CHAPTER 4

DOCUMENTS, ACTS AND POLICY ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE COLLECTED DATA

4.1   Introduction

This chapter deals with the analysis of documents that are regarded as frameworks for academic policy formulation in open and distance learning. It is worth noting that there is only a limited amount of published research that focuses on the implementation of tuition policy in open and distance learning, but this does not obviate the need to look at the documents that have a more general bearing. The research question in this study clearly shows the aim of investigating the views and experiences of various stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy, and the project asks more specifically how the study guide for the course Entrepreneurship Law 1 reflects the implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. Another dimension to this research involves looking at participants' views on and experiences of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. These issues are very specific. However, although the research question focuses on a particular institution, it necessarily does so in a larger context, and this study must consequently acknowledge that there have been various policy documents aimed at higher education in South Africa since 1994, and that these documents are partially relevant to distance education and open learning in South Africa. The documents deal with a few issues in distance education that need to be addressed, namely:

- o   The role of distance education in increasing participation and access;
- o   The balancing of resources to achieve cost-effectiveness;
- o   The distinction between face-to-face and distance education;
- o   The formation of a single, dedicated distance education institution;
- o   Quality in distance education programmes;
- o   Course design and the course development process; and
- o   Learning centres in various parts of the country.

4.2   Making Sense of Policy Analysis and Policy Research

What is a policy? The lack of a clear definition of the object of study makes policy analysis rather complex.   Moja (2003), in Stage and Manning (2003), states that policy processes are complex and include various stages, and argues that 'policy analysis refers to one or several stages in the policy process.'   On the other hand, Nisbet (1997:212) regards policy research as having direct application to current issues in educational policy or practice. This should consist of careful, systematic attempts to understand the educational process and improve its efficiency. Cooper, Fussarelli & Randall (2004:3) indicate that the fields of policy analysis and policy-making are rather new and ill-defined, and that the notion of policy in general and education policy in particular is complex and confusing. In policy-oriented research, one can see the existence of a cyclic process including the recognition of a problem, the shaping of a policy to address the problem, the implementation of the policy, the evaluation of the outcomes, and the reshaping of the policy.

Hillier and Jameson (2003: 27) state that a key factor in the analysis of policy is to determine the extent to which it is driven by evidence based on practitioner knowledge. In most instances, one sees only minor evidence of research-based policy-driven activities. Therefore, there is very little connection between education policy formation and research evidence. Another suggestion, coming from Olssen, Codd & O'Neill (2004:72), is that the analysis of policy can take two different forms. Firstly, there is policy advocacy, which serves the purpose of making specific policy recommendations in a given context. This involves an analysis of policy determination and effects, and looks at inputs and transformational processes in constructing public policy. Secondly, there is the generation of information for use in policy decisions, in which the researcher must provide policymakers with information based on data, so as to help with the revision or formulation of actual policies. This is the analysis of policy content, which looks at the values, assumptions and ideologies underpinning the policy process.

Dunn (2004:10) refers to two major forms of policy analysis, which are retrospective and prospective analysis. In prospective policy analysis, the production and

transformation of information occurs before policy actions are taken. Retrospective analysis operates with three types of analyses, which are the discipline-oriented, problem-oriented and the application-oriented. Therefore, policy analysis is a problem-solving discipline which relies heavily on theories, methods and substantive findings of the behavioural and social sciences, social professions and social and political philosophy (Dunn, 2004:3). He further states that policy analysis must address five types of questions:

(a) What is the nature of the problem for which a solution is sought?

(b) Which of two or more courses of action should be chosen in order to solve the problem?

(c) What are the outcomes of choosing that course of action?

(d) Does achieving the outcomes contribute to solving the problem?

(e) What future outcomes can be expected if other courses of action are chosen?

Following on from these questions, Dunn (2004:6-7) suggests that the policy analysis process should involve the following steps: monitoring (description); forecasting (predicting); evaluation (appraisal); recommendation (prescription); and problem structuring (definition).

There is now a widely accepted view that education policy must be examined by means of multiple theories or lenses, as many traditional policy analyses are too narrow and static, and cannot define the relevant socio-political phenomena (Cooper, Fussarelli & Randall, 2004; Mazzoni, 1995). This study has applied some of these principles, and rests on the fact that we need to explore interpretations of and connections between what the Unisa Tuition Policy stipulates and what is seen to be happening in reality. This helps us in understanding the nature of some of the foundations of the Unisa policy.

4.2.1   Analysis of Documents

Documents are written texts that serve as pieces of evidence or records of an event or fact, and they have an important position in our societies (Wolff, 2004:285). They are significant because they represent the legalisation and organisation of all areas of life

or operations, in this case with specific reference to new developments in higher education in South Africa. Wolff (2004: 284) says that documents are standardised artefacts, as they may appear in notes, case reports, policies etc. Scott (2000) agrees that educational policy initiatives can be read as texts, and can be interpreted in a variety of ways. He proposes that the models for policy processes can be centrally controlled, pluralistic or fragmented, and multi-directed. Policy documents are therefore not neutral, author-free or value-free entities. This implies that, in each policy document, one sees 'power stories' of those in control who are putting ideas into reality. These issues are investigated throughout this study, and are highlighted in Chapter 5.

In order to do an analysis of the relevant documents, the author drew on some issues highlighted in policy-oriented research. He adopted the text-driven approach, and looked at Unisa policy in terms of its application to practical or real situations. He attempted to understand and interpret the following documents: Ministry of Education - The National Plan for Higher Education (DoE, 2001a); Ministry of Education - New Academic Policy (DoE, 2002) Chapter 3; Council on Higher Education - Distance Education Task Team Report (CHE, 2004b); and The Open University of the United Kingdom - The Open University Learning and Teaching Strategy (2004-2008).

The criteria for selection of these documents were that they are: (i) currently in use or have been specified to be used for a specific period of time; (ii) among the more important documents that are used for carrying out the core business of open and distance learning institutions such as Unisa and The Open University of the UK; and (iii) currently being used to shape and guide the practice of higher education in South Africa. In the literature review in Chapter 2, attention was directed to some of the philosophical issues underpinning the practice of ODL. Among these were definitions and classifications of open learning, distance education, open and distance learning, principles of ODL, ODL in the context of social issues, how teaching should be conducted in ODL institutions, and societal values and ethics, and the author made direct reference to some teaching and learning theories and other aspects of education. All of these concerns are reflected in the selected documents in one way or another.

The written documents in an organisation may be seen as a preferred form of representing a desired reality, and the Unisa Tuition Policy may be seen in this light, as it suggests how tuition should take place. It is a standardised policy document to be used in order to guide tuition. The main intention is legitimisation by the senders and recipients involved in the process. At Unisa, the management may be seen as the 'senders', and 'academics' as the receivers. Official documentation (such as the Unisa Tuition Policy) may be used to draw conclusions about and build up an idea of an organisation, in this instance through its description of how teaching should occur at the institution. If one views and reads documents as representations of something else, one is looking at them as a 'window-pane,' and this may distort the 'view,' which one can clear by means of a more transparent representation or more profound interpretation (Wolff, 2004:285). Hence, one of the critical issues raised in this study is 'how well do the proposed strategies of the Unisa Tuition Policy appear to be grounded in reality (in the study guides)?' Seen in this way, document analysis corresponds to an aspect of qualitative research, in that documents are independent, methodological and situation-embedded creations.

4.2.2   The Unisa Tuition Policy in the Context of National Policies

In the pre-1994 era, higher education teaching and learning practices and curricula in South Africa were to a large extent based on the institutional structure and geographical area served by the institution. After the democratic elections in 1994, the higher education scenario experienced many rapid policy formulations which focused on issues such as redress, equity, quality and governance. Policy development in the sphere of higher education teaching and learning had been consistent with the dual emphasis adopted in all higher education framework policy, and wanted to respond to the legacy of apartheid and global trends (CHE, 2004c). This became what Jansen (2001) calls the 'symbolic policy period,' as it was more important for the government to declare its intention of doing away with the past than it was to develop policies that might have an immediate impact.

The development of such policy documents made the South African higher education system complex, as they established a variety of governance structures. The following table shows some of the key documents conveying new regulations and legislation,

which helped the author to ground the research question of this study in the relevant legislative context.

Table 4.1 Intentions and Impact of the Acts/Documents analysed

Documents	Aims	Intended impact
The Higher Education Act 1997	To regulate the higher education environment	Higher Education's role in the development of human resources, high-level skills training, and the production, acquisition and application of new knowledge
National Plan on Higher Education 1999, 2001	To advise on restructuring higher education. These plans are based of the goals of the White Paper 3 (1997)	The transformation of higher education
Unisa Tuition Policy 1998	To guide Unisa as a public institution to address the needs and challenges of society To change teaching and learning at Unisa	The application of seven principles of teaching and learning Alignment of the university teaching and learning system with the new outcomes-based paradigm
New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education, 2001	To provide an academic framework for reconstructing the higher education system to achieve the goals of the education White Paper 3	Dissolution of the 'apartheid framework' of separate qualification levels for different population groups
The National Commission on Higher Education 1996	To address past imbalances by looking at new realities and challenges	Increased participation greater responsiveness and diversification of a single co-ordinated system of co-operation and partnerships
White Paper 3, Programmes for the Transformation of Higher Education, 1997	To address the development needs of individuals in the labour market and in the knowledge-driven society	Transformation of higher education by increasing participation. A response to societal interests and needs. The promotion of cooperation and

		partnerships in governance
Council on Higher Education Task Team Report 2004	To advise the Minister of Education on issues in distance education	Access to distance education programmes, the quality of programmes and learning resources, conditions and criteria governing the provision of distance education in Unisa's new role and face-to-face universities
Open University of the United Kingdom Teaching and Learning Strategy	To implement nine objectives of learning and teaching (curriculum and learning delivery methods)	Guidance directed at relevant levels of teaching and learning

The Ministry of Education indicates that most of the above policies were not implemented because there was what they call an 'implementation vacuum' (DoE, 2001a). Cloete and Maassen (2002) point out that one of the critical factors that make policy ineffective is the 'long consultation process' in higher education policy development in South Africa, as seen in the NCHE (DoE, 1996a) and White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997c). In the implementation of the NPHE, the Ministry of Education blamed the 'lack of capacity in the implementation' (DoE, 2001a:8). However, Cloete and Maassen (2002) do not agree, and argue that the Department could have established a small advisory body to continue with the implementation process. The NCHE (DoE, 1996a) boldly envisaged that higher education should be democratised and massified to admit large numbers of youths and adults. It also envisaged promoting flexible learning, and acknowledged the influence of globalisation on knowledge production (CHE, 2004c). It is evident that the NCHE (DoE, 1996a), the White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997c), and the NPHE (DoE, 2001a) wanted to base curriculum reform in higher education on specific principles and practices, thus transforming the South African higher education system.

The new higher education policies also sought to foster greater participation, by making education more accessible through offering a wider range of programmes, increased partnerships and more applied research (Cloete and Maassen, 2002: 467).

They argue that the lack of a 'realistic policy framework and effective instruments' permits higher education institutions to interpret the policy interventions in a way that suits them. Some of the institutions embraced changes and moved on - others just continued with what they had been doing before, and ignored the policy interventions. However, others were unable to implement the interventions.

The responses from different institutions to the policy interventions related to their academic, leadership and management capacity. It was through their academic capacity that institutions were linked with society at large and global academic markets (Cloete and Maassen, 2002:472). In this context, the Unisa Tuition Policy could be seen as an attempt to link up with these global academic markets through packaging its intentions attractively. Seen in this way, institutional change is the product of a complex interaction between policy, the market and institutional dynamics (Cloete and Maassen, 2002: 474). One can then see that in the change process, there were intricate interactions between academics and management, which resulted in the ignorance regarding policy development in higher education institutions.

The author uses the following figure, adapted from Ball (1998), in order to reflect on the context of the policy process in terms of distance education:
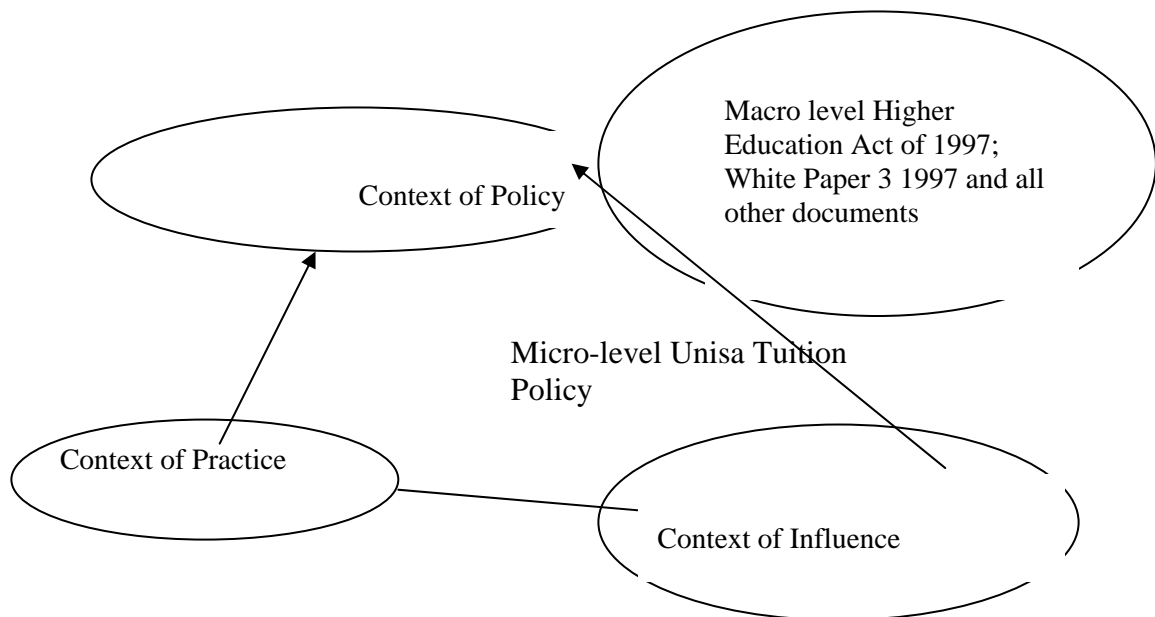

Figure 4.1 Policy process

Figure 4.1 tells us that policy can be influenced by the interrelation of different contexts, which are described here as the context of influence (what various groups want from the intended policy); the context of policy text production (the actual policy as a set of words contained in legislation or other such documents); and the context of practice (policy-in-use at national or local levels) (Naidoo, 2005:31). To expand on the context of practice, Fritz (2001:54) distinguishes between 'top down' and 'bottom up' policy processes. The 'top down' approach sees policy formulation and policy implementation as two distinct phases within the policy process. On the other hand, the 'bottom up' approach emphasises the importance of 'street level' bureaucrats and locally-based organisations in terms of the success or otherwise of policy implementation. Ball and Bowe (1992a:98) advocate that policy process should move beyond the traditional stages of formulation and implementation. They see the process as more complex - as a dialectical process in which 'moments' of legislation, documentation and implementation may be more or less loosely coupled. Welch (2003:3), writing on policy and planning in distance education, proposes that the provider must have a clear sense of purpose and direction, which is informed by national priorities, as well as by the quality demands of cost-effective provision of education. Furthermore, there must be rational and relevant systems for the use of distance education methods to achieve the purpose of the programme for the target learners. Policy statements, strategic plans and slogans must therefore be aligned with the mission, goals and principles of the institution. It is within this context that an analysis of the Unisa Tuition Policy is presented

4.3   Policy Text Analysis

In most instances, policy texts are written and delivered as official instructions on a particular aspect. They operate as official texts to influence public perception of a policy agenda (Scott, 2000:18). Scott (2000:18) says that policy texts are written in different ways, and must be understood in terms of a number of continua. An example of such a continuum would be the distinction between the prescriptive and non-prescriptive, i.e. the reader is allowed little freedom in a prescriptive process, whereas with a non-prescriptive one, he/she is allowed to interpret the message in a variety of ways. Scott (2000:21) observes that a policy text is usually poised between two

extremes - the prescriptive and the non-prescriptive, the ideologically explicit or opaque, generic or directed, single-authored or multiple-authored, diagrammatical or written, referenced to other texts or free of such references, coherent or fragmented, and narrowly or widely focused. The Unisa Tuition Policy reflects some of the elements indicated above, and will be analysed in relation to some of these issues in Chapter 5.

4.3.1   Unisa Tuition Policy

The Senate approved the Unisa Tuition Policy (see Appendix J) in June 1998, but the initial development of the policy started shortly after 1994, the year that ushered in a new, democratic era in South Africa. The development of this policy should be viewed against the backdrop of the dawning of the democratic era.

Unisa Tuition Policy Opening Statement

The opening statement of the policy is that 'Unisa is a national asset and public institution dedicated to serving all people of South Africa and addressing the needs and challenges of society'. This statement seems to be intended to legitimise the existence of Unisa and its role within South African society. The words 'national assets' and 'public institution' were chosen to depict certain values in South African society. The Unisa Tuition Policy focuses on the following:

o It provides quality open and distance learning opportunities in higher education, appropriate to South African learners, with certification up to the doctoral level. It aims at producing independent, critical graduates who are able to play a creative role in the community and society in general; and
o It conducts and fosters research through its expertise - teaching and research.

The way in which the above points have been formulated is an attempt to justify Unisa's continued existence. The statements that 'it provides quality open and distance learning,' that 'it conducts and fosters research,' and that 'it aims … at producing graduates' are in the present tense, and clearly state that these activities are

already happening. The assumption is that Unisa is already functioning productively, and that its continued existence is therefore justified, even prior to the envisaged improvement in standards. However, one may need to know to what extent and at what level of excellence these functions are being performed. The question, with regard to the Unisa Tuition Policy, is that if the abovementioned is true, what then are those who implement the policy doing at this stage? Is there a sign of relaxation on their part?

In comparison with the Unisa document, the Open University of the UK's Learning and Teaching Strategy document starts with describing the history of the university, and introduces the learning and teaching strategy through five principal aims or objectives, the intention of which are to encapsulate the driving forces in the areas of learning and teaching provision required to maintain and enhance the institution's historic pre-eminence in supported, open and distance learning in higher education.

The Unisa Tuition Policy begins by loosely stating its seven principles, and has nothing to say about their implementation. This may result in such principles being differently interpreted. Some policy implementers may even have a bias in favour of some of them rather than others, as they will attach different values to each of them.

The principles are:

- o Accessibility of higher education opportunities to all the people of South Africa, particularly those previously excluded from obtaining higher education;
- o Academic excellence of an international standard which is contextually relevant to lifelong learning in South Africa and Africa in general;
- o Affordability;
- o Advantageous use of partnerships; and
- o Collaboration with all bodies governing the field of education, training and development (ETD).

These principles are ideal, and they need to be strongly considered and remembered at all times and by all persons in the institutions. To achieve the purpose of these principles will also demand commitment in terms of human and financial resources.

Open and Distance Learning at Unisa

There is also an emphasis in open learning on the shift from institutional learning to a learner-centred and outcomes-based approach, and it is indicated that Unisa commits itself to this philosophy and practice. However, it is not spelled out in clear and specific terms what this commitment means. There is also an explanation of what distance learning is, and the various forms, technologies and strategies used. We are told that distance learning enables learners to become independent and critical thinkers, and to attain their educational goals, but how this will happen is not indicated at all.

The policy discusses what is to be taught, to whom, by what means, and by whom, but to put these issues in a policy without showing how they impact on teaching and learning may be a fruitless exercise.

Guidelines on the Tuition Policy

The Unisa Tuition Policy poses questions, the first of which is 'What is to be taught?' The first response to the question is an indication of what Unisa should offer. There is an emphasis on qualifications. Furthermore, there is no explanation of what the qualifications must conform to, and thus what curriculum development principles are to be followed.

Selection Principles and Criteria

The policy clearly states that courses must conform to the descriptions, as indicated in the policy. The challenge for implementation of the principles and criteria is the contradictions that arise between the two.

Curriculum Principles

The policy states that curricula should be developed according to stated principles. The principles reflect the values that are attached to each of them. The principles are broad and may have different interpretations.

To Whom?

This question focuses on open access to the university, and emphasises different mechanisms for gaining access, which are articulated in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

By What Means?

This is the second question, and the response is that programmes and courses should be taught by means of ODL and according to ODL principles. However, such ODL principles are not listed or described, although the implications of teaching using such principles are stated. The policy highlights a team approach to course/programme design, student support strategies, student-friendly environments, and quality promotion, assurance and control mechanisms. However, there is no suggestion as to how some of mentioned issues should be implemented.

By Whom?

This is the third question, and the response is that qualified and experienced teams should be selected from departments such as design, development, production, delivery and teaching, and learner support, in order to carry out the necessary tasks. The problem is such a selection is difficult due to time-frames and other constraints at the institution. The policy also recognises the contribution of learners and external reviewers of the study material. In reality, there are very few contributions by learners and external reviewers in the development of study material.

Evaluation of the Unisa Tuition Policy

While the literature does not have much to say about evaluating tuition policy in distance education, it is worth noting that a variety of acts and policies can be used for this task. Olssen, Codd & O'Neill (2004:2) argue that policy documents are discursive embodiments of the balance of these dynamics, as they underlie social relations at particular points in time. Hillier and Jameson (2003) affirm that research does not exist in a vacuum, but is strongly affected by prevailing educational trends, including policy-related issues. In the South African context, such policy-related issues are documented in various legislative documents. The aims of the policy can be captured in words that show a paradigm shift and, in the Unisa Tuition Policy, one sees words such as 'learner centeredness' and 'team-approach', and this emphasis shows the goals that this policy aims to achieve. New policy developments can be reflected in the language we use, and political and cultural trends are more or less subtly reflected in the language in which a policy is articulated and questions are framed (Hillier and Jameson, 2003:17). The use of terms such as 'collaboration' and 'teams' suggest the vision of social relations informing the Unisa Tuition Policy, and these new terms and concepts that have been used in policy development reveal the changes that are aimed at achieving specific goals.

One can conclude that the opening statement, 'The University of South Africa is a national asset and public institution,' implies the institution's approval of the new political system, and a desire to govern itself in accordance with this system. Educational policymaking has become highly politicised, as is shown by the 'principles' that Unisa commits itself to with respect to 'teaching and learning.' Given this fact, education policy must be read as transformative discourse, situated in both the national and international contexts, aiming to influence global survival and sustainability. According to Olssen, Codd & O'Neill (2004:3), the meaning of policy texts does not reside in the text itself as something to be 'discovered' or rendered 'visible,' but in the relationship between the text and the social structure, which is its context. This relationship can be sensed in the reference to principles such as 'academic excellence on an international standard which is contextually relevant to South Africa and Africa in general.'

Gellman-Danley and Fetzner (1998) developed a model containing seven factors that one should consider in relation to policy development in distance education. One of the factors is the academic policy, and the Unisa Tuition Policy broadly falls into this category. Here, the key issues are academic calendars, accreditation of programmes, course quality, course and programme evaluation, grading, admissions, curriculum review and approved processes. They believe that academic issues have more to do with why policies are critical, and deal with the overall integrity of a course. Since they deal with students, instruction, the curriculum and the programme, they have the longest and most widespread impact, and help ensure that institutional integrity is maintained (Simonson et al, 2003.)

