

'Based on the assumption that students will take responsibility for self-counselling', such a presentation 'provides "a structure, a technique which enables a student to engage in that process"' (Moran and Croker 1981)' (Colman 1984: 47, commenting on the Deakin University counselling package). Counselling by correspondence based on printed materials has been subjected to an illuminating study by Gaskel, Gibbons and Simpson (1990).

Offering students facilities to contact fellow-students through membership of associations (Ovst-Eriksen 1986), students' journals, or in other ways may be part of counselling. On a student-operated support network, see Williams and Williams (1987).

Whichever medium is applied, counselling must evidently 'promote a sense of close rapport between the student and the counsellor'. The latter 'needs to demonstrate empathy' and 'be sensitive to the needs, spoken or unspoken, of the student' (Thornton and Mitchell 1978: 23). These requirements are fully compatible with the personal approaches advocated on the basis of theory and empirical evidence for course development (see pp. 45-55) and tutor-student interaction (see pp. 125-7). Thornton and Mitchell further stress that

the counsellor in his relation with the student should try to work himself out of, rather than into, a job, by promoting and encouraging student self-help. The student will become increasingly more confident about seeking and finding his own answers and solutions to problems and less dependent on the counsellor.

(ibid.)

The processes and outcomes of counselling in distance education have been studied in a way helpful to practitioners by Thorpe (1988), who looks into a number of case studies.

THE ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education as a private arrangement between a student and a tutor is possible and occurs occasionally. In most cases known, however, there is an organization responsible for the teaching and a student body making use of its services. Following Delling I have referred to the former as a supporting organization. This reflects a view of teaching as facilitating learning (see the synonym 'facilitating institute' used by Mitchell 1975). The facilitation includes a great number of tasks, such as information about study paths and study opportunities, pre-enrolment counselling, instructive and advisory interaction with students, provision of learning materials and other activities that help students to learn and reach their goals. Work of this kind requires an organization co-ordinating the work of various specialists and administration of the processes necessary and desirable.

SERVICES REQUIRED

The services that are required in practically all distance-teaching organizations are as follows:

- 1 The development and technical production (or, possibly, the selection and purchase) of printed courses for distance study and supplementary media; the development work requires special facilities for editing, visualizing, audio recording, and for the work of project leaders, editors etc.
- 2 Warehousing.

- 3 The distribution of course materials.
- 4 Mediated tutorial interaction between students and tutors.
- 5 Information and publicity about study opportunities offered.
- 6 Counselling.
- 7 Course evaluation.

See Oster, who at an early stage defined distance-education administration as 'service to students and care of students (tutorial advice service before and during the course of studies, handling and despatching of submitted solutions, direction of the course of studies by means of timetables, etc.)' (Oster 1965: 71).

In many cases, services are also required for one or more of the following activities:

- 1 Library services.
- 2 Video recording.
- 3 Laboratory work for developing prototypes of experimental kits.
- 4 Supplementary face-to-face contacts between students and tutors/counsellors.
- 5 Student-to-student contact.
- 6 Awarding scholarships and administering financial support of students.
- 7 Issuing course certificates.
- 8 Administration of examinations and degrees.
- 9 Institutional research (systems evaluation) and general research into the conditions and methodology of distance education.

ADMINISTERING COURSE DEVELOPMENT

The development of course materials requires an establishment that is a combination of a research institute and a publisher's editorial office, providing facilities for course developers to work with various media. The organization can, but need not, include faculties of specialist course authors. Such specialists can also be engaged externally. Further, the technical production of print, audio-tapes or cassettes, films, etc. can be provided for by external bodies.

The internal organization for course development can thus be limited to an editorial body with educational subject-based and

technical expertise that enables it to develop courses and to control and administer co-operation with external organizations.

