities are illustrated in Figure 1.

#### The Enterprise Characteristics of the Open Learner



( 8 )

Thus, in general, those involved in Open Learning would agree that two of the essential factors necessary to ensure that learning is open are the existence of open access to all and a learning experience centred around the individual's needs.

However, aside from these generally agreed factors, opinions on the true definition and components of Open Learning, are widely varied.

Debates around such questions as "Can distance learning be considered as a part of Open Learning or is it something quite separate?", abound in the world of Open Learning. Similarly, the specific meaning of other commonly used terms in the field of adult education provision and their relationship with Open Learning, is still widely debated and opinions continue to differ. Some of the most frequent used terms from the terminology in this field are:-

- (1) Distance Education
- (2) Correspondence Education
- (3) Flexible Learning
- (4) Independent Learning
- (5) Individualized Learning
- (6) Directed Private Study

- (7) Drop-In Learning
- (8) Resource-Based Learning
- (9) Supported Self Study
- (10) Self-Access Learning
- (11) Self Study
- (12) Student-Negotiated Learning
- (13) Mixed-Mode Learning

Investigation into the commonly agreed definitions of each of these terms, will reveal that they all contain aspects of openness.

1) Distance Education

This is "a system where the learner is separated from the teacher, and a substantial part of the content is provided through print materials and/or other technologies like television and radio. All this can be supplemented by dialogue, or didactic conversation, by telephone or face-to-face support, or the learner can be entirely independent".<sup>(9)</sup>

Distance learning's most famous providers in Britain, are the Open University (OU) and the National Extension College (NEC).

(2) Correspondence Education

This is "a particular form of distance education based on print and written assignments and letters" only <sup>(10)</sup>.

(3) Flexible Learning

This term is applied to any type of educational provision which strives to make learning more learner-centred and thus has a very broad usage.

(4) Independent Learning and Individualized Learning

The latter implies that the learner has control over the pace and place of learning but not as in the former, control over the purpose of learning, the learning style and strategy.<sup>(11)</sup>

(5) Directed Private Study

Learning through a structured programme with assignments.

(6) Drop-in Learning

Learners use a resource centre and its materials. Tutorial support is often provided.

(7) Resource-Based Learning

Learners use resources in all types of medium, which are not preselected by a teacher.

(8) Supported Self-Study

Is "contract-based, individualized learning schemes - usually using assignments and guideline materials produced in-house by the sponsoring institution or groups of institutions".<sup>(12)</sup>

(9) Self-Access Learning

Learners have the responsibility for selecting the materials they require from a collection of resources.

(10) Self-Study

Broad term for any scheme where specially constructed resources are used and there is a minimum of tutorial support.

(11) Student-Negotiated Learning

Learning is learner-centred, with the learner negotiating with the tutor over all aspects of learning.



(12) Mixed-Mode Learning

Learning through a blend of traditional teaching methods and open learning methods.

All of these terms imply degrees of openness and can be considered to embody aspects of the philosophy of Open Learning in them. It is over the place of distance education, however, that the most controversy exists.

That it is a misconception to suggest that Open Learning and distance learning are one and the same is the view held by Roger Lewis, who goes on to place distance learning as "a sub-category of Open Learning".<sup>(13)</sup>

However, Greville Rumble, Planning Officer of the OU, suggests that "Open Learning and distance education systems are simply not opposites",<sup>(14)</sup> and Alan Tait (OU, East Anglia) states that "the great proportion of Open Learning initiatives historically and at present are in fact distance education also".<sup>(15)</sup>

Tait uses the CET's three part classification of Open Learning to illustrate his assertion.

Open Learning is divided by the CET into :-

1. College-based systems

"In which students attend college but are able to study at a time and at a pace of their own choice. Examples given are learning by appointment centres, special resource areas, and mathematics workshops.

2. Local systems

Most students in local systems live within easy travelling distance of the college but spend most of their study at home - learning is based on a written package (mostly bought in): the college provides guidance, counselling, a mark and comment service on assignments, tutorials, and access to the library and other college facilities.

3. Distant systems

Most students in distant systems live a long way from the college and, in effect, pursue correspondence courses. However, the provision may be supported by counselling and include periods of residential study". (16)

Tait points out that only the first of the three is not also distance education and that the latter two categories represent by far the largest in number of existing initiatives in the field of Open Learning and either adequately describes the provision provided by the OU or Flexistudy (NEC's scheme), both of which are thought of as providers of distance education.<sup>(17)</sup>

Greville Rumble backs up his argument by stating that at a technological level there is little to choose between the 'Open Learning' Open College and the 'distance teaching' OU.

"Technologically both the OU and the Open College expect students to study at home from media; their emphasis on work in local centres..... ( i.e. compulsory residential schools and optional face-to-face tuition at local study centres for the OU and Open Access Centres with 'local support.... provided by colleges, employers and other learning establishments'<sup>(18)</sup> for the Open College)..... is different, but it is a difference of degree, not of kind".<sup>(19)</sup>

Rumble goes on to conclude that distance education and Open Learning are not opposing concepts because

"the two concepts deal with different things, the former stressing the means by which education is achieved, the latter the objectives and character of the educational process".<sup>(20)</sup>

Rumble provides the following quotation to sum up his argument:

"Open education is particularly characterised by the removal of restrictions, exclusions and privileges, by the accreditation of students' previous experience; by the flexibility of the management of the time variable; and by substantial changes in the traditional relationship between professors and students. On the other hand, distance education is a modality which permits the delivery of a group of didactic media without the necessity of regular class participation, where the individual is responsible for his own learning."(21)

Although, it is clear that there is considerable disagreement among those involved in Open Learning, as to what precisely can be deemed an Open Learning system and what cannot, many of those involved do consider distance learning to be part of Open Learning and indeed see Open Learning itself as an "umbrella term which refers to a whole series of varied educational initiatives and provision."(22)

Perhaps it does not matter that there exists no one set definition of Open Learning, for as Mary Thorpe (Lecturer, OU) and David Grugeon (Director of Student Services, Open College) state in their book Open Learning for Adults, Longman, 1987, "the very flexibility of the term Open Learning enables it to be given local interpretation and..... does not restrict..... experimentation by individuals and small groups....."(23)

However, if one requires something somewhat more concrete than this view, then the following summary provides a comprehensive list of the general characteristics of Open Learning schemes:-

1. A focus on the learner's own purposes and on helping the learner to articulate these at every stage.
2. A commitment to helping the learner to acquire independence and autonomy.
3. A focus on the learner's own environment and experience - domestic, social, communal and work-based and on its potential for learning.
4. The belief that the learner is self-directed, that individual learning styles need to be respected and used, that learning involves the whole person.
5. The use of professionals to facilitate learning (rather than to teach) and to mobilize the learners themselves.
6. The use of objectives to underpin course planning; these are known to, and ideally changeable by, the learner.
7. The use of very frequent assessment, primarily to help the learner to achieve his objectives and to monitor his progress.
8. The absence of unnecessary entry requirements.
9. The use of new technology to bridge the distance between learner and provider.<sup>(24)</sup>

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF OPEN LEARNING

The early origins of Open Learning, as it appears today, derive from the still surviving correspondence colleges, which date back to the 1850's. Students, enrolled with these colleges, would study at home using print-based materials supplied by the colleges. Neither centrally nor locally based tutorial support was provided. This type of educational provision never gained a high reputation within educational circles, with the exception of the National Extension College (NEC), set up in 1963.

The NEC, a self-financing, non-profit distributing charitable trust, "sought to offer distance learning to home-based adults who had missed out on general education at school or who needed vocational training to gain a job or to gain promotion within a job".<sup>(25)</sup> Many of the present developments in Open Learning were to a great extent to be found within the NEC.

The NEC promoted the concept of learners having access to local colleges, universities and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), to use the resources of these institutions and attend some classes<sup>(26)</sup>. The new Open College has adopted a similar arrangement.

The NEC also provides residential courses, which help to break down the isolation of those studying on their own. This concept is now an important feature of the OU, which provides compulsory summer schools for its students.

The NEC pioneered the use of broadcasting, both radio and television, "to interest learners in study, to pace learners and to teach".<sup>(27)</sup> For example, the Dawn University, which broadcast networked Cambridge University lectures and the ITV series, named the 'College of the Air'. Both the OU and the Open College use broadcasting extensively. The former broadcasts on BBC2 and the latter in conjunction with Channel 4.

The NEC used Open Learning packages in the form of kits to enable students to learn practical skills.

They also encouraged the use of the new technology available. Open Learning packages and new technology are very much a part of the learning processes of the OU, Open College and Open Tech.

The creation of the OU in 1969, constituted the next major development in the field of Open Learning. The OU offered degree courses to individuals through the means of distance education. Before the advent of the OU, the only course open to those who wished to study for a degree away from the actual university, was to "undertake the lonely rigours of a London University Extra-Mural Degree Course".(28)

OU students pursue their course using specially prepared study materials and receive personal tuition in their own locality. The OU advanced the credibility of distance education by ensuring that it produced only study materials of a consistently high standard. The prevailing myth, that distance education was a second-rate, inferior alternative to conventionally taught courses was soon dispelled.



Critics of the new OU, were "within 5 years..... surreptitiously using the course units as the basis for their own teaching; within another five the units were on reading lists, library shelves and in the hands of students of 'conventional' courses all over the country".<sup>(29)</sup> It has been said that "the OU has brought respectability to Open Learning."<sup>(30)</sup>

The OU also created a nationwide structure of local tutors and counsellors to assist students. "It brought the concept of counselling into correspondence study."<sup>(31)</sup> The existence of the credit system, whereby students gain credits for each unit of a course successfully completed, enables students to pace their own learning and take as long as necessary to complete their degree course. This has created further openness for the student.

Broadcasting plays a major role in the OU's teaching strategy and the OU has always incorporated new technology into its courses. It recently implemented a test project on computer conferencing, involving 1,500 students.<sup>(32)</sup>

The success of the OU (in 1987, 67,000 undergraduates and a further 80,000 associate students <sup>(33)</sup>) created a great interest and demand for Open Learning schemes. However, the educational institutions interested in Open Learning, already had existing institutional structures and so faced the problem of how to integrate Open Learning into existing systems. Not to be deterred, small scale Open Learning schemes began to appear: schemes such as the Bradford Maths Workshop; the Napier College (Edinburgh) Centre for Learning by Appointment and the Nelson and Colne College, Open College Course, in cooperation with Lancaster University and Preston Polytechnic.

The CET, promoted these developing schemes through its Open Learning Systems programme. It discovered that in general, such schemes had common features which differed from the OU, they :-

1. Were small scale.
2. Had been developed to meet very specific needs.
3. Included more sharply focused learning objectives.
4. Offered a choice of modules.
5. Allowed learners to start at more or less any time.<sup>(34)</sup>

One of the most successful schemes in which the CET played a part, in conjunction with the NEC and Barnet College of Further Education, was Flexistudy.

Flexistudy students enrolled in local colleges, (thus becoming eligible for a Local Education Authority (LEA) grant, which would not have been available if the student had been studying solely on a NEC course), which provided tutorial support and open access to resources but did their studying using Open Learning courses provided by the NEC. The first scheme (assisted by the CET Open Learning Systems programme) at Barnet College of Further Education was established in 1977. By 1978, 25 such schemes existed and the number had grown to 179 in 1986.<sup>(35)</sup> "It was the largest fully collaborative Open Learning system in the U.K."<sup>(36)</sup>

In 1982, the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) (now the Training Commission), created their Open Learning scheme, the Open Tech programme, to teach vocational, rather than educational skills, by Open Learning methods.

The "MSC's commitment to Open Learning did not stem from any theoretical commitment to educational philosophy..... Instead the Commission is concerned with satisfying its practical remit to ensure that British training systems meet the present and future needs of the economy."(<sup>37</sup>)

This venture using Open Learning methods, to teach practical, as well as cognitive, skills on such a large scale was a new departure in the field of Open Learning. It was a new and unproved concept and as such, the MSC had to push hard to persuade companies that Open Learning could successfully meet their skill needs and to overcome barriers in the Further Education system.

Funding went to a wide variety of projects and "for the first time in Open Learning, government funding - via the MSC - encouraged industry to look at its own needs and to meet these either itself or through collaborative Open Learning arrangements with educational providers."(<sup>38</sup>) Among the many companies who were involved with Open Tech, were Austin Rover, ICI and Lucas Industries.

Open Learning packages were produced, along with the creation of delivery systems. However, the timescale for the completion of some packages in new projects was underestimated, with the consequence that delivery systems were in place, before they had materials to deliver.

