Executive Summary

This report provides an overview and analysis of the existing literature on open and distance learning (ODL) in the Caribbean from a gender perspective. It covers a wide range of themes encompassing the socio-cultural and economic factors. For some there was no data or analysis available directly related to gender issues or the data available is over ten years old. In these instances, the report summarized key ODL issues in that area and assessed the relevant gender equality issues and questions influencing the related current practices and status.

The gender analysis is based on an adaptation of two different frameworks: 1) the Empowerment Framework which examines gender from the perspectives of empowerment at the Welfare, Access, Participation and Ownership and Control levels; and 2) the World Bank Economic Systems Framework which looks at the interactions between informal institutions (such as gender values within the family) and formal institutions such as educational institutions.

Socio-Cultural Context

In the Caribbean, when one examines the linkages between informal institutions (gender values, beliefs and attitudes), households, formal institutions and markets, there is a clear correlation between the underlying core gender values held at the household and community level and markets. This is particularly evident within the labour market where there is a strong degree of gender-based occupational segregation across the region. This, in turn, has a significant impact on which ODL courses men and women choose to study as well as what kind of training (particularly vocational or technical crafts) is offered within the formal education system.

The core underlying values that need to be examined with regard to socio-cultural context are those related to male/female roles and what is considered appropriate behaviour for boys and girls, with a great deal of societal pressure being put on boys and men to become breadwinners at an early age. In the Caribbean, gender roles and values greatly influence occupational and economic choices related to learning opportunities. In turn, this often leads to fairly strong occupational segregation patterns that affect women and men’s life chances and income as well as learning outcomes. These occupational segregation patterns generally follow the underlying values related to male/female roles. For example, in tourism – a major employer in the Caribbean, women are found concentrated in jobs such as chamber maids, waitresses, front desk reception, etc. and men in yard and maintenance work and as tour guides.¹ In the Caribbean, higher education is also starting to be perceived as a female activity.² This and significantly higher dropout rates for males for a wide variety of reasons (several of which are gender-related) has led to a dominance of women in distance and open learning programmes.

From a market demand perspective enrolment and participation these gender values and beliefs have meant that skills training courses tend to be either male or female dominated – depending upon the course content or skill offered. To facilitate a greater gender balance would require a conscious outreach and marketing programme that would focus on men and women.

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considering non-traditional trades and skills as an option, along with related career counselling and job placement programmes.

**Access Issues**
The key access issues related to ODL are financial and low literacy levels for some groups of prospective users. The latter tends to affect young men more than young women. At all levels and in all countries the participation rate of females in education outstrips that of men. Where data is available, this includes the use of ICTs either as a focus or means of study, or both. As such, there are no obvious barriers to ICTs use for many groups of women in the Caribbean and often computer science is perceived to be more of a female than male occupation. Given the pressure on males to earn an income quickly, training programmes that take less time and provide a quick return on their investment are more attractive to male participants than ones which require a longer term investment but may generate more income over time. Boys’ higher dropout rates in the Caribbean also can limit their access to ODL as they may not have the literacy or numeracy skills or the learning discipline to be able to participate in self-directed learning programmes unless it is the type that works with a group teaching format. For poor, young women the key access issues are those that limit their access to education in general. These include finances, low self-esteem, rural locations, and childcare. Many have young children and often need a training allowance to be able to participate in open learning programmes or else childcare support at home if they are going to take part in distance learning.

**Access Issues for At Risk or Out-of-School Youth**
Approximately eight million of the Caribbean’s 35 million people are youth between the ages of 10 and 24. More than half of these are “at risk”, i.e., are engaged in or expected to engage in risky behavior such as dropping out of school, committing crime and violence, unsafe sexual behavior, and abusing drugs and alcohol. Available data shows that the primary reasons boys exit the education system early: lack of family and financial support; lack of interest in classes; and expulsion (for poor behaviour). For girls pregnancy is added to this list. This dropout rate is also high at the primary school level and means that boys are starting to fall behind in literacy levels as opposed to girls – the reverse of the situation in many other parts of the world.

There are also high unemployment rates for both male and female youth, with female youth generally experience unemployment rates that are double or close to double that of male youth. However, the general perception is that male youth unemployment is higher as they tend to be more visible and more unemployed youth engage in high-risk behaviour such as gang membership and related criminal activity.

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Participation in open learning programs for at-risk and unemployed youth tend to follow occupational segregation patterns as well, and boys show a strong preference for skills training that is shorter term whereas the girls are more willing to invest more time. This again stems back to differences in underlying gender values. Male/female needs in this type of training also differ somewhat for non-academic skills, with young women often needing life skills that focus on ways to build their self-esteem and confidence, how to parent young children and manage a job at the same time, knowledge of their rights to child support and personal security (i.e. gender-based violence). For the young men, it may need to include anger management, what are their familial rights and obligations, and career counselling regarding the benefits of longer term training. Both need substantial training on employability skills.

**Enrolment**

Throughout the Caribbean women’s share of tertiary education is significantly higher than that of men’s, ranging from 83% in Anguilla to 56% in Trinidad and Tobago, but standing at over 60 to 70% in most Caribbean countries. In April 2002, UWI noted that enrolment for distance education followed the same pattern as for face-to-face courses; i.e. that more women than men register for and complete training at a distance. The only exception, they found was the Advanced Diploma in Construction Management, where UWI found a greater number of males than females. Statistics from the UWI 2011/12 annual report indicates this pattern of imbalance in male/female enrolment has continued. UWI enrolment statistics also show that there is still a fairly strong gender imbalance by academic discipline within their campuses at large. There are often strong correlations between gender values and the reasons these groups of male and female students quit school – in addition, to economic challenges. These are often highly complex with a strong inter-relation between gender, ethnicity and class as well.

**Performance and Outcomes**

“Despite the numerical female advantage in institutions of higher learning, women remain disproportionately under-represented in the Caribbean labour force, over-represented in the unemployed labour force, have higher job-seeking rates than males and, on average, earn less than their male colleagues at all levels of educational achievement.”

The reasons for this disconnect between women’s educational achievements and their success in the labour force and in the political realm lie partially in lingering views of women as being less reliable since they have children (i.e. may not be available for overtime), of women as not being inherently sound leaders and the perception that men are still the main breadwinners in any family. A study on gender differentials in education also found that females were often disadvantaged as a group as the males who remained in education systems were clustered in the sciences and technical crafts, both areas which lead to higher status and better paid jobs. This again has to do with perceptions of what are appropriate fields of work for women.

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10 Bailey and Charles, op. cit.
**Curriculum Content and Development**

Curriculum content can unfortunately heighten inequality of opportunities, especially when existing inequalities are not considered where relevant and when they are transmitted in a way that strengthens stereotypes and inequality of opportunities (discriminating contents, or women and men portrayed as having unequal value).\textsuperscript{11} It is a political as well as technical process in that it often reflects the political values, interpretations of history and philosophy and core cultural values of a society, including gender values.

Both formal and informal education tend to be based on “socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels”.\textsuperscript{12} These unwritten rules are what constitute the “informal institutions” outlined in the World Bank Economic System Framework. In the education field, this is known as the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum in the region inadvertently transmits gender stereotypes through print and non-print materials used to support the delivery of curricula at all levels. Many examples used in schools to represent society do not challenge sexual inequalities resulting from the assumption that women and men are expected to perform different functions in life. Images used in curriculum materials are powerful and effective socialization tools as they normalize the status quo in relation to women and men’s roles and an acceptance of these as the norm. Research on twenty textbooks on History, Geography and Social Studies in the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) curricula used at the secondary level in Commonwealth Caribbean States concluded that the texts were heavily gender biased.\textsuperscript{13}

Despite compelling evidence of gender biases in learning materials in many countries, the effort to overhaul textbooks remains prohibitively expensive. External funding is therefore often required for a country to be able to conduct a gender-based revision of curricula, an initiative that requires coordination throughout the entire curriculum framework of a country. The challenge with non-formal education is that related curriculum does not pass through national review committees or need to follow national standards. Sometimes this means the related curriculum is cutting edge with regard to gender equality. At other times it reinforces the traditional gender values espoused by the host organisation. It is also difficult to assess as there are a wide range of organisations that offer non-formal education in the Caribbean.

**Human Resources and Professional Development**

In the Caribbean, there is a dominance of female teachers, including at the tertiary level. The problem is that women tend to be concentrated in socially accepted, non-technological and traditionally female-dominated streams. This trend not only serves to widen gender disparities in access to and use of ODLs, but it also conveys the wrong message to young girls in schools.

The challenge for women lies more with the opportunities available at the management level. In Belize, for example, despite the overwhelming preponderance of female teachers (73.3%) in the


lower grades, at the primary school level 56% of principals are male. This gap continues to widen all the way up to the tertiary level where only 22% of principals being women while 78% are men.\textsuperscript{14} Further study would be needed to determine if this is the pattern across the region.

\textbf{Distance Learning}
In the Caribbean the multiple modes of delivery for distance education and its relative flexibility make it more accessible for women who have multiple demands on their time. This flexibility may be one reason they have responded by opting for this mode of education in significantly greater numbers than men. Distance education that is part-time also appeals to men as they can pursue their education while still working. However, within Caribbean culture women still place a greater premium on education than men and men are more reluctant to take time away from earning an income to pursue further training after high school – even more so, if they did not complete their high school education and may need to take preparatory courses to gain acceptance at a university or college. A recent study by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education in Trinidad and Tobago found that financial constraints are still listed as the top issue for male students interested in pursuing post-secondary or tertiary education. The young men surveyed indicated that they have to “step up and help their mothers/families”.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{Open Learning}
Cultural views of what is a good way to learn can also vary between men and women. For example, a study on women and youth participation in agriculture in the Caribbean found that male farmers preferred in-field extension education approaches whereas female farmers were quite happy to participate in classroom-based training.\textsuperscript{16} There are numerous studies on the different ways boys and girls learn due to the differences in their brain development and the pace of this development. These differences narrow somewhat as people get older, but there is still a need for ODL to look into different learning styles from a gender perspective and make a conscious effort to include teaching approaches that take both male and female learning patterns into account. Offering diverse ways of learning and instruction may serve to increase male access to ODL in the future.

\textbf{Policy Environment}
The Caribbean Regional Policy Framework for Open and Distance Learning includes Equity and Inclusivity as guiding principles. However, the policy does not elaborate on how these guiding principles should be applied nor does it identify which particular demographic groups need particular attention in order to be included and gain equitable access to ODL. The Regional ODL Policy Framework notes that a number of educational challenges facing the region and includes the following gender-specific issues: Lack of boy’s success in the traditional school system; A

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{14} Ministry of Education. 2011. Part 3: Profile of Women and Men in Leadership in Education Institutions in Belize (powerpoint presentation)
\textsuperscript{15} Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. 2011. Gender Study on the Factors Affecting Male Re-Entry into the Post-secondary and Tertiary Education System. Port Of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.
\end{flushright}
paucity of secondary graduates entering the tertiary level (especially boys); and A shortage of secondary graduates with math and sciences subjects (especially girls).\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Financial Support Mechanisms}

The first line of support for ODL comes from national budgets under their education line item. The second comes from external organisations – either donor agencies or educational institutions which may or may not have a vested interest in the delivery of the ODL programme. These two forms of support are critical from a gender perspective with regard to whether they allocate funds to cover a gender component of the programme, e.g., to provide gender training for the instructors and tutors or to review and revise the curriculum from a gender perspective. National education ministries in the Caribbean differ in the amount of funds they allocate to gender. Therefore it would be necessary to do a country by country review to determine what percentage of the education budget is allocated to gender-related training, research, curriculum review, etc. and whether any of this applies to ODL programmes. A study on male re-entry in post-secondary education in Trinidad and Tobago, found that financial support is particularly critical for both maintaining and increasing male participation at the tertiary level.\textsuperscript{18} Poor women also have challenges affording post-secondary education and training, but tend to have a more positive attitude towards the life opportunities further education will bring them.

\textbf{Conclusion}

There are gender issues that affect both women and men with regard to their access to and participation in ODL in the Caribbean, as well as affect the outcomes of this form of education. The key to understanding these issues lies with an analysis of how girls and boys, women and men are socialized within the Caribbean. Societal norms regarding gender values, roles and behaviour, while they differ somewhat among the different ethnic groups in the Caribbean, in general follow a pattern in which there is considerable pressure put on males to be financially and emotionally independent from an early age and on females to stick closer to home, conform to acceptable social behaviour for women and to take on the primary responsibility for caring for and often supporting the family. Boys and men have greater mobility within the community and girls and women less exposure to non-traditional roles. These underlying social values have contributed to a high degree of occupational segregation based on gender lines within both the workforce and in technical/vocational and tertiary education, including within ODL programmes.

From the viewpoint of the Empowerment Framework, the main conclusions are as follows:

\textbf{Welfare:} Although primary enrolment is equitable for boys and girls, dropout rates are higher for boys overall, and there is already a gender imbalance in favour of girls by the time they reach high school. Girls and women’s educational outcomes however, do not necessarily reflect this greater access to higher education, with women’s unemployment rates often being double that of men’s and women in senior management increasing in fewer numbers than the available pool of qualified candidates in the labour market. The issues this raises for ODL is how to assist women achieve better outcomes and how to get more men to enroll and graduate.

\textsuperscript{17} Caribbean Regional Policy Framework on Open and Distance Learning. \url{http://www.cklh.org/home/sites/default/files/Caribbean%20Regional%20Policy%20Framework%20for%20Open%20and%20Distance%20Learning.pdf}

\textsuperscript{18} Ministry of Science, Technology, and Tertiary Education. 2011. Gender Study on the Factors Affecting Male Re-Entry into the Post-Secondary and Tertiary Education System. Port Of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.
Access: The main access issues are not related to education policy and infrastructure (except in rural areas) but are more a matter of poverty and socio-cultural perceptions as to what is appropriate for males and females. These views permeate Caribbean societies and the education system and have contributed significantly to the gender imbalances that exist.

Critical Awareness: While there is growing awareness of the need to revise curriculum for gender bias and give more thought regarding how to set up career counseling for male and female students to reduce gender segregation in course and programme selection, the need for increased awareness on related gender equality issues has not been addressed systemically. While the education system favours women’s participation it does not do much to promote women’s participation in less traditional areas. This limits their future opportunities. Men’s growing view that education is for women also limits their futures and at one level needs to be addressed through increased attention to raising critical awareness of these diverse gender issues and how they affect life choices by both potential students in ODL and by the staff that work in the institutions that offer ODL.

Participation: While the data on women’s participation in decision-making in educational management was limited, there was enough of an indication of a gender imbalance in favour of men at this level to merit further study to determine if this pattern of gender-biased employment is Caribbean-wide. At the same time, educational institutions that offer ODL could review their own human resource breakdown and position distribution and establish appropriate affirmative action measures to address any imbalances they might find. On the other end of the spectrum, men’s lower levels of participation in ODL in the Caribbean are cause for grave concern and also require a rethinking of how to reach more men and increase their access to ODL education.

Control and Decision-making: Women’s possibly more limited participation as senior education managers also means that they may have less input into the development of education policy. This includes policy explicating about ODL or ICT policies within the education system that act as a foundation for future ODL programming at the tertiary level. Women’s participation at the formal political level is also significantly less than men’s. While the limited number of women who are members of parliament in the Caribbean tend to be assigned “social” portfolios such as Education and Social Welfare, their lower numbers still mean that women have less input into how national budgets are spent and whether funding will be allocated to support the integration of gender equality into ODL and the education system in general.

The depth of the impact of underlying gender values in the Caribbean on educational outcomes is quite profound. This applies as much to ODL approaches as it does to more traditional forms of education delivery. However, ODL as it is still relatively new has a greater opportunity and slightly fewer constraints than traditional educational models to change how it is delivered.