Different types of organization occur for course development. The simplest consists of a subject specialist as author and an editor. A large course team for each course with authors, other subject specialists, media specialists (for print, radio, television, etc.), artists, editors, etc., constitutes a different approach. This latter type of organization is advantageous in providing for the best expertise available for all of the various tasks involved. See Walter Perry on the beginnings of the Open University course teams:

To produce the drafts on the various 'course materials' that would enable an adult, working in isolation, to reach a predetermined standard of performance in a given area of study, called for the combined skills of a number of groups of people. First we had to have not just one university teacher, with his thoughts and ideas about the objectives, contents and methods of presentation of the course, but several, because our courses were to be multi-disciplinary as well as multimedia in nature. This, in turn, meant that each teacher would have different and inevitably conflicting thoughts and ideas which would somehow have to be reconciled with each other to lead to an agreed final version. Second, since the university teachers that we could recruit would mostly be unfamiliar with the special problems both of educating adults and of teaching at a distance, we would need the advice of other experts, in particular educational technologists and television and radio producers, in order to determine the method of presentation of the course. (Walter Perry 1976: 77)

This course-team model has been very influential. Its main advantage is that the various tasks are divided between a group of highly specialized team members, among them subject specialists, specialists on instructional design, media, technical production etc. and editors. The professional standard can then be very high. The drawbacks of the course-team model are that it may impede personal approaches and may tend towards knowledge being presented more as a finished product than as a complex of problems under development (Weingartz 1980: 167-9).

Distance-teaching organizations which cannot or do not want

to work with course teams usually support their course writers by the services of an editor with experience of distance education. Sometimes an outstanding subject specialist is asked to write a draft only from which an editor produces a course. Some organizations entrust practically all course development to subject specialists. The University of Waterloo in Ontario can be mentioned as an example (Seaborne and Zuckernick 1986).

The co-operation between authors and editors varies with the organizations concerned and the individuals engaged. There are reasons based on experiences to describe the co-operation as particularly profitable when author and editor work together from the very beginning. In such cases they plan the course together, exchange drafts of objectives, items of contents, and plans for sequencing. When they have agreed on this, the author develops a preliminary draft of one or part of one unit at a time, on which the editor comments and suggests improvement. This leads to detailed discussions between the two before any attempt is made to create the version to be produced. The motto here is constant contact between author and editor, perhaps almost daily telephone contact between meetings and exchanges of drafts and emendations.

In a paper about course development procedures, Kevin Smith classifies the approaches to course development 'into five broad categories' (Smith 1980: 61)

- 1 The course team model.
- 2 The author/editor model.
- 3 The author/faculty model.
- 4 The educational adviser model.
- 5 The intuition model.

The 'author/faculty model' which is to my mind just a variety of the author/editor model, is said to be unique to the FernUniversität and is characterized by outside experts being 'contracted to write the courses but the material is vetted by the full-time faculty of the University' (Smith 1980: 65). Also, the so-called educational adviser model seems to be a kind of author/editor approach. Smith has in mind the practices of Murdoch University and the Darling Down Institute of Advanced Education in Australia. They include the use of educational advisers whose services are advisory only, which means that 'each author is the final arbiter of content, standards and format' (Smith 1980: 66). The

'intuition model', on the other hand, is based on no other principle than letting the work be guided by academic intuition rather than systematic procedures. On the whole we thus seem to be entitled to distinguish between two separate approaches, the author/editor model and the course-team model.

The author/editor model has the advantages that a personal tone and suggestions for problem-solving come naturally to the presentation as one person guides his/her students through a kind of mediated conversation. The weakness of this model is that, at least in a small organization, the author and editor may not have sufficient specialist support available for all of the course development tasks. They can usually have recourse to external advisers, however, which can compensate for lacking support within the organization.

Neither the advantages nor the disadvantages of the two models are inevitable corollaries, however. Awareness of the potentials and dangers of the models can overcome the weakness of both of them, whereas lack of such awareness may make both models weak. In reality there are several intermediaries between them. If the course author does not work completely alone, the difference between the author/editor model and the course-team model is often more a difference of degree than of character. Nevertheless, important principles are involved.

The choice between the two models is related to a large-scale and a small-scale approach and to the discussion about distance education as an industrialized type of teaching and learning. See pp. 7 and 16, where Peters' approach, relevant to this, is discussed. In both models there are, to different degrees, elements of industrialization, for instance, division of labour, mechanization through the use of modern technical equipment, and quality control. Mass production may also be a characteristic of both models. The aspect of industrialization in course development has been studied by Kaufman (1982). The person-to-person approach, the style of didactic conversation, can also be provided for in both models. As always in education there is no categorical reply to the question of which is the best procedure; it all depends . . .

