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**The development and implementation of an institutional
tuition policy for an open and distance learning institution:
A case study of the University of South Africa**

by

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DEDICATION

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Gloria in excelsis Deo



Summary

This study explores the development and implementation of a tuition policy at the ‘single dedicated distance education institution in South Africa,’ which is the University of South Africa. The discussion focuses specifically on ‘how different stakeholders participated in the development and implementation of the Unisa tuition policy’. In this context, the author contends that the development and implementation of an institutional tuition policy is influenced by various factors relating to the determination of the roles to be played by various stakeholders in the process. A broader consideration is whether or not and how tuition policy development and implementation influence teaching and learning in distance education.

The perspective taken in this study necessarily includes the different acts and policy documents that focus on the development of the higher education sector in South Africa, which consequently influence the practice and experience of distance education. The main findings of the study concur with the notion that there is contention in terms of Unisa tuition policy development and implementation, which leads to a measure of reluctance to implement the policy. Furthermore, the implementation has not been as effective as it might have been, and this defeats the purpose of the policy, which is to promote effective teaching and learning in distance education. The data derived from the investigation partly support this study’s concern that the development and implementation of this policy depend on participants’ and stakeholders’ mental models. The findings also show that the contention regarding the determination of roles in the development and implementation has negative impacts on the effectiveness of teaching and learning at Unisa, which may not be very obvious to the stakeholders involved. Crucially, it was also found that the stakeholders could not separate their institutional roles and positions from their roles in policy development and implementation. It is in the context of these findings that the author recommends that policy development and implementation for effective teaching and learning should critically define the institutional roles of those engaged in policy development and implementation in a distance education institution such as Unisa.

Key words: Unisa tuition policy, open and distance learning, distance education, policy development and implementation, teaching and learning.



Opsomming

Hierdie studie ondersoek die ontwikkeling en implementering van 'n onderrigbeleid by 'n 'enkel toegewyde afstandsonderrig instansie in Suid Afrika', by name die Universiteit van Suid Afrika (Unisa). Die studiefokus op 'hoe verskillende rolspelers deelgeneem het aan die ontwikkeling en implementering van die Unisa onderrigbeleid'. Van uit die konteks, betoog ek dat die ontwikkeling en implementering van 'n institusionele onderrigbeleid beïnvloed word deur verskeie faktore wat verband hou met die bepaling van die rolle wat die verskillende rolspelers in die proses vertolk. 'n Meer oorhoofse oorweging is of en hoe die ontwikkeling en implementering van die onderrigbeleid leer en onderrig in afstandsonderrig beïnvloed.

Vanuit die perspektief van hierdie studie is dit noodsaaklik om die verskillende wette en beleidsdokumente wat fokus op die ontwikkeling van die hoër onderwys sektor in Suid Afrika en gevolglik die praktyk en ondervinding van afstandsonderrig beïnvloed, in te sluit. Die belangrikste bevindinge van die studie onderskryf die opvatting dat daar verskillende sienings en uitgangspunte is oor die ontwikkeling en implementering van Unisa se onderwysbeleid wat aanleiding gee tot 'n mate van traagheid in die implementering van die beleid. Die implementering was ook minder effektief as wat verwag is, en dit verydel die doel van die beleid, naamlik die bevordering van effektiewe onderrig en leer in afstandsonderrig. Die data afkomstig van die ondersoek bevestig tot 'n mate my kommer dat die ontwikkeling en implementering van die beleid afhanklik is van die deelnemers en rolspelers se raamwerkmodelle. Die bevindinge dui ook daarop dat die verskille oor die bepaling van die rolle in die ontwikkeling en implementering van die beleid 'n negatiewe invloed het op die effektiwiteit van onderrig en leer by Unisa, wat moontlik nie so voor die hand liggend is vir die betrokke rolspelers nie. 'n Belangrike punt is dat daar bevind is dat die rolspelers nie hulle rolle en posisies in die instansie kon skei van hulle rolle in die ontwikkeling en implementering van die beleid nie. Vanuit die konteks en bevindinge beveel ek aan dat beleidsontwikkeling en implementering wat effektiewe onderrig en leer ten doel stel, die institusionele rolle van die persone



betrokke by beleidsontwikkeling en implementering by 'n afstandsonderrig-instansie soos Unisa, krities gedefinieer moet word.

