Distance Education Policy

Republic of Mauritius

TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind. Khalil Gibran
Distance Education Policy

Republic of Mauritius

Working Group on Distance Education Policy Development
2013

To understand life is to understand ourselves, and that is both the beginning and the end of education.
J. Krishnamurti (1895-1986)- Philosopher
DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

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<tr>
<td>ADDIEE</td>
<td>Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Environment and Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>AfDB</td>
<td>African Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>CATS</td>
<td>Credit Accumulation and Transfer Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBIS</td>
<td>Certificate in Business Information System course</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDL</td>
<td>Centre for Distance Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEMS</td>
<td>The Centre for Extra Mural Studies</td>
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<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<td>CHE</td>
<td>Council of Higher Education, South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>CODL</td>
<td>The Centre for Open and Distance Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>COL</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMESA</td>
<td>Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPDL</td>
<td>Centre for Professional Development and Lifelong Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPE</td>
<td>Certificate of Primary Education</td>
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<td>DE</td>
<td>Distance Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEASA</td>
<td>Distance Education Association of Southern Africa</td>
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<td>DECC</td>
<td>Distance Education Coordination Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAC</td>
<td>East African Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECCEA</td>
<td>Early Childhood Care Education Authority</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<td>ESD</td>
<td>Education for Sustainable Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>Fashion and Design Institute</td>
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<td>GER</td>
<td>Gross Enrolment Rate</td>
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<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human immunodeficiency virus / acquired immunodeficiency syndrome</td>
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<td>HRDC</td>
<td>Human Resource Development Council</td>
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<td>ICDE</td>
<td>International Council for Distance Learning</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGNOU</td>
<td>Indira Gandhi National Open University</td>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IVTB</td>
<td>Industrial and Vocational Training Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Master of Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>MANCOSA</td>
<td>Management College of Southern Africa (MANCOSA)</td>
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<td>MCA</td>
<td>Mauritius College of the Air</td>
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<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEAC</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture</td>
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<td>MEHR</td>
<td>Ministry of Education &amp; Human Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGI</td>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi Institute</td>
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<td>MIE</td>
<td>Mauritius Institute of Education</td>
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<td>MIH</td>
<td>Mauritius Institute of Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>MITD</td>
<td>Mauritius Institute of Training and Development</td>
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<td>MQA</td>
<td>Mauritius Qualifications Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>NADEOSA</td>
<td>National Association of Distance Education Organisations of South Africa</td>
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<td>NICTP</td>
<td>National Information and Communication Technologies Plan</td>
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<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>NTC</td>
<td>National Trade Certificate</td>
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<td>ODeL</td>
<td>Open Distance and Electronic Learning</td>
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<td>ODL</td>
<td>Open and Distance Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>OUM</td>
<td>Open University of Mauritius</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRIMTAF</td>
<td>Programme de Renforcement Institutionnel en Matière de Technologie en Afrique Francophone</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSTF</td>
<td>Pre-School Trust Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>RBS</td>
<td>Regent Business School (RBS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTI</td>
<td>Rabindranath Tagore Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>TDT</td>
<td>Transactional Distance Theory</td>
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<td>TEC</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>TQF</td>
<td>Transnational Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>TEC</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>TVET</td>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCLES</td>
<td>University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKOU</td>
<td>UK Open University</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nation Children’s Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UOM</td>
<td>University of Mauritius</td>
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<tr>
<td>UTM</td>
<td>University of Technology Mauritius</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCILT</td>
<td>Virtual Centre for Innovative Learning Technologies</td>
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<tr>
<td>WG</td>
<td>Working Group</td>
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<td>YKBS</td>
<td>YK Business School</td>
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Message from Chairman, Tertiary Education Commission

This Distance Education Policy comes at a time where Mauritius is at the cross-roads of development in matters of tertiary education. As the Chairman of the TEC Board, I am a privileged witness to participate in such development. To contribute to the making of Mauritius into a Regional Knowledge Hub, we recognize that it is important for us all to be strong in terms of guidelines, regulations and policy frameworks.

As the apex regulatory body for Tertiary Education in Mauritius, the TEC is concerned with aspects like national development; institutional development; access, personal development and lifelong learning; ICT integration; pedagogical and curricular development; assessment; student support; quality assurance as well as research and capacity building in distance education. It is along these lines that we welcome the Distance Education Policy for the Republic of Mauritius.

All the above mentioned aspects come under scrutiny when the TEC engages in quality assurance and audits. TEC ensures that all aspects of the Distance Education supply chain are considered since they are meant to provide the regulator with relevant information to foster understanding regarding functional and dysfunctional aspects. With this enhanced understanding, TEC and the Tertiary Educational Institutions can collaboratively endeavour to recalibrate a given practice for the ultimate benefit of the student.

The Distance Education Policy was developed through an innovative theory-led approach that ensures consistently that the distance in distance education is bridged so that the learner is not isolated in the learning endeavour. With the student at the centre of its concerns, the policy also ensures the instructional materials developed, carry academic integrity; that programmes are taught by appropriately qualified and trained individuals; and that students become employable citizens.

With this long awaited policy, it gives me great pleasure to see the TEC responding fully to its mandate as the apex agency for the continued development of the Tertiary Education sector in Mauritius and the region. I thank all those who have contributed to the preparation of the Distance Education Policy and commend its implementation to all stakeholders.

Prof. Donald Ah-Chuen, GOSK
Chairman
Preface from Chairman, sub-Committee on Distance Education Policy and Distance Education Coordination Committee

As a member of the Board of the Tertiary Education Commission and as a practitioner, it is with a heightened awareness that I welcome this Policy for Distance Education as one of the most important achievements of the Commission after the development and implementation of its Regulatory Framework. Chairing the sub-Committee on Distance Education Policy as well as the Distance Education Coordination Committee, I have been impressed by the amount of work done to enable the development of this evidence-based policy for Mauritius in a relatively short time. I commend the members of the Working Group, led by Dr. S. Gokool-Ramadoo, Ag. Head of the Distance Education & Open Learning Division of the TEC, for the commitment and consistency that they have shown in their adherence to tasks that were required of them.

The TEC, being the guardian of quality education in Mauritius, requires appropriate instruments to honour its mission. In the past few years, the mounting number of requests for the setting up of institutions, accreditation, quality assurance, recognition and equivalence that are sent to the Commission bear testimony to the opening up of the field of higher education to an increasing number of potential providers. The Board is fully conscious that to be able to provide informed advice to the Government, it needs to build on research evidence that emanates from the field. And a policy that is evidence-based is a powerful instrument that supports the existing regulatory framework. In fact they are mutually inclusive: it is expected that the Distance Education Policy will positively influence the regulatory framework and vice-versa as it builds public confidence. In furtherance of its mandate, the TEC will ensure its progressive implementation and compliance with the regulatory framework over the coming year.

As distance educators, we have long felt the need for operational guidelines, and for the kind of forum that has led to the formulation of the policy goals herein outlined. This has been achieved by the setting up a sub-Committee by the TEC Board to monitor the development of the policy, then the constitution of the Working Group to act as the technical arm to develop the policy through the required number of consultations and finally through the research that has been carried out which has demonstrated the continued vibrancy of distance education in Mauritius.

At a time when it is the Government’s ambition to develop Mauritius into a Regional Knowledge Hub- distance education being increasingly recognized as an important agent of development- this demonstrated vibrancy needs to be maintained. There are two elements that will foreseeably keep it ongoing: the Distance Education Policy as well as the Distance Education Coordination Committee (DECC) that was recently set up again by the TEC Board in renewed recognition of its importance.

Indeed way back in 1991 a former Executive Director of the Tertiary Education Commission, Prof. James Maraj (an ex-President of the Commonwealth of Learning) and a staunch believer in distance education, had initially set the DECC to support the TEC’s role as the national nodal coordination agency of distance education activities among post-secondary institutions in Mauritius. It will now ensure that the policy is progressively implemented, so that practitioners have an enlarged forum for research, sharing of best practices and experiences whilst students benefit from quality distance education.

I hope that this new chapter in the field of Distance Education in Mauritius will open up new opportunities that will benefit the Mauritian population as a whole.

Ken Cathan
Foreword by Officer-in-Charge, Tertiary Education Commission

It gives me great pleasure to present the Distance Education Policy. This policy document demonstrates the directions that the TEC Board wishes to give to distance education among post-secondary institutions in support to the Government ambition to develop Mauritius into a Regional Knowledge Hub. Today, at the click of a mouse, quality education can become accessible to an ever increasing range of audiences. However, at the TEC we realize the need to guard against any deregulated increase in access as well as the corresponding increase in demand. We realize the importance of being vigilant about the risks posed to quality of provision and vulnerability of learners. As guardians of the quality of tertiary education in Mauritius, it is important for the TEC to have appropriate mechanisms to enable its stakeholders engage in quality distance education.

A necessary gear in assembly of the regulatory framework, this Distance Education Policy is a timely initiative. It is a national matrix that will enable stakeholders involved in post-secondary education, including policymakers, providers and students, to resolve issues that so far had escaped them. Stakeholders have worried over conceptual confusion, have grappled with the benefits of using one technology over another, and have struggled to demonstrate the parity of esteem with which distance education should be considered. In fact, the policy aims at enlightening stakeholders as well as providing essential information for quality assurance purposes. Indeed, the distance education policy will provide additional support to the regulatory framework.

At the TEC, we will ensure that the policy is progressively and collaboratively implemented. We aim to make it an aspect of our quality assurance exercise. It is expected that as institutions work out their own plans within the coming months, they align these with the national one and we will all stand to gain. The processes leading to the formulation of the policy goals bear testimony to the innovative approaches to policy development that were employed in this exercise.

It is important to see that first of all, as the national nodal coordination agency for post-secondary distance education, the TEC has taken the lead in developing a dedicated policy that will take distance education into new realms of development. It is clear that if in a policy deficit situation, distance education has developed as much as it has, with the support of a policy, an appropriate roadmap will consolidate its planning, effectiveness and efficiency as it contributes to the country’s development. It stands to be a strategic tool as Mauritius engages further into the Regional Knowledge Hub ambition. Already with this policy framework aligned with that developed by the SADC, Mauritius can share experiences and best practices with fellow member countries. There can be a healthy exchange: in an environment where all stakeholders are informed, only quality education will prevail.

Finally, I must thank all the colleagues who have worked intensively to put this document together, especially stakeholders coming from public and private Tertiary Education Institutions and also those who have contributed internally at the TEC. They have all shown consistency and staunch support to the work of the TEC. This commitment is a good signal that I am sure will persist through the work that will be done by the recently revived Distance Education Coordination Committee. I commend this policy and expect all intended audiences to benefit from it.

Mohamed Saabir Kasenally
1.0 Scope and purpose of this policy

Distance education (DE) has, so far, been discussed in various education legislations, policies and strategic plans in Mauritius. A disparate approach has led to a noted unguided growth that is not doing justice to the potential applications of DE in a country like Mauritius. To address this gap and to harness the full capacity represented by DE, a dedicated policy contributes to a fuller understanding of its outreach potential. It does justice to its inherent complexity as well as provides guidelines to providers and practitioners in such a way that it can be usefully employed to fulfil the Government as well as institutional development agendas. This is therefore the first draft policy document of the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology/Tertiary Education Commission that is entirely dedicated to the use of DE among post-secondary institutions in Mauritius.

This policy framework is the result of collaborative work over several months among members of a Working Group that was set up by the Tertiary Education Commission/Sub-Committee on DE policy development. The Tertiary Education Commission is the nodal agency for the coordination of post-secondary DE activities in Mauritius. The recently revived Distance Education Coordination Committee (DECC) whereby all institutions engaged in DE are represented, will play an important role in the implementation of this policy framework and in further supporting the development of quality DE in Mauritius. Moreover, to consolidate activities leading to the development of Mauritius into a Regional Knowledge Hub, this policy document concurs with discussions held within the different policy-dedicated cells of the SADC-Centre for Distance Education. Thus despite the fact that it was worked out separately, the evidence-based policy goals developed by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) Working Group is harmoniously aligned with the SADC-evolved framework.

