# CHAPTER 7

# SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF THE FOCUS GROUPS INTERVIEWS, INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND STUDENT REPORTS

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to give an exposition of the assembled information on focus-group interviews and individual (or personal) interviews. The focus-group and individual (or personal) interviews was composed of staff members who were either distance learning administrators or instructors. In some instances the staffs performed both functions. These functions include officer commanding (OC), course directors, course managers, course coordinators, course administrators, and instructors. Irrespective of their designation; all these participants are treated as staff in this thesis. Information from the anonymous student reports is also discussed in this chapter. The anonymous student reports are presented as student response where appropriate. The results of the interview questions conducted in the focus group and those conducted with individuals are presented on separate sections in this chapter. The results from anonymous student reports are also presented in separate sections of this chapter.

The researcher has decided to replace the unavailability of student interviews with anonymous student reports normally collected by programme managers at the end of a programme. Permission was granted by the Department of Defence higher authority for the researcher to have access to the information. The Department of Defence higher authority is the Defence Intelligence (DI) unit specifically designated to grant the permission. The researcher had to produce an official letter from the authorities to the participant distance learning institutions (See attached Appendix P).

As mentioned before, the theoretical framework of this study is based on Michael Moore's theory of 'Transactional Distance' as it is widely considered to be one of the better-developed paradigms related to the field of distance education (Clark, 1991:121). Therefore, the four main research questions and their accompanying sub-questions, as presented in chapter 1, were designed around this theory. Fifteen focus group interview questions and seven individual interview questions were then constructed out of the four main research questions. These four main research questions are also linked to each other as discussed in the chapter.

The Army College from the South African Army (SAA), the Air Force College from the South African Air Force (SAAF), and, the School for Military Training from the South

African Military Health Service (SAMHS), participated in the study. All three institutions, made available to the researcher focused groups; individuals for additional information sought, and student reports. These focused groups and individuals comprised distance learning course managers, course coordinators and instructors or facilitators in those particular institutions. The student reports were compiled by the distance learners in these institutions. Completed data gathered from these three institutions were allocated codes (Appendices F, G and H from focused groups, Appendices J, K and L from personal interviews, and Appendices M, N, and O from student reports).

The codes allocated to the Army College focus group (RFG1), as the first institution to be interviewed, were used as a baseline for codes allocated to the Air Force College (RFG2) and the School for Military Training (RFG3) in the focused-group interviews. The codes allocated to the School for Military Health Training on individual/personal interviews (IP1) were used as the baseline for codes allocated to the Army College (IP2) and the Air Force College (IP3) in the individual (or personal) interviews. The codes allocated to the Army College student reports (ACSR), were used as a baseline for codes allocated to the Air Force College student reports (AFCSR) and the School for Military Health student reports (SMHTSR).

As the researcher could not control nor determine what information student reports would contain, the National Association of Distance Education Organisations of South Africa (NADEOSA) Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa of 1996 and 1998 were utilised to analyse them. It was originally the researcher's intention to use the NADEOSA criteria with the envisaged student interviews. The information contained in the student reports was assessed against the following NADEOSA criteria: 1. Policy and planning, 2. Learners, 3. Programme development, 4. Course design, 5. Course materials, 6. Assessment, 7. Learner support, 8. Human resource strategy, 9. Management and administration, 10. Quality assurance and, 11. Information dissemination.

Therefore, the responses have been classified and coded; and the codes have been categorised into groups. A brief discussion and the summary based on the provided responses follows.

## 7.2 FINDINGS FROM THE FOCUS-GROUP INTERVIEWS

### 7.2.1 Introduction

This section highlights the findings of the focus-group interviews. The interview questions were designed from the sub-questions that all work toward addressing the main research

question and depict the relationship between these questions. According to Andrews (2003:45) the subsidiary questions derive from the main question and contributory questions work toward answering the main question. The title of each table is also used as the heading of the paragraph, which depicts each interview question. The tables depict the exact answers given by the participants to each question. As alluded to before, the abbreviation for the focus group from the SA Army College is RFG1, from the SA Air Force is RFG2, and the SA Military Health Service is RFG3 in all the focus-group interviews and fifteen questions. Different answers given by the focus groups were allotted different codes and similar answers, similar codes. First, a thorough discussion of opinions of participants is presented. Secondly, a table with this information and accompanying codes is then presented. Thirdly, a discussion of the categories that emerges, where applicable, follows. Finally, a summary of opinions of the participants that emanates in terms of the categories is discussed.

### 7.2.2 The teaching and learning character of the institution

The teaching and learning character of the department of defence learning institutions providing instruction by means of distance education seem to resemble each other. This was evident in all the responses given by RFG1, RFG2 and RFG3, except in certain areas. All the participants seemed to have an induction period, contact sessions and residential phases. The Air Force College (RFG2) induction phase was done over a period of three days. This was also referred to as the 'study school' where the course administration, planning of studies and provision of advice took place. It was also an opportunity to inform the students how to manage their studies.

According to the Air Force College, this phase was also their first contact session where students were prepared for the distance education mode of teaching and learning. The Army College (RFG1) Induction phase lasted for a week and was utilised to "tell the students what was expected of them, in terms of their behaviour, and the learning content was explained to the students." According to the School for Military Health Training, the Induction phase referred to as "initial briefing" was utilised by providing students with books, materials, and giving them assignments that they had to hand in during the residential phase and to tell "students a bit of what was going to take place during the Contact session." Accordingly, all the participants said they utilised the residential phase differently. The Army College (RFG1) utilised the residential phase for students to hand in the Workbook that was given to them during the Induction phase. This phase was also used to conduct assessment on certain specific outcomes so that students could be more knowledgeable and more advanced in their

computer literacy. The Air Force College (RFG2) utilised the residential phase to write examinations and re-examinations given during their contact sessions.

During the residential phase, the students at the School for Military Health Training (RFG3) handed in their assignments given during the contact session. According to the participants, the students did "most of the research" and dealt with subjects the way they were supposed to deal with them. Although the School for Military Health Training did not indicate that formative and summative assessments would form part of their assessment types during data collection, these types of assessments were mentioned in their course material document. It could also be expected that these institutions provided their teaching and learning by utilising the modular and adult education approach in their distance teaching and learning.

| **1. What is the distance education (DE) teaching and learning character of this institution?** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| TLC9 | Students are able to continue their learning in their places of work where the Army College is able to continue assisting them (RFG1). |
| | The Air Force College utilizes diversified distance learning centres (RFG2). |
| TLC10 | Formative assessments are applied by the Army College (RFG1) and the Air Force (RFG2). |
| TLC11: | Summative assessments are applied by the Army college (RFG1) and the Air Force (RFG2).. |
| TLC12 | Students are not isolated (RFG1). |
| TLC13 | The Army College model is called learning management system (LMS) (RFG1). |
| | The Air Force College model is called the individual study (IS) phase (RFG2). |
| TLC14 | There are three structured modules (modules A, B & C) (RFG2). |
| | Six modules in all can be completed (or settled) in 3 years (RFG3). |
| TLC15 | Facilitation method of teaching is used (RFG2). |
| TLC16 | Subject specialists are utilised in DL. (RFG3). |

**Table 7.1:** Coding system with regard to teaching and learning characters of FG1, FG2 and FG3

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into four main categories. The combination of two TLC9 codes; one of Army College (RFG1) and the other of Air Force College (RFG1) constitutes the first category which indicates that distance learning can be offered to learners at their places of work and at diversified centres. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the assessment types. These are illustrated by TLC10 and TLC11 emphasizing the fact that formative and summative assessments as the forms of assessments utilized in distance learning at these institutions. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on model of distance education. This category emanates from the combination of two TLC13 codes; one of Army College (RFG1) where they prefer to call their distance model the learning management system (LMS) and the other of Air Force College (RFG1) where they prefer to call their model the individual study (IS). A fourth category is the combination of two TLC14 codes;

one of Army College (RFG1) and the other of Air Force College (RFG1) which is the modular-based approach to distance learning.

The responses in table 7.1 confirms that distance learning is been practiced in some of teaching and learning institutions of the department of defence. These institutions have a tendency to give their distance learning a name, apparently, either based on the approach they utilise or the technology they apply. It is self evident that distance education in the department of defence is characterised by, among others, allowing learners to remain at the units or places of work. The distance education teaching and learning is also characterised by the application of formative and summative assessments. The modular approach to distance learning and teaching is also utilised. Although department of defence instructors are normally utilised as facilitators, subject specialists are also utilised.

### 7.2.3 The requirements for designing distance learning programmes

With regards to the requirements for designing distance learning programmes the participants gave different requirements. While Army College participants (RFG1) emphasised 'outcomes', they mentioned that they design their programmes with the learning management system (LMS) in mind. The LMS is a computer-based teaching and learning system. In addition, their system is based on the 'systems approach' in their instructional design as their responses of codes DDLP1, DDLP4 and DDLP5 showed. They alluded to determining needs, development, implementation and assessment of outcomes, but they were not familiar with the DOD ETD Process.

The Air Force College (RFG2) emphasised 'pathways' for students. According to RFG2, 'pathways' was a system of building a student's career step-by-step. A student should be able to progress to the next level of his or her learning career after he or she had mastered a certain level. For example the SANDF members belong to different mustering; that is, infantry, logistics, or personnel. Thus, an infantry member would always be sent to infantry courses according to his or her infantry mustering; the logistician would be sent to logistic courses according to this mustering; and so on. Hence, this would be known as a member's career pathway. The School for Military Health Training (RFG3) said they emphasised aspects such as 'assignments' and 'pre-requisite examinations' in their programme design as shown in table 7.2. This meant that students were pre-occupied with assignments and examination in their fields of specialisations as doctors, nurses, social workers, etc.

| 2. How are your distance learning (DL) programmes designed in this institution? (or what are the requirements for designing DL programmes?) | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| DDLP1 | Programme designs are based on problem assessment, redesign & implementation (RFG1). |
| DDLP2 | Programmes are in accordance with the curriculum (RFG1). |
| DDLP3 | Programmes include the training purpose (RFG1). |
| DDLP4 | Programmes contain the specific outcomes (RFG1). |
| DDLP5 | Programmes contain the exit-level outcomes (RFG1). |
| DDLP6: | Programmes include the assessment guidelines (RFG1). |
| DDLP7 | Programmes contain the learning strategy (RFG1). |
| DDLP8 | Programmes are based on the learning content (RFG1). |
| DDLP9 | Programmes have the overview of the facilitation approach (RFG1). |
| DDLP10 | Programmes are based on the student pathway (RFG1). |
| | Programmes have pathways (RFG2). |
| DDLP11 | Programmes are designed with the LMS in mind (RFG1). |
| DDLP12 | Programmes have references (RFG1). |
| DDLP13 | Programme design emphasises the assignments (RFG3). |
| DDLP14 | Programmes require a pre-requisite exam (RFG3). |

**Table 7.2:** Coding system with regards to requirements for designing DL programmes

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into four categories. The combination of DDLP1, DDLP6 and DDLP14 constitutes the first category which indicates that the design of distance learning programmes is based on assessment guidelines. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the combination of DDLP1 and DDLP1 emphasizing the specification of outcomes in programme design. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on a content-based curriculum, facilitation and emphasises assignments. This category emanates from codes DDLP2, DDLP8, DDLP9 and DDLP13 which indicates the requirements for designing distance learning programmes. A fourth category that emerges from coded transcripts is the requirement to include pathways for learners. These are the combination of two DDLP10 codes; one from the Army College (RFG1) and the other from the Air Force College (FRG2).

It is noted from the above that traditional approach or system approach is used in designing distance learning programmes. But it is troubling to also note that very little or no strong emphasis to needs of the learners is being mentioned.

### 7.2.4 The encouragement to achieve intended learning outcomes

All the participants mentioned that they talk to students in encouraging them to achieve the intended outcomes. This was evidenced by the allocated AIO5 code. But code AIO1 denoted that the curricula in the department of department of defence distance learning institutions was designed around the achievement of specific outcomes as shown in table 7.3 above. Specific outcomes were a set of outcomes that had to be achieved at the end of a lesson or a certain module. To be found competent in the specific outcomes during the distance

education module meant that students had to demonstrate the knowledge and understanding of outcomes or set objectives during the examination or assessment. According to RFG1, their education approach was based on outcomes-based education (OBE) where knowledge of the subject matter was based on the achievement of intended outcomes (AIO3). With principles of assessment the participants meant aspects like procedures to follow when a student was not satisfied with his or her allocated marks and needed to appeal the decision (AIO4). As such, according to the participants, students were encouraged to manage their study and learning time wisely and effectively (AIO8). As much as students were encouraged to contact and communicate with each other (AIO12), they were also encouraged to contact and communicate with the instructors instead of instructors contacting the students (AIO13). It meant that it remained the responsibility of the students to contact and communicate with their instructors.

| **3. How are students encouraged to achieve the intended outcomes?** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| AIO1 | Students are found competent in the specific outcomes during the distance education module (DEM) (RFG1). |
| | Students must adhere to specific outcomes (RFG3.) |
| AIO2 | Before the students attend the residential module (RM) they must be found competent in the DEM (RFG1). |
| AIO3 | The role of outcomes-based education (OBE) is emphasised (RFG1). |
| AIO4 | Principles of assessment are adhered to (RFG1). |
| AIO5 | Students are told verbally of what is required from them (RFG1). |
| | Students are verbally encouraged to achieve the outcomes (RFG2). |
| | All course objectives are communicated during the initial briefing session (RFG3). |
| AIO6 | Students are also practically shown (RFG1). |
| AIO7 | Students are constantly reminded of the intended outcomes (RFG1). |
| AIO8 | Students are told of time management (RFG1). |
| AIO9 | Instructor telephone numbers that they can use to phone through out the day and also leave the message (RFG1) are given to students. |
| AIO10 | A manual of how to study is used (RFG1). |
| AIO11 | The programme is very flexible in that the students can arrange to write the exams at the suitable time if they have a problem (RFG1). |
| AIO12 | Students are encouraged to contact each other (RFG1). |
| AIO13 | Students are accommodated as long as they communicate with instructors (RFG1). |
| AIO14 | Instructors lack to monitor the progress of students where they are in different places because of different projects (RFG1). |

**Table 7.3:** Coding system with regards to encouragement to achieve outcomes

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into three main categories. The combination of two of AIO1, AIO3, two of AIO5, and AIO7 constitutes the first category which indicates that learners have to achieve specific outcomes. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the insistence on communication as illustrated by one of AIO5, AIO9, AIO12, and AIO13 emphasizing the fact that learners are told verbally and through telephone of intended outcomes to be achieved. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on the use of manuals and practical experiences to achieve the intended outcomes. This category emanates from codes AIO6 and

AIO10 which indicates that the intended outcomes and their practicality are also spelled out in the study guides or study manuals.

The outcomes to be achieved are spelled out in the curriculum as objectives to be reached. Apparently learners are reminded about the achievement and attainment of these objectives from time-to-time. It also emanated from table 7.3 that student-student interaction is also encouraged. In addition, it seems instructor-student interaction is also encouraged because student can also have access to their instructors' telephone numbers. It is alleged that all this is done with the purpose of encouraging the learners to achieve the intended outcomes.

### 7.2.5 The impact of transactional dialogue on students

In table 7.4, there is no mention of transactional distance and the improvement of the quality of learning by the participants. Instructor and student communication and student-to-student interaction in distance education settings were emphasised by many authors like Holmberg (1986) cited in Schlosser and Anderson (1994:11), Verduin and Clark (1991:10) Moore (1993) in Keegan (1993:24) and Willis (1994:141-142). According to all the participants, the effective impact of Transactional Dialogue was ensured by communication with the students through the use of the telephone. However, the participants interpreted the question in different ways as illustrated in the following paragraph.

The Army College (RFG1) mentioned that the success of transactional dialogue was ensured by providing the students with instructors for every subject who constantly provided feedback to students with reference to their learning progress, that students were being monitored and mentored, and students were encouraged to be dedicated as distance learning entails a lot of work (TD1). The participants at the Army College also understood the question as meaning that students have to play their part in the realisation of transactional dialogue. As a result, they mentioned that students were constantly requested to submit assignments according to set time schedules. This was then used to assess or measure each student's learning potential (TD5). In turn, the progress that resulted from this was then used for communicating with each student's home unit (TD6). In addition, it was realised that the Army College authorities were passionate about their Distance Learning system being the LMS. This was because they stated a number of times that they also sensitised the Chief of the Army about the LMS through the progress of students (TD7) and also that they requested the students to sensitise their unit commanders concerning the requirements of the LMS (TD10).

According to the participants (RFG1), the LMS forced the instructors to constantly communicate with the students while at their home units. The Air Force College (RFG2) mentioned that they understood the question as meaning 'how communication did take place with the students during the course of the programme'. Thus, they mentioned that this communication took place through the use of the telephone (TD13). In a way this was their student's appreciation of distance teaching and learning and of their instructors in ensuring the impact of Transactional Dialogue (TD14). The School for Military Health Training (RFG3) mentioned that they ensured the Transactional Distance by spelling out the communication that will take place during the course in their "Course Instruction." The way the participants understood the question was that, for instance, 'how will communication with the students happen during the distance learning programme?' Hence, their response was that all the correspondence with the students during the programme was spelt out in the "Course Instruction" document (TD15). It simply meant that what the students must expect during the distance learning programme was spelt out in this document.

| **4. What impact does transactional dialogue have on students, what are their comments on the impact of dialogue?** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| TD1 | All the subjects have an instructor (RFG1). |
| TD2 | Instructors work day and night giving feedback (RFG1). |
| TD3 | Students are being mentored all the time (RFG1) |
| TD4 | There are time frames to submit some assignments through the LMS (RFG1). |
| TD5 | The students are measured on what they submit (RFG1). |
| TD6 | Staff sensitizes the supervisor and unit commanders about the student's programme (RFG1). |
| TD7 | Letters are written through the Chief of the Army to communicate (RFG1). |
| TD8 | Units are encouraged to give students timeframes for doing their work during working hours (but not the whole day) (RFG1). |
| TD9 | Students are reminded about the target dates to submit and not to wait until the last day (RFG1). |
| TD10 | When the students are going back to their units they must present the programme (to their Supervisors) that is created on the Milqual (Military qualification system) (RFG1). |
| TD11 | Students are told that DL is a lot of work, they must be very dedicated (RFG1). |
| TD12 | Staffs are committed to communicate with the students rather than having the student in the classroom the whole time (RFG1). |
| TD13 | There is a lot of communication through the telephone; the students are not left alone to sit on their own (RFG1). |
| | Staffs communicate through the telephone (RFG2). |
| | Telephone numbers of the course coordinator who contacts all the module/subject specialist (RFG3). |
| TD14 | Students communicate verbally their appreciation (they express their appreciation) (RFG2). |
| TD15 | The communication that will take place during the course is spelled-out in the "Course Instruction" (RFG3). |

**Table 7.4:** Coding system with regards to the impact of Transactional Dialogue

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions of the participants to be clustered into three main categories. The combination of TD1, TD2, and TD12, three of

TD13, TD14 and TD15 constitutes the first category which indicates the commitment of instructors to communicate with the learners. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the submission of assignments on target dates as illustrated by TD4, TD5, TD8, and TD9 emphasizing that learners are reminded of target dates to submit their assignments. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focuses on the learners' responsibility to inform their unit commanders with regards to their involvement in a learning programme. This category emanates from codes TD6, TD7, and TD10 which indicates that learners and instructors should inform the learner's unit commander about the learner's involvement in the programme so that, in turn, the unit commander is sensitive about the learner's teaching and learning needs.

It is important to note that there was no mention or reference made to transactional distance by the participants. It could mean that the participants did not know what transactional dialogue is and it is not used. Therefore, transactional dialogue or distance is not associated with teaching and learning at these institutions. The question of teacher or instructor knowledge of distance learning intricacies comes to question. Transactional dialogue should have a positive impression on the quality of learning. The learners must recognise transactional dialogue as having meaningful impact to them.

### 7.2.6 Involvement of students in designing distance learning programmes

None of the three distance learning institutions in the DOD seemed to involve their students directly, in the designing of distance learning programmes. This was evidenced from the responses and coded LID1 in table 7.5. Wilmore (1990) referred to this practice in the United States Military Academy at West Point that "there was no such thing as participatory or site based management". The participants RFG1, RFG2 and RFG3 mentioned that the students were involved in this practice through 'debriefs', 'feedback' and 'SWOT analysis' only. Although these three phrases were termed differently, they meant the same thing, namely the students were asked to comment or give feedback about the 'strong', 'weak', 'opportunities', and 'the training needed' concerning the programme. Thus, the comments were utilised by the instructors or programme coordinators to improve the programme. This did not necessarily mean changing or modifying the content of a learning programme. The programme coordinators regarded this as taking into consideration the students' inputs as mentioned by RFG1 in code LID3. Sometimes the students were given a questionnaire that asks questions pertaining to the design, development and actual implementation of the programme as depicted in code LID6 by RFG2. In addition, RFG3 regarded that the student's

involvement was understood in the context of 'considering student's complaints' in their learning (LID3).

| 5. What is the involvement of students in the designing of DL programmes? | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| LID1 | Students are not directly involved in designing the DL programmes (RFG1). |
| | Students are not directly involved (RFG2). |
| | Students are not necessarily involved in designing (RFG3). |
| LID2 | Student's debriefs assist in upgrading / changing the Army College DL system (RFG1). |
| | Student's involvement only comes out from the feedback or debriefs (RFG2). |
| | Students give their comments in the "SWOT Analysis" format at the end of the course (RFG3). |
| LID3 | Staff takes lots of student's inputs into consideration (RFG1). |
| LID4 | Student's complains are taken into consideration (RFG3). |
| LID5 | Students are not part of the planners or designers (RFG2). |
| LID6 | Students are involved through questionnaires (RFG2). |
| LID7 | Students phone if there is something to be rectified in the manual (RFG2). |
| LID8 | Sometimes the shortcomings are not rectified but only analysed (RFG3). |

**Table 7.5:** Coding system with regard to the involvement of students in designing DL programmes

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into three main categories that emanate from table 7.5. The combination of three LID1 and LID5 constitutes the first category where learners are not directly involved in designing distance learning programmes. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the involvement of learners as illustrated by three LID2, LID3, LID4, and LID6 emphasizing the direct involvement of learners in advising in the issues of distance learning and teaching. This category emphasises that learners become involved only when they have to provide feedback to programme managers at the end of a programme. This is done by way of debriefs, SWOT analysis, and questionnaires. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions informs that learners can also phone the instructors or programme managers of any uncertainty in the manuals or study guides. This category emanates from codes LID7, and LID8 which indicates some freedom when having to be involved in the design of their learning programmes; but that the advice can or can not be. The fact that learners are not directly or indirectly involved in the designing of distance learning programmes in the department of defence confirms the discussion in section 7.3.1.2 of chapter 7. Instructors and learners are not allowed to design the learning programme or the curriculum in the department of defence. This practice confirms and signals the authoritative and prescriptive nature of approach to distance teaching and learning in the department of defence.

