Opportunities and Challenges for Using Technology in Distance Learning

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1.0 The Philosophy behind ODL

- **Open Learning**: is a philosophy of making learning accessible to all; regardless of age, gender, or time constraints etc.
- **Distance Learning**: is a *mode* of delivery that separates learners and facilitators by time and space.
There are two forms of ODL delivery tools:
   a. Print materials
   b. Electronic media
a. **Non electronic tools**
   - The traditional method
   - Delivered via print materials e.g. modules/manuals

b. **Electronic tools**
   - Is the most recent tool
   - Delivered via electronic media e.g. Internet, intranet, extranet, satellite broadcasts, audio–visual interactive TV, CD–Rom
The mode of delivery, more than the philosophy, has earned ODL with various names: e.g.

- Distance learning
- Open learning
- E-learning
- ODeL
- On-line learning
- Modular learning
- Virtual learning
2. ODL Delivery Tools (Cont’)

- Delivery through electronic tools is popularly referred to as e-Learning
- In modern times, e-Learning is confined to use of internet and computers (ICT)
- Thus, e-Learning is a subset of ODL, hence the use of ODeL
Which way for STEM education at LUNAR: Print media or E-learning or both?

This question can best be answered with respect to:

a. nature of targeted students
b. staff capacity to use the form
c. availability of resources—e.g. internet infrastructure
d. benefits and limitations of each form
## 2.1 Benefits and Limitations of Print Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Accessible to all</td>
<td>1. Escalation of printing costs</td>
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<td>2. Cost sharing makes cost of the learning materials cheap</td>
<td>2. Rigid– does not give learners flexibility</td>
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<td>3. Does not require special training to use the materials</td>
<td>3. Makes learners work in isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Supports learners of different learning abilities</td>
<td>4. High initial costs</td>
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## 2.1 Benefits and Limitations of Print E-Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Easy distribution of course materials</td>
<td>1. Many potential learners have no access to computers</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Cost sharing makes cost of the learning materials cheap</td>
<td>2. Many computers are not hooked to internet with adequate bandwidth</td>
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<td>3. Flexibility learning to the learner</td>
<td>3. Many learners have no skills of using ICT</td>
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<td>4. Supports learners of different learning abilities</td>
<td>4. High initial costs</td>
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<td>5. Encourages communication between learners</td>
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<td>6. Students have greater access to information</td>
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GROUP ACTIVITY

- How can ICT technologies help in ODL delivery in Malawi?
- What challenges are associated with using technologies in ODL in Malawi?