Distance education policy development should follow an integrated approach. An academic policy such as a tuition policy should deal with issues such as course schedules and academic calendars; course and programme approval and evaluation; student admissions; the grading and assessment of students; grade record- keeping and reporting; and the accreditation process.

The CHE (2004a) describes the criteria for teaching and learning interaction in higher education. There must be effective teaching and learning methods, and learning materials and learning opportunities suitable to the facilitation of the process and to achieve the outcomes of the programme. The minimum requirement is that students are provided with guidance on the programme, and this contributes to its learning outcomes. There must also be an appropriate balance between and mix of different teaching and learning methods. Suitable learning opportunities must be provided for the development of skills and knowledge. Students must be given the opportunity to actively participate in the teaching and learning process, and staff must be provided with opportunities to upgrade their teaching and learning facilitation methods.

Although some of these issues are covered by the Unisa Tuition Policy, there are still 'gaps' in terms of depth. Furthermore, some of the issues such as targets, implementation plans and evaluating and monitoring tools are not fully covered by the policy.

The following documents help and contribute towards an historical understanding of the current theoretical framework in terms of the development of tuition policy.

4.3.2 The Open University of United Kingdom Teaching and Learning Strategy 2004-2008

The title of the document indicates the years in which it must be operationalised. This is critical to both developers and implementers.

The document lists the objectives that have to be achieved. The introduction explains why this document was written in 2000. It also describes the challenges that the Open University will have to meet in terms of the use of ICT in the service of teaching and learning. In addition, it considers developments in the higher education sector in the UK and worldwide. It also defines the terms and definitions used to clarify issues and further provides definitions of the following terms: distance learning and teaching, open learning, supported learning, and E-learning.

This document tells us that the fundamental purpose of the strategy is a clarification of the present learning and teaching activities, and indicates the direction of change that will enhance students' learning experience and secure the Open University's position as a provider. It describes the articulation of the Open University's policies and operating principles. The principles are based on the relationship between pedagogy and technology in terms of subject matter, level of study, expected types and levels of learning outcomes, student disabilities, student abilities and expectations, and intended markets. Attention is therefore given to the media to be used; forms of academic and generic learning support; future development of distance learning; cost-effectiveness of the creation, production and delivery of course material and learner support; initial and continuing professional development; institutional and pedagogic research; quality assurance and quality enhancement; and the interweaving of the curriculum and awards strategy with the student support strategy.

There are other strategies of the Open University, but the principle in all of these is that the curriculum and awards and student support strategies must be mutually

supportive. The Teaching and Learning Strategy therefore constitutes the middle-tier policy supporting the university's strategic plan.

The e-learning strategy provides dates by which the expansion of online communication and e-learning should be achieved. This part of the document covers associate lecturers, students, courses and phases of implementation. The Teaching and Learning Strategy supports the e-learning strategy because of the pedagogic advantages to be obtained through using technology.

Internal Contextual Considerations

It is indicated in this section that there are other policies and activities that impact on the teaching and learning strategy. The document comments on the following issues: the course and programme dimensions of the Open University's academic offerings; course model reviews; pedagogy and technology; increased cost-effectiveness of the Open University; target relevance; and implementation of the teaching and learning strategy at faculty and course team levels.

This is critical, as it indicates a holistic approach to policy implementation and development. The fact that the Open University sees learning and teaching as having an impact on other policies and activities, highlights the fact that Unisa does nothing of the sort.

The External Environment and the Open University's Strategic Responses

The 'Teaching and Learning Strategy' refers to the external environment and the Open University's strategic responses to it. The issues to be addressed are the growth of the knowledge economy and knowledge society; advent of globalisation in economic, political and educational activities; increasing consumer-like behaviour of students; demographic changes; increased competition; technology and the digital age; united government and European politics; increased student demands; and the improvement of social justice in education. The responses are to promote fair access for all, reinvigorate the brand, create market response as opposed to producer-led offerings in the markets, strengthen leadership in modern pedagogy, expand global reach and local presence, focus on research activities, work in partnership, generate

more income from diverse sources, ensure cost-effective and quality leadership, and diversify the staff base.

The 'Teaching and Learning Strategy' provides a number of strategic objectives and commentary on each of them, clearly outlining what needs to be done. The first objective that characterises their programmes is that, in order to have successful student engagement and knowledge, they must help by providing students with professional skills and being discipline-specific. Student support must feature strongly in each programme. This first objective must be attained in each faculty and school. The second objective aims at refining and enhancing the effectiveness of the students' learning and the university's teaching methods. The third objective is the extension of the university's capacities in e-learning, in order to enhance students' ICT-based learning experiences through the implementation of appropriate pedagogic strategies in its courses and programmes. The steps to be taken towards achieving this are described. The fourth objective emphasises the Open University's position as the leading provider of open, multimedia and online distance learning, and encourages the enhancement of the quality and pleasure of students' learning. The fifth objective is the promotion of the interrelationship between the planning activities in the middle tier of strategy formation, and the alignment of the curriculum and awards strategy, the teaching and learning strategy, and the student support strategy. The purpose of this is to successfully deliver the university's strategic plan. The sixth objective is greater openness and flexibility, which are to be achieved by various methods described in the document. The seventh objective is the promotion of the use of a range of knowledge and expertise in distance and online learning. There is an outline of how this could be achieved. The eighth objective is the assurance of the highest achievable quality (the greatest degree of fitness for purpose) of the materials and services provided by the Open University in the four areas of academic quality, pedagogic quality, media product quality, and quality of the service provided. This objective emphasises the notion of 'fitness for purpose' as the context in which academic standards are to be judged. The commentary requires that multi-media education offered by the University must harmonise the capacities offered by the latest media products with the qualities of the course material and student services offered. The ninth objective is that course creation, production, delivery and learner support systems must be cost-effective. Once again, there are guidelines as to how

this should be achieved. The 'Teaching and Learning Strategy' also emphasises benefits to be obtained from the advancement of technology in the production of materials, so that there can be cost-effectiveness in production and presentation.

Operational Plans, Targets and Planning

This section of the 'Teaching and Learning Strategy' describes how the targets and planning should occur. Although the strategy is presented as a 'top-down' construction, this is done to provide guidance and direction at all relevant levels of the university in terms of the activities covered in the text. The document acknowledges that each department and unit must operationalise its own objectives and criteria for success, and operational plans need to be built in a 'bottom-up' manner and will need to be an ongoing process. The document contains a set of specific goals, priorities and targets to be achieved according to a specific timeframe, the purposes of this being to improve and manage teaching and learning. Action is to be taken after consideration of what already exists and what needs to be changed, and of how to get the 'buy-in' of academic staff.

The 'Teaching and Learning Strategy' was adopted in March 2004, and will be used until 2008.

Gibbs (2001) criticises the 'Teaching and Learning Strategy' document in relation to the following issues:

o Some policy strategy exists on paper, but will not change teaching and learning in the real context, owing to a lack of appropriate mechanisms and processes;
o There is only a small shift from traditional teaching and learning approaches;
o The strategy will only change a few individuals and not many academics;
o It fails to address institutional issues such as the provision of time and funding for research;
o It is not grounded in theories of learning; and
o It fails to address 'quality issues'.

While this study agrees with some of the mentioned criticism, it still finds the same problem - i.e. that Gibbs does not indicate how we can deal with some of these challenges. There is a need for the development and implementation of a 'teaching and learning' strategy to transform teaching and learning in any higher education institution, more so for those practising ODL.

4.4 South African Policy and Acts

The South African education system is policy-driven and policy-dominated. When one looks at any South African educational policy, one needs to understand what issues it addresses, how the policy will influence one's work, and how one will respond. Some of the issues to be found are changes in political governance, trends in the international arena, influence of one policy on another, socio-economic issues, globalisation and its related effects, trends in ICT, development of knowledge, skills and values, and changes in human resource development. Thus, the policy scenario is very broad and complex, and often complicated. This definitely impacts on the way the policies will be implemented or even whether or not they will be implemented at all. In dealing with the intentions of South African educational policy, one can always sense the top-down approach, and most institutions react to the intention, if at all, without much analysis. Hillier and Jameson (2003:25) observe that, instead of a clear climate in which to carry out our work as practitioners, we always seem to be operating in an environment that is continuously raining with new policies. Perraton and Lentell (2004:3) acknowledge the role that distance education plays in the world at large, and say that we should be able to answer questions such as 'does it work, and if so, what policies are needed for it to work effectively?'

The various policy initiatives which have a bearing on the higher education sector in South Africa resulted in a number of Acts and other documents:

4.4.1 A New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education (NAP, 2002, Chapter 3 and 4)

This policy initiative aimed at providing an academic planning framework to achieve the goals of the NPHE (DoE, 2001a). It had to ensure that there is an integrated

qualification structure for higher education, articulation between institutions, and multiple entry and exit points in the qualification structure (CHE, 2004b:97).

The NAP (DoE, 2002) document is based on a number of premises, namely:

o The context is a policy trajectory aimed at building a single, coherent and coordinated higher education system in the long-term; and
o The SAQA-NQF system has already been established and works with an outcomes-based model of curriculum design.

In 2001, the Minister of Education remarked that the NPHE (DoE, 2001a) provides a strategic framework for re-engineering the higher education system in the twenty-first century. The NAP (DoE, 2002) aims at providing an academic framework for reconstructing the higher education system in order to achieve the goals of the Education White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997c).

As far back as 1997, the White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997c) proposed that, since higher education in South Africa comprises separate and parallel qualifications, there is a need for the establishment of a single qualifications framework for this sector. The New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education aims at effecting what has been outlined in the White Paper, the Higher Education Act, and the National Plan. It is quite interesting to note that other individuals take it for granted that people know what is set out in the aforementioned three documents. On the other hand, the policy (NAP) (DoE, 2002) categorically states that it has a bearing on all of the programmes offered by public and private institutions, as indicated in the Higher Education Act, as well as SAQA's NQF levels 5 to 10.

The NAP (DoE, 2002) also replaced all of the NATED policy documents. This included the replacement of NATED Report 116 (99/02): A qualifications structure for universities in South Africa, NATED Report 150 (97/01): General policy for technikon instructional programmes, and NATED Report 151(99/01): Formal technikon instructional programmes in the RSA. Now, because of all these replacements of the NATED policy documents, there is a myth that, by doing this, the NAP aimed at doing away with the apartheid framework, which had separate

qualification levels for different population groups (DoE, 2002). Subsequently, we see the development of SAQA and NQF to focus specifically on issues of qualifications and levels of learning. One of the reasons why SAQA developed the NQF was to transform generic knowledge and skills into practical experience. The SAQA (1995) established a discourse to look at articulation and flexibility of learning and higher education qualifications to be registered with the NQF. One of the main intentions of SAQA policy and regulations was to develop the discourse of articulation and flexibility in learning through a set of key concepts for higher education qualifications to be registered with the NQF (CHE, 2004b: 96). This has had an impact on the qualifications that distance education institutions such as Unisa offer, and the 'time span' for completing such qualifications. Though the NAP ties in closely with the implementation of the NQF in higher education, there is still a dark cloud of uncertainty, and we have seen many changes to qualification levels.

As indicated earlier, one of the obvious things that posed a challenge for the South African education system was to address the issues of equity, redress and reconstruction. In the next section, the author discusses some of the policy documents developed in an attempt to address these issues.

4.4.2 White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, 1997

The purpose of the White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997c) was to provoke discussion on the idea that higher education should equip individuals to address the development needs of the labour market in a knowledge-driven society. In addition, it proposed that higher education should aim at helping in the socialisation of critical citizens who would contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge. Neither of these had previously been an aim of the higher education system, which had fostered the production, acquisition and application of new knowledge rather than high-level skills training. The White Paper claims that the transformation of the higher education system will need increased participation, responsiveness to societal interests and needs, and cooperation and partnerships in governance. The ministry's vision of a transformed higher education system purports to be based on the principles of equity

and redress, democratisation, development, quality, effectiveness and efficiency, academic freedom, institutional autonomy and public accountability.

The White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997c) concerns itself with issues of equity and redress, and therefore, and in accordance with the ministry's decision, proposes the structure and development plan for a single, co-ordinated higher education system. Colleges such as agricultural colleges and colleges of education would have to be integrated into the higher education system, technikons would have to be integrated into universities, and private education institutions would have to be regulated. On the topic of distance education and resource-based learning, the White Paper 3 declared that these must be based on the principles of open learning. In Chapter 1 of this study, the author stated some implications regarding the definition of open learning, as opposed to ODL. The South African Institute for Distance Education lists the following principles as those necessary for sound open learning:

- o learning opportunities should be lifelong and should encompass both education and training;
- o the learning process should centre on the learners, build on their experience and encourage independent and critical thinking;
- o learning provision should be flexible, so that learners can increasingly choose where, when, what and how they learn, as well as the pace at which they will learn;
- o prior learning, prior experience and demonstrated competencies should be recognised, so that learners are not unnecessarily barred from educational opportunities by lack of appropriate qualifications;
- o learners should be able to accumulate credits from different learning contexts; and
- o providers should create the conditions necessary for a fair chance of learner success.

According to the SAIDE, the term 'distance education' describes a collection of methods for the provision of structured learning, and avoids the need for learners to discover a curriculum by attending classes frequently and for long periods of time. It aims at creating a quality learning environment, using an appropriate combination of

different learning resources, tutorial support, peer group discussion and practical sessions. It has particular significance for open learning, because it has demonstrated great potential for increasing openness in learning, and it has also been shown to be a cost-effective method of education (SAIDE, 2006).

However, the challenges will be to meet and expand access, diversify learners and enhance quality against the backdrop of resource constraints. In order to achieve the targets of flexible learning, there must be better utilisation of scarce and expensive physical resources, scholarships must be provided to indigent students and teaching expertise fostered. In this regard, the White Paper 3 advocates a national framework to facilitate distance education and resource-based learning. This idea was carried forward as the need for a single, dedicated distance education institution that provides innovative and quality programmes, especially at the undergraduate level, to meet the skills requirements of the country. This became a reality when the three existing distance education institutions were merged in 2003 to form a new Unisa.

The Ministry also anticipated that distance education and resource-based learning would integrate lifelong learning into the higher education system. In order to create a coherent natural framework, a task team on distance education and resource-based learning was established, in collaboration with the CHE.

The White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997c) also discussed the need to establish a qualifications framework for higher education, the need for a quality assurance system for higher education, admission and selection procedures, language policy, research, capacity building and human resource development. A key emphasis of the White Paper 3 ((DoE, 1997c:20) is on policy commitment by the Ministry of Education towards the transformation of governance in higher education institutions.

Lastly, the White Paper 3 ((DoE, 1997c:33) recommended the improvement of public accountability for the public funds that institutions use. To this effect, the institutions were going to have to prepare a comprehensive strategic plan, comprising a distinctive mission statement, an academic development plan, an equity plan, capital management plan, and a performance improvement plan, for submission to the Ministry.

The White Paper 3 states that 'In South Africa today, the challenge is to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve the new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities.' This entails the development of various policy and programme interventions in higher education institutions. The Unisa Tuition Policy can be seen as one of these.

The White Paper 3 led to the adoption of the Higher Education Act of 1997 (DoE, 1997a), which replaced the Universities Act of 1955 (Act No.61 of 1955), the Tertiary Education Act of 1988 (Act No.66 of 1988), and the Technikon Act of 1993 (Act No. 125 of 1993).

4.4.3   The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997

One of the critical acts that changed the higher education landscape was the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (DoE, 1997a). This Act deals with a number of issues that have shaped the higher education system since its inception.

The purposes of the Act are to regulate higher education by providing for: the establishment, governance and funding of public higher education institutions; the appointment and functions of an independent assessor; the registration of private higher education institutions; quality assurance and quality promotion in higher education; transitional arrangements and the repealing of certain laws; and other matters connected with the above.

The Act contains definitions, as well as enabling the determination of higher education policy. The Minister is empowered to initiate this after consulting the CHE, and must table such policy in parliament and publish it in the Government Gazette. The Act also provides procedures on how to establish public higher education institutions. One of the critical aspects is the procedure related to the merging of higher education institutions and sub-divisions of public higher education institutions. This provision was reflected in the 2003 merger of Unisa and the TSA,

and the incorporation of VUDEC, to form a single, dedicated distance education institution, resulting in the creation of a new Unisa as a comprehensive university.

The Act stipulates the various governance structures that must exist in higher education institutions, and how appointments to such structures are to be made. Furthermore, the Act describes the procedures for the funding of public higher education institutions and the appointment of independent assessors on assessment panels. The Act also makes provision for the Director-General to be the registrar of private higher education institutions, and regulates such registrations.

The Act gives the CHE responsibility for the accreditation of higher education programmes and, through the HEQC, the responsibility to promote quality assurance. In this context, the Ministry tasked the CHE in 2000 to investigate different aspects of distance education in South Africa, culminating in a report published in 2004.

The Higher Education Act has led to the development of several other policies and regulations with which higher education institutions have to comply, and has induced institutions such as Unisa to respond to the challenges posed in the Act, by ensuring that its distance education courses and programmes comply with the provisions of the Act.

4.4.4   The National Commission on Higher Education, 1999

The historical context of higher education in South Africa was the unequal development of education for different population groups. The Commission states that South Africa's higher education system was well resourced, but that resources were not equally distributed among institutions catering for different population groups. There was therefore a need to clear the system of its deficiencies, and to look at new realities, opportunities and challenges. The principles informing the new framework would require the provision of resources and opportunities to be based on equity, in an attempt to address past inequities.

This document demands that there be increased participation, co-operation and partnerships, greater responsiveness, and diversification within a single, co-ordinated

higher education system, and identifies Unisa as a distance education university that can play a leading role in increasing access to higher education by previously disadvantaged youth and adults.

The NCHE (DoE, 1996a) advocated the engagement of various social structures in the policy-making process through the establishment of a large 'national consultative forum', (Cloete and Maassen, 2001:461). In order to achieve this, the relations between governance structures at a national, regional and institutional level must be re-examined. The NCHE aimed at transforming the higher education system in conformity with the guiding principles of equity, democratisation, development, quality, academic freedom/institutional autonomy, effectiveness and efficiency.

4.4.5 The National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa, (NPHE), 2001

The National Plan provides an important framework and procedures for the implementation of all policy goals, as stated in White Paper 3 of 1997 (DoE, 1997a). The plan gives advice on how to further restructure higher education institutions. In essence, the NPHE (DoE, 2001a) carries out the goals of the White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997a), with a view to transforming basic procedures.

The purposes of the NPHE (DoE, 2001a) are as follows:

o To ensure that higher education transformation takes place (in accordance with the recommendations made in White Paper 3);
o To ensure the systematic provision of higher education at a national level;
o To effectively manage resources and public funds; and
o To improve the quality of academic programmes (including teaching and research).

The purposes of the NPHE also include the promotion of equity of access and the fair chance of success, and of well-planned and coordinated teaching and learning and research programmes, support for the democratic ethos, and the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship.

The NPHE proposes that academic development programmes should be funded as an integral part of the new funding formula, a proposal that would affect the balance of enrolments between various specialisations at Unisa. However, the major proposal of the NPHE relating to institutional restructuring was the establishment of a single, dedicated distance education institution to address the opportunities presented by distance education, by increasing access both locally and in the rest of Africa.

The NPHE also identifies five key policy goals and strategic objectives to be achieved in overhauling the higher education system:

o The provision of increased access to higher education on a non-discriminatory basis. This means that there would be a need to develop learner support in distance education. The tuition policy would need to be very clear on learner support strategies.

o The promotion of equity of access and redress. There would be more access to higher education through ODL, and the 'promotion of equity and redress mechanism' would have to be articulated in clear terms in the tuition policy.

o Diversity in organisational form and institutional landscape. There should be various forms (face-to-face and distance education) which would be influenced by the geographical landscape in South Africa.

o The establishment of high-level research, which must influence the identification of best practice in distance education.

o The building of new institutional and organisational forms. Owing to the advancement of ICT, there would be more demands in ODL to integrate this with the institutional and organisational structure.

The NPHE also provides a number of desirable outcomes to be achieved on the way to transformation. Some of them, such as increased participation rate, increased graduate output, broadened social base of students, increased recruitment of students from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), changed enrolment patterns in various fields of study, and the enhancement of the cognitive skills of graduates, have an impact on how Unisa carries out its teaching and learning tasks.

There are strategies based on priorities, in order to help achieve each of the goals. SAUVCA (2001:7) says that the NPHE offers the first real opportunity to deliver, since the uncertainty over the implementation procedures of White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997a), which ended up in creating 'transformation fatigue'. SAUVCA sees the NPHE not as a visionary piece of policy beyond implementation, but as a serious, pragmatic, cautious and incremental document dealing with issues that the government feels are relevant and politically correct (SAUVCA, 2001). The Department of Education (DoE, 2001b) demonstrated that the graduation rate of White students was at least twice as high as that of Black students. One of the reasons for this was that most Black students were primarily located in distance education programmes and received little support from their institutions.

The NPHE called for the creation of a single, dedicated distance education institution and the regulation of the provision of distance education programmes by contact institutions. It also insisted on the maintenance of research and promotion of teaching as integral components of distance education. At Unisa, such teaching is regulated by the tuition policy.

4.4.6 Council on Higher Education: Distance Education Task Team Report, 2004

The purpose of the CHE's (2004d) Distance Education Report was to investigate matters regarding distance education, and to advise the Minister of Education. The chief issues to be addressed were access to distance education programmes, quality of programmes and learning resources, and the conditions and criteria that should govern the provision of distance education, especially the role of the new Unisa and residential universities in providing distance education. The provision of the 'Improving Teaching and Learning Resources' document with resources 1, 2 and 3 that are related to the audit criteria for teaching and learning, as well as programme accreditation criteria for programme planning, design and management, was one of the milestones of the investigation.

The NPHE had raised two serious issues relating to distance education: the lack of a clear policy in the offering of distance education by contact and distance universities,

and the quality of the programmes offered in distance education. Furthermore, the NPHE endorsed the vision presented in the CHE's 'Size and Shape' report - that in distance education, there must be a clear policy directive with conditions and criteria regulating the provision of distance education by traditional contact institutions. The Ministry of Education had asked the task team to give advice on the conditions and criteria which should pertain to the provision of distance education, the role of distance education in the ICT era, and the role of a single, dedicated distance education institution in South Africa, the new Unisa. This meant that the task team would have to unravel the complexity of distance education provision by face-to-face and distance universities.

The investigation was also aimed at assisting distance education provider/s to carry out the mandate stated in the White Paper 3 ((DoE, 1997a), which was: to improve equity and fair access to higher education; to meet national development needs such as the need for skilled employees; to contribute globally to all forms of knowledge and scholarship; to address the diverse problems and demands of the local, national, Southern African and African contexts; and to uphold rigorous standards of academic quality.

The advice to the Minister of Education by the CHE Task team centred on the conditions and criteria governing distance education in both distance education institutions and face-to-face universities, and the broader role of distance education in higher education, against the background of current and future international trends and changes in ICT. The role of the single, dedicated distance education institution in South Africa had to be defined. In order to accomplish this, the CHE Task Team had to develop a shared understanding of the nature of distance education, its costs and its role in the higher education sector. This further implied the development of guidelines for role differentiation in the distance education sector, and the recommendation of conditions and criteria for distance education provision. Furthermore, the issues relating to the proposal for a funding framework for distance education and the development of high-quality learning resources were to be investigated. The references made in this report point to a variety of issues which the single, dedicated distance education institution (Unisa) would have to comply with. Ultimately, issues

146

relating to teaching and learning, as indicated in the Unisa Tuition Policy, were to be addressed.