Sleutel woorde: Unisa onderrigbeleid, oop-en afstandsonderrig, afstandsonderrig, beleidsontwikkeling en implementering, onderrig en leer.



Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACN	Accounting
ANC	African National Congress
BLD	Bureau for Learning Development
CAQDAS	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CHE	Council on Higher Education
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
CPL	Continuing Professional Learning
DE	Distance Education
DoE	Department of Education
ECS	Economics
ETD	Education, Training and Development
FGI	Focus Group Interview
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICC	International Council for Correspondence
ICDE	International Council for Distance Education
ICLD	Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDE	Innovation in Distance Education
ITLR	Improving Teaching and Learning Resources
IQF	International Qualifications Framework
IRFOL	International Research Foundation for Open Learning
NADEOSA	National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa
NAP	New Academic Programme
NATED	National Technical Education
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NPHE	National Plan on Higher Education
NTTT	National Task Team on Transformation



OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
OUTLS	Open University Teaching and Learning Strategy
OUUK	Open University of the United Kingdom
QA	Quality Assurance
SA	South Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SMS	Short Message System
SAUVCA	South African Universities' Vice Chancellors' Association
TELI	Technology Enhanced Learning Investigation
TIP	Theory in Practice
TSA	Technikon Southern Africa
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN	United Nations
UNISA	University of South Africa
VUDEC	Vista University Distance Education Campus



CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction, Background and Context

One of the challenges in higher education is the ability to cope with the growing number of enrolments which face-to-face universities cannot handle due to factors such as limitation in terms of space. This crisis has led many universities to start teaching students in groups and to use face-to-face methods in distance education, leading to the development of ‘dual-mode’ or ‘mixed-mode’ universities. In the light of this huge challenge, the refinement of teaching and learning methods has become critical. The challenge, as defined in this particular study, is how to teach and ensure successful learning in distance education. The last 25 years have seen the expansion of ‘open education’ and ‘distance education’ in South Africa, as elsewhere, and this has truly impacted on the availability of formal education to those who are unlikely to have pursued it or were unable to pursue it in the past (Pond, 2002). Garrison (1999) believes that distance is disappearing in distance education! This surely indicates the existence of a further challenge in terms of the designing of worthwhile educational experiences for students in such institutions.

The overall picture of distance education (DE) since the early 1980s shows that it has become a common practice in all parts of the world. Distance education provides an opportunity to those who cannot or do not want to take part in classroom teaching and learning (Holmberg, 1995). There are various distance teaching universities that offer different kinds of study material, depending on their teaching-learning system. Yet, there is no universal or common agreement about the definition and characteristics of distance education (Holmberg, 1995; Evans and Nation, 1996; Daniel, 1997). One of the key issues in this debate is the lack of a clear distinction between ‘contact’ and ‘distance’ higher education in South Africa and other countries (SAUVCA,¹ 2003b). Some of the findings of the research undertaken in universities show that in most parts

¹ The South African Universities’ Vice-Chancellors’ Association. In 2004, this association was replaced by Higher Education South Africa (HESA).



of the world, higher education is in crisis (DoE, 1994; Holmberg, 1995; Daniel, 1996). Despite this crisis, Ross (1996) observes that distance education came of age in the 1990s. Thus, there is scarcely a modern university that is not significantly involved in distance education, and many visionary educational leaders envisage a virtual university of the future, one that is much more cost-efficient and technologically-based (Evans and Nation, 1996; Trindade, Carmo & Bidarra, 2000). This has led to what Champion (2001) sees as turmoil in all the world's universities because of the rapid changes that batter, blast and silence stakeholders, as well as deny them time to think. He further argues that universities are not alone in this turmoil, as other organisations are also under pressure to change. Champion (2001) adds that the current turmoil in universities makes them more vulnerable than ever before, and that being productivity-conscious reduces the space for reflection and contemplation over what is best for universities.

