

# OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

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## Introduction

Brunei Darussalam is going through a period of rapid development and modernisation with increased emphasis on diversification of the economy and the provision of quality education, welfare and health services.

Education delivery is still based on a formal conventional system of education. This is attributed to its smallness in terms of geographical area whereby all points in and around the country is accessible.

Brunei has been able to provide favorable and accommodating educational infrastructure and set out policies that allow opportunities for Bruneians to access education in the conventional way.

## THE MOVE TOWARDS THE USE OF ODL

Despite the absence of any substantive plan to adopt ODL, Brunei acknowledges its benefits, particularly, in relation to widening access in education, its flexibility and versatility in fulfilling constant re-training, re-skilling and upgrading requirements in an ever changing society and market economy.

ODL seems to be an ideal alternative and worthy of consideration for implementation considering:

a. The number of students eligible for tertiary studies is increasing annually and places for study at local institutions are becoming limited. Entry onto local tertiary institutions is becoming competitive and admission requirement is getting tougher to fulfill.

b. The government, as a major employer, wish to opt for a new strategy, so as to avoid 'vacuuming' within its workforce if training and skills delivery have to be implemented conventionally.

c. The ever changing global economy, coupled with the explosion of knowledge, advances in technology, the need to constantly update oneself to acquire various skills and new knowledge necessitate one to participate fully in society and economy.

d. The well developed ICT network facilitates various government ICT based projects.

e. Consistent with the Ministry of Education mission to 'provide holistic education to achieve fullest potential for all, and in line with strategic goals which includes providing more choice of education, developing life-long learning skills.

## THE ROLES AND NATURE OF ODL

There has been increasing number of private institutions and training agencies providing various courses through ODL method, through special arrangements with foreign institutions of higher learning, professional bodies and training agencies.

Local agencies provided the services such as registration and administrative roles, various educational infrastructure facilities, arrangements for examination and assessment requirement, occasional visiting lecturers.

Courses offered include business administration, professional accounting, law, information, computer studies, economic and sciences. This ranging from degree courses level, professional qualifications and basic skills such as ICDL.

Courses aimed primarily for working adult, students and the unemployed, with the main purposes of acquiring new skills and knowledge and fulfilling personal pursuit and enrichment.

## CONSIDERATION PERTAINING TO POLICY AND REGULATION OF ODL

Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council (BDNAC) is charged with the responsibility to oversee matters relating to quality assurance requirements and the increase number of ODL courses run privately by various private organisations, institutions and agencies.

To achieved the perceived quality in ODL, some feactures for consideration:

- a. Institutions and their courses must first be accredited by the government of the country of origin, by accrediting agencies recognised by the government, and/or by professional bodies in the fields concerned,
- b. ODL courses conducted through a combination of both face-to-face and distance learning using multimedia technology, and implementation based on collaborative partnership arrangement between foreign providers and local public or private agencies.

## FUNDING OF ODL

Since ODL is still at its preliminary planning stages, government funding has not been considered. If ODL has proven to be an effective and capable method of assisting Brunei to achieve its education and training needs, the government investments in this matter became feasible.

However, the following aspects could be considered for implementation:

- a. Students and government personnel could be considered for either full or partial scholarship awards, should they fulfill the criteria set by various government scholarship agencies,
- b. Private local education providers in ODL maybe given some form of government incentives such as financial assistance, facilitates in acquiring physical educational infrastructure, etc.
- c. Government institutions of higher learning will be encouraged to promote collaboration with foreign universities or colleges to run courses through ODL.

## CONCLUSION

Although ODL has been widely accepted as an additional method of education delivery and that it offers benefit in terms of access, equity and flexibility, Brunei Darussalam continues to observe and evaluate how other countries benefit from it.