

PREFACE

Open Distance Learning (ODL) is not a new subject, but it has recently come in vogue again. With the advent of new educational technologies and the need to meet the needs of learners in a fast-paced world, ODL is becoming a necessity. In its best sense, it can help educate more people any where at any time. Our renewed interest in ODL has the potential to change public perception of education and its ongoing importance through-out our lives.

This book has been designed for educators, trainers, administrators, educational policy makers and is aiming to provide:

- *practical suggestions to those who intend to develop and organize an ODL project for the first time, materialized mainly through the Internet and especially it's most widely spread service – the **World Wide Web (Web)**.*
- *a guide for the technological advances in the Web field, regarding ODL and the methods for best utilising them.*
- *the methodology which one has to follow in order to evaluate the results of the implementation of an ODL project*
- *an organizational and administrative guide for an ODL project, as well as one for the financial management.*
- *the presentation of the outcomes and the conclusions from the application of an ODL project in environmental education.*

The purpose of this book is not to provide an answer to every question that puzzles people involved in ODL against reinventing the wheel, those who intend to organise an ODL project in the future. It is certain that an ODL project can run without previous experience, that is from zero basis. Still those who apparently are going to materialise such a project should ask themselves:

- *do they have the time to start from zero basis?* Planning an ODL project is time-consuming, since feedback (mainly) from the students must be taken into account regarding the final modifications or the reconstruction of the project before its final implementation. The feedback is a very crucial element (especially when one seeks innovation) contributing a great deal to the success or failure of the project, because it will trace in the first stages if the pursuing purposes correspond to the actual flow of the program.
- *do they have the means and the background needed to start from zero basis?* Backing up an ODL project requires a strong organisational structure, as well as the needed means for its implementation.

It is obvious that people who want to run an ODL project through the Internet, as well as the researchers in this field, have a lot to gain from case studies of similar

projects. Although the Internet itself gives everyone the opportunity for a direct contact with these projects, it is better to present this material in the form of a book like the present one. It is the basic outcome of an European collaboration for the implementation of an ODL project in the secondary education. In parallel the site of the project in Web which, - provided the experience that formulated the main axis of development of this book - is fully functioning (<http://www.ellinogermaniki.gr/e-Hermes>). The **e-Hermes** project was developed in the framework of the European program **SOCRATES**.

ODL is a challenge, for those who develop a project and those who participate in it. It offers the potential to provide on going education to more people, but it requires detailed design of the implementation and very careful evaluation of the followed approach in order to achieve the best performance. The e-Hermes collaboration (Ellinogermaniki Agogi, University of Athens, FvS Schule, University of Frankfurt, BG und BRG Schwechat, University of Vienna) hopes that this guide will be a helpful tool toward developing more advanced and effective ODL projects. It includes two main parts. The first one, *ODL in action*, presents the theoretical background needed for ODL's implementation as well as a detailed description of all the steps one has to follow in order to achieve the best results. The second part, *The e-Hermes project*, presents, as an example of good practice the application of the e-Hermes project in the participating schools. A detailed description of the implementation and of the outcomes of the project is included. The evaluation methodology which was adopted during the project and the analysis of the data are presented also.