The policy framework that hosts the Distance Education Policy is at the cusp of local and international empirical research, experiences, and best practices that influence the discussions throughout this draft. Of significant interest, it is an educational policy that innovatively draws on a Distance Education theory to guide its development and sustainability. Through this policy document, the TEC addresses and helps resolve several uncertainties continuously expressed by Stakeholders thereby strengthening provision locally and makes DE as sustainable instrument of educational development in Mauritius and the region. In sum a dedicated policy will further support the growth of DE in a systematic and structured manner that aligns provision with national and regional requirements, holds more promises for individual, institutional and national development, opens up choices and learning opportunities, as well as strengthens the strategic positioning of Mauritius as a Knowledge Hub.

An integrated methodology was employed for the development of the DE policy. It is a roadmap for both the regulator and the provider of post-secondary education. Within the integrated methodology and policy goals herein delineated, it is expected that both public and private providers of post-secondary DE will find sufficient guidelines to reflect on and continuously improve their current practice as well as influence the development of their own institutional policies. The integrated methodology provides step-wise guidance towards programme planning, development and quality assurance. It aims at being useful for the development of institutional policies niched
within the framework of the national policy. It is only by aligning institutional development plans with those of the Government that progress can conceivably be achieved. The section on methodology is specifically useful for those who wish to develop their own institutional plans in a way that will support the alignment of their programmes with the learning outcomes outlined in the Mauritius National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and inherent in the Government vision.

1.1 Operational definition

To maintain the focus on aspects that are of relevance to the policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders, an operational definition is useful. DE refers to an educational operation that is transacted between two parties at a minimum - the teacher and the learner. ¹ We are given to understand that the fundamental concept of DE is simple enough: students and teachers are separated by a range of issues, concepts and factors that are conceived as ‘distance’. To bridge any such distance it is necessary to introduce a plethora of mechanisms that will provide channels for the interaction between teacher and learner. It is to be noted that, for ease of discussion the ‘teacher’ is hereby taken in the larger sense of the term to be the one who presents information for learners to interact with and who guides student learning as well as support how learners create, apply and test their knowledge.²

The Policy Working Group agreed on the use of the term ‘distance education’. DE is thus taken as an umbrella term that accommodates activities described variously as distance learning, e-learning, flexible learning, ODeL (Open Distance and Electronic Learning), open and distance learning (ODL) and so forth. The Working Group also agreed on adopting a systems approach to policy development. The systems approach enables stakeholders to see articulations between the different components of content, design, communications, interaction, learner environment, and management. It is also helpful in understanding DE, helps analyse and evaluate what is sometimes called DE but may not be, flags dysfunctions and is a model for good practice at all levels.

Under the umbrella term DE, two operational definitions inform this policy document. Thus, ‘classical’ DE refers to those distance learning environments that favour print-based media, that may include audio-visual, satellite, telephony and e-mail based transactions but that preclude an electronic educational platform⁴ as channels for interaction between teacher and learner. ‘Online’ DE refers to that type of educational transaction that is carried out on an electronic platform⁴ in an inclusive manner.

Some scholars⁵ have proposed that the separation of students from teachers influences how teachers plan, present content, interact and carry out teaching-related activities “in ways that differ significantly from teaching in a face to face environment”. They further propose that when teachers and students are not in a regular face to face exchange, the physical distance between them can generate a space for potential misunderstandings between them. These scholars⁶ call this space for

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² Depending on contextual/cultural variables, teachers are also called instructors, facilitators, lecturers and educators among others. For ease of discussion and reference, the term ‘teacher’ is used in this document is inclusive.
potential misunderstanding, ‘transactional distance’ and suggest that it can take many forms, including spatial, temporal, economic, social, psychological, cultural/contextual, geographical, technological and communication, fiscal, governance, faculty, legal, gender and finally, philosophical distances.

From a systemic perspective, DE is a layered notion with different types of transactional distances operating variously between the student and the teaching organisation. Therefore, a student involved in a DE transaction may face different layers of transactional distances, for instance: geographical distance if s/he is far from the place of instruction, or technological distance if s/he cannot register on an online DE programme for lack of connectivity or even access to a computer. So students must persist across contextually- and culturally-driven transactional distances, which are multi-layered and often, overlapping. Concerns in DE as a discipline converge towards bridging these transactional distances. In addition, it has been recently argued that a policy deficit introduces an additional layer of transactional distance. It follows that an effective DE policy should necessarily address all the layers of transactional distances. The policy should provide the space within which strategies and mechanisms that will support the development of bridges across the educational transaction can evolve.

1.2 Challenges

In the course of its development over the years, DE has faced many challenges. These have ranged globally from conceptual confusion, policy deficit, to inadequate funding, improper planning models, and weak networking that have sometimes compromised its sustainability.

1.2.1 Conceptual confusion

In Mauritius, as elsewhere, conceptual confusion contributed to negative perceptions and misconceptions with regard to DE. It is well documented how DE was globally seen as less important or credible and of lower quality than conventional education. This was clearly the result of conflicting discourses between the conservatives and the non-conservatives. The conservatives are those who constantly challenged the development of DE. First, conservatives were of the view that since DE and its implications were unknown to most stakeholders in the early days, it was best viewed with some caution. Second, the fact that DE was called by so many different names which conceptually meant different things, its development has often been crippled. When the concept of ‘virtualness’ was introduced by electronic media, DE was further shrouded with a cloud of uncertainty. Conservatives became more protective of conventional education, further relegating DE...
to the status of unfortunate second best. DE was thus marginalized as a less desirable route to higher education. Indeed, for the conservatives, DE was perceived to be at the periphery of development in higher education.

1.2.2 Policy deficit

It has already been said, experienced\(^1\) and agreed that a policy deficit has been the major obstacle to the growth of DE. The absence of a dedicated DE policy in Mauritius has slowed down its development. In fact while the need for a systemic approach was already felt in the early 1990s and was lobbied for by an AfDB Consultant, Dr. Jenkins who acknowledged that “The multiple problems and challenges arising in DE need to be addressed in a holistic way as a matter of urgency\(^2\).” However, it is reported that the implications of this approach were “grossly misunderstood and consequently has not crystallized…”\(^3\) Policy deficit impeded the realization of early discussions of DE as a driver of change and opportunities for lifelong learning which arose in the Master Plan for Education.\(^4\) Inadequate systematic research on the terrain including the difficulty to capture those individuals engaged in a DE activity has weakened its planning. Lack of advocacy and capacity building compounded existing difficulties among policymakers and practitioners. In a policy deficit situation, there was a noted absence of guidelines for planning and resource deployment as well as a clear shying away from a planned systemic approach that would involve the collaboration of all the stakeholders intervening from their areas of expertise and experience. At institutional level, a policy deficit can cripple strategic development and often leads to a myopic institutional vision entailing a non-alignment with national plans and variable quality of DE provision. For individuals, a policy deficit limits visibility and understanding in terms of choices and opportunities available for personal development and eventually may lead to learner dissatisfaction and non-persistence\(^5\). In addition to the above-observed challenges, a policy deficit will compromise a country’s competitive edge (especially in terms of quality benchmarks) and entail low public confidence. The following Figure 1, which is inclusive of all DE stakeholders, shows how effects of a DE policy deficit can cascade from one level of concern to another.

\(^1\) Paduruth, S. TEC, Distance Education Policy Working Group Member, MGI Representative
\(^2\) Dhurbaryall, R. (2005). Development of Distance Education in Mauritius. Quarterly Review of Distance Education. 6(3), p.196
\(^3\) Dhurbaryall, R. (2005). Development of Distance Education in Mauritius. Quarterly Review of Distance Education. 6(3), p.196
1.2.3 Intended audiences

The use of DE in Mauritius encompasses all educational levels (pre-primary to post-secondary and beyond), sectors (general, professional and vocational education) and pathways (formal, non-formal and informal). However, this is not in a sustained and organized way. The TEC Participation Report informs us that the total number of students for 2011/2012 studying through DE mode is 6,636\textsuperscript{16}. It is clear that with the Knowledge Hub ambition as well as with the requirements of the non-formal and even informal sectors, given the problems caused by Climate Change and the foreseen need to develop plans for disaster preparedness, DE will be increasingly solicited.

1.2.4 Funding

While elsewhere funding has compromised the growth of DE, this has not been the case in Mauritius. The ex-Mauritius College of the Air, as well as sections within the Mauritius Institute of Education, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, the University of Mauritius and now the Open University of Mauritius are clear demonstrations of how the Government has always believed in the potential of DE for adult learners, especially women, for teacher education as well as for primary and secondary school children (as was the case in the early 1970s). However, it is recognized that to make DE an effective instrument of development in a Knowledge Industry environment, an appropriate and dedicated funding model will have to be developed.

1.2.5 Linkages and networking

In the recent years, Mauritius has not made full use of its existing DE linkages. With the Association for the Development of Education in Africa/Working Group on Distance Education & Open Learning being coordinated by Mauritius, memberships for such organisations like the ICDE were secured, but membership with those like the NADEOSA, DEASA were not fully explored. As seen from outcomes within these mentioned networks, it is clear that Mauritius had stepped aside regional DE-related developments for a while. It is recognized that linkages and networking provide

additional support to local development of DE because of the availability of extended platforms for the sharing of experiences and best practices.

1.2.6 Quality assurance

Taken in its simplest definition, quality assurance in education implies fitness of purpose of programme for a given context. Quality assurance is the concern of everybody at large. The absence of a roadmap for DE has led to felt and expressed anxiety. It would appear that DE was seen to be in a deregulated environment, impacting negatively on curriculum development, instructional design, delivery and student support as well as programme outcomes. The increasing pervasiveness of ICTs in DE requires a more careful approach to its planning if quality is to be ensured and maintained.

1.2.7 ICTs and DE

Despite the fact ‘virtualness’ as introduced by electronic media contributed to uncertainty concerning education made available on online learning platforms or informal learning through social media, DE in Mauritius has progressed valiantly. Mauritius is one of the few sub-Saharan African countries that have strong and reliable connectivity. In fact, the Mauritius National Broadband policy 2012-2020\textsuperscript{17} sets out a strategic vision for a broadband Intelligent Mauritius, branded as “Towards i-Mauritius”, and set up national goals concerning broadband while elaborating specific policies to achieve those goals within the overarching National ICT Strategic Plan (NICTSP) 2011-2014. The National Broadband Policy facilitates the provision of affordable, universal access to broadband infrastructure and services to promote the social and economic opportunities that can be made available by broadband in order to ensure the best possible conditions under which Mauritius can grow further as a knowledge-based society. It is to be noted that between 2010 and 2011, the number of internet subscriptions increased by 30% from 284,200 to 370,000. Moreover the number of internet subscriptions per 100 inhabitants went up from 22.1 to 28.7. Data collected by the Housing Census 2011 on ICT access by households, shows that the proportion of households with fixed phone was 69.1%, mobile phones 88.1%, TV 96.0%, computer 37.5% and internet access 27.9\%\textsuperscript{18}.

ICT usage in both primary and secondary schools improved considerably between March 2010 and March 2011. There has been an increase in the proportion of primary schools providing internet access to students, from 55.7% to 58.0% while the number of primary school students per computer improved from 27 to 26. Access to internet in secondary schools also increased from 94.7% to 96.0% and the number of secondary school students per computer improved from 22 to 21. In the tertiary education sector, ICT continuously plays an important role since the number of students enrolled in ICT or an ICT-dominated field augmented from 3,694 to 3,878 (+5%) during the academic year 2010/2011 and 2011/2012. The enrolment in ICT courses based on the number of students enrolled at tertiary level rose from 8.3% to 8.4\%.\textsuperscript{19} More recently, in January 2013, the Government launched a scheme whereby individuals can purchase 2 gigabytes of bandwidth for a

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[18] Continuous Multi Purpose Household Survey (CMPHS) 2010 and Housing Census (2011.)
\item[19] Annual Survey in primary and secondary school in March: MES & TEC
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
modicum of Mauritian Rupees 200.00 (6.57 US$)\textsuperscript{20}. While in other countries, especially the sub-Saharan Africa, ICTs, access and connectivity present a challenge; with their democratization, Mauritius has a highly enabling technological environment. Its use should now be appropriately adapted for educational purposes and towards the development of pedagogically appropriate programmes. For DE, the development of ICTs hold significant promises that need to be fully explored.

Therefore despite a policy deficit leading to the absence of planning guidelines, and negative general perceptions, advances in ICT have been a strong ally that has helped bring DE back to centre-stage higher education and even conferred it parity of esteem. Nowadays, it is accepted that there is a no significant difference phenomenon between DE\textsuperscript{21} and conventional education. This aspect needs to be employed advantageously in Mauritius. It is expected that the present policy will address these challenges.