The present writer's favourite model is this: one course author is made ultimately responsible for the course development after decisions have been made about target group, broad aims, and contents. The author addresses the students in a personal style

reflecting his or her approaches and values. The course author is supported by editors for written and recorded, radio and television presentations, by advisers who may be educational technologists, subject and media specialists, by illustrators, print, and other production specialists, etc. While benefiting from the co-operation of all of these, the author consistently writes for (and may speak to) the students in his or her own way. Only those authors who are capable of establishing a personal rapport with students by means of their presentation (the simulated, mediated conversation), and who are reliable subject specialists can be made the final arbiters of what a course should eventually be like. The influence of others (editors, course co-ordinators, designers, or whatever they may be called) will have to vary with the experience, knowledge, and empathy of the authors.

An Australian study by David Ross of project management in the development of courses is worth mentioning in the present context (Ross 1991).

DISTRIBUTION OF COURSE MATERIALS

Course units and other learning materials for distribution to students are handled in practice in three basically different ways.

A few distance-teaching organizations send packages containing complete courses at the beginning of the study. This is usually felt to be a questionable procedure, as many students are likely to be intimidated by the large quantity of learning material to be worked through. It is also bad economy, as even modest drop-out rates lead to smaller editions of later units being required if course materials are distributed in batches along with students' progress.

A much more common practice is to send study material on pre-determined dates. However, sending course units without paying attention to individual students' needs seems to be counter-productive; such a great number of course units may then be amassed on the desk of a slow-working student that the person feels frustrated and may be discouraged. Students in this position have complained that they have felt it to be hopeless to tackle the course as they have been intimidated by 'the mountain of course material' in front of them (a FernUniversität evaluation; Bartels and Fritsch 1976: 62). See also Graff *et al.* (1977: 21). The rigidity on which such pre-planned distribution is based is usually

due to a firm desire to make students conform to a time schedule. It may also reflect lack of imagination, i.e. failure to realize what students' work situations may be like when they have to combine study with professional, social, and family commitments.

A third way is to adapt the distribution of course materials to what is desirable from the points of view of motivation support and the non-contiguous two-way communication. Proper adaptation to the conditions of distance students makes it desirable that course units should be distributed in relation to the individual study pace of each student. One way of doing this, which has proved valuable, is to provide the student at the outset with a small number of (say three) units of each course enrolled in and then to send out a new unit with each assignment that is returned with corrections and comments. Having initially received three course units, the student can work on unit 2 when unit 1 has been submitted to the supporting organization for correction and comment. Unit 3 acts as a buffer in case the student works so quickly that unit 1 has not been returned when unit 2 is submitted. With the return of the first assignment, unit 4 arrives. This system works well if it is possible for students who work fast to receive more units on request.

ADMINISTRATION OF STUDENT-TUTOR INTERACTION

There are a number of different aspects of communication between the students and the supporting organization that influence the administrative procedures. Thus pre-registration counselling and routine correspondence with potential students requesting factual information require effective organization, and so do counselling and other correspondence with enrolled students and would-be students. Correction of and comment on students' papers must be organized so that the right tutor receives without delay the right students' papers and any necessary background information. Procedures are necessary for application and enrolment, registration and statistics. Warehouse and dispatch arrangements have to be made for the course materials, and quick turn-round must be provided for all communication with the students.

As made clear on pp. 122-5, speed is a high-priority concern for the administration of tutor-student interaction. Thus it is

important to arrange record-keeping and distribution in such a way that it causes no delay in the communication process. The relevance of this is evident from the fact that most distance-education institutions apparently use the services of external tutors to whom students' assignments are submitted.