DE as a developing educational delivery system has become a viable alternative to traditional classroom teaching. It is primarily intended to meet the educational needs of students prevented by work or family obligations from attending classes at traditional campus locations during class times (Minton and Willet, 2003). Distance learning inevitably has to change because education in general is being transformed, and because of pressures arising from the changing societal context. Pressures such as globalisation, resulting in competition from overseas providers, and the growing acceptance by students of the marketability of qualifications that have an international dimension, are increasing. This has implications for student support mechanisms, the content of learning programmes, and learning approaches, which will be both expensive and time-consuming to address, and which will require considerable institutional commitment in order to be successfully addressed. It is within this context and background that the University of South Africa (Unisa) introduced their tuition policy in 1998². This policy was put in place to enable effective teaching and learning. This study investigates the views and experiences of the research population relating to the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy and its influence on teaching and learning.

² The Unisa Tuition Policy was accepted by the Senate in June 1998.



1.2 South African Policy Background and Statement of Purpose

The current status of distance education (DE) and open and distance learning (ODL) in South Africa is mixed and variable at best or, at worst, in a state of disarray, owing to the different forces impinging on it. The traditional distinction between contact and distance education and the different modes of delivery is becoming increasingly blurred. Higher education programmes continue to exist on a continuum, spanning distance programmes at one end and face-to-face tuition at the other (CHE, 2000a). The situation is further aggravated by perceptions of the changing roles and functions that DE and ODL play in transforming society. It is not surprising that those who frame policy and make decisions continue to recognise the value and contribution of ODL and DE to society. The 1994 Commission on Distance Education in South Africa³ concluded that, taken as a whole, distance education's contribution to the priorities of education and training in the policy framework is variously marginal, inefficient and, in respect of the values sought for a democratic South Africa, 'dysfunctional' (DoE, 1994). In concurring with this view, the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) (DoE, 1996a) also recommended that the envisaged single, dedicated distance education institution should not only offer programmes to large numbers of students, but should also provide coordination for the production of high-quality learning materials for widespread use across the HE system.

In South Africa, the period from 1994 to 2000 witnessed debates about the transformation of South African higher education, dealing especially with questions of access, quality and the redress of past imbalances. Such debates cannot be separated from the issue of expanding DE so as to meet the needs of the higher education system in South Africa. The debates provoked several policy discussions, subsequently leading to the development of several 'green' and 'white' papers. The Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation (DoE, 1996c) argues very strongly that DE has a crucial role to play in addressing the challenge of access and the quality of learning for South Africa's diverse student population. The Green Paper (DoE, 1996c) recommends that contact institutions must reorganise their learning and teaching by using well-designed learning resources, which will result in improved

³ Commission established by the Department of Education in 1994 to investigate the nature and status of distance education in South Africa.



quality and effectiveness. The White Paper no.3 on Higher Education (DoE, 1997c) reiterates that, based on principles of open learning, distance education and resource-based learning will be critical in addressing the challenges of access for the variety of learners. The vision of the White Paper no.3 (DoE, 1997c) is for a programme-based higher education system to be planned, governed and funded as a single and coherent national system. Furthermore, the NCHE (DoE, 1996a) states that in the new funding dispensation, a distinction must be made between the broad categories of contact and distance education. In concluding its investigation, the Technology Enhanced Learning Investigation (TELI) team acknowledged that future policy makers should be aware that the growth and development of distance education delivery methods would be the key feature of education in the 21st century (DoE, 1996b).

In 2001, the Council on Higher Education recommended that ‘a single and dedicated distance education system that provides innovative and quality programmes, especially at the undergraduate level, is needed in South Africa’ (DoE, 2001a). SAUVCA (2003a) also acknowledged that the traditional distinction between ‘contact’ and ‘distance’ modes of delivery was rapidly breaking down here and elsewhere in the world. Though the authorities and politicians perceived DE and ODL as one of the best tools to transform society through teaching and learning, such transformation was still suspect in South Africa. The SAUVCA (2003a) report recommended that the education sector and ministry should abandon the practice of classifying institutions according to ‘modes of delivery’, and that the new funding framework should, over a period of ten years, move towards a funding formula for programmes which not only acknowledge but also promote various modes of learning delivery. The implication of this is that ‘traditional’ residential institutions should be allowed to continue with ODL within the parameters of the recommendations in the report.