### 7.2.7 Utilisation of the DOD ETD Process

The DOD ETD Project Team institutionalised the Education Training and Development Process (ETD Process) in 1997. The Process is meant to be utilised for instructional or

programme design purposes by the DOD institutions of learning. It involved the processes of determining ETD needs, developing ETD opportunities, presenting learning, and evaluating the learning. Most DOD ETD institutions were not familiar with the DOD ETD Process, so that they do not utilise it. This was evident in the responses given by RFG1, RFG2 and RFG3 that they 'haven't seen the Process' (ETDP1) and 'do not really apply it' (ETD2) depicted in Table 7.6 above. On the other hand the Army College (RFG1) said they do problem assessment, redesign and implementation in their distance learning designing (ETDP3). The Air Force College (RFG2) mentioned that they sometimes 'do not do needs analysis correctly' because of insufficient time (ETDP4). According to the School for Military Health Training (RFG3), 'the specialised people' design distance learning programmes on their behalf. These people utilised a similar process to the DOD ETD Process (ETDP5).

| **6. What have been the experiences in utilising the DOD ETD Process?** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| ETDP1 | The staffs have not seen the ETD Process in a long time (RFG1). |
| | The staffs do not utilize the ETD Process (RFG2). |
| | There is no need for the staff to utilise the ETD Process (RFG3). |
| ETDP2 | The staffs do not really apply it on paper, but some of it (RFG1). |
| | The DOD ETD Process is not necessarily done or followed formally (RFG2). |
| ETDP3 | The staffs do problem assessment, redesign & implementation (RFG1). |
| ETDP4 | The needs analysis is not done correctly by the staff because of the time factor (RFG2). |
| ETDP5 | There are specialized people who design the curriculum by using a similar process but may not be called the DOD ETD Process (RFG3). |
| ETDP6 | Some of the staff members participate in other DOD forums where they are trying to design one curriculum so that members of the DOD can be able to speak one language and do the same things (RFG3). |

**Table 7.6:** Coding system with regard to the utilisation of the DOD ETD Process

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into two main categories. The combination of three ETDP1 constitutes the first category which indicates an uncertainty with regards to the knowledge of the DOD ETD Process; where participants cited not seeing it not utilising it and no need to utilise it. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the further uncertainty with regards to the knowledge of the DOD ETD Process as illustrated by two ETDP2, and ETDP4 emphasizing the fact that some of the DOD ETD Process is applied, not done and not done correctly. It is unfortunate that uncertainty is exhibited in table 7.6 when coming to the discussion of the DOD ETD Process. This was a promulgated ETD policy to design learning programmes in the department of defence irrespective of whether one is involved in designing or not.

### 7.2.8 Encouraging interaction among students

Just like the communication between instructors and student, student-to-student interaction in distance education settings was equally emphasised by many authors like, Holmberg (1986)

cited in Schlosser & Anderson (1994:11), Verduin and Clark (1991:10) Moore (1993) in Keegan (1993:24), Willis (1994:141-142). According to the Army College (RFG1) interaction among students was the skill that is taught by instructors (LI2). At the School for Military Health Training (RFG3), as indicated in table 7.7, the ability for students to express themselves is also a skill that is taught (LI2). While RFG1 and RFG2 mentioned that the Contact Session is utilised to communicate with the students and students are also encouraged to communicate with each other. In addition, the syndicate discussions are aimed at encouraging students to interact with each other (LI7).

| **7. What do you do to encourage students to talk to each other / What do you do to encourage or foster interaction?** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| LI1 | Encouragement for interaction is mentioned in all the documents and is discussed with the students all the time (RFG1). |
| LI2 | The senior instructor discusses interaction issues with the students as part of the skills taught (RFG1). |
| | Students are taught certain skills to be able to express themselves (RFG3). |
| LI3 | Staffs send students messages by e-mail through the LMS function (RFG1). |
| LI4 | The communication is immediate and directed to students (RFG1). |
| LI5 | The target of the contact session is to communicate with the students (RFG1). |
| | In the contact session, they do make some arrangements to be in contact (in touch) with each other (RFG2). |
| LI6 | Students are informed well in advance if there is something to take note of (RFG1). |
| LI7 | The subject is designed such that students can participate in groups (RFG1). |
| | Students are grouped according to their common area where they come from (in syndicate form) (RFG2). |
| LI8 | Copy and paste is not allowed nor encouraged (RFG3). |

**Table 7.7:** Coding system with regards to encouraging interaction among students

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into three main categories. The combination of LI1, LI3, LI6 and two LI7 constitutes the first category which indicates the means used to encourage interaction among the learners and with instructors. According to this category this is mentioned in all the documents, by e-mail and through syndicate group work. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the further utilisation of encouraging interaction during contact phase of distance education as illustrated by two of LI5 codes. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on interaction as a skill that is taught to learners. This category emanates from two of LI2 codes. The impression is given that there is a general lack of dialogue that fosters the interchange of ideas. The contribution of instructor and learner in dialogue or interaction is not echoed strongly.

### 7.2.9 Encouraging students to express themselves freely

The ability for students to express themselves was what Moore (1993) called “the encouragement of open dialogue that was supported and valued by all participants” in his

theory of Transactional Dialogue. Although all the participants said they encouraged the students to express themselves freely, they didn't explain how this was supported except RFG3 who mentioned that they applied an "open door" policy (FE1 in table 7.8). The 'open door' policy was understood to mean that students were encouraged to approach instructors or authorities if they encountered some problems and sought assistance. In addition, the School for Military Health Training (RFG3) stated that students were also encouraged to approach the Student Committee to express their concerns (FE9) although there was no policy with regards to 'encouraging students to express themselves freely' (FE11).

| **8. What do you do to encourage students to express themselves freely? (or how do you allow freedom of expression of learners?)** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| FE1 | The opportunity to speak is always afforded to the students and they love to speak (RFG1). |
| | The staffs constantly encourage the students to express themselves and be analytical (RFG2). |
| | The students are free to express themselves as the 'open door' policy is practiced (RFG3. |
| FE2 | Small group discussions are meant for students to express themselves (RFG1). |
| FE3 | As students mingle, they can say whatever to each other (RFG1). |
| FE4 | During the facilitation process, the students are free to say anything (RFG1). |
| FE5 | Debriefs every week are meant for students to participate (RFG1). |
| FE6 | There is also feedback on the exercises the students submit through the LMS to communicate with the instructor on one-on-one (RFG1). |
| FE7 | During distance education staff focuses on theory so that students can express themselves (RFG1). |
| FE8 | The staffs expect that the student answers cannot be necessarily the same (RFG2). |
| FE9 | Students have the right to approach the student committee about their problems (RFG3). |
| FE10 | The Officer Commanding (OC) holds a meeting with a 6-member student committee once a week (RFG3). |
| FE11 | Well, we don't have a policy that encourages that on the ground (RFG3). |

**Table 7.8:** Coding system with regard to encouraging students to express themselves freely

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into three main categories. The combination of three of FE1 codes, FE4 and FE7 in table 7.8 constitutes the first category which indicates that students are encouraged to express themselves where opportunity is provided a curriculum is provided when learners are taught theory lessons. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the provision of small group discussions or during syndicate work and student evaluation or comments at the end of the programme as illustrated by FE2, FE3, FE5, and FE6 is regarded as the emphasis to encourage students to express themselves freely. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on the provision of a policy on freedom of expression. This category emanates from FE11 and indicates that there is no policy for freedom of expression. There was no mention of freedom of expression as embedded in the curriculum. This again

illustrates the lack of encouragement of dialogue in the distance teaching and learning in the department of defence.

### 7.2.10 Student and instructor communication across transactional dialogue

It had been mentioned earlier that communication between instructors and students played a vital role in distance education. It was also discussed in table 7.4 that the participants did not respond satisfactory to the question posed with regards to the impact this communication has on transactional dialogue. Instead, they chose to discuss how they applied it. The question as put in table 7.9 followed the same pattern. Although it was explained to the participants that this question was meant to find out how communication functioned in distance learning, taking the distance (time and space) between the students and instructors into consideration, or how communication was ensured, instead they decided to answer the way as shown in table 7.4.

In table 7.9, The Army College (RFG1) as well as the School for Military Health Training (RFG3) responded that this communication was ensured through what was expected of the students as a 'course instruction'. Both, RFG2 and RFG3 mentioned that they ensured communication across transactional distance through the use of the telephone. In addition, the Air Force College (RFG2) mentioned that they tried several other ways to ensure this communication. They said that faxing was one way of doing this and that face-to-face contact during the residential phase was another. Residential phase is when students reside at the institution to attend lectures for a certain stipulated period of time.

| **9. How do students and instructors negotiate communication across transactional dialogue?** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| L/ICTD1 | The staff informs the students of what is expected of them and what they'll be able to do as learning is an emotional thing, it's not only cognitive (RFG1). |
| | The staffs communicate with students through the 'Course Instruction'. (RFG3). |
| L/ICTD2 | The staff communication with the students is clear of what is expected of them (RFG1). |
| L/ICTD3 | The staffs encourage the students to work collaboratively (RFG1). |
| L/ICTD4 | Authenticity is always a problem because some students do not always render their own work (RFG1). |
| L/ICTD5 | The discussion of the problem is not done once during the introduction, it is done continuously (RFG1). |
| L/ICTD6 | The instructors are always available after hours for students to catch-up (RFG1). |
| L/ICTD7 | The staffs conduct face-to-face communication with the students (RFG2). |
| L/ICTD8 | Communication is still paper-based (RFG2). |
| L/ICTD9 | The staffs communicate with students telephonically (RFG2). |
| | Telephone is utilised to communicate with students (RFG3). |
| L/ICTD10 | Communication with students is done through facsimile (RFG2). |
| L/ICTD11 | The staffs communicate with students during the residential phase (RFG2). |

**Table 7.9:** Coding system with regards to student and instructor communication across transactional dialogue

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into three main categories. The combination of two of L/ICTD1 and L/ICTD8 constitutes the first category which indicates that the course instruction and course manuals are used by instructors as the medium of communication with learners. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the authoritarian and prescriptive doctrine of the curriculum as illustrated by L/ICTD7 and L/ICTD11 emphasises the fact that residential phase and face-to-face contact is the opportunity of programme managers and instructors to negotiate transactional dialogue with learners. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on the tools used students and teachers to communicate across transactional dialogue. This category emanates from two of L/ICTD9 codes and L/ICTD10 and indicates that the telephone and the facsimile is the preferred means of communicating across transactional dialogue.

It emanated from table 7.9 that communication is mostly based on emphasising the attainment of intended outcomes. As much as communication can be done verbally, that is, face-to-face, it is also accomplished via written instruction in the teaching and learning materials. In addition, it is still paper-based and print-based. The responses of participants demonstrate that their institutions are still using a mixture of first and second generation of distance education in their teaching and learning distance education.

### 7.2.11 Reasons for considering distance learning

The participants gave a number of reasons why they considered distance learning as a mode of instruction for their selected courses. Both the Army College (RFG1) and the Air Force College (RFG2) mentioned that they mainly utilised the distance mode to prepare students for the Residential phase (CDL2 in table 7.10). In table 7.1 RFG1 mentioned that they utilised the Residential phase for students to hand in the assignments that were given to them during the Induction phase. They also said they utilised this phase to conduct assessment on certain specific outcomes so that students could be more knowledgeable and more advanced in their computer literacy. On the other hand, RFG2 mentioned that they utilised the residential phase to write examinations and re-examinations given during their contact sessions. It could then be postulated that the residential phase in these institutions was largely used to attain the intended outcomes, hence, according to the participants, the necessity for distance mode of learning.

The other reasons given by the Army College participants (RFG1) were to allow the student to develop at his/her own as life-long student and students to perform as was expected of them. The Air Force College (RFG2), on the other hand, said their reasons also included assisting the students to be back into the studying mode in a less controlled environment and

prepare the students to understand the Air Force. In addition, the School for Military Health Training said the reasons for considering distance mode of learning, included countering the backlog of students who needed to be qualified in certain courses and not to keep the specialised students, like doctors and nurses in class for longer periods because of their specialisations. Moreover, more students could complete their respective programmes in shorter or longer periods CDL16.

| **10. What are the reasons for considering DL mode in this institution?** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| CDL1 | The DL phase of the course or module must lead to the reaching of specific outcomes as stated in the curriculum (RFG1). |
| CDL2 | DE is focused on getting the students to understand the Residential phase (RFG1). |
| | It's a very good idea, on paper, to prepare students for the Residential phase after a gap of 10 to 15 years being out of formal schooling (RFG2). |
| CDL3 | During the Warrant Officers' module, students do the practical side and theory on DOD policies and DOD Instructions at the college for the regimental aspects on the parade ground (RFG1). |
| CDL4 | Distance learning helps to expose the student to a larger spectrum of knowledge (RFG1). |
| CDL5 | Students develop far better understanding and are supposed to be more skilled (RFG1). |
| CDL6 | Students must do DE to develop as life-long learning students (RFG1). |
| CDL7 | Students are able to optimize their potential to stay positive (RFG1). |
| CDL8 | Distance learning enables the students to challenge themselves to what is expected of them (RFG1). |
| CDL9 | DE is a guideline that all courses should consider to implement (RFG1). |
| CDL10 | There are a lot of advantages in DE (RFG1). |
| CDL11 | Students are helped to be back into the studying mode in a more or less controlled environment (RFG2). |
| CDL12 | Distance learning is a wonderful way of preparing the student for their promotion (RFG2). |
| CDL13 | Distance learning is used as a developmental vehicle to develop my students into becoming better, better leaders, and managers and to work with a budget (RFG2). |
| CDL14 | Distance learning is meant to give students more information in the Air Force (RFG2). |
| CDL15 | The reason to utilise DL was the backlog of people who had been promoted to do the course but could not because of the stagnation within the SAMHS (RFG3). |
| CDL16 | A very small chunk of people was doing the course that resulted in the course to be very slow (RFG3). |
| CDL17 | As members of the SAMHS are mostly professionals, like doctors, social workers, etc., it is usually not possible to keep such people in class for long; like for six months in a residential phase (if students are away from the course for 3 or more days, they are automatically withdrawn from the course (RFG3). |
| CDL18 | Students who are professionals like doctors are always in demand or needed somewhere within the SANDF; therefore, they can finish the course in 3 years (i.e. 2 modules per year) (RFG3). |
| CDL19 | Opportunity to include many students in the course at the same time (RFG3). |

**Table 7.10:** Coding system with regards to reasons for considering DL

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions in table 7.10 allows the opinions to be clustered into four main categories. The combination of CDL1, CDL5, CDL6, CDL8 and CDL14 constitutes the first category which indicates attaining a specific goal is the reasons for considering distance. These are to achieve specific outcomes, becoming skilled, becoming

life-long learners and receiving more information. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is to prepare learners for a certain phase as illustrated by two of CDL2 code emphasizing that distance learning is used to prepare learners for the residential phase. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on the career of learners. This category emanates from codes CDL12 and CDL15 and stresses that distance education is used to fast-track promotion of members of the department of defence. The fourth category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is providing learning opportunities to members of the department of defence who are not able to sit in a class or attend lessons for long hours. Some of these members cannot be away from their jobs for the duration of the programme.

It appears from table 7.10 that there are many reasons that inspire the department of defence distance learning institutions to consider utilising distance education mode of teaching and learning. Distance learning provides with many advantages and opportunities. It provides learners challenges to attain specific outcomes. It leads learners to be skilled and develop as life-long learners. It affords more learners opportunities to learn in a very short time. This, in turn, result in more learners open to other opportunities like promotion to other ranks and/or afforded other learning opportunities. The typical cost effectiveness of utilising distance learning was not mentioned by the participants.

### 7.2.12 Technologies applied to talk to the students

In response to the category of technologies applied to talk to the students, the participants mentioned various media. All the participants said they used the telephone (TEC1). In addition, RFG1 and RFG2 also utilised the facsimile machine (TEC2), computer (TEC3) and, lotus notes (TEC6) as shown in table 7.11. The Army College (RFG1) also used the intranet (LMS) and the laptop in their communication with the students (TEC4 and TEC5 respectively).

According to the Army College (RFG1) the Learning Management System (LMS) was the computer-based learning system that assists the College to communicate with the students inter-actively on the computer. The LMS was available via the DOD intranet; thus, all the students would access it if it was installed in their units. However, according to the Air Force College (RFG2), they relied on face-to-face contact (TEC7) and their communication with students was still paper-based (TEC8).

| **11. What technologies are used to talk to students in this institution when students are at a distance?** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| TEC1 | Telephone (RFG1). |
| | Telephone (RFG2). |
| | Telephone (RFG3). |
| TEC2 | Fax machine (RFG1). |
| | Faxing (RFG2). |
| TEC3 | Computer (RFG1). |
| | Computer (RFG2). |
| TEC4 | The Intranet (LMS) (RFG1). |
| TEC5 | Laptop (RFG1). |
| TEC6 | Lotus Notes but not all students have access to it (RFG1). |
| | Lotus Notes but not all students have access to it (RFG2). |
| TEC7 | Staffs use face-to-face contact (RFG2). |
| TEC8 | Staffs still use paper-based (RFG2.) |

**Table 7.11:** Coding system with regards to technologies applied to talk to the students

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the responses to be clustered into four main categories. The combination of three of TEC1 constitutes the first category which indicates that the telephone is a preferred tool used to talk to students. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the use of the facsimile machine as demonstrated by two of TEC2. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the use a computer or computer programmes available to the members of the department of defence. This category emanates from codes TEC3, TEC4, TEC5 and TEC6 which indicates the use of computers, laptops, and the department of defence computer programmes such as the intranet and lotus notes.

It can be concluded from table 7.11 that the distance learning institutions in the department of defence utilises the combination of distance education generations. It can also be concluded that some of these methods are both effective and, in some instances, not effective. Some of these institutions still utilises the first generation of distance education in the form of paper-based correspondence. These institutions also use the second generation of distance education as they utilise the computers as a resource in their teaching and learning. The application of third generation of distance education by these institutions is depicted by their use of personal computers and perhaps the provision of laptops. The application of the fourth and fifth generation of distance education by these institutions is depicted by their use of the intranet and lotus notes. The intranet and lotus notes are internal communication capabilities within the department of defence. They work like the internet because they are able to provide learners with all the information with regards to the department of defence. Some of the deficiencies of these technologies and models are that they are not connected to the internet (or WWW). In addition, some of the learners do not have access to them.

### 7.2.13 Preparation of instructors for distance learning instruction

To prepare instructors for distance learning, the participants mentioned various means and approaches. The Air Force College (RFG2) and the School for Military Health Training (RFG3) said that they equipped their instructors with NQF Level 4 which they attained from the College of Educational Technology (COLET) as indicated in Table 7.12 (DLIP3).

According to the Army College (RFG1), some of their instructors had obtained Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) at the University of Pretoria (DLIP1) and they also attended ETD Conferences (DLIP2) to empower these instructors. On the other hand, however, the School for Military Health Training (RFG3) confirmed that their instructors were required to follow a Senior Management course (DLIP4) and other instructors have Bachelor's degrees (DLIP5).

| 12. How are your DL instructors prepared for DL instruction in this institution? | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| DLIP1 | Some instructors did a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) at Pretoria University (RFG1). |
| DLIP2 | Instructors attend the DOD ETD Conferences (RFG1). |
| DLIP3 | Instructors do NQF level 4, assessor course, moderator course, and planning and design course presented at COLET (RFG2). |
| | Instructors do NQF level 4 presented at COLET and MentoNet (RFG3). |
| DLIP4 | Some instructors have done the Senior Management Course (RFG3). |
| DLIP5 | Some instructors have Bachelor of Arts (BA) degrees (RFG3). |

**Table 7.12:** Coding system with regards to preparation of instructors for DL instruction

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into three main categories. The combination of DLIP1, DLIP4 and DLIP5 constitutes the first category which indicates that instructors have got some. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the occupationally-directed qualifications as illustrated by two of DLIP3 emphasizing the fact that department of defence distance education instructors were qualified as assessors, moderators, and programme planners and designers. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on these instructors attending seminars and conferences. This category emanates from the code DLIP2.

The information provided in table 7.12 suggests that distance learning instructors are adequately qualified for this mode of instruction. They qualify as instructors, assessors, moderators, and course planning and designing. Some of these instructors even have distance education-related degrees. The information provided also suggests that these instructors also attend conferences and seminars related to distance education. But it should be pointed out that from the researcher's knowledge the department of defence has a tendency of nominating members to be instructors based solely on having done a particular course themselves. This

means that these members do not necessarily undergo the required training in that particular field and hence, not necessarily qualified.