1.3 Areas of relevance and importance

Second chance education, open schooling for lifelong learning and use of ICTs to enhance access are recognized aspects where DE is seen as relevant and important. Besides its pedagogical role in terms of bringing the teacher and the taught closer, DE worldwide has had a significant role to play as an instrument of development. It is highly appealing in terms of providing second-chance education to previously ‘marginalized’ groups like out-of-school youths, those with learning disabilities, housewives, the elderly, prisoners, and army personnel in difficult and remote situations as well as those displaced people in situations of conflicts or wars or situations of poverty. Through contextually-appropriate DE these audiences can continue to further their education. For others, DE may help their social reintegration or social promotion as the case may be.

Open schooling is an area of recognized importance in DE. Many children around the world, including Mauritius, have grown up listening to the voices of remote “teachers” on the radio or have been coached for their examinations by televised teachers. Educational programmes that have been broadcast in that manner have consolidated the development of many necessary competencies. This policy document considers open schooling as an important aspect that has to be fully explored to support the reintegration of many individuals in the national development plans. Wherever, they arise, aspects of ‘openness’ should be clearly delineated and contextualized with regard to DE provision in Mauritius.

Supported by technology, DE is now increasingly associated with enhancing access for a wider range of potential audiences and improved quality of programmes. In addition, DE has revitalized perspectives on and approaches to higher education in general, by opening up choices and opportunities for learning regardless of time and place. Lifelong learning has been reinvigorated through DE. For those who wish to continue schooling and higher education, DE presents opportunities that were heretofore unheard of.

\textsuperscript{20} Information and Communication Technologies Authority of Mauritius (ICTA)-supplied information. 25\textsuperscript{th} January 2013
It is recognized that globally, lifelong learning has been further supported through the development of Credit Accumulation and Transfer Systems (CATS) and adequately developed learning outcomes within National Qualifications Frameworks. With DE as an appropriate and relevant vehicle responding to the demands of a changing, knowledge-intensive society, this stands to further improve the way in which transactional distances can be bridged and student mobility improved across educational levels (pre-primary to post-tertiary), sectors (general, TVET/professional) and pathways (formal, non-formal and informal).

A noteworthy CATS is that one which is especially dedicated to DE transactions: undoubtedly the Commonwealth of Learning Transnational Qualifications Framework. By being referenced and recognized by 32 countries of the Commonwealth, this Framework is especially valid for student and professional inter-institutional and inter-country mobility among the countries of the Commonwealth and has further consolidated DE as a strategy for development. More importantly, DE, along with its approaches and philosophy has helped put the student at the centre of all its operations. It needs to be remembered that without the student – there is no transaction, no educational business. So the student should remain central to this enterprise.

In the wake of such developments the integration of technology-influenced DE which has gradually filtered into the arena of conventional education is increasingly recognized. ICTs play a pivotal role in terms of bridging transactional distances between teacher and the taught- equally for those on campus as for those who are off-campus and even between conventional education and DE. It becomes more and more clear that conventional education benefits tremendously from aspects that are more particular to DE, for instance educational technology or instructional design. The innovations that constantly occur in DE spill over to conventional education giving rise to an increasingly popular blended approach. Within the blended approach, on-campus students can study DE modules and off-campus DE students can benefit from some face to face sessions.

### 1.4 Guiding principles of the DE Policy

The guiding principles of the development of the DE policy are as follows:

1. The Government Vision and Mission with regard to democratizing access to quality Education for Development
2. Allocated budget
3. The Regulatory Framework
4. A Credit Accumulation and Transfer System and National Qualifications Frameworks with clearly outlined learning outcomes, including arrangements for the Recognition and Accreditation of Prior Learning to boost inter-country and inter-institutional student mobility
5. The audience/s concerned and their needs
6. The strengths of providing institutions in terms of their teaching and research capacity
7. The broad technological infrastructure to support DE delivery
8. The technological-readiness of the country and the population
9. The aspects of the DE philosophy that are contextually and culturally relevant
10. The importance of a DE theory to ensure the sustainability of the policy
11. The centrality of the student as an organizing principle making student satisfaction, support and persistence as important prerequisites at both national and institutional levels.

1.5 Why is a DE policy important for Mauritius?

The main argument in favour of DE is usually its scalability as well as the numbers for which it can cater. However in an island where geographical distance is hardly a challenge and where the numbers are relatively negligible and where DE is gradually taking roots, it may be perceived that the rationale for a DE policy may be difficult to defend. However this is not so since DE, as we know it, has become seamless to the extent that it may now even be considered as the matrix within which other forms of education can be found\(^{22}\). Research has also proved that there is a no significant difference phenomenon between DE and conventional education and therefore DE will require much attention given its potential to provide support in the development of Mauritius into a Regional Knowledge Hub.

A policy is also concerned with governance. It helps improve the educational infrastructure and architecture as well as transparency and accountability to all concerned. It is a roadmap that supports planning at all levels- the nation, the institution and the individual citizen and provides visibility to all concerned. With regard to post-secondary education, a national DE policy is important because it involves public resources. The national policy provides signposts regarding areas where interventions are required in post-secondary institutions and also provides guidelines for the development of institutional policies. Thus by aligning their policies with the national policy, public and private institutions are better armed to stay competitive and harness their resources towards growth.

Typically, a DE policy should speak to context, resources, activities, and desired outcomes\(^{23}\). With regard to post-secondary education, a national DE policy enhances public confidence and facilitates recognition, accreditation and quality requirements\(^{24}\). In fact an effective policy should carry inherent quality assurance mechanisms. A policy is expected to pave the way towards effective and efficient practice within an identified, generally agreed and well-understood framework. The framework should include the provision of student support, coordination of programme development and implementation, responsive administration and quality assurance\(^{25}\). Additionally, a policy will inform the public about choices, opportunities and alert them about ill-practices.

Finally with regard to its practice in Mauritius a DE policy will be important to (i) dispel existing conceptual confusion, (ii) promote advocacy and capacity building (iii) aid in planning for all relevant groups and sectors,(iv) harmonize curriculum development within tertiary education institutions (v) enhance meaningful learning experiences and student persistence (vi) fulfil Government ambition to democratize access to education for improved national development, (vii) sustain governance (viii) improve the international transparency of programmes and recognition of qualifications by means


of a gradual alignment of the local framework with regionally or internationally recognized ones, and (ix) promote regional integration initiatives.

1.6 The policy development process

This policy document is the result of the interaction between a policy development framework and data that emanated from several consultations with stakeholders. It was aligned with the expectations of the Board of the Tertiary Education Commission which decided to focus on the development of an evidence-based policy that would reflect and be responsive to the Mauritian context and needs. In this regard, an emanation of the TEC Board, a sub-Committee on Distance Education Policy was set up to support the development of the said policy. In turn the sub-Committee created a small Working Group. The Working Group was made up of members of Publicly-Funded and Privately-Funded Tertiary Education Institutions who were involved in DE provision. The Publicly-Funded providers were namely the Open University of Mauritius (OUM) and the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE). The Privately-funded Institutions which were selected on the basis on the highest number of registrants were the AEA Ltd and YK Business School. All participating institutions adhered to the agreed Terms of Reference. Eventually, participation was widened to the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI), the University Of Technology (UTM) as well as the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA). A series of consultations among the members of the Working Group, individual interviews with the members as well as teachers and students from the MIE, OUM, MGI and YKBS, and site visits provided pertinent information that was woven within this document and informed the policy goals. The Distance Education Coordination Committee which was subsequently set up by the TEC Board eventually provided additional support to the initially constituted Working Group. This document is progressive and is intended to accommodate changes as they arise in the Mauritian and regional contexts.

1.7 The DE policy framework

Ranging from its methodology to data collection and policy formulation, this document is unique because it is entirely Mauritian in its spirit, approach and research towards the development of an evidence-based DE policy. This policy development exercise rests on an innovative framework that evolved from the ground with the collaboration of Mauritian stakeholders. As opposed to many policies that are uniquely economic- or management-oriented, this particular policy is inspired from an educational approach and is oriented towards regional, national, institutional and personal development.

An innovative DE theory-driven policy development model that has been approved by the scholarly community provided the basis on which the policy goals described herein were developed. The theory employed to formulate the distance education policy in this document informs us that a policy deficit increases transactional distances between distance education stakeholders ranging from policymakers through students to providing institutions. This present policy document reinstates distance education to its central role in terms of democratizing access to quality educational opportunities and puts the student firmly at the centre of all its concerns. Moreover, using the learner-centred focus in fact allows the use of the “client as the major organizing principle,
[and] to tie in the transactional mode and the system perspective, “its main intent is to bridge transactional distances between all stakeholders. Informed by the principles of sustainable development, the policy framework delineated in this document provides practical guidelines for all providing institutions to develop their own strategic and action plans.

2.0 Mauritius: the policy context

The Island of Mauritius gained its independence on 12th March 1968 and acceded to the status of Republic within the Commonwealth on 12th March 1992. In 2012, the Republic of Mauritius which includes the islands of Rodrigues, Agalega, and Saint Brandon has an estimated population of 1,293,549 beings which comprises of different ethnic groups. Mauritius owes its plurality due to the different waves of colonization and migration over the past centuries. In the past few decades, there has been a significant economic growth in Mauritius upgrading it to the status of Middle Income countries. In the 1960s, as a monocrop economy, Mauritius heavily relied on the successful sugar cane industry which benefited from preferential trade agreements with the UK and the European Union.

Gradually, the diversifying Mauritian economy has focused increasingly on tourism, textiles, sugar and financial services to include information and communication technology, seafood, hospitality and property development, healthcare, renewable energy, as well as education and training. Following a multi-sector reform agenda in 2006 aiming at improving the competitiveness of the economy led to an accelerated rate of growth, reduced unemployment and economic diversification through the development of new sectors, including the Ocean Economy as enunciated in the 2012 Budget Speech.

Mauritius forms part of a number of regional blocs such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) or the East African Community (EAC). All these regional blocs help promote regional integration to achieve economies of scale, to increase the levels of trade among the different regions and to enhance development. Regionalization has enabled trade facilitation to improve the flow of goods and services. These regional blocs have focused on the elimination of barriers among member countries, such as the removal of custom duties and export duties to increase level of trade and regional cooperation and integration among them. Multilateral agreements made with countries such as India, China and mostly African countries have proved to be very beneficial for the progress of the country. Therefore, regionalization can be conceived as the growth of societal integration within a given region, including the undirected processes of social and economic interaction among the units. This section provides a backdrop against which the importance of education for development as well as the need for a DE policy in Mauritius will subsequently be explored.

27 http://statsmauritius.gov.mu/English/StatsbySubj/Documents/esi1018/Amended%20FIN%20%20_ESI%202012.pdf
2.1 Education and development in Mauritius

The role of Education in the development of the Economy cannot be disputed, nor can its future role in regional integration. Ever since Independence, democratizing access to education has been a stronghold of government agendas. Education is free in Mauritius from pre-primary to tertiary levels. The introduction of free transport in 2005 as an enabling scheme for all students has further enhanced access to education. Government expenditure on education was estimated at about 12.5% of total expenditure. The education system in Mauritius carries the pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Students are expected to spend about 3 years at pre-primary school, 6 years at primary school, exiting to the secondary school level after the Certificate of Primary Education. Five years at secondary school lead to the School Certificate examinations and an additional two years to the Higher School Certificate (examined through the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, UCLES). There are four universities that offer tertiary level programmes: the University of Mauritius, the University of Technology, the Open University of Mauritius and the University of Mascarenes. Given its strategic geographical positioning and especially it can play with regard to trade linkages between Africa, China and India, the Government envisages developing Mauritius into a Regional Knowledge Hub and a centre for higher learning and excellence.

In line with its democratic traditions, selected objectives of the Education Sector for Mauritius as stated in the Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources are as follows:

1. “To ensure that ALL children aged 3 to 5 years in Mauritius have the opportunity to develop their individual intellectual, socio-emotional and psycho-motor skills to the best of their capacity in order to build the confidence and self-esteem in learning that will not only prepare them for the next level (primary school) but more importantly, lay the foundations for learning that will support them throughout their lifetime.

2. To sustain equitable access to quality education, ensuring that all learners attain high levels of achievement in Literacy, Numeracy, Information and Communications Technology and such essential Life Skills as sound human values, healthy lifestyle and so forth as the basis for lifelong learning and good citizenship.