This potentially creates more space to integrate a holistic approach to gender equality content in its materials and overall approaches by: i) training staff how to develop and deliver gender-sensitive and positive curriculum and content; ii) tracking male/female participation and success rates and using this information to inform future programming; iii) ensuring that outreach and support programming and strategies are designed to take women and men’s specific needs and priorities into account; iv) working to encourage male and female students to select non-
traditional courses for their gender, particularly within the sciences for women and in computing science for men; and v) developing or expanding bursary and scholarship programmes that target demographic groups that are under-represented in ODL such as men, rural women, poor women, etc. This shift to a more gender-aware form of thinking and approaches in ODL will benefit both women and men in both the short and long term.
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# List of Acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDB</td>
<td>Caribbean Development Bank</td>
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<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<td>COL</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Learning</td>
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<td>COMOSA</td>
<td>Commonwealth Open Schooling Association</td>
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<td>CCDESP</td>
<td>Canada Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Programme</td>
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<td>CSFP</td>
<td>Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan</td>
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<td>CUPIDE</td>
<td>Caribbean Universities Project for Integrated Distance Education</td>
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<td>DE</td>
<td>Distance Education</td>
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<td>DFATD</td>
<td>Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development, Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
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<td>IT</td>
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<td>ITVET</td>
<td>Institutes for Technical and Vocational Education Training</td>
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<td>LIVES</td>
<td>Learning through Interactive Voice Educational Systems</td>
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<td>L3 Farmers</td>
<td>Lifelong Learning for Farmers</td>
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<td>MOE</td>
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<td>MPs</td>
<td>Members of Parliament</td>
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<td>NOSTT</td>
<td>National Open School of Trinidad and Tobago</td>
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<td>ODL</td>
<td>Open and Distance Learning</td>
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<td>OECS</td>
<td>Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States</td>
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<td>OERU</td>
<td>OECS Education Reform Unit</td>
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<td>RADA</td>
<td>Rural Agricultural Development Authority</td>
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<td>SES</td>
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<td>TVET</td>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education Training</td>
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<td>University of the West Indies</td>
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<td>VUSSC</td>
<td>Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth</td>
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Gender Analysis of Open and Distance Learning in the Caribbean Region

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

This report provides an overview of the existing literature on open and distance learning (ODL) in the Caribbean from a gender perspective. It covers themes encompassing the socio-cultural and economic factors that influence ODL that include curriculum, human resources, policy issues, infrastructure, users of ODL, etc. For some themes there was no data or analysis available directly related to gender issues or the data available is over ten years old. In these instances, the report summarizes the key ODL issues in that thematic area and assesses the relevant gender equality issues and questions influencing the related current practices and status.

The gender analysis is based on an adaptation of two different gender analysis frameworks: 1) the Empowerment Framework which examines gender from the perspectives of Welfare, Access, Participation and Ownership and Control; and 2) the World Bank Economic Systems Framework which looks at the interactions between informal institutions (such as gender values within the family) and formal institutions such as educational institutions.

The report is structured as follows:

Section 1: Introduction and Definition of terms

Section 2: Gender analysis frameworks

Section 3: Examines the critical socio-cultural and economic issues that shape the gender equality issues that influence or affect ODL in the Caribbean. It also examines men and boys, and women and girls as heterogeneous groups, with differences in age, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, geographic location, etc. and assesses the implications of these differences for ODL.

Section 4: Presents and analyses the available data for the following themes and topics:

1. Access Issues
2. Access Issues for At-Risk or Out-of-School Youth
3. Enrolment
4. Performance and Outcomes
5. Curriculum Content and Development
6. Human resources and Professional Development
7. Distance Learning
8. Open Learning
9. Policy Environment
10. Financial support mechanisms
Each sub-section of Section 4 is followed by recommendations for future priority actions based on the gender analysis of each theme.

1.2 Limitations of the Study

This report represents the data it was possible to collect within a fairly limited time frame. The study based its gender analysis on ODL-related data where this was available, and where it was not available, it referred to existing education statistics. It is based primarily on data sources available on-line supplemented by hard copy reports formerly collected by the researcher supplemented by relevant publications provided by COL and a limited amount of data provided by Commonwealth of Learning Focal Points from the Caribbean. The challenge this has presented is that much of the data readily available on-line on the report’s themes are ten years or older. The most current data used was drawn from primary research conducted by the researcher in Belize for the Caribbean Development Bank in 2011. While the sample size of the recent data from Belize does not allow definitive conclusions for the region it does give some indication of the types of gender issues that need to be taken into consideration in ODL in the Caribbean, particularly when complemented by similar data where it was available. To obtain the same level of data and analysis as was done in Belize on a wider regional basis would require conducting a similar level of primary research in several countries in the Caribbean. Nevertheless, it is possible to use the data collected to provide some useful lessons learned. This review has also helped identify key areas where there are data gaps related to gender and ODL in the Caribbean.

The report also does not include a section on gender, infrastructure and ODL. This is in part due to data limitations and in part due to the breadth of the discussion required given the broad definition of ICTs within an ODL context that includes all forms of technology used to promote communications. It is however, an area of research that also merits further attention as there are often distinct differences in the ways women and men access and use different types of ICTs. In other words, discussion in this area goes far beyond physical infrastructure to include the ways in which gender norms affect access to diverse ICTs in an ODL context.

Open and Distance Learning

There are many variations on the definition of open and distance learning. The traditional or most commonly known definitions, however, include following characteristics:

- Separation of teacher and learner in time or place, or in both time and place.
- Learning that is formally accredited or certified by an institution or agency. This is distinct from more informal learning through a person’s individual effort without official recognition of a learning institution.
- Use of mixed-media courseware such as print, radio and television broadcasts, video and audio-cassettes, computer-based learning and telecommunications, all of which constitute ICT tools used to facilitate learning. Courseware tends to be pre-tested and validated before use.

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19 This included interviews with a wide range of stakeholders who work in the education field at the primary through tertiary levels and with at-risk youth in Belize.
Two-way communication that allows learners and tutors to interact as distinguished from the passive receipt of broadcast signals. Communication can be synchronous or asynchronous.

The possibility of face-to-face meetings for tutorials, learner–learner interaction, library study and laboratory or practice sessions.\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{Open learning} is also broadly defined as “activities that either enhance learning opportunities within formal education systems or broaden learning opportunities beyond formal education systems.”\textsuperscript{21} It involves but is not limited to: classroom teaching methods, approaches to interactive learning, formats in work-related education and training, and the development and use of open education resources.\textsuperscript{22} The latter are also offered through distance education. COL states that open schooling “is the delivery of school level education through flexible techniques and methodologies, including distance education and appropriate information and communications technologies”.\textsuperscript{23} The central focus is commonly placed on the “needs of the learner as perceived by the learner.”\textsuperscript{24} Adding in a gender perspective, the key would be to analyse the differences between the perceived needs of female and male learners to ensure that related learning programmes both meet their needs and take any significant gender differences into account.

\textit{Distance education} can be a variation on open learning or may follow a more traditional educational style. It is a mode of delivering education and instruction to students who are not physically present in a traditional setting such as a classroom.\textsuperscript{25} It is generally set up for individual self-learning and instruction but can also be administered or delivered to a group. The means of delivery currently is primarily through the internet, but distance learning is also possible through correspondence courses in which the learner sends in work for feedback and marking and can be tutored through the mail or, in some instances, through SMS messages. From a gender perspective the key issues to analyse include whether more women or men engage in distance education and why gender differentials exist; as well as if there are any significant differences in male/female access to distance education resources. It is also important to assess in what ways curriculum should address gender equality issues both in terms of content as appropriate and with regard to how women and men learn. The findings from this analysis will form the basis of related recommendations.

\textit{Evolution of ODL}

Commonwealth Heads of Government established the COL (Commonwealth of Learning) to advocate and promote use of open and distance learning in the Commonwealth with the aim of


\textsuperscript{25} Wikipedia. Distance Education. \url{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distance_Education} Accessed Nov. 26, 2013.
enhancing access to education and training among member states. The arrival of newer technologies since then has led to a further evolution of ODL. As a result, ODL now embraces any or all of the following:

- **Open learning** – policies and practices that permit entry to learning with no or minimum barriers with respect to age, gender or time constraints and that recognize prior learning. These policies need not be part of a distance education system, but are complementary to it. Where distance education includes open learning practices it further increases accessibility. This is particularly important for male youth and men as there is a significantly higher dropout rate for boys at both the primary and high school levels throughout the Caribbean.

- **Distance education** – the delivery of learning or training to learners who are separated mostly by time and space from those who are teaching or training. The teaching is done with a variety of “mediating processes” used to transmit content, provide tuition and conduct assessment or measure outcomes.

- **Flexible learning** – the provision of learning opportunities that can be accessed at any place and time.

- **Online learning and e-learning** – describe the application of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance distance education, implement open learning policies, make learning activities more flexible and enable these learning activities to be distributed to more than one learning venue at a time.

- **Virtual education** – includes aspects of both online and e-learning but goes somewhat further. While it is largely web-centric, it does not strictly limit itself to learners outside a conventional classroom as it can be used as a tool within a classroom setting as well. Virtual education uses multimedia and enables a high level of interaction among learners, content, teachers, peers and administration.  

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**Section 2: Gender Analysis Frameworks**


**2.1 Empowerment Framework**

The Empowerment Framework is a relatively simple tool one can use to help identify and assess gender differences within five different levels of empowerment.

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Empowerment in this context refers to a process that gives men and women greater control and power over their lives. The framework’s underlying premise is that women and men experience unequal power relations arising from societal perceptions of gender values and behaviour. These unequal power relations also need to be correlated with other socio-economic traits such as class, race or ethnicity, age and rural or urban location. Given that neither women nor men represent completely homogeneous groups, any related gender analysis thus needs to include some degree of specificity regarding which groups of women and men are being considered or whose situation is being analysed. This is because there are nuanced and complex degrees of gender discrimination that affect different groups of women and men to different degrees. Thus, some groups of women of middle to upper class women may experience less economic discrimination than poor men but may still experience gender discrimination with regard to the gender roles they play and in their power relations with men. In the Caribbean, there are also specific groups of men who also experience reduced opportunities in life due to the roles and behaviours ascribed to them as acceptable for males by society.

For this reason, it is important to determine which specific groups of women and men or boys and girls are at a disadvantage. This report does this, for example, when discussing at-risk male and female youth. Overall, while the empowerment framework refers to inequalities between women and men, where possible this specificity of groups should be identified. In general, either women or men find themselves at a disadvantage, with unequal gender relations often leading to women’s subordination and lower socio-economic status. This occurs sometimes even in situations where women appear to be succeeding as is the case within the education sector in the Caribbean (refer to discussions by Bailey and Charles in section 4). Therefore, where possible, it is critical to determine or identify which specific groups of women and men face the greatest gender inequalities and how these inequalities impact on participation in open and distance learning.

In the Caribbean, for example, women face many of the common inequalities encountered by women throughout the world such as much lower participation in leadership positions and occupational gender stereotyping. In the Caribbean however, boys and men also are affected adversely by gender values and inequalities that lead to them taking far less advantage of the educational opportunities that are available.

The Empowerment Framework also seeks to measure and analyse gender gaps that stem from unequal power relations between women and men. It is a tool one can use to help identify where and what these gaps might be as well as what are the underlying gender values and issues that lead to specific gender inequalities.

To use the Framework, one needs to analyse the relative situation of women and men at five different levels of empowerment. With the exception of the Welfare level, these levels are not sequential and empowerment can take place for women or men at any or all of these levels.

1. Welfare
2. Access
3. Critical awareness
4. Participation
5. Control and ownership
Assessing empowerment for women and men, boys and girls from these different perspectives makes it possible to:

- Analyse where there are gaps in programme results or outcomes or in the availability of services for men and women
- Where imbalances will be created or maintained by a policy or programme
- Where there may be a need for additional measures to redress gender imbalances for either women or men, or boys and girls
- Plan where the optimum inputs are needed to generate increased empowerment for women and men or girls and boys.

**Definition of Empowerment Levels**

**a) Welfare**
This includes any actions that increase women and men’s or boys’ and girls’ material welfare (e.g., their nutritional status, health, income, etc.) and increase their quality of life through the provision of basic needs. Although welfare based programmes do not generally empower people, without basic material security at a survival level, it is not possible for them to move onto any other level of empowerment irrespective of their gender roles. For example, children who go to school hungry have more difficulty learning than those who are fed adequately.

**b) Access**
At this level gender gaps arise directly from inequalities in women and men’s or boys’ and girls’ access to resources such as education, information, land, credit, labour, services and other factors of production. Policies and programmes at this level focus on increasing male/female equality of access and opportunities related to these resources. From an ODL perspective a critical first step is to determine whether there is a male/female differential access to the resources needed to take advantage of ODL opportunities and what is needed for women/men/girls/boys to gain equitable access to their share of the available ODL resources.

**c) Critical Awareness**
In the process of trying to overcome the obstacles they face regarding equal access to resources, specific groups women and men tend to encounter discrimination or have internalized behaviours that limit their opportunities in life. To deal with this discrimination and acceptance of prejudicial gender roles and attitudes effectively, both women and men must first become aware that it exists. Therefore empowerment at this level means becoming aware of both the nature of the discrimination taking place and its underlying causes. At its base it means becoming sensitized to and rejecting the almost universal belief that women’s lower socio-economic status is part of the natural order and that they have less value than men or the view that poor men have less value than those with greater resources. This empowerment level only applies to some aspects of ODL but will be assessed where it is applicable, e.g., examining the perception that women need to work harder than men in the Caribbean in order to gain promotion or that education is something for women and not really for men.

Policy and programme inputs at this level encourage people to analyse their society and systems critically and recognize discriminatory practices for what they are and not as something which is either acceptable or permanent. It also involves developing a belief in equality between women and men as a basic human right.
d) Participation
The gender gap between women and men’s participation at all levels is a highly visible and easily quantified phenomena, particularly in terms of women’s lower levels of participation in decision-making. Increased representation for women and specific groups of marginalized men at all levels is a key goal of empowerment strategies in this category. Within the ODL context the analysis at this level would focus on human resource issues and will examine women and men’s participation in the management of ODL and non-formal education/learning environments and as policymakers and decision-makers within these education sectors.

e) Control and Ownership
Gender gaps at this level of empowerment are based on an imbalance between male and female ownership of the means of production and control over the decisions regarding their allocation and use. Within ODL this would refer to the owners or controllers of distance education venues and processes and education system management, including management of non-formal education programmes. To change any existing power relations within these different service providers, there needs to be a more equitable participation of women and men in decision-making and in their ownership/control of diverse educational delivery systems.

Inter-relationship between Levels of Empowerment
All five levels are closely interrelated and what occurs at one level potentially has an impact on all the other levels. For example, by increasing women’s participation in decision making in senior management in ODL and education systems, both male and female stakeholders become more aware of women’s ability and right to lead thereby increasing their critical awareness regarding women’s leadership as well. By increasing male youth access to credit, it becomes possible for them to develop their own businesses and attend related training and possibly will decrease gang violence. This means that they are better able to look after their family’s welfare at the same time as it increases their control and ownership of economic resources.

The Empowerment Framework can also serve as a useful tool for assessing levels of change. By reviewing the degree of change for women and men at all five levels of empowerment, you can assess where a programme or educational policy has made progress and at which levels their objectives and activities are focused. If your assessment determines that a programme or policy only concentrates on one level of change, you may decide that there is a need for additional strategies to ensure progress is made at the other levels of empowerment either through using a complementary initiative or by instituting special measures.

Example:
A school programme in Togo determined that girls were not able to do their homework because they had a lot of household responsibilities. The school started an education programme to encourage boys to share these household tasks. This led to a more equitable division of labour at home and enabled the girls in this particular school district to participate in their school experience more fully. It also taught both boys and girls that there was no such thing as a task that was strictly female or male. As such, the programme addressed two levels of empowerment – that of access and of critical awareness.  

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Not all five levels of empowerment will be pertinent to all of the themes outlined and analysed in this report. Therefore the report will apply the sections of the Empowerment Framework that are appropriate for each thematic area.

This report will also use one aspect of the World Bank’s Economic Systems Framework - an analysis of the relationship between informal institutions (i.e., gender values, roles, norms and social networks) and formal institutions (in this instance, the education system plus private sector and civil society service providers). The premise posited here is that in the Caribbean these informal institutions have a significant impact with regard to who (male/female) goes to school and which programmes and career choices women and men make.

Examining the influence of informal institutions on access, participation and critical awareness in particular makes it possible to identify key entry points for policy and programming (such as in target groups, programmes and service delivery) to achieve results that promote gender equality and sustainable economic development.

The framework’s key assumption is that differences in life conditions and opportunities for male and female “result from interactions between households, markets, and institutions” 28 and that government policies can promote or impede progress towards gender equality and economic growth. Kartini’s experience has been that to gain widespread support for gender equality in the Caribbean, the discussion of gender issues in ODL needs to focus on how government policy can better support women’s and men’s/girls’ and boys’ access to ODL and positive results from their participation in ODL as opposed to reinforcing the view of women and girls as victims or the sole beneficiaries of gender equality processes and initiatives. Indeed, in the Caribbean there is much evidence that boys and men are rapidly falling behind women and girls with regard to education. This framework will help explain why this is the growing trend as well as where and why more traditional gender biases and gender gaps still apply.