### 7.2.14 The impact of drop out and failure of students

Many authors observed that drop out and failure posed a problem in the teaching and learning environment of any learning system. However, the participants seemed to agree that they did not have drop outs and failures, but instead have withdrawal of students from the learning programme (DOF1) in table 7.13. On the other hand, the Army College (RFG1) added that they did not necessarily have failures (DOF2). The Air Force College (RFG2) decided to reveal that they only have a problem of students who did not hand in their tasks in terms of this question (DOF3). However, the School for Military Health Training (RFG3) cited "lack of discipline" on the part of their students. Accordingly, a student would be withdrawn from the course after he or she had been absent for three consecutive days. In addition, RFG3 mentioned that the students were also withdrawn from the course due to their lack of the required level of understanding (DOF6), but extra lessons were sometimes provided to alleviate with this problem (DOF7).

| **13. What has been the impact of drop out and failure of students?** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| DOF1 | The students withdraw from the course (RFG1). |
| | The Air Force College experiences withdrawals, not failures (RFG2). |
| | The School for Military Health Training do have dropouts or those who do not finish the course (those who do not complete a certain part of the module are withdrawn from the course and come back later) (RFG3). |
| DOF2 | The Army College does not necessarily produce failures (RFG1). |
| DOF3 | The Air Force College have students who do not hand in tasks (RFG2). |
| DOF4 | Students are also withdrawn from the course after an absence of 3 days (RFG3). |
| DOF5 | Lack of discipline of learners is another reason for not completing and thus withdrawal (RFG3). |
| DOF6 | The School for Military Health Training has experience of students who cannot cope due to their level of understanding (RFG3). |
| DOF7 | Extra classes are being provided to those learners who lag behind (RFG3). |

**Table 7.13:** Coding system with regards to the impact of drop out and failure of students

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into three main categories. The combination of three of DOF1 and DOF4 constitutes the first category which indicates that learners withdraw from distance learning programmes. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the fact that distance learning institutions do not produce failures. Instead, learners simply do not complete their studies due to lack of discipline and failure to submit assignments as illustrated by DOF2, DOF3 and DOF5. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on learners being placed in these programmes lacking the required level of knowledge for those programmes. This

category emanates from codes DOF6 and DOF1 which indicates that some learners cannot cope with the level of these programmes and thus, frequently lag behind in their studies.

The passage on the impact of drop out and failure of students and table 7.13 seems to provide information that the department of defence does not allow drop out and failure of students. This is true to the fact that learners who do not perform well the first time are given another chance to complete their studies some other time; learners are sometimes given the opportunity over and over again, until they can finish their studies. What is of significance here is that learners are said to withdraw from programmes due to a number of reasons. Students withdraw from a learning programme due to lack of discipline like not submitting their assignments. Some students withdraw from the learning opportunity due to their level of cognitive understanding of the module or programme. Therefore, these learners are provided support in terms of extra classes.

### 7.2.15 Opinions with regards to the DOD distance learning policy

With regards to the utilisation of the DOD DL Policy, the participants gave various answers. All three participants said that they haven't seen the policy (DOD DLP1). In addition, RFG2 and RFG3 said that they did not use such policy even if it did exist (DOD DLP3) as indicated in Table 7.14. However, Army College participants (RFG1) cited that they thought they were in line with the policy (DOD DLP2).

| **14. What is your opinion about the DOD distance learning policy?** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| DOD DLP1 | The staffs have not seen the policy for sometime now (RFG1). |
| | The staffs have not seen the policy (RFG2). |
| | The staffs have not seen the policy (RFG3). |
| DOD DLP2 | The staffs think they are in line with the policy (RFG1). |
| DOD DLP3 | The staffs have not used the policy (RFG2). |
| | The staffs do not use the policy (RFG3). |

**Table 7.14:** Coding system with regards to opinions about the DOD DL Policy

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into three main categories. The combination of three of DOD DLP1 in table 7.14 constitutes the first category which indicates that distance learning practitioners in the department of defence have never seen the department of defence distance learning policy. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the opinion of distance learning practitioners in the department of defence who indicated that they do not use the department of defence distance learning policy as illustrated by two of DOD DLP3. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the opinion of distance learning practitioners in the department of defence who indicated that they think they are in line with the department of defence distance

learning policy. This category emanates from code DOD DLP2. It was mentioned in chapter 6; section 6.7 that the Task Force was instrumental in developing the department of defence distance learning policy, which was still in the approval process by the higher authorities. To this date, the policy has not been formally approved. Therefore, it can be concluded that the existence of distance learning policy in the department of defence is still lacking. Hence, the distance learning practitioners in the department of defence are uncertain to whether the policy exists or not. Some of these practitioners are not certain whether they are applying the policy or not.

### 7.2.16 Opinions on solving the existing distance learning problems

In order to be able to solve the problems that the DOD DL institutions were experiencing, all the participants felt that they needed to talk to each other to discuss these problems (PS1). On the other hand, RFG2 and RFG3 said that they needed to constantly benchmark with others (PS2). In addition, RFG2 proposed that, in order to deal with distance learning problems, they should clearly identify these problems (PS3). This amounts to a needs analysis exercise (PS11), and to standardise (PS8) the way their distance teaching and learning was done. This included linking the phases of distance learning like Residential and Individual Study (IS) (PS5), evaluate the duration of these phases (PS6), and to look closely at the career pathway of students (PS7).

However, the participants from the School of Military Health Training (RFG3) added in their response of how to resolve the existing problems that they needed to implement distance teaching and learning correctly (PS12). In addition, they felt that the distance teaching and learning resources were important in this mode and should be looked at. They also felt that satellites (diversified distance learning centres), with the aim of carrying out certain activities, should be established (PS14-17). Importantly, they raised a concern that communication with their students in distance learning programmes should be improved (PS18).

| 15. How can the existing problems be solved or addressed? | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| PS1 | Distance learning institutions should share problems with each other (RFG1).) |
| | Distance learning stakeholders in the DOD should address the problems (RFG2). |
| | Distance learning stakeholders in the DOD should be able to talk to other role-players in the DOD (RFG3. |
| PS2 | Problems should be benchmarked with distance learning colleagues (RFG1). |
| | Benchmarking is also another way to address these problems (benchmark with other AoSs) (RFG2). |
| PS3 | The first step of the staff is to identify the problems at the College distance learning programme in order to address the needs of the Air Force (RFG2). |
| PS4 | Formulate a dedicated Working Group from the ETD side, from Career Planning side (RFG2). |
| PS5 | There must be a link between the IS and Res Phase (RFG2). |
| PS6 | The duration between the IS and Res Phases must not be too long (RFG2). |
| PS7 | This joint Pathway should also be looked into (RFG2). |
| PS8 | Things need to be standardized (RFG2). |
| PS9 | There should be building blocks; one should be finished before proceeding to the next (RFG2). |
| PS10 | Alignment with Pathways (RFG2). |
| PS11 | The staffs need to do the needs analysis (RFG2). |
| PS12 | The implementation of DL in the SAMHS should be done correctly (RFG3). |
| PS13 | The resources of DL are scarce or rather not there, so they need to look into the resources of doing teaching and learning in a DL mode (RFG3). |
| PS14 | Institute SAMHS DL satellites where DL instructors can meet there only once to discuss problems they are faced with and address students' concerns (RFG3). |
| PS15 | These satellites should also serve as central point for receiving students' assignments before students report for Contact and/or Residential phases (RFG3). |
| PS16 | These satellites should also serve as a point where students can direct their calls about their concerns (RFG3) |
| PS17 | These satellites should also be able to accommodate subject specialists so that students do not have to wait until their queries are answered when they report to school (RFG3). |
| PS18 | The staff should be able to communicate with the students throughout the duration of the course (RFG3) |

**Table 7.15:** Coding system with regards to how the existing problems can be solved

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into five main categories. The combination of three of PS1, two of PS2, PS14, PS15, PS16, and PS17 in table 7.15 constitutes the first category which indicates that distance learning institutions and practitioners should benchmark and share distance learning issues and problems respectively. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is to conduct a needs analysis in order to identify problems associated with distance education in the department of defence as illustrated by PS3 and PS11 emphasizing the fact that needs analysis should be the first step in identifying problems. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on linking phases of distance learning delivery. This category emanates from codes PS5 and PS6 which indicates that induction, individual (distance) and residential phases should be linked. A fourth category that emerges from the coded transcriptions consist of PS7, PS8, PS9 and PS10 focussed on standardising distance learning by building the career pathway of learners. A fifth category that emerges from the coded transcriptions points to the

fact that interaction in distance learning should be promoted. The sole PS18 code emphasises the fact that communication is vital in distance education and should be maintained throughout the programme. It is interesting that distance practitioners recognised the important role played by interaction in distance education.

## 7.3 FINDINGS FROM THE INDIVIDUAL (OR PERSONAL) INTERVIEWS

### 7.3.1 Introduction

This section highlights the findings of the individual (or personal) interviews. These were added as the researcher felt it necessary to conduct such interviews to clarify some issues raised during the focus-group interviews. As in the focus group interview section, the title of each table is also used as the heading of the paragraph, which depicts each interview question. Here again, the tables depict the exact responses of participants to each question. As alluded to before, the abbreviation for the individual (or personal) interview from the South African Army College is IP1, from the South African Air Force College is IP2, and the School for Military Health Service is IP3. Different answers given by the individual (or personal) interview were allotted different codes and similar answers similar codes. After each table a discussion with reference to the interpretation of the data in the table follows.

### 7.3.2 The extent of the function of a training branch or section's dependence on the prescriptiveness of the subject content

The responses of three personal interviews from the School for Military Health Training (IP1), the Army College (IP2), and, the Air Force College (IP3) to the question as to what extent did the function of a training branch or section depend on the prescriptiveness of subject content seemed to resemble each; although these responses were differently phrased. For example IP1 said that their institution did not design the curriculum (DPC1), it was given to them (DPC2), and they were only allowed to design the modules (DPC3). The participant added that their Education, Training and Development (ETD) Directors specified to the training management what they needed for their students (code DPC7), they gave direction as to how training had to be done and designed (DPC9). Thus, as the curriculum was originally designed by the ETD Directors (DPC10), it was prescriptive (DPC15). According to the participant (IP1), it was the training management's duty to design the modules based on the curriculum (DPC16), as laid down by the ETD Directors; they were not allowed to change (DPC19) nor modify (DPC20) anything.

The participant from the Army College (IP2) said that when their Training branch designed their training programmes, they depended on the prescriptiveness of the subject content (DPC25). This could have meant that they received guidelines of designing their programmes

from higher authorities (DPC26). According to the participant, they only did things independently when they sequenced the logical flow of subjects (DPC31); they also did things independently when they were planning or scheduling presentations (DPC32).

On the other hand, participant IP3 said that as instructors, they were only allowed to think independently as long as the outcomes of the unit standards had been addressed (DPC33), and that any additional information that the instructor considered to be of assistance to the student may be included. The researcher interpret the response given by the participant from the Air Force College (IP3) as that their training branch would also depend on the prescriptiveness from higher authorities in designing their programmes.

| 1. To what extent does the function of a training branch or section depend on the prescriptiveness of subject content? | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| DPC1 | The staffs do not design the curriculum (IP1). |
| DPC2 | The curriculum is given to the staffs (IP1). |
| DPC3 | The staffs only design the modules (IP1). |
| DPC4 | The curriculum is designed for the staff (IP1). |
| DPC5 | The curriculum is prepared for the staff (IP1). |
| DPC6 | The staffs are given the guidelines to design the modules (IP1). |
| DPC7 | The Directors specify to the training management what they need for their students (IP1). |
| DPC8 | The student doctors, the nurses, the social workers, have their curricula designed according to their specific needs from their Directors (IP1). |
| DPC9 | The Directors are supposed to give the training management direction as to how training must be done and designed (IP1). |
| DPC10 | The Directors design the curricula (IP1). |
| DPC11 | A curriculum gives the staffs overall picture of what is supposed to take place in the learning (IP1). |
| DPC12 | The curriculum generalizes the way things are supposed to be done (IP1). |
| DPC13 | The curriculum is the overall learning expectation of Directors (IP1). |
| DPC14 | The curriculum is the document in which the Directors say this is the way we want things to look like (IP1). |
| DPC15 | The curriculum is prescriptive (IP1). |
| DPC16 | It is the duty of the staffs to design modules according to different levels from the curriculum (IP1). |
| DPC17 | There's no differentiation too much because the content of the modules is based on the curriculum (IP1). |
| DPC18 | The staffs take the planning of the subject from the curriculum as it is (IP1). |
| DPC19 | The staffs do not change anything from the curriculum (IP1). |
| DPC20 | The staffs do not modify anything from the curriculum (IP1). |
| DPC21 | The staffs do not have powers to modify or change anything on the curriculum or from the content (IP1). |
| DPC22 | A certain part of the curriculum is put on a certain part of a certain course as content as it is (IP1). |
| DPC23 | It is like a doctrine to the staffs (IP1). |
| DPC24 | There is nothing the staff can change in a doctrine (IP1). |
| DPC25 | The branch function depends on the prescriptiveness of the subject content (IP2). |
| DPC26 | When the staffs design a learning programme, there are guidelines from the higher HQ (IP2). |
| | The guidelines stipulated by higher authority must be included in the curriculum (IP3). |
| DPC27 | The staffs need to adhere to the SA Army doctrine (IP2). |
| DPC28 | The staffs think independently when benchmarking (IP2). |
| DPC29 | The staffs align our subject contents with what they have in terms of capabilities of all Corps of the SA Army (IP2). |
| DPC30 | For each and every module the staffs compile debriefs from student side and also instructors (IP2). |
| DPC31 | The staffs think independently only in sequencing the logical flow of subjects (IP2). |
| DPC32 | The staffs think independently in planning or scheduling of presentations (IP2). |
| DPC33 | An instructor may think independently as long as the outcomes of the unit standards have been addressed (IP3). |
| DPC34 | Any additional information that the instructor considers to be of assistance to the student may be included (IP3). |

**Table 7.16:** Coding system with regard to what extent the function of a training branch or section depends on the prescriptiveness of subject content

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into three main categories. The combination of DPC11, DPC16 and DPC18 constitutes the first category which indicates that a curriculum is provided from where further dissemination is done. A

second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the authoritarian and prescriptive doctrine of the curriculum as illustrated by DPC1, DPC2, DPC4, DPC5, DPC6, DPC8, DPC10, DPC13, DPC14, DPC15, DPC19 DPC20, DPC21, DPC23, DPC24, DPC25, DPC26, and DPC27 emphasizing the fact that programme managers cannot and are not allowed to change the supplied curricula. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on programme managers' responsibility to develop modules from the curriculum. This category emanates from codes DPC3, DPC7, DPC12, DPC17, DPC28, DPC30, DPC31, DPC32, DPC33, and DPC34 which indicates some freedom when having to design their learning tasks and lesson plans according to the curricula. Therefore, it emerges from table 7.16 that the authoritarian and prescriptive doctrine of curricula is provided by the directors to managers from where they have the freedom to design the modules.

### 7.3.3 Freedom allowed in the selection of content

The question with regards to how much freedom was allowed when coming to the selection of content in the teaching and learning of distance students was derived from the previous question; hence, the participants' responses emanated from their previous answers. For instance, the participant from the School for Military Health Training (IP1) mentioned that "what ever we took from the curriculum, was prescribed by the ETD Director, to use for their own good, must look as it was" (FSC1), there's no way that they were allowed to change or modify anything (FSC2), and they were not allowed to select the content of their own (FSC3) as it was fixed (FSC4). On the same question, the Army College (IP2) said that to support the achievements of the outcomes, "we started to consider the needs analysis for the learning programme" (FSC5), and, "consider designing a programme according to the client's needs and profile of the product" (FSC6). According to the Air Force participant (IP3) the content was not restricted only by the outcomes (FSC10), and "the instructor may include additional information that will assist the student" (FSC11).

| **2. How much freedom is allowed when it comes to the selection of content to support the achievement of the outcomes?** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| FSC1 | What ever the staffs take from the curriculum to use for our own good, must look as it is (IP1). |
| FSC2 | There's no way that the staff can change or modify it (IP1). |
| FSC3 | The staffs are not allowed to select the content of their own (IP1). |
| FSC4 | The selection of the content is fixed (IP1). |
| FSC5 | To support the achievements of the outcomes, the staff to consider the needs analysis for the learning programme (IP2). |
| FSC6 | The staffs consider designing a programme according to the client's needs and profile of the product (IP2). |
| FSC7 | In the achievement of the outcomes, the staff considers the understanding of the outcome-based education (IP2). |
| FSC8 | Training or teach towards outcomes and assess against outcomes (IP2). |
| FSC9 | In terms of achieving outcomes, the staff adheres to the principles of assessment (IP2). |
| FCS10 | The content is not restricted only by the outcomes (IP3). |
| FCS11 | The instructor may include additional information that will assist the student (IP3). |
| FCS12 | The additional information may also enhance the transfer of learning (IP3). |
| FCS13 | The additional information may boost the learning experience (IP3). |

**Table 7.17:** Coding system with regard to how much freedom is allowed when it comes to the selection of content to support the achievement of the outcomes

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions in table 7.17 allows the opinions to be clustered into three main categories. The combination of FSC1, FSC2 and FSC3 constitutes the first category which indicates that content must look as provided in a curriculum by directors and cannot be changed or modified. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the fixed nature of the content as illustrated by FSC4, FSC5, FSC6, FSC7, FSC8 and FSC9 emphasizing the fact that programme needs analysis and achievement of outcomes have been pre-determined. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on programme instructors' responsibility to enhance the learning. This category emanates from codes FSC11, FSC12, and FSC13 which indicates some freedom when having to add some information to the content to assist in the achievement of outcomes.

### 7.3.4 Deviation that is allowed from a fixed norm

Table 7.18, dealing with the question of how much deviation was actually allowed from a fixed content, does not necessarily deviate from the previous two questions; hence, the participants' responses resembled those of their previous answers. For instance, participants from the School for Military Health Training (IP1) mentioned that, in writing the content, the only deviation might be the uniqueness of what was applicable to the SA Military Medics as opposed to the SA Army or SA Air Force. In addition, the curriculum had been written officially by the South African Military Health Service (SAMHS) ETD Director as their

expectation (DAFC4) and given to the training management to use (DAFC6). Otherwise, from the participant's perspective, deviation from a fixed content was not allowed.

According to the participant from the Army College (IP2), a fixed norm allowed the training staff and instructors to stick to the learning strategy that the needs analysis required (DAFC7). Thus, there was no deviation as such from a fixed norm (DAFC8). The participant from the Air Force College (IP3) mentioned that too much deviation might mean that information from a higher level was included (DAFC11). He went on to say that too much deviation might not be necessary (DAFC12). In addition, too much deviation may not address the outcomes (DAFC13). Thus, too much deviation may be too high for the prescribed outcomes (DAFC14).

| **3. How much deviation is allowed from a fixed norm?** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| DAFC1 | Within that curriculum, there are spaces that are being given that there's nothing that has been written on (IP1). |
| DAFC2 | Written on because of uniqueness of a particular course (IP1). |
| DAFC3 | So, the Medics also have their own uniqueness they need to put in that empty space (IP1). |
| DAFC4 | Expectations from Directors to the staff as trainers (IP1). |
| DAFC5 | The modification may happen in this scenario (IP1). |
| DAFC6 | It is being given by the Director that is written officially as it is in a curriculum (IP1) |
| DAFC7 | A fixed norm allows the staff to stick to the learning strategy that the needs analysis requires (IP2). |
| DAFC8 | There's no deviation as such (IP2). |
| DAFC9 | The instructor just needs to keep in mind what are the outcomes of the Unit Standard (IP3). |
| DAFC10 | The instructor just needs to keep in mind the level at which the Unit Standard is written (IP3). |
| DAFC11 | Too much deviation may include may the information of a higher level is included (IP3). |
| DAFC12 | Too much deviation may not be necessary (IP3). |
| DAFC13 | Too much deviation may not address the outcomes (IP3). |
| DAFC14 | Too much deviation may be too high for the prescribed outcomes (IP3). |

**Table 7.18:** Coding system with regard to allowing deviation from a fixed norm

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into three main categories. The combination of DAFC1, DAFC2, DAFC3, DAFC4 and DAFC5 constitutes the first category which indicates that deviation is only applicable to the uniqueness of a particular course where directors would expect the staff or instructors to fill the existing gap. That is change or modification could only happen within the confines of set norm or norms. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the prescribed curriculum is regarded as official fixed norm as illustrated by DAFC6, DAFC7, DAFC8, DAFC9 and DAFC10 emphasizing the fact that programme managers cannot and are not allowed to deviate from official supplied norm which is a curricula. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions allows deviation only from the higher authority's approval. This

category emanates from codes DAFC11, DAFC12, DAFC13 and DAFC14 which indicates that deviation could only be accommodated with higher authorities' approval as it may not necessary addressed the prescribed outcomes.

### 7.3.5 Emphasis of learning tasks in the study guides

Based on the question in table 7.19 the participants from the School for Military Health Training (IP1) reported that students were given assignments that they had to do from the study guides. The students must discuss these tasks in their syndicates. Syndicates were divided according to their groupings into their specific areas (LTSG8 and LTSG11). Therefore, the tasks in the study guides were discussed and completed by students in syndicate form (LTSG4). According to the participants, the students were assisted by the instructors in these discussions (LTSG2).