Findings

In their Policy Advice Report, the task team made several findings:

o   Distance education plays a very significant role in higher education provision;

o   The dedicated distance education institution is currently the major provider (Unisa);

o   The pattern of distance education provision is very different from national targets;

o   There is little evidence of any large-scale convergence to the middle on the continuum of contact and distance education;

o   Within the continuum, there is a clear role for the new, dedicated distance education institution (Unisa); and

o   There are some innovative and high-quality distance education programmes to be found at traditional face-to-face institutions, and some of their models can be used to reach students in remote areas.

The investigation into distance education policy revealed that there were still serious problems in the design and implementation of distance education programmes. It is against this background that CHE recommended the proposed criteria contained in the HEQC First Cycle of Audits: 2004-2009. In terms of criterion 4, the policies and procedures for assessment must take into account the particular contexts of distance education students.

The proposed characteristics for the dedicated distance education institution are as follows: the institution should be effective, efficient, and equitable; it should focus on increasing meaningful access to higher education, especially for working and disadvantaged people; and it should develop a critical mass in order to deliver strong programmes in targeted areas.

The report concludes by indicating that there are serious policy issues to be dealt with in relation to distance education, which are the poor quality of materials, the uneven integration of ICT into course material, the lack or absence of formative assessment, the uncertain level of exit outcomes for some courses, and the low throughput rate. Some of these issues are a direct reflection of the situation at Unisa.

For the new Unisa, as a dedicated distance education institution, the CHE recommended that it should increase access to higher education, provide affordable and flexible entry requirements, concentrate on large–enrolment courses, develop further capacity in distance education delivery, implement decentralised student support, engage in research and development of distance education practices, and collaborate with residential universities by playing a leading role in building a national infrastructure. In this study, the impact of the investigation on the views and experiences of various stakeholders regarding the Unisa Tuition Policy leads to the recommendation that there must be a framework of guidelines to help institutions to transform practices that are counterproductive and costly, and to embark on collaborative learning resource development. If this can be done, we will be addressing some of the issues raised by the CHE task team.

4.5   Acts and Policies in Institutional Context

The past twelve years of the democratic government have produced a number of policy documents aimed at changing the higher education scene in South Africa and influencing distance education provision. The documents discussed in this study highlight some of the following issues: the importance of the cost-effectiveness of distance education in a limited resources context; the notion of a single, dedicated distance education institution; the distinction between face-to-face and distance education institutions; the quality of distance education programmes; the need for collaboration in course design and development; and the development of network learning centres throughout South Africa. CHE (2004c) points out that after 1994, policy developments in the sphere of learning have focused on two issues, namely the imperative to respond to apartheid legacy, and global trends.

SAUVCA (2002:6) advises that in order to meet the challenges of transformation in higher education, some of the national policies have set in motion change initiatives that require concerted effort and intensive resource application by the state and higher education sector. One of the key elements in the vision of transformation is an integrated policy development that will ensure that complex policy streams achieve the anticipated benefits. It in this context that the changes advocated by these documents need to happen at the institutional level. SAUVCA (2001) suggests that the following policy issues need special attention: integration research, academic planning and quality assurance, the NQF programmes and qualifications, as in the new academic policy, governance, equity and labour issues, data collection and reporting, and funding.

The developments of the Acts and policies in higher education have had a direct or indirect influence on teaching and learning in distance education. The requirement that the CHE (2004d) Distance Education Task Team advise the Minister of Education on the provision of distance education can be seen as being of direct concern in terms of what is happening in distance education in South Africa today. The requirement could have been influenced by the fact that the provision of distance education programmes grew by 31% in 2001 (DoE, 2001b). The report makes a variety of recommendations, the critical ones being that the dedicated distance education institution (the new Unisa) should:

o Increase meaningful access to higher education, especially for the disadvantaged;
o Increase access by providing affordable opportunities and flexible entry requirements;
o Concentrate on large enrolment courses so as to benefit from economies of scale;
o Develop capacity in distance education delivery through reflective practices and staff development;
o Implement student support nationally;
o Engage in research and development of distance education practices; and
o Play a key role in national infrastructure, and collaborate with face-to-face institutions.

The ultimate aim of these recommendations is to improve teaching and learning in distance education. In this light, the Unisa Tuition Policy could be seen as the concomitant policy development in the area of curriculum. However, institutional policy developments are usually received critically, and are therefore not always as effective in bringing about the necessary changes as national policy developments. The policy frameworks imposed from above by the management and the Senex will not easily transform teaching and learning practices, especially if we want to achieve policy-driven reform of the fundamental curriculum. This implies that the new national academic policy must be finalised, in order to guide institutional teaching and learning approaches. Furthermore, institutions must respond to issues on teaching and learning that support specific policy goals such as equity, student throughput and success rates. The accelerated change in the higher education curriculum and systemic change in relation to aspects of the curriculum will not take place until the new academic policy is in place (CHE, 2003:100). CHE (2004b) indicates that national policy developments in the area of curriculum changes have been critically received by the academic community, with the critique tending to focus on assumptions that may be implied with respect to the nature of knowledge and learning.

Many changes to the curriculum and the academic programme will have to take place, in any event, to satisfy the provisions of the NQF and SAQA, especially with regard to the outcomes–based approach. The conceptualisation of the NQF and the prescription that we should have learning outcomes for each course and module in each qualification undermines the importance of the outcomes of qualifications. A key policy contribution of SAQA[1] was the development of the discourse of articulating flexibility in learning through key concepts in order for higher education qualifications to be registered on the NQF academic programmes as a 'planned combination of learning outcomes with a defined purpose or purposes', (CHE, 2004a:97). The emphasis was on applied competence, lifelong learning, generic skills and recognition of prior learning (RPL). To support this, the NAP document connected policy goals such as an integrated qualification structure for higher

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[1] Regulations under the SAQA Act 1995, NSB Regulations. Government Gazette No. 18787.

education, articulation between institutions, and multiple entry and exit points in the qualifications structure (CHE, 2004a:97). The Minister of Education, together with the Minister of Labour, through NQF and SAQA, proposed three types of learning and interdependent pathways: discipline-based; trade, occupation and professional (TOP); and career-focused learning (CHE, 2004a:97).

Furthermore, the provision of learning outcomes for each course and module becomes monotonous. Change, therefore, will in all likelihood focus on 'form' rather than on 'content' - the typical response perceptible in the context of the response to the Unisa Tuition Policy. CHE (2004a:99) warns that changes in teaching and learning cannot occur simply through the imposition of policy frameworks, and that changing the forms of programmes (for instance, to the outcomes-based format) will not guarantee quality. On the contrary, the CHE (2004b:100) recommends that in order for any serious curricula reforms to be enabled, we need to strengthen existing modes of curricula through the increased professionalism of academic staff with respect to teaching and learning.

In taking up this transformational challenge, one of the ranges of issues to address will be the transformation of teaching and learning activities at an institutional level. And here, one thinks of teaching and learning delivery modes, widening access and the development of a learner–centred curriculum in the merged institution (the new Unisa). All of these issues impact on the institutional tuition policy, and will therefore impact on the implementation of such a policy.

CHE (2004a) concludes that we urgently need a systemic framework for transformation in higher education teaching and learning, as well as in the curriculum. Finally, a comprehensive understanding of teaching and learning practices across the higher education scenario in South Africa should help in providing solutions to systemic problems, and should guide good practice. However, the depiction of teaching and learning practices in institutional policies might be an expression of desire rather than a description of an existing reality, and would be influenced by the ideological framework of the institution. However, an apparent issue here is that there would be characteristics of opposing ideologies in the Unisa Tuition Policy. In defining policy and ideology, Ball (1990) says that the process is characterised by

bargaining and negotiations, as the stakeholders try to reach a common understanding. Perhaps this should have happened at Unisa.

Some of the Acts and policies discussed here are responses to developments in South African higher education, including the current growth in distance education. Much of the debate has to do with comparing distance and face-to-face education. Research shows that good distance teaching practices can be equalled to good classroom teaching practices, because in both situations, the quality factors are universal (Wilkes and Burnham, 1991). In analysing the above Acts and policies, we are confronted with the question of whether or not teaching and learning in distance education is addressed in its context. One has to look at the Unisa Tuition Policy and its relevancy in addressing teaching and learning at the institution.

The Policy Analysis Framework presented by Gellman-Danley and Fetzner (1998) is a powerful tool to help decision-markers in the policy arena of distance education. King et al (2000) note that this framework is in a way an attempt to conceptualise and manage the distance education system through incentives, openness and the management of the structure. Consequently, developing policies in areas where weaknesses are found is the best way to help ensure that transition from near – randomly offered courses to fully fledged distance education programmes that provide certification, license and degrees - is achieved (King et al, 2000:5). Sound policies should lead to and support sound programmes in distance education.

A common characteristic of successful distance education organisations is the recognition that faculties are central to the instructional mission of the institution. Therefore, institutional and academic unit policies must be responsive to the changing roles of the faculty, as well as the changing needs of students (Dillon and Walsh, 1992; Olcott, 1996).

Policies provide a framework for the operation of distance education, and form a set of agreed rules that explain roles and responsibilities (Simonson et al, 2003:19). In a context where policy gives structure to unstructured events, they become a natural step in the development of innovation, as in distance education. Therefore, the development of rules and regulations and policies must be institutionalised (Rogers,

1995). One of the key indicators that distance education is moving into the mainstream is the increased emphasis on the need for policies to guide its effective growth (Simonson et al, 2003:19).

The CHE (2003) identified the elements of policies and procedures, and supplied them with descriptors. The descriptors are as follows:

o The provider has developed clearly defined policies, procedures and realistic time-frames for the design and approval of its academic offerings, and provides guidelines for academic staff and programme teams to work from;

o The institution has a well-planned course/modular and programmes-based system, in which the credit-ratings, level and status (e.g. core or elective) of its modules are clearly specified, so that they articulate internally; and

o All programmes in the institution are approved on the basis of transparent criteria, by an institutional authority that is independent of the programme team. There is consistency of standards across the institution.

When one looks at the above descriptors, one wonders if the Unisa Tuition Policy conforms to these tenets. In terms of teaching and learning, one is confronted by the CHE's Improving Teaching and Learning Resource (ITLR) report which intended to advise on teaching and learning issues in higher education. One of the critiques is that the ITLR is used and should be understood according to the interpretive paradigm. Although there is justification for this approach; it relies a lot on the interpretation and application of the NQF and the operation of OBE[2] and NQF (Killen, 2002). The ITLR should be used in conjunction with the HEQC criteria when HE institutions develop their internal quality management systems, including self-evaluation and review mechanisms. This is a challenge for HE institutions, as the interpretation of HEQC criteria is not the same in the variety of contexts of these institutions. The variety of stakeholders (academics, senior and middle managers, programme directors, expert personnel working in quality assurance, academic development units, library, student development and staff development may have different views and interpretations of what is 'good practice' when it comes to teaching and learning).

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[2] Outcomes-Based Education - an approach focusing on changes in teaching methods and assessment, introduced in South Africa after 1994.

The ITLR report advocates the provision of new policies and systems for teaching and learning and quality assurance. This will also include merging and restructured institutions. The challenge is that almost all HE institutions are struggling with merging and restructuring issues, and they tend to neglect quality assurance and teaching and learning issues. ITLR, like some of the other policies, may remain strong on paper, but may not have any major impact on teaching and learning practices. There may be difficulties in linking the ITLR to theories of teaching and learning. One may conclude either that the Unisa Tuition Policy was developed before these descriptors were issued, or that the Unisa Tuition Policy only addresses these descriptors at a surface level.

HEQC frameworks and policies show that teaching and learning are at the centre stage of quality assurance and receive the deserved attention in terms of good practice. ITLR has made an enormous contribution in terms of acknowledging the value and importance of discipline knowledge in curriculum design and development. However, the issues of quality assurance, as described by HEQC, undermine the issues of integrating knowledge into the outcomes. Shalem, Allais & Steinberg, 2004:53) share the concern that ITLR adheres to the complexity of learning, but the HEQC as a delivery tool, cannot marry the alignment to a specialised field of knowledge and outcome statement discourse. Table 4.2 below illustrates a classification of the criticisms of the ITLR.

Table 4.2 Improving Teaching and Learning Resource (ITLR): criticisms

Issues	Factors	Criticism
Quality Assurance to improve teaching and learning	There are various stakeholders	The difference in thinking and operation of the various stakeholders
Meta-narrative of learning and teaching	We need a good knowledge base, and framework of meaning and concepts	The issue of 'what is good knowledge' and application of various meaning and concepts to practice
Transformative learning	This should be grounded in good practice	The challenge is in terms of what good practice in teaching and learning is

Issues	Factors	Criticism
Environments for active teaching and learning	Operation in surface, deep and strategic learning	This demands good reflection on the part of practitioners

The ITLR makes a generalisation in terms of the link between discipline knowledge and career focus.

4.6   Conclusion

In this chapter, the author has analysed the Unisa Tuition Policy within the context of other Acts and policies relating to the South African higher education system. He has also analysed the Unisa Tuition Policy against the backdrop of the Open University of the United Kingdom Teaching and Learning Strategy. As policy documents are formulations of particular information, ideas and intentions, the task of the analysis was an attempt to establish a correct interpretation of the text. The policy documents discussed here had several implications for institutions such as Unisa, as a dedicated distance education university. These documents and policies influence how institutions view their learning programmes, the outcomes of their learning programmes, and articulation in and between curriculum offerings. Debates about teaching and learning, delivery modes, widening access and academic development, curriculum development in the context of the mergers, and learner-centred approaches to curricula will continue and become central to the future development of different sectors of higher education, including distance education (CHE, 2004a:100). These debates need to be robust at national and institutional levels, and need to involve critical stakeholders such as academics, managers and students. In order to widen access and facilitate academic development of teaching and learning, we will have to include bridging and foundation programmes or extended curriculum programmes focusing on developing academic skills (CHE, 2004b:101). It is in this context that SAUVCA (2003b) argues for abandoning the classification of higher education institutions on the basis of delivery modes, and proposes the convergence of delivery modes through ODL.

In the institutions which have been subject to mergers and incorporations, the most obvious challenges have to do with structures (colleges, schools, departments within institutions), and also with several aspects of teaching and learning, such as aligning teaching and delivery approaches, quality management systems, and the choice of a programme and qualification mix (CHE, 2004b). The commitment to the NPHE in terms of teaching and learning must be pursued in a vigorous way. CHE (2004a:103) concludes that there must be a comprehensive understanding of teaching and learning practice in the South African higher education system, leading to a clear, systemic process and formulation of good practice guidelines. These policy documents have sought to balance simultaneous challenges for the higher education curriculum (social and economic transformation, and globalisation) by applying specific principles and practices (CHE, 2004a:96).

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS

5.1   Introduction

In Chapter 4, this study showed that the historical development of higher education in South Africa and legislation and policy development since 1994 have led to a new situation in higher education, as policy development in distance education has led to some fresh tensions and trajectories, and issues of teaching and learning will depend on institutional policy development and implementation. Within the institution, there would need to be interaction among different stakeholders about what they see as the optimal mode of implementation of the tuition policy.

One of the main intentions of Chapter 4 was to make specific reference to the research question concerning the nature and status of the Unisa Tuition Policy in context. In this chapter, the author explores the next research question, by looking at the role of the different stakeholders in the development and implementation process. Given the fact that they may have different roles to play, it will be of critical importance to explore their views regarding the process.

In an institution such as Unisa, there are various stakeholders involved in delivering the core business of the institution, which is teaching and learning, research and community engagement. Policy development and implementation is therefore a complex process which may manifest itself in a variety of ways. Different stakeholders, groups and individuals will be involved in various ways. The development and implementation of an institutional policy such as this is determined by the interaction of the various components in the institution, the context of operation in the institution, and the individuals who interact with others in order to achieve effective teaching and learning. In planning distance education, we must consider that the various groups involved reflect the goals and mission of the institution, and allow for flexibility to respond quickly to changing conditions (Johnstone and Tilson, 1997:69).

In analysing the data that was collected, the author relied on his interpretation of the responses in the context of his own knowledge of the various points of analysis. He looked at the responses of the various stakeholder groups and focused on trends, patterns and differences in their knowledge of and attitudes towards the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. He also tried to develop a deeper understanding of the responses from management, students, academics, learning developers and external stakeholders.

5.2   Context of the Policy Process

There are various views on what the policy process is. Walford (2001) strongly argues that the policy process is complex, dynamic and interactive. Spillane, Peterson, Prawat, Jennings & Borman (1996) advocate broad plans which look at the nature of social problems, governance and organisational systems in which policies operate and people are willingly involved. The policy scholarship model looks at deep historical, structural and ideological contradictions. The policy process is therefore not a clear-cut process (Ball and Bowe, 1992b). The current growth in distance education has contributed to the development of a number of policies. Some of the policies developed out of the comparison between distance and face-to-face education. In comparing distance and face-to-face education, research shows that good distance teaching practices are fundamentally related to good classroom teaching practices, as quality factors are universal across environments and populations (Wilkes and Burnham, 1991). The policy process is further complicated due to how developers and implementers see their roles.

Consideration of the research question exposed some of the factors related to tuition policy development and implementation. It is in this context that we see contention in terms of policy and ideology. In defining policy and ideology, Ball (1990) says that the process is characterised by bargaining and negotiations, as the stakeholders try to come to a common understanding. In this study, the analysis and investigation into the policy reflected different ideological views, systems and principles, which, at times, were competing with each other. This makes the policy development and implementation process complex and complicated.

In order for one to understand the complexity of policy change, development and implementation, one must look at the complex relationships which may influence the process because of different ideas and paradigms (Ball, 1998). Van Zanten (2002) says that when one interprets policy in practice, there may be an unintentional alteration of the intentions, owing to the influence of the context and the interests of the stakeholders. The interpretation of the policy and the action one takes thereafter will rely on one's mental model of the policy in relation to the world that one knows. We can see this in operation in the stakeholders' reactions to the Unisa policy document, which they contextualised in terms of authority and dominance. This particular instance of contextualisation had to do not only with their sense of the imposition of authority from above, but also with the belief that some stakeholders had been afforded better roles than others.

In distance education, there are assumptions that are based on the relationship between the implementation of policy and production of the intended outcomes. Policies therefore provide a framework for the practitioner of distance education and form a set of agreed rules that explain roles and responsibilities (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2003:19). In the context where policies give structure to unstructured events, they become a natural step in the development of innovation. Distance education is moving into the mainstream. This is why there is also an increased emphasis on the need for policies to guide its effective growth (Simonson et al, 2003:19).

5.3   Context of the Participants

Research and literature on policy development and implementation in distance education show that there will be various changes as policy moves within the different levels in the institutional structure. There are many reasons for this, including the influence of the mental models of individuals and the groups to which they belong in making meaning out of the policy documents they read. Such mental models affect our behaviour in any given context. The author argues that the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy is influenced by how the groups' mental models shape their understanding of the policy. The different stakeholders, such as the management, academics, learning developers, students and external stakeholders, will

inevitably have different interpretations of the Unisa Tuition Policy, because they have different notions of the world to which it applies.

Owing to their various institutional positions, some of the individuals and groups in the research population have a more dominant role in the institution than others. It is within these parameters that, at times, we see evidence of the conflict, contradiction and difference in their mental models. Role conflict becomes pre-eminent when stakeholders want to lay claim to the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy, perhaps as a move in the game of acquiring and preserving institutional power. This is further influenced by stakeholders' attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and ability to understand and interpret the Unisa Tuition Policy and its subsequent implementation. This study therefore attended to issues having to do with the understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy, stakeholders' roles in implementation, focuses of the policy, extent of the various stakeholders' opportunities to implement the policy, and the weaknesses or barriers in this regard**.**

The democratic process in South Africa has produced its own vocabulary, including the word 'transparency', which in most circumstances implies that people participate, even though they may not understand the processes. There has been a tendency to politicise the issue of participation, whereby it is seen as much more than actively taking part. Participation can be at the beginning or end of the process. The process can be controversial, contested and now and then reversed. The desire for democracy in South Africa brings with it a confidence in the variety of views people hold, and the variety of practices in which they engage. In distance education, representation in decision-making groups can be a critical issue, as it may influence the product that is directed to the students. However, representation may also introduce a variety of conflicting views and concepts into the decision-making process. In the Unisa context, various stakeholders within the institution interact with the tuition policy as part of their working schedule, and form views on what the policy is saying. The fact that various stakeholders use the Unisa Tuition Policy so differently from one another is therefore justified in their minds, whether consciously or unconsciously, by their particular mind-sets and views of the world.

In the author's view, an implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy will be more successful in terms of how we address the following questions in the teaching and learning context of ODL:

(a) What is the understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy?

(b) What is the focus of the policy (what does the policy address?)

(c) Who participated in the development of the policy?

(d) What opportunities and possibilities are there for implementation of the policy? (How do academics and learning developers interpret the policy and apply it in the writing of study guides?)

(e) What are the obstacles to the implementation of the policy?

(f) How do the various stakeholders (academics, learning developers, management and external stakeholders) interact with the policy?

The literature on policy implementation supports the view that when policies are made to be applied in practice, there is the likelihood that they will change as they permeate down to different levels of staff. In this study, the author argues that the interpretation of the Unisa Tuition Policy is influenced by the individual's beliefs, mental models and actions in real situations. The following table lists the relevant stakeholders and suggests how they are influenced by their mental models in their interpretation and operationalisation of the Unisa Tuition Policy.

Table 5.1 Mental models

Participants	Action/behaviour/thinking influenced by mental models	Factors to consider
Management	Drive the development and implementation of the policy	Management style, authority
Academics	Concerned with teaching (how to make students learn?)	Content and subject specialist

Participants	Action/behaviour/thinking influenced by mental models	Factors to consider
Learning Developers	Advise on the teaching and learning design	Teaching and learning design. Move from content-centred to learner-centred teaching
External Stakeholders	Contribution to and influence of distance teaching	Trends and benchmarks in distance education
Students	Learn effectively and complete their studies	Achieve results in the best possible time. Implement what they have learned

The author adopted the mental model argument from Senge (1990:8), wherein he defines mental models as 'deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action.' Schön (1991) calls this a professional 'repertoire', wherein we are aware of the impact of our assumptions and our behaviour, and that we need to 'reflect-in and on-action'. This is related to what Argyris (1994) describes as 'theory-of-action' and 'theory-in-use'. In this chapter, the author addresses the research question by grouping views and experiences into the following themes: basic understanding of the policy, focuses of the policy (what is policy addressing?), role in the development of the policy, implementation hurdles or obstacles and implementation opportunities or strengths, and consequences if the policy is effectively implemented.

Parisot (1997) advises that it is crucial for institutional policymakers to develop a thorough understanding of faculty experiences in the distance learning environment, before implementing new procedures. Finkelstein, Frances, Jewett & Scholz (2000) note that policymakers face an array of bewildering choices related to distance education, including campus infrastructure, support for the changing relationships between universities, support for the changing role of faculty, and cost implications.