3. To ensure that all students are given the opportunity to embark on and complete higher secondary education for employability and higher and further education and training with the required maturity and confidence.

4. To build a system that ensures a supply of quality personnel that work collegially with a strong management and quality assurance system to improve and support learning achievement and overall development of all learners.

5. To provide an efficient and effective TVET system of greater public esteem responsive to the present and future needs by providing skilled and flexible workforce.

6. To make Mauritius an intelligent island, a Knowledge Hub to serve the Region and a Centre for Higher Learning and Excellence.

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7. To build a creative and competent Human Resource base for Mauritius for sustainable national development.”...

In the above sectoral objectives indicate that initiatives within the Education sector should address all levels of learning and should also incorporate all learning pathways that are depicted in Figure 2 hereunder:

**Figure 2. Pathways of the Education and Training System in Mauritius**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Labour Market</th>
<th>Tertiary Education</th>
<th>Pre-Vocational Education (3 years)</th>
<th>NTC Level II &amp; III (MITD &amp; Other Private Providers)</th>
<th>NTCE / Other Private Providers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper Secondary</td>
<td>Form V/VG &amp; Lower</td>
<td>Cambridge Higher School Certificate (HSC)</td>
<td></td>
<td>NTC Level II &amp; III (MITD &amp; Other Private Providers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Secondary</td>
<td>Form V</td>
<td>Cambridge School Certificate (SC)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Std VI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Key to Figure 2:

1: Pre-Vocational education was provided for those pupils who have failed the CPE after a second attempt and hence were not eligible for admission in secondary schools. In 2001 pre-vocational classes were integrated in secondary schools alongside the mainstream classes. The pre-vocational curriculum provided for basic literacy, numeracy, science, technical and ICT skills over three years. Upon completion of the pre-vocational programme, students follow a bridging course - the NTC foundation course, which allows for progression in the TVET sector. Entry requirements for the TVET sector vary from completion of Form III to Form V.

NTC - National Trade Certificate, IVTB - Industrial & Vocational Training Board (now Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, MITD)

2: Requirements for NTC Level II vary between SC and HSC or NTC III

3: Requirements for NTC Level III vary between Form III and SC or NTC III Foundation Course (Min. Age: 15)

4: Refers to Post A-Level / HSC

In the above selected objectives, several elements that echo with the philosophy of DE resonate: inclusiveness, equity, opportunities, employability, mobility, quality, personal development and national development among others. These are all the aspects that DE is a driver of. In that regard, while it has an important but often subdued role to play within the above pathways, a policy will help make these emerge with more clarity.
2.2 Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education in the Republic of Mauritius targets children in the 3-5 years’ age range and is provided by both private and public pre-primary schools. The early childhood sector is regulated by the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA) whose mission is to provide equal access for all children to quality pre-schooling, including those at risk of delayed development and disabilities, through a child-centred and play-based approach, with the involvement of the parents. It has overtime been strongly influenced by the International Year of the Child in 1979 and later consolidated by the Declaration at Jomtien (1990) and Dakar 200 Education for All and the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. There have been efforts to professionalise Early Childhood Care and Education in Mauritius.

This had started in 1972 when the Joint Child Health Education project was set up as an International longitudinal research on ECD and two model/ pilot experimental Pre-School Centres. Between the years 1972 to 1978 two cohorts of 30 Pre-School educators were trained by the MIE. In 1979, a Pre-primary Unit was set up at the Ministry of Education to oversee and coordinate teaching resources in the existing preschools. In 1984, the Pre-School Trust Fund (PSTF) was set up with the responsibility for promoting and providing pre-school education and services in the Republic of Mauritius. It was soon superseded in 2008 by the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA) whose mission was to provide equal access for all children to quality pre-schooling, including those at risk of delayed development. During the last 7 years, enrolment has increased from 85.5% in 2005 to 98% (29,893) in 2012 and Mauritius is moving towards universal pre-primary education.

Towards the professionalization of the sector, the different educational reform plans bear testimony to the sustained government effort in terms of policies, programmes, financial input and quality initiatives to offer quality pre-school education to all children. Over the last 7 years, the enrolment rate has increased from 85.5% in 2005 to 98% in 2012 and Mauritius aims at attaining a universal pre-primary education. The professional development of the teaching staff in the pre-school sector has always been a matter of concern and remains one of the critical challenges that need to be addressed. In collaboration with the national training institutions such as the Mauritius Institute of Education, the Open University and the University of Technology, the ECCEA is working on a long term and sustainable professional development plan with a view to ensure that all pre-primary educators are fully trained and qualified.

Since the 1990s Distance Education was adopted as a strategy for the training of pre-primary school teachers through the launching of the Certificate of Proficiency in Early Childhood Education. This programme was the result of a collaborative effort between the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), the Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) and UNICEF Mauritius and was an innovative, inter-institutional model programme utilizing DE practices that enabled over 1000 pre-primary teachers who had no prior formal tertiary training to participate in a programme leading to a Certificate in Proficiency in Early Childhood Education.

With the success of the first DE training programme for preschool educators, the Open University in collaboration with the ECCEA launched in 2008 the Certificate of Proficiency in the Management of ECD Services and to date, two cohorts of 329 educators have completed the training. The DE mode will be maintained to promote professional development to preschool educators.
2.3 Primary education

Primary schooling spans across six years, from Standard I to Standard VI. Standard VI is usually sanctioned by a national examination, the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) which is the mechanism that distributes students to secondary schools. The CPE results are used as a selection device for admission to secondary schools. In March 2012 there were 312 primary schools in Mauritius, comprising 223 government schools, 53 private aided and 36 private non-aided. Among the private schools, some were administered by the Roman Catholic Education Authority (51) and by the Hindu Education Authority (2). The gross enrolment rate at the primary level was 99\% in 2012. Government schools enrolled 75\% of the pupils, while the aided schools absorbed 21\%. Private non aided schools enrolled the remaining 4\%. Compulsory primary education was introduced in 1992.

2.4 Secondary education

In Mauritius, secondary education spans across 7 years. These include junior and senior high school. The Cambridge School Certificate examination sanctions 5 years of secondary schooling (Form V) while the Higher School Certificate examination (or Form VI) leads to the end of school certificate. There are several educational institutions that provide secondary schooling. These include the State schools, those schools run by religious bodies as well as fee-paying private schools. Some schools also run International Baccalaureate as well as the French Baccalaureate programme. In 2005, there were 70 State Secondary Schools and 118 private secondary schools (98 aided and 20 non-aided). Secondary school enrolment in 2005 was 120,132. There were some 43,304 students attending the State secondary schools. These schools enrolled 34\% of the overall student population, while the private schools had the remaining 66\%. The increase in participation is striking: at March 2012, there were 178 schools providing secondary education in the general stream. The Secondary school enrolment was 115,667 (48\%, 52\% girls). Among these 178 schools, it should be noted that 68 were State Secondary Schools while the remaining 110 were both private aided and non-aided schools. Secondary enrolment in 2012 was 115,667 representing an increase of 388 from the previous year.

2.5 Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

The TVET sector is mainly dominated by three Polytechnics that operate under the aegis of the Mauritius Industrial Training Board (MITD). The MITD Cisco Networking Academy Program offers a comprehensive e-learning programme to trainees. This provides them with an opportunity to pursue IT curricula through online instructor-led training and hands-on laboratory exercises. Subsequently, the MITD website reports that trainees can apply classroom learning to actual technology challenges and are thus equipped to embark on life-long learning opportunities. The presence of DE in TVET or competency-based initiatives in Mauritius is lesser known but this policy document will provide opportunities for DE planning in this sector as well. It will provide guidelines along which competency-based programmes with regard to learning outcomes for Levels 1-4 of the National Qualifications Framework can be developed. This will be useful towards enabling

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30 Education Statistics 2012-Central Statistical Office
Recognition and Accreditation of Prior Learning. DE is already a well-known instrument for the skilling and competency-training of migrant populations and enabling them to join mainstream education in countries like Australia. Similar pathways need to be chartered for Mauritius.

2.6 Tertiary education

The Mauritian Tertiary Education Sector has undergone significant expansion and diversification in recent years. The College of Agriculture was set up in 1924 and expanded into the full-fledged University of Mauritius in 1965. In 1976, free education in the country made more students University-ready. The regulatory, coordination and policy development apex body, the Tertiary Education Commission was set up in 1988, followed by the University of Technology, Mauritius in 2000. From there on progress was consolidated by the setting up of an overarching Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology in 2010. Thus Tertiary Education sector now consists of an expanded and diversified system which has evolved over the years with several institutions in both public and private sectors.

The major universities are the University of Mauritius, the University of Technology, Mauritius and the newly set-up Open University of Mauritius as well as the University of Mascarenes. Other publicly-funded institutions engaged in the provision of tertiary-level education are the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI), the Rabindranath Tagore Institute (RTI), the Fashion & Design Institute (FDI), Mauritius Institute of Health (MIH) and the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD)\(^{31}\). The Gross Enrolment at the Tertiary level increased by 3.7% from 44,334 in 2010 to 45,969 in 2011. Students pursuing their higher studies locally totalled 35,906, among which 22,442 attended the publicly-funded institutions and 13,464 were registered with a private institution or through DE mode\(^{32}\). There are several private institutions that are also engaged in the provision of higher education in Mauritius.

The role of the Tertiary Education Commission within the tertiary education landscape is to act as the guardian of quality of tertiary education in Mauritius. Empowered by the TEC Act 2005—also known as the Education and Training (Miscellaneous Provisions) - it aims to promote, plan, develop and coordinate post-secondary education in Mauritius, and implement an overarching regulatory framework to provide quality education. It allocates government funds to the Tertiary Education Institutions under its purview and ensures accountability and optimum use of resources. The Master Plan had stated that Mauritius would use distance education extensively to widen educational access to working people, housewives, school dropouts and others wishing to continue in post-school education. The most desirable outcomes of the initiative would be improved quality and cost-effectiveness of educational provision (MEAC, 1991).

It is part of the TEC’s mandate to plan and promote DE to increase access to post-secondary education and lifelong learning, both locally and regionally\(^{33}\). With the National Qualifications Framework in the backdrop, the TEC ensures that providers comply with its regulatory framework. It


\(^{32}\) TEC (2012). Participation in Tertiary Education 2011

also aims at supporting institutions improve the quality of their provision. In fact, the TEC has a nodal role with regard to the coordination of DE activities in Mauritius. A proposed review of the TEC Regulatory Framework should ensure the complete integration of DE in provisions that occur across all educational levels, sectors and pathways. It is reiterated that to accelerate its development, and to help position local institutions strategically in the region, it is important to have a policy that can dispel conceptual confusion, promote advocacy and acceptance among stakeholders so that DE can benefit from more budget and space for growth in Mauritius as it contributes to the Government ambition to democratize access to education.

2.7 DE and the National Qualifications Framework

A National Qualifications Framework is the backbone that enables the articulation of learning outcomes across educational levels, sectors and pathways. To quality assure educational provision in Mauritius as well as to understand how one pathway articulates with the other, the systemic approach is crucial. Within the systemic approach, appropriate policies, a regulatory framework and a supporting Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS) are vital to ensure the quality of programmes on offer in a given territory.

Currently the following National Qualifications Framework influences programme development as well as mobility across the different educational levels and pathways including the TVET sector. It also influences the higher education regulatory environment in Mauritius.

Figure 3. Structure of the National Qualifications Framework

Source: Mauritius Qualifications Authority website: http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/mqa/menuitem.6097cfe0eee460352d252d51048a521ca/

The MQA is responsible for the accreditation and recognition processes pertaining to Levels 1-5. The Mauritian NQF as above has been inspiring to many countries and was in fact adopted by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) for the development of its Transnational Qualifications Framework\(^\text{34}\) to which the Mauritian NQF is referenced making qualifications obtained in Mauritius immediately recognized by those countries that have referenced their NQFs to the COL TQF.

\(^{34}\) Transnational Qualifications Framework for the Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth
The TEC is responsible for the development of credit values, credit level descriptors and notional hours of learning as well as learning outcomes for Levels 6 to 10 in the above Matrix. Some work has already been done with regard to the development of a draft Mauritian Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS). It is foreseen that a planned forthcoming Credit Accumulation and Transfer System will support the further development of education in general, but DE especially, across all pathways in Mauritius by improving internal and external efficiencies:

(i) facilitate credit transfer to enhance inter-institutional or inter-country mobility;
(ii) promote lifelong learning;
(iii) promote public confidence in the provision of higher education by both public and private providers; and
(iv) promote linkages with other accreditation bodies facilitate mobility of individuals across institutions and countries.