According to the Army College participant (IP2), their study guides contained the tasks that have to be completed by the students (LTSG19). Actually, these study guides were based on the tasks that would be given to students to perform. The participant said the importance of the study guides were to direct the students to the approach to follow for learning in a proper way. In addition, the study guides were designed to reach the outcomes. The participants from the Air Force College (IP3) mentioned that the task settings and the study guides worked hand in hand. However, the student needed to complete the task by utilizing the study guides. These study guides are designed in such a way that the students could complete the task step by step. If the student experienced difficulties in completing the task the last resort would be to contact the instructor who was coordinating the process. The learning tasks were included in the study guides normally after each chapter in the specific module. These learning tasks also determined whether the student had mastered that section of the subject before moving onto the next section or chapter.

| **4. How does the DOD emphasise learning tasks when students have to master outcomes from the study guides?** | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| LTSG1 | What the staff do in their environment mostly they give the students assignments that they must go and do (IP1). |
| LTSG2 | The staff show and discussed learning tasks with the students (IP1.) |
| LTSG3 | The staff discuss with learners in syndicates (IP1). |
| LTSG4 | The learners must discuss the assignments as given by the instructors in their syndicates (IP1). |
| LTSG5 | During the discussion in the class everybody understands broader (IP1). |
| LTSG6 | The learners' discussions even broaden understanding of instructors (IP1). |
| LTSG7 | The instructors come with our Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) (IP1). |
| LTSG8 | The staffs identify learners according to their groupings (IP1). |
| LTSG9 | The staffs identify these tasks according to their specific areas (IP1). |
| LTSG10 | The staffs usually divide learners according to those roles (IP1). |
| LTSG11 | The staff groups learners according to their specialisations (IP1). |
| LTSG12 | The importance of the study guides is to direct the students to the approach to follow for learning in a proper way (IP2). |
| LTSG13 | This is the measure for competency by the student in a learning programme (IP2). |
| LTSG14 | Study guides are designed to reach the outcomes (IP2). |
| LTSG15 | The study guides are based on the tasks that will be given (IP2). |
| LTSG16 | The study guides are not always the same (IP2). |
| LTSG17 | The study guides are based on the debriefs and guidance of the students (IP2). |
| LTSG18 | After the learning programme, some of the comments given by the students are altered (IP2). |
| LTSG19 | These study guides have the tasks (IP2). |
| LTSG20 | It is a sort of assessment confirmation (IP2). |
| LTSG21 | The task settings and the study guides work hand in hand (IP3). |
| LTSG22 | A student needs to complete the task by utilizing the study guide (IP3). |
| LTSG23 | The study guide is designed is such a way that the student can complete the task step by step (IP3). |
| LTSG24 | If the student experiences difficulties in completing the task the last resort would be to contact the instructor who is coordinating the process (IP3). |
| LTSG25 | The learning tasks are included in the study guides normally after each chapter in the specific module (IP3). |
| LTSG26 | The learning tasks also determine if the student has mastered that section of the subject before moving onto the next section or chapter (IP3). |

**Table 7.19:** Coding system with regard to how the DOD emphasizes learning tasks when students have to master outcomes from study guides

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions in table 7.19 allows the responses of the participants to be clustered into three main categories. The first category emanates from the ordering of the transcriptions LTSG1, LTSG2, LTSG3, LTSG4, LTSG5, LTSG6and LTSG24 that indicate that the learning tasks in the study guides are discussed with the learners to achieve the outcomes. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the grouping of learners according to their roles, specific areas and specialisation as illustrated by LTSG8, LTSG9, LTSG10, and LTSG11 emphasizing the fact that learners are grouped according to these areas to discuss and achieve the learning tasks in the study guides. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on accompanying study guides with learning tasks. This category emanates from codes LTSG12, LTSG14, LTSG15, LTSG16, LTSG17, LTSG19, LTSG23, LTSG25, and LTSG26. This category indicates that some learning tasks are found in the study guides. Therefore, it emerges from table 7.19 that the learning tasks are

emphasised in the study guides where learners are grouped into different areas and instructors communicate these tasks to learners.

### 7.3.6 The authenticity of the learning tasks in the learning guides

As also explained to the participants, the question as posed in Table 7.20 was to find out how they ensured that the study guides were authentic in ensuring student participation or corporation, or how students' participation, corporation, collaboration and, maybe, their attention is encouraged in the study guides through their learning tasks. How were they supported? Again, the participants responded differently on this question and according to their understanding of it. Responding on this question, the participant from the School for Military Health Training (IP1) said this caused a serious problem of 'cut-and-paste'. This was when a student copied the work of a student that has done the course before. Although the students were given different scenarios, they were similar but there were changes and if you don't know, you may not discover them. However, instructors cannot be absolutely sure when the students were on their distance learning phase.

Responding to the question, the participants from the Army College (IP2) mentioned that an instruction about authenticity was presented during distance learning and was also emphasized in the assessment instructions. He went on to say that the assessment committee does 'spot-checks' on the schoolwork submitted by the students. The 'spot-checks' were actions performed by the instructors on the work submitted by the students to see if it was not duplicated. According to the IP2, the roles of the DS on a facilitation problem were presented to the students, and the roles of a student with a facilitation problem were also presented. In addition, the authenticity of these tasks was confirmed during the syndicate room discussions. Thus, where the instructor was going to facilitate, every student was going to be given the chance to say something.

Responding to the question, the participant from the Air Force College (IP3) mentioned that, in certain subjects, the same study guides were utilized. The instructor has first-hand feedback with regards to the use of the study guide. However, when a programme was completed the students were requested to give feedback with regards to their experience during a particular programme. In addition, the students were encouraged to share inputs and ideas with the instructors and programme managers.

| 5. How is the authenticity of these learning tasks designed in order to provide students with authentic learning experiences when having to master the outcomes? | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| SGA1 | The staff have a serious problem of 'cut-and-paste' by students (IP1). |
| SGA2 | The staffs usually give the learners one and the same scenarios (IP1). |
| SGA3 | The staff now give the learners different scenarios that are similar, however, there are changes and if you don't know, you may not discover them (IP1). |
| SGA4 | A student copies the work of another student that has done the course before (IP1). |
| SGA5 | The staff cannot be 100% sure when the learners are in a distance learning phase (IP1). |
| SGA6 | Lecture for authenticity is presented during distance learning and it also emphasizes the assessment instructions (IP2). |
| SGA7 | The assessment committee performs spot checks on products (IP2). |
| SGA8 | Before the staffs introduce outcomes-based education, they also mention the facilitation (IP2). |
| SGA9 | The staffs give the learners the roles of the instructor on a facilitation problem (IP2). |
| SGA10 | The staffs also give learners the roles of a student on a facilitation problem (IP2). |
| SGA11 | The staffs confirm this by doing the SRDs (syndicate room discussions) (IP2). |
| SGA12 | When the instructor facilitate, all the learners are given the chance to say something (IP2). |
| SGA13 | In certain subjects the same study guides are utilized (IP3). |
| SGA14 | The instructor has first hand feedback with regards to the use of the study guide (IP3). |
| SGA15 | When a programme is completed the students are requested to give feedback with regards to their experience during the particular programme (IP3). |
| SGA16 | The student is encouraged to share inputs and ideas with the instructors and programme managers (IP3). |

**Table 7.20:** Coding system with regard to how the authenticity of these learning tasks is designed in order to provide students with authentic learning experiences when having to master the outcomes

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into three main categories. The combination of SGA1, SGA2, SGA3, SGA4 and SGA5 constitutes the first category which indicates that exact copying (cut-and-paste) of products by learners does exist. This practice compromises the authenticity of learning tasks and learning programme. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is that, to ensure the authenticity of a learning task, thorough spot-checks are done by the staff on the learners' products during assessment as illustrated by SGA6, SGA7, SGA8, SGA9 and SGA10 emphasizing the fact that programme instructors and managers inform the learners concerning the authenticity of the learning tasks. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focuses on the use of the learning guides. This category emanates from codes SGA13 and SGA14 which indicates that learning guides are utilised on for the learning tasks.

### 7.3.7 Encouragement to communicate or debate answers freely

The question as posed in table 7.21 below was also explained as, what was the policy or comments in encouraging students to communicate freely? It was also further explained as, to what was the policy on freethinking in learning or was there such a policy at the institution that encouraged freethinking? According to the participant from the School for Military

Health Training (IP1), there was absolutely nothing on that (PFC1). The participant went on to say that no one was there to provide them with policies on these issues (PFC3). Hence, there was no guideline or policy provided concerning this issue (PFC5).

According to the participant from the Army College (IP2) with regards to the same question, the learning and teaching was continually to encourage the students to participate in learning (PFC9). Facilitation allowed students to debate and express their views (PFC10). Students were given an opportunity and encouraged to talk freely (PFC14 and PFC15). In addition, the Syndicate Room Discussions were used to encourage those who were not prepared to talk or were naturally quiet people (PFC16).

The participant from the Air Force College (IP3) said, "There was no official policy that stated students must communicate freely" (PFC1). "As far as I know, students are not encouraged to communicate freely," he added. The participant also added that, students in all training institutions thought that if they spoke freely, that might have a detrimental effect on their results. However, students were encouraged to 'think out of the box'. This meant that despite the absence of such a policy, students were still encouraged to think independently as opposed to be told how to think.

| 6. How important is it for the DOD to encourage and allow students to communicate their answers and/or debate freely? | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| PFC1 | There's absolutely nothing on that (IP1). |
| | There is no official policy that states students must communicate freely (IP3). |
| PFC2 | There are policies that the staffs are supposed to have as trainers that have been given by the Directors (IP1). |
| PFC3 | No one is there to provide staff with policies of these on these issues (IP1). |
| PFC4 | The fact that the school is not registered or accredited with the sector training authority (Seta) is a problem (IP1). |
| PFC5 | There is no guideline or policy on free communication by learners (IP1). |
| | There is no official policy that encourages students to communicate freely (IP3). |
| PFC6 | The staff cannot get a certain area where they can say there is a policy on student free communication (IP1). |
| PFC7 | The staffs have got some pieces and bits of policies on these things (IP1). |
| PFC8 | Some are designed for the issue at hand like the policy on harassment, sexual harassment (IP1). |
| PFC9 | The learning is conducive in encouraging the students to participate themselves at learning (IP2). |
| PFC10 | Facilitation allows students to debate and express their views (IP2). |
| PFC11 | Video lessons make students communicate freely by demonstrating (IP2). |
| PFC12 | The staff is aligns the outcomes in their analysis to have the relevant unit standards (IP2). |
| PFC13 | The policy of the ETD also includes all these learning issues (IP2). |
| PFC14 | The staffs give learners a free way of talking (IP2). |
| PFC15 | The staffs also encourage communication among the learners (IP2). |
| PFC16 | The syndicate room discussions encourage the learners who are not prepared to talk; like the quiet people (IP2). |
| PFC17 | The general training policy is to gain feedback from the students (IP3). |
| PFC18 | Students in all training institutions think that if they speak freely that it has a detrimental effect on their results (IP3). |
| PFC19 | Students are encouraged to "think out of the box" (IP3). |
| PFC20 | Training is dynamic (IP3). |
| PFC21 | Training is not stagnant and rigid (IP3). |

**Table 7.21:** Coding system with regard to how important it is for the DOD to encourage and allow students to communicate their answers and/or debate freely

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into four main categories from table 7.21. The combination of two of PFC1, PFC2, PFC3, two of PFC5 and PFC6 constitutes the first category which indicates that there is no policy, guideline or instruction from the directors to managers on learners' free communication. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the problem of accreditation of some of the learning programmes as illustrated by PFC4, PFC7 and PFC8 emphasizing the fact that there was no policy on free communication programme managers invent pieces of policies dealing with the overall conduct of learners. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focussed on encouraging learners to freely engage academically. This category emanates from codes PFC9, PFC10, PFC11, PFC12, PFC14, PFC15 and PFC19 which indicates some freedom to debate academic issues freely. A fourth category that emerges from the coded transcriptions indicates that, as much as the ETD policy should address free

communication on academic discourse, sometimes learners are afraid of further repercussions of victimisation by the authorities as depicted by PFC13, PFC17 and PFC18.

### 7.3.8 The consideration of students' answers to master the outcomes

The question as posed in table 7.22 was also asked differently as follows: "were students allowed to think 'outside the box', whether in oral or written work as in exams or in discussions when, of course, they have to master the intended outcomes? Again the responses from the three participants were different. The participant from the School for Military Health Training (IP1) said that the students' answers were based on the 'mark sheet' as a marking template (TOB1). This meant that if a student's answer was not the same as on the 'mark sheet' the answer was in correct (TOB2). The participant also mentioned that the DOD did not use the moderators as much as other Departments in marking the students' examinations (TOB3). In addition, an instructor in the DOD designs, instructs, evaluates, marks and moderates the work of his or her students at the same time as he or she pleases (TOB4).

The participant from the Army College (IP2) said that, to achieve the intended outcomes, his institution conducted a process of student preparation (TOB5). Students were also advised not to copy directly from the textbooks when completing assignment (TOB6). The participant meant that students were not allowed to take words 'as is' from the book (TOB7). "The meaning and understanding was important here," he added. The participant also said that, "in the end, a feedback was given for better development and improvement."

The participant from the Air Force College (IP3) said that in certain tasks there was a set memorandum whereby the task was assessed (TOB10). In other tasks there were set objectives that the instructor would like to achieve (TOB11). The participant also said that students may broaden their discussion on a particular subject just as long as the objectives of the task had been met. In addition, the students may air their opinion on a particular subject just as long as the objectives of the task had been met (TOB13). However, he added, students were not expected to study the subject content off by heart (TOB14). Thus, the students were encouraged to "think outside the box" (TOB15). Again, this meant that students were still encouraged to think independently as opposed to be told how to think.

| 7. How would the students' answers be considered when having to determine that they have mastered the outcomes? | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| TOB1 | The instructors use the mark sheet as their marking template (IP1). |
| TOB2 | If a students' answer is not according to the mark sheet, therefore the answer is considered incorrect (IP1). |
| TOB3 | The DOD does not use the moderators as much as other departments (IP1). |
| TOB4 | An instructor in the DOD designs, instructs, evaluates, marks and moderates the work of the students as the instructor pleases (IP1). |
| TOB5 | A process of student preparation is conducted by the instructors to achieve the intended outcomes (IP2). |
| TOB6 | Students are also advised by the instructors not to copy directly from the textbooks when completing assignment (IP2). |
| TOB7 | Instructors do not allow students to use words from a book as they are (IP2). |
| TOB8 | The meaning and understanding is important (IP2). |
| TOB9 | A feedback is given to the students for better development and improvement (IP2). |
| TOB10 | In certain tasks there is a set memorandum whereby the task is assessed (IP3). |
| TOB11 | In other tasks there are set objectives that the instructor would like to achieve (IP3). |
| TOB12 | The students may broaden their discussion on a particular subject just as long as the objectives of the task have been met (IP3). |
| TOB13 | The students may air their opinions on a particular subject just as long as the objectives of the task have been met (IP3). |
| TOB14 | Students are not expected to study the subject content off by heart (IP3). |
| TOB15 | The student is encouraged to "think outside the box" (IP3). |

**Table 7.22:** Coding system with regard to how would the students' answers be considered when having to determine that they have mastered the outcomes

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into four main categories. The combination of TOB1 and TOB2 constitutes the first category which indicates that a marking sheet or template is used by the instructors to mark students' exams or assignments. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is that instructors are charged with lecturing, assessing, evaluating and moderating to determine if learners have mastered the learning outcomes as illustrated by TOB3, TOB4 and TOB5 emphasizing the fact that programme instructors fulfil these tasks on behalf of students. A third category that emerges from the coded transcriptions focuses on providing learners with feedback on the achievement of objectives. This category emanates from codes TOB9, TOB10, TOB11, TOB12 and TOB13 which indicates that learners' answers should conform to subject, course or programme objectives. A fourth category that emerges from the coded transcriptions addresses the fact that students were not allowed to copy directly from the text books. This category emanates from codes TOB6, TOB7, TOB14 and TOB15 which encourages learners to be critical in their thinking but as long as their answers were in line with marking sheets or template and not use the exact wording of text books.

## 7.4 FINDINGS FROM THE STUDENT REPORTS

### 7.4.1 Introduction

This section highlights the findings as they appear in the student reports. The original student reports were obtained from the senior instructors of distance learning institutions that

participated in the interviews. The student report from the South African Army College was a feedback compiled by distance learners who participated in the Junior Command and Staff Programme in 2008 and 2009 (learner debriefs is a preferred term used by the Army College). A total of 15 student reports used in the study were compiled in syndicate (or group) format. These reports are accompanied by instructor reports (directing staff (DS) is a preferred term used by the Army College) compiled based on the student reports. These reports are based on the following exercises: Mathaithai, Imfazwe, Ubuntu, Safari, Phastrol, and Hlobane. The names were given to these different exercises to distinguish one exercise from the other. Each exercise deals with a particular military doctrine or military approach to war; such as military offensive strategy; military defensive strategy; military retreat or withdrawal. It is not the intention to discuss these military doctrines in this thesis. The student report from the South African Air Force College is a feedback compiled by 5 distance learners who participated in the Senior Supervisor Programme and 15 distance learners who participated in the General Services Human Resources Course in 2009 (learner feedback form on learning programme is a preferred term used by the Air Force College). Thus the findings in the study are based on a total of 20 individual Air Force College student reports. The student report from the School of Military Health Training was a feedback compiled by distance learners who participated in the Junior Command and Staff Programme in 2009 (Questionnaire for orientation programme is a preferred phrase by the School). A total of 15 individual student reports were used in the study compiled in syndicate (or group) format. Although a letter of permission from Defence Intelligence (Appendix R) and the researcher's letter of request to access the student reports (Appendix P) was produced by the researcher, all the participants cited problems of strict confidentiality when dealing with student reports. Hence, explained that they will only make few student reports available. The data in the student reports is matched against the relevant 1996 and 1998 NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa. The student reports are also matched against the relevant Criteria for Accreditation of Programmes offered through Distance Education developed by the Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education (in draft 4, February 2005). These criterions were used interchangeably in the study as they had the tendency to compliment each other. The title of each table is named after the NADEOSA distance education criteria as the heading of the paragraph. The tables depict the information as contained in the student reports. As alluded to before, the codes allocated to the Army College student reports (ACSR), were used as a baseline for codes allocated to the Air Force College student reports (AFCSR) and the School for Military Health student reports (SMHTSR). After each table a discussion with reference to the interpretation of the data in the table follows.

### 7.4.2 Policy and planning

Elements in the policy and planning of the 1996 and 1998 NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa require that educational providers provide the mission statement that sets out clearly the goals and principles guiding the distance learning programme. This also meant that these goals and principles are applied correctly. According to the student reports from the Army College, as policies were incomplete, they were not correctly implemented (PPF1). In other instances, there was a lack of policies to guide some issues concerning the student learning. Learners request that there should be a policy guiding issues such when and how instructors' meetings should be held and not to disturb their learning (PP3). The information on policy in the student reports correlates with the information in the interviews that as much as the policy existed it was not utilised correctly.

| 1. **Policy and planning**: Is a clear sense of purpose and direction by the provider; rationale and relevant systems for the use of distance education methods to achieve the purpose of the programme for the target learners. | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| PP1 | The references to policies are not correct and complete (ACSR). |
| PP2 | The South African Military doctrine should be corrected to avoid contradiction (ACSR). |
| PP3 | The instructors' meetings should not be allowed to disturb learning (ACSR). |
| PP4 | A policy to involve external assessors must be drawn: (ACSR). |

**Table 7.23:** Coding system with regard to policy and planning

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions in table 7.23 allows the opinions to be clustered into two main categories. The combination of PP1 and PP2 constitutes the first category which indicates that policies are not correct or rather not complete. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions is the lack of policies on various issues of concern to students as illustrated by PP3 and PP4 emphasizing the fact that there is no policy on instructors when they have to conduct their meetings and/or a policy with regards to the use or involvement of external assessors.

### 7.4.3 Learners characteristics

Elements in the policy and planning of the 1996 and 1998 NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa require that educational providers be up-to-date with information concerning learners. Such information is used to inform policy and planning of programme development course design and materials development, learner support, and other relevant aspects concerning the learners. The student report from the Army College (ACSR) reports that extra classes were provided to those learners who need them as a student support mechanism (LN2). But this was also because learners in distance learning course provided by the Air Force College (ACSR) do not have the same experience as other learners were slower than others (LN1). This was also supported by the learner's feedback that learners from

different backgrounds should be brought to the same level at the beginning of the course (LN5). It is also troubling that the learners were not confident that they will be able to perform their duties upon qualifying the learning programme (LN6). Distance education learners from the School for Military Health Training (SMHTSR) also echoed the same when they said the course content was very informative but pitched at a higher level (LN7). In addition, they feel that assumptions are sometimes made that everyone understands (LN8). Therefore, it was appropriate that the provider develops a learner profile that includes motivation for learning and for career purposes.

| 2. **Learners:** An up-to-date detailed information about past, present and potential learners used to inform policy and planning of programme development, course design and materials development, learner support, and other aspects. | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| LN1 | Some learners are slower than others: (ACSR). |
| LN2 | Extra classes and lessons are available to those learners who need them: (ACSR). |
| LN3 | What the learners need to know must be standardized: (ACSR). |
| LN4 | Learner's rights were not necessarily respected throughout the Programmes: (AFCSR). |
| LN5 | Learners from different backgrounds should be brought to the same level at the beginning of the course: (ACSR). |
| LN6 | Learners were not necessarily confident that they can transfer the learning to their workplace: (AFCSR). |
| LN7 | The course content was very informative but pitched at a higher level: (SMHTSR). |
| LN8 | Assumptions are sometimes made that everyone understands: (SMHTSR). |

**Table 7.24:** Coding system with regard to issues about learners

At least only one main category can be synthesised from the coded transcriptions in table 7.24 above. The combination of LN1, LN5, LN6, LN7, and LN8 constitutes the only category which indicates that the level of the programme was too high for certain learners. The level of understanding for some of these learners was not suited for the programme at hand. Hence, these learners needed extra classes to assist them to understand.

### 7.4.4 Programme development

In addressing the Programme Development criteria, the NADEOSA Quality Criteria proposes that programmes should be designed to be flexible to encourage access and be responsive to changing environments. In addition, programmes must be developed to the purpose and outcomes of the programmes. The findings from the student report from the Army College reveal that the learners were concerned about the lack of streamlined instructions of exercises (PD1) and lack of standardised guidelines (PD3). In this case, the criteria encourages using courses in more than one programme. The findings in the student report from the Air Force College point out the fact that training methods were not necessarily appropriate and contributing to learning (PD5). The criteria emphasises that careful analysis of the most appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning processes during programme planning. Student reports points out that the learning sequence was not logical to assist

understanding (PD4). According to the NADEOSA Criteria, "due attention should be paid to the appropriate sequencing of modules in a programme…" (24). The criteria also, encourage innovation and flexibility in procedures of programmes. This could as well apply to the feedback of students in the student report from the School of Military Health Training that time allocated for the course might be too short (PD6).

| **3. Programme Development:** Programmes are flexible with national, learners and employer needs in mind; their form and structure encourage access and responsive to changing environments; learning and assessment methods are appropriate to the purpose and outcomes of the programmes. | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| PD1 | The instructions of the exercises should be streamlined and standardized: (ACSR) |
| PD2 | There should be no break within modules; the programme must continue to flow: (ACSR) |
| PD3 | The guidelines must be standardized: (ACSR) |
| PD4 | Learning sequence was not logical to assist understanding: (AFCSR) |
| PD5 | Training methods were not necessarily appropriate and contributing to learning: (AFCSR) |
| PD6 | The time allocated for the course might be too short: (SMHTSR) |

**Table 7.25:** Coding system with regard to issues of programme development

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into two main categories. The combination of PD1, PD2 and PD3 constitutes the first category which indicates that the programme development was not standardised. A second category that emerges from the coded transcriptions in table 7.25 is the authoritarian and prescriptive doctrine of the curriculum as illustrated by PD4 and PD5 emphasizing the fact that programme development was not logically sequenced to assist understanding to learning. Added to this category is that the training methods were not appropriate to the programme development.