5.4 Making Sense of the Unisa Tuition Policy: Views and Experiences from Various Participants

Questionnaire Findings: Part A

The questionnaire had two sections, as indicated in Chapter 5. In the administration of the questionnaire, the author was assisted by two postgraduate Unisa students. He had the cooperation of the participants, although participation was on a voluntary basis. The responses were entered manually, and the analysis of the data and calculation of percentages was also done manually.

The author had to take cognisance of the fact that the interpretation of the data could contain some bias, as those who participated had the responsibility of implementing the Unisa Tuition Policy. This might be relevant if the questionnaire was also presented to respondents who are not responsible for the implementation of the policy. The author may have produced entirely different results if the questionnaire had been sent to those who are intentionally not implementing the policy. In Appendix I, the questionnaire is presented.

The questionnaire was sent to thirty participants. Of those that responded to the questionnaire at the university, 49.9% were lecturers and senior lecturers, and 36.3% were in learning development positions. The remainder were in positions such as Head of Development and Assistant Dean. The participants came from a variety of structures within the university.

22.7% of the respondents came from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. This is the second largest college at Unisa. Although it is in fact the largest college in terms of the number of staff employed at Unisa, it is the second largest college in terms of student registration. 13.6% came from the College of Economics and Management Sciences, and 9.09% of the participants came from the other colleges (Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Science, Engineering and Technology and Law). 36.6% respondents came from the BLD.

In terms of age, the highest percentage of respondents, 31.8%, was in the age group 41-45 years. The next highest, 18.1%, was in the 51-55 age group. 13.6% were in the age group 36-40, and 13.3% were under 30 years old. Only 4.54% fell into the groups 30-35 and 56-60, or were above 60 years old. 59% of the respondents were male.

Those who had 0-5 years experience of lecturing or learning development at Unisa made up 50.0%, and those who had 6-10 years experience made up 13. 6%. Those who had 11-15 years experience made up 4.54%; those who had 16-20 years experience made up 18.1%, and those with more than 20 years experience made up only 9.09%.

The next part of the questionnaire dealt with the source of the policy and how participants became aware of the Unisa Tuition Policy.

5.4.1   Basic Understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy

The questions in this section focused on how various stakeholders interacted with the Unisa Tuition Policy. The question regarding the basic understanding of the policy elicited responses that indicated the variety in respondents' concepts of what a policy is and what it should contain. This was linked in a way to what the various stakeholders were doing within the institution. A participant from the management reacted as follows:

'My understanding is that it was a much open document to kind of, to me, give management a buy and mandate in what we were trying to do at Unisa. But it was according to me, pushed by the fact that we had been doing different things and when I first came in 1994 they were mostly staff development. The team project started in 1994, 1995 and each faculty was to do a new type of course based on the OUUK model. We needed policy mandate for some of the things we were doing; like the team-approach, the idea of looking at assessment of everything in the course and not only study guide'. The second participant from management saw the development as an exclusive process, saying '*although I was a Deputy Dean at that time, I was not invited.'*

On the issue of the basic understanding of the policy, the view from the management was that they understood the policy and its implications in terms of teaching and learning in distance education, as expressed by a participant from the management:

'*Yes, my understanding of the tuition policy is that the university want to indicate to the community on what it actually aims at in as far as education is concerned, more so, we need to further distance learning as a higher learning to the community at large. It also wants to make research based on community.*'

Simonson et al (2003: 198) say that distance education policy is the written course of action adopted by an institution to facilitate development of its distance education programmes.

Another view from one of the external stakeholders was as follows: '*I looked at the policy and it is understandable and straight forward, and for me it's more about Unisa providing access and by access I mean student coming straight from Matric[3] to Unisa who cannot afford to go to other universities?*' This could be seen in light of the fact that policies provide a framework for the operation of distance education and form a set of agreed-on rules that explain roles and responsibilities (Simonson et al, 2003:19). Quigley (1997) describes policies as decision-makers' tools for applying consistent solutions to recurring problems. Thus, policies play a pivotal role in establishing agreement among relevant members of an institution and guiding their behaviours, so that they conform to the collective interests of the group. Therefore, the policy would have to be supplemented by many other, different guidelines that have to be developed.

The development of education policies in South Africa after 1994 was an attempt to change the higher education scenario rapidly by direct impact. The changes were expected to happen smoothly, as indicated by the policy process. However, the variety and range of responses to the issues raised in the questionnaire, and the complexity of the attitudes they reflect, suggest that our education policy will not be smoothly and quickly implemented. And it is here that one can think of different policy theories in terms of implementation. There are also varying views in terms of interpreting the

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[3] The last grade in the South African high school education system.

policy process. In the implementation, we basically see policy implementation as carrying out or putting into effect the intended changes stipulated in the policy. Different participants had different concepts of what a policy is and what it aims to achieve. Some participants felt the policy was not saying what it should be saying. A statement by a learning developer captures it all: *'It never specifies how it's open and it never clarifies because we are not open, I like it to have a national imperative focus....'*

Thus, there were issues around how the Unisa Tuition Policy had been conceptualised, this being a reflection of a particular mental model. The interpretations of the basic understanding of the policy, as presented in this section, are from the interview schedule and represent different and often contradictory views in terms of policy development and implementation. One of the critical implications is the status of the policy at Unisa. Is it a legally binding document or it is just another institutional policy document which can be ignored like any other document in the institution? Should it be treated as a guide or could it be enforced? And if the latter, how would it be enforced, and what would happen to those who did not comply with it?

5.4.2   Focuses of the Policy (what is it addressing?)

The Unisa Tuition Policy provides guidelines on what is to be taught, to whom, by what means, and by whom. Such guidelines draw very strong views from academics**:** *'I don't like the idea; it is being imposed on me. I did not participate in identifying the above questions and those areas are critical in any policy or institution. We need participation from the onset. We must be involved in identifying all these things'*. Such contentions can further be seen in the view that *'the policy is nice in theory but when it comes to implementation it is very difficult. The African university they talk about it (Unisa) how practical is it to embrace African identity while you remove Shona from the courses being offered at Unisa. In European Universities Shona is being taught.'* Institutional leaders respond that neither 'techno-crats' (science experts) nor technology should drive the instructional mission of the institution. And this was expressed in the views of one academic, who said that: *'I think there are*

some elements that we can practice. But things like student participation in material development, I think it can really influence the approach we have. Even technology can change the way we teach like video-conferencing we can enhance all the way we are doing things but not really change the lecturers.'

These are other issues that reveal strong ideas on the policy's development and implementation. Although most participants felt the need for participating and being represented in the development and implementation of the policy, there was confusion about how this should happen. One thinks of the corresponding statements in the CHE Distance Education task team report. Among a variety of recommendations, the report said that dedicated distance education institutions should:

(a) Increase meaningful access to higher education, more so for the disadvantaged; and

(b) Increase access by providing affordable opportunities and flexible entry requirements.

Policies play a pivotal role in establishing an agreement among relevant members of an institution, and in guiding their behaviours so that they conform to the collective interests of the group.

5.4.3   Participation in the Development of the Unisa Tuition Policy

An academic who had been at the institution for thirteen years was shocked to find out about the policy. He had had no knowledge of the existence of such a policy until the author gave him a copy: *'You know I have been here for thirteen years but I saw it the first time you brought it, funny enough. I did not know there was such a policy from 1998. I was not part of it. The new policy, one will appreciate the participation of academics. Yes, I would like to take part.'*

A number of academics indicated that they wanted to be involved in the development of a new policy and would support the management in this regard. However, one can see a number of areas of possible conflict between their role as academics and that of

learning developers and management. Their views and histories in terms of teaching and learning at a distance institution influenced this: *'I think the policy will help in transforming DE. If you look, I came here in 1989 and I can see some change, although one cannot contribute these changes to policy alone. There are other factors that I think policy cleared some of the issues that we never raised before....'*

It seems that not everyone sees the importance of the role that government needs to play in higher education. A member of the management reflects that: *'Should the government be involved in the higher education institution? Should the university be listening to policy from government side? And to what extent are all the questions you have been asking me?   The university got a tuition policy that the government does not want.'*

There was also a view that students should be involved in the development of the policy, but their role could not be specified. Some felt that students should come as observers, whereas others felt it was not necessary to involve students. One student remarked: *'Yes, students should be involved. For instance, the students can determine whether it is working or not. The students base this on certain action and if students are involved they will feel that their concerns are somewhat being addressed.'*

With reference to their role in policy development, we also see contention regarding what various stakeholders need to do: *'Though I did not personally play a role in the development of this policy, I feel that academics must play an important role in the policy development. More so, as this is a tuition policy that we must use.'*   The most common barrier to faculty participation in distance teaching is a lack of commitment by academic units to faculty release time, training and unit instructional resources for distance teaching (Olcott, 1996; Clark, 1993; Dillon and Walsh, 1992, Gilcher and Johnstone, 1989; Kirby and Garrison, 1989). An academic who feels the need to play a leading role says that: *'I think the management and academics must be involved in the development of the policy. The management must listen to the academics.'* The academics believe that they have the knowledge to be able to tell the management what should be done in respect of teaching, and how management should act. This

belief highlights one of the difficulties in using a top-down approach in policy development and implementation.

On the role of participation in the development of the policy, not all stakeholders understood the level and value of participation: '*I was not at the original workshop in 1998 but in the drafting subsequent to that, in the whole bureau (BLD), as far as I remember, everyone had an input in the way it finally went out.*'

Quigley (1997) describes policies as decision-makers' tools for applying consistent solutions to recurring problems. One participant commented: '*I think this was part of the policy stating status-quo because our university at that time had three legs of teaching, research and community service.*'

The policy talks about norms and values, but ignores the issue of how stakeholders can engage with these qualities: '*I think that maybe I have nothing to do with organisational framework. But I also think that it gave them an excuse to put in things about ODL principles, curriculum principles and idea of learner-centeredness against content – centred, and this was pre-SAQA.*' Therefore, making policy and ensuring it is followed takes a major effort on the part of an institution's management (Theisen, 2004).

Some aspects of the policy were understood, but inevitably there were gaps in understanding, as acknowledged by the respondents. An academic expressed himself on this topic as follows: '*I think I do understand though I am not an expert. In that I know it came through the Broad Transformation Forum after 1994. So Unisa was trying to put itself in context through tuition policy, research, language. I was a member of the senate by then. I understand it but not all the aspects.*'

The respondents also viewed participation from different points of view and in the context of the level that they occupy within the university. It was not surprising that all of the respondents regarded participation as critical in the development of the policy, but on further probing, could not figure out how such participation should happen.

Some of the respondents felt that there must be enough and fair representation in the process of the development of the policy, but as to how representation was to be achieved and what fair representation was there were no clear ideas. A question was raised as to who would have the power to make a final decision about constituency representation in policy development, and it was thought that the management should be the last 'structure' to effect a decision, something that does not make sense at all, in the author's view.

Policies play a pivotal role in establishing agreement among relevant members of an institution and guiding their behaviours, so that they conform to the collective interests of the group. It was not surprising, then, that on the subject of who should be involved in policy development, there were divergent views such as 'experts only' and 'no students as their purpose is to study'. The students missed the critical issue of the need for democratic participation in policy development and implementation: *'For the development of the policy... well I mean there is a Unisa tuition committee which is responsible for the development as I understand it …… from all various colleges and presumably through a collaborative process – there should be a collaborative process amongst those in the group in developing a particular policy. It seems to be that it got to be across ... it can't be simply be seen as management who are saying what needs to be done.'* Another view was: *'Look at the structure. We must start at the academic planning.'*

From the management's point of view, the policy was intended to help in changing the teaching and learning paradigm at Unisa. Issues such as the ethos of the institution, the management structure and the transformation of the staff complement were not relevant to this particular issue, as they were already being dealt with effectively elsewhere. These things were already happening, and a lot of these educational and transformational issues were validated by the tuition policy.

One student who was using the Entrepreneurship Study Guide thought the transformation that the tuition policy could bring about would not occur easily: *'I think if we reinforce it there will be changes. But, I mean the management must put pressure on the departments to implement this policy.'*

The students' view on the policy was that it was well beyond their expectations. This may be because some of the student participants were young and had no experience of studying through distance education: *'We should be getting more assessment. This can be in the form of exercises, then mostly, you get answers and they must advise on how you get to the answer.'*

5.4.4   Implementation Hurdles or Obstacles

Fritz (2001:66) says that there is very little agreement within policy studies about precisely what constitutes 'implementation.' A number of educational policy studies have indicated how difficult it is to distinguish conceptually between the practices, formally or analytically, described as 'formulation' and 'implementation.'

Asked what the obstacles preventing the full implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy could be, there was no ready agreement. A member of the management answered: *'Ya! I think one of the big challenges is executing what we call Open and Distance Learning. And that implies the preparation of your study guide. The crux of this policy is the development of material based on team work.'* Another strong view was: *'Firstly we need to look at the learners themselves. We need to look and take some of the activities in the policy so that we can afford to implement. I think we need to look at the attitudes of some of Unisa staff towards the policy. The one major problem that I see is the acceptance of the policy by various stakeholders. We need to look at why do I have to do this and who is going to benefit. There can be some difficulty in implementing this policy.'* Another view made reference to human nature as part of the resistance towards policy implementation: *'Human nature is funny; anything that comes from authorities without individual input will be resisted or looked with suspicion. This thing was created with maximum input my colleague will have real problem – They will scrutinize it and surely voice feelings about that in a policy like.'*

There are many interpretations of distance education and open learning. Holmberg (1996) argues that our notions of distance education and open learning are blurred because of the strong influence of the British Open University, which has led to some universities adapting the objective of being 'open', without having a clear idea of

what this could mean. Furthermore, educators who practice distance education are inclined to use the term 'open learning' as if it meant the same thing. It was for this reason that the author reflected on some of the issues relating to open learning in Chapter 2. Open learning has to do with openness of place, time and content of learning, all of which has nothing necessarily to do with distance education (Holmberg, 1996). The crux is that one needs the intervention of competent and trained scholars, who work on the design of learning material. The design process needs some expertise in the use of multimedia, video conferencing, writing of tutorial letters, assessment using multiple-choice questions, and design of e-learning or online learning. Thus, the process is complex and challenging.

One of the respondents holds the view that Unisa is not moving with the times, and that this is a problem: '*Well, I think this policy gives us direction of where we are going but nobody has been there before. So that means we still lack expertise. We have talked about Africanisation but we are still debating about what is Africanised curriculum expertise to reach there? So in terms of that we need training and retraining to change our tradition. We need to make people move…. The second challenge is that you know we are in a technology age and Unisa is still far behind in terms of online teaching. You cannot imagine distance education without online; that is the most important mode but there are still very few departments that are doing online teaching. I think lack of knowledge of technology is a threat that we are facing. Well again the community that you are addressing …I mean you are talking about online and you know Unisa is serving such a broad community and so if you talk about Africa you may have expertise which may be non-existent in some communities.*'

The fact that the tuition policy indicates what needs to be taught, how, to whom and by whom, could be regarded as '*what needs to be taught, that's curriculum aspect.*' The concern was that: '*They never say who is responsible for developing the what? We need to look at how – how do we organize teaching; face–to-face, print based or it's just correspondence.*'

Collaboration among policymakers, faculty and distance learning advocates will help in achieving a common vision (Olcott, 1996). Therefore, the tuition policy '*can be*

cross-referenced. There is a statement about curriculum includes assessment yet there is hardly anything about assessment here.' When actual policies have been developed and implemented, we need to have formative and summative instruments and data, so as to evaluate these policy processes

It also emerged several times that people were not given training in the application and understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy. This can be seen in a remark from one of the academics**:** *'So for me the major obstacle is training given to academic staff. I believe that we must conduct some workshops before you choose the team of academics to implement the policy. I feel that lack of training is a major obstacle in the implementation of the policy. I mean I was not aware of the policy when I was lecturing for two years. I only became aware when I had to write a study guide. I was not aware of the policy until the Bureau for Learning Development showed me the policy. That is why I said we need training to implement the policy.'*

Ball and Bowe (1992a) view policy implementation as a process characterised by competing interests and views, and can only be realised when policy is used or applied in reality. The following view indicates the challenges in terms of implementation of the policy: *'...what I do miss a little bit here is there is really not enough about who is responsible for implementation. I mean that I know that, I think there should be --- -- there should be some indication on who is responsible for the implementation of the policy so that there is a system I am saying well --- you know we done all these things --- what about implementation ---- who is responsible for that, that you can call upon to either ask or agree or account.'*

In further probing whether or not management was involved in the development of the policy, another tension could be established or involved in the development of the Unisa Tuition Policy: *'I was not involved in the development but I was involved in the long process of approving it. This policy was talked through at the workshop of which I was not invited. Although I was a Deputy Dean or Vice Dean at that time, I was not invited. By implication I was involved in the process of approving this policy. That is when it went to Senate; I was a member of the Senate which approved the policy.'*
On the other hand, the following shows the contention about who should play a leading role in policy development, as expressed by an academic: *'Not that I am*

trying to be selfish, but look at the relationship between students, management and lecturers. I think tuition matters are done by academics, so I think academics should take lead in developing this policy. I believe in that but as we are in a democracy, students must also contribute as they are the target market.'

Parisot (1997) advises that it is crucial for institutional policymakers to develop a thorough understanding of faculty experiences in the distance learning environment, before implementing new procedures. An external participant held the following view: *'Obstacles ... have been seen in people and not apparently lack of money. People don't actually agree with and don't understand the policy ... lack of an advocacy and staff development on people who must implement that specific policy. I see very dominantly in the work that I am involved in... I have been critiquing higher education policy at the moment in the institution at the moment one of the issues is that there is no staff development around policy ... people won't understand what the policy is talking about. It is not even a question of not being able to do ... it's a question of not understanding it ... what's that I need to do ... people don't even know about it and even when people know about it, they don't know what to do about it.'*

5.4.5   Opportunities for Unisa Tuition Policy Implementation

On the question of the availability of implementation opportunities, a participant from the management raised simple issues such as: *'to validate our face in department by giving many people and change of the name of our department. I mean that's an opportunity.'* But this was limited to the fact that *'these opportunities came with a lot of expectations from management and from academics of what we could fix for them.'* Policy and ideology emphasise that there must be negotiations between stakeholders until the point of agreement (Ball, 1990). Thus, the policy process is characterised by negotiations around differences in ideology and practice.

The following view from an academic emphasises Unisa's repositioning after 1994: *'I think the issue that I can pick up, is that after 1994 Unisa wanted to reposition itself more so with so many institutions introducing distance education. Unisa wanted to answer who are we? Unisa wanted to change and move to the other mode like face-to-face and tutoring model was introduced and the Principal was involved. The*

tuition policy defines Unisa as an organization that do a bit of not having one focus. If you are a distance university how far do you go? I think the distance within the distance and this was the mode. The second thing was curriculum.... Can you recurriculate and teach things that were not offered pre-1994 because of the new democratic content we needed to redefine what we offer. Issue of curriculum was quite an issue. Another issue was the Africanisation and the issue was not talked much about in the policy. But the policy issues - that means we need to Africanise and open aspects that serve the broader community and not a sector of one population.'

Another area of contention was the question about who should take responsibility for the policy. One respondent put it this way: *'the whole body – Senate must take responsibility and if you vote in the Senate the whole body must look at the document. But that does not guarantee that everyone understands the document.'* Entwistle (2003) supports the idea of developing a conceptual framework that describes some of the variables influencing the outcomes of learning. *'Well the Tuition Policy, I think the tuition policy wanted people to recontextualise what we are teaching. That is your graduates should be relevant to the new context.'* There was further contention on the issue of what the curriculum should look like, as indicated by the policy: *'Well I don't think we have achieved that – well if you look at our tuition whether we are really teaching courses that address the needs of the community I don't think we are doing that... we are trying to get there. The issue of Africanisation is not addressed until today. We see courses in Unisa reflect Western dimension and not the African dimension. The issue of Africanisation even until today this is an issue at Unisa today. I cannot say it's something we have achieved.'*

The response from a learning developer emphasises the shifting of the paradigm as being the main aspect of the tuition policy. Cannel (1999) says that the new emerging learning paradigm looks at several issues such as learning as a social phenomenon requiring the development of learning communities, and this could be achieved by means of a team approach: *'Academics need to play a role; administrators need to play a role – if they don't play a role.... They need to be there to support academics. The learners need to be there and all the professional bodies like BLD, counselling, library need to be there, all the stakeholders. Preferably management should not be*

there, they can come in later. No the previous one (Unisa tuition policy) was mostly drafted by management – I doubt whether they have expertise and understanding of teaching and learning at ODL.'

In Unisa as an institution, different stakeholders have roles which influence how they interact with the tuition policy. One learning developer puts it in this way: *'For me I have grown in my understanding in the past three years. I have learnt to use words like epistemology and use them critically. And if you had asked me five years ago, it would have been a fine document. If it's put as a rule it is legal term and it becomes very difficult to change that. Maybe a policy should have hard and soft elements. The hard one should look and change after four years but the soft one maybe every year.'*

This implies that the policy will change or be changed as it moves down the bureaucratic structures of the university. At each level, the changes will be influenced by how people see policy as practice and their beliefs on how policy should be implemented. It is appropriate to suggest that there will also be differences in groups and individuals in terms of interpretation and application. In the responses, it was indicated that the Unisa Tuition Policy was a necessary document and needed to be used by everyone at the university. This was indicated by responses such as: *'It is all about objective - the objective which indicates how the university is structured and how the university will teach.'*

Almost all of the participants' views reflected that Unisa as a public institution should be concerned about the way it teaches and makes its students learn. Of grave concern was the view that *'Unisa fails students.'* Perhaps this, in some way that we have no knowledge of, is in support of the Unisa Tuition Policy, and maybe if the academic representatives could be given a platform to explain themselves, we shall then have an understanding as to why things are the way they are. One particular view encapsulates this: *'I think the opportunity should be afforded to the academic to respond to the policy. I think academics are able to respond to what they are doing now.*

There were also complaints about the carrying out of responsibilities. Academics and learning developers believed that the management was not carrying out its responsibilities. On the other hand, students also felt that the academics (and the

management) were not carrying out their responsibilities as defined in the tuition policy. In policy implementation, as in everything else, our values, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs may hinder the success of our efforts.

The literature shows that there are several views on the topic of policy development and implementation. Cibulka (1995) suggests that in traditional management situations, policy follows a rational process, with the following steps:

(a)   Formulation of a problem.

(b)   Agenda setting.

(c)   Policy formulation.

(d)   Policy implementation

(e)   Policy evaluation.

However, seeing the process as a set of steps or a cycle may create the expectation that one step will lead to another, and we must be aware that policy processes are not linear, even if we can identify some stages (Moja, 2003). From other people's point of view, such as Olcott, there must be systematic policies that reflect this commitment to distance teaching faculty (Olcott, 1996). Such commitment was seen by one respondent as taking the institution a step closer to implementation: '*issues like ethos, management structures of the institution and transformation and indicates who is in charge and the issues of colours of people sitting in those structures and their gender… The new policy must provide more guidelines in terms of implementation and inspire to the new heights.*'

Research in distance education indicates that there should be a shift from faculty-centred to learner-centred institutions, and for learners to be able to access multiple levels of education rather than proceeding in lock-step fashion from one level to another (Olcott, 1996; Wolcott, 1999; Schifter, 2002).
Perraton and Lentell (2004:3) acknowledge the role distance education is playing and note its adoption by governments and institutions. They help by providing some advice in answering the question: 'Does it work, and if so, what policies are needed to work effectively?'