One of the great successes of Open Tech was the foundation of an on-line database - Materials and Resources Information Service Network (MARIS-NET) - containing information on nearly all available Open Learning materials and services.<sup>[2]</sup>

The latest development in the field of Open Learning has been the establishment of the Open College. Its aim being to extend "vocational education and training opportunities more widely to adults through the use of open learning methods".<sup>(39)</sup>

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[2] MARIS-NET is no longer government funded and has become a private limited company. It provides information on most Open Learning packages available in Britain, training films and videos, private sector short courses, specialist organisations and individuals, and an Open Learning bibliography.

The first courses offered were available from September 1987, no educational qualifications are necessary for enrolment but although the Open College has been established with government support, it is a private company and within 3 years, it must be self-financing and thus fees are fairly high.

The College uses existing educational institutions, such as Colleges of Further Education and the OU and also employers, and works through them to arrange for students to obtain materials and to have access to:

- Information
- Pre-enrolment counselling and guidance.
- Tutorial support.
- Practical training facilities.
- Assessment and certification of their performance. (40)

Students pay for the above resources to the extent to which they use them.

The Open College, in common with the OU, uses radio and television transmissions to complement the use of conventional Open Learning tools.

In its first three months, the Open College set up 400 local support centres for learners and a National Distance Learning Centre for those students who could not or preferred not to attend a local centre.<sup>(41)</sup>

Although initially, considerable interest was shown by the public in the Open College courses; the high prices of the courses put them outside the reach of many potential students.<sup>[3]</sup> There exists an inherent tension between the "educational objectives of the College, (i.e. to be 'a college for everyone'<sup>(42)</sup>) and the requirement to be commercially self-supporting within 3 years".<sup>(43)</sup>

However, the courses offered by the College did prove attractive to the business sector, who saw them as an opportunity "to train their workforces more cheaply and without disrupting their work."<sup>(44)</sup> A Corporate Services Group was set up to develop this market. It is this sector which now accounts for most of the Open College's clients.<sup>[4]</sup>

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[3] Only 1,200 students had enrolled by December 1987 (45).

[4] 23,000 clients in April 1988 (46) and 40,000 by September 1988 (47).

Also in existence are Open College Networks (OCN's); these are representative bodies which bring together organisations involved in providing learning opportunities to adults. They aim to "improve the accessibility, flexibility and quality of learning opportunities available to adults, particularly those who have benefited least from existing provision."<sup>(48)</sup>

They provide flexible accreditation on four levels; the levels denoting the degree of independence of learning.

The Open College Networks Project (funded by the DES) supports developing and existing OCN's. OCN's exist in London, the Black Country and West Glamorgan, with Developments in other areas of Britain now looking likely, for example Newcastle, Leicestershire and the South West of England.<sup>(49)</sup>

Although, the organisations described in this section have contributed greatly to the development of Open Learning in Britain, other groups have played their part too.



One of these Groups is the WEA.<sup>[5]</sup> In 1907, it commenced in its role as intermediary between the universities and working class students.

The WEA is primarily involved in adult education, with local branches organising classes that are independent of the universities and LEA's. "Classes are intended to be self governing: tutor and students work out their programme together, modify it in the light of progress made and share in a joint discipline of study and discussion."<sup>(50)</sup>

The WEA is especially committed to providing classes and activities for those groups of people often overlooked by other providers of adult education, for example, hospital patients, prisoners, retired people and immigrants.

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[5] Founded in 1903, to organise and voice the educational claims of the working class.

Other people have promoted the concept of Open Learning by forming, 'learning exchanges'. These exchanges bring together people who want to learn a particular subject or skill and those who want to teach those subjects or skills. The cost of tuition depends entirely on what is agreeable to both the learner and the teacher.<sup>[6]</sup>

If no teacher is available, the exchange can help to bring together, into a group, those interested in a skill or subject, so that they can learn from each other and together.

Finally, the public library service has always encouraged learners to make full use of its resources in an independent and flexible manner.

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[6] One of the most ambitious learning exchanges was set up in 1971, in Ecanston, Chicago. It had 15,000 users and 2,000 topics that people either wanted to learn or teach. (51)

The development of Open Learning in Britain, has followed a variety of routes, as described in this section, mostly aided by government financed bodies or educational bodies registered as charities.

However, the most open of all learning - which owes nothing to any institution or government body and has been in existence since the creation of man - is that of the individual, learning by him or herself, from the resources available; this after all, was the manner in which the wheel was invented.

Presented in the next chapter, for those interested in turning the theory of Open Learning into reality, is a step-by-step guide to creating an Open Learning scheme.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### SETTING UP AN OPEN LEARNING SCHEME

## INTRODUCTION

Building on the theory of Open Learning presented in the preceding chapter, this chapter discusses the various management issues, which must be considered and resolved in order to develop a successful Open Learning scheme. The issues are discussed in turn and are presented, for ease of reference, in the order in which developers of Open Learning schemes will be most likely to be faced with them. A systematic approach to developing an Open Learning scheme, following each of the stages listed below and discussed in this chapter, will lead to the establishment of an efficient and successful, learner-centred Open Learning scheme.

Management issues discussed in Chapter Three:-

1. Preliminary Issues.
2. Structure of the Open Learning scheme.
3. Staffing.
4. Open Learning materials and Learning styles.
5. Learner Support.
6. Marketing & Publicity for Open Learning schemes.
7. Quality Control.

## SECTION ONE : PRELIMINARY ISSUES

The first essential issue to be dealt with is:

"Have the aims and objectives of the proposed learning scheme been thoroughly thought about, discussed and listed?"

If this is the case:

"Has the target audience of the scheme been identified?"

The Gloucestershire Open Learning Desk (GOLD) situated at Stroud Public Library, identified as one of their main target audiences, the small businesses that proliferate in the surrounding area and so concentrate the available resources on this group.

TABLE 1 : Subjects covered by GOLD (%)

<u>SUBJECTS</u>	<u>%</u>
Management	40
Finance/Accounting	15
Computing	10
Office Skills	5
Advertising/Marketing	4
Communications	4
Others	23 (1)

The next question to be asked is:

"Has research into real demand for the scheme been conducted?"

It would then be advisable to conduct, on a modest scale, a market research survey, to discover how the potential students on the scheme actually like to learn and what they want to learn. The age range, ability levels and geographical location of potential students should also be researched. In the light of the information provided by the market research, the following question can now be discussed:

"Is it considered appropriate to adopt an Open Learning approach to student learning or is another approach more appropriate?"

If Open Learning is considered to be suitable to the proposed scheme, the next major considerations to be addressed are those of financial and management commitment to Open Learning. Open Learning is not a cheap alternative to conventional teaching or training: to be presented adequately, a large initial outlay of capital is required, to purchase/develop Open Learning materials; purchase equipment; train delivery staff; establish a tutor network;

construct an Open Learning centre, if desired and to market the scheme. Day -to-day running costs and the continuing process of purchasing and updating materials must also be considered.

It is essential for senior management to be committed to Open Learning and thus ensure the provision of the necessary funds for the Open Learning scheme.

TABLE 2 : Initial Budget of GOLD

The Training Agency funded the project to a sum of £12,000 of which:

Open Learning Packages	£8,000
Equipment	£2,000
Printing/Publicity	£1,000
Staff Development	£500
Systems Development	£500

Gloucestershire County Library, Arts and Museums Department contributed £3,000, much of which was spent on staff development.

It is estimated that at least a sum of £3,000 a year is required to maintain the Open Learning scheme in Stroud Library.(2)

## SECTION TWO : STRUCTURE OF THE OPEN LEARNING SCHEME

Once the implementation of an Open Learning method has been decided upon, the structure of the scheme must be discussed. The following questions must be asked and resolved:

1. Is entry to the scheme open to all or are restrictions to be imposed? These restrictions may take the form of:
  - i) Only allowing those with certain educational qualifications to participate.
  - ii) Only allowing certain groups of pupils or employees to participate.
  - iii) Charges for enrolment and use of materials and equipment.

In the Open Learning Resource Centre, Central Library, Uxbridge, the charges for Open Learning courses are as follows:

1. A 3 month loan with a charge of £5.
2. A 2 week free loan to ascertain the suitability of the course. The course can then be renewed for 3 months with a £5 charge.

All the courses can be renewed for a further 3 months with an additional payment. Holders of a Hillingdon Leisure Concession card can borrow courses free of charge. Charging, does not cover the costs of the Resource Centre.<sup>(3)</sup>

- iv) The subject matter and availability of the courses offered.

In the Open Learning Resource Centre, Central Library, Uxbridge, only one course may be borrowed at a time. The subject matter provided is restricted (probably through financial constraints) to vocational courses:

- Setting up a Business
- IT
- Keyboard Skills
- Personnel Development
- Child Care
- Carers & Caring
- Book Keeping
- Running a Guest House
- Health & Safety
- Statistics

- Quality Assurance
- Employing Staff
- Management and Supervisory Skills.<sup>(4)</sup>

The brochure does encourage potential learners to ask for courses not supplied and which they wish to pursue.

2. If the scheme is in a school or college, or in a place of employment, is enrolment compulsory or voluntary?
3. Are the starting and completion dates of the courses offered, fixed or can learners join courses at any time and take as long as required to complete them?
4. If the scheme is in a place of employment, will study take place in the firm's time or in the employee's own time?
5. Is the scheme totally designed around Open Learning or are some conventional teaching methods, for example, lectures, to be utilized?



The course contents of Open Learning schemes are usually presented in a modular form, as this facilitates:

- i) Continuous learner entries.
- ii) The learner's control over his/her learning, i.e. the learner can choose which modules/units to study, when and in which order.

6. Does the scheme allow:

- i) Continuous entry?
- ii) Can the modules be studied in any order?
- iii) Can modules be missed out or substituted?
- iv) Can learners change direction at any point with ease?

7. Are the courses to be assessed or not?

If so, how?

By:

- i) Summative assessment? (i.e. assessment that is directed towards grades/certificates) or,
- ii) Formative assessment? (i.e. assessment that is intended only so the learner can chart his/her own progress).<sup>(5)</sup>

8. If qualifications are the aim of the scheme, are these already in existence or to be created?

9. Will the Open Learning scheme include an Open Learning Centre, open to all learners and containing materials and equipment?

If the answer to this question is Yes:

i) Has research into the position of the Centre been initiated? Open Learning Centres should be in prominent locations that are easy to find and accessible to everyone.

The Uxbridge Open Learning Resource Centre is situated at the Central Library, on level 3, opposite the Enquiry and Information Desk which is the principal information point within the library.(6)

ii) Has the layout and arrangement of resources been decided on? The Open Learning Resource Centre, Central Library, Uxbridge, forms a complete unit, with up to .....

"36ft of shelving in a flexible arrangement of display and standard shelving, leaflet and poster display. The Open Learning packages will be on open access at all times.... Equipment to enable learners to assess the materials will be available adjacent to the resource centre."(7)

iii) How open is access to the Centre to be in terms of opening hours?

iv) Will the Centre be staffed? If so :  
By professional or non-professional staff or both?

For how many hours?

10. Has the necessity of providing a tutorial support system for Open Learners been discussed?

(The importance of support for the learner is discussed in Section Five).

### SECTION THREE : STAFFING

To devise and plan an Open Learning scheme requires much time and effort on behalf of those staff involved; most of whom will not be working exclusively on this project<sup>[1]</sup>. The development stage of the scheme must be carefully scheduled and the amount of time staff can devote to it realistically calculated.

The up-and-running Open Learning Centre will (unless it has been decided against) require manning by the appropriate staff. Staff are needed to advise potential learners if asked; maintain the equipment and learning materials and refer learners to tutors/counsellors. (The role of tutor/counsellors is discussed in Section Five). Not all of these staff need to be professionals, but it is advisable to have the latter on call if needed.

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[1] The Open Learning Resource Centre, Central Library, Uxbridge: The Open Learning Project Team consisted of 5 professional staff, each committing a proportion of time to the project.(8)

In the Open Learning Resource Centre, Central Library, Uxbridge, professional librarians, who permanently man the Enquiry and Information Desk, are available to assist potential learners.<sup>(9)</sup>

### Staff Training

All staff involved in Open Learning will require some specialist training, none more so than those responsible for the development and management of an Open Learning Scheme.

In the Open Learning Resource Centre, Central Library, Uxbridge, "an Open Learning Support Group has been formed with the staff of the two other Open Learning Centres in Hillingdon, i.e. Uxbridge College and the Basic Skills Open Learning Centre, Adult Education. It is anticipated that training for the members of the Open Learning Project Team can be offered by experienced staff from the Uxbridge College Centre. The Project team is committed to meeting regularly for the purpose of becoming thoroughly familiar with the Open Learning concept, the associated materials and their use.

