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The Open University On The Internet

Many countries today offer university courses through what is known as an Open University. "Open" because its admission requirements are more flexible than a regular university. Generally known as "Distance Learning" this type of schooling is fast becoming popular especially in remote areas and for those whose occupations prevent them from attending regular classes "on campus." In the United States it has been a tradition to provide remote education and training for people in offices or classrooms. Britain's Open University is perhaps the best known to people in this part of the world but is, interestingly enough, not, after all, the oldest, for that title goes to the University of South Africa, the Open University at which both Nelson Mandela and Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe's President, earned their degrees.

However, such Open Universities have generally concentrated on teaching students in their own homes (or prison cells) via radio or television but even that is now changing as Open Universities climb abroad the Internet in search for more students for widening their base. For example, Britain's Open University will, next month, launch its first course contained on a compact disc bringing the open university, or distance learning, right inside the home, which was their intention any way. But, by using the new hi-tech areas. Because distance learning is relatively inexpensive, costing less than conventional full-time degree courses, even on a compact disc, it is becoming more attractive everywhere. With so many new technologies ready to change its tired image, the whole concept of distance learning is likely to undergo a change for the better. With the possibility of attracting new students over a far wider geographical range than was ever envisaged, it is likely to become the easiest and cheapest way to spread learning, if for no other reason than to make a dent in world illiteracy. If nothing else, access to the new technology is certain to make learning more interesting. But, even that is not all it will do, for satellite and computer networks are also making it easier for a university to sell its skills in other countries.

The open university we have in Bangladesh will, we hope, expand its activities learning from the experience of the other such universities around the world.