Policy Development and Implementation in Context

Policy implementation is a complex and ever-changing process. The Unisa Tuition Policy demands that there should be a move towards new methodologies of teaching and learning, informed by a new curriculum. The views of Argyris (1994) on policy as the practice and theory of action comes into the picture. The tuition policy is driven by a certain paradigm, which is challenged when it has to be applied in practice. In this view, the different contextual issues in education contribute to how we see the policy in action. We have seen new forms of teaching and learning emerging in open and distance learning. Some of the contextual issues in education that are being referred to are:

- o Curriculum changes due to the introduction of OBE into the South African educational scene (involving changes to teaching and assessment methods);
- o The emphasis on ICT in teaching and learning, which is dangerous if we take it for granted that if we have the facilities, ICT teaching and learning will happen automatically (as indicated by the CHE Distance Education Task Team Report, 2004);
- o The development of a policy framework based on the descriptions of various concepts of distance education; and
- o The merging of distance education institutions to form one dedicated distance education institution in South Africa (the merger of Unisa and TSA, and the incorporation of VUDEC in 2003, to form the new Unisa).

Ball and Bowe (1992a:98) advocate policy process as moving beyond the traditional use of formulation and implementation. To this end, they see the policy process as more complex, a dialectical process in which 'moments' of legislation, documentation and implementations may be more or less loosely coupled.

5.4.6   Views and Experiences of Students using the Entrepreneurship Law 1 Study Guide

There were clear differences among students in terms of how they defined the tuition policy and its focus areas. On the question of whether they had a basic understanding

of the Unisa Tuition Policy, it was not surprising to hear views such as: *'The policy tells us the way Unisa operates. There are a lot of rules for teaching and learning. Teaching and learning is an important aspect of Unisa.'* However, some of the views referred directly to what they thought teaching, learning, and studying at Unisa should be like: *'Study needs to be supplemented by a teacher - you need somebody that you can ask questions.'*

There were contradictory views on whether or not students should be involved in the development and implementation of the policy. This is what one of the respondents had to say about this view. *'I don't think they must be involved in the content of the subject matter. They must be involved in the survey on testing the material.'* On the other hand, there were strong views on students' involvement in the policy development process: *'I think students should be involved in the team and, five students doing the same module or those who have completed, can comment on the content. They can advise'*.

Some of the students' views on involvement in the policy development process were influenced by how they saw the tuition policy as contributing to their success or failure at Unisa. Their notion of how distance education should happen is, of course, based on their previous learning experiences in the high school education system. They expressed their views on the demands of studying at an ODL institution such as Unisa through comparisons with the experience of studying at face-to-face universities. *'I think our study process should involve other universities. If I come here from Wits you may find that there is a lot of difference in the learning material, Unisa forces you to do subjects again because the standards are high at Unisa.'* In some instances, the practices in face-to-face universities or high schools were recommended, especially with regard to the election of a student representative council.

The students did not understand some of the issues in the Unisa Tuition Policy. Typically, they could see no role for themselves as collaborators in the process of teaching and learning. Only lecturers had that authority, according to them. As

students, they had to be guided in what they should learn, how they should learn it, and how they wrote examinations.

Of course, some students responded in terms of their own idiosyncratic mental models, but many of them saw the policy in more or less the same way: '*It may be difficult to implement this as you have to know what students want. Basically we are different individuals and we may prefer different things in studying.*' Another view was: '*It will be very tricky to implement the policy as there are different priorities and learners are not like cows. There are different ways of teaching and students may provide a variety of answers to the same material.*'

There were perceptions that some members of the student body had a limited role to play in the development of the policy. In terms of the different focuses, the concern was that Unisa is not delivering as per policy statements: '*And as we study alone we are independent and used to do things on our own way. We can face any challenge without much help from lecturers or adults and we help each other.*' The call to produce independent and critical graduates seemed to mean different things to different people. There was also a misunderstanding of the notion of learner-centeredness: '*The policy talks about learner-centeredness and that is teaching to be responsible, to be disciplined, and manage our time, so time management is very important.*'

In terms of whether or not the policy would change teaching and learning, students felt that there are gaps in terms of their expectations. They had views about tests and assignments: '*I think I feel like we need to write tests so that we can test ourselves. Most of the time with assignments you copy from books and answers are exactly in the book so we don't do much work, we just copy.*' This view is in contrast with what one of the respondents said in terms of high standards.

They liked the idea that different stakeholders should be involved in the writing of the study guides. This was captured by expressions such as: '*We need different views from different people. People have got different views and if its only one person she or he will write on one view and if it is difficult to understand that then you will not understand the whole course.*'

One element in their learning which plays a critical role for students is the idea of contact with the lecturers. *'I also think that face-to-face is better as you can tell the lecturers when you don't understand but with distance you have to take efforts to meet the lecturers.'* Furthermore, *'face-to-face has some kind of security as the lecturer is there and you can ask questions.'* The wish was expressed that students who are studying at Unisa and not working should have face-to-face teaching: *'We need to have full-time and part-time students. Full-time are here all the time and part-time stay at home.'*

Students felt that the team approach is not applied effectively: *'In some modules you can see only one person,'* and *'Yes, in some you see study guides developed by more people.'*

The responses to the request that they identify barriers to the implementation of the policy included: *'People will find it (Unisa tuition policy) difficult to use; it is written in big words and each time you use it you will need a dictionary,'* and *'You don't understand what the policy says, it is not interesting. The solution to this may be to write the policy ... like a pamphlet.'* Students who were using the Entrepreneurship Law study guide felt that some of the issues in the policy were covered by the study guide: *'This study guide also makes us to think. Imagine before I read it I did not know what was going on in the corporate sector but now after I have read the study guide I know what is happening.'* One of the practices recommended in the Unisa Tuition Policy is cross-referencing in study guides. One of the participants stated that: *'The guide also refers to other study guides. If you study Entrepreneurship Law they refer also to Mercantile Law. You can also see some of the things you have never seen before.'* This seemed to be an indication of satisfaction.

Morrison (1989:7) lists some of the challenges that face distance education. The first one is the need to move from an institutional to a systems level in planning, needs assessment and delivery, and the second one is the need to broaden the concept of distance education in order that it not only enhances access, but also leads to success in learning.

From the students' point of view, there are different roles to be played in policy development. There were broad interpretations by students of the role of the academic in policy development. Most students felt that they should not be involved in the development of the material, as they did not have sufficient knowledge to make a valid contribution. However, some felt that they could be involved in the evaluation process.

5.5   Reflections on the Participants' Views and Expectations

In interviewing students, the author used focus-group interviews, as indicated in the research design in Chapter 3. Some of the expectations from students were in direct conflict with normal practice in distance education. For instance, they asked for the provision of residences and sporting activities. Some of the students felt that the business of developing teaching material (study guides and tutorials) was the responsibility of the lecturers, as experts, and that they could not play any role.

While the policy talks about a team approach, nothing is said about who belongs to this team and what the roles of the team players will be. Students expressed the views that they should be involved if there was going to be a team approach, but they could not define their roles. It was apparent that the academics regarded their role as important not only in terms of the core function of the university, but also in terms of how they conceptualised it. These tensions also arose due to the expectations of how teaching and learning should take place in ODL. They were especially concerned about the work pressure they felt as academics at Unisa. Many academics also felt that the management do not understand what they are doing and have no idea about what is happening in the academic area.

There were clear differences among students in how they described the tuition policy and its focus areas. These differences determined how they saw the tuition policy as influencing their studies at Unisa, as did their different perceptions of the general nature of distance education, which must be understood in the context of their previous experience of education, mainly in high schools.

On the issue of what role individual participants should be playing in policy development and implementation, there were various views. There was a tendency to refer to the need for 'training to carry out their roles'. However, some individuals understood the policy, reacted to it and described what they believed to be the best way to do things in terms of their own mental models. There were perceptions that some members of the student body had a limited role to play in the development of the policy. There were some comments that had narrower views about the roles that students need to play. In contrast, as one academic said fairly representatively: *'We need students also to get involved and we can start by giving them questionnaires when they register and until they submit the first assignment.'*

There was some confusion of the notion of participation with the notion of representation. Representation was taken to require the representation of the specific interests of a group, which some thought could be problematic. Meaningful participation was seen as an element that would help in policy implementation, whereas lack of participation was construed as a hurdle or obstacle in the implementation of the policy.

The external stakeholders felt uncomfortable about looking at an institutional policy that they themselves had not developed, or in the development of which they had not been involved. Now and then they made reference to the appalling failure rates of students at Unisa.

The participant expressing the management's view on whether the policy was changing teaching and learning at Unisa was not overly optimistic: *'I think so, not that it is a fast moving process that happens overnight. If I recall where we stood in the late 1990s and where we stand now in 2005, then I must say there is a lot of progress.'* However, another member of the management indicated the need for a new tuition policy: *'Okay, first I know that you are talking about the 1998 one. I hope soon it must change and I think the new one will cover a few things that I am worried about and some of the issues in the question.'* The issues referred to here refer to learning that can take place at any time and in any place, more interactive and collaborative learning, accommodation of an increasingly diverse university

population, and ubiquity (the development of a more affordable, widely-accessible education system for all).

The need to use a policy as a justification for what people should be doing anyway was expressed by one participant as follows: '*We needed a policy mandate for some of the things we were doing; like the team-approach, the idea of looking at assessment of everything in the course and not only the study guide.*'

On whether the Unisa Tuition Policy could lead to quality teaching and learning, an external participant stated: '*Well it seeks out the quality but does not guarantee the quality ... the quality cannot be guaranteed by policy it can only be stated by a policy ... that is why QA assurance falls within the scope of HEQC ... say what policies do you have and evidence to demonstrate that you are implementing the policy. It can't guarantee it!*' This is a view from one of the academics: '*We value this and that – how can we value integrity if we have not included other key role players because the key players are also your watchdogs.*' Policies can be a double-edged sword, as they may have both positive and negative institutional consequences.

Participants indicated their ideas of the roles to be played by the different stakeholders in implementation, but they still felt that the management must take the leading role. Almost all academics interviewed felt that they had a critical role to play, as they were responsible for materials development.

Unisa Tuition Policy Alignment

Olcott (1996) states that there is a continued proliferation of distance education in colleges and universities. However, many of these universities have not resolved the issues of aligning policy and practice. At the heart of this dichotomy is a simple premise that traditional academic values and distance education diverge on common issues. This is an issue that Unisa needs to address: '*we need to look at how – how do we organize teaching; face-to-face, print based or it's just correspondence.*'

The responsibility for aligning institutional policies with distance education practice rests with institutional policymakers, faculty and distance education practitioners.

184

The proliferation of distance education programmes among colleges and universities has contributed to a growing need for aligning institutional academic policy with distance education practice (Clark, 1993; Dillon and Walsh, 1992).

Morrison (1989:7) lists some challenges that face distance education, the crucial one being the need to move from an institutional to a systems level in planning, needs assessment and delivery. The making of a policy in these areas can help address issues of systems planning. Furthermore, there is a need to develop the learning approach to organizational ethos and management. The Unisa Tuition Policy can be seen in this context. The focus of the themes in the tuition policy affords us a chance to be able to understand the policy expectations as well as the role players in it. Hence, an external stakeholder held the view: '*No, people don't know about it and if they don't know about it they don't care about it. I mean the policy talks about team approach, independent graduates. This must be upfront and in each study guide. This is where the study guide features. And we want to portray our dream of how Unisa graduates are like.*'

Elmore (1985) suggests that in education policy implementation, we can be involved in forward mappings, which is a hierarchical pattern of policymaking and implementation. This will comprise looking at the set goals, planning ahead and using some form of control in implementation. This may be seen as a simple, rational approach to the process of policymaking and implementation**.** As to the implementation, obviously those people who are at those particular colleges need to be responsible for working out in detail, in their particular areas, how the tuition policy would need to be operationalised. CHE (2004d) states that the responsibility to align institutional policies with distance education practices rests with institutional policymakers, faculty, and distance education practitioners.

The polarisation exacerbated by innovation in technology must be countered by attempts to synthesise the old and the new in order to arrive at the best educational process. This is what some of the participants felt that the Unisa Tuition Policy should address. There were a variety of factors influencing students' views, such as their age and experience in distance education. It became evident that academic and learning developers felt students should be involved in the development of learning material,

but they held this opinion superficially, and could not describe the way in which students should be involved.

Unisa Tuition Policy and the Curriculum

Distance education policy development should follow an integrated approach, and an academic policy such as the Unisa Tuition Policy should include guidance on the grading and assessment of students. Furthermore, the institution must respond to issues on teaching and learning that support specific policy goals such as equity, student throughput and success rates. And, if policy is to be truly integrated, it should also deal with matters such as course schedules and academic calendars

Policy developments in the area of curriculum were received with some criticism relating to the areas of personal knowledge and learning or skills and knowledge. *'Even in OBE some of our lecturers were never trained as teachers and they struggle with this. Imagine if they have to train other people in OBE. I am bringing this to understand that when we talk about OBE, it's various structures that makes this entity. We need supporting team in teaching and learning.'* Of course, what remains unchanged is the fact that knowledge, capacities, skills and competencies are to be delivered by the higher education curriculum. To conclude, imposed policy frameworks will not simply change teaching and learning, especially if we want to achieve policy-driven reform of the fundamental curriculum.

One must be aware that academic issues are at the heart of every university. It is critical that our policies should acknowledge this and contribute to the overall integrity of the institution's programmes. As the policies deal with students, instruction, curriculum and the programme, they have the most enduring and most widespread impact, provided that they help to ensure that institutional integrity is maintained (Simonson et al, 2003).

Unisa Tuition Policy and relation to External Stakeholders

On the issue of external factors that impact on distance education, one external stakeholder was unhappy with the government: *'On explaining the government issues*

when it comes to policy, we are struggling to maintain a niche for distance education. Distance education is becoming more and more expensive and government subsidies are dwindling.' Currently, most governments place a premium on the need to be cost-effective in all forms of the provision of education, including distance education, given the constraint of limited resources. However, the demand for efficiencies in provision by an institution dedicated to distance education must only be understood in the context of the competition experienced from face-to-face institutions which are being permitted to offer distance programmes in the most profitable areas: *'Over the years we are competing with face–to–face universities. And a lot of students are becoming more communal and we are beginning to realise that we have a niche market for ourselves. Initially students used to come to us because there were no other alternatives but now we have competition.'* The state stands and believes in the notion of a single, dedicated distance education institution in South Africa, and the importance of the cost-effectiveness of distance education in a limited resources context. Therefore, the state should then make it possible for these two demands to be met through promulgating the necessary regulations.

King et al (2000), in looking at the current state of education policy, conclude that where there are gaps in distance education policy, real or perceived, there must be a strategic policy discussion

5.6   Questionnaire Responses

During the middle stage of this study, a questionnaire was constructed and sent to various respondents at the University of South Africa. The covering letter requested them to complete the questionnaire and return it in a closed envelope by the stated date. Participation was on a voluntary basis. The administration of the questionnaire was to satisfy one of the requirements of the research methodology, namely triangulation. As this study was not a quantitative research project, the questionnaire was, as indicated in Chapter 3, just one of the methods used for triangulation. Thirty questionnaires were distributed to the following members of the Unisa community: management; academics and learning developers. Twenty-two questionnaires were returned, thus making a return rate of 73.3%.

The questionnaire was made up of two sections: A and B (see Appendix I), each with different parts.

SECTION   A

Section A had four parts with close-ended questions, as shown in the following table:

Parts	Information required	Type of Question
A	Biographical information	Close-ended
B	Awareness of the Unisa Tuition Policy	Close-ended
C	Understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy	Close-ended
D	Understanding of the expectations/outcomes of the Unisa Tuition Policy	Close-ended

Part A

1.   Biographical information showed the following:

(a)   Position in the University

Position	Number	%
Lecturer	5	22.7%
Senior Lecturer	6	27.2%
Head of Department	2	9.09%
Assistant Dean	1	4.54%
Dean	0	0%
Learning Developer	8	36.3%
Other (Specify)		
Total	22	99,83%

(b)   Qualifications

Qualification	Number	%
Honours	3	13.6%
Masters	13	59.0%
PhD	4	18.1%
Other (Specify)	2	9.09%
Total	22	99,79%

(c)   College/Department

College/Department	Number	%
Humanities and Social Sciences	5	22.7%
Economics and Management Sciences	3	13.6%
Law	2	9.09%
Agriculture and Environmental Sciences	2	9.09%
Applied Sciences	2	9.09%
Bureau for Learning Development	8	36.3%
Total	20	99,79%

(d)   Age

Age	Number	%
Under 30	3	13.3%
30-35	1	4.54%
36-40	3	13.6%
41-45	7	31.8%
46-50	2	9.09%
51-55	4	18.1%
56-60	1	4.54%
Above 60	1	4.54%

(e)   Gender

Gender	Number	%
Male	13	59.0%
Female	9	40.9%

(f)   Lecturing/learning development experience at Unisa

Years	Number	%
0-5	11	50.0%
6-10	3	13.6%
11-15	1	4.54%
16-20	4	18.1%
More than 20	2	9.09%

Part   B

2.   Awareness of the Unisa Tuition Policy

(a)   Becoming aware of the policy

In this part, the author wanted to find out whether members were aware of the existence of the Unisa Tuition Policy, which was accepted by the Senate in 1998. He also wanted to find out how they became aware of the Unisa Tuition Policy.

Only one respondent indicated that he was not aware of the policy, and the rest (twenty-one) were aware of the existence of the Unisa Tuition Policy. The twenty-one members indicated that they knew that the policy was available on the Unisa intranet.

(b)   Source of the policy

In the next section, the author wanted to find out how they obtained the policy. The following table indicates the responses:

Source	Number	%
Bureau for Learning Development	9	40.9%
Department	5	22.7%
Intcom[4]	1	4.54%
Workshop/training	1	4.54%
Online/intranet	4	18.1%
Other (Specify)	1 (from a colleague)	4.54%

(c)   Initial Contact/ awareness of the policy

One of the questions was: How did you first become aware of the policy? It elicited the following responses:

Source	Number	%[5]
I was told by the Dean	0	
I was told by the HOD	2	
I was told by a colleague	8	
I read the policy	7	
I attended training or a workshop	3	
It was discussed at our staff meeting	3	
Other (specify)	1 (intranet)	

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[4] Intcom is an official electronic communication sent to all Unisa employees who have access to email and intranet.

[5] As there were participants who selected more than 1 option, the % could not be calculated.

(d)   General understanding of the policy

In the last question, the author wanted to find out whether respondents had a general understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy. Nineteen indicated that they understood it and only three indicated that they did not have a general understanding of the policy.

3.   Options on some issues in the Unisa Tuition Policy

(a)   Understanding and implementation of the policy

In Part C of the questionnaire, the author wanted to establish whether members understood the policy well enough to be able to implement it. He gave five statements and respondents had to choose from the five options of: strongly agree; agree; not sure; disagree; and strongly disagree.

Place a cross (X) in the appropriate block	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It was easy to understand	13.6%	72.7%	4.54%	9.09%	0%
It gives very clear guidelines on what is required from academics	4.54%	40.9%	31.8%	13.6%	9.09%
It gives clear guidelines for the implementation	4.54%	22.7%	22.7%	31.8%	18.1%
It allows for adaptability in implementation	9.09%	27.2%	22.7%	31.8%	9.09%
I have personally implemented some of the aspects in the development of my study guide	13.6%	45.4%	18.1%	13.6%	9.09%

From the above table, one can see a large number of participants indicating that they understand the Unisa Tuition Policy and that they can implement some of the aspects of the policy. There were varied views on whether or not it gives clear guidelines for implementation and adaptability.

192

(b) Expectations and outcomes of the Unisa Tuition Policy

In Part D, the author wanted to find out whether the formulation of the expected outcomes in the Unisa Tuition Policy was clear. He gave five statements and respondents had to choose from the five options of: strongly agree; agree; not sure; disagree; and strongly disagree.

Place a cross (X) in the appropriate block	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. The Unisa Tuition Policy states clearly what is expected of the academics	4.54%	45.4%	13.6%	31.8%	4.54%
2. The Unisa Tuition Policy, if implemented, will lead to improvement of learning and teaching	22.7%	63.6%	9.09%	0%	4.54%
3. The Unisa Tuition Policy clearly states the university's focus and its underlying principles	18.2%	63.3%	9.09%	4.54%	0%
4. The Unisa Tuition Policy articulates very clearly the ODL philosophy and practice	22.7%	54.5%	9.09%	4.54%	4.54%
5. The Unisa Tuition Policy clearly states the principles to be followed when developing the curricula	13.6%	59.0%	9.09%	13.6%	0%
6. The Unisa Tuition Policy clearly shows the principles and criteria for the actual range of courses offered	0%	45.4%	18.1%	27.2%	9.09%
7. The Unisa Tuition Policy clearly states limitations to be taken into account when determining the range of programmes and courses	9.09%	36.3%	27.3%	18.1%	4.54%
8. There is clear articulation of the requirements for the type of qualifications to be offered	4.54%	36.3%	22.7%	27.2%	4.54%
9. The Unisa Tuition Policy clearly shows some of the implications of the programmes and courses to be taught by means of ODL and according to ODL principles	9.09%	31.8%	18.1%	22.7%	13.6%
10. The Unisa Tuition Policy clearly shows the people responsible for the course development	4.54%	45.4%	18.1%	22.7%	4.54%

On average, most of the participants indicated that they understood the expectations and outcomes of the Unisa Tuition Policy.

(c)   Effective teaching and learning

In Part E, the author wanted to find out whether the Unisa Tuition Policy could help in making teaching and learning effective at Unisa. He gave five statements and respondents had to choose from the five options of: strongly agree; agree; not sure; disagree; and strongly disagree.

Place a cross X in the appropriate block	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. The Unisa Tuition Policy will create opportunities for effective development of study guides	18.1%	63.6%	9.09%	9.09%	0%
2. The Unisa Tuition Policy recognises different "voices" in the study guide development	31.8%	36.3%	13.6%	18.1%	0%
3. The Unisa Tuition Policy is firmly based on sound ODL principles	13.6%	45.4%	27.2%	13.6%	0%
4. The Unisa Tuition Policy will lead to the addressing of the needs and challenges of South African society	0%	50%	36.3%	13.6%	0%
5. The use of the Unisa Tuition Policy will lead to a clear curriculum design	4.54%	45.5%	31.8%	18.1%	0%
6. What the Unisa Tuition Policy articulates could be implemented	9.09%	54.5%	22.7%	9.09%	4.54%
7. The Unisa Tuition Policy will help academics to develop interactive learning material	36.3%	31.8%	13.6%	9.09%	9.09%
8. The Unisa Tuition Policy provides clear guidelines on what is to be taught	4.54%	31.8%	13.6%	22.7%	13.6%
9. The Unisa Tuition Policy encourages open debate on material development	4.54%	54.5%	18.1%	9.09%	9.09%
10. The Unisa Tuition Policy will lead academics from developing content-centred to learner-centred materials	9.09%	36.3%	31.8%	13.6%	9.09%

Most of the respondents chose the 'agree' option. The majority of the participants overwhelmingly agreed that the Unisa Tuition Policy clearly states its focuses, and that if implemented, it would lead to effective teaching and learning.