The vision for the transformation of higher education in South Africa is expressed in the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) in South Africa (DoE, 2001a:46). The demand made in this document was that the restructuring of DE should ensure that it was well placed to contribute to the development and transformation of the higher education system, and that it should also play its role in social and economic development. Furthermore, the plan insisted that the transformation of distance

education required a focus on improving the quality of programmes and learner support services. However, the NPHE presented few new ideas on how teaching and learning in DE and ODL should take place in a distance education institution such as Unisa, as a result of which the above documents and reports drew much criticism from different sectors of higher education.

Though these documents and reports provide guidelines on what needs to happen at the macro-level, institutions are taking different routes to implement these guidelines at the micro-level.

While there is a growth of public interest in DE and ODL, uncertainty about their focus, aims, purpose and strategies is still a problem. Most institutions of ODL have therefore developed a number of policies to give a clear picture of their vision and mission. Tuition policies and learner support policies, for instance, are attempts to clarify the purposes and functions of the distance education institutions where they are framed, but the lack of a national policy on distance learning continues to hinder the formation of a clear national purpose for DE and ODL, thus inhibiting initiatives that are critical to transforming society. Such initiatives end up being excluded from the development and implementation of institutional tuition policies. In the document outlining a vision for South African higher education, one of the key elements introduced is ‘integrative policy development’. The implementation of tuition policies in distance learning institutions should afford decision-makers an opportunity to assess the benefits of a large social investment such as a dedicated distance learning institution.

In the next section of this chapter, a statement is given of the research question that this study focuses on.

1.3 Research Question

A number of issues relating to developments in DE and ODL at a national and international level have become concerns for our institutions of higher learning. Globalisation, competition for students, technological advancement, competition between conventional institutions and ODL institutions, merging of distance



education institutions for cost-cutting reasons, academic concerns, transfer of skills, quality of learning, content of learning programmes, and the nature of the curriculum, are some of the issues that demand instant attention from the various stakeholders. The argument in this study is that the Unisa Tuition Policy reflects some form of a teaching paradigm, but that the nature of the paradigm, as reflected in stakeholders' views and experiences, is a matter of contention. In attempting to illuminate how the views and experiences of stakeholders are aligned with the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy, this study will acknowledge that the development of an institutional policy is a complex process, but will insist that efficiency and consistency in its implementation are of overriding importance.

The Unisa Senate accepted the tuition policy in June 1998, and subsequently expected it to be used by its different stakeholders, such as academics and instructional designers, for the benefit of the learners. Effective learning environments offer positive experiences for learners, as the latter construct their own learning experiences and knowledge base. This study scrutinises the operationalisation of the policy from the points of view of groups of stakeholders, including learners, in order to judge whether or not the Senate's purpose, as stated in 1998, has been achieved. The nature of the document and the extent and quality of its implementation are therefore central to this study.

The following critical research question is asked in this study: What are the various stakeholders' views and experiences of the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy?

The focus here is on interaction among selected Unisa participants and their experiences in the development and implementation of the tuition policy, but places these concerns in the context of a comparison of the views and perceptions of major stakeholders in policy formulation in distance education circles. The policy document can be found in Appendix J. Appendix B gives details of the research sub-question, the propositions explored in each case, and the methods used in generating data.

The post-1994 democratic era in South Africa has produced many changes in the South African educational landscape. In particular, the introduction of an outcomes-



based approach in primary and secondary schools has had a ripple effect on teaching and learning in higher education institutions. It is against this background that teaching and learning have become a collaborative affair, where the lecturer and learner contribute together to the discourse (Harasim, 1995; Jordaan, 2001; Prinsloo, 2003). Furthermore, Prinsloo (2003) acknowledges that the changes embedded in the tuition policy require academics to move from content-driven to learner-centred teaching. However, these developments have yet to be enshrined in a clearly formulated, helpful national policy. Furthermore, this study looks at the challenge of how the Unisa Tuition Policy was developed and implemented against the backdrop of the absence of a national teaching and learning policy. It is also critical to link the research question to the context of the government. The Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, remarked, in her address to parliament in September 2006, that of the undergraduate students who register for the first-year at universities and technikons in South Africa, only 30% obtain their qualifications within five years of enrolling (McFarlane, 2006). Unisa and Technikon Southern Africa (TSA) data are presented separately from that of other face-to-face institutions, as it is assumed that the average time for completion of a qualification for students at these two distance institutions would be longer than the maximum (five years) at predominantly contact institutions. The ministry makes references to the attrition rates at Unisa and TSA, which were as follows:

Of the 20 173 first-time undergraduates who registered at Unisa in 2000, 59% dropped out, 14% graduated by 2004, and 27% had not yet graduated. At TSA, out of the 17 625 first-time undergraduates who registered in 2000, 85% had dropped out by 2004, 2% graduated by 2004, and 12% had not yet completed by this time. It is worth noting that not much has improved in terms of undergraduate throughput rates during the period of operation of the Unisa Tuition Policy (1998 to 2005). The principal of Unisa, Prof. N.B. Pityana, noted in his address to the Senate in 2006 that 88% of enrolments are in courses with less than 300, and generate 26% of university income (Pityana, 2006). Within this, 43% have less than 20 enrolments.

Furthermore, the drop-out rate is of concern, as shown in the following list:

- Bachelor of Science: 80% - 90%;

- Bachelor of Arts and Social Science: 85% - 96%;
- Bachelor of Commerce: 77% - 87 %; and
- Bachelor of Arts, Languages and Literature: 83% of 2001 enrolments dropped out, and only 5.59% have graduated so far.

Mathematics, Philosophy and Mercantile Law have the highest number of students repeating. ACN101-M⁴ and ECS101-6⁵ have the highest number of students repeating continuously for about fourteen times, and ACN102-N⁶, IOP101-M⁷ and ECS102-8⁸ have students repeating continuously for about thirteen times. In this context, one has to question the lack of impact of the teaching and learning policy, which was accepted in 1998. Most academics felt that there should be training to help staff to implement the policy. The author makes further reflections and input in terms of the findings of this study in Chapter 5.

Permission was sought from Unisa to conduct this study (See Appendix D).

1.4 Rationale for the Study

The author began the exploration represented in this study by reflecting on some of the experiences that led him to develop an interest in educational policy.

Personal and Professional Context

The author joined Unisa as a learning developer after a period of 6 years working at a face-to-face institution. This move triggered his interest in how teaching and learning occur at Unisa, as against his views and expectations. The study also allowed him to reflect on his own experiences as a former Unisa student (having taken 6 years to complete his first degree) and now as a professional working at the same institution, with part of his responsibility being the implementation of the institution's tuition

⁴ ACN101-M: Financial Accounting, Module 1

⁵ ECS101-6: Economics, Module 1

⁶ ACN102-N: Financial Accounting, Module 2

⁷ IOP101-M: Industrial and Organisational Psychology

⁸ ECS102-8: Economics, Module 2



policy. Thus, part of the study has an auto-ethnographic component. Pratt (1992) shows that auto-ethnography allows people to describe themselves in such a way as to engage with the views that others have of them. This is part of the purpose here. The use of auto-ethnography in this study integrates the ordinary, mundane realities of everyday life into academic writing, and is a form of ethnography that blurs lines between the personal and the social, the self and others (Simpson, 1996:372). This represents the reflexive turn in fieldwork involving human study, where the researcher is repositioned as an object of inquiry that depicts a site of interest in terms of personal awareness and experience (Crawford, 1996: 167). The author's own personal experience therefore played a role in the choice of the topic and methodology of this dissertation. His six years of hard work to obtain his degree at Unisa, which was a considerable effort, always surfaces when he is engaged in some aspects of his daily work.

As a coordinator for Staff Development (Continuing Professional Learning) in the Bureau for Learning Development⁹ at the University of South Africa, one aspect of the author's job description is to see to the implementation of institutional policies, such as the tuition policy, by relevant stakeholders such as academics. During his involvement in staff development training and programmes, he has always noticed a reluctance to implement the policy by those who have the responsibility to do so - that is, the academics. In order to be able to understand the source of this resistance, he needed to investigate how the Unisa Tuition Policy was developed, and proceed to an understanding of the implications for the implementation of this policy at an institutional level.

Although this study has been undertaken at an institutional level, the author believes that it will have implications for policy development at micro- and macro-levels in the distance education arena worldwide, and it was in this regard that he felt that this study on institutional policy relates to a number of other policy issues in distance education, both nationally and internationally.