The report will assess what gender values are stemming from the household level and community (i.e., informal institutions) and how these affect the diverse educational institutions providing ODL, as well as who (male/female) uses ODL and how. The chart below depicts the interactions between the different levels and components of the Economic Systems Framework.

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Diagram 1: Economic Systems Framework

For the purposes of this report informal social institutions refer to the mechanisms, rules, and procedures that shape social interactions but do not pertain to the functioning of the state\(^{29}\), i.e., the unwritten social rules that determine how people behave and women and men, boys and girls in particular.

With regard to open and distance learning, the focus would be on assessing how gender roles, beliefs, social norms, and social networks affect male/female access to ODL training modalities as well as what is taught and who participates. It will also assess the influence that gender equality norms have on the diverse institutions that offer open or distance learning, e.g., what kinds of apprenticeships are available and in which occupational areas, as well as which fields are male or female dominated. Gender roles and values greatly influence occupational and economic choices related to learning opportunities. In turn, this often leads to fairly strong occupational segregation patterns that affect women and men’s life chances and income as well as learning outcomes.

The assessment will also examine the key social norms related to the patterns of behaviour based on socially shared beliefs in the Caribbean and enforced by informal social sanctions (the unwritten rules). It will also look at how these can affect household bargaining: by establishing limits on what can be bargained about; what can be a determinant of or constraint to bargaining power; how bargaining is conducted and by who; and how these factors can all change over time, e.g., who in poor families will have access to limited resources for training and learning or who will have the time to participate in ODL learning opportunities.

\(^{29}\) World Bank, op. cit.
The report will also look at **social networks** – “the system of social relationships and bonds of cooperation for mutual benefit that shape one’s opportunities, information, social norms, and perceptions.”

These can have a particular impact on access to open and distance learning opportunities in terms of who (male/female) hears about these opportunities and which groups/organisations join forces to make these opportunities possible for particularly vulnerable groups.

Gender roles and values, social norms and social networks all have a profound impact on economic and market relationships in a country, as well as on educational policy and practice. The report will therefore assess the influence and impact of underlying gender values and norms at the household and community level and how these affect women’s and men’s and girls’ and boys’ access to ODL, related learning outcomes and educational policies and practices.

**Section 3: Socio-cultural and Economic Context**

In the Caribbean, when one examines the linkages between informal institutions (gender values, beliefs and attitudes), households, formal institutions and markets, there is a clear correlation between the underlying core gender values held at the household and community level and markets. This is particularly evident within the labour market where there is a strong degree of gender-based occupational segregation across the region. This, in turn, has a significant impact on which ODL courses men and women choose to study as well as what kind of training (particularly vocational or technical crafts) is offered within the formal education system.

Within the Caribbean context it is also critical to have an understanding of the variation of gender values from ethnic group to ethnic group in the region. The dominant ethnic groups include Afro-Caribbeans, Indo-Caribbeans, Hispanic-Caribbeans and indigenous peoples. The analysis which follows identifies general patterns but also recognizes that there is considerable individual variation at the micro-level and that this analysis should not be taken to mean that all members of each of these ethnic groups follows the characteristics described.

**3.1 Afro-Caribbean Family Patterns**

Afro-Caribbeans form the largest ethnic group in most Caribbean countries. They are descended mainly from slave populations brought to the region by European traders in the 1700 and 1800’s. This ethnic group is divided roughly into two types of gender and social relations. The first follows a fairly traditional family pattern with two parents plus extended family, is often fairly religious and socially conservative and there is generally a clear division of labour between women and men, with men being perceived as the family breadwinners and women as responsible for family and home care – even if the women also work outside the home. There is also a prevailing belief, particularly among the older generations that good jobs are those with permanent salaries and pension plans and entrepreneurship is not necessarily viewed positively.

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30 World Bank, op. cit.
The second group tends to follow more of a pattern that evolved from the slave period where women have the primary responsibility for children and there is not a great onus on men to parent their children. Men will often have children from more than one woman and engage in “visiting relationships” staying with one family for a while and moving onto another relationship or splitting their time between families. The women involved in these relationships often feel pressure to have a child with their male partner in the hopes that he will contribute to family support. When the man moves on, the women may enter into a new relationship and then have another child. Often the women in this situation are poor and highly dependent upon the financial support they get from their partners. A social pattern has thus developed in which there may be several children from different fathers under one roof all being raised primarily by their mothers. Women in families where there are absent or intermittent fathers also tend to rely heavily upon their own mothers and fathers to help raise their children. This is particularly the case for women who emigrate in order to earn an income to support their families.\textsuperscript{32}

**Differences in Male/Female Child Rearing**

Boys and girls are also generally raised quite differently, with boys being encouraged to be independent both emotionally and financially from a young age. Boys are also often raised with the expectation that they will be responsible for protecting their sisters and mothers and that they will contribute to family expenses while still quite young. This places a great deal of pressure on male children to become family breadwinners at an early age. This is a key factor contributing to the high dropout rate and poorer academic performance of boys in the Caribbean starting at the primary school level. That, in turn, influences the demand for ODL from boys and young men as these boys grow up having limited literacy, numeracy and skills and often a not very positive view of education as a means of furthering themselves.

Parents, particularly the mothers, will generally spend more time with their daughters and prefer to keep them closer to home – both as a means of protecting them from early pregnancy and as the girls may be needed at home to help out with elder care or the care of younger siblings. Girls are also not expected to be financially independent as much or as young.\textsuperscript{33}

As the boys are out in the community unsupervised at a younger age and due to the pressure on them to earn an income, they can fall easy prey to gang activity. The gangs provide a sense of belonging and alternative family as well as “father figures” in older gang members as well as a source of status and easy money. In the words of a farmer from St. Vincent “\textit{ganja man, he got jeep – farmer he no got jeep}”.\textsuperscript{34} Because of boys’ greater independence and the influence of gang activity, grandparents who are raising their grandchildren due to either an absent father or a mother who has emigrated to earn a living and send money home, often find it harder to exercise parental control over boys and may just leave them to roam in the community – even if they are not happy with the situation.

Female youth who act out are more likely to do so sexually as opposed to with violence or involvement in criminal activity. While that can contribute to the relatively high rates of teenage pregnancy found in many Caribbean countries, unemployed female youth girls also tend to be

\textsuperscript{33} Peebles, Dana. 2011. op.cit.
\textsuperscript{34} Focus Group Discussion with female farmers, St. Vincent. July 2012.
much less visible than unemployed male youth.\textsuperscript{35} Therefore the general perception is that unemployment rates are higher among male youth. However, CARICOM data shows that female youth unemployment is significantly higher than that of male youth unemployment across the region.\textsuperscript{36} This has meant that in some Caribbean countries it has been easier to obtain funding for the training of at-risk male youth than for female youth.

### 3.2 Gender Values in Other Ethnic Communities

*Indo-Caribbeans* often are descendants of indentured labourers from South Asia whose ancestors contracted themselves to work for landowners and other businesses for set periods of time. This ethnic group is predominantly Hindu but also includes some Muslim communities and a smaller proportion of Buddhists. Each group’s gender values are influenced to some degree by their respective religious beliefs. However, there was until recent years a prevailing view that women had the primary responsibility for family and household care and that men were the primary breadwinners. There is, however, generally a high value placed on education by these groups and in past decades women from this ethnic background have increasingly moved into the ranks of professionals.

There is also a stronger tradition of entrepreneurship amongst these ethnic groups and of running family businesses. The women and children involved in these family enterprises may or not be paid directly for their labour by the male household head. In this context, where the women have more limited decision-making and control over family resources, this may limit their access to ODL. However, this is less the case for younger generations as gender values and economic circumstances continue to shift.\textsuperscript{37}

*Hispanic-Caribbeans* are only predominate in some Caribbean countries – generally the ones connected to Central or South America such as Belize or Guyana or islands which are Spanish-speaking such as the Dominican Republic or Cuba. Gender values are generally similar with regard to male/female roles within Hispanic-Caribbean families, with women taking the lead on household and family responsibilities and men for working as the family breadwinner. This is particularly noticeable in Belize where there are many immigrants from the surrounding countries who come to take up farming. In these communities the overwhelming majority of farmers are male.\textsuperscript{38}

There are also pockets of *indigenous Caribbeans* – ranging from the Maya in Belize, diverse indigenous groups in Guyana, a scattering of Carib communities in different islands and the Garifuna in Belize who are actually a mix of Afro-Caribbean and indigenous peoples. Gender values vary considerably among the different indigenous groups. The Maya in southern Belize, for example, have a strict view of male/female roles which has meant participation in high school for Mayan girls is minimal and that once out of school Mayan girls often work on the family farm or marry young.\textsuperscript{39} These gender values have implications for ODL outreach and participation rates within Mayan communities. Amongst the Wapichan in Guyana men tend to

\textsuperscript{35} Peebles, Dana. 2011. *op. cit.*

\textsuperscript{36} CARICOM. 28 November 2007. Insights into Social/Gender Statistics Produced at the CARICOM Secretariat.

\textsuperscript{37} Peebles, Dana. 1981. *op. cit.*

\textsuperscript{38} ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Peebles, Dana. 2011. *op.cit*
follow a hunter role and range quite widely outside of their communities while women follow the ancient gatherer role and stick closer to home. What these communities do tend to have in common is that they are often found in the more remote parts of a country where there is limited or poor infrastructure and literacy levels in these communities tend to be lower than the national averages, particularly amongst girls and women, with the latter also often not speaking the national language. This also limits their access to ODL.

Therefore to reach these groups ODL programming needs to either be offered in multiple languages that include minority languages or additional training provided to increase fluency in the national languages concerned. Neither option is inexpensive but the latter requires more time from the potential students. This in turn may also limit ODL accessibility, particularly for indigenous women as the traditional gender division of labour means that they generally have less free time to undertake additional training or education.

3.3 Implications of Underlying Gender Values for ODL

The gender division of labour in the Caribbean also contribute to their being a labour market which is divided fairly strongly by occupational gender segregation, with women tending to dominate in services and men in construction and business. Both sexes tend to select occupations and related training that follow more traditional gender roles, with women’s jobs generally paying significantly less than men’s. For example, in tourism – a major employer in the Caribbean, women are found concentrated in jobs such as chamber maids, waitresses, front desk reception, etc. and men in yard and maintenance work and as tour guides.

From a market demand perspective this means that enrolment and participation in skills training courses tend to be either male or female dominated – depending upon the course content or skill offered. To facilitate a greater gender balance would require a conscious outreach and marketing programme that would focus on men and women considering non-traditional trades and skills as an option, along with related career counselling and job placement programmes.

At the household level many women are expected to shoulder all or most of family care. This expectation is held against them to some extent in the workforce when it comes to deciding whether or not female workers will be promoted to higher positions. There is also a lingering underlying gender belief that men are better suited to be leaders. This is despite the fact that women have pulled ahead quite strongly in education at all levels in the Caribbean and are slowly making inroads into middle management. However, since women hold the primary responsibility for family care and earn less money than men, they are also less available for and able to run for public office. This can have a significant impact in small island economies where the number of members of parliament (MPs) is often below 20 and where the average percentage of female MPs is around 15% (ranging from 0% also in Belize to a high of 43% in Cuba). These generally low levels of political participation limit women’s input into national policies on ODL.

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41 Peebles, Dana, 2011. op. cit.
Table 1: Women in Congress in the Caribbean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Single or Lower House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antigua and Barbuda</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Kitts &amp; Nevis</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Lucia</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Vincent &amp; the Grenadines</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad &amp; Tobago</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Section 4: Gender and Open and Distance Learning

The 2011 Regional COL Focal Points meeting in the Caribbean identified the following priorities:

- Developing and implementing special programmes for boys’ participation in education
- Improving male attitudes towards education as a way to better the life of an individual
- Incentivising men to enter into teaching
- Promoting women’s leadership (high levels) programmes to support governance
- Orienting parents on socialisation of children with regards to gender.  

This overview of priorities for future action demonstrates that there is a definite understanding that there are significant gaps in the education area between male and female. The following section summarizes and analyses what these key gender differences are from a gender perspective.

4.1 Access Issues

The key access issues related to ODL are financial and low literacy levels for some groups of prospective users. The latter tends to affect young men more than young women. At all levels and in all countries the participation rate of females in education outstrips that of men. Where data is available, this includes the use of ICTs either as a focus or means of study, or both. As

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42 COL. 2011 (Mar. 28 – 30). Report on the Regional Focal Point Meeting Caribbean. Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago
such, there are no obvious barriers to ICTs use for many groups of women in the Caribbean.\textsuperscript{43} The 1999 Report on the Caribbean Regional Meeting of the COL found there was widespread agreement that women are taking advantage of new technologies where they are available at every educational level. While this data is quite dated, 2012-13 enrollment statistics for ODL programming from the UWI indicate that there is still an overwhelming preponderance of women who take advantage of this type of technology for educational purposes.\textsuperscript{44} In general, there is greater female participation in ODL programmes.

Caribbean women in general see educational opportunities as their means to a better future and are willing to invest time to upgrade their skills or obtain professional qualifications. Bailey and Charles observe that,

\begin{quote}
Males, as a group, see… themselves as dominant and having power over females. This coupled with the allure of quick money, a critical marker of masculine gender identity, only serves to discourage men from pursuing the route of education, which they perceive as requiring too much time and effort with too little return to satisfy the socially imposed role of bread winner and provider.” \textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

These factors make training programmes that take less time and provide a quick return on their investment more attractive to many male participants than ones which require a longer term investment but may generate more income over time. This pattern provides one example of how gender values and norms are influencing the choices that women and men make with regard to their participation in ODL.

Boys’ higher dropout rates in the Caribbean are also a factor that can limit their access to ODL – as they may not have the literacy or numeracy skills or the learning discipline to be able to participate in self-directed learning programmes unless it is the type that works with a group teaching format. For them, the researcher’s experience has been that open learning approaches with face-to-face instruction are likely to have greater effect. Once they have acquired greater learning skills, blended approaches could be an effective way to introduce them to distance education options and possibilities, particularly as use of technology often holds great appeal for boys and young men.

The 1999 COL report also noted that across the region, long-term education plans were focusing on the need to raise male participation levels and academic performance, as well as to attract more men into continuing education. The 2011 COL report cited previously confirms that the need to attract males into participating in diverse types of education and training remains an issue and priority for the region.


\textsuperscript{44} University of West Indies. 2013. Annual Report – 2012-13.

For poor, young women the key access issues are those that limit their access to education in general.\textsuperscript{46} These include finances, low self-esteem, rural locations, and childcare. Many have young children and often need a training allowance to be able to participate in open learning programmes or else childcare support at home if they are going to take part in distance learning.

The role of the grandmother in the Caribbean is pivotal here as often it is the grandmothers who help out in this way. The National Council on Aging in Belize, for example, notes that almost half the older population in Belize work as care givers and provide for their families and others in diverse ways such as assisting with school expenses, giving to in-laws, and extended family.\textsuperscript{47} However, what is not commonly known is that in poorer families many older women also need to work outside the home to provide this support to their families and cover their own expenses. Women generally outlive men in all countries in the region and “\textit{these older women are often faced with loss of financial support, limited employment opportunities and greater dependence on them by family members regarding care giving duties}”.\textsuperscript{48}

Poverty combined with rural locations and un- or underemployment also limit access for some groups of women, as does age. All these factors can also affect men’s access to ODL but in the Caribbean there are larger groups of women who are poor, rurally based and un-or underemployed. Women also live longer so there are also more older women than men who may be quite unfamiliar with ICTs and lack the confidence to try them without significant support or encouragement – even if they did have the resources to have ready access.

Other factors limiting access for some women include “time poverty”. The gender division of labour in the Caribbean at the household level means that women have less time to take part in either part or full time courses, regardless of how they are offered. One Caribbean respondent in a study by COL on women and ICTs observed that, “\textit{in some ways the Internet is a tool for those with lives of leisure}.”\textsuperscript{49} This same study noted programmes that require synchronous use of ICTs can also limit women’s access to ODL since women have less time flexibility and more limited mobility. Once again this pattern is linked to women’s gender roles and social norms that allocate most of the family and household care to women.

Where this pattern may be changing somewhat is within middle class families where both the husband and wife work outside the home. In these circumstances, there is a growing trend towards a greater sharing of household tasks and some blurring of women and men’s traditional roles.\textsuperscript{50} The question that remains, however, is what kind of impact this initial shift of gender roles is having on women’s access to leisure and the internet and whether this will make a difference with regard to their participation in ODL and self-directed learning opportunities.