### 7.4.5 Course design

The course design section in the NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa specifies that the course curriculum should be well-researched, with aims and learning outcomes appropriate to the level of study; content, teaching and learning and assessment methods should facilitate the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes. Student reports at the Army College indicated that the Syndicates were too large to be catered by one instructor, (CD1), as a result some learners felt that the outcomes were not achieved (CD3). They also felt that the exercises should be standardized to avoid confusion (CD2) to an extent that the level of content is too high for the current level of training (CD4). In addition, the learners felt that the presentation on Air Force had no meaning to them (CD5). Student reports at the School for Military Health Training indicate that the learners have some related problems with the content of their programme: it lacked detail because of little time (CD6); it lacked clarity on certain processes (CD7); and it had no value to them (CD8).

| 4. **Course design:** The course curriculum is well-researched, with aims and learning outcomes appropriate to the level of study; content, teaching and learning and assessment methods facilitate the achievement of aims and learning outcomes; there is an identified process of development and evaluation of courses. | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| CD1 | Syndicates are too large to be catered by an instructor: (ACSR) |
| CD2 | Exercises should be standardized to avoid confusion: (ACSR) |
| CD3 | Some learners felt that the outcomes were not achieved: (ACSR) |
| CD4 | The level of content is too high for the current level of training: (ACSR) |
| CD5 | The Air Force presentation had no meaning to the learners: (ACSR) |
| CD6 | The content lacked detail because of little time: (SMHTSR) |
| CD7 | The content lacked clarity on certain processes: (SMHTSR) |
| CD8 | The content had no value: (SMHTSR) |

**Table 7.26:** Coding system with regard to course design

Only one main category can be synthesised from the coded transcriptions in the discussion of course design from table 7.26 above. The combination of CD2, CD5, CD6, CD7, and CD8 constitutes the single category which indicates that the content lacked clarity, detail and, hence, had no value. This was also as a result of lack of standardization. Again the learners felt that the level of the content was too high for them to understand. The learners also felt that the arrangement in group format (syndicates) was too large for one instructor as a result the intended outcomes are not achieved.

### 7.4.6 Course materials

The section of the materials review in the addendum to section two of the 1996 and 1998 NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa (p.50) specifies that the materials need to be periodically reviewed in order to update course materials. Thus, according to student reports, some information on the maps and/or documents is incorrect and some contradictory (CM1). In addition, some of the study guides (manuals) are outdated (CM2). Hence, the request in the student report is that current doctrine or theory must be revised (CM3). The lack of computers (CM4) impacts heavily on the ability of management to provide student support. In their report, the students request that available computers must be regularly maintained in order that they should be free from being contaminated by viruses: (CM5). The fact that the books were already available in the rooms was appreciated and saved time (CM6). The student report from the Air Force College mentions that more learning guides, to master some skills, should be provided (CM7). According to the Air Force College student report, the learning materials were not necessarily clear, nor sufficient and promoting learning (CM8). Books in the library to do research were also not adequate (CM9). The video machine was also not made available (CM10). In addition, there was a lack photocopying machine (CM11). The learners suggested in the student report that reference material for beginning learners should be made available (CM12). Study guides (or learning materials) were not provided in other subjects (CM13).

| 5. **Course materials:** The content, assessment, and teaching and learning approaches in the course materials support the aims and learning outcomes; the materials are accessibly presented; they teach in the coherent way that engages the learners; there is an identified process of development and evaluation of course materials. | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| CM1 | Some information on the maps and/or documents is incorrect and some contradictory (ACSR) |
| CM2 | Some of the study guides (manuals) are outdated: (ACSR) |
| CM3 | Current doctrine or theory must be revised: (ACSR) |
| CM4 | There is a serious lack of computers: (ACSR) |
| CM5 | Available computers must be regularly maintained (clean the viruses): (ACSR) |
| CM6 | The fact that the books were already available in the rooms was appreciated and saved time: (ACSR) |
| CM7 | More learning guides, to master some skills, should be provided: (AFCSR) |
| CM8 | The learning material were not necessarily clear, nor sufficient and promoting learning: (AFCSR) |
| CM9 | Lack of adequate books in the library to do research: (AFCSR) |
| CM10 | The video machine was not made available: (AFCSR) |
| CM11 | There was a lack photocopying machine: (AFCSR) |
| CM12 | Reference material for beginning learners should be made available: (AFCSR) |
| CM13 | Study guides (or learning materials) were not provided in other subjects: (SMHTSR) |

**Table 7.27:** Coding system with regard to course materials

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into two main categories. The combination of CM1, CM2, CM3 and CM8 constitutes one category which indicates that the course materials are both outdated and incorrect. These learning materials do not contribute to the promotion of learning as they are not sufficient and clear to comprehend. Another category that emerges from the coded transcriptions in table 7.27 is the lack or inadequacy of other learning materials as illustrated by CM4, CM5, CM7, CM9, CM10, CM11, CM12 and CM13. This category emphasized the fact that such learning materials as computers, study guides, books, video machines and reference materials were either not adequate or provided. It also emerged from the coded transcripts that, if some of these learning materials were provided, they were not properly maintained in order to contribute to teaching and learning continuity.

### 7.4.7 Assessment

The assessment criteria in the NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa emphasises that assessment should be recognised as a key motivator of learning and an integral part of the teaching and learning process. It adds that it should be used to inform teaching practice and improve the curriculum. In addition, there should be a range of formative and summative assessment tasks and methods which ensures that all learning outcomes are validly assessed. It also specifies that there should be a range of parties involved in assessment of learners; and these include self-assessment, peer assessment, tutor assessment and/or assessment by workplace mentors. According to the student reports of the Army College peer and formative assessment occurred to a limited degree (ASMT1). These

student reports also reveal that the layout of the summative assessment must be verified and rectified (ASMT2). They also mentioned that the time available to write the assessment was not enough (ASMT3). However, the approach to the assessment was very fair and the learners knew what was expected of them (ASMT4). The learners request that they should be provided with extra instructors during writing of the assessments (ASMT5). They also request that some assessment technique, like fill-in missing words, should be revised (ASMT6). In addition, an approach to assessments should be standardised (ASMT7). The student reports of the Air Force College highlighted the fact their assessment appeals' procedures were not easy to use (ASMT8).

| **6. Assessment:** Is an essential feature of the teaching and learning process, is properly managed, and meets the requirements of accreditation bodies and employees. | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| ASMT1 | Peer and formative assessment occurred to a limited degree: (ACSR) |
| ASMT2 | The layout of the summative assessment must be verified and rectified: (ACSR) |
| ASMT3 | Time available not enough for the assessment: (ACSR) |
| ASMT4 | The approach to the assessment was very fair and the learners knew what was expected of them: (ACSR) |
| ASMT5 | Provide with extra instructors during the assessments: (ACSR) |
| ASMT6 | Some assessment technique (e.g. fill-in missing words) should be revised: (ACSR) |
| ASMT7 | An assessment approach should be standardizes: (ACSR) |
| ASMT8 | The assessment appeals' procedures are not necessarily easy to use: (AFCSR) |

**Table 7.28:** Coding system with regard to the assessment

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions from table 7.28 above allows the opinions to be clustered into one main category. The combination of ASMT1, ASMT2, ASMT6 and ASMT7, constitutes a category which indicates that there was a problem with regards to assessment approach. According to this category, assessment approach is not standardized and should be revised. It also points out that the layout of the two assessment approaches; the formative and summative assessments should be verified and/or rectified. In addition, the peer and formative assessments occurred very minimally as opposed to regularly. According to the student reports, learners were concerned about time allocated to writing assessments. It seemed the time that was available was not enough for learners to complete the assessment. Also, it seemed there was a shortage of instructors during writing assessments. There is also a concern with regards to the assessment appeals' procedure. It seemed it is not according to the accreditation requirements.

### 7.4.8 Learner support

The learner support section in the NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa specifies that learners should be provided with a range of opportunities for real two-way communication through the use of various forms of technology for tutoring at a distance…and the stimulation of peer support structures. In adds that the need for physical

facilities and study resources and participation in decision-making should also be taken into account. According to student report of the Army College pre-briefing by the Exercise instructor was excellent despite power failure sometimes (LS1). In addition, pre-briefing by the Exercise instructor was of high standard (LS2). But, the student report also states that the instructor expectations or outcomes were not clear to the learners (LS3). The learners mentioned that they knew what was expected from them at all times (LS4). The learners request in their student report that all documentation must be handed out at the beginning of the Exercise (LS5). The learners appreciated the effort to give guidelines and help after hours (LS6) and the effort by the instructor to give advice and help for revision work (LS7). The student report reports that the learners were informed on the basic arrangements and received a block programme for the week (LS8). On one hand it adds that some instructors do a lot of preparation with reference to their lectures (LS9). On the other hand, the student report reiterates that there was no relation between the Distance Education Module (DEM) and the Residential Education Module (REM) (LS10). Hence, a build up of outcomes on the DEM course should be applicable to the outcomes on the REM course (LS11). Somehow, the student report cited that there was a good link-up between the DEM and REM (LS12). The student report request that the subject matter should be presented in more depth during the DEM phase in order for learners to understand it in the REM phase (LS13). The learners complain in the student report that not enough is allowed to do the corrections (LS14). The request from the learners is that feedback should be provided to them by means of examples (LS15). The learners also wanted to bring to the attention of authorities that the effectiveness of information technology (IT) remained a challenge (LS16). In addition, the learners highlighted the fact that the responsibilities of some learners towards their families should be taken into consideration (LS17).

| 7. **Learner support:** Learners are provided with a range of opportunities for real two-way communication through the use of various forms of technology for tutoring at distance; participation in decision-making by learners is also taken into account. | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| LS1 | Pre-briefing by the Exercise instructor excellent despite power failure sometimes: (ACSR) |
| LS2 | Pre-briefing by the Exercise instructor of high standard: (ACSR) |
| LS3 | Instructor expectations or outcomes were not clear to the learners: (ACSR) |
| LS4 | We knew what was expected from us at all times: (ACSR) |
| LS5 | All documentation must be handed out at the beginning of the Exercise: (ACSR) |
| LS6 | The effort to give guidelines and help after hours was good: (ACSR) |
| LS7 | The effort for revision by the instructor for learners to recap was very good: (ACSR) |
| LS8 | The learners were informed on the basic arrangements and receive a block programme for the week: (ACSR) |
| LS9 | Some instructors do a lot of preparation with reference to their lectures: (ACSR) |
| LS10 | There was no relation between the Distance Education module (DEM) and the Residential Education module (REM): (ACSR) |
| LS11 | Build up of outcomes on the DEM course is applicable to the outcomes on the REM course: (ACSR) |
| LS12 | There is a good link-up between the DEM and REM: (ACSR) |
| LS13 | The subject matter could be presented in more depth during the DEM phase in order for learners to understand it in the REM phase: (ACSR) |
| LS14 | Not enough time allowed to do the corrections: (ACSR) |
| LS15 | Feedback must be provided to the learners by means of examples: (ACSR) |
| LS16 | The effectiveness of information technology (IT) remains a challenge: (ACSR) |
| LS17 | The responsibilities of some learners towards their families should be taken into consideration: (AFCSR) |

**Table 7.29:** Coding system with regard to learner support

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions from table 7.29 allows the opinions to be clustered into two main categories. The two categories can be divided into issues that the learners appreciated and those that still present some challenges in terms of student support. The combination of LS1, LS2, LS4, LS6, LS7, LS8, LS9 and LS12 constitutes the category in which learners indicated a range of appreciative factors in terms of learner support. The learners are appreciative of the instructors' efforts although faced with challenge of power failure. Pre-briefing of relevant Exercise was of high standard and they knew what was expected of them. The learners also appreciated the guidelines given after hours and said it was good. The effort by the instructors to provide revision exercises in order for learners to recap was also good. The information given to the learners with regards to the programme of the week was also appreciated by the learners. The preparation done by some of the lecturers for their lecturers was also appreciated. The learners seemed to appreciate the interaction with them as displayed by some of the instructors as it assists the learners to achieve their set objectives. On one hand, some learners are appraised the link-up between distance learning phase and residential phase (LS12). On the other hand this link-up presents with some challenges (LS10). The other category that emerges from the coded transcriptions concerns the challenges as regards to student support and is illustrated by LS3, LS5, LS10, LS11, LS13, LS14, LS15, LS16 and LS17 emphasizing some of the factors vital in distance

learning. It seemed there was a problem of communication when learners suggested that instructor expectations were not clear (LS3). The interrelation between the distance learning phase and the residential phase still presents with challenges. This is also evident according to learners that the subject matter should be presented in depth in order to prepare for and better understanding during residential phase. The effectiveness of information technology remains a challenge. It also emerged that adequate time should be considered when providing feedback which feedback should be more effective in terms of examples. Learners also reiterated the fact that their responsibility towards their families should be considered.

### 7.4.9 Human resource strategy

The human resource strategy section in the NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa specifies that the staff structure as well as the experience, qualifications, responsibilities and job descriptions of staff are appropriate for the education and training services. It adds that staff development programmes should be able to equip staff to perform their roles and tasks effectively. According to the Air Force College student report, the staffs at the College are not friendly (HRS1). In addition, the training staff (or instructors) did not conduct themselves in a professional manner (HRS2). Course morale is not positive and conducive to learning (HRS3). The student report mentions that somehow practitioners (or instructors) are not always well prepared to deliver the learning plan (HRS4). It also adds that practitioners (or instructors) are not necessarily able to transfer learning effectively (HRS5). In addition, practitioners (or instructors) are not necessarily competent and knowing the subject matter (HRS6). The student report from the School of Military Health Training mentions that some presenters (or instructors) do not prepare properly for the lecture (HRS7). Hence, some presenters (or instructors) are boring as they read the material to learners (HRS8). But some presenters (or instructors) are unable to answer some questions (HRS9) and some instructors lack expertise of the subject matter (HRS10). The student report of the School of Military Health Training adds that some instructors have poor presentation skills (HRS11).

| **8. Human resource strategy:** The staff structures as well as the experience, qualifications, responsibilities and job descriptions are appropriate; staff development programmes equip staff to perform their roles effectively. | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| HRS1 | The staff were not friendly: (AFCSR) |
| HRS2 | The training staff (or instructors) did not conduct themselves in a professional manner: (AFCSR) |
| HRS3 | Course morale was not positive and conducive to learning: (AFCSR) |
| HRS4 | Practitioners (or instructors) were not always well prepared to deliver the learning plan: (AFCSR) |
| HRS5 | Practitioners (or instructors) were not necessarily able to transfer learning effectively: (AFCSR) |
| HRS6 | Practitioners (or instructors) were not necessarily competent and knowing the subject matter: (AFCSR) |
| HRS7 | Some presenters (or instructors) do not prepare properly: (SMHTSR) |
| HRS8 | Some presenters (or instructors) were boring as they read the material to learners: (SMHTSR) |
| HRS9 | Some presenters (or instructors) were unable to answer some questions: (SMHTSR) |
| HRS10 | Some instructors lacked expertise of the subject matter: (SMHTSR) |
| HRS11 | Some instructors had poor presentation skills: (SMHTSR) |

**Table 7.30:** Coding system with regard to human resource strategy

When table 7.30 is synthesised from the coded transcriptions from HRS1 through to HRS11 it allows the opinions to be discussed from one perspective. That discussion seemed to be centred mainly on the lack of dialogue as discussed in Moore's transactional distance theory. According to learners, the instructors lacked expertise and professionalism (HRS2). It also seemed the instructors were not friendly towards learners (HRS1) as learners' morale was not always positive (HRS3). Dialogue demands partnership, respect and warmth of both learners and instructors. According to the coded transcripts, instructors were not always prepared to deliver the learning plan (HRS4). It would then seem that the instructors were not taking advantage of the interactivity of the programme offered. In addition, the experience and academic level of the instructor presents some challenges.

### 7.4.10 Management and administration

The elements of management and administration in the NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa emphasises that efficient administrative systems should be able to support the activities of the educational provider. The student report of the Air Force College mentions that the learning venue was not suitable for course purposes (MA1). Catering was not sufficient to cater for group needs (MA2). It adds that accommodation was not suitable (MA3). In addition, pre-course induction was not necessarily clear and useful (MA4). The student report of the School for Military Health Training mentions that time management on the part of the instructors was lacking (MA5). It adds that the approach of some instructors was very prescriptive (MA6).

| 9. **Management and administration:** There is effective and accountable management of communication and information as well as human and material resources; democratic governance structures are in place; financial administration is sound to make reliable educational provision. | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| MA1 | The learning venue was not suitable for course purposes: (AFCSR) |
| MA2 | Catering was not sufficient to cater for group needs: (AFCSR) |
| MA3 | Accommodation was not suitable: (AFCSR) |
| MA4 | Pre-course induction was not necessarily clear and useful: (AFCSR) |
| MA5 | Time management on the part of the instructors was lacking: (SMHTSR) |
| MA6 | The approach of some instructors is very prescriptive: (SMHTSR) |

**Table 7.31:** Coding system with regard to management and administration

The synthesis of the coded transcriptions allows the opinions to be clustered into two main categories. These categories consider the teaching and learning on part and the learning environment on the other part. The combination of MA2 and MA3 constitutes one category which indicates that the catering (MA2) and accommodation (MA3) were respectively not sufficient and suitable to cater for the needs of the group. Another category that emerges from the coded transcriptions concerns the inadequate and prescriptive nature of the structure. According to learners, the learning venue was not suitable for the programme. Pre-course briefing was not clear and useful to the learners. The instructors cannot manage their time for the benefit of the learners. In addition, the approach of instructors to teaching and learning is much prescriptive.

### 7.4.11 Quality assurance

The elements of quality assurance in the NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa specifies that there should be a clear cycle of planning, development, documentation, reporting, action, and review of policy and procedures. It adds that efforts should be made to ensure that there are demonstrable processes and ongoing efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning according to priorities identified through monitoring and evaluation processes. In addition, efforts should be made that quality management mechanisms are in place to ensure that exported programmes are of equivalent quality…The Army College student report mentions that the quality of preparations during the distance education module (DEM) was insufficient for application during residential education module (REM) (QA1). It adds that the general quality of the Exercises needs to be improved: (code QA2). The student report from the School of Military Health Training reports that some aspects of the learning programme were not relevant: (code QA3).

| 11. **Quality Assurance:** An integrated framework of planning, implementing, monitoring, reflection and action to ensure that the needs of all the stakeholders are met. | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| QA1 | The quality of preparations during the distance education module (DEM) was insufficient for application during residential education module (REM): (ACSR) |
| QA2 | The general quality of the exercises needs to be improved: (ACSR) |
| QA3 | Some aspects of the learning programme were not relevant: (SMHTSR) |

**Table 7.32:** Coding system with regard to quality assurance

According to the learners, the overall quality assurance of the programme displayed a lack of planning on the part of the distance learning institutions. It seemed there is no much preparation done by these institutions in terms of preparing for the distance learning phase and the residential phase. The general quality of the programme seemed to be very poor as the learners feel that some aspects are not relevant.

### 7.4.12 Information dissemination

The elements of information dissemination in the NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa emphasises that the learners should be informed regarding access to technologies used in the programme, technical competence required, and the nature and potential challenges of learning in the programme's technology-based environment. The elements adds that the information about the programme should be able to reach as many as possible those who are expected to have a need or use for the programme, given the limitations imposed by resources and available information channels. In addition, the strategies should form part of the institution's management of information system and are subjected to institutional cyclical reviews. The student report from the Air Force College mentioned that the language and explanations were not necessarily clear and understandable (ID1). The student report also mentions that interaction was not necessarily encouraged and supported (ID2). There was also a mention that the learner guidance and support were not always readily available and useful (ID3). The student report goes to say that the pace of delivery did not match learner requirements (ID4). In addition, feedback on progress was not always regular, sufficient and useful to the learners (ID5).

| 12. **Information Dissemination:** Education and training services are effectively and accurately promoted in a variety of ways. | |
|---|---|
| **Code** | **Description** |
| ID1 | The language and explanations were not necessarily clear and understandable: (AFCSR) |
| ID2 | Interaction was not necessarily encouraged and supported: (AFCSR) |
| ID3 | Learner guidance and support was not always readily available and useful: (AFCSR) |
| ID4 | The pace of delivery did not match learner requirements: (AFCSR) |
| ID5 | Feedback on progress was not always regular, sufficient and useful: (AFCSR) |

**Table 7.33:** Coding system with regard to information dissemination

According to the information in table 7.23, it seems that the teaching and learning services were not adequately effectively and accurately promoted. The learners felt that the language used was not necessarily clear and understandable. Most importantly, interaction was not encouraged and supported. Guidance and support seems to be lacking. It seems the learner needs were not always addressed or met. Feedback was not given regularly and, if given, it was not sufficient and useful.

## 7.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the summary of the findings of fifteen interview questions put to the focused groups and seven individual (or personal) interview questions for the three institutions. These institutions were the Army College from the South African Army (SAA), the Air Force College from the South African Air Force (SAAF), and, the School for Military Training from the South African Military Health Service (SAMHS). It was pointed out that the South African Navy declined to participate stating that their institution was no longer conducting their studies through distance learning.

The findings of this study were allocated codes and presented in tabular form from where the information was analysed. (The raw data is contained in appendices F, G and H for focus-group interviews, appendices J, K and L for individual (or personal) interviews, and appendices M, N, and O for student reports). Focus groups comprising distance learning course managers, course coordinators and instructors or facilitators from those particular institutions were made available to the researcher. Each member from these focus groups later participated in the individual (or personal) interviews. It was necessary to conduct the added interview questions because the researcher felt that the main research question and sub-questions had not been adequately answered. In addition, the researcher decided to replace the unavailability of student interviews with anonymous student reports normally collected by programme managers at the end of a programme. Permission was granted by the Department of Defence higher authority for the researcher to have access to the information at the named distance learning institutions. The permission letter is attached as Appendix P. The department of defence higher authority is the defence intelligence unit specifically designated to grant the permission. The researcher produced an official letter from the authority to the participant distance learning institutions. In turn, the participants also signed a letter giving permission to the researcher to use information from the interviews and that contained in the student reports.