The Project team will visit and liaise with staff of the two local Open Learning Centres and will visit Open Learning Centres for guidance and advice. The Project Team will train other professional enquiry desk librarians in the background to Open Learning, the materials and their use. All staff in the Central Library will be kept informed of the project and its objectives. Staff training and development needs in relation to the project will be monitored throughout.

All library branch managers will be kept informed of the project so that they can promote the Open Learning Resource Centre effectively."<sup>(10)</sup>

For GOLD the staff training consists of two formal sessions. Most of the £3,000 contribution of the Gloucestershire County Library, Arts and Museums Department, was spent on staff development, as was £500 of the Training Agency grant.<sup>(11)</sup>

#### SECTION FOUR : OPEN LEARNING MATERIALS AND LEARNING STYLES.

Theoretically, virtually any material can be considered an Open Learning material; a cookery book or a newspaper can be used by an individual, in any way he or she chooses, to extract information and learn. In practice, Open Learning materials tend to take the form of structured packages. These packages can contain audio cassettes; video cassettes; computer discs or compact discs and are accompanied by a workbook, which guides the learner through the package. Packages designed to impart practical skills contain all of the necessary accompaniments, for example, screwdrivers, plugs, fuses, etc.

##### i) Obtaining Open Learning Materials

When establishing an Open Learning scheme, careful consideration needs to be applied to the issue of how the materials for the scheme will be developed. Will :

- a) Commercially produced packages, adapted if necessary, be purchased?
- b) Existing resources be used, adapted for Open Learning, through the production of written study guides?
- c) The materials be produced in-house?

The first of these options is the quickest and cheapest; the third option is the most time consuming and expensive.<sup>(12)</sup>

In attempting to create Open Learning materials in-house, the following problems may be encountered :

- a) Difficulty in recruiting good writers.
- b) Lengthy and expensive training for writers.
- c) Long delays in offering the scheme, while the package is put together.
- d) Stress, especially for project managers.
- e) Escalating expense.
- f) Waste of resources (in the sense that the Open Learning materials required may already be in existence).<sup>(13)</sup>

"Making resources is so time consuming that it can completely dominate the preparation phase (of an Open Learning Scheme). The results are often inadequately presented, poorly conceived, poorly designed and unattractively reproduced. Use home production only when other sources have failed to produce what is required."<sup>(14)</sup>

However, the advantage of this approach is that the package can be tailor-made to meet the exact needs of specific learners. As already mentioned, in some cases, no commercially produced package is available and in-house



production is the only course of action.

However, many commercial producers of Open Learning packages are able to customize packages to meet the specific needs of different organisations.

ii) Selecting Media

The media that are chosen to be included in an Open Learning scheme are of vital importance. The chosen media should be the ones that best complement the material to be learned. This will not necessarily be the newest and most technological form of media; often text-based packages are the most suitable means of presenting a topic. Media must be selected because they fulfil expressed needs not because they are the latest in technological development; although it may be the case, that the newest form of state-of-the-art technology is just what is required.

In reality, around 90% of Open Learning packages on the market are text-based.<sup>(15)</sup>

This trend is reflected in the media available in many Open Learning schemes. For example, GOLD lists its media as being:-

TABLE 3 :The Format of Materials Held by GOLD(%)

<u>Format</u>	<u>% held in GOLD</u>
Printed Text .....	Almost all packages contain some elements.
Audio Tape .....	Over Half.
Software .....	Below 20%.
Video Tape .....	About 10%. <sup>(16)</sup>

There is no scientific method of selecting media; but common sense is required. Most importantly, the selectors of Open Learning materials and their media, must be aware of the learning styles and preferences of their learners.

### iii) Learning Styles

Question :  
Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary,  
How can I help your mind grow?

Answer :  
Teach me awhile through my own learning style  
and I'll grasp all the things I should  
know!<sup>(17)</sup>

This little rhyme composed by Dr. Rita Dunn reveals the key to a successful Open Learning scheme. The media and the materials purchased must be those that match the individual learning styles of the learners.

Every human being is unique, we are none of us the same as each other. Thus it logically follows that our approach to learning the same information will also be unique. We all have different styles/approaches to learning; I do not have exactly the same learning style as you and you do not learn in exactly the same manner as I do.

The learning styles present in an Open Learning scheme are thus as varied as the learners in the scheme. However, certain generalised groupings of learning styles can be attempted :

a) Auditory Learning Style

Describes people who learn best by actually hearing information. These people will learn best through using audio-cassettes, listening to radio transmissions and attending lectures or discussion groups.

b) Visual Learning Style

Describes people who learn best by reading information or from observation. These people will learn best through using text materials, videos, television programmes, etc.

c) Tactile Learning Style

Describes people who require to be active whilst they listen to information, for example, by taking notes and when they read, by underlining or taking notes. These people learn best by being able to work at their own pace; to make notes or underline, when they feel it is relevant.

d) Kinesthetic Learning Style

Describes people who require to be active and physically and practically involved with whatever they are learning. These people learn best by actually 'doing'. For example, to learn a foreign language, they would learn best by using language tapes or talking to someone in the language to be learned, or in order to understand how an engine works they would need to dismantle it and find out for themselves how to reassemble the pieces.<sup>(18)</sup>

To grasp this concept of individual learning styles, one only has to perform a little experiment; analyse the way in which you yourself prefer to learn and then compare that to the way in which someone else you know likes to learn. The chances are that you will both like to learn in very different ways.

Individual learning styles can also be identified in terms of whether the learner has an 'holistic' or 'serialistic' approach to learning.

Holistic or Global Approach - learners need to understand the overall concept (global picture) before they can analyse and learn the parts.

Serialistic or Analytical Approach - learners need to learn each part of a topic sequentially until they reach the whole.

Rita and Kenneth Dunn have identified that learning styles are also affected by such factors/stimuli as :-

a) Environmental Elements

i.e. the amount of sound, light, temperature or design of learning environment which the learner prefers.

b) Emotional Elements

i.e. the motivation, persistence and responsibility displayed by the learner and the structure (organisation) of learning preferred.

c) Sociological Elements

i.e. whether the learner prefers learning with peers; alone; with an adult; in a pair; in a team or in a variety of combinations.

d) Physical Elements

i.e. which of his/her perceptions the learner prefers to use in learning; whether the learner likes to eat/drink while learning; which time of day the learner likes to study in and whether the learner needs to be mobile when learning.

e) Psychological Elements

i.e. whether the learner is an analytical or global learner; which hemisphere of the brain is used most in learning (the left hemisphere is important in analytic tasks; the right hemisphere in spatial tasks) and whether the learner is impulsive or reflective. (19)

If it is acknowledged that every learner has an individual learning style, it follows that when asking a learner to learn a topic, there must also be available a variety of media, all providing the same information, from which the learner can choose the medium/media he or she learns best from.

Open Learning schemes, where the learners can learn on an individual basis, at their own pace, with individual learning packages, provide the ideal setting for ensuring that learners are able to learn from the most appropriate media for them.

To ensure that learners are fully aware of what exactly their own learning style is - most people often only have a vague idea of how they like to learn; they perhaps might note that they cannot seem to remember much about lecture content and it only all seems to 'click' when they see a diagram or perform a practical exercise, but they have never analysed why this should be so - as part of the enrolment process, learners could be handed a questionnaire based on the above elements identified by Rita and Kenneth Dunn. Analysis of the results should point to the individual learner's unique learning style.

If providers of Open Learning schemes do not acknowledge individual learning styles to be a reality and media and resources are not provided accordingly, the full potential of many learners will not be reached.



For too long, learners have been struggling to learn using resources/media that they are not compatible with, only because these are the resources/media set by course designers. Open Learning schemes are ideally suited and can open the way for their learners to reach their full potential. It would be a great pity if Open Learning providers failed to seize this chance and in many ways, the true openness of the learning experience would have to be questioned.[2]

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[2] It is recognised by the author that due to the constraints on the amount of space available for the discussion of learning styles, this has led to a somewhat simplified picture of the essence of learning styles and their differences. For further reading, a bibliography of selected 'learning styles' literature has been prepared and is presented in Appendix A.

iv) Criteria For The Selection of Open Learning Materials.

"Distance learning packs are as much process as they are content. They aim to meet particular needs which require, not simply information, but motivation, work plans, assessments."(20)

This statement applies to all Open Learning materials, whether in package form or not. Thus Open Learning materials, because they aim to provide a complete learning experience to the learner, must be selected using different criteria to conventional materials.

The following criteria have been designed to use in the selection of Open Learning materials.[3]

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[3] These criteria incorporate some of the ideas put forward by Terry Hamilton in the Evaluation of Open Learning Materials worksheet presented at What's Happening in Education - Open Learning, L.A. Conference, 22nd May 1990 and Roger Lewis and Nigel Paine in How to find and adapt materials and select media (open learning guides; no.8), London: CET, 1986, 106-108.

Only criteria relating specifically to Open Learning materials are included; it is taken as read that criteria used to select conventional materials, such as quality of production, boldness of type, durability, etc., will be applied to Open Learning materials as a matter of course.

The criteria for the selection of Open Learning materials come under the following headings :

- The purpose and relevance of the package.
- The structure and content of the package.
- Assessment facilities.
- Package support.
- Self-development of the learner.

#### Purpose and Relevance of the Package

1. Is a clear outline of the aims of the package provided?
2. Is there a complete list of the equipment necessary to use the package?

3. Is the package at the right level for the intended learners, in terms of:

Language used?	
Style?	
The learners educational	
background & experience?	

4. Will the package require adaption?  
If so, is this realistic and possible?

Structure and Content of the Package

1. Is the structure of the package clear?  
For example, is it divided into modules/units?
2. Are clear instructions for working through the package provided for the learner?
3. Are other aids to the learner present?  
a) at the start of the section?

e.g: Links with previous material	
A list of objectives	
A list of equipment	
An overview with key concepts	

b) during each section?

e.g: Symbols for practical	
activity.	
Self-assessment exercises.	
Symbols for media.	
Type to be used.	

c) at the end of each section?

e.g: Summaries.	
Checklists	
Things to do next. <sup>(21)</sup>	

4. Do the text and media interact efficiently?
5. Is a time span allocated for the completion of each unit?  
Are they realistic?<sup>[4]</sup>
6. Does the package fulfil its stated aims?
7. Is information about further learning opportunities provided at the end of the package?

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[4] An unrealistic time span can cause discouragement when learners fail to meet it.

### Assessment Facilities

1. Is there provision for assessment?
2. Is there provision for tutor and self-assessment?

In the form of:

	Pre-tests?
	Post-tests?
	S.A.Q?
	T.A.Q?
	Practical Activities?
	Exercises? (22)

3. Are the types of assessment varied?

	e.g: Multiple Choice?
	Short Answer?
	Essays?
	Calculations?
	Practicals?(23)

4. Are assessments positioned appropriately?
5. Are assessments relevant to the content of the package?
6. Are answers provided?[5]

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[5] Answers are essential for feedback and therefore learner motivation.

### Package Support

1. Will the learner require extra support alongside the package?<sup>[6]</sup>

e.g: Tutorials
Pre-course counselling
In-course counselling
Peer-group meetings
Facilities for practical work
Examination facilities
Access to a Library. <sup>(24)</sup>

2. Are guidance notes provided for the tutor?

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[6] When purchasing packages, the extra support required by the learner, must be taken into consideration. Without this support, the learner will be less likely to achieve his or her true potential from the package.

### Self-Development of the Learner

1. Does the package actively involve the learner?
2. Is the package formative?  
i.e. encouraging confidence and independence.
3. Is the package demanding?  
i.e. encouraging the learner to use understanding and display a range of skills but also to acquire new knowledge.<sup>(25)</sup>

### v) Sources of Open Learning Materials.

Open Learning materials are now produced by a whole host of different organisations, some of the best-known being the NEC, the OU, the NCET and the Open College. Many Universities, Polytechnics, local FE Colleges and commercial bodies are also producers of Open Learning materials.

In order to assist those involved in Open Learning, to ascertain just what is available on the market, the Open Learning Directory and MARIS-NET have been created.



The Open Learning Directory<sup>(26)</sup>, first published by the Training Commission, for the session 1988-89, has taken over the role of the Open Tech Directory, which ceased publication in 1987. The Directory provides full details of the Open Learning packages available, together with information about related modules; costs; qualifications which may be gained and the locations where regional support and advice may be sought.

