



## **ST. LUCIA**

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### **Report on the Use of ODL in St. Lucia**

The promulgation of ODL faces a number of challenges in St. Lucia. For example, there is the belief which has remained from the early days of Correspondent Learning that the quality and integrity of ODL learning can be compromised. Another issue is the question of what “open” really means. Specifically, there are concerns regarding whether “open” means that there is no need for prerequisite knowledge and skills and whether all forms of open learning allow access for all.

Access to technology also affects the use of ODL. While St. Lucia’s education policy may support Open Learning, the technological infrastructure and general access to technology is insufficient. Indeed teachers’ access is still very limited and schools are not endowed with adequate ICT resources. Many homes are still without computers and Internet connection. This is in spite of ISP provided Internet infrastructure throughout the island. Information Technology may yet be cost prohibitive for many citizens and the digital divide continues to exist.

ODL is, for the most part, a phenomenon among professional workers in St. Lucia and is not yet a feature of K-12 learning. Some programmes delivered by the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC) as well as the National Skills Development Centre (NSDC) try to make use of technological means to augment student learning. Students are able to access course content via web resources such as wikis and web portals that students may have user accounts for.

Since the 1940’s, there were persons in the region who enrolled in correspondence courses taken from England. Many teachers enrolled with universities in the UK such as Leicester and Sheffield to take courses in Education. Much like the UWIDEC programmes in the 90’s, teachers were able to take advantage of synchronous technologies such as teleconferencing to take part in university lectures. Web 2.0 and related technologies can now support both synchronous and asynchronous delivery of content and activities between student and teacher.

The Advanced Certificate in Education – ICT Integration (ACE-ICT) programme was developed as a requirement for the delivery of Teacher ICT training under the Education Enhancement through Information and Communication Technology Project (EEICTP). The ACE-ICT Integration programme is consistent with the Commonwealth of Learning’s Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration standard (CCTI). The programme’s first cohort includes about 60 teachers from 24 primary schools that were direct beneficiaries

under the EEICTP. The programme was initially being delivered on a Moodle platform installed at the Ministry of Education, which was implemented under the same EEICTP.

The courses are delivered completely online. Unfortunately, the programme suffered two major setbacks. The main setback was caused by software issues related to the old and unsupported version of Moodle that was installed at the Ministry of Education. A decision was made to migrate the entire programme to the Moodle platform owned and operated by the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College. It is now not clear when the programme will be resumed.

The Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC) established its Moodle platform in 2003 with the intention of supporting its extended programmes to a wider community. While the Moodle is expected to augment regular classroom taught courses, the system has the capacity to permit students in remote locations to take courses completely online. The Diploma in Education programme for example, contains a few courses that are mediated through this portal. Most of the students in this programme are in-service graduate teachers at secondary schools.

SALCC has at its disposal a fully staffed Information and Technology Services (ITS) unit that supports the technology infrastructure of the institution. The Moodle is well supported by dedicated staff. At the latest enquiry, SALCC's Moodle was found to be mostly underutilized by the staff. The Moodle administrator reported that there are usually fewer than five programmes being hosted on the Moodle at a time. The ITS unit has sought to improve the performance of the Moodle platform by purchasing cloud services to host the platform. This should result in less downtime and ease of maintenance.

The UWI Open Campus evolved from the previous UWI programmes of Distance Education such as the University Distance Teaching Enterprise (UWIDITE) of the 70's and, the University Distance Teaching Centre (UWIDEC) that was developed in 1996. The Open Campus website claims that over 20,000 are now enrolled in various programmes across the Caribbean.

### **Possible Areas for Further Support from COL**

In general, the Ministry of Education desires a structure that will support ODL. Therefore, some of the Ministry's main objectives pertain to the creation of the Ministry web portal; the development of programmes and training materials and the design of a student performance assessment system.

### **Top Priorities of the following Ministries.**

#### **Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development and Labour:**

1. Training of teachers in the use of CXC Notesmaster Digital Platform.
2. Assistance in establishing a National Qualifications Framework.

**Ministry of Agriculture, Food Production, Fisheries, Cooperatives and Rural Development:**

3. Assistance in strengthening the Youth in Agriculture Programme. Specific areas for training under this programme include: life skills training, business/entrepreneurial skills; development of cooperatives; management of business, risk management and training in crops and livestock.

**Ministry of Health, Wellness, Human Services and Gender Relations:**

4. Adolescent Health.
5. Sexual Reproductive Health.

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