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**Open and Distance Learning in Higher Education in Egypt: An
Evaluation of the Degree Programmes of the Centre of Open Learning
in Cairo University (COLCU)**

Submitted by Ashraf Ebrahim
For degree of PhD
Of the University of Bath
2001

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is related to the expansion of open and distance learning (ODL) programmes in Egypt. The expansion in Egypt mirrors similar changes in many developing countries. The adoption of ODL in higher education has had several purposes, however, in Egypt, the most important has been to expand access to higher education in order to allow those students who, for whatever reasons, have been prevented access to conventional higher education. To date, there has been no evaluation of these ODL programmes in Egypt. Moreover, data collected from one of the most important ODL systems in Egypt, The Centre of Open Learning-Cairo University (COLCU), shows that the majority of the students enrolled in these programmes do not graduate, suggesting that an evaluation of these programmes is overdue.

Therefore, this study aims to provide an evaluation for Egyptian policy-makers using quantitative and qualitative methods. The issues to be evaluated are: the effectiveness of teaching and learning methods, the support delivered to ODL students by the programmes and an examination of possible exogenous reasons for the high wastage rate from these programmes.

The findings of this study highlight that the majority of students on these programmes are 'second chance' students who do not have the educational backgrounds to be admitted to conventional university programmes. Some of the teaching and learning methods are not effective and others are in need of development, in part because the 'second chance' nature of these students is not taken into account in the teaching and support policies. The thesis, therefore, provides recommendations as to how these programmes can be made more effective.

In addition the thesis may have implications for ODL programmes in other developing countries, since over and above the points raised above a further problem concerns the less than adequate resourcing of the COLCU programmes, especially in relation to the training of lecturers on these programmes. Consequently, the questions raised in this thesis are placed in the broader context of the role of ODL in higher education in developing countries, the problems such programmes seek to address and the issues they confront.

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