The typical layout listing the details of a package includes the following headings:

Course Title

- Description of Course
- Intended for
- Experience/Qualifications required
- Qualifications aimed at
- Materials supplied
- Other materials required
- Support provided
- Minimum time to complete
- Cost
- For more details

The Open Learning Directory also provides information on the location of Delivery Centres and Practical Training Facilities in Great Britain. The former provide advice on choosing Open Learning materials; supply Open Learning materials; advise potential learners; offer tutorial guidance to current learners and provide access to equipment, for example computers and video cassette players. The latter provide learners with access to the equipment needed for hands-on experience; advice is available on the spot.<sup>(27)</sup>

MARIS-NET - originally funded by the MSC, now a private limited company - provides national databases for Open Learning information, "covering practically every Open Learning package available in the U.K., training films and videos, private sector short courses, specialist organisations and individuals, and an Open Learning bibliography."<sup>(28)</sup>

MARIS Databases are, at present, as follows :-

- Open Learning Materials
- Management Training Opportunities
- Training Resource Materials
- Computer Based Training and Interactive Video
- Training films and Videos
- Short Courses
- Training Services
- Open Learning Bibliography
- National Open Learning Library (29)

The subscription rate to MARIS-NET costs £125 a year. (30)

NERIS (National Educational Resources Information Service) and ECCTIS (Educational Credit Transfer and Counselling Information Service) are both databases which may be useful sources of some Open Learning materials. The former provides information about primary and secondary school teaching and learning materials and the latter, has over 53,000 records of courses in Further and Higher Education. (The latter is run at the OU).(31)

It may also be useful to look at the resources already present in an institution or organisation, to ascertain whether they could be adapted to serve in an Open Learning scheme.

vi) Cataloguing Open Learning Materials.

Open Learning packages are not the same as monographs or audio cassettes and hence, "it is not reasonable to assume that they could be catalogued..... as part of the conventional library service."<sup>(32)</sup> This statement holds true for Open Learning materials held not only in libraries, but also for any place where Open Learning materials are housed.

A catalogue of Open Learning materials needs to record, not only the author, title, date of publication, publisher and ISBN of the material, but also and more importantly, there must be entries for:

- The purpose of the package
- The level of the package
- The time taken to complete the package

- Qualifications aimed at
- The contents of the package
- The medium of the package
- The equipment needed to use the package
- The support needed/availability of support, to use the package
- The size of the package, i.e. is it easily portable
- The cost of the package
- The quality of the package

When using MARIS-NET, enquirers can search under the following entries:

- |                    |                 |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| - By Title         | - By Occupation |
| - By Subject       | - By Study Time |
| - By Content       | - By Media      |
| - By Target Group  | - By Author     |
| - By Key Skill     | - By Cost (33)  |
| - By Subject Level |                 |
| - By Qualification |                 |

Information concerning the availability of tutorial support or the qualifications aimed at, as well as the media used, can change rapidly; it is thus of great importance to update an Open Learning catalogue on a regular basis.

Any catalogue of Open Learning materials which does not provide the entries listed above and is not regularly updated, fails in its duty, to provide the enquirer with the information necessary to make an informed selection of Open Learning materials.

## SECTION FIVE : LEARNER SUPPORT

Although Open Learning packages are designed to be complete learning experiences and lead the learner through their content with instructions and suggestions, in many cases the presence of tutorial support will add and is necessary to the learner's learning process. "Local tutor support for the student, available on tap, will be a vital element and must be built into courses." (34)

Developers of Open Learning schemes need to recruit suitable tutor-counsellors into an Open Learning tutor network or be sure of being able to refer learners to an already established and compatible network.

Tutors may be required to provide any of the following :-

- Pre-entry counselling
- Tutorial support
- Exit counselling
- Help in organising peer-group meetings
- Occasional lectures/workshops

At GOLD, library staff will advise on :-

- The best way to use the available Open Learning materials
- How to get back into the studying mood
- Making contact with other learners
- Where else to go for training. (35)

The library staff cannot offer tutorial support or counselling and so refer learners to local colleges and agencies, such as Stroud College, Careers Guidance, and the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester.(36)

The relationship with local colleges was established in a rather hasty manner and at first was not particularly satisfactory. However, the situation has improved and a County Open Learning network (COLN) has been established to further improve matters.(37)

In the Open Learning Resource Centre (Central Library, Uxbridge), learners seeking tutorial support will be referred to the Open Learning staff at Uxbridge College for arrangements to be made to suit individual circumstances.



Staff at Uxbridge College have been consulted and are keen to co-operate.<sup>(38)</sup>

The Centre also offers support to learners in the following ways :-

- a) By making available the Clywd User Education Pack, modified as necessary for use in a computerised, categorised library system.
- b) The project members will arrange 'Open Sessions' for learners on a regular basis, where they will be available to offer help and advice.
- c) The Open Learning Resource Centre will also act as a referral point for those learners whose needs could be better met by the service offered by the Open Learning Unit, Uxbridge College, or by the Basic Skills Open Learning Unit at Pinkwell Adult Education Centre. The Open Learning Resource Centre will also hold information on local training and education initiatives such as TRACS and HELP.<sup>(39)</sup>

Perhaps in the future, in public library Open Learning schemes, it may be possible to bring the tutor into the library rather than sending the learner to the local college, thus further increasing the openness of the scheme.

It should also be remembered that making use of a tutorial support service should be voluntary; it is very much the personal decision of the learner, as to when or whether he or she consults a tutor.

Also essential to the efficient running of an Open Learning scheme is the existence of good administration support and procedures that can cope with the flexibility required within the scheme and by learners.

SECTION SIX : MARKETING AND PUBLICITY FOR OPEN  
LEARNING SCHEMES.

To market an Open Learning scheme successfully, the target audience must be clearly defined. It is anticipated that this definition will have been one of the issues researched and established during the preliminary discussions concerning the proposed Open Learning scheme.

Once the target audience is defined and the fees (if charges are to be implemented) decided on, a promotional strategy should be devised. Using the research data collected on the potential learners and purchasers of the scheme, a decision as to the best means of reaching these groups can be made, i.e. whether to advertise on television, or on the radio, or in newspapers; where to place posters and promotional leaflets; whether to present talks about the scheme, in person, to groups or on the television or radio; whether to visit people on an individual basis; whether to produce a promotional video or glossy brochure, etc.

The relevance and effectiveness of each method needs to be considered in the context of the proposed scheme.

Obviously, the agreed budget for the marketing process will define the choices available, to a large extent.

It may be that after discussion, it is felt that no member of the scheme's development team has the necessary skills to undertake the marketing process. In such a case, an outside consultancy should be brought in.

R. Lewis and N. Paine in 'How to Develop and Manage an Open Learning Scheme' Open Learning Guide 5, CET, 1985, suggest that the following issues also be carefully considered:

- a) Set marketing objectives, for example, to recruit 200 learners. This will help in measuring progress.
- b) Time publicity appropriately, plan to advertise a few months before the launch.
- c) Plan follow-up, marketing should be a continuous process and there should always be a follow-up
- d) Deal with enquiries, make sure there are sufficient facilities to deal with enquiries.

- e) Monitor results, the effective initiatives will then be apparent.
- f) Keep records, records of the enquiries received will help in the slanting of the next promotional campaign,<sup>(40)</sup> as will records of the groups the scheme actually serves :
- Staff at GOLD have conducted research, albeit fairly sketchy in nature, as to who the scheme lends to. The results are as follows :

TABLE 4 : Groups who borrow from GOLD.

- Small Businesses
- Regular users of the Library
- Women returning to the workforce
- Mature Students
- Some High School Students. <sup>(41)</sup>

The Central Library, Uxbridge, planned the promotional campaign for their Open Learning Resource Centre as follows :-

**First Phase:**

"An advance information leaflet with a contact telephone number for those requiring further information.

Closer to the launch, there will be a press release and posters and leaflets will be published, describing Open Learning, the range of materials, how to borrow, etc.

The Project launch will take place mid-October. This will be in the form of an open evening for selected representatives of local groups and agencies active in education and training, local firms and volunteer groups."

**Second Phase:**

"Planned for January 1990, there will be a feature article in the local press, plus a second poster and leaflet campaign highlighting specific subject areas of Open Learning materials, accompanied by a programme of talks and visits by the project team and the user relations team to targeted local groups.

Information about the Open Learning Resource Centre will be available in all libraries in Hillingdon. The Open Learning materials will be added to the on-line catalogue which is accessible to all library users, to students at the Further Education College and in Adult Education Centres."<sup>(42)</sup>

The promotional leaflets for the Open Learning Resource Centre, Central Library, Uxbridge and GOLD are presented in Appendix B.

## SECTION SEVEN : QUALITY CONTROL.

Quality control or monitoring the effectiveness of a scheme is not a new concept; however the field of Open Learning is so new that it is not until very recently that codes of practice have been laid down. It was the lack of formal standards of quality in Open Learning that caused the MSC (now The Training Commission) to voice the fear that,

"It is not easy for users to tell the difference between the experienced and competent providers of Open Learning and those whose enthusiasm outruns their competence and whose ignorant or exploitive approach to Open Learning might bring the whole idea into disrepute."<sup>(43)</sup>

The above situation has now been rectified and two codes of practice for the providers of Open Learning schemes and materials now exist :-

1. The MSC code of practice for Open Learning is to be found in Section B of Ensuring Quality in Open Learning : A Handbook for Action. MSC 1987<sup>(44)</sup>
2. The National Open Learning Association have also drawn up a code of practice.<sup>(45)</sup>



Continuously monitoring an established Open Learning scheme will ensure that visible data exists. This data can then be used :

- to check that the objectives of the scheme are being met. If they are not, modifications can be instituted.
- to ensure that high standards of delivery are maintained.
- to monitor the ever changing demands of the learners.

To ensure that high standards of Open Learning delivery are provided nationwide, the Certificate in Open Learning Delivery (COLD) has been established.

COLD is a competence based qualification awarded by City and Guilds, the Royal Society of Arts Examinations Board and SCOTVEC. It provides certificates or statements of credit for people in open and flexible learning who can show their skills or competence in practical working situations in the following areas :

- \* Management
- \* Marketing
- \* Administration
- \* Counselling
- \* Tutoring and Assessment.

Assessment methods concentrate on :

- \* Observation of the candidate's performance on the job.
- \* Projects or case studies from the candidate's working situation.
- \* An interview to explore the candidate's background knowledge and skills.[7] (46)

To further ensure high standards of delivery the Learning Systems Unit of SCET (Scottish Council for Educational Technology) has developed a database which charts how well one hundred staff development/training materials cover areas of competence laid down in the Training Agency's publication 'An Interim Framework for Standards of Performance for Open Learning Staff.'

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[7] Further information on COLD can be obtained from Julie Carragher, The Open College, 3rd Floor, St James's Buildings, Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 6FQ. (Tel: 061-228-6415).

To control the efficiency and effectiveness of their scheme, the staff at GOLD monitored the use of the Open Learning packages provided:

TABLE 5 : The use of Open Learning packages at

GOLD

Use after three months.

Packs in stock .....	95
No. on shelf on last day .....	54
(at one stage only .....	40)
Issues .....	163
Referral to other agencies .....	157 (47)

The staff at the Open Learning Resource Centre, Central Library, Uxbridge, pursue the following procedure to ensure quality of delivery:

"The Training Agency monthly report form on the Open Learning Project will be completed and submitted regularly.

The use of individual packs will be monitored through information provided by the computer system. A monthly print-out will indicate which packs are on loan at any one time.

Users' satisfaction with individual learning packs and their experience of the Open Learning process will be assessed through questionnaires and through staff monitoring of the service.

The project team will meet regularly to review progress, monitor demand and where necessary make adjustments to the implementation of the project."(48)

If an Open Learning scheme is not monitored (monitoring must be continuous to be really effective and sensitive to changing demands), it may drift and lose sight of its objectives. Even worse, it will no longer be responsive to changing trends and may cease to meet the needs of the very learners it is there to serve.

## CONCLUSION

The thorough consideration of each of the management issues discussed in this chapter, should lead to the development of an Open Learning scheme which successfully and efficiently provides for a truly Open Learning experience for its learners.

In conclusion, to ensure that the correct decisions have been made concerning each issue, it is often advisable to pilot the new scheme. If developers decide that this is a necessary stage, the following recommendations are put forward by R. Lewis and N. Paine, for discussion and implementation :-

- Have you identified your pilot group of learners? Do they form a reasonable sample of the target group?
- Have you briefed the learners?
- Have you planned a realistic time-scale?
- Have you decided :
  - What data you need to collect?
  - How you will collect the data?
  - Who will interpret the data?
- Have you allowed time to make any modifications to your scheme in the light of comments from the pilot?(49)

In the following chapter, as a complement to the advice on creating a successful Open Learning scheme given in this chapter, an assessment has been carried out as to the true openness of two existing Open Learning schemes.