⁹ Due to the merging of Unisa and TSA, and the incorporation of Vista University Distance Education Campus (VUDEC) in 2003, this unit became known as the Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development (ICLD).



Research Context and the Knowledge Age

We are living in an information and knowledge society which sustains the demand for ODL to service the frequent changes in skills and competencies required at work, and to meet the demand for an improvement in the global standard of living. In this, the 21st century, knowledge is generated at great speed, and scientific and technological advancements are shared through the free flow of information. In the White Paper no.3 (DoE, 1997c), the South African Ministry of Education welcomes the developments in distance education, as these are an indication of the responsiveness of South African HE institutions to changes in both learning and teaching technologies.

The author has observed that conflicts about policy can obscure the main focus in distance education, which is teaching and learning. In contrast, recent general developments in distance education are centred on the student's ability to understand, select and absorb knowledge, and are forcing distance education institutions to transform their usual structures and traditional academic policies. Demands are being made on institutions to integrate, implement and harmonise new processes with existing ones. They are being impelled to develop new modalities of teaching and learning. And, the concern here is whether or not the development of the Unisa¹⁰ Tuition Policy is a valid response to the need to address innovation in teaching and learning.

Context of Models and Policy Framework

The Department of Education has made it very clear, in several statements and documents, that the outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning should be used in our educational system. Despite the role of a tuition policy in helping to further this aim, there are very few initiatives by academics to implement this policy at Unisa. We have seen a new development in recent years, whereby students are now demanding distance education because of personal preferences, technological advancements, job demands, social contexts and the fact that they live in geographical

¹⁰ This policy was accepted by the Unisa Senate Committee in June 1998.



locations where they cannot access face-to-face university education. This is why we need to create learning experiences that provide for a variety of ways to learn. Simonson, Smaldino, Albright & Zvacek (2003) suggest that distance education is a dramatic idea which may change or even restructure the provision of education in more general terms. In accordance with this vision, we need to make the experience of the distant learner as complete, satisfying and acceptable as that of any other learner.

Gellman-Danley and Fetzner (1998) state that policies can provide a framework for operation (an agreed upon set of rules that can explain all participants' roles and responsibilities), whereby policies can be grouped into several operational areas, such as academic, fiscal, geographic service areas, governance, labour-management, legal, and student support services. When one looks at the already existing academic policies, most of them only emphasise issues relating to academic calendars, course integrity, transferability, transcription and evaluation processes, admission standards, curriculum approval processes and accreditation. It is very difficult for one to find policies that provide guidance about teaching and learning practices. This is the reason why King, Nugent, Russell, Eich & Dara (2000) conclude that the general policy analysis framework based on Gellman-Danley and Fetzner's model (1998) is effective and functional when analysing distance education policy, even though there may be more detailed and specific elements or components in a particular educational situation. The insights gained from this research could help future policy makers in DE and ODL to critically consider issues that could make distance teaching and learning effective.

Gellman-Danley and Fetzner (1998) developed two policy frameworks, namely their 'Policy Analysis Framework for Distance Education' and the 'Three-Tiered Policy Analysis Framework'. These frameworks are critical for decision-making by planners and managers in distance education institutions. However, these frameworks say very little about decision-making in teaching and learning in distance education. Even though the models may be used as an evaluation instrument in areas where the institution is doing well or badly in relation to its policies, they do not help in the attempt to evaluate the efficacy of teaching and learning at the institution.



Simeroth, Butler, Kung & Morrison (2003) suggest that future doctoral students could usefully focus on areas where there is a lack of research and policy framework: learners and learning, technology and the design of instruction models for distance education, faculty in distance education, administration, management, institutional contexts, and international contexts. This study takes up their challenge in relation to teaching and learning.