Cost is a factor that affects women more than men given women’s lower incomes across the region. In some

\textsuperscript{46} Green, Lindsay and Trevor-Deutsch, Lawry. 2002. Women and ICTs for Open and Distance Learning: Some Strategies and Experiences from the Commonwealth. COL Accessed Dec. 2, 2013 \url{http://www.col.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/women%20and%20ICTs.pdf}


\textsuperscript{48} National Council on Aging. \textsuperscript{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{49} Green, Lindsay and Trevor-Deutsch, Lawry. \textsuperscript{op. cit.}

countries, to avoid incurring these costs personally people access the Internet at work. However, women may be limited from access to the internet at work by their lower employment status.\textsuperscript{51} CARICOM statistics demonstrate that there are significantly higher rates of unemployment for women in all but a few of the smaller islands, with the average being in double digits across the region for both sexes.\textsuperscript{52} In addition, more men than women work in academic, management or technical positions that offer free access as one fringe benefit of their jobs.\textsuperscript{53}

From a socio-cultural perspective, the Caribbean shares a semi-unique characteristic with some countries in Asia as there is a general perception by males that computing skills are a female preserve. This means that there are few socio-cultural barriers preventing women from accessing ICTs. In the Caribbean, contrary to patterns in most other parts of the world, this is one factor that has led to women accessing these new technologies more than men. In Dominica, for example, computer-training programmes showed a predominance of female participants, with females outnumbering males sometimes as much as five to one.\textsuperscript{54} Another factor is the more positive attitude that women have towards learning in more formal situations and a willingness to take a longer term view towards investing in education and training. Again, this stems back in part to the pressure on men to be breadwinners from an early age.

**Recommendations:**

1. Given their different gender roles and challenges, ODL programmes need to develop different outreach and support strategies for women and men to achieve a more equitable balance regarding male/female participation. For example, men may require more assistance to acquire learning skills and to participate in bridging or preparatory programmes to ensure they have greater success once they enter an ODL programme at whether at the tertiary level or within a technical or vocational training context. Women may need greater choice of times when synchronous course-related activities are offered. Outreach for men will need to address to emphasize the financial benefits of an investment in education and may need to use men who have successfully completed ODL courses to do the outreach or to engage other role models with high visibility (such as sports figures) to promote ODL participation.

2. ODL outreach and support strategies need to be accompanied by career counseling and campaigns that encourage male and female enrolment in programmes related to non-traditional occupations. This would also need to be complemented by related job placement or work experience programmes to help overcome employer bias against hiring a woman or man in areas traditionally dominated by one sex.

3. ODL programmes for at-risk youth should consider offering a childcare allowance directly to grandmothers or family members who are assisting their daughters get an education or training by taking care of the grandchildren.

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\textsuperscript{51} Trevor and Green-Deutsch. op. cit.
\textsuperscript{52} CARICOM. 28 November 2007. Insights into Social/Gender Statistics Produced at the CARICOM Secretariat.
\textsuperscript{53} Trevor and Green-Deutsch. op. cit.
\textsuperscript{54} ibid.
4. ODL programmes that are not already doing so should consider testing all students who apply to determine their literacy and numeracy levels as well as to give credit for prior learning. Based on the results, they could then develop and provide preparatory courses to strengthen both male and female students’ literacy, numeracy, computer and study skills. Similar programmes in community colleges in Canada have found that the students who complete these preparatory programmes often do better academically than those who enrol in the ODL programmes directly. 55

5. For rural populations where access to ICTs may be limited by finances and demands on women’s time, ODL providers could consider either setting up small internet centres in key population hubs or work with existing providers of ICT services and NGOs to increase rural women’s access to the ICTs needed to participate in distance education. These would also benefit rural men who have limited access.

4.2 Access Issues for At-Risk or Out-of-School Youth

Approximately eight million of the Caribbean’s 35 million people are youth between the ages of 10 and 24. 56 More than half of these are “at-risk”, i.e., are engaged in or expected to engage in risky behavior such as dropping out of school, committing crime and violence, unsafe sexual behavior, and abusing drugs and alcohol. 57

In the Caribbean, the school dropout rate is higher for boys than for girls in most communities (with some exceptions based on ethnic background). This gap is also growing rapidly. For example, the ratio of female to male enrollment in secondary education in St. Lucia was 112.9 in 2007; and in the Dominican Republic 120. The regional average for Latin America and the Caribbean is 107.3, with higher numbers for Caribbean countries in general. This is in contrast to the male/female dropout ratio averages for sub-Saharan Africa of 80.3, and the Middle East and North Africa of 91.5. 58

Available data shows that the primary reasons boys exit the education system early: lack of family and financial support; lack of interest in classes; and expulsion (for poor behaviour). 59 For girls pregnancy is added to this list. Even in countries where educational policies permit pregnant girls to stay in school, these are often not enforced uniformly – particularly in faith-based schools where sexual activity outside of marriage is considered anathema to core religious values. 60 Bailey and Charles also observe that “the absence of males from higher education systems can possibly be explained as a deliberate withdrawal to create distance between

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60 Peebles, Dana. op.cit.
themselves and what has come to be seen as a primarily female, and therefore, decidedly non-male, activity.\textsuperscript{61}

Even more disturbing is that dropout rates at the primary level are also high. The Caribbean Education for All 2000 Assessment found that while universal access to primary education is available many children are not participating, with up to 28\% of pupils not completing primary school.\textsuperscript{62} Given the differential in male/female dropout rates, it is also clear that it is boys who are starting to fall behind in literacy levels as opposed to girls – this is the reverse of the situation in many other parts of the world.

Average youth unemployment rate in Latin America and the Caribbean is also high, standing at 17\%, with female youth unemployment often being twice as much as that of male youth. In the Caribbean, youth unemployment rates are also twice the overall unemployment rate and three times the rate for adults.\textsuperscript{63} Despite their higher numbers, female youth unemployment is not as obvious as that of male youth. Given traditional gender roles and behaviours, young women either tend to stick closer to home or are kept closer to home by their parents when unemployed whereas male youth are given more leeway. As a consequence, they are more visible – hanging out on street corners, etc. For some, this greater exposure to other unemployed males has led to their becoming involved in gang and criminal activity.\textsuperscript{64}

The absence of strong male figures or fathers in their families is another contributing factor to this trend as the gangs can fill an emotional gap in their lives and give them a sense of belonging. It is further exacerbated by the fact that somewhat older men who emigrated and became involved in criminal activity elsewhere and were subsequently deported back home, often set up similar criminal activities upon their return and recruit male youth to assist them or to join gangs under their leadership.\textsuperscript{65}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{61}] Bailey and Charles. \textit{op. cit.}
\item[\textsuperscript{63}] Hopenhayn, Martin. Youth and Employment in Latin America and the Caribbean: Problems, prospects and options. ECLAC.
\item[\textsuperscript{65}] Peebles, Dana. 2011. \textit{op. cit.}
\end{itemize}
This latter group still constitutes the minority of youth. Despite this all youth tend to be tarred with the same brush. Hopenhayn notes that:

“Young people have assimilated implicit promises of social mobility and a place in society, given the fact that they are [often] more educated than their parents, but at the same time they come up against a situation in which their real work opportunities are more limited and do not correspond to the fund of knowledge they have accumulated during childhood and adolescence. They are treated as children by adults (politicians, entrepreneurs and the media), and a cultural bias often stigmatizes them as potentially violent, drug-consuming and morally weak – to the extent that this bias often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Given the higher visibility of unemployed male youth who are not in school or are otherwise at risk, alternative training for this age group tends to focus more on meeting the at-risk male youth than at-risk female youth. There are multiple training programmes for at-risk youth in the Caribbean – many of which follow open learning models. How these programmes are organized

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66 Hopenhayn. op.cit.
can be typified by the following assessment of programmes for at-risk youth in Belize conducted as a part of a national gender assessment by the Caribbean Development Bank.

In Belize, there are several specialized programmes for students who have dropped out or are otherwise at risk. A summary of these is presented here to provide an overview of the kinds of gender issues that similar programmes for at-risk youth encounter in the region or need to take into account. The Belizean programmes include apprenticeship programmes, a cadet style of disciplined education, and vocational training. While all offer a range of skills the youth participants tend to focus their course selection along fairly traditional gender lines, most likely as they have not been exposed to the possibility that men and women can be successful and accepted in less traditional fields. This has the impact of both reinforcing gender stereotypes and limiting opportunities for both sexes. It also means that female at-risk youth often wind up in skills areas where they are likely to earn less.

The skills areas chosen by the male youth generally are in occupations which pay more precisely because they are male-dominated and therefore often ascribed greater value by society at large. For example, young women tend to select occupations such as hairdressing, dressmaking, and confectionary making which are seen as an extension of their traditional roles in the home and young men to opt for training in more lucrative fields such as electronics or motorcycle repairs. While these choices are being made by the youth themselves, the fact that these choices are being made in such a concentrated way along gender lines are one indicator that there is a limited awareness on the part of the youth of why they are making these choices and the long term consequences of these choices for them in terms of future income.

Another alternative for at-risk youth are variations on vocational training. Many of vocational training institutions offer more traditional forms of classroom-based learning, but some have combined the classroom approach with more hands-on skills training and other variations of open learning. For example, most of the skills training may take place in a community-based programme where the youth may feel more at ease and less intimidated, but they also might be taking classes in numeracy and literacy a few times a week at local vocational training institutions to complement their skills training. In regular vocational training programmes, generally much higher levels of literacy and numeracy would be assumed as a requirement for enrolling in a programme that leads to a diploma or other types of certification. Those requirements can effectively limit at-risk youth’s access to vocational training, particularly for male youth who are likely to have lower levels of formal education. Open education approaches therefore are particularly important for male youth as it will increase their access to vocational training as well as give them credit for prior learning at a more non-formal level.

In Belize, for example, vocational training is provided primarily through the Institutes for Technical and Vocational Education Training (ITVET) schools. These institutions were set up in each region to replace a system of vocational education training formerly offered by employment training centres. To be eligible students have to be 15 years old and the academic standards for the ITVETs are higher than those required for the employment training centres. This has meant that they are not as accessible for male and female primary school dropouts. As there are more male youth dropouts than girls this is a policy that is having an unexpected gendered impact and which limits male at-risk youth access to this training than it does female

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67 Peebles, Dana. 2011 op. cit.
at-risk youth. One lesson learned from this aspect of the Belizean experience is that to reach at-risk youth formal vocational education training needs to accompanied by some type of transitional programming which will facilitate the young men’s entry into the more formal training programmes.

For example, educators interviewed for the CDB study noted boys and male youth dropouts prefer to attend an ITVET rather than return to high school – even if they have to take participate in a one to two year preparatory pre-vocational programme to qualify for further training. They indicated that this is because the male youth perceive it to be moving forward and a higher and more prestigious level of education than if they had to repeat a year at or return to high school to complete their secondary training. The need for a higher status form of education regardless of their actual academic ability again is related to male gender roles and behaviours as men are generally expected to aspire to higher status occupations and activities.

Belizean educators also noted that boys tend to prefer short programmes with a quick turnaround and completion time whereas girls were more willing to undertake a two-year diploma programme or associate degree than their male counterparts. This pattern again appears to stem from the pressures on males to earn an income from a fairly early age and a greater acceptance of females as economic dependents stemming from the society’s underlying gender values. It is also another indicator of the significant impact of underlying gender values on which education modalities will be effective when working with at-risk youth. The key lesson here is the need to offer a range of programme modalities that address the different priority needs of both young women and young men and to take into account the effect of prevailing gender roles on the choices young women and men make.

Another example of a programme for at-risk youth in the region includes a partnership between COL with the University of Technology, Jamaica Foundations for Lifelong Learning, HEART NTA and the Jamaican Ministry of Education. It adds in the step that is missing in the Belizean ITVET model and is designed to expand access to vocational literacy and skills training through educational technology. The partnership brings together community members and development agencies in three marginalised communities in Kingston to provide young adults with opportunities to upgrade their basic qualifications and join the mainstream technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system.

There are multiple other examples of skills-based or preparatory training for at-risk youth in most Caribbean countries.

UNICEF notes, however, that while the different ODL and training programmes for “at-risk youth have been playing an interesting role, their impact and capabilities of effective scaling up are limited”. This is a challenge in the Caribbean in general given the small size of many of the islands’ economies. While there appear to be ODL programmes for at-risk youth in the

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68 Peebles, Dana. 2011 op. cit.
69 ibid.
70 ibid.
Caribbean, national and civil society organization (CSO) resources have not been able to develop relevant learning programmes to satisfy the needs of the large numbers of at-risk and unemployed youth. There is often limited staff who is experienced and skilled at working with youth. Capacity is even more limited with regard to staff who are trained to work with youth and know how to take gender issues into account effectively in related ODL programming. In addition, if the Belizean example represents common approaches across the Caribbean, it would appear that these programmes are more accessible for male than female youth. This is to some extent as there is a perception that more male youth are at risk than females and in part due to self-selection as there is a strong degree of gender segregation in course selection and many of the courses offered are those that appeal more to male youth.

There are also some differences between male and female non-academic needs amongst at-risk youth. For young women this can range from finding ways to build their self-esteem and confidence, how to parent young children and manage a job at the same time, what their rights are related to child support and personal security (i.e. gender-based violence). For the young men, it may need to include anger management, what are their familial rights and obligations, and career counselling regarding the benefits of longer term training. Both need substantial training on employability skills.

**Recommendations:**
6. ODL that targets at-risk youth needs to include basic literacy and numeracy components as well as life skills and counselling in its content in order to be of use to primary school dropouts. For girls or young women, the life skills training needs to include self-esteem components, as well as information about their right to security and freedom from violence. For the boys or young men, anger management and long term planning are often much needed skills.
7. Outreach and marketing will also need to take at-risk youth’s low literacy levels into consideration and use materials and media that are readily accessible, e.g., comic book style ads, radio and television spots, etc.
8. ODL programmes for at-risk youth need to consider ways in which they could encourage young men and women to consider enrolling in non-traditional skills areas for their gender and providing more gender-sensitive and aware career counselling, for example, by bringing in male and female role models who work in non-traditional occupations to talk to the potential participants about their experiences and why they selected those particular occupations or making career orientation videos using these role models.

**Apprenticeship Programmes**
There are different regulations for apprenticeship programmes in each Caribbean country. The example examined in Belize was designed for dropouts and former gang members. Most of the female youth who applied were unemployed as opposed to being involved in gangs. The programme started in December 2010, and combined on-the-job training with some math and English. It also included a small stipend of $100 Belizean a week to cover the trainees’ food and transport. The latter was an important feature for both male and female trainees as many already had families to support.

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73 Peebles, Dana. 2011. op. cit.
Demand for this type of practical skills programming among at-risk youth is high. In this instance, there were 100 applications for the first 30 spaces available, and more males than females applied. This skew in the male/female ratio of applicants was, in part, due to the nature of employment training offered which was highly dependent upon the employers who were willing to participate in the programme and favoured occupations or skills which were generally male-dominated. The programme providers indicated that the first cohort was fairly successful and 22 out of the original enrolment graduated.\(^{74}\)

Programme providers interviewed for the Belizian study noted that at-risk youth involved in this type of training often need a lot of additional non-academic support, particularly with regard to employability skills. Life skills in general are also critical components needed in any ODL programming for at-risk youth. While there are some common skills that both male and female youth need, there are also others which are more gender-specific. For young women these include the building of self-esteem, learning what their rights are with regard to gender-based violence and child support as well as how to extricate themselves from potential situations of domestic violence. The young women also often need assistance learning how to think beyond traditional, low paid occupations. For the young men, parenting skills are often a need as may be anger management, and learning to set and keep longer-term goals.

**Recommendations:**

9. Apprenticeship and work experience programmes for at-risk youth need to seek out a wider range of types of employment experience and training opportunities to ensure a more equitable gender balance in male/female youth participation and inclusion of occupations that will lead to a living wage or potential for earning a higher income in the future.

10. It may be necessary to include an incentive programme for potential employers to get them to consider taking on apprentices or trainees who come from at-risk groups.

11. Prior to starting the hands-on work portion of their apprenticeship or trainee position, ODL providers should include life and employability skills as a part of the course content to help prepare the participants for the workplace culture and to enhance the possibility of their placements being successful.