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## CHAPTER IV

### CRITERIA FOR TRUE OPENNESS IN OPEN LEARNING SCHEMES

Following on from the advice given, in the previous chapter, as to how to create an Open Learning scheme, this chapter analyses two existing Open Learning schemes, in order to assess their true openness.

The fundamental aims of Open Learning schemes are stated and criteria relating to these aims have been produced and are applied to two case-study Open Learning schemes, as mentioned above, in order to assess the extent to which the latter fulfil the aims of Open Learning schemes. The case-study Open Learning schemes have been chosen from the public sector - GOLD and the field of community education - the Strathclyde Open Learning Experiment (SOLE).

Not all Open Learning schemes can claim to be great successes or to have reached their true potential and this aspect of Open Learning, is examined in the last part of the chapter, using the experience of IBM UK Limited, Havant Plant and its Distance Learning Centre.

## FUNDAMENTAL AIMS OF OPEN LEARNING SCHEMES

The two fundamental aims of Open Learning schemes are :-

- 1). Open Access (i.e. to break down the barriers to learning, whatever form they may take, for example, geographical, social, financial, etc.)
- 2). The learning experience must be learner-centred; resources and learner support must complement and reinforce this aim.

The latter aim attempts to ensure that control of all aspects of a learner's learning are placed into his or her own hands and that the learner takes responsibility for the learning process.

The criteria for open access are applied to GOLD and those for a learner-centred learning experience are applied to SOLE.

## CRITERIA FOR OPEN ACCESS

### A). Open Access to Open Learning Courses

There should be :-

1. No unnecessary entry requirements.
2. Continuous enrolment facilities.
3. A reduction of financial barriers as far as is realistic, (i.e. fees, cost of materials, etc). Grants should be made available as far as possible.

B). Open Access once enrolled on an Open Learning Scheme

The learner should be able to :-

1. Study at home, in an Open Learning centre or both.
2. Use the centre at anytime, for however long and as often as needed.
3. Take as long as required to complete a course.
4. Attendance at timetabled events should be voluntary, for example, lectures.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE OPEN LEARNING DESK (GOLD), STROUD LIBRARY.

GOLD is at present a pilot project funded by the Training Agency. Its aim is to provide the general public with the opportunity to borrow Open Learning packages straight from the public library. It is a fact that many potential learners do not want or are afraid to approach colleges or other institutions for enrolment on Open Learning courses. These people and other public library users, who perhaps may not yet be aware of the concept of Open Learning, can benefit from public library provision of Open Learning materials.

However, it must be remembered that many people find public libraries, just as off-putting as formal educational institutions and that methods of providing Open Learning to these groups must not be neglected. (The Library Association Policy Statement on Open Learning and other public library ventures into Open Learning are included in Appendix C).

Many of the features of GOLD have already been highlighted in Chapter III. However, a brief resume is provided, in order to 'set the scene', for the ensuing application of the criteria for open access to GOLD.

As well as those groups already mentioned, GOLD identified a large market for its Open Learning packages amongst the community of small businesses, that exist in and around Stroud.

Open Learning packages are offered in the following topics and suggestions by the public for others are welcomed :



- How to Study
- Basic Skills
- Languages
- Computing
- Word Processing
- Accounts
- Catering & Tourism
- Horticulture
- Child Care
- Cooking
- Car Maintenance
- Management
- Communication
- Office Skills
- Marketing
- Small Business Administration (1)

The topics offered reflect the demand by small businesses for Open Learning packages.

GOLD's Open Learning packages exists in a variety of formats :

- Videos
- Audio Tapes
- Computer-based Materials
- Workbooks
- Books and Periodicals (2)

These can be studied in the library, using the equipment provided or taken home.

GOLD does not provide teaching or tutorial support but refers learners to those local colleges which can provide these services. This referral mechanism has been greatly improved with the creation of the County Open Learning Network (COLN), in Gloucestershire.

#### DOES GOLD FULFIL THE CRITERIA FOR OPEN ACCESS?

##### SUMMARY

The results of the application of the criteria for open access to GOLD are recorded in Table 6. GOLD completely satisfies all of the criteria, although the restrictions to access imposed by Stroud Library's opening hours, does limit to some extent the true openness of the scheme. However, in general, GOLD fulfils the aim of Open Learning schemes to provide open access to all.

Gold also satisfies the criteria for the other fundamental aim of Open Learning schemes; that of providing a learner-centred learning experience :

- Learners are free to choose any course they wish, subject to the package being available and use/study this package in any way they desire.

TABLE 6 : CRITERIA FOR OPEN ACCESS APPLIED TO GOLD

CRITERIA FOR OPEN ACCESS	DOES GOLD FULFIL THE CRITERIA?	HOW DOES GOLD FULFIL THE CRITERIA?
<p>No Unnecessary entry requirements :-</p> <p>i) No educational requirements  ii) No age limits  iii) No geographical restrictions  iv) No employment requirements  v) No gender, class or racial barriers.</p> <p>Continuous enrolment facilities should be in operation.</p> <p>Financial barriers should be reduced as far as is realistic.</p> <p>Once enrolled on an Open Learning Scheme the learner should be able to :-</p> <p>i) Study at home, in an Open Learning centre, or both.</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>	<p>Everyone is entitled to enter and use the public library facilities and membership is open to all. Even temporary visitors in an area can have a temporary ticket and borrow items. However, only those learners residing within a reasonable distance of Stroud Library would be able to borrow/renew Open Learning packages on a regular basis or use Library equipment.</p> <p>Learners can borrow Open Learning packages at any time during Stroud Library's opening hours.</p> <p>At the moment, no charges are made for the loan of the Open Learning packages or use of library equipment.</p> <p>Open Learning packages can be used in the library, on specially purchased equipment or borrowed and used at home.</p>

CRITERIA FOR OPEN ACCESS	DOES GOLD FULFIL THE CRITERIA?	HOW DOES GOLD FULFIL THE CRITERIA?
<p>ii) Use the centre at anytime for however long and as often as needed.</p> <p>iii) Take as long as required to complete a course.</p> <p>Attendance at timetabled events should be voluntary.</p>	<p>YES AND NO</p> <p>YES</p> <p>---</p>	<p>Learners can use the library for as long and as often as it is open. The library's business hours limit the openness of the scheme in this respect.</p> <p>Learners can renew packs as often as required.</p> <p>Stroud Library does not provide teaching support but refers learners to local colleges, where this support is available if required.</p>

- The Open Learning packages provided are available in a variety of media formats; thus individual learning styles have to some extent been accounted for.
- Tutorial/teacher support is available but it is not compulsory.
- Learners have complete control over any further courses of study.

In conclusion, GOLD provides a quality Open Learning scheme; with truly open access to a learner-centred learning experience.

#### CRITERIA FOR A LEARNER-CENTRED LEARNING EXPERIENCE

- 1). The course should reflect the goals of the learner, not the institution.
- 2). The past experience (not only educational experience and qualifications) of the learner should be taken into account.
- 3) The learner should be able to :
  - i) Construct his or her own course of study.
  - ii) Choose whether, how often and in what form assessment should occur.
  - iii) Choose whether to use the available tutorial support, how often and where to access this support.

- 4). Specially designed Open Learning packages (or adapted materials with study guides) should be provided.

N.B. Open Learning schemes can exist without such resources but they are the normal mode of provision.

- 5). Open Learning materials should be produced in a range of media to suit the learner's individual learning style. Ideally, each topic offered in a course, should be available in as many media formats as possible, to ensure the majority of learning styles are covered.
- 6). The learner should be able to exercise control over any further learning experiences.

#### STRATHCLYDE OPEN LEARNING EXPERIMENT<sup>(3)</sup>

##### CASE HISTORY

The region of Strathclyde, which includes Glasgow, has been described as suffering from "multiple social deprivation."<sup>(4)</sup> Poverty, illiteracy, poor health, unemployment and broken families are rife in this area. A policy of investing resources in the areas of greatest social need was created by Strathclyde Regional Council, in the mid 1970's; some of these areas were designated APT's (Areas of Priority Treatment).

Attitudes towards adult education in the APT's was predictable; no one was really interested or knew what subjects were available or had the time and money, to be interested, and take up was low. Many had unpleasant memories associated with learning; these memories were of "school-days, of authoritarian officials, immutable timetables, externally-imposed rules, of rigidly traditional curricula, and of 'failure'".<sup>(5)</sup>

However, in some APT's, interest in continuing education was being shown by small groups of young women. They had been involved in Open Learning, using OU Community Education packs. It was out of the interest generated in these areas, that in 1981, SOLE was established. SOLE is a partnership between the local authority and the OU which seeks to encourage continuing education, improve learner support systems and develop flexible use of material to suit individual needs.<sup>(6)</sup>

SOLE has been an enormous success, with almost 8,000 people in the APT's having studied at least one of the courses.<sup>(7)</sup>

Its success is in the great part due to its Open Learning approach. SOLE has recognised that "unless the realities of adult life - the values, responsibilities, the anxieties and the potential - become and remain the pivot of a genuinely new approach, the barriers would remain unbreached. Outreach needed to take account of adult autonomy, to allow a measure of control to the learners, to deprofessionalise and de-mystify - that is to go some way along the road towards 'de-schooling'.<sup>(8)</sup> The adults in the APT's needed to be given control over their learning experiences and the latter needed to become learner-centred; subjects, style of materials and tutor support need to be relevant to the individual. It was the recognition of this, by the organisers of SOLE, that has led to its huge success.

The courses offered by SOLE are of personal interest to the women in the APT's, (and it is mainly women who have become involved in SOLE, men seem interested, "Only where some form of professional training might be enhanced")<sup>(9)</sup>

and cover such topics as child health care, hygiene, work choices and consumer rights.



The OU Community Education packs, not only present topics that are of personal concern, they are also designed in an attractive and interactive manner.

"In layout and design, the books resembled the familiar commercial magazines rather than textbooks, and were complemented by updateable leaflets and fact sheets to which learners could add their own..... and the style based on a reading age of 12 and constantly invoking an active response to quizzes, attitude probes and suggestions for home activities, seemed to be removing one of the main barriers to adult learning - the memory of school learning as a passive process."<sup>(10)</sup>

Resources are available in a range of media to complement individual learning styles.

Students can choose :

- Which Course to study.
- Which parts of the pack to select/reject.
- Whether to be assessed or not.

Students, who successfully complete courses, are presented with a Certificate, bearing the logos of the OU and the Local Authority.

"It is highly prized by the students, many of whom receive it as their first ever paper confirmation of educational success."<sup>(11)</sup>

Support is available to students in the form of study groups. These groups meet when and where the students themselves decide, to discuss issues that come up in the packs and to receive specific assistance if required.

Group Leaders are mostly drawn from the ranks of Local Authority Adult or Community Education staff, although there are a small number of voluntary workers.

Students are not charged for courses, which are funded by the Local Authority, with supplementary support from such bodies as the Open University and the Scottish Health Education Group.

Some of the women go on to find employment after taking part in SOLE, but for the majority of the women, SOLE has performed a more important role; it had aided them in their own self-development and given them self-confidence and a sense of personal satisfaction.

#### DOES SOLE FULFIL THE CRITERIA FOR A LEARNER-CENTRED LEARNING EXPERIENCE?

##### SUMMARY

The results of the application of the criteria for a learner-centred learning experience are recorded in Table 7. SOLE fulfils these criteria and offers a good example of an Open Learning scheme that has succeeded in achieving the provision of a learner-centred learning experience.

TABLE 7 : CRITERIA FOR A LEARNER-CENTRED LEARNING EXPERIENCE APPLIED TO SOLE.

CRITERIA FOR A LEARNER-CENTRED LEARNING EXPERIENCE	DOES SOLE FULFIL THE CRITERIA?	HOW DOES SOLE FULFIL THE CRITERIA?
The course should reflect the goals of the learner.	YES	The topics covered are of close personal concern to students, e.g. child health care. However, subjects attractive to men are not really available.
The past experience of the learner should be taken into account.	YES	The personal experience, attitudes and values of students are used to illustrate parts of the course and as the basis for discussion in the Study Groups.
The learner should be able to :-		
i) Construct his or her own course of study.	YES	Students can choose any course available and select/reject any parts of the course. Students can also add their own information into the pack.
ii) Choose whether, how often and in what form assessment should occur.	YES	Assessment is optional. Students actually changed the format of assessment, by demanding harder tests assessed by Computer Marked Assignments.
iii) Choose whether to use the available tutorial support, how often and where to access this support.	YES	Students can choose whether to attend study groups and which one to join. Students determine how often groups meet and where they will be held.