Once the Mauritian Credit Accumulation and Transfer System is made available, DE programmes can be grafted thereon. The NQF and CATS are important tools that will support the further growth of DE by enabling providers to develop their programmes in line with learning outcomes and will enable policy makers ensure the highest quality by ascertaining the match of local private and public provision against benchmarks established in the NQF and CATS.

### 3.0 Distance education in Mauritius: A historical perspective

To have an enlightened discussion with regard to the development of DE in Mauritius, it is necessary to sift through the institutional memories of those who have been its local architects. Thus in this section, interwoven among the activities that have occurred within the publicly-funded institutions, there is an effort to reconstruct the evolution of DE in Mauritius. This is especially influenced by the various experiences of the participants of the Working Group. In another section, consideration will be given to its current status.

#### 3.1 Distance education in publicly-funded institutions

Official records indicate that the first generation of distance education in Mauritius was present as far back as 1858, with students registered on the London University external correspondence programmes and examined locally (TEC, 2001). Subsequently in 1941, the colonial Government introduced ‘La radio solaria’ for adult learners through radio broadcast of programmes from the British Broadcasting Corporation. A few decades later, the Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) was created to provide dedicated distance education facilities in 1971, three years after independence. Lord Young of Dartington from the British Labour Party was simultaneously setting up the UK Open University (UKOU) in the UK and the MCA in Mauritius.

At that time it was the first generation DE, especially print-based correspondence courses that dominated the educational landscape. While there was no structured action plan with regard to the development of DE in Mauritius, it would appear that somehow in Mauritius, DE had a life of its
own. Local publicly-funded Tertiary Education Institutions responded to emerging demand in various areas where intervention was required. Thus the MCA launched its first course in 1972 in collaboration with the University of Mauritius while three other courses were launched in 1973 to provide support to a wide range of groups including primary school teachers’ efforts to introduce new Mathematics for adults as well as school students. Gradually the role of the MCA was superseded by the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) which took over curriculum development and teacher training as per its mandate. The MCA then focused on the non-formal aspects of its distance learning activities and gradually interest in DE went into a lull.

However, with the re-enactment of the MCA in 1985, there was renewed interest in DE. Successively, consultants of international repute like John Radcliffe (1988), John Daniel (1989) and Lord Young again (1989) studied how to optimally develop and implement DE. It was around that time, in 1985 that the Mauritius Institute of Education first delivered training programmes using the DE mode to train teachers in Rodrigues. It went on to start its first distance education delivery in Mauritius in 1993 following capacity building that started in 1992 with the support of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and that set off the trend of the essentially print-based classical DE as from 1993. Since that time, the MIE has been running an Advanced Certificate in Teacher Education through DE.

The Daniel Report (1989) recommended the use of DE at the University of Mauritius. Two years later, Daniel further recommended the setting up of a Centre of Distance Learning at the UOM. This prompted institutional capacity-building for DE. Eventually, the Consultants’ reports were incorporated in the 1991 Master Plan on Education (MEAC, 1991), which indicated there was an immediate need for the coordination, planning and establishment of priorities for DE provision. The private sector, while regulated, experienced challenges with the absence of benchmarks caused by the lack of explicit policy. Appropriate mechanisms and understandings among local stakeholders had to be developed to enable the appropriate coordination of the DE provision in Mauritius. The Master Plan in 1991 formalized the need for coordination and gave this nodal role onto the Tertiary Education Commission which in turn mandated the Distance Education Coordination Committee (DECC, circa 1991) with that responsibility. Given the uncertainty surrounding DE at that time, clear leads were difficult to develop.

The Centre for Extra Mural Studies (CEMS) was created at the UOM in 1993. It focused on the development of mixed mode courses for the academic year 1993/1994. Later, in 1995, an entirely DE-delivered programme, the 2-year Certificate in Business Information System course (CBIS) was launched in association with the University of Victoria, Canada. This almost coincided with the setting up on a DE division within the MCA in 1994 by the African Development Bank injected donor fund under the intellectual leadership of a Dr. Jenkins, to support the structured development of DE in Mauritius including capacity building of cadres, a dedicated building to host an institution, and a national seminar (in 1995) to build consensus towards a national action plan. The MCA was assigned the responsibility of upgrading the academic qualifications of about 500

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35 Dhurbayali, R. (2005). Development of Distance Education in Mauritius. Quarterly Review of Distance Education. 6(3), pp.185-197.
38 TEC. (1994). Distance Education in Mauritius. The present and the future. Mauritius. TEC
private, secondary-school teachers. At about that time, the MCA acquired experience with a 2-year Higher Certificate in Librarianship and Information Science through the DE mode in collaboration with Napier University (U.K). Further capacity building was provided by CIDA (Canada) and enabled about 25 academics who were working at the then Mauritius College of the Air, the University of Mauritius, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute and the Mauritius Institute of Education to benefit from short-term courses under the Programme de Renforcement Institutionnel en Matière de Technologie en Afrique Francophone (PRIMTAF). The 3-credit course was run following an agreement with the Tele-University of Canada. The Commonwealth of Learning and the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme enabled some of these academics to read for a MA in DE through the DE mode with the IGNOU, India while others studied from the University of London. In the intervening time, the development of DE was however maintained within different institutions, sometimes leading to duplication of efforts and challenges in terms of resources. Thus, the MCA developed its own programmes initially focusing on adult and continuing education pertaining to programmes ranging from information technology, the maintenance of audio-visual equipment, Basic English and competency-based English courses, essay-writing skills and so forth. It broadened its range of available courses by developing linkages with IGNOU among others. In 2012, the MCA was re-styled into the Open University of Mauritius (OUM), a DE-dedicated institution. The Open University of Mauritius whose Act has been proclaimed since July 2012 plans to offer programmes ranging from Undergraduate degrees to Doctorates. It has to date about 1400 students.

In the intervening time, the MIE went on to develop a Teacher Diploma programme for all in-service teachers in 2005 and by 2011, it had trained two cohorts (over 1500 trainees) and a third cohort has already started. The Distance Education Unit which was set up in 1992 with the mandate to provide for all teacher education programmes involving Distance Education (DE) gradually gained in importance since the Unit was upgraded to Centre for Distance Education in 1993. The Centre was further strengthened to become the Centre for Open and Distance Learning in 2009 to improve its capacity in furthering the MIE mandate through DE. In fact, a number of programmes are now offered through a mixed blend of face to face and distance mode. The MIE has developed an Educator’s License course online, which was sponsored by the Human Resources Development Council (HRDC) and has already provided same to 4 cohorts. Since 2009, the MIE has also run a Diploma in Educational Management, for Mauritius and Rodrigues, through a fully print based DE mode, which is now being converted to an online version. So far, the following numbers of individuals have been trained: 1761 in Mauritius and 39 in Rodrigues. Recently the MIE has been entrusted the Sankore Project by the Ministry of Education & Human Resources which focuses on the development of resources and capacity building for the use of the Interactive White Board in primary schools (starting with Standard 4 students). Towards its fuller implementation, the MIE is currently developing an online community of practice platform.

At the University of Mauritius, the Centre for Extra Mural Studies (CEMS) was renamed Centre for Distance Learning in 1996. Following an Internal Review, in 2005, the Centre was again restyled the Centre for Professional Development and Learning (CPDL) to better reflect its new

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39 Dhurbaryall, R. (2005). Development of Distance Education in Mauritius. Quarterly Review of Distance Education. 6(3), pp.185-197.
40 Data provided by: Dr. Kaviraj Sharma Sukon, Director General, Open University of Mauritius:
41 Section contributor: Dr. Brinda Oogarah-Pratap, Working Group member. MIE representative
mission and objectives. With the creation of another centre which focused on online DE, today the DE activities at the University of Mauritius are run through the Centre for Professional Development and Learning [CPDL-classical DE and lifelong learning programmes; ([http://www.uom.ac.mu/CPDL/index.htm]) and the Virtual Centre for Innovative Learning Technologies [VCILT- online DE; ([http://www.uom.ac.mu/CPDL/index.htm]). Both operate under the Lifelong Learning Cluster. The mandate of the CPDL had broadened from being purely an on-campus facilitating agency of distance education modules to centralizing Professional Development and Lifelong Learning activities using multimode delivery, including DE to meet working client needs ([http://www.uom.ac.mu/AboutUs/AnnualReport/2007_2008/12%20CPDL.pdf]). It also seeks sources of funding from appropriate agencies/institutions for training programmes to be offered by the Lifelong Learning Cluster.  

On the other hand, the VCILT was responsible for providing and developing online web-based education and tele-learning at the university and throughout the country. It was engaged in the development of academic modules for the university and pedagogical prototype projects in line with the national ongoing effort for the promotion of ICT, continuous education and lifelong flexible learning (as stated on its website). The VCILT supported academics and tutors with technology, pedagogical and management tools for the conception, multimedia presentation and networking of their contents and activities. The VCILT offered an e-learning environment that widened access to 135 academic programmes. As at 2007/2008, the VCILT had fifty (50) modules on the Moodle Platform on a Blended/Online format of delivery. Furthermore, workshops, Summer/Winter Courses and several modules were offered on UOM Moodle Platform. In addition the following General Education Modules were offered by VCILT to University students: Educational Technologies and Computer-based Learning Environments (ILT 1020), Creativity and Innovation for Teaching and Learning (ILT 1040) and Digital Learning Resources (ILT1090), ([http://www.uom.ac.mu/AboutUs/AnnualReport/2007_2008/15%20VCILT.pdf]). As at January 2013, the CPDL has a total of 363 students and the VCILT a total of 430 students spread across full-time and part-time modes.

Another institution whose contribution is vital with regard to sustaining the relationship between education and sustainable development (ESD) as articulated in the UN Agenda 21 and the UNESCO Decade for Education for Sustainable Development is the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI). The MGI has a unique potential to tap into the principles of ESD with regard to cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge/s, literacies and so forth. This needs to be fully tapped. Since its creation in 1978, the MGI has endeavoured to reach out and increase accessibility of its courses/programmes to a larger clientele so much so, that in 1982, it set up the Department of Extra Mural Studies, responsible for disseminating a plethora of courses in its areas of studies in different Regional Centres, Women’s Centres and Socio-cultural Organisations throughout the island. In addition, it also took on board the idea of offering some of its existing modules and courses through DE mode. Several projects involving conversion of some existing course contents into DE format and designing and writing up of new modules/courses in Indian Music and Dance, Indian Languages,

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42 Correspondence between Office of Vice-Chancellor and TEC Officer-in-Charge, on 21 January 2013. TEC file TEC/DEOL/9/1/34-1
44 Section Contributor: Dr. Santosh Kumar Pudaruth. Working Group Member. MGI Representative
Indian Philosophy and Mauritius Studies saw the light of day. However, for want of a national policy and, by extension, an institutional policy as regards DE, not much headway could be made and most of these projects had to be shelved half-way. Currently, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute has reiterated its conviction in DE’s potential to access a wide range of hitherto unreachable audiences with the setting up of Department for the Decentralization of Music and Dance, Distance Education and E-Learning within its School of Performing Arts that followed a re-structuring exercise in 2006. This department, is responsible for decentralizing academic and cultural activities of the Institute across the island, and is also mandated to develop courses and materials to be offered through DE and E-Learning modes.