SECTION B

This section contained four open-ended questions, and respondents were required to fill in their responses in the given spaces. The responses to each question are summarised below:

What do you think were the main reasons for the introduction of the Unisa Tuition Policy? Give a clear response.

The reasons for the introduction of the Unisa Tuition Policy were largely seen from a variety of angles, ranging from political to academic factors. One response was that the policy was introduced because of the 'change of political context since 1994 and exposure to international best practice in ODL'. There were some who felt that the management wanted approval of their initiatives in the process of curriculum, staff and course development. In terms of this view, the Unisa Tuition Policy was to be seen as serving as a guide in ensuring that a clear curriculum that fitted the basic values underlying an open and democratic society was designed. Furthermore, it was to address the needs and changes of society, and to provide quality open and distance education.

With regard to the curriculum, the Unisa Tuition Policy was seen as an instrument to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The underlying issue was to standardise the requirements sought amongst academics and curriculum designers. The policy must serve as a yardstick for measuring quality and to give guidelines and direction to academics and support staff related to teaching and learning at the university. In this manner, the Unisa Tuition Policy would help 'to make sure that all departments use uniform standard when developing their study materials/courses.' It provided a framework for the design and development of course materials conforming with ODL principles.

There were also responses suggesting that the policy represented a shift to the new paradigm, as articulated by the governments' Acts and policy documents, of education and training. It was to cut ties with the past, in which students were taught (content-centred learning), and introduce a future in which students were induced to learn (outcomes-based learning). In opposition to this, there were responses such as 'all universities have a policy, so we need to be creative. I suspect the main reason was compliance. The policy is not very clear or original to be contrary'.

What do you think are the major breakthroughs that are/were envisaged by the policy?

The question in this section was whether or not they thought there were any major breakthroughs that may have happened because of the introduction of the Unisa Tuition Policy. There was a range of responses, as summarised below.

A substantial number of responses indicated that one of the major breakthroughs was the introduction of 'the team approach.' Some respondents thought that the ODL principles had been spelled out and the team approach had been mandated for the whole process of course design and development. It was presupposed that the team-approach would 'ensure that knowledge to be imparted is of good quality that the learner/student will be able to face the outside world with no doubts.'

Some felt that the policy was helping in 'the transformation of Unisa to be relevant to the new South Africa and Africa in general. Through this the student pass-rate and throughput rate will increase. This will happen if there is teamwork, strong focus on student support, an awareness of the involvement of many role players in an ODL-environment is prioritised.' This assumes that lecturers can be successful in their teaching only if they are part of large, supportive teams.

The team approach was seen as a means of incorporating current ODL design into academic offerings, and to improve accessibility through the semester system. The change in the attitudes of the lecturers, it was believed, would help improve the pass rates of the students and the quality of study materials. However, there were some responses that showed that the Unisa Tuition Policy lacked clarity on some of the

issues, for example: 'Learner-centredness is good although the policy does not make it very clear.' 'And the team approach is definitely not clear as it does not indicate the broad-based stakeholders' participation.'

To conclude, one response was: 'We have a policy in order to guide, advise and support the offered programmes.' This includes the policy itself as a symbolic member of the teams it attempts to establish.

What do you think are the major obstacles, constraints and hurdles with regard to the implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy?

There were quite diverse responses to this question. One of the obstacles mentioned was the involvement of the academics. It would not be easy to implement this policy if academics were not aware of its existence. However, even if they were aware, it would not be possible for them to implement the policy when preparing study materials, if they are not trained in terms of how to follow such policy. Furthermore, the lack of well-trained and experienced members of staff to develop the envisaged curriculum and the Africanisation of course materials was regarded as a major obstacle. There was a repeated reference to the fact that the 'academics are not aware of the policy,' and suggestions that there should be 'marketing of the policy amongst academics.' One of the concerns in the development of the policy was that stakeholders' involvement was not as wide as it should have been, and that there was therefore no community ownership amongst staff.

One of the hurdles was thought to be that the policy 'did not evolve into a strategy and an outcome of teaching - it remained a document.' One response was that the management should have exerted some authority to ensure the implementation of the policy: 'I believe that if every department was forced to respond with their implementation plan, and strategy, it would have been more effective.'

There were responses that indicated that 'some chairs of Departments wanted their way and were adamant that the policy was sidelined.' There were also suggestions that the whole university structure would need to change if the policy were to be implemented. The academic structure needed an overhaul to cater for masses of

learners, and needed to include intensive training for academics on ODL. If that was not done, it would be like 'putting new wine in old bottles.'

It was also evident that the difficulty in changing people's mind-sets could hinder the implementation process. One response summarised this view in saying: 'Paradigms take time to shift, management and administration and the departments don't really collaborate enough to give real meaning to the vision and mission statements, key people in management can also make the implementation of the policies very difficult, high workloads and weakening student profiles that are increasing as well as all other factors.' Another hindrance could be the fact that many members of the academic staff had been recruited from face-to-face institutions, and therefore found it difficult to write study materials suitable for ODL.

The following were also indicated as factors that became obstacles in implementing the policy:

- o There are no clear principles stated to apply the tuition policy;
- o Poor monitoring strategy;
- o Resistance to change by academics;
- o The policy is in itself not very clear;
- o Training and workshops not offered to academics;
- o Poor vision leads to poor policy, poor principles and implementation;
- o Lack of implementation plans;
- o No quality assurance plans;
- o Fragmented procedural plan and process nature of institution;
- o Inflexibility of the Unisa system;
- o Merger (Unisa, TSA and Vudec);
- o Time constraints of using teams; and
- o Lack of consistency, commitment and consultation.

One respondent concluded that 'people do not know about the tuition policy i.e. lack of transparency on what it entails and how it could assist in tuition matters.'

What do you see as the major possibilities or opportunities for the successful implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy?

The question was whether the respondents saw any major opportunity or chance to implement the Unisa Tuition Policy. Some participants felt that if the Unisa community could understand the policy, this would in itself be a major opportunity for implementation. There were responses such as: 'It will open up fields and create a lasting relationship with students.' The birth of the new Unisa was also seen as an opportunity to implement the policy. Given the fact that the policy was accepted in 1998, this response makes little sense, but it can at least be seen as a vote of confidence in the policy. The merger, which entrenched Unisa as the major player in the provision of distance education in South Africa and on the continent as a whole, was seen as a step in the implementation of the policy.

Most of the responses made recommendations as to what should be done to ensure the implementation of the policy, but did not address 'the opportunities or chance for the implementation of the policy.' It is because of this reason that the following issues were raised:

- o Quality assurance;
- o Good programme qualification mix (PQM)[6];
- o Satisfying staff salaries and promotions;
- o Enhancement of learning at a distance;
- o Comprehensiveness;
- o University's commitment to the policy;
- o Use of technology-intranet and internet, etc.;
- o Broad-based stakeholders' participation;
- o Interdisciplinary participation in course material development, including peer group (student) participation; and
- o Consideration of practical courses in most of the programmes.

There were some remarks that the policy would lead to the enhancement of open and distance learning practices if a group of ODL educators that were well trained and had

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[6] PQM is Programme Qualification Mix – all the programmes and qualifications offered by Unisa.

experience to do an excellent job could have been invited to the development of such a policy.

It was thought that the implementation could be enabled by the fact that Unisa was a leader in the field of open and distance education, already possessed the necessary technology (ICT), and was the oldest ODL institution in SA. Another respondent noted that Unisa has a well-equipped library, and there was an expression of the need for strong leadership at all levels within the institution, so that those who are passionate and committed to effective teaching and meaningful learning could be rewarded. Another said that if academics were to be trained to understand the policy, it would be easier for them to follow it when designing study materials. This would 'produce better academics and as a direct result of this, students would also benefit from using good study materials in their careers or jobs.' Some of the responses showed a broad grasp of what the Unisa Tuition Policy should do.

5.7   Conclusion

The acceptance of the Unisa Tuition Policy in 1998 by the Senate provoked some doubts and suspicions about its purpose and intentions. The analysis of the data generated in this research project suggests that the development of the tuition policy followed very rigid and bureaucratic lines and was not an 'open process.' On the other hand, the development of the policy sparked debates about issues in distance education as a mode of delivery, as compared with face-to-face delivery. The development and implementation of the tuition policy was characterised by tensions pulling in different directions. The author showed that there is no common consensus on how the tuition policy should be developed and implemented. In Chapter 6, he discusses the findings generated from the data presented here.

Olssen, Codd & O'Neill (2004:61) warn that not all policy documents express intentions and that, if we assume that all policy documents do so, this may become an example of intentional fallacy. CHE (2004b) notes that teaching and learning issues are receiving attention at systems and institutional levels, and that the process will continue until a new academic policy is established. In teaching and learning delivery

modes, it is evident that the systematic use of ICT is blurring the distinction between face-to-face and distance education. In examining some of the responses and observations in this study, one can conclude that the lack of a realistic policy framework influenced the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings and make recommendations from the analysed data. The findings and recommendations are based partly on the literature review in Chapter 2, and partly on the data analysis in Chapters 4 and 5. Therefore, this chapter gives an overall view of the intention of this study - an exploration into views and experiences of various stakeholders in the development and the implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. The author also makes recommendations on issues relating to the development and implementation of the institutional policy for effective teaching and learning in open and distance learning.

The author has divided the chapter into four main sections. In the first section, the findings which describe the issues relating to the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy are discussed. The second section deals with recommendations based on views and ideas of how an institutional policy can be developed and implemented for effective teaching and learning in an ODL context. In the third section, the author presents some discussions and conclusions arising from the findings, whereas the last section sets out the limitations of the study and makes suggestions for further study.

The Unisa Tuition Policy, adopted by the Unisa Senate in June 1998, was intended to produce a paradigm shift in teaching and learning at Unisa. Since the policy is the object of study here, the analysis of the findings is conducted in terms of the questions posed to various stakeholders. The themes around which the questions were organised are:

- o The basic understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy and its various foci;
- o The process of developing the policy;
- o Hurdles, challenges and barriers to its implementation;

o Opportunities and chances for the implementation of policy; and

o The effects of implementation on teaching and learning.

The investigation into these aspects of the Unisa Tuition Policy through interviews, document analysis and questionnaires provides some basis for coming to the conclusions and the findings that are presented in this chapter.

6.2 An Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the views and experiences of various stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. The previous chapters highlighted the following:

Chapter 1 presented the key concepts and terminology used in this study. The theoretical framework had the following critical elements: 'Distance Education', 'Open Learning', and 'Open and Distance Learning.' In general, use of the terms 'distance education' and 'distance learning' seems to be interchangeable, although in some contexts, they are taken to refer to different phenomena, and open learning is often thought to rely heavily on distance education or distance learning, thus confusing the terminology even further. The author makes reference to the impact of this on the theoretical framework, for discussion later in this chapter.

The chapter also identifies various theories on distance education and the theoretical framework applied in this study. Evidence will be presented to demonstrate that various Unisa stakeholders hold different views on the issues under discussion. As a member of staff at Unisa, the researcher also had his own opinions about these topics, especially as part of his responsibility at Unisa is the implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy, which is the policy under investigation in this study. Chapter 1 therefore had to deal with the issue of the researcher's role in this qualitative research study.

Chapter 2 presented a review of relevant literature. The author looked into and commented on the literature relating to the issues of policy development and implementation, distance education, and open and distance education. He searched

for various comparative studies dealing with tuition policy development at an institutional level, and found that most studies that purport to be dealing with the concept 'tuition policy' actually deal with such issues as study fees and the structure of the learning programmes at institutions. Those that used the term to refer to a teaching and learning strategy had made comparisons with distance education practices at face-to-face universities that were introducing the distance education component to run concurrently with their face-to-face delivery. The literature on distance education still concentrates on how face-to-face institutions that need to bring distance education into their mainstream can go about this.

In Chapter 3, the author presented the research design and methodology applied in the study and will, later in this section, outline the impact that the choice of research design had on the findings. The design of this study was decided upon after much debate between the researcher and his promoters. The decision was also influenced by his having attended several seminars in education policy implementation at the University of Pretoria, as a requirement of the study. This exposed him to a variety of possible research designs (each with its own advantages and disadvantages). The use of interviews, focus group interviews, analysis of documents and a literature review is typical of qualitative research (Babbie, 2001), and that was the nature of the study to be performed. The inclusion of a quantitative facet, involving the administration and interpretation of a questionnaire, served the purpose of triangulation in the study. The researcher regarded the use of more than one method as a means of validating the research findings. There were some assumptions that the researcher had to make. The foremost of these had to do with the appropriateness of the design of the project and the appropriateness of the researcher, as a person and employee of the institution, which was the object of study, to undertake this particular research project. On the one hand, part of his responsibilities as a member of staff involved advising the institution on the implementation of policy, which meant that he was totally involved in the study that he wished to conduct. On the other hand, his position as an inside researcher gave him particularly intimate insight into the other participants' observations, knowledge, attitudes and some of the experiences relating to the development of the tuition policy. It is for these reasons that he believes that the design selected for this research was suitable. He also believes that the theoretical framework used in this study was a relevant one. Accordingly, the growth of DE as a

field of study has led to new developments, which have entailed the production of new theories and models regarding how teaching and learning are conceptualised. The challenge facing theorists has been how to define the learning process. Through the literature review, this study indicates that models have been developed in an attempt to describe the learning process in distance education. This study also shows that the increased demand for ODL and the need for practical innovation to meet that increase should induce us move to new discovery and insight. However, such moves will be influenced by what has already been done in terms of the different theories and models. Above all, this study has reiterated the fact that there is a need for tuition policy in distance education institutions.

The interviews were coded using Atlas.ti software, as said in Chapter 3. The coding of all the transcripts provided a large volume of information. The author therefore had to limit and recode the data so that valid findings could be presented from the different participants involved in the study. The choice of participants included the various stakeholders, as indicated in Chapter 3. The author chose two participants each from Unisa management, academics, learning developers, students, external stakeholders with interests in distance education, authors and learning developers of an Entrepreneurship Law 1 study guide, in order to find out their views and experiences in terms of the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. Thirty questionnaires were distributed, and only twenty-two participants responded. Four focus group interviews were held with students registered at Unisa. One group was made up of students who were using the Entrepreneurship Law study guide, and the other three groups were interviewed on the topic of their views and experiences relating to the Unisa Tuition Policy. The external stakeholders provided another dimension in terms of how they saw the impact of an institutional tuition policy on institutional practice. This was done against the background of what their various organisations stand for in terms of the development and role of distance education (SAIDE and NADEOSA). The participants were interested in an attempt to provide valid insight into the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy and the use of focus-group interviews helped in discussing certain issues and led to a degree of insight, except on controversial issues where the author had to reserve his judgement. Some South African policy documents and Acts were scrutinised in order to illuminate national developments in higher education, and one

international document, a policy document of the Open University of the UK, was introduced in order to situate the study within a reputable international context.

In Chapter 4, the author presented data and analysed it through a discussion of several documents which regulate the higher education scenario in South Africa. He indicated the aims of each document and its intended impact on higher education. In this way, he managed to analyse the Unisa Tuition policy in the context of national imperatives in the development of higher education in South Africa.

In Chapter 5, the author provided analysed data derived from the interviews and questionnaires. It is in this chapter that he dealt specifically with issues related to the research question posed in Chapter 1. Thus, he dealt with data relating to the views and experiences of different stakeholders regarding the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy.

Finally, in this chapter, the author outlines and discusses the findings and recommendations of this study. He also presents some limitations of this study and possible directions for future research, before coming to a conclusion.

6.3   Contextualising the Findings

The various findings on the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy are based on the literature review and empirical data and these findings provides a foundation for supporting the development and implementation of the tuition policy in an ODL context. One cannot contextualise the findings without also looking at the policy process. The literature suggests that there are different forms of policy processes, depending on the context. By a 'policy process', the author means the interaction by which the policy evolves, focusing on how the policy is initiated, formulated, enacted, implemented, evaluated and revised (Moorosi, 2006:4). The Unisa Tuition Policy process relates, to an extent, to some of the conventional ways for developing policy: the rationalist approach, the incremental process and the interactive process, but one cannot state categorically that one approach predominated in the development and implementation process of the Unisa Tuition Policy.

Institutional policy should be based on principles and values which are intended to guide practice, and can be evaluated in terms of the extent to which it is successful in doing so. Monitoring a policy therefore entails regular reflection on how the policy is influencing the core business. Unisa is a complex institution and needs well-articulated planning and formulation of relevant and suitable policies. Such policies will need to be evaluated and monitored if we are to effectively achieve the expected outcomes.

6.3.1 Basic understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy

One of the first questions in this study was whether participants have a basic understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy. Various views came from participants. The author found that some of them thought the Unisa Tuition Policy was intended to advise on how to deal with teaching and learning issues at Unisa. His unhappiness with this view stems from the fact that policy does not say 'why' and 'how' any particular line of action has to be followed. In this regard, the implementation is relegated to the background, and the expected outcomes, as stated by the policy, cannot be achieved.

One of the major findings of this study is that the participants understood the policy in the context of their 'mental models.' The implementation or lack of implementation of the policy was also related to how individuals and groups saw their roles in the whole process. The management saw themselves in the role of those with the authority to manage the development and implementation of the policy. Most of the academics were concerned about how to make students learn the content of their courses. Learning developers were strongly influenced by how they design effective teaching and learning materials. External stakeholders were focused on the contribution of distance education to the needs of the country. Students focused on learning effectively and completing their studies in the shortest time possible. Their understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy also influenced how they saw their roles in terms of its development and implementation, and differences in the understanding resulted in a degree of contention and conflict. The origins of such conflicts and contention can be attributed to the position of participants in the institution's hierarchy, and their perceptions of their roles. Regrettably, students were not

confident that they understood the policy, and thought that it did not help them at all, despite their having been given copies of the policy long before the interview. It became apparent during the interviews that they and the academics did not have the analytical or critical pedagogical tools to evaluate their views and experiences in terms of the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. This is in contradiction with the policy's intention, which is to help students in their learning.

6.3.2 Unisa Tuition Policy Development

The Unisa Tuition Policy was developed over a period of time, beginning in 1995 after the publication of the report on the status of distance education in South Africa. A management respondent was clear about this: 'The team project started in 1994-1995 and each faculty was to do a new type of course that is based on the OUUK model.' The development of the policy was a process involving internal and external elements, a fact which made it complex and complicated.

In essence, the Unisa Tuition Policy assumes to represent the reality of teaching and learning in distance education, and therefore oversimplifies the matter. Any view claiming to represent such a reality (through a policymaking process) must take cognisance of the fact that teaching and learning in reality is a complex, non-linear, multi-factorial process, not perfectly delineable and reducible to a single document, decision or event (Van Audenhove, 2003: 4). The development of the Unisa Tuition Policy was thoroughly influenced by the historical context and developments with regard to South African higher education at that time. In analysing the documents and Acts, one of the findings was that the 1994 Distance Education Commission report and the idea of a single, dedicated distance education institution, as indicated in NPHE (DoE, 2001a) and the White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997a), had a major impact on the decision to develop and implement a Unisa Tuition Policy.

A variety of different 'actors' were involved in the development. However, the actors did not talk and align their inputs. It was suggested that the development of the policy had to be viewed against the background of who developed the policy, with what, or for what purpose. The history of the development does not indicate that any

responsibility for this can be attributed to the management, although most respondents agreed that the management initiated the 'workshop' which led to its development.

The author found that the development of the policy was influenced by a number of factors, one of which was the uncertain grasp of the nature of policy discourse. There were various views on the nature of the policy, what the policy says, and what it implies. Other telling factors were the varying preconceptions about the way in which a policy is written, its application and the desired impact. There were different points of view on and assumptions about who should be involved in the development and implementation, and what process should be followed. It was thought that there is an urgent need to understand 'how management, academics, learning developers, and students may contribute to the institutional policy development and subsequently how the contributions will enhance the policy implementation'.

The management, academics and learning developers felt very strongly that they should be involved in the development of the tuition policy. However, each felt that they had a more important role to play than the others. No one was ready to say who should lead, even in the team approach.

It was also evident that the majority of students felt that they should also be involved. Students who were doing Entrepreneurship Law felt that they should be involved, even if only at the level of evaluating the teaching and learning material.

There was no indication of students having ever previously been involved in the development and implementation of the policy. There were suggestions that they should participate, but the nature of their role was a major cause of contention. It is evident that there will be a need to build a culture of effective policy development if we are to realise the potential of teaching and learning in distance education. Furthermore, the tendency in distance education circles to be preoccupied with any issue other than teaching and learning needs to be further explored (Gellman-Fetzner and Danley, 1998).

6.3.3   Unisa Tuition Policy Implementation Hurdles

The Unisa Tuition Policy, in a broad sense, does not extend to the issue of evaluation of its implementation and the desired effects. One can therefore not speak about the efficiency and effectiveness of the policy. There were very fluid responses about what participants saw as the focus of the policy. This was seen as one of the barriers against implementation, as the policy suggests various foci, but makes no suggestions in terms of their application. The actual writing of the policy and the timeframe in which it had to be applied show a wide gap. In other words, after the development of the policy, it takes longer before such a policy comes into effect.

Participants' notions of their own roles at the institution could in some instances be described as barriers against successful implementation. There were those who did not want anything to do with the policy, either due to ignorance or for no stated reason. Given the fact that these are the people who are meant to interact with the policy on a daily basis, as the policy was intended to have an impact on their practice, this is most disturbing. One respondent put it like this: 'we operate under different paradigms and some of us do not believe in OBE'. One can partially blame Unisa for making it possible for a member of staff to be so bold as to distance himself from an approved institutional policy. The policy does not clearly state that those members of the institution's staff who are responsible for teaching and learning should view its implementation as compulsory or mandatory.

It is obvious that the purpose of the Unisa Tuition Policy was to advise on matters of teaching and learning at Unisa. However, the participants in this study could not determine their specific role in the development of the policy. There was consensus that they must be part of the team in policy development, but they could not think further than that. If one function of the role is to implement the policy through the writing of study guides, the policy must fail if people do not know their roles.

The author also found that some individuals have, in their different contexts, incorporated different aspects of the policy in their writing of study guides. This could be seen as something like a partial application of the policy. The reasons why these particular elements were included in the study guide and others were not would

have to be found in the relation between the elements of the tuition policy and the individuals' 'mental models.' Their views and experiences were shaped by their mental models, which often resulted in tensions and contradictions.

It became apparent from the responses that there was a need to improve the understanding of policy development and create awareness about institutional policy (via effective communication). Furthermore, some responses gave advice about the 'developed strategy for policy implementation,' which should be driven by the institution. The literature indicates that policy implementation is not a simple and straightforward process. There are various dynamics which make the process complex. Thus, there are always gaps between what is envisioned in policy and what happens in reality as an outcome of the policy.

This certainly impacts on the way in which policies are implemented. In dealing with the intentions of the policy, one always feels that the intentions belong to those at the top of the hierarchy, and are imposed on the lower orders. This top-down approach is partly responsible for the fact that Unisa has reacted to the intentions without much thought. The staff of any other large institution would have done the same.