CRITERIA FOR A LEARNER-CENTRED LEARNING EXPERIENCE	DOES SOLE FULFIL THE CRITERIA?	HOW DOES SOLE FULFIL THE CRITERIA?
Specially designed Open Learning packages (or adapted materials with study guides) should be provided.	YES	Learners use OU Community Education packs which are interactive, stimulating, containing practical activities as well as text-based ones and are written in a style which learners can relate to.
Open Learning materials should be available in a range of media to suit the learner's individual learning style.	YES	Materials are available in the format of text, video and audio cassette.
The learner should be able to exercise control over any further learning experiences.	YES	Learners have complete choice over further learning experiences. Many go on to study other OU Community Education packs.

However, the subject matter offered has not proved attractive to the males in the APT's - males constitute only 2% or so of SOLE participants.<sup>(12)</sup> The lack of suitable courses for males who wish to participate prevents the scheme from being truly open. To correct this situation, the organisers of SOLE have developed new objectives and hope to provide suitable courses.

SOLE not only offers a learner-centred learning experience, it also satisfies the other aim of Open Learning schemes, that of open access:

- There are no unnecessary entrance requirements.
- Continuous enrolment exists.
- There are no financial barriers.
- Learners can study where and when they choose and take as long as needed to complete courses.

SOLE has succeeded in engaging and keeping the interest of the adults in the APT's, providing them with high quality learning, using an Open Learning approach. The success of SOLE is due in great part to the fact that its organisers have recognised that Open Learning is "an activity which fosters personal development by emphasising the worth of the individual and the capacity to learn in adult life."<sup>(13)</sup>

The success of GOLD and SOLE and the Open Learning Resource Centre, (Central Library, Uxbridge), illustrate that Open Learning is a realistic and effective means of adult learning and self-development. The basic aims of Open Learning - freedom to study at the learner's own pace, at any time and wherever is convenient - and the philosophy of placing control of the learning process into the hands of the learner, in order to ensure a learner-centred learning experience, have been enthusiastically embraced in the above schemes, by providers and learners alike.

However, Open Learning schemes are not always as successful as those mentioned above. The following case study serves to illustrate this point.

CASE STUDY - IBM UK LIMITED, Havant Plant.

Havant Plant is one of IBM's main UK manufacturing bases. During the last 4-5 years, there has been a growing commitment to Open Learning (distance learning is the term used in IBM) practices within the Company. Havant Plant has a Distance Learning Centre and courses are offered to all employees.

The Distance Learning Centre is open 24 hours a day, but is unstaffed. (There are plans to move the centre to the library, so it would be staffed at least between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.) It consists of 8 private study booths and contains :

- Computers; IBM PS-2's  
PC's
- A Video Disc Player
- Televisions
- Audio-Cassette Recorders.

Employees are free to drop into the centre at any time and book materials out.

The materials themselves, are a mixture of internally produced Open Learning packages and OU packages. Some of the packages are complemented by tutorial support or courses but the majority leave learners to their own devices. The majority of the packages are presented in the format of computer software, audio cassettes and videos.

IBM does not regard Open Learning as the only means of training its employees nor does it regard Open Learning as a means of cutting training costs, and conventional training methods continue to constitute the basis of the Company's Training Policy.

However, at the onset, Open Learning was considered to be a great step forward in training and self-development.

The skills required by Havant Plant in its employees are mainly in the areas of:

- Engineering
- Manufacturing
- Software
- Management

Hence, the majority of the Open Learning packages provided are in these areas. The only 'recreational' packages provided are in the areas of health care and fitness; these issues are also essentially related to the Company's performance.

If the course an employee wishes to pursue is directly related to his or her job or will produce skills that IBM Havant Plant requires, the full cost of the course will be met by the Company and the employee will be able to study partly in Company time and partly in his or her own time. It is felt that courses which require a commitment to study in a least part of the employee's own time are more likely to be completed by the employee.



If the course is not directly related to the employee's job, then negotiation will occur as to how much of the Company's time, the employee can use to study in.

The last 3-4 years, have seen a steady increase in the demand by employees for OU courses and a small percentage of employees are currently studying for MBA's and technology-based MSc's.

However, in general the response to Open Learning by employees has been poor. The overriding reason given for this state of affairs, is the quality of the materials that are available in the Distance Learning Centre. It is felt that the Open Learning packages which are available in the subject areas that Havant Plant requires, are of poor quality and do not relate sufficiently to the skills needed. In fact, the materials are felt to be 'very boring' and that employees have to be very self-motivated, in order to contemplate using the Centre.

The Distance Learning Centre at Havant Plant, is very much in a "Catch-22" situation at the moment: the materials are of a low standard and so consequently demand for them is low. But materials of a higher standard and of greater variety will not be provided unless demand for Open Learning by employees increases. Thus Open Learning, at Havant Plant, is considered not to have fulfilled the potential it was thought possible when it was first implemented three or four years ago.

The Open Learning scheme at IBM UK Limited, Havant Plant, fulfils many of the criteria for the provision of quality Open Learning, in terms of open access and creating a learner-centred learning experience, but the provision of materials that are not relevant to the goals of the learner, are of poor quality and are not attractive to use, has prevented the scheme from achieving its full potential.

Perhaps a solution to this problem, would be to commission a commercial producer of Open Learning packages to design packages, which are tailor-made for the specific needs of IBM employees.

Alternatively, IBM could establish a design team to produce such materials in-house. (The advantages and pitfalls of this approach have been discussed in Chapter III, in the Section entitled "Obtaining Open Learning Materials.")

### CONCLUSION

Quality provision of Open Learning can be achieved, if the criteria for open access and a learner-centred learning experience, outlined in this chapter, are met as far as it is possible. Freedom of access and the needs of the learner are of paramount importance; careful consideration as to the correct type of materials and support to meet those needs, is required.

In the next chapter, the changing trends in the client pattern of Open Learning are examined, with particular attention being paid to the fear that the criteria for truly Open Learning (established in this chapter), may be being, in some cases, disregarded.

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## CHAPTER V

### OPEN LEARNING: A CHANGE OF DIRECTION?

"The term Open Learning brings a hope that the learning involved will be that appropriate to an open society in which all persons have the ability to choose - from a wide range of options - those courses of action which appear to them to be the most appropriate. However, it is questionable whether or not Open Learning systems promote an openness in learning situations or seek to promote the learners' ability to choose and develop."<sup>(1)</sup>

It is the above issue, with particular reference to the question of whether the criteria for open access and a learner-centred learning experience (established in Chapter IV) are being disregarded in many Open Learning schemes, that is discussed in this chapter.

Originally, Open Learning was envisaged as a means of providing a satisfying educational experience for those groups of people, who it was felt had been passed by or failed by the traditional structure, for example, the unemployed, women at home, the disabled and those lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills.

However, the funding for Open Learning schemes available for these groups has always been relatively scarce and the cost of Open Learning courses or the purchase of Open Learning packages, which are often very expensive, can thus be prohibitive to the very groups that Open Learning, ostensibly, set out to serve.

During the last few years, Open Learning appears to have changed its course of direction, with the industrial and commercial sectors becoming the new 'clients', for the providers of Open Learning resources.

It is probable that low take-up of Open Learning courses, amongst many educational establishments and the public generally (where funding is scarce), and thus consequently, the low demand for Open Learning materials, has led commercial producers of Open Learning materials to create new markets; one such area 'ripe' for exploitation was that of the industrial and commercial sectors.

To these sectors, Open Learning was promoted as an efficient method of staff training, which had the added benefits of substantially reducing the unit cost of training and by allowing training to occur in situ, reducing the disruption caused to normal working patterns.

The MSC undertook the funding of many pilot projects within companies, via their Open Tech programme, to convince management that Open Learning could satisfy their training requirements.



Companies involved in these initial projects include Austin Rover, ICI and Lucas Industries. The MSC (or The Training Commission as it is now known), is still active in this field and considers one of its future objectives to be the identification of

"the best ways of getting the Open Learning message across to all levels of management and to employees."(2)

The Open College, which at the outset proclaimed its intention to be "a college for everyone,"(3) now had the majority of its clients in the industrial and commercial sectors and has developed a Corporate Service Group, to foster and nurture, potential and existing purchasers of its Open Learning materials and services.

The Corporate Services Group is able to offer the following services to clients :-

- Producing customised learning materials that suit company requirements;
- Delivering support, including tuition and counselling, direct to trainees;

- Consultancy in setting up in-house or in-company centres;
- Training staff responsible for developing and delivering Open Learning within a particular organisation.<sup>(4)</sup>

The predominant factor underlying the inability of The Open College to fulfil its pledge to provide education to all sectors of society, was the necessity of the College to become self-financing, within 3 years of its inception. Individuals and many educational establishments found the cost of courses prohibitively high, but the high prices were necessary, in order for the College to generate sufficient income to become self-financing. Thus, it is more out of necessity than choice, that the Open College looks to the industrial and commercial sectors, for the majority of its clients.

Pilot projects and established Open Learning schemes within the industrial and commercial sectors, have validated the claim that Open Learning is an efficient and effective training tool. What is more, managers are delighted that in many cases, training costs have been reduced.

Management has also realised that Open Learning, if presented to employees in a conducive manner, can form part of a management strategy, to encourage employee involvement in company life. Successful Open Learning schemes, can make employees more aware of the aims of the company and feel that management acknowledges their contribution to these aims. Open Learning schemes in industry and commerce, as elsewhere, contain the potential to promote learner self-confidence and self-development; characteristics which can only be of benefit to a company.

It was not only the producers of Open Learning resources, who foresaw the potential of Open Learning methods in the industrial and commercial sectors; the concept of Open Learning as a means of 'saving' the national economy has also become widespread.

Lord Gregson, a member of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, stated that,

"since the UK is not rich in physical resources other than energy in the short term, our ability to compete in the World markets with our goods and services is entirely dependent on adding value to the materials and resources which we import from abroad. This means that we must rely primarily on the quality of our human resources - their skill, their enterprise, and their versatility. In other words, technical knowledge and the intellectual capability to apply it."<sup>(5)</sup>

In order to equip the nation's workforce with the necessary skills, Lord Gregson suggested that the teaching of maths and science in schools must be improved, that more higher education places for science and technology must be created and that post-graduate provision should be strengthened. However, it was realised that results from these measures would take time and,

"time is what the United Kingdom does not have if it is to prevent a disastrous decline in its standard of living."<sup>(6)</sup>

The re-training and updating of the skills of the existing workforce was seen as the only solution to this problem. However, as the majority of these people are already in employment, the delivery of full-time education to them was impossible.

In answer to this dilemma, Lord Gregson reasoned that,

"we simply have to convert them (i.e. existing workforce) or up-grade them in situ. The only solution to this problem that I can see is the application of distance learning."<sup>(7)</sup>

Open Learning was considered ideal, by many, for the task of re-training existing workers, with the least disruption to existing working patterns. Open Learning would enable people,

"to learn at the time, place and pace which meets their circumstances and requirements .... and it is cost effective for the student because they can study whilst they are working; it is cost effective for the employer because the employee can study whilst still making an economic contribution, in fact the opportunity cost is low."<sup>(8)</sup>

Lord Gregson sums up his argument, (albeit rather dramatically), by stating that,

"considering the economic threat we are facing and recognising the past neglect of our wealth creating capability, we would be foolish indeed not to seize the opportunity of Open Learning as the only potential to recover from our neglect of at least 100 years."<sup>(9)</sup>

The present applications of Open Learning have led to the creation of two dilemmas:-

1. Have the disadvantaged groups of people which Open Learning set out to provide for, been lost along the wayside, in this new scramble for corporate clients?

2. Are these same corporate clients, more concerned about the reduction of training costs, than with the openness of the learning experience?

In response to the first question, there has never been a major commitment to the funding of Open Learning provision for disadvantaged groups in our society, nor for individuals who wish (voluntarily or out of necessity), to pursue learning away from the traditional educational institutions. The Open College itself cannot offer funding and Local Authority discretionary grants, are often limited to the payment of tuition fees only; the purchase of materials is excluded. The OU has fee subsidies for the unemployed and low income groups, "though this aid is not greatly publicized."<sup>(10)</sup>

Open Learning techniques have been implemented in schools and colleges of higher and further education, but in terms of who has access to Open Learning provision, the financial restrictions which remain a barrier to accessing educational provision for disadvantaged groups, have not on the whole been successfully broken down by Open Learning.

In addressing the second question, it should be stated that there is nothing 'wrong', in employing Open Learning methods in industry or commerce, nor in wishing to reduce staff training costs. Indeed, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of staff training, whilst reducing training costs, makes sound economic sense. What is 'wrong', is if the training process is portrayed as an Open Learning experience, but in reality, cutting costs is the main objective, with freedom of access and a learner-centred learning experience being seen as of secondary importance or even worse, completely ignored. Schemes that do not at least attempt to provide open access and a learner-centred learning experience, cannot truly merit the title of Open Learning.