The University of Technology (UTM) was set up in 2000. Of late, it has started engaging in DE initiatives with a recently launched Certificate and Diploma in Public Procurement in 2011 with 300 students (Mauritius and Rodrigues inclusive). This programme was provided online on a Moodle platform for which the content was adapted. Previously, the UTM had explored capacity building possibilities for its faculty as well as shared some facilities with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology i-Labs. This is not current anymore, but the UTM recognizes the importance of DE in increasing and improving its provision.45

3.2 The private providers of distance education in Mauritius

In pursuance of the Government’s plan to develop Mauritius into a regional Knowledge Hub, the regulatory framework has provided the appropriate climate to enable the setting up of private providers of DE programmes. There are quite a few privately-funded post-secondary institutions that provide DE programmes and comply with regulations established by the Tertiary Education Commission. Some of these institutions owed their membership to the Working Group on the Distance Education policy to their respective number of registrants. Thus the YK Business School had 307 students enrolled in 2011 while the AEA Training Centre had 139 registered students. Many of the private providers offer quality education that is assured and audited as required by parent institutions they represent. Thus YKBS for instance also benchmarks itself with quality assurance standards which are of international reputation since in addition to being monitored by the TEC, it is also quality assured by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) with its programmes originating from two South African institutions namely The Management College of Southern Africa (MANCOSA) and The Regent Business School (RBS). Furthermore, compliance with regulations of local authorities like TEC, MQA and MES ensures that the best quality assurance norms are observed.46 The AEA Training Centre follows similar arrangements with the parent institutions which it represents as well as adheres to the regulatory parameters of the TEC. Both institutions are committed to supporting their students in their educational pursuits. Student persistence and satisfaction are reportedly high among learners registered with the private providers of DE.

From the above, it is clear that to promote its sustainability through effective coordination and to make it an effective instrument towards the development of Mauritius into a Regional Knowledge Hub, post-secondary DE should be anchored in a national policy. There is an increasing

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45 Section Contributor: Dr. Mohamudally, Working Group Member. UTM Representative
46 Section contributor: Mr. R. Phul, YK Business School. Working Group member
need to systemize its national provision. The ‘widening access’ discourse has remained prevalent but with an appropriate policy demonstrable progress will foreseeably become more considerable.

4.0 Guidelines for practice

It was earlier mentioned that an integrated methodology was employed towards the development of the Policy Framework and formulation of policy goals. Innovatively inspired from a DE theory, this framework is detailed hereunder. Careful attention to each delineated step will provide guidelines to develop institutional plans as well as quality-oriented programmes. As earlier mentioned, approaches delineated herein can be used for both national policy development at a macro level and institutional policy development at a micro level. The methodology that is hereby presented can be used by all interested stakeholders engaged in post-secondary education, it will provide information to both, the regulator and the provider, that is essential for quality assurance and compliance with the regulatory framework. The different stages described herein are exercises in reflexive praxis and should be referred to often in the future for quality assurance purposes and to help reinvigorate national and institutional planning processes. The framework is essentially made up of an operational definition, supported by a DE theory—the Transactional Distance Theory (Moore, 1993)\(^{47}\), the organizing principles of student persistence (Deschênes and Maltais, 2006)\(^{48}\) and Saba’s “system dynamics” theory (Saba, 2003, pp13-16)\(^{49}\) and reflexive praxis (Schön, 1983)\(^{50}\).

Towards the development of a policy on Distance Education, it was important to consider who were to be involved and for whom was the policy. To arrive at a policy that reflected the needs of the people and the country but that at the same time enabled the country to position itself in the region and the world at large so that its vision became realizable, it was crucial to have a policy development framework that could respond to challenges and provide answers to questions asked by all stakeholders. These stakeholders included DE practitioners, professionals, policymakers and researchers as well as institutional managers, programme developers, teachers, instructional designers, educational technologists, and students. A policy, it has been said earlier, should be owned by the people. Additionally, it became clear that a policy should therefore not only address pedagogical issues but also socio-economic, technological, global, contextual and even cultural concerns. Of special importance was the use of a policy framework that could ‘talk to’ the context in which the policy was being developed, the needs of the country and the people, the regulatory environment, the technological readiness of the population among others. It was clearly important that the voices of the people should also be heard during this process. Towards that end, a composite framework was required to understand the elements inherent in distance education and its implications for policy development and quality assurance. The following theory-based model for DE policy development is proposed. This model has been arrived at based on evidence from the DE terrain in Mauritius\(^{51}\) and on international literature that was reviewed. Its different constituents

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\(^{49}\)Saba (2003). Already referenced


\(^{51}\)Gokool-Ramdoo (2009); (2011). Already referenced
will first be discussed to understand why they should be considered as important supporting pillars. The following is the blueprint along which institutional policies may be constructed.

4.1 The use of the term ‘distance education’

To respond to the generally acknowledged conceptual confusion, it was important to have an operational definition. By focusing on the term ‘distance education’ in a purist manner, the adopted model responds to conceptual confusion identified by several scholars (Moore, 1991) and avoiding the ‘profusion of new vocabulary’ that John Daniel saw as problematic since it seemed “that practitioners in this field are particularly prone to terminological flatulence.” A comprehensive term like Distance Education includes aspects of teaching and learning as well as the management thereof, and is a useful alliance with theory to help align thinking and to help solve problems. Terms like ‘distance learning’ or ‘open and distance learning’ among others may be misleading. This is especially more so with regard to ‘open’ learning. Not all DE programmes carry elements of openness, which has to be defined.

A leading scholar Moore had argued that the use of the term “distance learning” is troublesome since it suggests actions of one person, that is the learner, that are independent of the actions of teachers. Yet he says that every so-called “distance learning” program is in fact a teaching program as well as a learning programme, and therefore can only correctly be referred to as distance education. The point is not, he goes on to say, that the concepts of distance education have not been defined and explored, nor that there is unanimity among scholars about their meanings...what is needed is more discussion about and understanding of these efforts to organize our knowledge, as well as more careful and thoughtful use of terms”. By focusing on Distance Education, this framework seeks to resolve conceptual confusion. The framework is then supported by other pillars.

4.2 Theory-driven framework

Scholars state that a theory represents everything that we know about something. Theory provides a common framework, a common perspective, and common vocabularies that help us ask questions in a sensible way and make sense of problems. By summarizing what we already know, theory helps us identify what we don’t know, and so it is the starting point for deciding what really needs to be researched. Anchoring a policy in a DE theory contributes to its sustainability since informed questions will be asked and informed answers may be expected. By helping practitioners understand what they do not know theory increases their ability to solve problems in different times and different places. In theorizing practitioners rise above immediate and local concerns and find out what is general and long lasting. This provides a broad perspective that enables heightened analytical effectiveness and to take informed decisions that are guided by fundamental teaching and

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learning principles rather than by the pressure of a particular crisis or the dazzle of a fresh opportunity.\textsuperscript{56}

### 4.3 The Transactional distance theory (TDT)

The first attempts (in the Anglophone world) to define distance education and to articulate a theory appeared in 1972 and in 1980, one such attempt was coalesced by Moore\textsuperscript{56} the Transactional Distance Theory (Moore 1980). Among existing theories related to distance education, Moore’s TDT is selected because it accommodates all forms of distance education through the concept of educational transaction. In addition, it carries elements of pedagogy as well as principles of adult learning as enshrined in andragogy.\textsuperscript{57} Recently research has indicated that the Transactional Distance Theory can be usefully applied to all components that are of interest in a distance education enterprise. These include but are not limited to: administration, technology, pedagogy, educational technology, implementation as well as institutional and national policy matters.

#### THE TRANSACTIONAL DISTANCE THEORY DEFINED

The Transactional Distance Theory states that distance in distance education is a pedagogical phenomenon. Given that teachers and students are separated by time/space, the distance between them has an effect on instruction, on themselves, on the strategies for communication and interaction, as well as the management of the programme among others. The pedagogical distance is a distance of understandings and perceptions that have to be overcome by teachers, learners and educational organizations if effective, deliberate, planned learning is to occur.

The concept ‘transaction’ is used to refer to the “interplay among the environment, the individuals and the patterns of behaviours in a situation.” An educational transaction often involves a cognitive exchange since it implies an exchange of information pertaining to the matter that is taught and ideally learned. This exchange or transaction is influenced by the environment, context and culture in which it occurs. The transactional approach is systemic in nature. It acknowledges and considers the inter-articulations between the different aspects of the DE enterprise including the organisation, the teachers and the learners. The transaction is mediated by teachers’ plans, learning contents, interactions (either face to face or mediated through some form of technology) student predispositions and willingness to learn. In fact, this framework is constructed with the student as a central organizing principle. It proposes that student satisfaction and persistence as well as the meaningfulness of the learning experience are critical to education as a whole and distance education in particular. Indeed, Moore proposes that the transactional nature of contemporary distance education operates around three central concepts: dialog, structure and learner autonomy.

The term ‘dialog’ focuses attention on the interplay of words, actions and ideas in interactions between teachers and learners during the exchange of cognitive information. Dialog helps build positive interactions geared towards improving both student and stakeholder


\textsuperscript{58} Moore, M.G. & Kearsley , G. (1996) . Already referenced
understanding through a series of feedback loops that involve all stakeholders in several transactional relationships. If the interaction is not positive, it is not considered as dialog.

A second determinant of transactional distance is ‘structure’ in relation to course design. The course structure consists of such elements as learning objectives, content themes, learning content, case studies, illustrations as well as assignments. Dialog and structure are both determined by the educational philosophy of the teaching organisation, the teachers themselves, the academic level and maturity of the learners, the nature of the content, and especially by the communications media employed. Structure and dialog affect “the extent to which course components could accommodate or be responsive to each learner’s individual needs.” The greater the transactional distance or space for potential misunderstanding, the more responsibility is required of the student. The focus on responsibility ushers in the third determinant of transactional distance, learner autonomy.

Before we move on, it is to be noted that learner autonomy is one of the most desirable competencies or learning outcomes of an educational system. The Mauritius NQF situates learner autonomy progressively along the qualifications framework. At level 10, learner autonomy becomes a prominent attribute. Learner autonomy relates to that dimension that helps understand the different decision-making capacities of the student including the ability to plan, find learning resources as well as the “ability to decide for oneself if progress was satisfactory.” Learner autonomy requires a high range of thinking skills from the student including thinking about the learning activity – or meta-cognition. In a distance education transaction, learner autonomy can be construed as the ability of learners to make decisions regarding their own learning. Successful distance education rests on the equilibrium achieved by teacher and student in an educational transaction, as they negotiate the structure of the learning materials and the quantity and quality of dialog, while taking into account the extent of the learner’s autonomy in taking responsibility for that learning. It is important to focus on the interplay and the flow between dialog, structure and autonomy. These operate in feedback loops among the various stakeholders involved in the different transactional relationships and provide essential information whenever there is a breakdown in effective/efficient interaction and any resulting impacts on quality.

4.4 The feedback loop

Broadening on Moore’s argument that distance education implied an educational transaction among numerous stakeholders including the teacher and the student, Saba argues that the educational transaction was the result of several feedback loops. Learning happens through mutual sharing and negotiations of meaning between teacher and learner in such a manner that the

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locus of control shifts from one to the other constantly through the feedback process, which Saba calls the “feedback loop.”

Figure 4. The feedback loop bridging transactional distances in a DE activity

It is highly desirable that educational programmes are geared towards supporting the development of learner autonomy among students. At the start of the educational programme, the locus of control resides with the teacher. Through constant interaction or dialog that operates across the feedback loop, this locus of control theoretically shifts several times such that at the end of the educational programme, it rests with the newly/fully autonomous student. In addition, the feedback loop as seen in the above Figure 4, is important to shift information from the teacher to the student in the first place but also supports information flow among all other stakeholders including policymakers, manager, programme developers, education technologists, quality assurance managers as well as programme evaluators. It provides appropriate information to all the above and is useful in decreasing any transactional distances that usually operate across a distance education activity.

4.5 Principles of student persistence

First, distance education practitioners firmly believe that the student needs to be at the centre of a learning enterprise. All educational transactions focus on the exchange of skills, knowledge and competencies. Thus there is a cognitive exchange whereby teachers impart knowledge to students. At the same time, teachers should have the ability to organize this knowledge with regard to the student’s contextual need, as well as improving student confidence regarding the ability to use this knowledge to contribute to his/her given society in a meaningful manner. Deschênes and Maltais have organized the exchange between the teacher and the

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student according to strands that encompass all aspects of the learning experience. **The organizing strands of student persistence** are the cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and a final subsuming one, the socio-economic. These will become the fourth pillar of the policy development framework.

The **cognitive interest** in an educational transaction relates to the didactic process, the transmission of the educational content. As discussed with regard to the TDT, the **metacognitive** refers to one’s awareness of, and ability to manage one’s own cognitive processes, thus implying strategies that help the student organize and take responsibility for the learning experience. Learner independence is seen as a learning outcome of the highest order.