**Youth Employment Training**

The youth employment training programme reviewed in the Belizian study found that in 2011, a new youth employment programme had just started. It did so with limited resources and was initially offering training in barbering, IT repairs, sewing, arts and crafts, juice making, and front desk work. The plan is to eventually expand the programme to include 15 trades and skills. The programme started with 135 male and female students from Belize City.\(^{75}\)

Each trade/skills includes additional training in math, English and life skills. The latter is particularly important as it helps make the male students, in particular, more aware of the value of what they are learning versus the higher incomes they could be earning more quickly in criminal activities. However, the programme organizers are also aware that they are “competing” with the relatively easy money earned from gang activity. Thus they have included some short-term training that generates income quickly by offering skills such as repair of shoes, 

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\(^{74}\) Peebles, Dana. 2011. _op.cit._

\(^{75}\) ibid.
suitcases and small appliances. The option of offering both shorter term basic skills training and longer term more advanced skills training courses is one that could serve as a means of increasing male youth participation in other skills training programmes in the Caribbean.

Educators interviewed also noted the instructors involved in these programmes generally need training in how to work with this youth as most have more of a technical background whereas this group needs different approaches and language. Often they also have to be able to work around the fact that many students are missing core math and communications skills. There is also sometimes a need to work with instructors to change their negative perception of youth to a more positive one and for them to learn how to communicate effectively with this age group.

Given the large numbers of at-risk and unemployed youth with relatively low levels of education in the Caribbean it is clear that there is more demand for skills training of different types for at-risk youth and unemployed. The main challenges to doing this encountered in the Belizean case and which likely also are similar in other Caribbean countries include:

1. Finding consistent resources to offer more training seats
2. Labour market needs change fairly rapidly and it is difficult and expensive for the curricula to keep up with changing trends.
3. Experience-based or apprenticeship style programmes can only offer the types of work offered by employers and these may be concentrated in male-dominated areas of work
4. The skills offered tend to reflect the gender segregation that already exists in the labour force and a concerted effort would have to be made to encourage both trainees and employers to consider hiring young men or women in non-traditional occupations.

From a gender perspective the two greatest challenge remain:

- A common male perception that education is a waste of time and the view that it is more productive to be earning an income than investing in a long term future
- A tendency for young women to select training for occupations which reflect traditional gender roles and are unlikely to pay that well or have much scope for growth.

**Recommendations:**

12. Employment skills training programmes for at-risk and unemployed youth with lower levels of education should also include training on learning skills, computers, etc. to give participants the skills to be able participate easily in distance education in the future as a means of upgrading their skills and to develop a lifelong learning culture among this group. Young men, in particular, need additional encouragement and additional tutoring to learn the skills needed to access ICTs and distance learning.

13. Since ICTs and computing are perceived to be more of a female field in the Caribbean, outreach programmes for young men would need to emphasize the status and higher incomes that come from being knowledgeable about technology.

14. To attract and retain more male students, ODL that is computer based also needs to include innovative methods of teaching such as computer games and computer-based learning that is more “flashy” with lots of technological “bells and whistles”. For women, computer

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76 Peebles, Dana. 2011. *op.cit.*
77 *ibid.*
78 *ibid.*
applications usually are most effective when they are very practical and applied and easy to access.\textsuperscript{79} Therefore computer-based learning needs to be tailored to include both styles of learning and technology in order to capture both the male and female audiences effectively.

4.3 Enrolment

*The Caribbean Policy Framework for Open and Distance Learning* observes that public education for children and youth is a high priority in the Caribbean, with all countries having met the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education. It notes girls and boys both enter the early childhood and primary cycles of education in fairly equal numbers, but that this equality diminishes considerably by high school and even further at the tertiary level,\textsuperscript{80} with boys increasingly falling behind girls with regard to completion of primary and high school.

The table below demonstrates that throughout the Caribbean women’s share of tertiary education is significantly higher than that of men’s.

**Table 2: Women’s Share of Tertiary Education in the Caribbean**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>WOMEN’S SHARE OF TERTIARY ENROLMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anguilla</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antigua and Barbuda</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aruba</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bermuda</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Virgin Islands</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayman Islands</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montserrat</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Kitts and Nevis</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Lucia</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands Antilles</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turks and Caicos</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In April 2002, UWI noted that enrolment for distance education followed the same pattern as for face-to-face courses; i.e. that more women than men register for and complete training at a distance. The only exception, they found was the Advanced Diploma in Construction


\textsuperscript{80} Caribbean Regional Policy Framework on Open and Distance Learning. [http://www.ckln.org/home/sites/default/files/Caribbean\%20Regional\%20Policy\%20Framework\%20for\%20Open\%20and\%20Distance\%20Learning.pdf](http://www.ckln.org/home/sites/default/files/Caribbean%20Regional%20Policy%20Framework%20for%20Open%20and%20Distance%20Learning.pdf)
Management, where UWI found a greater number of males than females.\(^{81}\) Statistics from the UWI 2011/12 annual report indicates this pattern of imbalance in male/female enrolment has continued.\(^{82}\)

In 2011/2012, the proportion of females to males was 69\% to 31\% for total University enrolment. The ratio was 66\% to 34\% for on-campus enrolment, with 81\% female to 19\% male for Open Campus\(^{83}\) enrolment and 74\% to 26\% for off-campus enrolment Overall, the Open Campus recorded the highest proportion of females at 81\% of total enrolment, followed by Mona with 70\%, Cave Hill with 69\% and St Augustine with 63\%. This may be an indication that women – with the higher demands on them at the household level commonly found in the Caribbean, find the flexibility of the Open Campus arrangements easier to access. This may explain why the numbers of women enrolled in this education modality is so high compared to their participation in more traditional forms of education delivery.

However, clearly this type of programming is still not appealing strongly to men. Bailey and Charles observe however that,

> “Current questions around rates of male enrolment cannot, therefore, focus simply on rates of enrolment of boys in general, but must identify the specific groups of boys and, in fact, girls alienated by the Caribbean education system since its establishment. Little attention has been given to the range of personal, social and economic factors that both independently and in combination have historically determined differential access and performance between and among different groups of male and female students in the Caribbean.”\(^{84}\)

Their main point is that it is specific groups of girls and boys who drop out (primarily those who have lower socioeconomic status). There are also often strong correlations between gender values and the reasons these groups of male and female students quit school. These have been described earlier in this report, and are often highly complex with a strong inter-relation between gender, ethnicity and class as well.

The Dean of the University of Belize observed however, that in her experience many male students preferred to attend university part-time so that they could still work.\(^{85}\) This may indicate that part of the answer to attracting more male students lies in finding creative ways to facilitate their combining work and study, such as coop placements or flexible policies that allow longer time periods to complete part-time degrees with core courses being offered both during the evenings and the day, and possibly also on weekends. This would also help accommodate male students who need to work to either to fund their education or to support their families.

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\(^{81}\) Green and Trevor-Deutsch. op. cit.


\(^{83}\) UWI defines open campus as referring to a campus where there is open education that is about free and open sharing from the perspective of no cost, and open with regard to the use of legal tools (open licenses) that allow everyone to reuse and modify educational resources. The idea is that “free and open sharing increases access to education and knowledge for everyone, everywhere, all the time. It allows people to make changes to materials or to combine resources to build something new.” [http://www.open.uwi.edu/openness/what-open-open-campus](http://www.open.uwi.edu/openness/what-open-open-campus). Accessed Feb. 25, 2013.

\(^{84}\) Bailey, Barbara and Charles, Suzanne. Gender Differentials in Caribbean Education Systems. CARICOM.

\(^{85}\) Peebles, Dana. 2011. op. cit.
The UWI enrolment statistics also show that there is still a fairly strong gender imbalance by academic discipline within their campuses at large. For example, first degree enrollment patterns at UWI show that there is a higher proportion of women enrolled with 81% of first degree students being women at UWI’s Mona campus, followed by Cave Hill (69%), and St. Augustine (64%). The report also notes that each campus had high female enrolment in the Faculties of Law, Humanities and Education, Social Sciences and Medical Sciences. Men’s participation was higher only in Engineering (St. Augustine – 69%) and Pure and Applied Sciences where they represented 53% of the students. The latter may be an indication that there is starting to be a shift to more women entering science-related fields.

Even within community-based open learning and distance education there is some evidence that there are higher numbers of women who participate. For example, COL reports from Jamaica, and St. Kitts and Nevis found noted that more women than men made use of computer-based literacy programmes.

The COL report from Guyana observed that the level of female involvement in distance education there is because the programmes focus on training for traditional female roles: low-paying, low-status jobs, notably in teacher education, junior positions in the public sector, and in food service. This again speaks to the challenge noted in diverse Caribbean countries that women and men often select training programmes that are male or female dominated and based on traditional gender role lines. This is a challenge that extends beyond ODL to most tertiary education options.

The strong pattern of male and female dominated choices of courses all stem back to prevailing gender values and norms within Caribbean society. Men and women’s expectations of what are appropriate areas of work or study for themselves are internalized along with other expectations of how women and men should behave. These values and expectations, in turn, limit the choices that people make with regard to their education and training. One university professor in Belize also noted that it affects women and men’s aspirations and assessment of what jobs they should seek. His experience has been that in his tourism classes, most of his women students talked about getting entry level positions when they graduated while most of the male students talked about figuring out ways they could become tourism business owners as soon as possible. While this is just one anecdote, it is indicative of the pervasive impact of the different expectations Caribbean society has of women and men.

**Recommendations:**

15. There is a need to also track male/female retention rates in ODL and to analyse the different factors that either contribute to male and female students remaining in their selected programmes and which factors lead to their dropping out to determine if there are any significant differences in either the dropout rate or the reasons male and female students have for quitting. Service providers can then use this analysis to develop gender-specific

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86 U.W. I. op. cit.
87 Bailey, Barbara and Charles, Suzanne. op.cit
88 Green and Trevor-Deutsch. op. cit.
89 Peebles, Dana. 2011. op. cit.
support systems to increase male/female student retention rates.

16. One means of attracting more male students in ODL programs at the tertiary level, educational institutions would be to offer more flexible options for part-time studies that would allow the male students to continue working while studying. These could include offering both evening and weekend classes as well as coop semesters in which the students would be earning an income while being given credit for what they are learning in their work placements.

17. Another would be to use high profile male role models in outreach programmes/materials who would talk about the multiple ways they have benefited from further education and to highlight the income and success possibilities in different career options.

4.4 Performance and Outcomes

4.4.1 Performance and Achievement

In a summary of the study “Gender Differentials at the Secondary and Tertiary Levels of the Education System in the Anglophone Caribbean” Bailey and Charles observe that,

“simply comparing male and female average performances ignores issues of substantive equality and assumes that the benefits and outcomes of education for males and females are the same. Such an assumption does not match the Caribbean reality. Despite the numerical female advantage in institutions of higher learning, women remain disproportionately under-represented in the Caribbean labour force, over-represented in the unemployed labour force, have higher job-seeking rates than males and, on average, earn less than their male colleagues at all levels of educational achievement.”

This observation refutes the commonly held perception that women are doing much better than men in the Caribbean due to their over-representation in education. While women in the Caribbean are making definite strides, they are finding real change past the middle management level very slow to achieve and still face considerable gender-based discrimination with regard to promotion to senior management and election to parliament. The reasons for this disconnect between women’s educational achievements and their success in the labour force and in the political realm lie partially in lingering views of women as being less reliable since they have children (i.e. may not be available for overtime), of women as not being inherently sound leaders and the perception that men are still the main breadwinners in any family.

The Gender Differentials study also found that females were often disadvantaged as a group as the males who remained in education systems were clustered in the sciences and technical crafts, both areas which lead to higher status and better paid jobs. This again has to do with perceptions of what are appropriate fields of work for women and men in the region. In Belize, for example, at the University of Belize women predominate in nursing programmes, (a traditional extension of women’s work at the household level). Men are concentrated in medical laboratory positions which lead to better paying jobs – even though the level of science required for both programmes is similar.

The study also found that contrary to the widely held perception notions of male under-performance, male students had a superior average performance to female students in four of the five subject groupings investigated in the study.

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90 Peebles, Dana. 2011. op. cit.
It also noted that the performance of boys who remain in the education system is on par with that of their female counterparts. The issue therefore is so much not that boys perform poorly in school at the high school and tertiary levels once they get there, but that a large proportion of boys do not continue past the primary school level – and many do not even finish primary school.

Another key finding of the Gender Differentials study was that it is structural factors that most significantly affect performance of both male and female students as opposed to personal attributes or demographic factors. These structural factors included:

1. School type, where it was documented that students in single-sex schools had a superior performance to those in co-educational schools.
2. The socio-economic status of the location in which schools were located, where students attending schools in high/middle social-economic status locations performed better than those from lower ones.
3. The administration of the school, where better performance was observed in church-run schools compared to state-run schools.
4. School location, where students in schools in urban areas performed better than those in rural areas.
5. School curriculum, where students from schools with a traditional academic curriculum did better than those in technical schools.
6. The type of school last attended before entry to secondary school, where students who attended preparatory schools prior to going to a secondary school did better than those who attended government primary schools.

The Gender Differentials study shows that lower socio-economic status is more important to determining a person’s performance in school than gender. However, for those in lower socio-economic groups, the reasons boys and girls drop out of school are still very much related to underlying gender values and issues. Consequently, the outcomes for male and female dropouts are quite different – due to general perceptions of appropriate gender roles and behaviour. The young women will often remain unemployed for much longer periods of time and in greater numbers, may get pregnant and become involved in relationships with “itinerant” male partners and have to resort to engaging in a form of transactional sex in these relationships to survive. The jobs they do get are low paid and often insecure or they wind up working in the informal sector. For the young men, there are more employment options – although these are still not necessarily well paid and a greater danger of becoming involved in criminal activities.

The main implication of these diverse findings for ODL are that there is a need to find ways to encourage a greater gender balance in most fields, with a particular emphasis on women’s participation in the sciences and technical crafts. Another is that ODL programmes which target at-risk youth of either sex need to include financial incentives or supports.

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91 Bailey and Charles. op. cit.
92 ibid.
93 Church-run schools however, tend to enforce harsher policies for pregnant students and often do not allow them to continue their studies. This has a disproportionately negative impact on adolescent girls/teen mothers.
94 Bailey and Charles. op. cit.
Recommendations:

18. To address the issue of women tending to select fields of study which pay less upon graduation than those selected by male students, there is a need for ODL programmes to encourage and promote greater participation of women in the sciences and technical crafts. These ‘affirmative action’ approaches generally need to be introduced starting at the upper primary school level and can include initiatives such as holding all-girl math and science classes, setting up mentoring programmes for girls interested in science and math and profiling female role models in the sciences. Financial incentives as young women reach the tertiary level can also be effective when combined with these other initiatives.

19. For young men, there is also a need to encourage them to select non-traditional fields such as computer science. The programmes can use similar approaches, e.g., using male role models to talk about the opportunities and benefits of working in traditionally female-dominated fields and demonstrating what the economic benefits are for them.

20. ODL programmes need to document male/female performance by programme type and use the results of this data collection and analysis process to help guide how the programmes are set up and what kinds of additional support services are required for male and female students.

21. ODL programmes also need to start documenting the success rates of their male and female students by programme type after they graduate. This data can be used as evidence to help encourage future students to select non-traditional programmes and to assist ODL programmes in their career counselling programming. It can also be used to help dispel myths and misperceptions about male/female performance and achievement.

4.4.2 Outcomes of Learning in ODL

Learner outcomes with regard to ODL refer what students should be able to do at the end of the course that they could not do before and a net improvements in skills. The Centre for Positive Practices suggests the “stimulation of effective learning outcome could be explained through... multi-factors among which are: self-concept, self-esteem, self-confidence, anxiety, background, socio-economic status, gender and self-efficacy.”

A case study conducted in 2010 focused on participants consisting of secondary school principals and senior administrators who took a nine-month distance diploma programme offered by the University of Technology Jamaica (UTech) showed the programme had an impact on them due to several factors. They reported these as: timeliness of programme, relevance, multi-techniques of learning embedded in the design, ease of application, support of their roles as school leaders and managers, and technology applications (online forum discussion and webcam sessions). Gender was not mentioned as success or outcome factor.

In low-to-middle income countries such as those found in the Caribbean, there is generally a greater emphasis on the economic benefits/outcomes of ODL and improving employment and income as development priorities. However, the World Bank notes skill acquisition needs today

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go beyond the traditional focus of technical skills such as literacy, languages, science and mathematics, problem solving and analytical skills. It posits skills development is increasingly about “imparting a certain set of ‘competencies’ which encourage individuals to act autonomously, use tools interactively and to function constructively as a heterogeneous group”.97 Learners can acquire such competencies through ODL, depending on the quality and the types of courses offered.

