



MAURITIUS

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides a status of ODL in Mauritius, highlighting that this sector will be a key one in the expansion of Tertiary Education to serve local and regional needs in the years to come.

Distance Education in Mauritius is called to undergo major developments in the short term with the imminent setting up of an Open University. The legislation for the University has been passed in parliament and is awaiting proclamation. A National Policy for ODL is also currently under development and will be launched by mid 2011.

Reconfiguring the Mauritius College of the Air into an Open University

Mauritius has a long tradition of distance education. The establishment of the Mauritius College of the Air in 1971 was a major step towards building distance education capacity in Mauritius. The MCA has focused on the use of mass media for distance education and, during the course of its activities the MCA has built rich traditions and expertise in the use of media for education and training at primary and secondary education, at tertiary level and at adult and continuing education.

The objective of reconfiguring the MCA as an Open University will result in more flexibility and autonomy to the institution and will enable it to develop more national and international partnerships through the widening of the scope of its activities. The University status will result in more academic credibility in the eyes of international community and enable it to play a more effective role in the region. In view of the existing expertise of the MCA in producing educational materials for Primary and Secondary schools, the Open University will also contain an Open Schooling division which will further strengthen the ability of the institution to develop distance programmes through multimedia channels for schools. The University is also expected to house a Language Institute to develop the emerging sector of translation services.

Why is there a need for an Open University?

It is imperative to expand access to tertiary education in Mauritius to enable the country to be equipped with the relevant trained human resources to meet the growing requirements of the new economic trajectory based on the knowledge and services

sectors. This increasing demand for tertiary education is reflected in the growth of the Gross Tertiary Enrolment Ratio (GTER) at national level since 2004, and the Open University will be a key element to assist the country in the attainment of the target set to reach a GTER of 72% by 2015.

Year	2004	2010	2015 (estimate)
GTER (%)	24.2	45	72

Vision and Mission of the Open University

- To be an internationally recognised open and distance learning institution committed to the development of Mauritius as a knowledge economy and a learning society through quality education and training;
- To expand the scope and scale of quality higher education to high school leavers;
- To provide greater access to continuing professional education and training;
- To provide more opportunities for lifelong learning;
- To play a leading role in research and development and application of learning technologies for education and training, including the emerging sector of languages in business;
- To facilitate national and international partnerships and collaborations for the optimal use of resources for open and distance learning; and
- To become a leading provider of quality open and distance learning programmes in the region.

Such a new framework for Distance Education, coupled with the expansion of the Tertiary Sector at large, will ensure that the country strengthens its provision of Tertiary Education at local level and also emerges as a regional player in the field of Distance Education in the next 10 years.

Current Status of the Open University Project

The Open University Bill has been passed in Parliament and awaits proclamation.

The Open University will, further to the setting up of Board of Governors, initiate course upgrading from the existing programmes of the Mauritius College of the Air and also come up with new programmes of its own.

Other national assets: The Virtual Centre for Innovative Learning Technologies (VCILT) of the University of Mauritius

Operating under the aegis of the University of Mauritius, the VCILT is responsible for providing and developing on-line web-based education and tele-learning at the University and throughout the country.

The VCILT has recently (Dec 2010) been awarded the Commonwealth of Learning Award for excellence in Distance and Online Learning.

The Centre for Professional Development and Lifelong learning of the University of Mauritius

The Centre for Professional Development and Lifelong Learning (CPDL) was set up in January 1993 to facilitate the implementation of Distance Education (DE) at the University of Mauritius (UOM) with the objective of improving quality and increasing enrolment at UOM.

The CDPL operates under the umbrella of the Lifelong Learning Cluster (LLC) which involves the other Centres of the UOM (the Virtual Centre for Innovative Learning Technologies and the Centre for Information Technology and Systems) and taps from a database of academics on different fields, from Engineering to Management, Communication and Science, to design and deliver tailor-made programmes with the support of distance education.

Distance Education and Open Learning by Private providers in Mauritius

The number of students pursuing Tertiary Education in local private institutions, or directly with an institution overseas through distance education and open learning mode, increased by 4.1% to reach 10,003 in 2008, up from 9,612 in 2007. Many of the local providers use Open and Distance Learning platforms developed by leading International institutions in higher education.

The Human Resource Development Council (HRDC)

The Human Resource Development Council (HRDC), a corporate body, was set up as per the HRD Act 2003 and started its operation in November 2003. The main motive behind the creation of the HRDC was to remedy the severe distortions within the labour market caused primarily by a mismatch between demand for work and the nature of employment. The HRDC has been vested with the huge task of looking after and promoting the development of a labour force which matches the genuine requirements of a fast growing economy.

HRDC'S involvement in Distance Learning

Through a joint venture with the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), the HRDC recruits an average of 100 fresh university graduates who want to join the teaching professional but have no pedagogical experience and send them to the MIE to follow a six month intensive training course on a 50% face-to-face and 50% Distance mode in pedagogy. The fees are paid by HRDC and the students obtain an officially recognised Educators License. This has enabled the Government to alleviate a severe shortage of teaching staff within the secondary education sector.

COL Actions in Mauritius

COL has since its inception provided strong support in the field of Distance Education in Mauritius. As early as 1989, a first consultancy report entitled *Distance Education for Human Resource Development in Mauritius: The Way Forward* was produced through the COL by Sir John Daniel, then President of Laurentian University. The sector has since grown, in particular at the University of Mauritius, and in September 2007, COL provided the services of a Programme Specialist and Team Leader, Prof Mohan Menon, for a report which sealed the way for the structure of the forthcoming Open University. COL has also provided support through its Life Long Learning Cluster in the development of Entrepreneurship programmes for women. Finally, COL has encouraged capacity building in technical areas of special relevance to small states like Mauritius through its VUSSC programme, with strong participation in all Course Content Development Workshops (bootcamps), along with representation in the first VUSSC Management Committee.