This is how Renée Erdos described the administrative procedure in the 1960s when the work was still usually done manually:

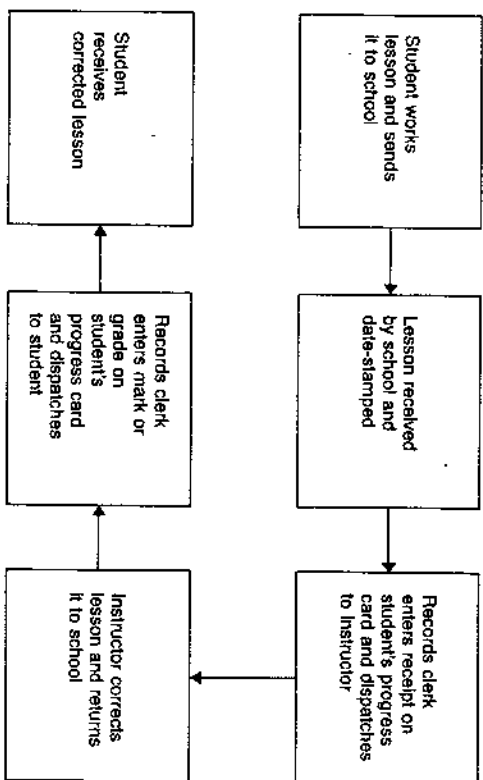


Figure 7 Movement of a correspondence lesson

Source: Erdos 1967: 26

While with the almost universal use of the computer this description is out of date, the tasks to be carried out remain. Students' papers, assignment solutions or other communications may arrive by post, by telefax or by electronic mail, tutors may comment on them in writing, using the post, the fax or electronic mail when forwarding them with marks to the administration of

the supporting organization and returning them to students. The whole administrative work is usually computerized today.

The computer has, indeed, proved a very useful and economical instrument for both the distribution of course material and the handling of students' assignments, inclusive of record-keeping. There is a danger inherent in its use, however. Some administrators tend to adapt the system to the computer instead of developing computer programs that cater for what is educationally desirable. Valuable computer systems have been developed for the administration of distance education; one pioneering model description occurs in Merup (1968). Computers can, above all, provide (without mistakes) individual dispatch of study material and perfect record-keeping for several different purposes simultaneously, at very high speed, and at very low cost. The Merup study describes a large-scale application of such computerized administration of distance education with particular emphasis on the communication element.

The use of the computer may lead to depersonalized service which makes students feel that they interact with an institution or authority rather than with human beings. The computer is a versatile instrument, however, which can instead be used to bring about feelings of personal contact with tutors, counsellors and others representing the supporting organization. It is important that the empathy approach characterizes also the administrative parts of the distance-education processes.

TYPES OF ORGANIZATION

The type of the organizations offering distance-education facilities varies with cultural and social contexts, with national and other traditions as well as with the target groups and educational levels of study. It is possible to identify four prototypes as follows:

- 1 Single-mode universities and schools.
- 2 Dual-mode universities and schools.
- 3 Specialized service organizations.
- 4 Networks.

(1) Single-mode universities and schools committed to the special purpose of providing distance education

The single-mode organizations employ their own academic and administrative staff to take responsibility for (develop or vet) printed courses, audio and video tapes and/or radio and television programmes, kits for laboratory work, and other study materials. They organize and provide advisory and didactic mediated two-way communication with their students as well as some supplementary face-to-face tuition. Counselling, examining, issuing certificates, running research projects, etc. are other concerns for these organizations. For their course development, tutoring and counselling, special organization units have been set up. Procedures conducive to the administration of distance education have been developed.

(2) Dual-mode universities and schools offering distance education as well as on-campus study

Well-known examples are extension departments of universities, which provide distance study opportunities for their extramural and on-campus students. The distance-education departments of dual-mode organizations rarely have their own teaching staff. Usually no attempt is made to cover whole countries or to cater for large populations. This implies, on the one hand, small-scale course development with modest resources for pre-producing study material and, on the other hand, far-reaching parallelism with residential study.

See White (1982) and the presentation of the Australian University of New England model on pp. 7 and 202-3.

(3) Specialized service organizations

Examples of service organizations are correspondence schools with expertise in distance-education methodology and administration which administer distance education on behalf of universities or other bodies awarding degrees or examination certificates. These organizations, while drawing on freelance expertise, provide editorial services, development of printed courses and other media, they organize and run tutorial and counselling services, and take responsibility for warehousing, dis-

tribution and all administration. Usually they also evaluate their own work as part of the development process (formative evaluation).