There is a clear positive link between education and earning. Studies show a higher return for time and money invested in secondary and tertiary education than for those students who stop their education at the primary level. With ODL programmes, it is challenging to measure and conclude to what extent ODL has delivered on expected learning outcomes (whether defined by the ODL institution or students) because long-term systematic analysis is required to assess ODL graduates’ cumulative income earning data.98 This kind of evaluation is often beyond the resources available within many educational institutions or not perceived as a priority.

Research from South Asia suggests that ODL has not made a difference in helping women enter traditionally male-dominated subjects such as science and commerce.99 Women enrolling in ODL tend to focus in areas where women already have higher visibility, such as education and nursing. Based on course selection analysis this same pattern appears to be holding true in the Caribbean as well for both men and women. However, this is the result of a much larger societal issue and ODL programmes may not yet be equipped to challenge or address the cultural and situational barriers that lead to these gender-skewed choices – although there are some internal programme-related they could take at a smaller scale such as ensuring that their curriculum does not include gender biases and integrates positive role models for both women and men. There are also examples in South Asia where ODL has facilitated women’s higher enrolment in programmes that award science degrees where they were well supported by the government and where their connection to higher economic returns and promotions were clearly defined. This example could be highly relevant for the Caribbean where there is a strong pattern of occupational segregation by sex that is also reflected in the course choices women and men make within ODL as well as in traditional post-secondary training.

**Recommendations:**

22. It is critical to include a gender component in ODL to achieve maximum outcomes. This, at a minimum, would include career counselling/job placement to help women and men pick fields that they might not normally have thought of due to the way they have been socialized, but which might bring them greater earning power or job satisfaction. Other gender concerns in curriculum or related services for ODL programmes could include how to address sexual harassment in the workplace, how to plan for work/life balance (for both male and female), labour rights and obligations and for women, in particular, self-esteem and leadership skills and exposure.

99 ibid.
23. ODL programmes should review their curriculum for gender bias and revise it where needed to present a more diverse images or content related to male/female roles. This can be done across most, if not, all subject areas.

24. COL should seek funding to conduct an assessment of the outcomes of ODL in the Caribbean at the 6 month, 1 year, 2 year and 5 year marks following graduation to determine if there is a significant gender differential in outcomes and if so, what factors have contributed to these differences in outcomes between women and men that it would be possible for ODL programmes to address through their own approaches to programming.

4.5 Curriculum Content and Development

This section reviews overall curriculum content and development in the Caribbean from a gender perspective in addition to specifically within the context of ODL since curriculum determines course content while ODL is more (although not exclusively) about how this content is delivered. To understand the key gender equality issues involved in ODL curriculum it is important to understand the overall context of these issues in the Caribbean.

Curriculum content/learning materials content for non-formal education

UNESCO defines curriculum content as a main lever of education quality. It further adds, “the knowledge, skills and attitudes imparted by learning areas/subjects, cross-cutting approaches and extra-curricular activities is a main source of systematic and comprehensive learning.”

Even though learners may learn from other sources (e.g., informal ways such as media and internet), a curriculum offers the advantage of structuring and sequencing learning for greater sustainable acquisition.

Curriculum content can unfortunately heighten inequality of opportunities, especially when existing inequalities are not considered where relevant and when they are transmitted in a way that strengthens stereotypes and inequality of opportunities (discriminating contents, or women and men portrayed as having unequal value).

Curriculum development and learning materials development for non-formal education

Curriculum is a political as well as technical process in that it often reflects the political values, interpretations of history and philosophy and core cultural values of a society. It also reflects how any given society views male and female roles. It also goes beyond content, as it includes teaching, learning and assessment. Curricula are often described in curriculum frameworks that determine subject curricula or syllabuses in a wider context for greater coherence and

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102 ibid.

Curricula are often presented through learning materials such as textbooks, teacher guides and assessment guides.

Textbooks are key indicators of existing curricula. Despite compelling evidence of gender biases in learning materials in many countries, the effort to overhaul textbooks remains prohibitively expensive within the context of national budgets. This is even more of a challenge in countries with small populations – as is the case in much of the Caribbean – as their tax base is small. Therefore external funding is often required for a country to be able to conduct a gender-based revision of curricula, an initiative that requires coordination throughout the entire curriculum framework of a country. There is also often little incentive for most governments to make curricula and textbooks more gender-sensitive as the views they contain tend to reflect the existing broader gender stereotype and stratification system of a society. This attitude unfortunately misses the opportunity that a gender-sensitive curriculum could offer ‘girls agency and autonomy, aspiration and voice’.

It is equally likely or possible to find gender bias in curriculum associated with non-formal education. This is despite the fact that non-formal education consists of:

"Any organized and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the definition of formal education [and] may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons of all ages... Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily follow the 'ladder' system, and may have differing durations, and may or may not confer certification of the learning achieved".

The challenge here is the informality of non-formal education means that related curriculum generally does not pass through a national review committee or need to follow national standards. Sometimes this means the curriculum offered is cutting edge with regard to integrating gender equality. Other times it means that it reinforces the traditional gender values espoused by the host organisation. It is also difficult to assess as there are a wide range of organisations that offer non-formal education in the Caribbean.

**Hidden curriculum**

Both formal and informal education tend to be based on “socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned..."

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These unwritten rules are what constitute the “informal institutions” outlined in the World Bank Economic System Framework. In the education field, this influence of informal institutions is known as the hidden curriculum. It exists alongside the formal curriculum within educational institutions. This refers to values, principles and attitudes, which are implicitly conveyed to students and which reinforce societal norms such as gender behaviours and roles. The hidden curriculum encourages social control first within the school itself, and then, within society as a whole. The hidden curriculum acts to create conformity, obedience and coercion into belief that social inequalities [such as gender inequality] are just and correct. Overcoming these beliefs requires a conscious effort and awareness that hidden bias exists. These beliefs are often internalized to some degree by most members of society – including teachers - who may unconsciously pass them onto their students. The influence of informal institutions are so strong that the students themselves also reinforce these beliefs and will tease, criticise or ostracise anyone who does not conform to the standard roles and behaviours expected of girls and boys.

Another challenge that education systems in the Caribbean face is the negative impact of the hidden curriculum, which conveys semi-rigid gender stereotypes, instils in girls a lack of self-confidence in their own leadership or to try new things and take on decision-making roles.

The hidden curriculum in the region inadvertently transmits gender stereotypes through print and non-print materials used to support the delivery of curricula at all levels. Many examples used in schools to represent society do not challenge sexual inequalities resulting from the assumption that women and men are expected to perform different functions in life. Images used in curriculum materials are powerful and effective socialization tools as they normalize the status quo in relation to women and men’s roles and an acceptance of these as the norm. Research on twenty textbooks on History, Geography and Social Studies in the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) curricula used at the secondary level in Commonwealth Caribbean States concluded that the texts were heavily gender biased:

“The textbooks reviewed are at their worst in terms of the portrayal of women. Women are invisible in most of the texts. Sexism appears through the use of language, masculine words frequently used to include women. When they do appear, women play subordinate or menial roles. The books also fail miserably in presenting the contributions of women to the development of the Caribbean.”

The findings in English literature were similar, except for the works by Olive Senior who sought to transmit the strength; wisdom and courage associated with Caribbean women, and therefore provided positive images for young women to emulate. The analysis of science textbooks also brought out interesting results. It showed a gender balance in the illustrations of young people, but an imbalance in the illustrations of adults that favoured men. This carried the implicit message that science was more a man’s field. Kathleen Drayton also conducted analyses of Caribbean textbooks from the perspective of the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender. She

concluded that despite the end of colonialism, Caribbean society was dominated by the few in powerful positions, mostly men, and that this domination was reproduced through social institutions such as schools. She further added that textbooks are a universal tool of this reproduction of dominant social values and ideologies.\textsuperscript{110}

The key question that this raises is what is the impact of teaching with gender-biased curriculum? The main issue for ODL is that it tends to reinforce the gender segregation that already exists in course selection at the technical and vocational high school and university levels. For those who make it to the secondary and tertiary levels, in the long term gender bias tends to limit women’s life opportunities more than men’s since programme selection tends to follow traditional gender roles and occupations. It also reinforces existing stereotypes about male/female behaviour, roles and leadership potential.

Since 2003/4, it is possible that positive changes with regard to eliminating gender bias in curriculum may have taken place. Since that time several publishers have since developed guidelines to ensure curriculum materials are gender-sensitive and minimize or eliminate gender stereotypes. The effect of these guidelines may take some time, however, to have a significant impact as they are mainly being applied to new textbooks and curriculum. Nevertheless it is definitely a step in the right direction.\textsuperscript{111}

\textbf{Jamaica’s Curriculum Reform Process}

An illustrative example of types of gender issues one needs to examine in curriculum reform can be seen in the Jamaican curriculum reform process that took place in the 1990s at the primary and lower secondary levels to improve its quality. There were two revisions in the secondary curriculum that were significant from a gender perspective from which those involved in ODL curriculum development can draw lessons learned and guidance in future efforts to make related materials gender-sensitive and/or free from gender bias.

\textbf{1) Career Education} was incorporated into five core and eight personal development subject areas to help students make meaningful and satisfying career choices. The curriculum guide was innovative in attempting to change gender norms in educational and career choices by explicitly making reference to the fact that educators had the responsibility to guide student career development processes, as well to ‘expose all students to, and encourage them to explore non-traditional careers regardless of sex, race or ethnic background.’ The underlying reason for this was that Jamaica’s labour market was characterized by fixed occupational sex-segregation which concentrated women in low-paying, low-status service related occupations. The idea was to open new opportunities for girls and women through this shift in focus on career education. It would also serve to open new opportunities for boys and give them a chance to consider working in fields that were traditionally female dominated such as nursing.

\textbf{2) Resource and Technology} was introduced as a way of providing females and males with a wide range of options. The goal again was to facilitate more open choices for career


development and break down traditional gender stereotypes associated with technical-vocational studies.\textsuperscript{112} It also would help set the stage for fostering a culture of life-long learning as it would give students the skills they would need to participate in ODL programmes whose delivery was technologically based.

The effectiveness of the Jamaican curriculum reform process was not addressed in the report. However, it did indicate that the curriculum was sex-segregated at the upper secondary level, especially in the technical-vocational areas. This follows a common pattern in the Caribbean of technical and vocational training tending to follow “female” or “male” skills or rather the general perception that particular skills or occupations are more suitable for girls and boys. While there is some evidence that same sex schooling at the high school level may contribute to better student performance, this does not mean that the curriculum offered should be different with regard to technical content for girls’ and boys’ high schools.

\textit{Gender and ICTs and Curriculum}

Continuing the analysis of the Jamaican curriculum reform process, as of 2004, there appeared to be a general lack of appreciation for the gender disparities that exist in the ICT field. The Jamaican Ministry of Education drafted an ICT policy framework for the education system. However, the policy was gender blind. It failed to recognize extensive evidence of inequality and well-documented gender divide with regard to access to ICTs as well as opportunities for pursuing studies in the field at various levels of the education system. Despite the fact that in the Caribbean there is less bias for young women going into the ICT field than in other parts of the world, data from local sources show gender gaps in IT education, with males were still in a better position in the field to study at both the secondary and tertiary levels.\textsuperscript{113}

In addition, since the learning materials in ODL often replace the teacher, careful design of materials is important. Materials in ODL are subject to an ongoing process of planning, testing, and revision because they are learning tools designed to encourage and support self-study.\textsuperscript{114} They are formed around learning outcomes, on what students need to know. This calls for a clear understanding of the curriculum framework and criteria for it development and delivery. Given that the needs of learners feed the development of study materials and delivery of courses in ODL, there is an opportunity for curriculum planners to infuse gender considerations based on learner profiles. This would probably require more probing and analysis of the target audience to gain a better insight into potential gender-based study needs.

Understanding learners would centre around questions such as who will the learners be? How old will they be? How many are female and male? What existing knowledge do they have? What do they want to study? Why? How will gender equality issues and gender roles and values affect course choices and the skills and knowledge male and female learners need to acquire? In what ways can curriculum planners integrate positive images of men and women that do not

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\textsuperscript{113} Jamaican Report 2003/4. \textit{op. cit.} \url{http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001467/146747e.pdf}

\textsuperscript{114} Lentell, Helen. 2007. The role of ODL in curriculum development. \textit{Commonwealth Education Partnerships}.\
\end{footnotesize}
reinforce gender stereotypes? The responses to these types of questions can provide curriculum planners with a useful set of sex-disaggregated data that can lead to gender-sensitive curricula content and delivery.

An integral part to ODL teaching is the tutor. The materials represent the content, but it is the tutor who facilitates learning by supporting students to learn. The tutor’s role in ODL is different from the traditional classroom setting that is characterized by lectures. Rather, it is focused on ‘careful, attentive, responsive questioning of, and listening to, learners.’115 While this requires specific skills, there is again an occasion for tutors to gain a better understanding of female and male learners. The challenge however is that tutors or trainers would require capacity building, not only in the area of gender equality, but also in the technical component of ODL course facilitation. For many Caribbean countries, training tutors in gender equality issues may not be a priority budgetary issue, and it may well be that another opportunity to integrate gender equality issues is missed. Tutors also need some training to examine their own gender biases and values so that they can learn to avoid imposing the former in their teaching practice.

**Curriculum and ODL**

In ODL, curriculum planning is a more involved process as it includes a host of factors,116 both the standard curriculum development issues and those related to content delivery such as teaching strategy and methods to be used, media choices and assessment/evaluation techniques and related technologies.

In this complex context it becomes even more critical for those who are developing the curriculum content to have a good awareness and understanding of relevant gender issues and how to integrate these into the curriculum. However, as the next section will demonstrate there is still fairly limited capacity in the Caribbean on how to do this.

**Recommendations:**

25. Institutions offering ODL in the Caribbean should either allocate or seek funding to conduct a gender review of its curriculum and to revise and disseminate any curriculum found to have gender bias.

26. ODL institutions also should offer training in how to integrate gender equality issues into ODL curriculum and how to tutor students in a gender-sensitive and positive way. This training should also address issues related to hidden curriculum from a gender perspective and assist teaching personnel identify what kinds of hidden curriculum they themselves might be inadvertently teaching and how to teach with a more bias-free approach.

27. As one means of addressing the specific needs of male and female students, institutions offering ODL in the Caribbean should consider the efficacy of introducing life skills programmes that take into account the different ways in which boys and girls are socialized in the Caribbean so that each group can learn each other’s skills and strengths as well as their related human rights and obligations.

28. Other content issues that curriculum needs to include would be an analysis of the key

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115 Lentell, Helen. *op. cit.*
issues related to each course theme. This would help both male and female students gain a greater critical awareness of how these issues impact on their chosen sector of study and potentially develop ways to address these gender issues when they graduate and have more decision-making authority.

29. In the Caribbean, the key barriers to girls’ and women’s use of ICTs as a learning tool are cost and the fact that they generally have less leisure time than boys and men due to their gender roles. ODL programmes can accommodate the cost issue by working in partnership with local organisations to set up ICT centres where women and girls without the means to buy their own equipment and related internet services can go. This is particularly important in the rural areas.

30. It is beyond the scope of ODL programmes to try and change the gender division of labour that exists outside their doors to help women carve out more leisure time to learn how to use ICTs and to study. However, the programmes can take into account the limitations on women and girls’ time and ensure that their course offerings are as flexible as possible, e.g., offering group work or lectures at different times so that the female students can choose the time when there is the least conflict with their household responsibilities.

4.6 Human resources and Professional Development

**Staff Capacity Issues**

Except for the Caribbean, all regions identify the lack of women teachers/trainers as a key barrier to education for girls. In the Caribbean, there is a dominance of female teachers, including at the tertiary level. Instead the problem is that women tend to be concentrated in socially accepted, non-technological and traditionally female-dominated streams. This trend not only serves to widen gender disparities in access to and use of ODLs, but it also conveys the wrong message to young girls in schools.