The issue, as to whether many schemes in the industrial and commercial sectors, merit the title of Open Learning, has been taken up by two prominent figures in the world of Open Learning :

Greville Rumble (Planning Officer of the OU) and Roger Lewis (Author of the CET's Open Learning Guides and Director of Services at the Open College).

Rumble argues that company Open Learning schemes,

"are not open if members of the public cannot take them."<sup>(11)</sup>

Lewis counters this argument by stating that,

"in practice no scheme.... can ever be open to everyone .... further, it is unrealistic to expect a company to open its doors to the public."<sup>(12)</sup>

It may be unrealistic to expect company Open Learning schemes to be totally open to the public, but the schemes and access to company Open Learning centres, could be offered on a limited basis to those learners in the locality, who are studying or wish to study similar subjects.

True openness of access within a company Open Learning scheme is also an issue in regard to the company's own employees. In many in-company schemes, access to Open Learning provision is restricted to specific groups. For example, in 1984, Lucas Industries PLC, created an Open Learning scheme (part funded by the MSC), with 12 Learning Centres, on separate Lucas Industries sites. However, only professional engineers, technologists and managers were eligible for training using Open Learning practices. For the time being,



"other types of employees would continue to be served by conventional means."<sup>(13)</sup>

The true openness of the learner's learning experience, once enrolled on an in-company Open Learning scheme, must also be examined. Some companies, including Jaguar Cars and ICI, do allow their employees to exercise choice over the course to be studied, including the possibility of studying courses which are not job related. Tom Foggo, a member of the Manpower Planning and Development Group, Agricultural Division, ICI, goes on to state that,

"the ramifications of this step towards trainee-centred learning are all of a piece with the observable trend towards self-managed careers and consequently towards self-managed development."<sup>(14)</sup>

However, many companies restrict choice or offer no room for choice at all, leaving the learner with little or no responsibility or control over what is to be learnt and openness rarely exists.

Allowing the individual to work through an Open Learning course in his or her own way, using his or her preferred media, is another aspect of openness often overlooked in some in-company schemes.

Where this aspect is overlooked, the learner's individual needs have been put aside and employees following the same courses are required to learn in a uniform manner, thereby it is hoped gaining uniform skills. Individual learning styles and needs have not been sufficiently taken into consideration and thus the learning process is not learner-centred; that the learning process be learner-centred is one of the identified aims of Open Learning schemes.

Also to be considered is the issue of the freedom of employee's access to Open Learning centres. For true openness of learning, employees involved in training through Open Learning methods, should be free to use a centre (attendance at centres should be voluntary), at any time they wish to.

Within many in-company schemes, attendance at Open Learning centres is voluntary and the latter are open to employees 24 hours a day, (although the number of manned hours, may be less than 24). For example, IBM UK Limited, Havant Plant's Distance Learning Centre is open 24 hours a day, to all employees.

However, within Lucas Industries, employees are not permitted to use Learning Centres, unless a Centre Manager or his or her deputy is present and,

"students take periods of around 2 hours out of their working day to study at the local centre. We (Lucas Industries) regard this training as of benefit to the company, so we encourage them (employees) to study in company time in the proper environment. In fact, we actively discourage them from studying at home."<sup>(15)</sup>

Lucas Industries commitment to staff training and development is illustrated by their willingness to allocate periods of company time for employees' study. However, by preferring employees to study whilst at work and in the Learning Centres and by deeming the latter as the only proper environment for learning, Lucas Industries has effectively deprived learners of the responsibility for their own learning experience; employees are not free to determine when they learn and where they learn.

Lucas Industries and many other companies running similar schemes are actively committed to staff development and training; wanting staff training to be efficient and effective, reaching as many employees as possible.

Open Learning can be both efficient and effective, in terms of staff coverage, reduction of training costs and imparting knowledge and skills. However, the scheme run by Lucas Industries, although effective in staff training and employing Open Learning packages, cannot truly be deemed to merit the term Open Learning.

A scheme that is truly open will allow learners to choose:-

- What they learn.
- How they learn.
- Where they learn.
- When they learn.
- How quickly they learn.
- Who to turn to for help.
- Whether, when and where to have their learning assessed.

In reality, within the industrial and commercial sectors, the structure and aims of many companies (i.e. the production of goods and services to tight schedules), may not be favourable to the existence of many of the above criteria.

Many companies may run training schemes incorporating some of the above criteria (and these schemes may be effective vehicles for staff development and training, improving operating standards and reducing operating costs), and thus partially fulfil the requirements necessary for true openness of learning.

However, given that it is realised that no scheme is ever completely open, is it valid to bestow the title 'Open Learning', on a scheme, if it does not fulfil at least most of the criteria for openness?

There is no easy answer to this question and any reply given by the author would be of a purely subjective nature. Indeed, it is, as already mentioned in this chapter, a point over which fierce debate is occurring at this present time and as such, this question will probably remain unanswered for some time to come.

Even those Open Learning schemes, within companies or in the public sector, which do fulfil most of the criteria for true openness may not be truly open. The barrier to openness in these cases, may be the closed nature of the Open Learning packages provided.

Many of the Open Learning packages available on the market are of a highly structured nature. Although most packages are divided into modules or units, which should allow freedom of choice, many are designed to be worked through in a set order; instructing learners to use particular media; to complete set exercises and assessments and to learn topics within set time periods and allowing no deviation from the predetermined pattern. The structure of the package merely reproduces the conventional role of the teacher as the disseminator of information, leaving little room for the initiative of the learner.

True openness of learning is reduced as,

"students are given little scope to challenge the objectives, contents and desired outcomes of courses..... and one runs the danger that the student will become a passive consumer of what is provided."(16)

The desire of many producers of Open Learning packages to reach mass audiences (and thereby reducing the unit cost of packages), may have led them to concentrate more on the manufacture of packages, rather than on providing truly learner-centred packages which meet individual needs.

Admittedly, to produce truly individualized packages, on a large scale, would be extremely expensive; to the manufacturer in terms of production costs and to the potential learner in terms of purchase costs.

One solution to this problem is,

"that alongside the mass production of knowledge in distance education... (and Open Learning)... must be a process of individualisation."<sup>(17)</sup>

This can be achieved through tuition and counselling, where learners can be encouraged and helped to construct their own courses of study. Thus the existence of an effective tutorial support system should enhance the openness of the learning experience.

#### IS COMPLETE OPENNESS DESIRABLE?

The last issue to be addressed in this chapter, is that of the actual desirability of 'complete' openness in Open Learning schemes. Is it really in the learners' interests, to allow them total control over all aspects of their learning experiences? Or should restrictions exist, in order to prevent learners from 'losing' their way?

Many adult learners are more than capable of identifying their own learning needs, in terms of course structure and content and are comfortable with the idea of unsupervised study, with the option of accessing tutorial support if required.

However, potential learners from the disadvantaged groups, (for example, the disabled, women at home, those who traditional educational provision has failed or passed by), which Open Learning started out to serve, are less likely to be able to coherently articulate their needs and may even feel intimidated at the thought; the concept of creating one's own course of study and learning in a largely unsupervised environment, is an approach that many will never have been faced with during their years of conventional schooling. Many will have the preconceived notion that it is the role of the tutor to define the perimeters of the learning experience.

In this situation, the independence given to the learner through an Open Learning scheme, may prove to be a frightening experience, with the learner feeling adrift and isolated, even dropping out of the course.



Course organisers must guard against the "open door..... becoming the revolving door."<sup>(18)</sup> The existence of tutorial support and especially personal tutors, is of vital importance.

Personal tutors can, by spending time with potential learners, gain the latter's confidence and build it up until it reaches the point where they are able to express their needs and construct and assume control of their own learning experiences. The existence of the personal tutor, a friendly face known and trusted by the learner, will also increase the chances of a less confident learner, actually accessing help when problems arise during the course of study. It is often the less confident and less able learners who are afraid to ask for help and thus are left in isolation, often dropping out of courses.

It is often the case that,

"flexibility in mode of attendance.... (and construction of course content)... if not accompanied by adequate counselling and initial attention to students' learning-to-learn skills, discriminates in favour of the educationally and socially advantaged groups."<sup>(19)</sup>

Providers of in-company Open Learning schemes should also be aware that many of the employees will never have experienced an autonomous learning situation. Potential learners will need to be taught 'how to learn' and access to tutorial support provided, for all those involved in training through Open Learning. Lucas Industries, successfully addressed this issue by developing,

"an introductory course which is mandatory for all new students, whatever their rank and this - together with the careful attention of the Learning Centre manager - helps them to overcome concerns they may have."<sup>(20)</sup>

Finally, the highly structured nature of many Open Learning packages, although as already discussed reducing the true openness of the learning experience, can in many cases be a blessing in disguise for less confident learners. As these 'closed' packages and their predetermined procedures, contain the tools to guide learners through their learning experience.

## CONCLUSION

The expansion within the world of Open Learning to embrace the training needs of the industrial and commercial sectors, is a positive step forward for Open Learning, as long as its providers in the above sectors, retain a commitment to ensuring open access and a learner-centred learning experience.

However, there is widespread concern that if,

"Open Learning systems in general begin to concentrate on corporate clients, then increasingly major sections of the population will find opportunities for education and training closed to them..."<sup>(21)</sup>

In order to prevent such an occurrence, those committed to the provision of Open Learning to the general public, especially disadvantaged groups in our society, must campaign for increased funding for resources and increased availability of subsidies and grants, for those individuals wishing to pursue Open Learning courses.

The last chapter in this work, follows on from the current trends in Open Learning described in this chapter, by speculating on future trends in Open Learning practice, with special reference to 1992 and the arrival of the single market.

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE FUTURE OF OPEN LEARNING

It is true to state that the direction of Open Learning has altered from that envisaged at its conception and as discussed in Chapter V, Open Learning has now been adopted by the industrial and commercial sectors, as an answer to staff training and development.

Consequently, some of the attention has been taken away from the disadvantaged groups that Open Learning was originally to serve. There are those of the view that,

"increasingly educational decisions will be determined by market decisions. This will result naturally from the pressure on educational organisations to be more entrepreneurial and to operate successfully in a conventional commercial environment."<sup>(1)</sup>

Expanding on this point, there is the concern that there will be an increase in vocational courses financed by the industrial and commercial sectors and a decrease in,

"courses which encourage students to think, question and learn for its own sake."<sup>(2)</sup>

In addition, those groups of people with little economic power, (for example, senior citizens, women, the unemployed, the disabled and ethnic minorities) are,



"bound to find that their needs are not given proper consideration." (3)

There is much truth contained in the above viewpoint and real grounds for concern. However, it must be stressed that the industrial and commercial sectors are not to be seen as the 'villains of this piece'. On the contrary, the use of Open Learning methods for staff training and development in these sectors, has served to widen the sphere of Open Learning and its continuing success within these sectors, has validated the effectiveness of an Open Learning approach to learning.

However, while the expansion of Open Learning practices in the industrial and commercial sectors is encouraging - as long as true openness of access and learner-centred learning experiences are consistently aspired to and achieved - the disadvantaged groups, which Open Learning first hoped to serve, must not be neglected. For as the following quotation for the Poor Man's Guardian 1834 warns,

"education resembles manure. When it is spread evenly it fertilises and fructifies. But when it is piled up unevenly in heaps it rots and begins to stink." (4)

Adequate funding and provision are necessary for all potential learners in our society and those truly committed to the doctrine of Open Learning, must endeavour to ensure that the above are consistently provided on a comprehensive basis.

#### 1992 AND OPEN LEARNING

The arrival of the single market in 1992, could see Open Learning entering into an important phase in its historical development, although, the actual involvement of Open Learning in the single market depends largely on the perceptions held by the providers of Open Learning resources, as to the future role of Open Learning.

The aim of the European Commission is to create a,

"vast open market without barriers within the European Community by 1992."<sup>(5)</sup>

The present barriers to an open market are seen as physical barriers (for example, immigration controls, customs checks, etc.), technical barriers, (for example, differences in technical standards) and fiscal barriers (for example, differences in excise duties).<sup>(6)</sup>

The existence of a 'vast open market' creates a range of opportunities for Open Learning. Open Learning methods are ideally suited to meet current and future British training needs in the following areas<sup>(7)</sup>:-

i) Language Training

Only 16% of the British population can speak French and fewer German<sup>(8)</sup>. Fluency in European languages will be vital in order to conduct business in the European market.

ii) Training Needs of Small Business

The advent of 1992, will increase the opportunities for small businesses to export goods, but in return, there will be greater competition from imports. Thus British firms, both large and small, will need to provide efficient staff training in order to survive and prosper.

iii) Providing professionals with the information and skills to live and work in other European countries.