In addition to an administrative and pedagogical role, the teacher also plays an **affective and motivational role**. Under this grouping more human aspects of the educational endeavour will come into play. The affective relates to strategies that engaged the feelings of the student with a view to enhancing the meaningfulness of the learning experience (based on extrinsic and intrinsic motivators, especially dealing with the realm of feelings). Thus factors like learner anxiety, tutors’ expectations, and complaints require consideration.

The **socio-economic** is a subsuming group of factors that act on any or all of the above three. Thus a student from a well-to-do background will be in a favourable position to accede to resources enabling successful programme completion while one who has lost his/her job and source of income will probably revise priorities and he/she will be affectively influenced to defer studies or even drop out. The fourth principle implicitly carries influences from given contexts and cultures. These principles involve all the variables inherent in the student’s public and private spaces. The organizing principles of student persistence are then woven into the feedback loop which is then meant to operate across the whole of the distance education enterprise. It becomes the integrated feedback loop as seen in Figure 5 hereunder.

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4.6 The systems approach

The systems approach is also seen as another important supporting pillar. To provide an all-inclusive view of the educational enterprise, the systems approach is selected because of its overarching perspective whereby the DE transaction can be simultaneously compartmentalized and seen as comprehensive, with components and sub-components that are seamlessly woven into a whole.

It can be used to study changes in dialog and structure and the resulting effects on transactional distance. Saba’s model indicates that the teacher will adjust goals, instructional materials and evaluation procedures based on teacher/learner interaction as needed to maintain the balance between dialog and structure which is also seen as helpful to achieve the desired level of learner autonomy. Saba’s “system dynamics” model is compatible with the Transactional Distance Theory.

The Transactional Distance Theory (TDT) informs us that the educational activity is transacted across a series of stakeholders other than students. The teaching aspect is broken down and undertaken by a range of stakeholders, who intervene on the strength of their expertise and commitment. With the systems approach to DE, other stakeholders find their functions split into the following roles: policy makers, programme developers, deliverers (teachers engaged in facilitating learning) and managers, providers of student support, programme evaluators, technical support, librarians, and administrators. In addition to the academic input there are also non-academic inputs such as use of technology in teaching. For planning purposes, the systems approach

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favours discussions on all aspects of the supply chain\(^{72}\) of DE- from inputs to outputs. This can be seen in action across the modified ADDIE-E model of programme planning.

### 4.7 The modified ADDIE-E model of programme planning

The original ADDIE model of programme planning is useful to all DE programme planners including policymakers and instructional designers. It has been used to demonstrate how the systems approach fits easily onto the transactional approach to DE\(^ {71}\). When an extra component, ‘E’, that stands for environment is added to the ADDIE model, it comprehensively includes environmental and cultural variables that are also important in determining transactional distances\(^ {74}\).

With the feedback loop, we have seen how learning happens through mutual sharing and negotiations of meaning between teacher and learner such that the locus of control shifts from the teacher to the learner until learner autonomy is achieved. Innovatively, the feedback loop has been added across the ADDIE-E model to show how teaching/learning is being transacted and how quality can be improved and practice recalibrated informed by feedback data at each and every stage of the programme planning process. In acknowledgement of the importance of the feedback loop\(^ {75}\), it is argued that despite the fact that everyone in an “educational institution has a role to play in producing high quality instruction, administrators are responsible for its measurement and for using data gathered in taking action to improve it”. All the above aspects can be integrated one into the other to provide a consolidated and comprehensive picture as seen in the following model (Figure 6) which will be under discussion once its final pillar is discussed.

### 4.8 Reflexive praxis

As the final pillar, a reflexive praxis approach provides answers to many of the questions raised in DE. Reflexive praxis has been particularly influential as a framework for discussion of adult learning, especially in widening participation and diversity contexts\(^ {76}\). Reflexive praxis is at the heart of professional development, organisational development, and a discussion of learning in any context\(^ {77}\). Constant self-evaluation helps transform and improve one’s practice\(^ {78}\). Reflexive praxis is incumbent on all professionals including educational practitioners, administrators and policymakers. In fact, TDT finds resonance in reflexive praxis because it gives equal consideration to the teacher, the learner and all other educational stakeholders in the shared practice and requires them to think

\(^{72}\) The supply chain aspect is an emanation of the systems approach. It succinctly sums up the different aspects related to organisations, people, technology, activities, information and resources involved in moving a product or service from the institutions to the student. It also takes into consideration the various aspects of the educational transaction including institution-teacher-student-instructional materials-technology-peers and so forth. This term is increasingly being considered where education is taken as a market concept.


\(^{75}\) Moore, M.G., & Kearsley, G. (2005). Already referenced


on their practice with a view to improving it\textsuperscript{79}. Reflexive praxis is thus important for all those who are engaged in the distance education practice and should inform the policy development framework. The one under discussion benefited from the reflections of the Working Group members and those of the Distance Education Coordination Committee (circa 2013).

Towards gathering information, a Delphi approach was deemed appropriate since it was consistent with the feedback loop within the policy development framework. The Delphi model is based on the principle that formulations from a structured group of experts are more accurate than those from unstructured groups. It makes provision for the voices of as wide a range of participants as can be heard. The Delphi model operates in several rounds of consultations whereby feedback is continuously ploughed back to the group so that there is eventually convergence towards a level playing field whereby each participant can find himself or herself reflected in the final exercise.

The employed research methods are questionnaires (the Thinking Checklist, Appendix 1), focus group interviews and individual interviews (Appendices 2 & 3). After each round of data circulation, a summary of participants’ views is made available and they are encouraged to revise their earlier answers in the light of replies of other members of their panel. This method is results-oriented and the purpose of continuous feedback is to reach data saturation.

Figure 6. The composite DE policy development framework

Aligned with the philosophy inherent in the integrated feedback loop and based on the above framework, stakeholders (represented by the WG members) were involved at each level of operation, from conceptualization to goal formulation. They first provided their inputs using a Thinking Checklist (Appendix 1) which was constructed along the ADDIE-E programme planning

model. Thus data was made available pertaining to the different components of the DE activity and involving each participant’s area of experience. A convenience–based sample of teachers and students was also included as subjects of research. They were interviewed to provide data that was relevant to their particular areas of concern and interest. Data collection was done along the lines of the Delphi model. To ensure that the participants’ views were respected, data obtained was triangulated with all participants to ascertain that their concerns were verily reflected and not imposed on the WG by the team leader.

4.9 The model in action

As the move towards the final construction of the policy development framework is being made, it must be noted that this model has a systemic approach to development and recognizes that a DE operation in any given country exists as part of a wider goal. Based on the systems approach, initiatives within Level 1 will percolate onto Level 2 (as indicated by the simple arrow), where they will be monitored for quality assurance. Quality DE will then generate its own momentum with regard to market forces of supply and demand and will cascade onto Level 3- policy development and planning (the simple arrow indicates a shift information from one level onto the next in Figure 6). At Level 3, decisions regarding recalibration with regard to programmatic, institutional and national objectives will be taken. Since we are talking about evidence-based policy development, the integrated feedback loop (depicted by the three colours) will cyclically shift information among and across the above levels and will provide relevant data to those concerned. Finally, information at Level 3 will be fed back to Level 1 with indications for changes. It is the grey arrows (called circular information flow arrows) that will shift comprehensively organized information cyclically through levels 1to 3.

Level 1 includes all the processes necessary for the development and implementation of DE activities and relies on integrated feedback loops. At Level 2, quality assurance takes an overarching importance. DE providers have to ensure that information available on cognitive, metacognitive and affective student requirements through the integrated feedback loops are captured and acted upon such that the demand and supply sides of DE are effectively aligned and connected to further improve learning experience and persistence.

Quality assurance in DE is constantly evolving, driven by changing learner profiles, educational technologies, course materials, course development processes, learner and teacher satisfaction as well as market forces. Using the systems approach effectively and resting on feedback loops, a flow of comprehensive information (grey arrows) contributes towards continuously recalibrating approaches and readjusting contextually relevant quality elements. The flow of information is then channelled into evidence-based policy development initiatives at Level 3. At Level 3, the usefulness of the TDT for policy development becomes obvious because it gives indications regarding: (1) the existence and the type of transactional distances that have to be bridged, and (2) what measures could be taken to decrease distances such that the cognitive, metacognitive, affective and even socio-economic needs of all stakeholders were effectively met.
Through its integrated feedback loops, (Figure1), the TDT circulates information among all concerned participants. It indicates whether given interventions affect needs analysis processes; design and development issues; delivery concerns; interaction or teaching/learning transaction; implementation, context; and evaluation. The TDT therefore has a distinctive capacity to probe different contexts, to ask the right questions that provide the right answers. The gaps that became apparent in the answers provide appropriate directions for recalibration of practice. It is useful along all the supply chain of the DE enterprise. In that regard, when questions are asked within the ADDIE-E programme planning model, appropriate answers are arrived at with improved accuracy. This easily captures the cyclical relationship between policy development and quality assurance. The processes involved in quality assurance should influence policy development and make locally awarded educational qualifications globally acceptable and even competitive or portable across borders and simultaneously protect the consumers of education.

5.0 Policy Goals

Educational policies worldwide as well as in Mauritius have been informed by the Education for All (EFA) goals that have emanated from the Jomtien Conference (1990) and the Millennium Development Goals that were inspired from the United Nations Agenda 21 (1992) that was adopted at the first Rio Earth Conference. The EFA goals and the MDGs are deeply anchored in the philosophy of sustainable development which as it was articulated in the Brundtland conference and subsequently adopted on a global scale to imply that development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. In fact, sustainability began as a concept that was primarily associated with the environment, according to which nature was to be used in a way that harmed neither its productivity nor its resilience. This concept has since expanded to encompass the social and economic infrastructure that determines a society’s capacity to maintain itself in a rapidly changing global context. The above view is also enshrined in the Maurice Ile Durable vision. This framework is also aligned with the vision of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) whose focus is equally on economic growth and development, alleviating poverty, and enhancing the quality of life of the people of the Region.

This definition has refreshed the compelling linkage between education and development. Indeed it is recognized by all SADC governments that one way of implementing these objectives is to ensure that all population groups have adequate access to education. SADC recognizes the importance of DE in that regard.

Inspired by the principles of sustainable development, the relevance of education to drive development agendas, widen access to inclusive opportunities for personal and national development, reduce poverty, eliminating gender disparities to improve women participation in global development activities, address pandemics like HIV-AIDS, energy and natural resource depletion has long been recognized. It is known, especially across the sub-Saharan African Region how important a DE Policy would be in terms of addressing development issues. It is even

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81 SADC. (2012). Draft Regional ODL policy. SADC Secretariat.
documented how, for instance the combined absence of an HIV/AIDS policy and a national DE policy in Nigeria disabled the Nigeria Open University from institutionalizing AIDS policy and helping many individual lives. When appropriately employed, DE is meant to improve individual lives in their cultural and contextual specificities. In fact, this is what prompts us as DE practitioners, from a systemic approach to put the human being/student back at the centre of development/DE endeavours. DE should foster the development of contextualized metacognitive competencies that as enshrined within the United Nations Agenda 21, would promote creativity and meaningfulness in life.

Taking this inclusive approach, the above definition of sustainable development underscores all the thinking, the methodology, as well as policy goal formulation of this document. In fact, the increased global thinking behind the formulation of post-Millennium Development Goals, and the recent Rio+20 Earth Conference has given a new impetus to the linkage between Education and Development. Rio+20 Conference has sharpened the focus on higher education as a crucial driver of ESD. It is now recognized that higher education, of which DE is an accessory is pivotal in promoting social change processes with an emphasis on educational quality and curriculum transformation, educational responses to poverty, and Disaster Risk Reduction as well as Climate Change. Higher Education Institutions educate and train decision-makers to empower them in their role towards creating new paradigms to foster sustainable societies, to promote development through research and teaching, understand the symbiotic relationship between industry and research, disseminative new knowledge and practices as well as the crucial importance of capacity building. Towards that end, the importance of second chance education, lifelong learning opportunities, open schooling and other means to liberate the potential of individuals as well as secure their participation in development initiatives should not be forgotten. This thinking has been subtly woven into the current Distance Education Policy goals for Mauritius. As a result of discussions and consultations, hereunder are the policy goals arrived at by the Working Group.

**P.A Policy Statement/Objective**

The Distance Education Policy aims at providing a roadmap to facilitate programme planning at National and Institutional levels with regard to post-secondary education. It fulfils the TEC ambition to forward the government agenda of developing Mauritius into a Knowledge Hub. Additionally it provides students with information to guide their choice in terms of quality provision and employability opportunities.