An important consideration in ODL delivery is ICT. Given that much of ODL materials now rely on electronic and digital media, the challenge for ODL tutors/teachers/trainers is that they have to have up-to-date ICT skills. Education institutions would need to review their curricula, teaching-learning methodologies and staff functions if they are to effectively facilitate ODL courses. In Trinidad and Tobago, the COL report observed that teaching staff would therefore not only need to upgrade their ICT skills, but also require training in adapting ODL learning materials to the new electronic format as well as in their new roles of teacher, facilitator and mentor.\(^{117}\)

Even though ICTs are not perceived as being the exclusive domain of men in the Caribbean, many women do not have much interest in ICTs unless they see an immediate and practical value in using them. This likely has as much to do with women’s more limited time than fear of new technology. The former makes it critical for any ICTs used to promote learning to be very user-friendly and practical for women to want to use them and find them useful. For women, in general, there is less appreciation of the “bells and whistles of technology” and more on the pragmatism of getting their work done quickly.\(^{118}\)

Within rural areas distance is another a factor that limits women’s access to the new

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\(^{117}\) Trevor and Green-Deutsch. *op. cit.*

\(^{118}\) Peebles, Dana. 2000. Policy Brief: Gender and Ecommerce. Gender in APEC Project: CIDA.
educational opportunities opened up by ODL. Many ODL programmes include face-to-face tutoring sessions as a part of their methodology. If poor, rural women with limited means of transport live far from where these tutoring sessions are being held, it restricts their ability to take advantage of the training offered through ODL. Given their generally lower incomes women in rural areas in the Caribbean are less likely to have access to a car than men and thus are reliant on public transport. The same challenge applies if the tutoring sessions or the courses are offered at a time or place that is inconvenient in terms of family care or is unsafe (at night for example). Refer to recommendation #29 for one potential solution for this challenge.

Teacher Education

In Caribbean states, teachers also often encounter problems with lack of technical support and low speed modem communication due to low bandwidth. Reports from Jamaica and St. Kitts and Nevis show that faculty who use traditional instructional methods require training, but are often unable to devote enough time to learn to integrate the new technologies in their design. The reports did not differentiate between female and male teachers, but given women’s additional responsibilities at the household and family levels, it is likely that women teachers/trainers would have more difficulties in finding sufficient time to learn ICT and adapt their instructional plan accordingly.

The Caribbean Regional Policy Framework on ODL notes that educational institutions/providers in most Caribbean countries have inadequate personnel trained to develop, deliver and support programmes and courses offered through ODL. The reason for this is that there has been limited dedicated training for either existing or potential staff to teach through ODL methodologies. In general, there appears to be limited institutional capacity to offer ODL as a viable mode of education delivery despite the increasing demand for ODL across the region.

This being said, Caribbean institutions that deliver teacher education in the English speaking Caribbean have recognized the need to include new technologies for both on-site delivery and distance teaching. In response, there was a major move to use the new technologies in teacher education in the 1990s. This focus on new technologies in teachers colleges has been driven to some extent by the comprehensive education reform agendas taking place in many Caribbean states. For example, Erdiston College in Barbados has made considerable progress in integrating new technologies for delivery as well as in the actual teacher education programme as a pedagogical proficiency requirement. In fact the training of teachers in technology integration is one of the key developmental priorities of the Education Sector Enhancement programme for Barbados which started in 1998 with a proposed expenditure of U.S $175 million. The Bethlehem and Mico Teachers Colleges in Jamaica are also in partnership with some primary schools to provide training and support to the schools and their communities in the new technologies.

119 Trevor and Green-Deutsch. op. cit.
122 Marett, Christine. op. cit.
UWI and other universities such as UTECH, the University of Belize and the University College of the Bahamas, are increasingly employing new technologies for teaching and for delivery. Given the number of small island states in the Caribbean that make it difficult to take advantage of “economies of scale”, distance education is a mode of delivery that increases student access to tertiary education and training. The enrolment patterns in the Caribbean at the tertiary level mean this shift in delivery is increasing access to education for more women than men. To address this growing demand, UWI has developed an ICT policy based on the use of the WebCT platform for delivery of courses that focuses on the “seamless integration of technology throughout all programmes”. The policy has been accompanied by a “drive to ensure that all faculty are competent to use a variety of new technologies for delivery and that teacher education candidates can infuse the new technologies competently in their teaching”.

**Male/Female Management Ratios**

The table below provides a snapshot of another human resource issue in education. Again, using Belize as an example, we find that that despite the overwhelming preponderance of female teachers (73.3%) in the lower grades, at the primary school level 56% of principals are male while only 44% are female (an 11% difference). At the secondary school level, 65% of principals are male while only 35% are female. This is juxtaposed against a teacher resource pool of 53.6% female teachers and represents a 30% difference in women’s representation in educational management compared to the actual pool of qualified female staff available for these positions. At the tertiary level this gap continues to widen, with only 22% of principals being women while 78% are men.

**Table 3: Female/Male Representation as Principals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Without conducting a country-by-country review of comparable statistics, it is not possible to definitively conclude that this imbalance in educational management exists across the region, it is an indicator that there is a need to pay attention and document this type of trend. It is also important to assess why this imbalance exists and how it might affect male/female management ratios within ODL. Educators interviewed in Belize were of the opinion that one reason for the male/female skew in education management is the perception that high school and tertiary

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123 ibid.
education management has more status than that of primary school. Therefore men are more attracted to management positions at this grade. However, it does not explain why more men are hired when the candidate pool is substantially female. In Belize, this would seem to be an indicator of significant gender bias within educational hiring which goes back to the overall belief that men are more natural leaders and that women do not have time for management positions because of their family responsibilities.

Recommendations:
31. There is a need for educational institutions and systems to develop an affirmative action or fast tracking process to ensure that women are proportionately represented within educational management positions, including management of ODL.
32. Educational and non-formal institutions that offer ODL need to ensure that both their male and female staff have access to training on how to make effective use of technology as a part of their instructional practice. This training should also include sessions on the different ways male and female students learn and the different ways they use and access technology so that the instructors can take these factors into account in their instructional design and approaches.

4.7 Methods and Delivery
How ODL is delivered depends entirely on the intended learner populations. Currently in the Caribbean the key groups targeted include a wide range of groups encompassing:
- Early Childhood Development, both learners and caregivers
- Primary, secondary and tertiary level learners
- Parents
- Home schooling advocates and practitioners
- Pre-service and in-service teachers for all educational levels
- Professionals needing upgrading and refresher training, e.g., accountants, lawyers, engineers, doctors, etc.
- Adult learners
- Second chance learners
- Special Educational Needs learners
- Nurses (in training and post-graduation) and other health care professionals
- Farmers
- Workers in the tourist and leisure industries
- Prisoners and prison workers
- Seniors
- Office workers
- Health workers

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4.7.1 Distance Learning

There are multiple methods for delivering distance learning. These include some of the following:

1. Mixed delivery modes comprising a self-study print based instructional package, face-to-face tutorials and audiographic-conferencing. This is the primary mode of delivery for University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre.
2. Blended learning in which learners combine on-line training with intensive face-to-face group or tutorial instruction.
3. Single delivery mode such as self-study print-based instructional packages.
4. Self-study print based instructional guides supplemented by radio broadcasts or webinars.

The University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC) in Jamaica uses self-study print-based packages as the core components of their traditional delivery mode. It includes:

- A set of learning activities integrated into course material that contains the essential course content plus a compilation of readings, where appropriate linked to relevant sections of the teaching text.
- A course guide that contains course-related information, such as the course outline, guidelines on the study of the course, references to additional resource material, and important deadline dates. It also normally contains course assignments, information on mid-semester and final examinations.
- Where there is not a set of course material and readings students are asked to buy a textbook, the cost of which is subsidized to some extent. In some cases, the course coordinator may require an additional text to complement the course materials. In this instance, the students are required to pay the full amount of the additional text.

UWIDEC also uses face-to-face tutorials to support its mixed mode approach to distance education. The time allocated for tutorials ranges from 10 - 12 hours are divided into 5 - 6 sessions, 16 hours being allocated for quantitative courses such as economics.

The course coordinator organizes the tutorials locally at diverse locations in the Caribbean and may also source tutors locally. Where this is not possible, the Centre conducts the tutorials over its audiographic-conferencing system. The Centre also uses audio-conferences to support the distance learning process. The COL Barbados report estimates that about 8% of the UWI course material is supplemented with new technologies, specifically computers and audioconferencing.

Kaplan University in Bermuda also includes web field trips and facilitates and communication with fellow students and faculty via email and message boards as well as live chat with tutors. Their programme also provides remote access to library Resources through the Kaplan Online Library which offers access to over 50,000 e-books, an onsite library catalogue, and articles from professional, scholarly, and trade journals. Related services include book delivery and

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127 Green and Trevor-Deutsch. op. cit.
interlibrary loan; reference assistance via toll-free phone, email, and live chat; real-time and multimedia instructional materials, and research collaboration with online library staff.  

In the Caribbean the multiple modes of delivery for distance education and related flexibility make this form of education and training more accessible. This is particularly critical for women given the multiple demands on their time and this flexibility may be one reason they have responded by opting for this mode of education in significantly greater numbers than men. Distance education that is part-time also appeals to men as they can pursue their education while still working. However, within Caribbean culture women still place a greater premium on education than men and men are more reluctant to take time away from earning an income to pursue further training after high school – even more so, if they did not complete their high school education and may need to take preparatory courses to gain acceptance at a university or college. In the case of open learning, in particular in open schools, there are also opportunities available for both men and women to complete high school and prepare them for university. However, the Belizean experience was that young men preferred to complete their high school within the context of an institution of higher learning as it made them feel as if they were progressing more and had more status. If there is a similar pattern across the Caribbean, these preparatory courses will have greater success reaching young men if they are offered as a part of a university or college programme.

A recent study by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education in Trinidad and Tobago found that financial constraints are still listed as the top issue for male students interested in pursuing post-secondary or tertiary education of any type, including ODL. The young men surveyed indicated that they have to “step up and help their mothers/families”. This again speaks to the pressure on young men to be family breadwinners. This study adds to the evidence that traditional gender roles for men in the Caribbean – combined with a lower socio-economic status are key factors limiting them from taking advantage of existing educational opportunities.

Recommendations:
33. Colleges and universities that are not already doing so, should consider establishing high school equivalency and preparatory programmes for high school dropouts who are considering a tertiary education option. This may be a more successful way of outreaching male students.
34. The provision of bursaries and grants to male students from lower socio-economic backgrounds is one strategy tertiary institutions can use to increase male participation in ODL programmes.

4.7.2 Open Learning

Cultural views of what is a good way to learn can also vary between men and women. For example, a study on women and youth participation in agriculture in the Caribbean found that male farmers preferred in-field extension education approaches whereas female farmers were

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quite happy to participate in classroom-based training.\textsuperscript{130} For the men, this means that extension training sessions will be more expensive to hold since it requires travelling to multiple sites to deliver. This cost factor may serve to limit male farmer’s access to extension education in some countries.

There are numerous studies on the different ways boys and girls learn due to the differences in their brain development and the pace of this development. These differences narrow somewhat as people get older, but there is still a need for ODL to look into different learning styles from a gender perspective and make a conscious effort to include teaching approaches that take both male and female learning patterns into account. Offering diverse ways of learning and instruction may serve to increase male access to ODL in the future.

There are a number of different forms of open schooling offered in the Caribbean at the primary and secondary level. These programmes are designed to meet the needs of specific types of learners who either have special interests, special needs or whose learning styles do not fit well into standard educational practice. Amongst others, this can include boys who have dropped out due to pressures at home, learning disabilities (there is a higher incidence of these among boys), peer pressure, etc. and girls who had to drop out due to pregnancy or financial pressures at home.

COL reports that in the Caribbean, open/alternative schooling has proven to be a successful and cost-effective means of increasing access to basic and secondary schooling and COL currently supports open schools through several initiatives. These include:

- Establishment of the National Open School of Trinidad & Tobago (NOSTT)
- Work with partners in the Bahamas and Belize to build capacity and launch new open schools in those countries\textsuperscript{131}

COL also led the establishment of the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA), a consortium of open schools working to expand access to quality education through open schools. It has members from three Caribbean countries and NOSTT is taking part in three COMOSA research studies.\textsuperscript{132}

Open schools generally provide face-to-face instruction for their students, but also may combine this with a high degree of self-study. To facilitate this style of learning, open schools in the Caribbean have access to quality learning materials through COL’s Open Educational Resources for Open Schools initiative in which Master Teachers in six developing Commonwealth countries, including Trinidad & Tobago, developed 20 new secondary-level courses that can be freely downloaded, adapted and re-used as open educational resources.\textsuperscript{133}

Another example of open learning approaches include:

- COL’s successful Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3 Farmers) programme which has now been established in Jamaica in partnership with the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) and involves a strong partnership of farmers, educational institutions, banks and ICT

\textsuperscript{132} http://www.col.org/progServ/report/region/Pages/caribbean.aspx
\textsuperscript{133} http://www.col.org/progServ/report/region/Pages/caribbean.aspx
providers to promote learning for sustained improvement of livelihoods.

- RADA is using a learning management system called LIVES (Learning through Interactive Voice Educational Systems). Developed by the University of British Columbia in partnership with COL, LIVES provides communities with a learning tool based on voicemails on mobile phones. RADA has used LIVES to deliver text messages relating to hurricane management, pest management and agronomy to 60,000 farmers in Jamaica. The system includes a feedback mechanism; farmers can provide feedback to RADA through a toll-free number.

The Construction and Use of Alternative Technologies project in Guyana provides another example of an open learning programme. It involved training for local women in the design, construction and use of appropriate technologies related to energy saving. This exposed the women to science and technology, helped them develop relevant skills and be better able to understand the links between science, technology and their everyday lives. Evans notes that to build on these kinds of initiatives, they need to be incorporated explicitly in policy development in ways that empower women as environmental managers within their communities through improved access to education and resources; and which establish strategies to involve female professionals and experts in project planning through training of women and girls; and employ and promote women in these fields.

Key lessons related to gender equality in the use of these different open learning techniques are that for female students’ self-esteem raising and study skills components are absolutely essential due to their more subordinate position in Caribbean society. In addition, as self-paced materials can encourage procrastination goal-setting and time management need to be built in. There is also a need to capitalize on governmental/ institutional equity policies for funding and support. These same principles can apply for boys except that usually there is less need for work on self-esteem raising for boys and more need for study skills and time management.

Some critique this type of community programme as just being a bandaid approach due to the low numbers they reach in the Caribbean. However, Warner notes that “they do not preclude, and should run in parallel with, action to remedy the wider conditions which act to subordinate women and prevent their access to education.” The advantage of many community-based open learning programmes is that they often include a critical awareness and/or action component that addresses women’s subordination or issues related to masculine identities that have contributed to low male participation rates in education.

**Recommendations:**

35. There is a need to include a critical awareness component related to gender equality in open learning programmes for both women and men. This will help both sexes examine their gender roles and identities, the idea and rejection of subordination of one sex to another, and how commonly accepted gender values and norms are affecting their lives and where they might want to make changes.

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134 [http://www.col.org/progServ/report/region/Pages/caribbean.aspx](http://www.col.org/progServ/report/region/Pages/caribbean.aspx)
136 [ibid.](http://www.col.org/progServ/report/region/Pages/caribbean.aspx)
137 [ibid.](http://www.col.org/progServ/report/region/Pages/caribbean.aspx)
36. Open learning programmes need to include life skills components such as self-esteem training for women and study skills and time management for both women and men. Work with male students may also need to include sessions which are male only to identify and discuss masculinities within the Caribbean context and to assist the male participants address any related issues that might be holding them back from furthering their education and skills training.

4. 8 Policy Environment

The Caribbean Regional Policy Framework for Open and Distance Learning includes Equity and Inclusivity as guiding principles. However, the policy does not elaborate on how these guiding principles should be applied nor does it identify which particular demographic groups need particular attention in order to be included and gain equitable access to ODL. Several of the policy framework’s other guiding principles, if applied effectively, could contribute to greater equity and inclusivity. These include:

- Flexibility
- Quality in a variety of modalities
- Relevance to the societal and cultural realities of the region
- Cost effectiveness
- Openness
- Learner centeredness
- Collaboration and partnership

Without an explicit operational strategy in place however, there is a reasonable chance that the equity and inclusivity policy goals could be overlooked or else skewed in favour one particular marginalized group.

The Regional Policy Framework’s mission statement is that there should be “seamless and equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning through ODL.” Again there is no explanation of to what equitable refers. It may be that the main assumption is that greater equity is being achieved mainly by increasing access to education and training to more remote regions of the Caribbean. However, even a brief review of the literature makes it clear the main groups that appear to be not taking as much advantage of the new opportunities offered by ODL are men in general and poor, rural-based women in particular. The Policy Frameworks objectives do not include any explicit references to gender equality targets but do note an objective of: “Improving educational access and equity.”