The literature shows that we can ask basic questions about policy implementation (McLaughlin, 1987; Perraton and Lentell, 2004). Such questions may be as follows:

(a) Is the overall policy consistent?
(b) Are there any gaps, overlaps or loopholes?
(c) Are there the right people and departments to implement the policy?
(d) Are there enough resources?
(e) Is the institution capable of the implementation?

One cannot see any guidelines in the Unisa Tuition Policy regarding the making and implementation of policy, nor do we know who the people are that this policy is meant to be serving. Is it intended to serve students, the management, academics or learning developers? And if it is intended to serve any of the particular groups, what is it that it must deliver – what is to be served or what service must be delivered, and how will we evaluate the type of service being given in terms of the impact? The lack

of succinct responses to the above questions could also be seen as implementation hurdles.

McLaughlin (1987) suggests that there are different phases or periods of policy implementation. In the first phase, the challenge lies in the uncertain relationship between policies and implementation programmes in broad parameters. The second phase is characterised by unpacking of the implementation process and looking at the relations between policy and practice. The third phase is an attempt to integrate the micro-world of individual implementations. He concludes by making the following points:

- o Individual incentives and beliefs are central to local responses;
- o Policy cannot always mandate what matters to outcomes at the local level;
- o Effective implementation requires a strategic balance of pressure and support; and
- o Policy-directed change is ultimately a problem of the smallest unit.

The views and experiences of stakeholders, as evident in their responses to the questionnaire and in the focus groups, would seem to support McLaughlin's ideas. It is clear that the institution's failure to deal with these issues effectively has contributed to the poor implementation of the tuition policy.

6.3.4   Unisa Tuition Policy Implementation Opportunities

The focus of this investigation was the University of South Africa as a case study. One of the opportunities to implement the Unisa Tuition Policy relates to the context in which Unisa exists. The history of the institution gives it an opportunity for policy evolution, as it differentiates between teaching and learning in the correspondence approach and open and distance learning. One of the respondents noted the fact that Unisa is now distinguished from all other universities, as it has been identified by the South African government as the single, dedicated distance education university in the country, and this affords it an opportunity to develop and implement an effective tuition policy.

There were strong views that if we follow a linear model of policy development and implementation, the effect of the policy will be strong. Sutton (1999) argues that the linear model of policymaking is characterised by the objective analysis of options, and that the separation of policy development from implementation is inadequate. She advises that policy implementation is best understood as a chaos of purposes and accidents. Juma and Clark (1995) suggest that, often, failure in policy implementation can be attributed to a lack of political will, poor management or a shortage of resources.

Some of the views and experiences of respondents were influenced by the attrition and poor throughput rates at Unisa, as indicated in Chapter 1. Some participants felt that we should use the Unisa Tuition Policy in order to turn the situation around, the assumption being that if the Unisa Tuition Policy were effectively implemented, the situation at Unisa might be redeemed. Of course, some participants made a link between this situation and the concerns of the Ministry of Education, as articulated in the problem statement. Hillier and Jameson (2003:22) advise that we need long-term comprehensive planning that brings together and rationalises different policy initiatives and systematically takes into account the practical realities of the difficulties faced on the ground by institutions and practitioners implementing multiple changes simultaneously. They are right, and we need to reflect deeply on the changes that the policy aims to achieve, and on different ways to implement such policy initiatives.

6.3.5   Impact on Teaching and Learning

On the issue of whether or not the Unisa Tuition Policy contributes to their learning, students expressed a lot of doubts. Responses such as 'it's not easy to get a degree here', 'the time factor of studying here at Unisa is tough,' and 'we need to write tests so that we can test ourselves' reflect what Knapper (1988) describes as insecurities about learning in distance learners. Such insecurities are founded in personal and other related issues such as the cost of studying, the irrelevance of studying, and the lack of support.

213

Distance education should be characterised by student-centred learning, and knowing the characteristics and demographics of distance learners therefore helps us to understand the potential barriers to learning (Galusha, 1997:3). Knowing the personal characteristics is an important aspect of planning distance learning courseware and strategies (Knowles, 1980; Galusha, 1997). Therefore, more importantly, it means knowing the participants who can help to drive the programme planning and policy formation, factors that are important to participation and success in distance learning (Galusha, 1997:13).

There was a range of issues in this study which students identified and saw as critical for their successful learning at Unisa. The issues were almost the same in the different focus groups, but they were given different attributes in terms of value. The issues were:

- o The assessment at the university, including self-assessment;
- o Contact with lecturers and study groups;
- o Study or learning material; and
- o The logistics of travelling.

DE is a demanding environment of learning. It carries opportunities for policy developers and, at the same time, creates a culture and tradition that govern its teaching and learning, as well as research.

A wide range of views was expressed in the focus groups interviews on various issues. One of the main issues for future research will be learner support in the context of improving learning and teaching. There seems to be a wide gap between what Unisa sees as a learner and the view of students on learner support in terms of their learning. From the focus group of students who were using the Entrepreneurship Law Study Guide, it became apparent that the implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy would help to improve students' performance. Thus, future research should look at issues that can improve teaching and learning in ODL.

It also emerged that the lack of clearly defined goals and a guide as to how teaching should take place at Unisa had an impact on pass rates. The policy does not clearly

indicate the necessary skills, knowledge and experience needed to succeed in studying in terms of distance education.

Innovations in Distance Education (IDE, 1999) suggests that we need to follow some principles in designing learning goals and content presentation. One of the principles is that instructional design and development support should include a wide range of faculty services, as they create and prepare instructional materials for delivery via distance education.

In this study, the author concludes that the analysis, findings and discussion show that policy development and implementation is complex and complicated. The policy development and implementation process depends on the participants' perceptions and views, and the context in which they operate.

6.4   Acts and Documents

From 1994 to date, we have seen the introduction of many policies aimed at redressing past inequalities in the South African education system. These policies have had different results. Some of the implementers and policy developers were motivated to carry out the policy, while others were too scared to do anything about what the policy required. On the issue of the role of the leadership in the policy implementation process, Sehoole (2005:193) refers to knowledge of the intricacies of the policies being considered as being essential, whereas leadership for policy development requires the ability to provide vision and a set of strategies, and the ability to defend the policies under consideration.

Cloete (2002) points out that the major achievement of the post–1994 era was the development, in a participatory, co-operative manner, of a comprehensive new policy framework. However, the implementation proved to be a major difficulty. Cloete concludes that some progress has been made in respect of the main pillars of transformation - equity, democracy, efficiency and responsiveness, but that such achievements can be attributed to institutional responses, rather than to the government's policy proposals and processes.

Most of the policy areas covered by the Acts and documents show the interaction between the role of institutions and the responsibilities of the state or government. In some situations, what happens at a national level influences what happens in institutions. A typical example would be the issues covered by the NAP (DoE, 2002) document and how institutions responded. Kovel–Jarboe (1997), in her study on 'state-level policy and planning for distance education', identifies policy areas where institutional and state-level responsibilities interact. Such areas are quality assurance, student support, human and financial resources, governance, mission and programmes, and infrastructure.

One finding derived from this study is that institutions should also play a role in state policy-making agencies. The work of these agencies should be transparent, and their composition should involve a variety of stakeholders. Kovel–Jarboe concludes that the interaction of campus (institutional) policy and state-level policy is a dynamic process. No institution can do good campus planning without understanding government policies. She also points out that state-level policies are better when informed by campus practices, and that if both do not engage or interact, then both state policies and campus practices will be the poorer.

The Acts and other documents introduced another means of development and implementation. The governance and developments in higher education focused on the 'transformation' of South African society and institutions themselves.

Distance education has the potential to offer new learning opportunities that are unrestricted by time, distance or individual differences among students (Chang, 1998). Dillon and Cintron (1997) emphasise that educational practices cannot accommodate distance education without corresponding shifts in the fundamental views of teaching and learning, as well as in state, federal and institutional policies. In the South African context, distance education is centrally concerned with equity of access to educational opportunities for all citizens, no matter where they live or what time is available for them to study. The South African government, like most governments in the world, is looking at distance learning and technology, so as to encourage economic growth in the sector.

The Acts and documents discussed in this study suggest the maintenance of some issues through coherence, cooperation and partnerships in terms of the regimes around values, norms, rules and procedures. Such documents provide some critical issues regarding policy development and implementation. The analysis of the Acts and other policy documents should help Unisa to contextualise itself in respect of HE developments in South Africa, and to benchmark its achievements against those of other successful ODL institutions.

6.5 Close-Ended Questions

Close-ended questions provided options and required respondents to react to these options. The choices ranged from 'totally agree,' 'agree,' 'not sure,' and 'disagree,' to 'totally disagree.' Therefore, interpretation cannot come up with totally valid, cast in stone, findings. The close-ended questions had the following major themes:

      (a)   An understanding and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy

      (b)   The expectations and outcomes of the Unisa Tuition Policy

      (c)   The implementation impact on effective teaching and learning

An introductory question related to the availability of the Unisa Tuition Policy to participants in different sections of Unisa. Most respondents indicated that the availability or lack of availability of the tuition policy was of great significance, but they added that there should be a vigorous display of the policy, so that everyone who was involved in teaching and learning would be aware of it. One cannot imagine an academic who had been at the institution for over thirteen years, but became aware of the tuition policy only when he was asked to participate in this study.

Understanding of the tuition policy

Many participants indicated that the Unisa Tuition Policy was easy to understand. However, when asked if the policy gave clear guidelines on what was required from academics, there were few participants who thought that was the case. The last item sought to find out whether or not participants had implemented some of the aspects of

the policy in the development of a study guide. The following table indicates the percentages regarding the responses to the above:

Strongly agree	Agree	Do not agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
13.5%	45.4%	18.1%	13.6%	9.09%

There were various views on the issue of whether or not participants had a basic understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy. It was generally found that respondents thought the policy advised on how to deal with teaching and learning issues in distance education institutions, but that the policy did not justify why or say how such a line of action had to be followed.

Expectations and outcomes of the Unisa Tuition Policy

There were 10 items in this part of the questionnaire. The first item sought to find out whether the policy clearly stated the expectations of the academics. Those who strongly agreed were 4.54%, 4% agreed, 13.6% were not sure, and 31.8% disagreed.

The second item sought to find out whether or not the implementation of the policy would improve teaching and learning. 22.7% agreed, whereas 63.6% disagreed.

The third item was on whether or not the policy clearly stated the university's focus and its underlying principles. Those who chose to agree were 63.3%. One of the findings was that the policy clearly stated its expected outcomes.

The rest of the items explored the relationships between philosophy, policy practice and learning material development. In this section, the following issues or themes emerged:

o   The challenge of implementation: would the policy lead to the improvement of teaching and learning?
o   Various foci and principles of the university;
o   The principles for driving curriculum development;

218

o The development of programmes and courses;

o The articulation of various types of qualifications;

o ODL principles and their influence on course development; and

o The role and responsibilities of course developers.

Effective Teaching and Learning

A number of the responses demonstrated that respondents believed that they were playing meaningful roles in the operationalisation of teaching and learning at Unisa. As the percentages show, many participants chose the response 'agree' in reaction to questions relating to the function of teaching and learning, where the agreement was to a positive statement about the connection between their experiences in implementing aspects of the policy. However, there were some who strongly disagreed, and a few more who simply disagreed with the statements. On the basis of these results, we can conclude that the Unisa Tuition Policy clearly states its expectations of what academics should do, and that most participants believe that implementation will lead to an improvement of teaching and learning. Sherry (1996:4) argues that theory in distance education should take cognisance not only of the communication of information to a student, but also of the way in which a student makes sense of and constructs new knowledge from the information presented. In this context, only a few of the respondents believed that the policy clearly showed some of the implications of operationalising sound ODL principles in the teaching of Unisa programmes and courses.

Most of the items in this section looked at issues relating to the Unisa Tuition Policy and its impact on teaching and learning. Some of the findings indicate that the Unisa Tuition Policy could lead to the effective development of study guides. In terms of curriculum design, one of the common views was that the Unisa Tuition Policy is based on sound ODL principles relevant to addressing the needs of South African society. There were obvious doubts about whether or not its implementation would lead to the development of interactive learning materials. However, the respondents agreed that the Unisa Tuition Policy is encouraging a move from developing content-centred to learner-centred materials.

There were also responses that indicated that the Unisa Tuition Policy did not provide clear guidelines on what to do in order to relate the principles of the policy to the development of effective teaching and learning. In designing close-ended and open-ended questions, the author's intention was to arrive at an approximate portrayal of the same issues in the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. The questions did not intend to reflect any conflicts or contradictions. Therefore, if the closed-end questions were restrictive in terms of the options offered to respondents, there was an opportunity to expand on some of the issues in the open-ended questions.

6.6   Open-Ended Questions

The responses to this section required participants to give their own views without being channelled into predetermined responses. Therefore, participants had to play a creative role and think before answering questions in this section.

There were four open-ended questions that the respondents had to answer. The first one was about what they thought were the main reasons for the introduction of the Unisa Tuition Policy. The respondents were required to give a clear response. The responses ranged from political to academic factors. One response was that it was introduced because of 'change of political context since 1994 and exposure to international best practice in ODL'.

There were two main findings that arose from responses to this question. The first finding related to the political influence at the time. The idea was that Unisa wished to reposition itself in relation to the many higher education policy documents and Acts that had just appeared: the National Commission on Higher Education (1996), the Technology Enhanced Learning Investigation (1996), the Green Paper on Higher Education (1996), the Distance Education Policy document (1996), the Education White Paper 3 (1997), and the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997. Furthermore, the 1994 Commission on Distance Education report had indicated that Unisa was not delivering in terms of targets for human resource development in the country. The opinion was that the Unisa Tuition Policy was therefore developed to address some of the concerns of the Commission on Distance Education (1994).

The second finding was that management wanted approval of their initiatives in the process of trying to align Unisa with the democratic reforms which were happening at the time in the social, political and economic sectors in South Africa.

The second question was about what one thought were the major breakthroughs that were envisaged by the policy. Participants saw the introduction of the OBE approach as one of the main breakthroughs. Even if people did not use the Unisa Tuition Policy, they became aware that there was a new approach to teaching and learning in South African education, which should also be applied at Unisa. At the institutional level, one of findings was that the Unisa Tuition Policy brought up issues of compliance with NQF imperatives.

The third question asked participants to identify the major obstacles or constraints in the implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. There were various views related to various experiences. One of the issues that came up was that the Unisa Tuition Policy is underpinned and influenced by a paradigm which is not likely to be shared by all of the role players with a responsibility for implementing the policy. Some of the stakeholders were adamant that training on how to implement the tuition policy should be provided. Such training would address the lack of knowledge and skills to effectively implement the policy.

The fourth and last question in this section was about what participants saw as the major possibilities or opportunities for the successful implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. The findings indicated very strong views condemning Unisa's low pass rates, and the sentiments were that the tuition policy should help to correct the situation. One of the findings that arose had to do with the language used in the text of the policy, which participants thought could be interpreted differently in different situations and contexts. In most instances, we do not have to ask what a policy document means, because the policy has been formulated in clear, unambiguous language and terminology, specific to a discipline. This is not the case here. It was thought that terms such as learner-centredness, team approach and ODL might mean different things to different role players.

The critical aspects in the findings were that the Unisa Tuition Policy, in a broad sense, does not indicate a manner in which its implementation and desired outcomes can be evaluated, and that one can therefore not speak about efficiency and effectiveness in relation to the Unisa Tuition Policy. The findings suggested that in order for the effective implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy to take place, we need to look into the areas of institutional capacity (skills and knowledge; infrastructure; team approach and curriculum design).

6.7   Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

In brief, the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy was problematic and posed many challenges. This can be seen in some instances where participants were not clear on why and how they were using the Unisa Tuition Policy. Some of the participants haphazardly incorporated some of the Unisa Tuition Policy's elements, without much understanding about why they were doing it. And, since there were no clear guidelines and mandate on what various stakeholders needed to do to implement the policy, it was in general left to whatever individuals felt like doing.

The lack of a clear discourse in terms of the thinking and discussions around the Unisa Tuition Policy made participants lose focus regarding the value of the policy. The lack of an epistemological policy community at Unisa leaves the role of policy development and implementation in the hands of the management, who may not be experts in this particular process. Clay and Schaffer (1984) pinpoint the dichotomy between policymaking and implementation, which comes about because policy-makers avoid taking responsibility for policies they make. Clay and Schaffer term this 'escape hatches,' and use the concept to explain a lack of policy outcomes.

The lack of a policy network or coalition makes policy communication difficult, particularly in the general system of relationships at Unisa, which was thought to be unstable and restrictive. From various responses in the study, the author deduced that there is a feeling that an interactive development approach should have been used. Sutton (1999:11) is of the opinion that the frequent preference for this approach is rooted in a criticism of much development policy as being 'top-down,' not generated from the communities in which policies are implemented. Sutton argues for an 'actor-

perspective', so as to take into account the opinions of individuals, agencies and social groups that have a stake or interest in the system. In the development of the Unisa Tuition Policy, one cannot recognise the initiators, those who set the agenda. Therefore, one cannot understand the policy in terms of who defined the agenda and who was keeping the gate when it comes to some of the gate-keeping issues dealt with in the document.

The introduction of the Unisa Tuition Policy could be seen as an attempt to change the institution's teaching and learning practices, but the stakeholders represented by the participants in this study seem to believe that the changes have not taken place, and that the envisaged benefits have not accrued. There has been little in the way of implementation. Most policymaking and implementation models split the process into two. Clay and Schaffer (1984), focusing on their linear model, introduce the notion of a divided, dichotomous and linear sequence from policy to implementation.

In the process of the development and implementation of the Unisa tuition model, one can sense the assumption that management is responsible for decision-making and that academics are responsible for implementation. One of the factors in policy implementation is that as the implementation moves through different levels in the institutional hierarchy, there will inevitably be some changes. Juma and Clark (1995: 125) affirm that policy implementers have various ways of interacting with policies. They can adapt new polices, co-opt some of the ideas or ignore the new policy, and this gives them a crucial role, as their actions determine the success or failure of policy initiatives.

In terms of policy development and implementation, the context of Unisa as a distance education institution and the mental models relating to teaching and learning influenced, in an interactive way, how the policy was implemented. The literature review demonstrates the contested nature of terms such as distance education, open learning, and open and distance learning, and highlights the debatable nature of theories of distance education. Thus, it was only to be expected that the development of the Unisa Tuition Policy would have led to tension. The way in which management, academics and learning developers view policy development and implementation differs. Similarly, they have different views on the development of

223

distance education and distance education theories, and different conceptions of distance education, open learning, and open and distance learning. The challenge for the Unisa community in terms of developing and implementing the tuition policy will be a need to engage in a deeper understanding of the national and international context of ODL and its development and practice. This will enhance a critical look at the important factors and issues which will lead to constructive institutional policy development and implementation.

The challenge of an institution such as Unisa in terms of policy development and implementation will be to look at bureaucratic restructuring and capacity building. If the education policy context dictates the political and theoretical settings, one would see tension around issues of prescription of an institutional ODL tuition policy, role of stakeholders and social factors. As such, the challenge will be to reinforce all these issues within the realm of possibilities in local contexts and their dynamics.

The influence of social movement in policy development and implementation should not be ignored. The value of involving those who implement policy in development is that they can collectively challenge a management view and dictate a way and agenda for institutional policy development. Unisa needs to look into creating an enabling environment for the various stakeholders to engage in dialogue for policy development and implementation. The development of the Unisa Tuition Policy, as well as individual and institutional challenges, should be looked from a more broadly determined structure. The use of Unisa as a case study resulted in some ideological differences of opinion in terms of how the policy was implemented, and was often revisited by some groups and individuals. This, at times, saw people operating according to different and often contradictory policy meanings and contexts.

The policy attempted to provide guidance in terms of how teaching and learning should occur at Unisa. It presupposed the move away from content-centred to learner-centred teaching. However, in the almost seven years of the Unisa Tuition Policy's existence, nothing has been researched or done to evaluate the effect of this policy. Hence, the focus of this study was on an exploration into different views and experiences regarding the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy.

With regard to interacting with the policy, most of the participants were influenced by their mental models. In this context, their views and experiences of the Unisa Tuition Policy development and understanding were influenced by how they understood and responded to the policy process.

The issue of students' involvement in the development of the policy resurfaced several times. The limited involvement of students in the Unisa Tuition Policy development should be a concern, as the policy is intended for them. The conflict in the ideas relating to the Unisa Tuition Policy development and implementation did not surface clearly in students' responses, as they felt it was the responsibility of the academics to develop such a policy. There was an obvious gap between the development of the Unisa Tuition Policy and its implementation. The role of the academic, as specified in the policy, included the issues of what to teach, how to teach, to whom, and who would teach. However, in practice, the reaction to these policy issues depended on what the academics saw as important in their specific subjects. IDE (1999) advises that we need to look at three critical factors in students' needs: defining and reaching students, providing access to learning resources, and maintaining and assessing quality. Furthermore, IDE (1999) advises that students have the right to know what courses meet high qualitative standards, so that both learners and the public can rely on their education. Students also have the right to choose a style and method of learning that works best for them individually, and not only what to learn, but also where, when and how they learn.

Unisa as a case study also shows some of the new developments in terms of how it views teaching and learning. Thus, the move from the 'distance education' approach to 'open and distance learning' can be viewed in this light. Although Unisa has been involved in the distance education field for more that 130 years (Pityana, 2003:1), there has been very little support in terms of planning and preparation to launch and implement the policy. The planning and preparation could have started at the departmental level. It could have progressed to faculties or college committees, and then to the whole university. This would have involved taking cognisance of the 'policy context' at Unisa. Despite the fact that each faculty or college has a tuition

committee, it does not seem that there are discussions around general tuition matters to be taken to the Senate.

The reality of policy development and implementation is complex, and the participation of different stakeholders makes it much more complex. What makes the issue of development and implementation even more complex is the absence in the policy of monitoring and evaluation tools or procedures. Monitoring and evaluation is a critical element in any policy development and implementation context. The only time that there seems to be any monitoring and evaluation is when learning developers and academics interpret the policy and implementation in a study guide during the learning development process. The Unisa Tuition Policy exists, but it does not define its status in the institution. One therefore does not know whether or not one is compelled to implement the policy.

Some of the participants were actively involved in the policy development and implementation, using the policy to influence the way they write learning materials. However, others make use of some of the elements of the tuition policy in the writing of study material, without being aware that the elements are in the tuition policy. In this instance, one thinks of how useful the team approach would be in the development of study material.

The acceptance of the Unisa Tuition Policy helped to encourage scrutiny of teaching and learning practices at the institution. This should be taken as a breakthrough, since, during the years before this policy was created, teaching and learning were not organised from a central point at the institution. Teaching was fragmented into different departments and divisions. Conceivably, the policy will be seen as a central point for organising teaching and learning. If this does not happen, the institution's teaching and learning practices are likely to remain fragmented.

This study indicates that more academics are becoming aware of existence of the tuition policy, partly due to the existence of the Bureau of Learning Development (BLD). Such awareness led some academics to try to find out what the policy says, but awareness in itself does not mean that most of the academics will implement this policy, as this depends on their mental models, views, attitudes and knowledge.