Coding as data-analysis procedure was used. Coding is the process of dividing data into parts by a classification system (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993:486). Thus, data analysis was specified, classified and categorised.

The next chapter attempts to analyse and synthesise the information gathered in focus-group interviews, individual (personal) interviews, and student reports in relation to the four main research questions. In addition, and most importantly, the next chapter uses this information in relation the theoretical framework of the study; that is, Michael Moore's theory of 'Transactional Distance'. This also means that 'discipline or dialogue' will be the focus of attention. The next chapter discusses the summary of the research results, conclusions, recommendations and implications, and suggestions in terms of further investigation.

# CHAPTER 8

# SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the summary of the main findings from the focus-group interviews, individual (or personal) interviews and student reports in terms of the literature review and the empirical study. The chapter also provides some recommendations and implications. Suggestions for further study are also provided in this chapter. The discussion of focus-group interviews is aimed at understanding how the literature review and empirical study informs this thesis on student support to issues such as the distance teaching and learning characteristics of the DOD distance education institutions. The requirements and the involvement of students for designing distance learning programmes are discussed. The encouragement of students to achieve the intended outcomes is further explored. The impact of bigger or wider transactional distance as a result of more structure is also discussed in the conclusion of this thesis. The experience of the department of defence distance learning practitioners with the DOD ETD Process is discussed. This further explores the nature of the design of distance learning programmes.

The interaction among students, the interaction between students and instructors coupled to the freedom of speech and empowerment is thoroughly viewed. The students' freedom of expression of ideas and in terms of academic discourse and answering examination questions freely is looked into. The dependence on the prescriptiveness of the department of defence doctrine of content in terms of curriculum design is discussed. Also how much freedom is allowed in the selection of content and how much deviation from a fixed content is allowed is analysed. The contribution of study guides on learning tasks and the authenticity of the tasks to achieve intended objectives is explored.

The preparation and qualification of the department of defence distance education instructors is also further explored. The main reasons for considering distance education by the department of defence distance learning institutions and technologies used is also analysed. The difference between withdrawal from the programme and drop out and failure is analysed. The prevalence and need for a distance learning policy in the department of defence is also explored. How problems associated with distance learning issues could be solved is also explored. In addition, the chapter discusses the main findings from the empirical study, with regards to the sub-questions of the study. The discussion of the main findings in terms of

these issues are then synthesised to the discussion, analysis and exploration of the main research question.

The discussion from the individual (or personal) interviews is aimed at understanding how the literature review and empirical study informs this thesis on student support to issues such as the extent of the function of a training branch's dependence on the prescriptiveness of the subject content as well as the freedom allowed in the selection of content. It also looks at how much deviation is allowed from a fixed norm. The emphasis of learning tasks in the study guides and the authenticity of these learning guides is also discussed. The issue of encouraging learners to communicate or debate their answers to learning questions freely in order to master the outcomes is also discussed.

The discussion from student reports is aimed at understanding how the literature review and empirical study informs this thesis on student support to issues raised by the 1996 and 1998 NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa. These include such issues as policy and planning, human resource strategy and management and administration. In addition, issues that discuss programme development, course design, course materials, and information dissemination are also looked into. Issues pertaining to learners' characteristics, assessment, quality assurance, and learner support will also form part of the discussion in this chapter.

## 8.2 MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The main findings indicated that the characteristics of distance teaching and learning in the SANDF distance learning institutions involve the induction, contact and residential phases (Par 7.2.2). As noted by Viljoen (1999:[s.p.]):

> "In the SANDF distance learning will probably always be a component of any course, since most courses demanded that the students gather at a central place for varying periods for certain practical aspects of their training".

Therefore, the form of distance learning consist of distance learning phases alternated by one or more residential and contact phases coupled with a practical phase *(ibid*:[s.p.]*)*. The South African Defence Review (1998:850 suggested that distance education through correspondence with an inclusion of a practical phase was an option to manage programmes in the department of defence. The success of distance learning in the SANDF would, as for any other training, depend on ensuring the provision of student support thorough understanding of the characteristics of distance learning in these institutions. The students remained in their usual environment and even the contact sessions with the ETD Practitioners could take place at

their units (Bless, 2002). This main characteristic in distance learning allows for the requirements of different kinds of learning modes, such as independent learning, group learning, and discussion with teachers (Kubota, *et al*:169). It means therefore that interaction is central to any of these kinds of learning modes; whether the learner alone, or with other learners, or with the instructor. But it is interesting to learn how much of this interaction takes place and/or is allowed in these learning modes in the department of defence.

The findings also reflected that teaching and learning utilises facilitation (Par 7.2.3) and may also take place at the students' workplaces (Par 7.2.2). However, Moore (1990) suggested that the interaction of both the instruction and the student could form part of the characteristics of a distance learning institution in order to be effective to respond to them. However, facilitation in the SANDF is based on an adult teaching and learning approach. Adult learners are by nature questioning and inquiry-oriented (Frick, *et al*, 2010:86). In addition, it was discovered that students were assessed utilising formative and summative assessment. Several formative assessments were conducted during the course of a programme to monitor the progress of students. A summative assessment was conducted at the end of the programme to determine if students had achieved the intended outcomes. In addition, a 'mark sheet' was utilised in marking student's work or product. The implication is that if the student's answer did not match the 'mark sheet,' the answer given by the student was wrong. The utilisation of the 'mark sheet' does not provide an independent and analytical learning impetus on the part of the student. The learners are expected to think and/or analyse according to the 'mark sheet'. Hence something to the contrary is deemed to be inappropriate and thus wrong. Therefore, there is a lack of student support with regards to achieving the intended outcomes as the characteristic of distance learning in the institutions of distance learning in the SANDF.

The findings of the study also revealed that the requirements for designing distance learning programmes in the SANDF distance learning institutions include a curriculum, specific outcomes, and assessment guidelines (Par 7.2.3). In addition, these programmes must contain a learning content and a learning strategy. These dichotomies are used as learning guidelines. In addition, the findings indicate that directors provide the curricula to programme coordinators or managers from where they have the freedom to design instruction and are not allowed to change the curricula as supplied (Par 7.3.2).

The findings from student reports indicate that course design lacked some clarity and detail (Par 7.4.5). According to Sullivan and Rocco (1997), distance learning activities could be

designed to fit the specific context for learning. In addition, Nash (2004a) observed that instructional designers who followed standard, one-size-fits-all best practices without benefit of needs assessment or analysis of the participants were out of touch with the realities of today's military service. She went on to say that online course developers and administrators failed to appreciate the students' skill-sets, military training, educational background, cultural diversity, work schedules, and the nature of their access to the Internet *(ibid)*.

The findings also suggest that in the SANDF distance learning institutions, the requirements for designing also involved pathways and assignments (Par 7.2.3). A pathway is a system of building a student's career step-by-step. A student should be able to progress to the next level of his or her learning career after he or she had mastered a certain level. As a result, there was practically no opportunity for students to deviate from the learning path or to vary it to take account of individual learning requirements or spontaneous contributions (Peters, 1998:41). The course objectives should be flexible enough to allow the student to adapt them and make connections between one's own goals and course content and objectives (Nash, 2005a).

According to the assembled evidence, to achieve the intended outcomes, students must be found competent in specific outcomes (Par 7.2.4). The evidence suggests that the specific outcomes are the yardstick to measure if students have mastered their learning. Thus, students must adhere to these specific outcomes as they are also encouraged verbally what is to be achieved. In addition, the requirements for the designing of distance learning programmes in these institutions does not involve student support as, probably, it would constitute one of the main requirements for designing the distance learning programmes. The student reports contend that there was a lack of standardization in terms of achieving the intended outcomes (Par 7.4.5) To achieve the intended outcomes, Holberg (1985), Perry and Rumble (1987) and Keegan (1990), suggested that the printed materials should be well-written, packaged, and have clear objectives.

According to the findings from the interviews and student reports there was no mention of transactional distance. According to the participants interviewed, transactional dialogue in the SANDF distance learning institutions is ensured by the provision of instructors in all the subjects (Par 7.2.5). These instructors work 'day and night' attending to students' learning problems. However, the provision of instructors in all the subjects does not provide enough evidence of their role in student support endeavours. Thus, it is the researcher's view that 'transactional distance' or 'transactional distance' is not understood in the DOD distance learning institutions. According to Nash (2005b) this practice does not prepare instructors to

be able to listen to or appreciate the student's vocabulary (Nash, 2005b). Usun (2004) conducted a study to determine the use and importance of student support in the Turkish distance education system, Open Education Faculty. Although Usun observed that the Turkish distance education system provided for various forms of student support such as student support and student needs; student support and content; student support and institutional context; and student support and technology, there were still some important problems left unconsidered concerning these forms of support. Usun says that, according to the findings of the literature (Murphy, 1991a; Gunawardena, 1996; Demiray, 2002), patronage and oral tradition, which were two important elements, seemed to play a significant role in distance learning.

The SANDF utilises what was called the Education, Training and Development (ETD) Process in the designing of ETD or teaching and learning programmes. The SANDF ETD Project Team institutionalised the ETD Process in 1997 (DOD ETD Project Team Report, 1997a). The ETD Process was specifically utilised in the designing of face-to-face and distance learning modes of instruction. In a summary form, the ETD Process is carried out in four phases; viz., analysis of learning needs, designing of learning opportunities, implementation of learning opportunities, and evaluation of the learning programme. Hence, the participants stated that they either had not seen the ETD Process, or did not utilise nor apply it.

But, on the other hand, some of the participants stated that during the process of designing they include the needs analysis, implementation, and evaluation process (Par 7.2.7). Thus, it would seem that some of the participants do apply the ETD Process but were not aware that they did. This was also mainly because the SANDF distance learning institutions were not directly involved in the designing of the learning programmes. This function is left to the experts who design these programmes (Par 7.2.7). This model had been identified by Verduin and Clark (1991) as institution-centred (1991:167). Escotet (1980) cited by Verduin and Clark (1991) termed this model more instruction than education because little permanent contact between student and instructor or student and student was available (1991:167). This model basically transferred information from the institution to the student in a rather straightforward manner.

The notion of the interests to control teaching and learning is normally associated with the 'normative' approach of developing curriculum and instructional design as mainly echoed by (Smith & Lovat, 2003:113). In addition, the prescriptiveness with regards to the designing of

learning programmes is also associated with the 'descriptive' approach because it describes the actual steps undertaken by curriculum planners (*Ibid*, 2003:113).

According to Kang (2004:39), two distinctive aspects of what became instructional design and development, "behavioural objectives" and "formative evaluation" first became visible in the 1930s. Objectives were specified in behavioural terms and served as the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of instruction. According to Kang (2004:39), many early advocates of instructional systems design and development, such as Finn, Banathy, Briggs, and Gagné, played important roles in systems development. Banathy (1968) defined the systems approach as "a self-correcting, logical process for the planning, development, and implementation of instruction" (in Kang, 2004:40). Finn (1962) argued for the desirability of using scientific procedures to determine educational goals, specifically the use of theories of analysis in the statement of objectives and systematic development of instruction (in Kang 2004). Gagné (1965) made efforts to connect learning objectives to instructional design (in Kang 2004). This was self-evident in the 'normative' and 'descriptive' instructional design approaches as discussed above.

Many instructional design models (such as the Gagné-Briggs model) that have been developed since the early twentieth century and dominated the study of human learning for the first half of the century had been based on behaviourism and cognitivism theories. They vary widely in terms of philosophical orientations, theoretical perspectives, and operational procedures. Some were prescriptive, providing systematic approaches to design courses (Kang, 2004:40). Others were descriptive, providing only a conceptual diagram (Gustafson & Branch, 1997 cited by Kang, 2004:40). They provided instructors and instructional designers with procedural frameworks for systematic production of instruction for traditional classroom-based learning, but have also been used extensively in distance learning settings as with the DOD ETD Process. Evaluation consisted of determining whether the criterion for the objective has been met. In this approach the designer decided what was important for the student to know and attempted to transfer that knowledge to the student. The learning package was somewhat of a closed system, since, although it may allow for some branching and remediation, the student was still confined to the designer's "world" (Mergel, 1998:[s.p.]).

It emerged from the evidence that there was no policy in the SANDF that fostered the students to interact with each other, but the need for students to work together or assist each other was mentioned in the instructional manuals or documents (Par 7.2.8). The contact

sessions were used mainly for students to interact with each other (Par 7.2.8). This meant that the contact and/or residential sessions were the opportunities that the students must utilise to interact with each other. In addition, the distance learning institutions utilised the 'syndicate discussions' for students to mingle and interact with each other. The syndicate discussions system was probably the most favoured form of student interaction in the SANDF.

This was done to such an extent that groups were formed to discuss, deliberate and produce a single learning product. As such, two or more such groups could be formed in a programme. However, two or more groups cannot and were not allowed to produce one and the same learning product. According to the participants, producing the same learning product was the result of 'cut-and-paste', which was not allowed (Par 7.2.8). In some instances, this activity resulted in court-martial proceedings being convened against students involved. On the same token the participants claimed that the opportunity for students to express themselves freely was afforded, although the student's answers in the examinations were not supposed to be the same (Par 7.2.9). The encouragement of open dialogue was not supported and valued by all participants (Moore, 1993). Again, there was no policy in the SANDF that fostered or mentioned the need of students for the freedom of expression. Hence, there was a lack of student support, supported by the policy.

Interaction between students and instructors was vital in the distance learning mode of instruction. The participants mentioned that the interaction that took place between their instructors and students is spelled out in the 'course instructions' (Par 7.2.10). The 'course instruction' mentions that the students must not hesitate to contact the instructors in time of need. This interaction took place during contact and residential phases. One participant mentioned that interaction between instructors and students was still paper-based. This meant that they were still relying on the telephone and facsimile to communicate. The reason was that the technologies still utilised in the SANDF distance learning institutions included the computer, telephone, facsimile, intranet, and lotus notes (Par 7.2.12). Hence, according to the ETD Project Team, technology utilised in the SANDF was outdated (DOD ETD Project Team Report, 1997a). The intranet and lotus notes are communication means utilised widely by members in the SANDF (Par 7.2.12).

The utilisation required the installation of the local area network (LAN) on the premises. The disadvantage was that if such LAN was not installed, the interaction could not happen. Schifter (2002:13) stated that while faculty were the key to a successful distance education programme, it is revealed that less interaction with the students lead to less interest on the part

of faculty to participate. There is also evidence that the SANDF distance learning institutions were still stuck in the practice of the 'first generation' of distance education. According to Verduin and Clark (1991:82), among the major disadvantages of 'first generation' of distance education was the lack of direct interaction between the students and the instructors and amongst the students because it depended largely on correspondence and mail to communicate messages. Thus, the evidence would also suggest that the SANDF lagged behind in the movement along the continuum of 'generations of distance learning' as discussed earlier in the study and this signals the lack of student support in the form of two-way communication and advanced technologies.

The evidence suggested that the reasons to consider distance learning by the distance learning institutions in the SANDF were numerous (7.2.11). Some participants claimed that they utilised the distance mode of instruction as the attainment of specific outcomes in that it exposed students to better knowledge, fostered development, and more skills. As one participant found, 'it was used for life-long learning'. The evidence suggested that distance learning was also used to fast track the learning process in the SANDF. This was done mainly to deal with the backlog experienced in other AoSs; especially in the South African Military Health Services (SAMHS). In addition, the distance learning mode of instruction at SAMHS was used for the reason of trying not to keep professional people like medical doctors for longer periods in class than necessary. It was also suitable to the South African Army as it was an AoSs with the largest members in the SANDF. One gets the impression that the purpose of distance education programmes was to meet the needs and requirements of the department of defence and not to create alternative opportunities for students to grow and develop academically and professionally.

Hence, distance learning instruction was used to accommodate as many students in one class as possible. An interesting finding by Magagula and Ngwenya in 2004, was that the advantages of learning through distance education included, among others, attending to family commitments; the flexibility of studying at one's own pace, time and place; the opportunity to develop independent learning skills, learning to manage time, and developing self-discipline; and access to modules which were well-written and easy to read and understand.

According to the participants in the survey of this study, preparation of instructors for distance learning in the SANDF was attained by preparing instructors in the National Qualification Framework – level four (NQF4) (Par 7.2.13). This qualification included knowledge of instructional methodologies, assessment or evaluation strategies, moderation

processes, etc. Various institutions around the country including the SANDF's College of Instructional Technology (COLET) offered this qualification. Nash (2004a:[s.p.]) observed that some military distance learning institutions did not prepare instructors in any way to relate to students. This was not the fault of the courses, which were actually good (Nash, 2004a:[s.p.]).

The evidence of participants suggested that the SANDF distance learning institutions did not experience drop out and failure in their programmes (Par 7.2.14). Instead, these institutions would normally experience students withdrawing from the learning programme for various other reasons. Some of these reasons were due to the level of educational qualification in a specific learning programme. Accordingly, the withdrawal of students from the programme would simply mean incompletion of the programme.

According to Nash (2004a:[s.p.]), failure in a programme was as the result of a huge disconnection between reality and academia in the design of these programmes. The level of student educational qualification might not be suitable for a specific programme (Par 7.4.3 and 7.4.5). According to Crome and Swift (2004:[s.p]), the student support and student's experience with distance learning of any kind surrounded questions on perceptions. Thus, the increased pressure of work led 5 out of 7 students to abandon their learning plan (*ibid)*. Other reasons for students to withdraw from the learning programme were associated with failure to hand in tasks and general lack of discipline. According to Nash (2004b:s.p.]), other reasons for failure included failure to communicate with students; poorly defined learning outcomes; badly designed instructional tasks; and inaccessible or late course materials (*Ibid*). The faculty was also out of loop and cannot perform basic tasks (*Ibid*). There were too many intermediaries in support services (*Ibid*). The courses were not aligned with needs of students such as failure to provide writing support and inappropriate assessment strategies (*Ibid*). The learning management system issues were problematic (*Ibid*). The content was outdated or irrelevant and learning was badly situated (*Ibid*). In addition, rigid deadlines and policies resulted in counterproductive administrative policies and there were no replacements in case of component breakdown (*Ibid*). Hard-to-access library resources and war and post-war stress issues created some problems (*Ibid*). McGivney (2004:41-42) realised that lack of support in the form of teaching staff not getting to know their students and showing little interest in their work contributed to non-completion. Although according to student reports (Par 7.4.8) learner support was appreciated by the learners, the instructor expectations were not clear.

It was clear from the evidence that the practitioners of distance learning in the SANDF were not necessarily involved in the designing of distance learning programmes in their respective institutions (Par 7.3.2). Hence, they felt that the learning content that they have to work with was prescriptive. Nash (2005b:[s.p]) observed that the United States Military Academy was an elitist, formless, faceless, normative body that exalted absolute conformity of anyone who dared aspire to its ranks. "It required absolute obeisance, a bended knee to the idea that anyone who might question it, was ignorant" *(ibid)*.

In addition, the participants mentioned that they receive their guidelines from the higher authorities (Par 7.3.2). They also mentioned that they do not design the curriculum as it is designed for them. Their respective ETD Directors make use of specialist-in designing the curricula for the instructors. The Directors give specific instructions to the training management what they want to see in the curricula. The training management, including the instructors in certain instances, are only required and allowed to design the modules from the curriculum. Even at the stage of designing the module/s, the instructors are not allowed to change or modify anything. Thus, there is no support for instructors from the authorities to allow the function of designing learning programmes. Some of the distance learning institutions adhere to the specific AoSs doctrines. Hence, the distance learning content in the SANDF distance education institutions is largely prescriptive because the military is an autocratic and has a closed environment that enforces rules and demanding discipline (Johnson, 1998;[s.p.]).

Wilmore (1990:[s.p.]) said that the United States Military Academy at West Point produced high standards of quality officers but observed that, "there was no such thing as participatory or site based management." Administration was totally autocratic *(ibid)*. "The organisational pattern and operating practices of a distance education establishment were, of course, based on the educational philosophy of that institution as well as some economic and political restrictions" (Verduin & Clark, 1991:166). The prevailing philosophy of the military was based on it being an autocratic organisation, as stated earlier. Although hybrids and variations existed, Rumble (1986) cited by Verduin and Clark (1991:167) suggested that there are three potential models for organising distance education: institutional centred, student centred, and society centred.

The institution centred would definitely fit the military organisational and administration of distance education. According to Verduin and Clark (1991:167) in this model large numbers of adult students could be handled with highly controlled and technical experiences emanating

from the institution. Little student input occurred on goals, directions, and content other than the students' decision to enrol in a given course or set of courses *(ibid)*. The "experts" developed the materials and learning packages whose major concern was to develop the protocols and have them delivered to students *(ibid)*. Interpersonal communication was almost nonexistent, and limited guidance was available to students *(ibid)*. Escotet (1980) cited by Verduin and Clark (1991:167) termed this model more instruction than education because little permanent contact between student and instructor or student and student was available. There was also very little socio-cultural interaction and feeling, mutual respect and dialogue, and interpersonal communication that could have made this a model of education *(ibid)*.

The prescriptiveness of the content is also evidenced by the lack of freedom and student support allowed in the selection of the content (Par 7.3.3). Where prescription was the order of the day and open dialogue was not allowed, learning in a constructive way may suffer notable negative consequences (Schuman, 1996:[s.p.]). According to the participants, the content must look exactly the same as the prescribed curriculum. The distance learning practitioners may not select content of their own. They may neither change nor modify it. It must be designed according to the client's needs. The client in this case was the specific ETD Directorate. Hence, the distance teaching and learning approach had to adhere to the outcomes-based education content. Likewise, deviation was not allowed from a fixed content. The distance learning practitioners had to keep to a given learning strategy and strive to attain the outcomes as has been laid down by the higher authorities. Thus according to Schuman (1996:[s.p.]), interaction, freedom of expression, and exploration of ideas through discussion was much celebrated in a constructivist approach.

The distance learning institutions in the SANDF also used study guides (Par 7.3.5). These study guides contained learning tasks that emphasised certain roles to be played by the students. The tasks must be played according to the student's specifications or mustering. The order of tasks, instructional activities, rubrics, etc., should be organized in a way that was easy to find and follow (Nash 2005a). The authenticity of these tasks sometimes caused the problem of 'cut-and-paste' as the students had the tendency of copying each other's work.