When the possible founding of a distance-teaching university or school is discussed, co-operation with or setting up such a service organization may be an alternative as it is much less costly than creating a full distance-teaching university or school with academics representing each discipline.

(4) Networks

Networking bodies, the fourth type, co-ordinate and supplement the course offer of other distance-education organizations. Norsk Fernundervisning in Norway and Deutsches Institut für Fernstudien at Tübingen University in Germany are cases in point. The latter is a somewhat special kind of network. It has developed courses for use by other organizations, and runs a department for distance-education research as well as a documentation centre. This institute in the summer of 1993 changed its name to Deutsches Institut für Fernstudien forschung ('The German Institute for Distance-Education Research').

Contributions to an organizational typology are presented in Keegan (1990). A remarkable classification based on educational criteria has been developed by Schuemer (1988). It is an empirical study which, in a statistically manageable way, identifies a student-friendliness concept including the recognition of the importance of student-tutor interaction and the need for student support, a further flexibility concept (regarding individual choices of submission frequency vs. imposed pacing, e.g.), an autonomy concept, the place (use and role) of supplementary face-to-face sessions and similar characteristics. This results in a classification of distance-education organizations in six fairly homogeneous groups listed with relevant data.

THE STUDY OF DISTANCE-EDUCATION ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

The principles and practice of distance-education administration have been investigated by several authors. The management of distance education, in practical terms and against the background of basic theoretical approaches, is a concern discussed in Graff

(1981) One of the earliest and still most important contributions to the administration of distance education is Oster (1965). This paper was ably supplemented, as regards the application of computer methods, by Mernup (1968), also still of relevance. They both based their analyses on the practice of a very large and prestigious correspondence school with courses from university level to elementary stages, with professional and occupational training, etc.

A model for distance-study institutions in developing countries has been developed by Erdos (1975a), who, as shown above, has also elaborated her theoretical bases in the form of a systems presentation (Erdos 1975b). The organization of small private correspondence schools has been discussed by A. F. Saxe (1965), and the management of public, small distance-education systems is investigated by Snowden and Daniel (1980).

Among later studies, strongly influenced by the work of distance-teaching universities, is Kaye and Rumble (1981: 13). They identify two key features:

- 1 A *courses subsystem*, concerned with the creation, production and distribution of learning materials.
- 2 A *student subsystem* concerned with enrolment, support and assessment of distance students, and their learning needs.

Keegan (1986) develops this further:

The *course development subsystem* comprises the planning, designing, crystallizing and recording of the teaching (together with the proposed methodologies and structures for presenting the teaching at a future date) in mechanical or electronic form. The *student support subsystem* comprises the activities designed by the institution to focus on the student's home (or institutional centre near the student's home) that will provide a private and individualized presentation of the pre-recorded course content together with the stimulation of teacher and peer-group clarification, analysis, motivation and non-verbal atmosphere that normally accompany the presentation of the course in oral, group-based educational provision.

(Keegan 1986: 197)

Rumble (1986) describes this approach as 'rather technocratic' (p. 17) and compares it with a 'holistic model' of Perraton's

(1981) and a 'transactional model' developed by Henri and Kaye (1985). Why Keegan's systems model is not called holistic, whereas Perraton's is, seems to be because the latter starts out from more comprehensive, external, social requirements, whereas the former's system is limited to specific distance-education concerns. The transactional model views distance education from the different perspectives of its principal agents.

At the time of writing, Rumble (1986 and 1992) are the most comprehensive and best documented presentations available of distance-education administration. Economic and political perspectives are given due prominence and the organization, staffing, planning, budgeting, management, and evaluation of distance education are thoroughly and competently discussed. Institution-centred, person-centred, and society-centred organizations are studied in this monograph.

Interesting presentations of the operative aspects of distance education from Latin American points of view are to be found in Villarroel (1987). They include, but are not limited to, organizational and administrative concerns as to tutoring, course production, media use, student assessment, and course evaluation.

An administrative function of particular importance to distance study at the university level and to project work generally (see p. 72) concerns library facilities, on which some important studies have been published (Brockman and Klobas (1983); Winter and Cameron 1983).