The single market will also provide a golden opportunity for the providers of Open Learning resources to market their products in Europe itself and to create an international delivery network<sup>(9)</sup>.

The acceptance of British produced Open Learning packages for staff training, by European firms, should be facilitated with the possibility of the following developments occurring in 1992:-

- i) The international recognition of British qualifications.
- ii) The replacement of national standards by European standards - hence the production of internationally accepted training materials will then be possible<sup>(10)</sup>.

The advent of the single market in 1992, would seem to offer a wealth of opportunities for the expansion of Open Learning practices. However, the extent to which these opportunities are pursued, will depend largely on the vision and actions of the providers of Open Learning materials and resources and government funding and commitment to an Open Learning approach to learning.

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## CHAPTER VII

## CONCLUSION

It is anticipated that the information contained within this work will assist both, those groups of people interested in creating an Open Learning scheme and those merely wishing to undertake an initial exploration of the concept of Open Learning.

It is hoped that the needs of the latter group will be satisfied by the history of the development of Open Learning, the definition of the aims of an Open Learning scheme and the clarification of the meaning of the term 'Open Learning', which have been provided in Chapter II.

The requirements of those groups or individuals who wish to create an Open Learning scheme are met in Chapters III and IV. The fulfilment of the criteria for open access and a learner-centred learning experience - both of which are identified as the two main aims of an Open Learning scheme and are presented in Chapter IV - will be made possible by the careful consideration and implementation of the stages for the creation of an Open Learning scheme, outlined in Chapter III and listed below:-

- Preliminary Issues.
- Structure of an Open Learning scheme.
- Staffing.
- Open Learning materials and individual learning styles.
- Learner support.
- Marketing and publicity for Open Learning schemes.
- Quality control.

The discussion of the industrial and commercial sectors involvement with Open Learning practices and the current concerns surrounding this involvement (discussed in Chapter V), along with the discussion concerning the future of Open Learning (Chapter VI), are intended to create an awareness of the wide range of situations in which Open Learning methods are already effective and those as yet unexploited situations where Open Learning has a potential role to perform.

In conclusion, it is to be hoped that those already engaged in the provision of Open Learning and those who enter into the role of providers, will retain a continuing commitment to ensuring truly open access for all learners and the provision of learner-centred learning experiences.



How the path of Open Learning will ultimately develop cannot be accurately foretold, but in the closing words of this work, it would not seem too presumptuous to assume that,

"1992 is likely to offer a wide range of opportunities for practitioners of Open Learning, both in terms of product development and marketing and in terms of increasing contact with colleagues in other member states (of the European Community)... The rapidly developing experience of open, distance and flexible learning in the UK leaves us well placed to make the most of these opportunities."<sup>(1)</sup>

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A :

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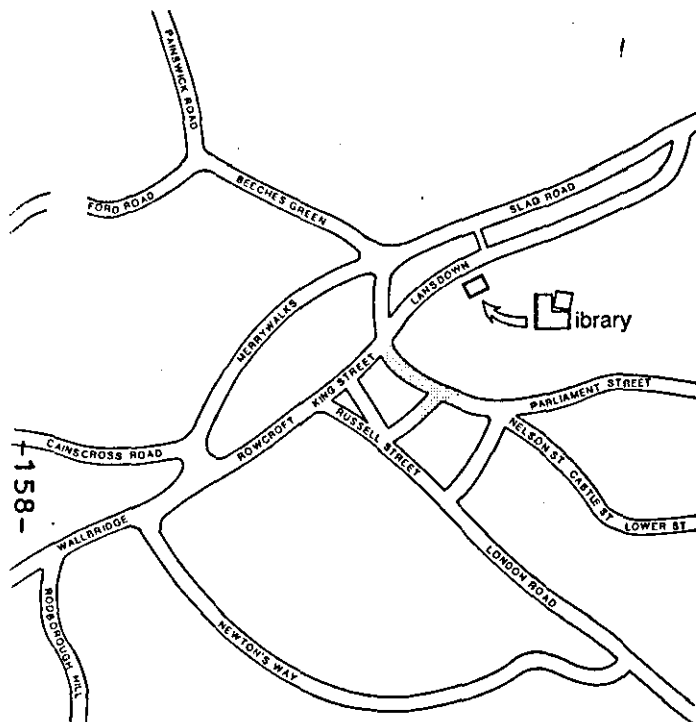
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## APPENDIX B

Promotional Leaflet for GOLD

Promotional Leaflet for The Open Learning Resource  
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Stroud Library



Stroud Library  
Lansdown  
Stroud  
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**Go for GOLD!**

**GOLD**

GLoucestershire OPEN  
LEARNING DESK

Tel: Stroud 751651

Open and flexible learning  
at Stroud Library

This is a pilot project and no charges will be made for  
the present.



GLoucestershire  
COUNCIL  
*At Your Service*



TRAINING  
AGENCY

**GOLD**

GLoucestershire OPEN  
LEARNING DESK

Tel: Stroud 751651

Open and flexible  
learning at  
Stroud Library

**Go for GOLD!**

Whatever your age

Whatever your education

Whatever your experience

Not sure how to go about  
studying on your own?

Worried about making the best  
use of new technology?

Need more training to develop a  
small business?

Perhaps you've been some time  
out of the workforce?

Do you face redundancy or early  
retirement?

Or are you still deciding on your  
new career?

Maybe you're just in a rut and  
want a change?

related learning packages:

*videos*

*audio tapes*

*computer-based materials*

*workbooks*

*books and periodicals*

We can advise you on:

*the best way to use them*

*how to get back into the  
studying mood*

*making contact with other  
learners*

*where else to go for training*

You can take the packages home  
and work at your own pace.

Or you can arrange to study in the  
library and use our equipment.

(If you want something else —  
ask!)

how to study  
basic skills  
languages

computing  
word processing  
accounts

management  
communication  
office skills  
marketing  
small business  
administration

catering and  
tourism  
horticulture  
child care  
cooking  
car maintenance

**Go**

**for**

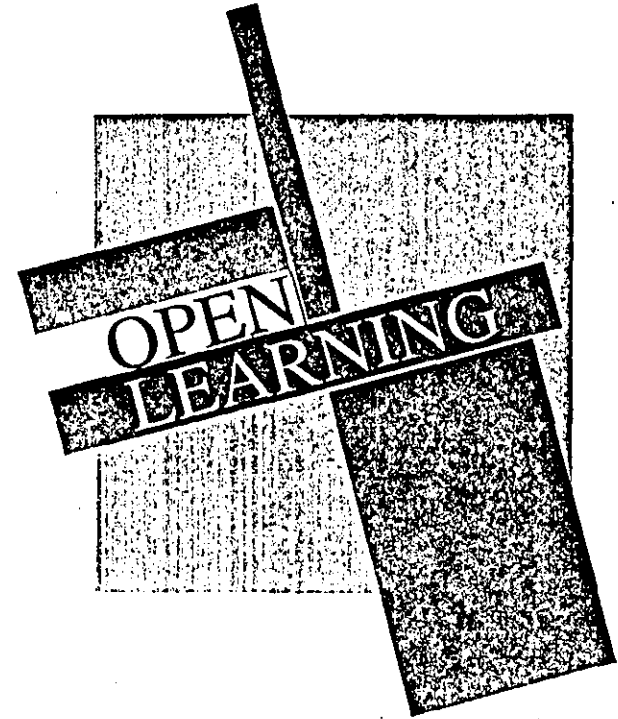
**GOLD!**



# OPEN LEARNING

## -A flexible approach

- Improving your career prospects?
- Returning to work? • Going back to study?
- Changing jobs? • Setting up a small business?



Please telephone Uxb. 50716  
for further information





# **The Open Learning Resource Centre**

Central Library, High Street,  
Uxbridge. Telephone Uxbridge  
(0895) 50716

The library is open Monday - Friday 9.30-8.00 and Saturday 9.30-5.00

**The Open Learning courses can be borrowed in two ways:**

- (1) A three-month loan with a charge of £5
- (2) A two week free loan - then, if you would like to go on with the course, bring in to the library and have it issued for three months with a £5 charge.

All the courses can be renewed for a further 3 months with an additional payment. Holders of a Hillingdon Leisure Concession card can borrow courses free of charge.

Just one course can be borrowed at a time and equipment is available in the Central Library to help you make your choice.

## **There are courses on:**

- ☐ Setting up a business
- ☐ Information technology
- ☐ Keyboard skills
- ☐ Personnel development
- ☐ Child care
- ☐ Carers and caring
- ☐ Book keeping
- ☐ Running a guest house
- ☐ Health and safety
- ☐ Statistics
- ☐ Quality assurance
- ☐ Employing staff
- ☐ Management and supervisory skills

Let us know of any other course you might be interested in.

## APPENDIX C :

### LIBRARY ASSOCIATION POLICY ON OPEN LEARNING

#### Preamble

"Open Learning is a concept now widely used in all areas of education and training. The term covers a wide area of activity with many kinds of programmes using the name. The present statement is intended both to clarify the terms, and to set out the policy of The Library Association.

The main aim of an Open Learning system is to make it easier for everybody, including those with disabilities, to undertake their chosen learning by reducing or removing the barriers of time, entry requirements, finance and distance to study or training. The emphasis is on learner-centred, self-paced, methods with geographical and social circumstances largely disregarded.

Librarians have an important role to play in helping Open Learners to find and use appropriate materials and hence to make their learning truly 'open'. Whatever the programme, current trends provide more scope for the exercise of a librarian's skills and resources. Open Learning is much more than the delivery of distance learning packs. It develops the skills of self study and builds confidence in learning and therefore puts a premium on the normal readers' advisory work, and the professional organisation and deployment of learning resources, provided by libraries and librarians. The librarians's role ranges from meeting needs on a formal taught course for 'checking a reference', or 'finding a book' to support the tutor's lectures, through access to equipment for the use of learning technology, to personal support of the learner and the exploration of new directions after the learning programme has been completed."

Appendix C, continued.

Librarians can also provide guidance to potential learners, on the initial selection of a course. Librarians are not course teachers but they can offer practical and valuable advice to the potential learner, who is confused by the range of available options.

Although librarians are not normally thought of as course teachers, they are qualified to teach potential learners, on such topics as 'study skills' and 'returning to study'. The familiarity of the library setting may also be less off-putting to some adult learners, than a formal college environment.

"The Policy of the Library Association for its Members in support of Open Learning is :-

1. To do such things as will enable its members to perform the following tasks:
  - a) To motivate adult learners, and potential adult learners, to explore and to engage in forms of learning most helpful to them.
  - b) To inform adult learners of the many different ways of learning available to them. In particular they should ensure that enquirers have access to any local Educational Guidance Service and to relevant national data such as ECCTIS, NERIS, MARIS-NET and to the PICKUP TRAINING DIRECTORY, and to local data on TAPs (Training Access Points).
  - c) To co-operate with other agencies in the establishment of Educational Guidance Services.
  - d) To make readily available appropriate learning resources at the time the learner needs them by competently selecting, evaluating and managing them.

Appendix C, continued.

- e) To help adults on Open Learning programmes to make the most effective use of the library services available. Many adults, especially those on Access or vocational training courses, may have made little or no use of a library before, and will need special attention in this respect.
- f) To guide and support adult learners in order to maintain motivation and to help them to assess their progress.

(See example at the end of this document.)

- 2. To influence the policies of those organisations that have responsibility for Open Learning by:
  - a) Pressing for a recognition of a wide range of learning and experience as part of entry requirements for formal education.
  - b) Ensuring that librarians are equal partners in the provision and in the management of the services for adult learners.
  - c) Ensuring that adequate resources are provided to meet the need of adult learners.

Examples of Recent Initiatives involving Library Services. (refer to 1a to 1f above)

- 1a) North Yorkshire County Library's OWTLET scheme helps to 'place' learners with the most appropriate learning provider or resource.
- 1b) College libraries and public libraries collaborate in managing and hosting databases and similar information services (Newcastle City Libraries, Kirklees Libraries, etc.)
- 1c) Clwyd County Libraries' involvement in educational guidance networks included training library staff for this function.
- 1d) The provision of special collections of multi-media learning packs in public libraries with Training Agency support.

Appendix C, continued.

- 1e) Public libraries have drop-in-learner centres (Avon County, Sheffield City, Cheshire County Open Tech Centres) and many college libraries are the Open Learning Centre for their institution.
- 1f) This is still new territory for UK librarians but the United States' Independent Learner Project demonstrated the practicality of, and need for, this kind of activity."

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January, 1990

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