It is a fact that the researcher knew that the DOD or SANDF distance education policy had been designed and developed long before but has not been promulgated by the higher authorities yet. Hence, it emerged from the evidence provided by all the participants in the study that some of the SANDF distance learning institutions do not utilise the policy or have

not even seen it (Par 7.2.15). But, on the other hand, participants at the SA Army College stated that they thought that they were in line with the policy. The lack of distance education policy in the SANDF affected a number of distance learning matters. For example, the participants mentioned that there was no official policy on the free expression of ideas by the students. Hence, the students might seem afraid because of the repercussions on the expression of ideas.

Hũlsmann (2000), cited by Welch *et al.* (2004:13), identified a clear policy as one of the three conditions for efficient and effective provision of distance education. The other conditions were an appropriate institutional culture and the consideration of costs. In its document "Criteria for Quality Distance Education in South Africa – 2003," the National Association of Distance Education Organisation of South Africa (NADEOSA, 2003) identified Policy and Planning as one of the quality criteria and critical success factors for distance education provision in South Africa. The purpose of the distance education policy is to guide and inform the distance education initiatives … at the University of Pretoria (University of Pretoria, 2009:10) f Seyoum (2003:9) reported that, "despite the absence of clearly defined policy … a glimmer of hope could be visualized if things were turned around in the secondary level and the Instructors' Training distance education programmes in Ethiopia." He suggested that, the formulation and implementation of a clearly articulated distance learning policy was one of the steps to be addressed by Ethiopia's Distance Education Panel.

As the aim of the study was to determine what requirements are placed on the design of distance education programmes with the aim of identifying the nature of discipline or dialogue and how drop out and student support manifested themselves in a distance learning environment, it was clear from the evidence provided that there was a lack of 'student support', especially characteristic of distance learning institutions in the SANDF. In addition, the requirements for designing distance learning programmes in these institutions did not involve the student support as, probably, it would constitute one of the main requirement for designing the distance learning programmes. However, the provision of instructors in all the subjects and in the provision of extra lessons, in the case of withdrawals as they did not experience drop out and failure, did not provide enough evidence of their role in student support endeavours.

As such, students were encouraged to manage their study and learning time wisely and effectively. As much as students were encouraged to contact and communicate with each other, they were also encouraged to contact and communicate with the instructors instead of

instructors contacting the students. Therefore, it meant that it remained the responsibility of the students to contact and communicate with their instructors. It was only then that their inputs were considered although students' inputs would not change the content. Thus, student support in the form of two-way communication was lacking. The prescriptiveness of the content was also evidenced by the lack of freedom for students to select the content. Again, there was no policy in the SANDF that fostered or mentioned the need for students to have the freedom of expression. Hence, there was a lack of student support, which is supposed to be part of the distance learning policy.

## 8.3 MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

This section discusses the main findings retrieved from the empirical study. This includes the classifying and categorising data. A mixture of sources for the classification approach, as suggested by Schumacher and McMillan (1993:487), was applied. Classification of data emanates from the sub-research questions, interview questions, and data themselves. Categories that assisted clustering the data into meaningful groups were identified and patterns were identified.

In this section, the findings are addressed in terms of the questions posed in chapter 1 of this thesis. The discussions that follows deals with the empirical data derived from the interviews as well as the data captured from the student reports.

### 8.3.1 The character of distance learning programmes in the SANDF

The caption to this section is derived from the first sub-question. The sub-question reads: *What is the unique character of each of the four Arms of Service (AoSs) of the SANDF and what requirements do they place on the design of distance education learning programmes as well as the achievement of the outcomes in such learning environments?* The objective was to determine the character of teaching and learning in the DOD institutions of distance learning in terms of such issues as programme design requirements, achievement of outcomes, etc. The reason is because each AoSs in the SANDF is different and unique in terms of its teaching and learning practices. Some of these characteristics include such issues as the teaching and learning content, strategies, approach, evaluation, assessment, etc. The assembled evidence suggests that teaching and learning characteristics of AoSs in the SANDF are the same or rather identical.

The findings revealed that the teaching and learning character of the DOD institutions providing instruction by means of distance education mostly subscribed to having the

induction, contact and, residential phases. Also, evaluation consists of formative and summative assessments. In addition, these institutions provided their teaching and learning utilising the modular system. It also emerged from the evidence provided that there is a lack of standardization in distance learning programme development. The participants pointed out that they do not enjoy the freedom to select the content to support the achievement of the outcomes. In addition, according to student reports the level of understanding of some of the learners in distance learning programs is not suited for these programs.
The respective ETD Directors designed the curriculum to be used by the ETD managers and instructors; the ETD managers and instructors were only allowed to design their respective modules based on these curricula. It can then be postulated that the DOD distance teaching and learning programmes are pre-planned and prescribed down to the last detail, so that student needs are not taken into account. This view is also supported by the evidence gathered that nothing could be changed nor modified. Hence, deviation from a fixed norm was not allowed. This analysis was also supported by the fact that these institutions emphasised 'outcomes', 'assignments', and 'pathways' as the designing requirements. However, the interaction of both the instructor and the student as forming part of the characteristics of a distance learning institution to be effective to respond to them as suggested by Moore (1990) does not form part the characteristics in the DOD DL institutions. This was why Moore argued that the more 'discipline' or structure, and the less the dialogue, the larger the 'gap' or transactional distance between student and instructor (Moore, 1993 cited in Keegan, 1993:24). This resulted in tension in the interplay of dialogue and structure.

According to Sullivan and Rocco (1997:[s.p.]), distance learning activities could be designed to fit the specific context for learning. Nash (2004a;[s.p.]) observed that instructional designers who followed standard, one-size-fits-all best practices without benefit of needs assessments or audience analyses were out of touch with the realities of today's military service. She went on to say that online course developers and administrators failed to appreciate the students' skill-sets, military training, educational background, cultural diversity, work schedules, and the nature of their access to the Internet *(ibid)*.

The DOD distance education institutions are utilising the 'systems approach' in their instructional design even though they are not familiar with the DOD ETD Process which contains elements of determining needs, development, implementation and assessment of outcomes. The findings also point out that the participants mentioned that they have to talk to students to achieve the intended outcomes. This evidence denotes that the curricula in the DOD distance learning institutions were designed around the achievement of specific

outcomes. The DOD distance learning programmes are designed with reference to 'Outcomes-based Education' (OBE). In the OBE approach, intended outcomes to be achieved are, 'normally' predetermined and prescribed by certain persons for students. Learners and, sometimes, parents are 'normally' not involved in determining the outcomes to be achieved by students. To achieve the intended outcomes Holberg (1985), Perry and Rumble (1987) and Keegan (1990), suggested that the printed materials should be well-written, packaged, and have clear objectives. Hence, according to the ETD Project Team, some DOD distance and face-to-face courses lacked quality and credibility (DOD ETD Project Team Report, 1997a). The student reports pointed to the fact that course design lacked clarity, detail and hence, had no value.

The findings also pointed out that the DOD distance students are not involved in the design and development of distance learning programmes. According to student reports, sometimes learners felt that they lacked confidence. As mentioned earlier, the reason is that the military is an autocratic organisation that sometimes does not encourage academic discourse outside of the military. The military is an establishment that prescribes and enforces rules in order to obtain discipline. Academic participation on issues is normally limited to certain members. The evidence also suggests that the distance education mode of teaching is used only to prepare students for a certain phase; the residential phase in this case. This is the reason why all the participants agreed that they do not have a problem concerning drop out and failure. The DOD distance students are not allowed to drop out because they are handled with highly controlled and technical experiences emanating from the organisation (Verduin & Clark, 1991:167). The organisational philosophy of the DOD is that of prescription and, to a certain extent, duress. Hence, students are not allowed to drop out but withdraw from a specific programme. According to Nash (2004a), failure in a programme was as the result of a huge disconnection between reality and academia in the design of these programmes.

The distance learning policy influences all the issues mentioned above. The participants indicated that that they had not seen nor utilised the policy. This is because the DOD distance learning policy had not been promulgated. Hence, this situation could be subscribed to lack of urgency and importance in the part of the higher DOD ETD authorities with regards to the utilisation of the DOD distance learning policy. Hũlsmann (2000), cited by Welch *et al.* (2004:13), identified a clear policy as one of the three conditions for efficient and effective provision of distance education. Thus, with regards to the objective on the first sub-question, it is clear that the character of structural design of distance learning programmes in the DOD resembled that of a disciplined approach; it was prescriptive, and that it demanded 'things are

done this way here'. The character of the DOD distance learning is not flexible as it is not adapted to the needs of students. There is a lack of policies on various issues pertaining to distance learning. The policies that exist are not correct or rather not complete.

On the other hand, the character of distance learning in the department of defence can be viewed from the characteristics of learners or their distance teaching and learning perception. It was their concern as reported in table 7.24 that the level of understanding of some of the learners was not suited for the distance learning programmes. The combination of LN1, LN5, LN6, LN7, and LN8 constitutes the only category which indicates that the level of the programme was too high for certain learners. The character of distance education in the department of defence should reflect the approach that is appropriate for the level of the learners' understanding. According to De Boer, Steyn and Du Toit (2001:185), programmes…should reflect an educational approach that is appropriate for the participants and meaningful for the specific practice. In these settings, particular attention needs to be paid to the way knowledge is presented. Learners' own experiences and understanding should be seen as valid departure points for discussion. Learner support should assist and encourage learners to be self-directed and accept responsibility. This could only happen when teaching and learning methods are adjusted and used. Greyling, Geyser and Fourie (2002:115) contend that the learners' ability and willingness to take responsibility for their own learning can be enhanced. They (Greyling, *et* al) suggest that learners should be encouraged by the demands of the learning activity and teaching methods employed to develop from independence to interdependence.

### 8.3.2 Dialogue as vital in the design of teaching and learning

The heading to this section is derived from the second sub-question. The sub-question reads: *How does dialogue manifest itself as a mode of communication between instructor and student in a distance education environment and what constraints does discipline place on transactional dialogue*? The objective was to determine the nature of dialogue as a mode of communication between the role players in the DOD distance learning environment. It is also to determine and understand the role of dialogue in the design of learning material and distance learning teaching and learning in general. The reason is because dialogue, the interaction between students and instructors is vital in distance learning and important in maintaining a sound transactional distance. The more structured the design and development of teaching and learning in the SANDF distance learning were, the less dialogue and interaction occurred among students and with their instructors. As the findings have pointed out the programme design requirements allowed for 'outcome', 'assignments' and 'pathways'. It is evident that the DOD distance learning structure is rigid and largely pre-

planned and prescriptive in nature. Activities such as assignments and conforming to formative and summative assessments restrict dialogue between the DOD instructors and their students. In addition, the dialectical method is neither allowed nor existed in the SANDF's distance learning environment. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2001) defines the term dialectic as "a method of examining and discussing ideas in order to find the truth". The aim of dialectical method is to try to resolve the disagreement through rational discussion, and ultimately, to search for the truth (Wikipedia, 2007b). Dialectics could be viewed as experientially developing the truth (Van Gerwen, 2001:68).

The use of telephone, fax and lotus notes as a communication medium in the DOD distance learning environment is specifically for administrative purposes and not necessarily for giving and receiving instruction. This form of communication is by far the most utilised bridge between instructors and the students and serves as the basic pedagogic pattern for distance education in the SANDF (Peters, 1998:19). It is 'one-directional'. Its purpose is to give and receive instructions or directives. The interaction between students and instructors is restricted and limited to the use of telephone, fax and lotus notes. As illustrated in table 7.27 the combination of CM1, CM2, CM3 and CM8 indicates a category that the course materials as they also facilitate dialogue in distance teaching learning were both outdated and incorrect. These learning materials do not contribute to the promotion of learning and dialogue as they are not sufficient and clear to comprehend. Another category in table 7.27 is the lack or inadequacy of other learning materials as illustrated by CM4, CM5, CM7, CM9, CM10, CM11, CM12 and CM13. This category emphasized the fact that such learning materials as computers, study guides, books, video machines and reference materials were either not adequate or provided.

Thus, this limited communication is just a mere communication for the sake of communication. And, as mentioned earlier, technology to facilitate the interaction between students and instructors in the SANDF is outdated and still conforms to the 'first generation' of distance education. The skill that is taught to DOD distance students to interact among themselves does not fulfil the requirement of transactional dialogue. The encouragement of open dialogue is not supported and valued by all participants (Moore, 1993). In addition, the level of distance instruction of instructor preparation in the DOD distance learning was found to be limited to ordinary instructor ETD Level four at COLET. This preparation does not necessarily prepare instructors to understand the intricacies of distance education that include, most importantly, student support. Equally so, the DOD distance education policy does not

support the kind of dialogue and interaction between and among the role players. It is non-existent. In addition, the department of defence does not have a policy that encourages students to freely communicate their answers. The evidence suggests that students have to answer examination questions exactly as the 'mark sheet' prescribes. Although, according to the assembled evidence, students can discuss or raise their views 'out of the box' or apply independent thinking, they could only be correct according to the 'mark sheet.'

Thus, because the objective of the above sub-question was to determine the nature of dialogue as a mode of communication between the role players in the department of defence distance learning environment and also to determine and understand the role of dialogue in the design of learning material and distance learning teaching and learning in general. The reason being that dialogue, the interaction between students and instructors was vital in distance learning and important in transactional distance. Therefore, failure to abide by the importance played by dialogue leads to more alienation between students and instructors and the institution. The nature of communication media and technology employed in the SANDF distance learning results in a highly structured distance learning environment. Thus, the DOD distance students do not necessarily feel the warmth, consideration, understanding, honesty, sincerity, and respect in the DOD distance learning environment.

### 8.3.3 Achievement of learning outcomes in transactional dialogue

The heading of this section is derived from the third sub-question. The sub-question reads: *How the achievement of programme outcomes, as well as drop out and failure rates are linked to subject discipline, learning interventions and transactional dialogue?* The objective was to determine the relationship between the achievement of learning outcomes and dialogue across transactional dialogue. It was also to determine the extent of drop out and failure. The reason being that the lack of dialogue can impact negatively on transactional dialogue and can result in drop out and failure. It was mentioned earlier that the achievement of intended outcomes by students at the DOD distance learning institutions is emphasised by way of their utilisation of the 'systems approach' in their instructional design. This is also communicated to the students.

It means that these outcomes were not necessarily negotiated with the students as they are not involved in the design and development of distance learning programmes. It was also pointed out that drop out and failure does not exist; thus, it was not allowed. Instead, students were allowed to withdraw for one reason or another. The student support and students experience with distance learning of any kind is surrounded questions on perceptions. The increased

pressure of work led 5 out of 7 students to abandon their learning plan (Nash, 2005b). Therefore, the achievement of intended outcomes in the DOD distance learning settings was imposed rather than negotiated across transactional dialogue. The way the students have to master the content of the subject is structured. Thus, distance learning institutions in the SANDF do not prepare instructors to be able to listen to students or appreciate their views. They also did not prepare instructors in any way to relate to students.

The opportunity to allow students the spontaneous contribution to DOD distance teaching is largely non-existent. The DOD teaching and learning institutions, as military institutions, set formal standards and specific requirements to be followed. It is thus concluded that the formal character of structural design of distance learning programmes in the DOD does not allow nor cater for the needs of students for negotiation of transactional dialogue or dialectical discussion. According to the gathered information, the tasks in the study guides in the DOD distance learning mode of instruction are meant for students to master the outcomes.

The tasks in the study guides were not structured so that the students would be able to perform and master the tasks. Although the tasks are given as assignments and discussed in syndicate groups, they did not necessarily ensure participation and encourage attention. Therefore, the objective aimed at determining the relationship between the achievement of learning outcomes and dialogue across transactional dialogue reveals that the achievement of learning outcomes are not adapted to the needs of the students; students are not afforded an opportunity for interactivity.

### 8.3.4 The role of dialogue in student empowerment

The heading of this section is derived from the fourth sub-question. The sub-question reads: *What is the role of dialogue in student and instructor support and what is their impact on the design of distance education (DE) programmes and achievement of learning outcomes in a DE environment?* The objective was to determine the role of dialogue as a student support mechanism in the DOD distance education environment. It was also to determine other student support endeavours in the DOD distance learning environment. Ensuring dialogue in distance learning programmes contributes to student support and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes.

As mentioned previously students were ‘told’ what the outcomes must be, rather than that it would be ‘negotiated’ or ‘discussed’ with students. The communication was limited to the use of the telephone. It was obvious that this kind of support did not encourage dialogue and mutual respect among the participants. It was also learned that students were not directly

involved in the design and development of distance learning programmes in the DOD. This practice suggested that student support in the DOD was one-sidedly imposed rather than mutually negotiated. The reasons cited for considering distance education in the DOD have, mostly, to do with speeding promotion to the next higher level and not necessarily to inculcate the power of knowledge, analysis and decision-making. It was then concluded that student support in the DOD distance education did not address requirements of dialogue in distance learning settings: it is thus lacking or does not necessarily exist.

The physical environment in which the students learn and the instructors instruct influences dialogue. It was mentioned earlier and the evidence suggested that the DOD distance learning instructors were inadequately prepared (DOD ETD Project Team Report, 1997a:10). The DOD distance learning institutions have a shortage of qualified instructors *(ibid)*. These institutions were then forced to use "unqualified" instructors without proper distance learning training. Thus, dialogue is positively related to the adequate training and preparation of instructors to be able to function appropriately in the distance learning environment. The number of students each instructor is able to instruct also affects dialogue. Thus, student support also meant staff support. The transaction of giving instruction by instructors and responding to it by students depends on proper and adequate dialogue. That is, instructors should be supported through proper and adequate training. As noted above, the objective for posing the sub-question was to determine the role of dialogue as a student support mechanism in the DOD distance education environment, and also to determine other students-support endeavours in the DOD distance learning environment. This is because ensuring dialogue in distance learning programmes also contributes to student support and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes. Verduin and Clark found that Moore's concept of dialogue or two-way communication is sound, but it should include the idea of support since the basic reason for dialogue is to provide support of one kind or another to the distance student (1991:124). This support should also be extended to distance learning instructors.

## 8.4 FINDINGS WITH REGARDS TO THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

The main research question was to determine what the requirements are for the design of Distance Education (DE) programmes with the aim of identifying the nature of discipline or dialogue and how these factors impact on student support in the SANDF. According to the findings of the study, a one-size-fits-all is the standard that is followed in the design of distance learning programmes in the SANDF distance learning institutions. Open dialogue is not necessarily encouraged, supported or valued in these institutions. The subject content was prescribed to structure the way learning objectives have to be achieved. According to

Schuman (1996:[s.p.]), where prescription was the order of the day and open dialogue was not allowed, learning in a constructive way may suffer some negative consequences (Schuman, 1996:[s.p.]). The experts developed the materials and learning packages whose major concern was to develop the protocols and have them delivered to students *(ibid)*.

Interpersonal communication was almost non-existent, and limited guidance was available to students *(ibid)*. Escotet (1980) cited by Verduin and Clark (1991:167) termed this model more instruction than education because little permanent contact between student and instructor or student and student was available. Present also was little socio-cultural interaction and feeling, mutual respect and dialogue, and interpersonal communication which would have made this an effective model education *(ibid)*. Lt Col Karen Johnson (Ret.) said that this was because "the military was an autocratic, closed environment that was very capable of enforcing rules and demanding discipline" (1998). Wilmore (1990) said that the United States Military Academy at West Point produced high standards of quality officers, but observed that "there was no such thing as participatory or site-based management." Administration was totally autocratic *(ibid)*.

One is once again reminded of work done as far back as 1991 by Verduin and Clark (1991:166) that:

> "The organisational pattern and operating practices of a distance education establishment were, of course, based on the educational philosophy of that institution as well as some economic and political restrictions"

The prevailing philosophy of the military is based on it being an autocratic organisation. As such, the distance education model followed in the SANDF is institutional-centred (Rumble, 1986 cited by Verduin & Clark, 1991:167).

Accordingly, the findings of the study pointed to the lack of student support in the SANDF distance learning institutions and this lack manifested itself in a number of ways. Malan (2004:5) observed that instructors were under-prepared for their roles such as mentoring, coaching, tutoring and creating an environment to enhance learning. McGivney (2004:41-42) had realised that lack of support from the teaching staff who did not know their students and who showed little interest in their work contributed to non-completion. Yorke (2004:26) noted that a sense of belonging had negative implications for distant student's persistence, especially when the student was remote from the provider. Students wanted to feel that they were members of an academic community. Kember *et al.* (2001) cited by Yorke (2004:26), said that sense of belonging could be developed in distant learning institutions in which attendance and some contact sessions was the norm. According to Barefoot (2003) cited by

Yorke (2004:26-27) mutual support was relatively easy to achieve in this respect. Simpson (2004:80) felt that contact with students in any student support-system was very important.

The main findings reflected that the characteristics of distance teaching and learning in the SANDF distance learning institutions involve induction, contact and residential phases. The duration of these phases would vary from institution to institution and depended on the length of the specific course. These institutions would also prepare their students for distance teaching and learning. While the SA Army College prepared their students for distance teaching and learning by giving them what they called Workbooks, the SA Air Force College utilised the Study School. The distance learning in the SANDF distance education institutions is content- and modular-based. Teaching and learning utilised facilitation and may also take place at the students' workplaces. However, facilitation was based on adult teaching and learning approach.

In addition, students are assessed by formative and summative assessment practices. Several formative assessments were conducted during the course of a programme to monitor the progress of students. A summative assessment was conducted at the end of the programme to determine if students had achieved the intended outcomes. In addition, a mark sheet was utilised in marking student's work or product. The implication here was that if the student's answer was not according to the mark sheet, the answer given by the student was wrong. Therefore, there was lack of support, especially, as the characteristics of distance learning in the institutions of distance learning in the SANDF requires adequate support. In addition, assessment should be used as part of instruction to support and enhance learning (Shepard, 2000:4).