At the same time, there is a link between the regional ODL policy and ODL policies at the primary, and secondary levels. In 1999, the Open Education Resources University launched a project to support development of ICT policies in education by OECS member countries. Specific measures included development, review and revision of a Model ICT policy for the education system in 2000. The Model ICT policy project led the development of a model national policy that different countries could simply revise slightly to make it country-specific before its

adoption as national policy. The model policy emphasizes issues that include: access, learner-centered pedagogies, lifelong learning and information management. Access in this context includes access to education information by teachers and as a means to enhance the potential of all individuals (including the mentally and physically challenged) by the use of multimedia packages and other electronic learning tools, as well as ensuring equitable access to ICT resources by all students and teachers within the education system.\textsuperscript{139}

The document also specifies which technology skills primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary students need to acquire and includes 44 statements of actions to be undertaken by the MOE, principals, or other stakeholders. The countries drawing on the OERU Model policy to develop their own ICT policies in education include: Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.\textsuperscript{140} One study indicated that “although many of the adopted policies have yet to be enacted in schools and school systems, ... the OERU Model policy was becoming dated and would benefit from revision to address newer practices and tools.”\textsuperscript{141}

The Regional ODL Policy Framework notes that a number of educational challenges facing the region and includes the following gender-specific issues:

- Lack of boy’s success in the traditional school system
- A paucity of secondary graduates entering the tertiary level (especially boys)
- A shortage of secondary graduates with math and sciences subjects (especially girls)

**Recommendations:**

37. There is a need to review existing ODL policy and ICT policy at the regional level within the context of education delivery to determine how they are addressing gender equality issues for both sexes and to develop and implement operational strategies with clear targets to achieve greater equity on multiple fronts. This will require different strategies for male and female students to take into account their different needs and conditions of life.

4.9 Financial Support Mechanisms

There are three main forms of financial support mechanisms for ODL in the Caribbean. The first two refer to support for the establishment and running of the programmes and the third to support for the learners who participate in ODL.

The first line of support for ODL comes from national budgets under their education line item. The second comes from external organisations – either donor agencies or educational institutions which may or may not have a vested interest in the delivery of the ODL programme. These two forms of support are critical from a gender perspective with regard to whether they

\textsuperscript{139} OECS Education Reform Unit. 2001. OECS Education Reform Strategy Model ICT Policy Document for the Education System.


allocate funds to cover a gender component of the programme, e.g., to provide gender training for the instructors and tutors or to review and revise the curriculum from a gender perspective. National education ministries in the Caribbean differ in the amount of funds they allocate to gender. Therefore it would be necessary to do a country by country review to determine what percentage of the education budget is allocated to gender-related training, research, curriculum review, etc. and whether any of this applies to ODL programmes.

**Recent External Funding**

Recent examples of external funding include a $19.6 million contribution over five years (2013-2017) to the *Strengthening Distance Education in the Caribbean project* by the Canadian government. DFATD (formerly CIDA) has a strong gender policy and the project should include a gender component – although this would need to be confirmed. The project will provide technical assistance for new programme development and to help build the capacity of the University of the West Indies Open Campus. It will enable the Open Campus to increase access to post-secondary education for remote and under-served communities at up to 42 learning sites across the Caribbean using distance education technologies. In August 2008, the University created the Open Campus, based in Barbados, offering courses through distance education to non-campus countries. The University’s Open Campus will be the main implementing partner of this project. In 2010, Bermuda joined the UWI family as an associate member.¹⁴²

Five universities across the English, Dutch and French-speaking Caribbean that have participated in a collaborative distance education project aimed at improving access to their services through increased use of information and communication technology. The University of the West Indies was the executing agency for the project “Human Resource Development in Electronically Enhanced Teaching, Administration and Material Distribution”, nicknamed CUPIDE (Caribbean Universities Project for Integrated Distance Education). The other partners included:

- University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech)
- University Quisqueya (Haiti)
- University of Suriname
- University of Guyana.

The project was financed with US$1.1 million under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation/Japanese Funds-in-Trust for Capacity-building of Human Resources.¹⁴³ A web search on this project was unable to find any references to gender in past documentation.

**Scholarships and Bursaries**

These are a valuable tool for promoting equity for specific demographics groups that are either under-represented in a particular educational field or experiencing financial challenges that limit their access to training. The study on male re-entry in post-secondary education in Trinidad and


Tobago previously cited, found that financial support is particularly critical for both maintaining and increasing male participation at the tertiary level. Poor women also have challenges affording post-secondary education and training, but tend to have a more positive attitude towards the life opportunities further education will bring them.

There are several scholarship and bursary programmes in the Caribbean that have facilitated participation in ODL. This includes the Canada Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Programme (CCDESP) which was an extension of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP). The CSFP is a co-operative education programme that provides post-graduate study through traditional means and has been in place for several decades. CCDESP initiated a five-year pilot in that emphasized undergraduate-level lifelong learning and skills upgrading, and used new information and communication technology to conduct long distance learning as an adjunct to this programme. The most recent references to this program indicated that it was still operating in 2005.

CCDESP was funded by Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and piloted by COL. COL’s partners in this initiative were the University of the West Indies, four Caribbean governments and four Canadian universities. The Canadian universities designed the curriculums and offered them through participating countries, in collaboration with the Ministries of Education, local partners, and UWI’s network of facilities. The programme addressed skills shortages in a regional job market with high unemployment levels with:

- Athabasca University providing information technology programmes in Jamaica
- Memorial University of Newfoundland offering teacher education in Dominica and in St. Vincent & the Grenadines
- Mount Saint Vincent University offering tourism management in St. Lucia and in St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

The programme was designed to “enable students of high intellectual promise to pursue studies in Commonwealth countries other than their own so that, on their return, they can make a distinctive contribution in their own countries while fostering mutual understanding within the Commonwealth”. Scholarship recipients were selected primarily by the host governments. The related articles on this programme did not provide data on the numbers of male/female recipients of these scholarships.

There are also bursary programmes for students in need that are not closely tied to academic performance. One example are the UWI Canadian Gala Bursaries valued at CAN$3,000 given to students enrolled in the UWI Open Campus Dominica for the academic year 2013-2014 – of which one was awarded to a female student and one to a male student for this year.

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144 Ministry of Science, Technology, and Tertiary Education. op. cit.
Funding is also available to ODL students at the tertiary level through traditional loans programmes offered through national government development banks, often backed by loans from the Caribbean Development Bank. Data from Belize indicated that in that country there was a possible pattern of male students receiving a higher percentage of the student loans available than the female students when looking at the relative ratio of male to female students. Enrolment for female students at the tertiary level at the University of Belize in 2005 was 63.5% and for males 36.4%. Student loan data is available for the period of 2009 to 2011. While this does not provide an exact year comparison it is unlikely that the proportions of male/female student enrolment would have changed dramatically in this time period. Therefore the student loan figures may give a rough indication of an issue that bears watching.

In this instance, male tertiary level students in Belize received 44.4% of available loans for that time period and female students only 55.6% - despite their representation levels in the student body being 8% higher. In St. Lucia, the percentage of National Community Foundation Scholarships awarded to male students was 36% (46) for 2011/12 versus 63% (81) to female students. In St. Lucia, 72% of tertiary level students were female in 2010 and 28% male meaning that male students there also received a disproportionately higher amount of the scholarships available compared to their representation in the student body i.e. 36% versus 28% or 8% higher than their actual numbers. It would merit further research and analysis to determine more exact year and loan by sex comparison to determine if the awarding of a higher proportion of scholarships to male students is a pattern across more than one Caribbean country and if so, why. If it is, it may be the result of affirmative action programmes designed to increase male participation in tertiary education. It could also potentially demonstrate a bias in favour of male students in the scholarship awards process that may need to be addressed.

Statistics supplied by COL’s Focal Point in St. Lucia also provide information on student welfare programmes at the primary and secondary levels and an indication of the supports in place to help keep students in school. While not disaggregated by sex, these statistics are still able to show the scope of coverage for these student welfare programmes.

**Student Welfare Programs in St. Lucia – 2012-13**

- % of students benefitting from School Feeding Program (Primary) - 42%
- % of students benefitting from Bursary Program (Primary) - 8.1%
- % of students benefitting from Bursary Program (Secondary) - 5%
- % of students benefitting from Transportation Subsidy Program (Secondary)-17.6%

Why these types of student welfare programmes are critical for ODL is that they serve to increase the number of graduates from the primary and secondary levels and to increase the potential student body at the tertiary level. They can be particularly critical to ensure male students make it past the primary level and are able to move onto secondary education.


149 Peebles, Dana. 2011. op. cit.

150 Statistics provided by COL Focal Point in St. Lucia, January 2014.

151 UN Statistical Division. op. cit.
Recommendations:
38. There is a need for a country by country review to determine what percentage of the national education budget is allocated to gender-related training, research, curriculum review, etc. and whether any of this applies to ODL programmes. The results of this analysis can provide a basis for advocacy for further or more equitable funding.
39. ODL programmes need to track the number of scholarships awarded to women and men at the national and regional levels and if the proportion is the same as the numbers of women and men who apply to the programme and for the fields for which these scholarships were awarded (i.e., were more scholarships awarded to male or female-dominated fields or were they evenly distributed). If there are affirmative action policies in place that target specific demographic groups (e.g., men, rural women, etc.) it would also be useful to track the success rates of these investments and assess which support mechanisms are the most effective and needed for male and female students from specific demographic groups.

5. Conclusion

There are gender issues that affect both women and men with regard to their access to and participation in ODL in the Caribbean, as well as affect the outcomes of this form of education. The key to understanding these issues lies with an analysis of how girls and boys, women and men are socialized within the Caribbean. Societal norms regarding gender values, roles and behaviour, while they differ somewhat among the different ethnic groups in the Caribbean, in general follow a pattern in which there is considerable pressure put on males to be financially and emotionally independent from an early age and on females to stick closer to home, conform to acceptable social behaviour for women and to take on the primary responsibility for caring for and often supporting the family. Boys and men have greater mobility within the community and girls and women less exposure to non-traditional roles. These underlying social values have contributed to a high degree of occupational segregation based on gender lines within both the workforce and in technical/vocational and tertiary education, including within ODL programmes.

These patterns are reinforced by a fairly high degree of gender bias in textbooks and other educational materials at the primary and high school levels. Further research would be needed to determine whether this same bias exists within ODL materials (refer to recommendation #25). Since many of these materials are new, it may be that there is a lesser degree of gender bias if the new materials were developed according to the new guidelines on how to develop gender-sensitive instructional materials. However, it is likely that there is a mix as the degree of awareness that there is a problem with the materials or that there is need to consider gender equality issues in instructional design and facilitation is still somewhat limited. Thus a key action for the future is to increase critical awareness of the impact of gender values on educational outcomes and processes and how this relates to ODL (refer to recommendation #’s 28 & 35).

The same factors that influence course selection by gender also contribute to the fact that there are significantly more women than men who take advantage of the new opportunities offered by ODL and to the view that education is for women rather than men. By the same token, the education field in general needs to address the predominance of men in the upper echelons of
education management despite the larger numbers of women who work in the education profession.

If we assess the situation from the viewpoint of the Empowerment Framework, the main conclusions are therefore as follows:

**Welfare:**
Although primary enrolment is equitable for boys and girls, dropout rates are higher for boys overall, and there is already a gender imbalance in favour of girls by the time they reach high school. Girls and women’s educational outcomes however, do not necessarily reflect this greater access to higher education, with women’s unemployment rates often being double that of men’s and women in senior management increasing in fewer numbers than the available pool of qualified candidates in the labour market. The issues this raises for ODL is how to assist women achieve better outcomes from their participation in ODL and how to get more men to enroll and graduate.

**Access:**
The main access issues are not related to education policy and infrastructure (except in rural areas) but are more a matter of poverty and socio-cultural perceptions as to what is appropriate for males and females. These views permeate both Caribbean societies and the education system and have contributed significantly to the gender imbalances that exist at all educational levels.

**Critical Awareness:**
While there is growing awareness of the need to revise curriculum for gender bias and to give more thought to how to set up career counseling for male and female students to reduce the gender segregation that prevails in course and programme selection, the need for increased awareness on related gender equality issues has not been addressed systemically. This means that, without intent, the education system, including ODL programming is reinforcing the existing status quo which while it favours women’s participation in education, does not do much to promote women’s participation in less traditional areas such as science and the technical crafts. This limits their future opportunities and ODL programmes need to work to reduce gender segregation in its course offerings Men’s growing view that education is for women also limits their futures and at one level needs to be addressed through increased attention to raising critical awareness of these diverse gender issues and how they affect life choices by both potential students in ODL and by the staff that work in the institutions that offer ODL. (refer to recommendation #’s 8, 13, 14, 18, 19, 21 & 35 for related possible actions)

**Participation**
While the data on women’s participation in decision-making in educational management was limited, there was enough of an indication of a gender imbalance in favour of men at this level to merit further study to determine if there is additional evidence to either support or refute that this pattern of employment is Caribbean-wide. At the same time, educational institutions that offer ODL could review their own human resource breakdown and position distribution and establish appropriate affirmative action measures to address any imbalances they might find. On the other end of the spectrum, men’s lower levels of participation in ODL in the Caribbean are cause for grave concern and also require a rethinking of how to reach more men and
increase their access to ODL education as an option (refer to recommendation #’s 1, 13 – 17, 34, & 37 for related possible actions)

**Control and Decision-making:**
Women’s possibly more limited participation as senior education managers also means that they may have less input into the development of education policy. This includes policy explicating about ODL or ICT policies within the education system that act as a foundation for future ODL programming at the tertiary level. Women’s participation at the formal political level is also significantly less than men’s. While the limited number of women who are members of parliament in the Caribbean tend to be assigned “social” portfolios such as Education and Social Welfare, their lower numbers still mean that women have less input into how national budgets are spent and whether funding will be allocated to support the integration of gender equality into ODL and the education system in general.

The depth of the impact of underlying gender values in the Caribbean on educational outcomes is quite profound. This applies as much to ODL approaches as it does to more traditional forms of education delivery. However, ODL as it is still relatively new has a greater opportunity and slightly fewer constraints than traditional educational models to change how it is delivered. This potentially creates more space to integrate a holistic approach to gender equality content in its materials and overall approaches by:

- training staff how to develop and deliver gender-sensitive and positive curriculum and content
- tracking male/female participation and success rates and using this information to inform future programming
- ensuring that outreach and support programming and strategies are designed to take women and men’s specific needs and priorities into account
- working to encourage male and female students to select non-traditional courses for their gender, particularly within the sciences for women and in computing science for men
- developing or expanding bursary and scholarship programmes that target demographic groups that are under-represented in ODL such as men, rural women, poor women, etc.

This shift to a more gender-aware form of thinking and approaches in ODL will benefit both women and men in both the short and long term.
Annex 1: Data and Research Gaps

This annex provides a summary where there were either significant gaps in the data, outdated data or where additional research is needed.

Some of this data may be available at the individual institutional level, but is not posted on the internet and so would require an in-country study involving interviews with diverse stakeholders to collect. Other types of data are not collected consistently or in ways that are readily comparable among the different countries in the Caribbean.

Summary of Missing or Outdated Data

1. Access
   • Data on male/female use of information and communication technology, both in general and within ODL context
   • Male/female enrolment and graduation rates in ODL programmes by year for past 10 years

2. Access Issues for At-Risk and Out-of-School Youth
   • Survey of existing training programmes for out-of-work and at-risk youth, their capacity, the courses offered and male/female enrolment and completion rates
   • Youth unemployment rates by male/female post 2000 by country
   • Income levels achieved by male and female graduates of skills training and vocational education training programmes
   • At-risk and unemployed male/female enrolment in skills training programmes by type of training offered
   • Survey of type and number of apprenticeship programmes offered and male/female participation in these apprenticeships

3. Enrolment
   • Male/female enrolment and graduation rates at the post-secondary and tertiary levels by type of programme from all the major formal institutions in the region
   • Male/female enrolment and graduation rates for ODL programmes at the post-secondary and tertiary levels by type of programme from all the major formal in the region

4. Performance and Outcomes
   • Comparison of number of teen mothers and their participation rates in ODL
   • Comparison of performance of male/female students in ODL programmes across the region
   • Longitudinal study of incomes of male/female ODL graduates by course type

5. Curriculum Content and Development
   • Review of existing ODL curriculum for gender content and/or bias
6. **Human Resources and Professional Development**
   - Data on numbers/percentages of male/female managers of ODL programmes
   - Data on numbers/percentages of male/female instructors by subject in ODL programmes

7. **Methods and Delivery (Open and Distance Learning)**
   - Research on the different ways adult women and men learn and their response to different methods of delivery for ODL programmes

8. **Policy Environment**
   - Survey of national policies on ODL and related education and ICT policies
   - Update on effectiveness of Caribbean Regional Policy Framework for Open and Distance Learning, particularly from a gender perspective

9. **Financial Support Mechanisms**
   - Data on percentage of scholarships and grants awarded to male/female students
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