226

There were those who felt that the policy alienated them from what they know as teaching and learning at Unisa. Some of their views were based on what the author sees as different theories of distance education.

It is in this context that the author highlights the issues raised in the framework of this study in Chapter 1. He indicated there that the theoretical framework for this study has been drawn from various viewpoints based on models of distance education, historical developments and the Unisa Tuition Policy.

The Unisa Tuition Policy is influenced by three broad categories of distance education theories: theories of independence and autonomy; theories of industrialisation; and theories of interaction and communication. In the theory of autonomy and independence, dialogue is regarded as critical, since it is an interaction between a learner and an instructor. The influence of these theories leads to complications in trying to understand the Unisa Tuition Policy in terms of defining distance education. Distance education can no longer be viewed as a separate entity on the periphery of the academic enterprise, as it can be used to improve learning and teaching, while also increasing access to the university through technology (IDE, 1999). Rumble (1989) had already argued that the terms 'open learning' and 'distance learning' have never been used precisely. Thus, we need greater clarity in order to avoid misleading ourselves and others. In looking at the Unisa Tuition Policy and the practice of teaching and learning at Unisa, one sees a mixture and variety of the abovementioned theories. A further complication arises out of the difficulty involved in attempting to define distance education and open and distance education at Unisa.

The use of the terms 'open and distance learning' and 'open learning' lacks clarity in the Unisa Tuition Policy. The policy uses open and distance learning, yet it also specifically refers to the following: open learning promotes access to courses, flexibility in learning provision, and methods and criteria of assessing learning progress and achievement. Furthermore, the policy states that open learning denotes a shift in emphasis from the institutional lecturer or content-centred learning to a learner-centred and outcomes-based approach. In the Unisa Tuition Policy, one comes across phrases such as 'learner centredness' and 'team approach,' and thus the emphasis shows what this policy needs to achieve. The language we use can reflect

the new policy developments. Political and cultural trends are more or less subtly reflected in the language in which a policy is articulated and in the way that questions are framed (Hillier and Jameson, 2003:17). The new terms and concepts in policy development show changes that are aimed at achieving specific goals.

The Unisa Tuition Policy refers to open access, collaboration, lifelong learning and other such matters as aspects that need to be realised. However, Unisa as a distance education institution should give students maximum independence with regard to choice, study methods and learning activities, study pace and progression and evaluation (Moore, 1983:88). And, through the responses from various participants, especially students, the finding of this study is that this is not happening. There is also an emphasis on dialogue in this theory, which the Unisa Tuition Policy indirectly invokes when it refers to the need for a team approach. However, such dialogue, as respondents indicated, is not happening or is very minimal. In the theory of industrialisation, the structure of distance teaching is determined to a considerable degree by the principles of industry, particularly those of rationalisation, division of labour and mass production (Peters, 1988). In such a system, the teaching process is gradually restructured through increasing mechanisation and mass production.

The Unisa Tuition Policy invokes this in the form of guidelines on tuition. The guidelines say what is to be taught, to whom, by what means, and by whom. This theory implies that the development of study courses should consider these guidelines, which are important as the first steps in a production process. Paulsen (1993) also advises us that the effectiveness of the teaching process is particularly dependent on planning and organisation. The course must be formalised and the expectations of students standardised. The teaching process is largely objectified. The functions of academic teaching at a distance have changed from conventional teaching. However, when looking at the Unisa Tuition Policy, one sees very limited opportunities for interaction among individual students. The effectiveness of the teaching process is particularly dependent on planning and organisation. The finding in relation to this is that there seems to be very little planning and organisation around activities at Unisa (between management, academics, learning developers and students).

The theory of interaction and communication emphasises the didactic conversation in distance learning. Holmberg (1988:115) regards it as 'conversation-like interaction between the students on the one hand and the tutor counsellor of the supporting organization administrating the study on the other.' Paulsen (1993:4) advocates a constant interaction (conversation) between the supporting organisation (authors, tutors, counsellors) and the students. This will be simulated and real - simulated through students' interaction with the pre-produced course materials, and real through written and/or telephonic interaction with their tutors and counsellors. However, the finding here is that there is little or no dialogue between Unisa and its students, even though the Unisa Tuition Policy emphasises this. The policy states that Unisa should create and sustain student-friendly environments by coordinating and integrating resources.

It was also found that participation in policy development is a good thing, as it leads to a feeling of ownership. Furthermore, participation in policy development encourages implementation. There is a need, then, for the creation of a new culture in terms of participation in institutional issues (Fullan, 1993; Elmore, 1995). This will encourage a move away from the status quo, and will therefore prevent the expression of attitudes such as 'we have been teaching like this for the past 20 years.'

One of the participants, a learning developer, expressed a general view of what is happening in terms of the Unisa Tuition Policy. Although, from the national government, there are various Acts and documents, there is no indication or emphasis as to what institutions such as Unisa need to do. Thus, the Acts and documents are in the public domain, and the government seems to be saying; 'you have the tools and guidelines, why can you not do what we envisage?' This is also an attitude that one can see at Unisa, as the tuition policy is there, but no one takes the responsibility for its implementation. This includes those who were involved in the development of the policy. This attitude is interpreted in various ways by academics and learning developers. It may mean those who developed the policy were not sure of what they were saying, or do not know how teaching and learning at Unisa should occur.

It was also apparent that stakeholders looked closely at what should happen in teaching and learning, without looking at the overall impact of teaching and learning

in a distance education context. In this context, participants did not even look at the requirements of the Unisa Tuition Policy. This was just a single policy that existed alone for so many years, and everyone should have been aware of it.

The use of other international documents, such as the teaching and learning strategy of the OUUK, demonstrated that Unisa should think of benchmarking itself against some other successful institutions. The OUUK has moved away from having a tuition or teaching policy, and now focuses on developing a teaching and learning strategy for a specific period of time.

When a policy has to be implemented, there will always be a variety of reactions from the implementers. There are always tensions between development and implementation, between various stakeholders, and even between individuals themselves. In general terms, the impact of the policy sees the emergence of mental models regarding what happens just after the policy has been implemented.

Uncertainties surrounding how to implement teaching and learning policies are obvious, and the issues discussed in this study about the Unisa Tuition Policy development and implementation could contribute to the knowledge base. Areas of strength and weakness in teaching, as perceived by students, have been identified, and advice on intervention has been given. In general, this study gives a practical overview of what happens when a policy has been developed and is to be implemented by various stakeholders at an institutional level.

6.8   Recommendations

It is evident from this study that recommendations have to be made, based on the many views and experiences of the various stakeholders who participated in the study. This study looked at the various views and experiences of a variety of stakeholders, focusing on issues pertaining to whether or not the Unisa Tuition Policy is effective. Therefore, in order to examine the effectiveness of the Unisa Tuition Policy, one could recommend that the institution should provide a tool or mechanism for policy evaluation. This tool would serve the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness and

efficiency of the Unisa Tuition Policy. It could involve the use of an analytical framework and value judgements, as suggested by Van Audenhove (2003), who suggests that we ask the following questions:

(a) Has the policy been effectively implemented, that is, comparing the goals, process and impact of the policy?
(b) What are the enabling and constraining factors for policy development and implementation?
(c) Where are the problems situated in the process, and in what phase do they occur?

Lape and Hart (1997) affirm that distance education requires the re-conceptualisation of institutional policies. In this context, one would recommend that if policy is a vehicle that would aid institutions in achieving their goals, there must be strong leadership to drive the process. This would help address confusions which may arise as to what needs to be done when a policy has been developed - that is, what line of action should be taken.

Plant (1995) suggests five critical issues for successful policy implementation, which are:

o Developing a plan for change;
o Identifying change agents;
o Recognising barriers to change, building support for reform;
o Reforming organisational structure; and
o Mobilising resources to consolidate change.

The Unisa institutional vision and mission should be clear and shared among various stakeholders, so that issues in the tuition policy can become more transparent, thus allowing effective management. The policy-writing process must be influenced by the shared beliefs.

Distance education can serve as a catalyst for creating a new teaching and learning environment in which faculty, students and administrators can examine and change

the way they conceptualise instruction (IDE, 1999). This institutional culture at Unisa will happen when shared values and visions about how to achieve effective teaching and learning are clearly captured in the tuition policy.

Tuition policy implementation must be regarded as an ongoing, non-linear process that must be managed (Grindle and Thomas, 1991). It requires consensus building, participation of key stakeholders, conflict resolution, compromise, contingency planning, resource mobilisation and adaptation (Sutton, 1999:23).

One of the things that could be done is to reform the organisational structure at Unisa for effective tuition policy implementation. Crossby (1996) suggests the use of task forces across the organisational structure to push the policy reform agenda. It is obvious that the 'merger' of Unisa and TSA and the incorporation of VUDEC came out of the restructuring of the higher education system and the implementation of several policies that were initiated by the Department of Education. The implementation of these policies is influencing the way in which the new Unisa is carrying out its teaching and learning activities. Owing to the importance of some of these policy documents, one can recommend that Unisa needs to find ways of responding and using the guidelines in the context of its teaching and learning role. The nature of the implementation of the policy would vary according to the levels at which the implementation took place, the variation being attributable to the different roles that management, academics and learning developers need to play.

Sutton (1999) advises that policy innovations happen when several factors or issues coincide. In terms of the Unisa Tuition Policy, one can see that there was a discourse (not a strong one) which made way for some new thinking, influenced by what was happening in the higher education environment in South Africa, and this pointed towards an OBE approach across all spheres of education, and hence new policy directions. From this perspective, policymaking must be understood as a political process as much as an analytical or problem-solving one (Sutton, 1999). Thus, Clay and Schaffer (1984) confirm that the whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes and accidents, and not a matter of the rational implementation of so-called decisions through selected strategies. Juma and Clark (1995) emphasise that a policymaking process is not a rational activity, as portrayed in the literature, but is messy, and the

outcomes appear as a result of complicated political, social and institutional processes which are 'evolutionary'. The policy process should strive to make policy clear and simple, and should address the policy not just as a document, but as what happens on the ground.

The author also recommends that Unisa should integrate learners' experiences in the design and development of learning material. This could help in addressing students' opinion that Unisa cares little about their success. This would also take care of the issues relating to the failure and repetition rates in some of the courses, as reported in section 6.3.4.

This study touched on some policy discourse, and the author therefore recommends a clear policy discourse analysis in the development and implementation of any institutional policy. Although this study is not about the Unisa policy analysis, however, it acknowledges the role of critical policy analysis, as it can take account of policymaking at all levels. Furthermore, this study does not get into critical issues of discussing the reproduction and maintenance of discourses by powerful policy actors. One of the challenges is that it is difficult to define discourse theory, because there are overlapping definitions originating from a range of theoretical and disciplinary standpoints (Macdonnell, 1991:7; Fairclough, 1992; Sutton, 1999). In the theories of discourse, what is central is the language and meaning which has been taken for granted in the past (Taylor, 1997). In critical theory, ideology and discourse are central and related to each other. However, critical discourse analysis for social policy research and analysis is complex and often multifaceted. Yanow (1996) indicates that understanding how policy happens, as experienced by different policy actors, is an under-researched area. Taylor (1997:28) emphasises that discourse theory can be used to explore particular polices in their historical context, tracing how policy 'problems' are constructed and defined, and how particular issues get to be on the policy agenda. Furthermore, it is also useful in highlighting how policies come to be framed in certain ways, reflecting how economic, social, political and cultural contexts shape both the content and language of policy documents. The influence of theories of discourse has resulted in a more critical awareness of methodological questions which had previously been taken for granted, particularly in relation to interpretation (Taylor, 1997:29).

However, making reference to some policy discourse will help in the interpretation of the policy text, ensuring that the 'development process can be understood' (Sutton, 1999:14). This will also enhance policy evaluation, which has to continuously examine the content of the different policy components (Hanberger, 2001).

There are various policy development and implementation approaches. The traditional approach emphasises that policy will involve the following steps: formulation, implementation and evaluation. This approach assumes a top-down approach, and takes it for granted that the policy will be implemented by those who must implement it. The assumption is that there will be enough resources and time to implement it - thus, this approach demands 'blind loyalty'. The interpretative approach advocates policy reform, which should come after debates and arguments. This context of policymaking would involve issues regarding goals, views, context and individuals involved. Thus, the policy would be reconstructed and remade during everyday practices in the applied context. The critical approach portrays the view that there will be conflicts and power struggles in policymaking. For example, neo-Marxism views policy as the construction of reality which sustains the interests of a specific group or class (mostly the dominant and powerful), which goes against all principles of democracy. The post-modernist approach emphasises that rationality can be unpacked and disintegrated. Policy discourse issues are the crux of these approaches. The meta-policy approach emphasises a systems' approach. The aim is to explain the role of contextual factors in the policy process.

Taylor (1997:34) concludes than an understanding of policy processes as the 'politics of discourse' can be very useful to those involved in 'the ground' struggles in the various arenas of education policymaking. Clay and Schaffer (1984) conclude that the whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes and accidents, as it is not all a matter of the rational implementation of so-called decisions through selected strategies.

Therefore, policy evaluation should also facilitate the interpretation of policy in a broader context.

The following model, proposed by Sutton (1999), can be adopted for policy development and implementation:
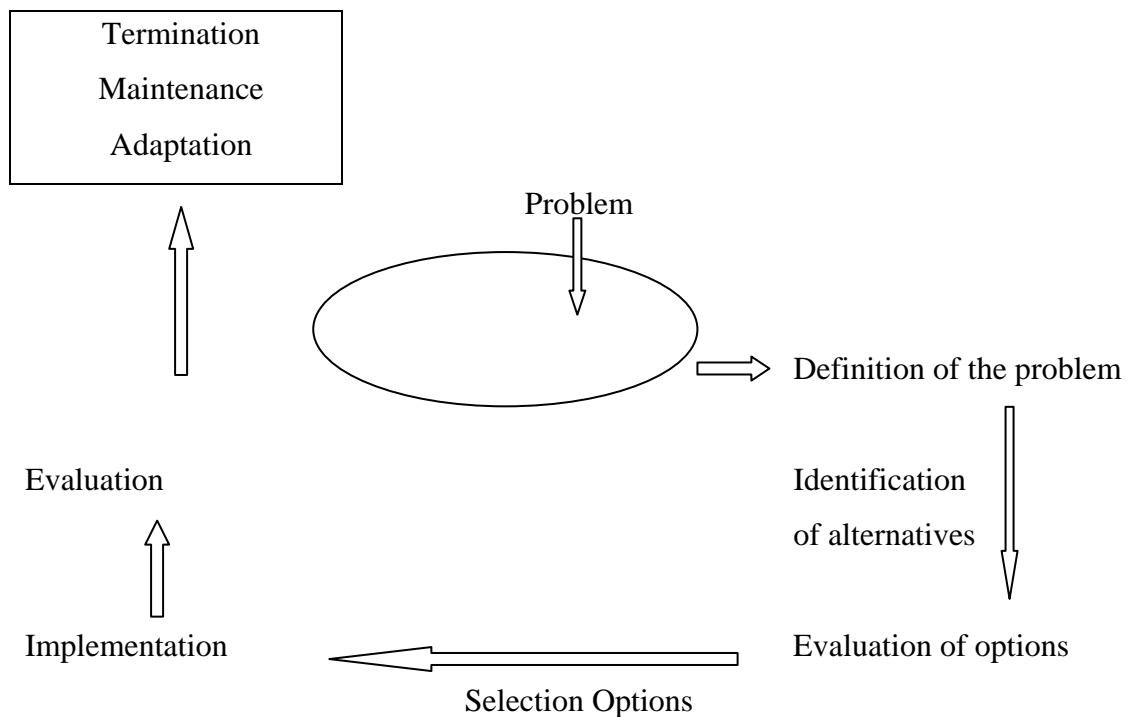

Figure 6.1 Policy Development and Implementation Process

The disadvantage of this method is that it can create an artificially idealistic view of policy. This runs counter to the reality, in which the course of policy is much more unpredictable and may not always be a rational, goal-oriented process, as many decisions may be irrational and taken on an ad hoc basis (Van Audenhove, 2003). The author suggests that Unisa should consider some of the ideas provided by Sutton (1999), in order to see the implementation of the tuition policy on a full scale:

o There must be a dominant epistemic community, particularly an influential group that has close links with policymakers, that forces an issue onto the agenda and shapes policymaking;

o A dominant discourse or way of thinking must be established, which makes clear certain priorities, thereby simplifying a situation and providing guidance towards certain policy directions; and

o There is a network of people around the 'change agents' who will respond to them and help them carry the process forward.

However, there are many other ideas which are crucial in terms of policy development and implementation. In most policy models, there is a tendency to split policymaking and implementation. Grindle and Thomas (1990) reiterate that, in general, the splitting of decision-making and implementation can be blamed on decision-makers who think politics surrounds decision-making activities, while implementation is an administrative activity. Brickenhoff (1996) states that it is of utmost importance to develop and work for a wider and better understanding of implementation, as this will link the process to policy goals and outcomes.

One of the consequences of the dichotomy between policymaking and implementation is the possibility of policymakers avoiding responsibility. Sutton (1999:23) expressed it in this manner: 'the dichotomy between policy making and implementation is dangerous'. The separation of 'decision' from 'implementation' often leads to policy makers avoiding responsibility and often referring to the problems as 'bad implementation' (Gillespie and McNeill, 1992; Clay and Schaffer, 1984).

Roberts (1996) agrees that distance education is a significant and growing component of the education and training activity. Therefore, there needs to be more 'research for policy' and 'research of policy.' Research for policy is more applied, more practical, and the focus is on how the social and economic goals can be achieved, while research of policy wants to enhance the understanding of the policy, without much emphasis on its improvement (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999). Badat (2005) supports the view that critical researchers in the field of higher education should undertake research and writing that is unconcerned with policy, analysis of policy and or some kinds of analysis for policy. In the analysis of policy, there must be a description and analysis of existing or emerging policies, as well as past or current policymaking. The purpose here may be to conduct scholarly research with a different focus to that of applied, policy-oriented research and writing. On the other hand, analysis of policy covers a spectrum, from weak involvement that is restricted to contextual analysis to strong involvement, which extends to the concrete design of policies and policy-making instruments and processes (Badat, 2005).

6.9   Reflections on the Study

This research contributes to academic discourse in various ways. One of these is that the study uses different approaches to solicit the views and experiences of various stakeholders relating to policy development and implementation. The use of interviews and questionnaires allowed the author to identify some of the underlying issues in this study. This was helpful in dealing with issues in an exploratory research project. The exploration of views and experiences highlighted differences and similarities between various stakeholders, thus opening the door for future debates on issues which influence teaching and learning policy developments in ODL.

The views and experiences could be used in defining various concepts that describe distance education and its various classifications. In the past, research looked at policy development in a national context and implementation in an institutional context. Therefore, what has been suggested in this study in terms of institutional policy development and implementation may be used in helping institutions to deal with this process and to make connections with some of the findings from research undertaken on policy development and implementation at a national level.

This study also serves as the platform to explore the views and experiences of various stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. Its significance comes from the challenges that those who are involved in teaching and learning in distance education are confronted with. This study serves as a foundation for the exploration of theories and research in distance education. Furthermore, it provides ways and means whereby academics, learning developers, students, authors, policymakers, management and external stakeholders can develop a better understanding of the issues that influence the development and implementation of an institutional policy. In this context, issues that are regarded to be strengths and weaknesses in terms of the development and implementation of an institutional policy were identified.

In this study, some of the views and experiences represent the collective views of the participants involved. The author used interviews and questionnaires to gather the data on which the analysis is based, and from which the findings are derived. Some

of the participants had never been exposed to policy development and implementation issues before and they therefore had an opportunity to be involved, through this study, whereby they were able to give their opinions, views and experiences.

This is an exploratory research project, which was not designed on the basis of any standard model. There are various theories and models for distance education - however, the contexts of distance education have changed, and some of the standard models may therefore no longer be entirely applicable. Therefore, the goal of this research was to document the views and experiences of various participants in the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. The existing distance education theories could not help the author to establish the views and experiences relating to the development and implementation of the policy. However, the choice of various participants for this study allowed a deeper understanding, and also provided valuable new insights into the topic. This exploratory research project allowed the author to look at the Unisa Tuition Policy development and implementation from various viewpoints, on various theoretical levels, and in terms of various practical aspects. While this research was designed to explore the views and experiences of various stakeholders in relation to the development and implementation of the policy, there were many interesting findings.

6.10   Limitations in terms of Findings

The topic that this study investigated is complex, and there are some issues that warrant further research, and the choice of Unisa as a case study was limiting. This was due to the fact that after the NPHE (2001) recommendations, Unisa became the 'single dedicated distance education in South Africa.' It would not have served much purpose in terms of this study to compare the tuition policy at Unisa with that at those face-to-face universities that also offer distance education, as the principles and foundations are different.

Despite the fact that this study involved various selected stakeholders, it provided some valid insight into the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. The findings of this study are primarily based on views and experiences in the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. However, a

longitudinal study would have allowed a more explicit explanation and understanding of the impact of the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. There is a critical need for embarking on further research in teaching and learning in distance education in South Africa. The findings on the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy suggest the following future critical areas of research in distance education:

- o The use of ODL in development of an effective HR strategy;
- o Increasing throughput and retention rates in distance education by using a tuition policy; and
- o Best and good practices in teaching and learning in ODL.

The development of these critical areas will bring many benefits for distance education.

This study explores the experiences and views of various stakeholders in terms of the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. Further research in this area may take the form of an investigation of the process of the Unisa Tuition Policy implementation. Within this range, one of the objectives would be to understand the nature and dynamics of the policy process. In this regard, the focus should be on the role of different stakeholders such as academics, management, students, instructional designers/learning developers, academic authors, external stakeholders and their contestation of the policy and how it shapes the course of their actions and outcomes. Such a study can contribute to the general debate on tuition policies. Furthermore, key areas in policy contestation and how policy implementation happens on the ground can be critically discussed. One possible future study would be a carefully designed set of case studies with common research instruments for exploration of all qualitative aspects, and collection of data on the impact of involvement in the implementation of the tuition policy.

6.11   Conclusion

The various participants that expressed their views and experiences relating to the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy raised the challenging

question of how we could come to a common understanding with regard to developing and implementing an institutional policy. It is very difficult to conduct research into institutional policy development and implementation based on the views and experiences of various participants. One would need to look deeply into each participant's role and context, in order to come up with an acceptable conclusion regarding institutional policy development and implementation. This would allow the researcher to interrogate the view that policy never reaches its goals because the intervention in social reality is very complex, and social change cannot be predicted. Furthermore, policy often fails because of unforeseen factors and perverse effects.

It would also have been helpful to test some of the generalisations of this study's concepts and conclusions at other distance education institutions, or even face-to-face institutions with a distance education component. Academics, managers, learning developers, authors, students and external stakeholders have reacted in various ways to the Unisa Tuition Policy. Some enthusiastically embraced the changes suggested, while others rejected the changes. There is a need to stimulate debate around new ways of institutional policy development and implementation. This would assist us in being able to implement what has been developed to become a policy that we completely understand, but could not put into effect. We would be able to democratise the process of policy development through broad participation by those who would be affected by the policy and those who have the authority and responsibility to implement the policy. This would encourage a move towards a new paradigm, wherein policy development and implementation would be broadened and would deliver the necessary benefits.