**P.B Underpinning principle, values & philosophies**

Given the understanding that a country will develop as much as it enables its people to develop, democratic access, inclusiveness, individual development, quality provision and student satisfaction are the underpinning principles of this policy.

**P.C Policy Goal, Strategies and Actions**

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It is to be noted that at present there is the current regulatory framework in force. Given its dynamic nature, the DE policy will be strengthened by and in turn will possibly lead to amendments to the regulatory framework.

**P1 National Development**

**P1 Aligned with Governmental mission and vision, the TEC-developed distance education policy will be a roadmap to facilitate programme planning at National and Institutional levels**

P1.1 As the nodal point for Distance Education Coordination, the TEC will regularly engage in research to update evidence-based distance education policy that will inform recalibration of practice.

P1.2 The TEC will be committed to the principles of sustainable development and will encourage the integration of its critical competencies in all distance education provision.

P1.3 The TEC will promote understanding of Distance Education and will provide advocacy in related matters for all groups.

P1.4 The TEC is committed to increasing participation in education through distance education.

P1.5 The TEC will promote research and capacity building in matters related to distance education.

P1.6 The TEC has set up a Distance Education Coordination Committee consisting of public and private providers to continuously review and update national policy to ensure coherence in the provision of quality distance education and to suggest strategic directions towards the development of the Knowledge Hub.

P1.7 The TEC will be the guardian of quality Distance Education provided in Mauritius.

P1.8 The TEC will develop linkages with relevant institutions and organisations in support of the above goals.

**P2 Institutional Development**

**P2 Providing institutions will develop their own policy based on their mandate, mission and vision and will ensure that it is in accordance with national policy.**

P2.1 Each institution will develop a dedicated Distance Education Policy that will be in accordance with the national policy and agenda.

P2.2 Each institution will define the type of distance education it is providing and the arrangements, where they apply, it has made with regard to capacity building, research, curriculum development, the integration of ICT, student support and grievances, responsible open admission, teaching and learning, delivery channels, tutor recruitment, assessment, linkages and academic collaborations.

**P3 Access, personal development and lifelong learning**

**P3 Given its commitment to supporting lifelong learning and personal development endeavours, inclusive access to education will be enhanced and widened to include lifelong learning opportunities.**
P3.1 The TEC will develop a consolidated Credit Accumulation and Transfer System to promote enhanced recognition and portability of quality assured qualifications.

P3.2 Distance education will democratise access and will provide inclusive opportunities to all groups of learners across formal, non-formal and informal education pathways including vocational and professional as well as general streams through a range available of media so that they engage in activities sustaining the development of cognitive, metacognitive and affective competencies.

P3.3 Distance education will contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction in Mauritius by enhancing employability, market opportunities and life chances.

P3.4 Distance education, from suitably recognised and accredited providers as well as through ICT intensive provision will be considered at par with conventional education.

P4 ICT integration

P4 Arrangements will be made to promote the integration of ICTs in the delivery of distance education.

P4.1 The TEC will develop linkages with relevant institutions to enable optimal integration of ICT in Distance Education.

P4.2 The TEC will develop and host an Open Educational Resource Platform to provide a space for the sharing of distance education resources, instructional materials as well as best practices for all providers, researchers, practitioners and students in distance education. The TEC will facilitate such development at institutional levels.

P4.3 Provision of distance education through a range of media including print, technologies with limited interaction, asynchronous technologies, use of multimedia with interactive possibilities, mobile learning will be promoted wherever they respond to criteria of access and availability, pedagogical relevance and appropriateness and enhancing of the learning experience.

P5 Pedagogical and curricular development

P5 Promote sustainable development through needs-responsive educational curricula

P5.1. The TEC will ensure that curriculum of providers is empirically matched with student profile, centrally considers student interest and carries academic integrity, is responsive to national requirements as well as societal and employment needs.

P5.2. The curriculum will be designed to foster the development of effective cognitive, metacognitive and affective competencies.

P5.3 Providing institutions will clearly enunciate expected learning outcomes, curriculum outlines as well as learning and assessment arrangements to meet these outcomes.

P5.6. There will be a well-established supply chain of programme development and delivery to enable adjustment in specific aspects.
P6 Assessment

P6. Assessments will measure the effectiveness of the distance education transaction in terms of advancing the national mission and vision.

P6.1 Assessment strategies will enable the measurement of the extent to which students have developed effective cognitive, affective and metacognitive skills.

P6.2 The assessment strategies will also measure teaching/learning effectiveness.

P6.3 Assessment strategies will delineate all appropriately documented arrangements made to ascertain authenticity of identities.

P7 Student support

P7. Student satisfaction will be central to educational provision.

P7.1 Academic and non-academic support with regard to grievances should be made available across all the aspects of educational provision.

P7.2 Round the clock support will be made available using electronic media and means.

P7.3 Feedback on performance will be provided in a timely manner through a range of accessible and appropriate media.

P7.4 Institutions will research into and develop strategies to enhance its student support activities and continuously improve its teaching-learning transaction across the range of media employed.

P7.5 Providing institutions undertake to widen access to an inclusive range of learning resources.

P8 Quality assurance

P8. The TEC will be the guardian of quality of all distance education provision in the Republic of Mauritius.

P8.1 All providing institutions operating within the national quality framework of the TEC will have harmonized quality protocols for all aspects of distance education including those under sections like needs analysis, design/development, delivery, implementation, evaluation and environment.

P8.2 Evaluation in its different aspects will inform periodic review and enhance distance education programmes to continuously match personal and national requirements.

P8.3 Information about such evaluation should be accessible to the public to guide their informed choices.

P8.4 Providers will be encouraged, wherever it applies, to undergo quality audits with external quality assurance agencies of countries from where their programmes originate.
P 9 Research and capacity building policy in DE

P9. The TEC will actively encourage research and capacity building in DE

P9.1 The TEC will support research and capacity building in DE through its Research and Related Support Schemes and private sector as well as through international linkages.

P9.2 Providing institutions should ensure that their staff undergoes relevant capacity building to contribute to their own quality culture
A. Mission/ Vision/ History

1. What is your mission and vision?
2. Do you have a strategic plan for DE?
3. What type is your role in the provision of DE?
   (i) Interface
   (ii) Course developer, provider and assessor - awarding
   (iii) Partner offering tutoring
4. Which DE programmes do you offer?
   (i) Under graduate
      Certificate          Diploma          Degree
      □                    □                  □
   (ii) Graduate
      Post-graduate Certificate      Post-graduate Diploma      Master      Doctoral level
      □                    □                  □                        □
   (iii) Please provide subject areas: _______________________________
5. What type of DE programmes do you offer?
   (i) Essentially print-based and some face to face
   (ii) Print-Based and some face to face
   (iii) Print based, face to face and some electronic communication
   (iv) Online with some face to face
   (v) Online only
6. (i) How many students in your organisation are DE students?
(ii) What is their average age group?
(iii) What percentage are working adults?

B. Needs Analysis

1. Do you carry out Needs Analysis? How?
2. Do you think Needs Analysis is important?
3. What or whose needs do you measure?
4. Can you give details about how you provide the following:
   (i) Pre-entry information
   (ii) Guidance
   (iii) Counselling
5. How do you match student level with programme provision?
6. (i) How much of electronic media do you use?
   (ii) Give details of type of electronic media
   (iii) Do you believe this media
       - is ineffective in terms of teaching and Learning?
       - helps you achieve your goals?

C. Design/ Development

1. How do you design your programme? Describe the process
2. What is your approach to DE?
   (i) Do you leave students to take their own decisions in terms of learning? ☐
   (ii) Do you assist students? If so how? ☐
   (iii) Do you participate in course development? If so how? ☐
3. Where do you recruit your tutors from?
4. How do you recruit them?
5. Is it a pre-requisite that they should have prior DE teaching experience?
6. Do you provide capacity building in DE
   (i) If yes, how?
   (ii) If no, does it affect your operations?
7. Through what stages do you approach:
   (i) programme development?
   (ii) course development?
D. Delivery

1. Similarly, what are the aspects of the students’ life that you take into consideration during course delivery?

2. What do you consider when designing assessments?

3. What type of assessments do you believe are most appropriate for your registrants?

4. How much of control do you give over to your students with regard to their learning:
   - (i) I require my students to take full charge of their learning.
   - (ii) The teachers are responsible for student learning.
   - (iii) The responsibility is shared.

5. If you replied (iii) to the above, please explain how?

6. Do you encourage
   - (i) Individual work
   - (ii) Collaborative work

E. Programme Implementation

1. Teaching and Learning
   How do encourage interaction between teacher and students?
   - (i) face to face  (ii) email  (iii) phone  (iv) electronic chat  (v) Skype  (vi) a blend of the above
   - (vii) none of the above

2. Student Support
   - (i) What do you provide in terms of facilities to your students?
   - (ii) What do they do when they have complaints with regard to the following:
      - Course material
      - Technology
      - Local Tutor
      - External (foreign) Tutor
      - Delays in getting feedback
      - Fees are seen as too high

3. Can you detail how you handle student complaints?

4. What mechanism do you have to ensure that your students’ grievances are addressed?

5. What are your views with regard to your students’ learning experiences?

6. Is developing a sense of community important for you?
   - (i) If yes, what sense is this important?
(ii) If no, why is it not important?

F. Evaluation

1. Programme level

   (i) Do you carry out programme evaluation
       • during programme implementation
       • at the end of a programme?
       • can you give details
       • how do you design your approach to evaluation?

2. Course level

   (i) Can you give details about the type of assessments that the programmes you offer entail? (By programme if one is different from the other)
   (ii) What are your arrangements to ensure security in your students’ assessments?

G. Environment

1. Do you believe the Mauritian environment is conducive to DE?

2. Do you think students in Mauritius can cope with DE courses?

3. How do you integrate contextual/environmental aspects in your programme development?

4. What are the environmental/cultural challenges you face?

5. How do you cope with these challenges?
TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

Distance Education Policy Development Exercise

Interview schedule for DE teachers

Questions

1. What type of Distance Education activities are you engaged in?
   - Print based/electronic or a mix?

2. Have you had much prior experience in DE before becoming a lecturer in DE programmes?

3. Had you trained earlier in DE programmes?

4. What has your DE experience as a teacher been like?

5. What do you think would have helped improve this experience?
TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

Distance Education Policy Development Exercise

Interview schedule for Students

Questions

1. How long have you been a DE student?
2. Why did you choose DE?
3. What type of DE are you engaged in?
4. Are you satisfied with your choice? Can you please give details?
5. How do you think the Distance Education you have access to can be improved?
# List of official documents consulted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acts, Documents, Policies and Strategies consulted</th>
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<tbody>
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# Tertiary Education Commission Distance Education Policy Sub-Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Kenneth Basil Cathan</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Mauritius Institute of Education, TEC Board Member, <strong>Chairperson</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr V A Ramchurn</td>
<td>Principal Training Officer, Mauritius Revenue Authority, TEC Board Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Shamim Ajaheb</td>
<td>Centre for Professional Development &amp; Lifelong Learning University of Mauritius, TEC Board Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Saabir Kasenally</td>
<td>Officer-in-Charge, Tertiary Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Sushita Gokool-Ramdoo</td>
<td>Ag. Head Distance Education &amp; Open Learning, Tertiary Education Commission</td>
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# Contributors- Working Group Members

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<tr>
<td>Dr. Sushita Gokool-Ramdoo</td>
<td>Ag. Head Distance Education &amp; Open Learning, <strong>Chairperson</strong></td>
<td>Tertiary Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Shaheen Motala-Timol</td>
<td>Quality Assurance and Accreditation Officer</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr (Mrs) Brinda Oogarah-Pratap</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Mauritius Institute of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Santosh Kumar Pudaruth</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer and Head School of Performing Arts</td>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Kaviraj Sharma Sukon</td>
<td>Director-General</td>
<td>Open University of Mauritius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs A Tirvassen</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>Open University of Mauritius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr R Durbarrylall</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Open University of Mauritius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr G Nuckchady</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>AEA Co Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs S K Kistamah</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Early Childhood Care and Education Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Rashid Phul</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Y K Business School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr D Fokeer</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>University of Technology Mauritius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr N Mohamudally</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>University of Technology Mauritius</td>
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