The requirements for designing distance learning programmes in the SANDF distance learning institutions included a curriculum, specific outcomes, and assessment guidelines. These programmes had to contain a learning content and a strategy. These were used as learning guidelines. The requirements for designing also involved pathways and assignments. A pathway was a system of building a student's career step-by-step. A student should be able to progress to the next level of his or her professional career after he or she had mastered a certain level. To achieve the intended outcomes, students must be found competent in specific outcomes. The gathered evidence suggested that the specific outcomes were the yardsticks to measure if students had mastered it. Thus, students must adhere to these specific outcomes as they were also encouraged verbally what was to be achieved. In addition, the requirements for the designing of distance learning programmes in these institutions did not

involve the student support as, probably, it would constitute one of the main requirement for designing the distance learning programmes.

The education approach of distance learning institutions in the SANDF was based on the outcomes-based education where knowledge of the subject matter was based on the achievement of intended outcomes. The students were also told to observe the principles as an encouragement to achieve the intended outcomes. By principles of assessment it was meant that there were procedures to follow when a student was not satisfied with his or her allocated marks and needed to appeal the decision. As such, students were encouraged to manage their study and learning time wisely and effectively. As much as students were encouraged to contact and communicate with each other, they were also encouraged to contact and communicate with the instructors instead of instructors contacting the students. It meant that it remained the responsibility of the students to contact and communicate with their instructors.

Transactional dialogue in the SANDF distance learning institutions was ensured by the provision of instructors in all the subjects. These instructors worked day and night attending to students' learning problems. However, the provision of instructors in all the subjects did not provide enough evidence of their role in student support endeavours. The telephone was the medium used by these institutions to communicate with the students. In addition, the course instruction was also another medium used, as it contained everything to be communicated during the learning programme. It also emerged from the evidence that students were not directly involved in the designing of distance learning programmes at the distance learning institutions surveyed. This was because the students were not part of the designing process. These institutions utilised what they called 'specialists' for the designing function of distance learning programmes. The only involvement of the students was evidenced when students had to provide feedback in the form of debriefs. It was only then that their inputs were considered. However, the student's input would not result in the changing of the content.

The SANDF utilises the Education, Training and Development (ETD) Process in the designing of ETD or teaching and learning programmes. The SANDF ETD Project Team institutionalised the ETD Process in 1997. The ETD Process was specifically utilised in the designing of face-to-face and distance learning modes of instruction. In summary, the Process was carried out in four phases; viz. analysis of learning needs, designing of learning opportunities, implementation of learning opportunities, and evaluation of the learning

programme. Some participants stated that they either had not seen the ETD Process, or did not utilise, or apply it, while others stated that they did engage in the needs analysis, implementation, and evaluation process. Thus, it would seem some of the participants did apply the process but were not aware that they did. This was also mainly because the SANDF distance learning institutions were not directly involved in the designing of the learning programmes. That function was left to the specialised people who designed these programmes.

It emerged in the evidence that there was no policy in the SANDF that fosters the students to interact with each other; but the need for students to work together or assist each other was mentioned in the instructional manuals or documents. The contact sessions were used mainly for students to interact with each other. This meant that the contact and/or residential sessions were the opportunities that the students could utilise to interact with each other. In addition, the distance learning institutions utilises the syndicate discussions for students to mingle and interact with each other.

The syndicate discussions system is probably the most favoured form of student interaction in the SANDF. This was done to such an extent that groups were formed to discuss, deliberate and produce a single learning product. As such, two or more such groups could be formed in a programme. However, two or more groups cannot and were not allowed to produce one and the same learning product. According to the participants, producing the same learning product was as the result of 'cut-and-paste', which was not allowed. In some instances, this activity resulted in court martial proceedings being convened against the students involved. On the same token the participants claimed that the opportunity for students to express themselves freely was afforded; but again, the students' answers were not supposed to be same. The encouragement of open dialogue was not supported and valued by all participants. Again, there was no policy in the SANDF that fostered or mentioned the need for students to be allowed the freedom of expression. Hence, there was a lack of student support, which was supported by the policy.

Communication between students and instructors was vital in the distance learning mode of instruction. The participants said that communication between instructors and students was spelled out in the 'course instruction'. The 'course instruction' mentioned that the students must not hesitate to contact the instructors in time of need. This communication took place during contact and residential phases. One participant mentioned that communication between instructors and students was still paper-based. This meant that they were still relying

on the telephone and facsimile to communicate. The reason was that the technologies still utilised in the SANDF distance learning institutions included the computer, telephone, facsimile, intranet, and lotus notes. The intranet and lotus notes were means of communication utilised widely by members in the SANDF. The utilisation required the installation of the local area network (LAN) on the premises. The disadvantage was that if such LAN was not installed, the communication could not happen. Thus, student support in the form of two-way communication could not take place. Freedom to communicate is restricted in the department of education. Freedom in…education is referred to as a study environment in which individuals have the ability to study and act, to go to his or her study goals according to his or her own will (Hrubý, 2008:14).

The reasons to have distance learning by the distance learning institutions in the SANDF are numerous. Some participants claimed that they utilised the distance mode of instruction to achieve specific outcomes in that it exposed students to better knowledge, fostered development, and brought about more skills. As one participant said 'it was used for life-long learning'. The evidence suggested that distance learning was also used to fast track the learning process in the SANDF. This was done mainly to deal with the backlog experienced in other AoSs; especially in the South African Military Health Services (SAMHS).

In addition, distance the learning mode of instruction at SAMHS was used not to keep professional people like medical doctors for longer periods in class than was necessary. It was also suitable for the South African Army as it was the largest AoSs in the SANDF. Hence, distance learning instruction was used to accommodate as many students in one class as possible. Preparation of instructors for distance learning in the SANDF was attained by preparing instructors in the National Qualification Framework – four. This qualification included knowledge of instructional methodologies, assessment or evaluation strategies, moderation processes, etc. Various institutions around the country including the SANDF's College of Instructional Technology offer this qualification.

According to the responses the SANDF distance learning institutions do not experience drop outs and failures in their programmes. Instead, these institutions would normally experience students withdrawing from the learning programme for various reasons. Some of these reasons were due to the level of educational qualification in a specific learning programme. The level of student educational qualification might not be suitable for a specific programme. The reason for this is that the SANDF does not necessarily subscribe to strict educational student entrance requirements into its learning programmes. A student is accepted for any

SANDF learning programme according to the rank group of that specific programme and where the student is deemed to be at that rank level. The participants explained that the instructors were available to offer extra lessons, as a kind of student support, for students to catch-up. Other reasons for students to withdraw from the learning programme were associated with failure to hand in tasks and general lack of discipline.

Because the practitioners of distance learning in the SANDF were not necessarily involved in the designing of distance learning programmes in their respective institutions they found that the learning content that they had to work with to be prescriptive. The participants said that they received their guidelines from the higher authorities. They also mentioned that they did not design the curriculum as it was designed for them. The curriculum was designed for them by their respective ETD Directors who made use of 'specialist' in designing the curricula. The Directors specified to the training management what they wanted in the curricula. The training management, including the instructors in certain instances, were only required and allowed to design the modules from the curriculum. Even at this stage, they were not allowed to change nor modify anything. Thus, there was a lack of support on the part of the authorities. Some of the distance learning institutions had to adhere to the specific AoSs doctrines. Hence, the distance learning content in the SANDF distance education institutions was largely prescriptive. The prescriptiveness of the content was also evidenced by the lack of freedom and student support allowed in the selection of the content.

According to the participants, the content must look exactly the same as the prescribed curriculum. The distance learning practitioners could not select the content of their own. They may neither change nor modify it. It had to be designed according to the client's needs. The client in this case was the specific ETD Directorate. Hence, the distance teaching and learning approach had to adhere to the outcomes-based education. Likewise, deviation was not allowed from the fixed content. The distance learning practitioners had to stick to the given learning strategy and strive to attain the outcomes as given by the higher authorities. The distance learning institutions in the SANDF also made use of the study guides. These study guides contained learning tasks that emphasised certain roles to be played by the students. The tasks must be played according to the student's specifications or mustering. The authenticity of these tasks in the study guides sometimes caused the problem of 'cut-and-paste'. The students had the tendency of copying each others work. They produced exactly the same work as the others.

It must be concluded that the DOD or SANDF distance education policy had been designed and developed long ago, but has not been promulgated yet by the higher authorities. Hence, it follows from the responses that some of the SANDF distance learning institutions did not utilise the policy or have not seen it. But, on the other hand, participants at the SA Army College stated that they think that they were in line with the policy. The lack of distance education policy in the SANDF affects a number of distance learning matters. For example, the participants mentioned that there is no official policy on the free expression of ideas by the students. Hence, the students might seem afraid because of the possible negative repercussions on the expression of ideas.

As the aim of the study was to determine what the requirements are for the design of distance education programmes with regards to identifying the nature of discipline and dialogue and how drop out and student support manifested themselves in a distance learning environment, it was clear from the evidence assembled that there is a lack of 'student support', especially, as such support should be a characteristic of distance learning in the SANDF. However, the provision of instructors in all the subjects and the provision of extra lessons, in the case of withdrawals as they do not experience drop out and failure, does not provide enough evidence of their role in student support endeavours. The students were, however, encouraged to manage their study and learning time wisely and effectively. The students were encouraged to contact and communicate with each other, and they were also encouraged to contact and communicate with the instructors instead of instructors contacting them. Therefore, it meant that it remained the responsibility of the students to contact and communicate with their instructors. It was only then that their inputs were considered although that would not change the content. Thus, student support in the form of two-way communication is lacking. Therefore, communication appears to be one-directional. Communication is 'instructional' telling students what to do with little opportunity to engage in a true dialogue style and form. The prescriptiveness of the content was also evidenced by the lack of freedom and student support allowed in the selection of the content. Again, there was no policy in the SANDF that fostered or mentioned the students' need for freedom of expression. Hence, there is a lack of student support, which has to be supported by the policy.

## 8.5 EFFECTIVE APPLICATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE SANDF

As the evidence suggested and for reasons as I have explained the way in which the department of defence applies distance education appears to be outdated. According to Moore's theory (TD) the SANDF has to bring their education environment, and more specifically DL, in line with present day requirements. The students involved in DL are for

the most part, if not all of them, senior military personnel and they have to meet the challenges that the SANDF are confronted with. These challenges are varied and have to be answered adequately. These senior military staff members have, through their work, been exposed to similar situations and they already have experience in such matters. Therefore, they know what it is about and they can effectively assist in the design of DL courses because of their experience in military matters. These senior students must be allowed to discuss matters concerning their study courses with each other and with their instructors.

While Sullivan and Rocco (1997:[s.p.]) are saying distance learning activities could be designed to fit the specific context for learning and Nash (2004a:[s.p.]) is saying instructional designers who followed standard, one-size-fits-all best practices … were out of touch with the realities of today's military service, we need to take certain military issues into consideration. For instance, the military culture comes into mind. Historically, the military has been known and understood to follow a more formal way of doing things. The military is structured to carry out its aims and objectives in a prescriptive and standard way. Thus, as Wilmore (1990:[s.p.]), observed, there was no such thing as participatory … management. This is based on the organisational philosophy of the military as a totally autocratic institution.

The education and training requirements in the SANDF are more specific. The SANDF needs to maintain a high level of military professionalism and provide skills that are linked to work and national standards. These skills require making the SANDF students and soldiers more knowledgeable than the ordinary student in a distance education course. Although DE, in the SANDF, in general is good, it is advisable for adult students with varying abilities and experience. Senior SANDF staff members are in effect highly trained and competent professionals. As such, they can be as much teacher as student. When applying DE in the SANDF it must always be kept in mind that the process is directed to like-minded individuals.

## 8.6 RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The recommendations and implications are addressed to the following focussed groups with regards to this study:

### 8.6.1 Recommendations and implications to the DOD Training Command

First and foremost, the DOD Training Command and other higher structures should be fully committed to the entire education, training and development, and specifically distance education. Development and planning of a holistic distance learning system in the SANDF should not be left to the directing staff only as this result in the training and education for the

sake of training and education (Esterhuyse, 2009:122-123). A proper distance education policy should be researched, designed and developed. The implication is that a number of distance education issues should be institutionalised so that nothing pertaining to distance education could be left out. Hence, the practice of distance education in the SANDF would not lack authenticity, originality, and authority. Specialists to undertake this task could be identified and supported by higher DOD ETD authorities. On the same token higher DOD ETD authorities must be able to support these endeavours in order for them to promulgate such policy. A number of issues pertaining to distance education should be categorically spelled out in this policy. An example of such issues in distance education policy is presented by the University of Pretoria University (2009:5-9). A number of some of these issues is mentioned below.

### 8.6.2 Recommendations and implications to training directors

Kember (1989:199-209) cited by Fraser and Nieman (1995:22) listed academic environment and integration as two of several variables influencing the drop out process in distance learning. He says that the academic environment embraces aspects such as study materials and academic assistance. In other words, student support should be seen as central to distance learning. This should be the basis for answering challenges associated with distance education as mentioned in the study. Student support, as the critical component of distance education, should be integrated in this programme evaluation. In addition, as discussed in the study by Sharma (2002) and Rumajogee, (2002), [pages 86-93], the distance education support system in the SANDF could include issues such as library facilities and reading rooms equipped with advanced technology; preparation of examination techniques; mutual design and development of distance learning programmes; encouragement of dialogue and interaction; well-prepared study materials; internet and telephone facilities; close personal support; well-prepared guidelines and instructions; instruction on the preparation of assignments; immediate provision of information and feedback; structured supervision, counselling, and mentoring programmes; motivating students to continue their learning; student or peer support groups; career guidance, etc. The implication is that all facets of student support should be institutionalised. Development of curricula has to be made to democratise the process by involving everyone concerned – directors, coordinators, developers, instructors and learners (Du Plooy, 2006:75).

### 8.6.3 Recommendations and implications to instructional designers

Distance education programme designers should be specifically qualified in distance education, as the design of distance education conducted by inadequately qualified designers

in distance education would lack authenticity. The authorities should take into consideration that distance education does not involve ordinary qualifications. Distance education qualifications are based on sound theoretical grounds such as Moore's 'Transactional Distance'. These qualifications should be able to equip designers with theoretical distance education foundations. A certain level of student involvement in the design of distance learning programmes should be considered. Students should not only be involved in the feedback they provide at the end of courses, but also during the design and development stages.

The use of other advanced technologies like video-conferencing, tele-conferencing, etc. should also be looked into. Specialists should be identified and undergo education and training on the use of these technologies. The DOD Command, Management and Information division should play a leading role with the utilisation of technology in the DOD ETD environment. The DOD training institutions should be able to benchmark with each other on the use of such technologies and other distance education matters. In addition, student support should be institutionalised and form part of the DOD distance education policy. Lastly, a culture of 'dialogue' should be inculcated throughout the distance learning practices in the DOD. This point must be supported by the constructivist theory that, in a discussion, students should be allowed to contribute their views, that is, the exploration of ideas through discussion. Training should not be done for the sake of training. The emphasis should be on the type of training, how and why it is given… (Bernardes, 2008:67). Education, Training and Development and specifically distance learning in the department of defence should be able to reflect the resolve of the South African society. Learners should be developed into active and well-informed citizens of the broader educational society (Daniels, 2007:24).

### 8.6.4 Recommendations and implications to instructors

In the setting of the current study, the solution of performance excellence in the DOD distance learning was envisaged. The fact is that 'performance excellence' is composed of programme structure and design and development, subject structure/student assessment and programme evaluation, student support, motivation, learning theories, and other factors, qualities and characteristics associated with transactional distance supposed to be found in any ideal instructional design. Providing instruction by means of distance education in the department of defence should not be seen as a 'quick fix' solution to speed-up promotion, to remove backlog, or to solve other ETD related problems because, as such, it would be inadequately designed. The designing of distance education would lack the proper attention and thorough research of such programmes taking the distance education theory and/or doctrine into

consideration. It should be utilised to empower students to be better leaders with the ever-changing military challenges. It should also be seen as saving on educational costs. The need to provide instruction through distance education in the DOD should be thoroughly researched. It is suggested that the programme evaluation discussed earlier in the study [pages 82, 109-110], could be implemented. As discussed this programme evaluation includes such issues as the following:

a. Students focus on clear goals, that is, they are goal oriented.
b. The students determine the goals, learning experiences, and evaluation decisions of the learning programme, evaluation is based on final products, and self-evaluation is encouraged.
c. Education as a process of knowledge construction.
d. Learning focuses on knowledge, gathering of information and application.
e. Diverse needs are catered for.
f. Students are guided to the desired behaviours.
g. Individualised instructional approach (these could take the form of facilitation, coaching, induction, counselling, etc).
h. Instructors are facilitators and a product is produced in a more facilitative nature than prescriptive.
i. Students are guided by the principles of problem-solving and decision-making.
j. Learning involves continuity and repetition.
k. Creation of appropriate conditions for learning.
l. Students construct their own learning.
m. Students interpret information/learning based on their experiences.
n. Individual uniqueness is encouraged to single out talents and skills.
o. Dialogue; open dialogue is encouraged, supported and valued by all participants.
p. Opportunities of dialogue are built into the learning programmes.
q. Student to student dialogues and student to instructor dialogues are encouraged.
r. Students are organised into groups to solve problems through exploration and discussions.
s. Structure reflects the capacity to respond to students' needs.
t. Flexibility of structure, evaluation methods, and objectives are reflected in the learning programmes.

## 8.7 CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study led to the conclusion that the character of structural design of distance learning programmes in the DOD resembles that of a disciplined approach; and is

thus prescriptive. The prescribed nature of the structure in the design and development of distance learning in the SANDF was more preferred than interaction. This was why Moore argued that the more 'discipline' or structure, and the less the dialogue there is, the larger the 'gap' or transactional distance between student and instructor (Moore, 1993 cited in Keegan, 1993:24). This resulted in a tension in the interplay of dialogue and structure. The DOD distance teaching and learning programmes were pre-planned and prescribed down to the last detail, so that student needs were not taken into account. The DOD teaching and learning institutions, as military institutions, set formal standards and specific requirements that have to be followed. This could be a reason why all the participants agreed that they did not have a problem concerning drop outs and failures. It can thus be concluded that the formal character of the structural design of the distance learning programmes in the DOD does not allow nor cater for the needs of students for negotiation about transactional dialogue.

The policy to allow the students to make spontaneous contributions was lacking. Thus, this leads to conclusion that the design of teaching and learning material in the DOD distance learning environment does not allow for dialogue. Equally so, the DOD distance education policy does not support the kind of dialogue and interaction between the role players as it is lacking. This practice suggests that student support in the DOD is one-sidedly imposed rather than mutually negotiated. It is therefore then concluded that student support in the DOD distance education does not address the requirements of dialogue in distance learning settings.

As understood in terms of Moore's transactional distance theory, the assumption is *that the more structure is captured as part of any distance learning programme, the more the transactional distance becomes* (Moore, 2007:[s.p]; Holmberg, Moore & Peters, 2007:427 and 458; Dron, 2006:[s.p]; Gorsky, & Caspi, 2005:2-4;De Ture, 2004:21; Dron, Seidel, & Litten, 2004:163; Wallace, 2003:245; Lowe, 2000:1 & Shearer, ([n.d.],[s.p.])). Structure here does not only refer to the teaching and learning facilitation strategies one would engage at classroom, course, and programme levels, but also to the substance, ordering and arrangement of the learning content that finds its way into the course curriculum. This applies specifically to the disciplinary approach that at times structures and embraces the learning content. The more prescriptive the learning becomes, the less the opportunities exist for students to engage constructively with the learning material. Such discourse is limiting dialectic opportunity, contributes very little to the development of autonomous learners, and the autonomy is lost as the most 'ideal speech situation' as advocated by Habermas. Dialogue is then not symmetrical meaning that communication becomes a 'one-way' mode of operation.

Communication finds its way into the system as authoritative power source, where dialogue's main task and function is to vest the interest of the organisation such as the department of defence and programme directors and not the emancipation, liberation and empowerment of the learners on a programme. Students and lecturers find it difficult to engage constructively academically. This is also as a result of lack of enough time spent on rigorous debate, reflection and, eventually, the internalisation of knowledge (Esterhuyse, 2009:119). Learner-to-learner academic discourse and freedom of interaction is hampered as the result of authoritarian and prescriptive doctrine of a structured curriculum. As the 'speech situation' has now become ideal – because of the one-directional dialogue or discourse (Welch & Reed, 2005:32). The discourse or effective and sustainable student support lies vested within an organisation's ability to transfer existing first generation distance education modes of delivery, to situations where the mutual exchange of experience (shared experiences between learners and lecturers) leads to 'Mündigkeit' as Habermas in his thesis of communication (Thompson & Held, 1982:59). The suggestion of 'Mündigkeit' qualifies a person to exit learning as authority, expert or knowledgeable person. He or she has therefore divorced him- or herself for appearance (Thompson & Held, 1982:47).

The researcher therefore asks the question whether the main task and function of distance education practices within the department of defence is to create an open-learning environment based on classical adult practices, allowing freedom of speech, the freedom to question approaches, practices, discussions, suggestions, ideas and solutions to problems under discussion. One should however not divorce the notion of 'freedom' and 'symmetrical dialogue' from the power structures of 'discipline' and 'autonomy'. But the paradox between the listed constructs does not go unnoticed. The open 'ideas' behind the disciplinary nature of content, concepts, constructs, outcomes and objectives nourish a constructive discourse required in a developmental or building process.

## 8.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Although several important findings emerged in this study, certain limitations of the study should be noted. One limitation was its generalizability to other settings. In the military, issues were not necessarily discussed or negotiated. The way of life in the military is pre-planned and largely imposed on members. While the researcher had planned to involve students in his interview schedule, the students were deliberately and, maybe purposefully, not provided. Thus, this study was conducted without the involvement of students as being most affected by the topic of the study. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that the involvement of students in similar studies could have a beneficial effect on the result.

The researcher was not able to locate relevant studies done in the military. While some studies on distance education in the military dealt with the impact of distance learning in those situations; others dealt with reasons for providing instruction through distance education. Thus, the researcher was not able to locate studies that addressed 'Transactional Distance' in the military per se. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that studies that address 'Transactional Distance' in the military would be of value to studies of this nature.

Such studies should also be a 'buy-in' for the higher authorities from the start. If higher military authorities support such studies from the beginning, it would yield better results. This support would allow the researcher access to the relevant student population. It would also secure much needed financial support to conduct such a study. In addition, action research and participant observation as a research methodology is well-suited for such studies. All these recommendations would of course benefit if adequate time is made available to execute such studies.