The process of creating a distance education policy, delegated to the relevant Council on Higher Education Task Team, should also benefit from this study through information-sharing on policy formulation issues. The Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2004a) commissioned the Improving Teaching and Learning Resources (ITLR), which dealt with institutional policy and practice. However, their brief was limited in that they only dealt with admission, access, selection, placement and enrolment of students in distance education. This study may assist statutory bodies such as the CHE, by giving them access to the views of various stakeholders in relation to an institutional tuition policy. It explores a wide variety of audiences in different settings, in order to establish the critical issues in the implementation of tuition policy, and to gather information about the policy development and implementation process. COL (2001:1) advises that in the developing distance education environment, policy must be constantly reviewed and adapted or new policies developed, in order to accommodate changes in practice. Continued policy development in the area of teaching and learning would most certainly help to advance and inform future distance learning policy development and practice in the context of contesting stakeholders.

The key findings of this research should be able to help academics, instructional designers and tutors to be aware of policy issues, in order to develop effective learning processes for distance teaching and learning. The findings should, furthermore, help practitioners in ODL (lecturers, tutors, managers and administrative, academic and professional staff) to focus on societal transformation issues from a tuition policy perspective. The voices of academics, lecturers and students, as contesting stakeholders, which remain silent for the most part in policy formulation, should be given a platform. This study further provides a platform for institutional policy discussions by management, academics, learning developers,



students and various other stakeholders, and it should be able to help institutions to identify gaps in policy and make proactive decisions.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Since the beginning of the 1990s, there have been major investigations into the operation, administration and management of distance education in South Africa. The 1994 Commission on Distance Education (DoE, 1994) was one of the most important of these studies. One of the reasons for instituting the commission was the vast scale of the South African distance education enterprise. Large numbers of students enrol at various South African distance education institutions every year.

Distance education policies are generally informed by particular theories. In the area of tuition policies, these relate to assumptions about whether the major responsibility for learning lies with the learner or the academic. This dichotomy is reflected at Unisa, where issues of teaching and learning raise serious debates on how academics teach and how students learn, and by extension to questions about the theories and guidelines that influence teaching and learning at Unisa. A review of practices at other distance education universities suggests that the development of a sound tuition policy and other related policies would enhance teaching and learning in this mode of delivery.

In the absence of national guidelines for teaching and learning in ODL, it is to be hoped that this study will serve as a ready reference for managers, academics and learning developers when they engage themselves in developing and implementing teaching policies at a distance education institution. This study suggests the need, in particular, to frame policy that looks beyond the issue of access to that of throughput rates. Unisa, for example, has a large body of students, but the throughput/graduation rates are very low. This study is likely to yield results that would be helpful in trying to improve the throughput rates.

In addition, this study explores the uncertainties surrounding how to implement teaching and learning policies, and attempts to clarify these uncertainties and contribute to knowledge formation in this area. The strengths and weaknesses in

academics' teaching practice are identified, as perceived by students, and advice on intervention is also 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.

Due to the fact that most publications on policies in higher education deal with issues such as admission, access and finance (costs), this study will contribute to the literature by providing more information with regard to the development and implementation of tuition policies.

In addition to the above, most studies on policy in distance education limit themselves to the development and implementation of national and government (external) policies aimed at regulating distance education (COL, 2005). COL (2005) reviewed policy development in ODL, and concluded that most of the research already undertaken focused on admission, funding, throughput rates, ICT policies and accreditation policies. Such policies focus on general issues in the context of experiences in both the public and private sectors (Perraton and Lentell, 2004). A number of authors have noted the lacuna in intense research in teaching and learning in distance education (Ross, 1996; Peters, 2002; DoE, 1994; COL, 2000). It is against this backdrop that COL advises on policy areas that need revision in both distance education and face-to-face campuses.

In brief, this study explores the process of the Unisa Tuition Policy development, in order to reach some form of understanding of how management, academics, learning developers and students view and think about this policy from the points of view of their respective roles. Furthermore, this study explores the extent of various roles played by Unisa stakeholders, in order to determine their willingness to attempt to implement the tuition policy. This study may also help in identifying any weaknesses or strengths that can be utilised by other distance education institutions in the development and implementation of a tuition policy.



1.6 Contested Meanings, Constructs and Terminology in Distance Education

What is distance education? What is open and distance learning? The history of distance education can be traced back to the early 1700s in the form of correspondence education, but technology-based distance education might be best linked to the introduction of audiovisual devices into schools in the early 1900s (Jeffries, 2002). Since then, the notion of distance education has been contested in terms of its definition and operation. One can identify three distinct periods or phases of distance education during this period (Moore, 1973, Holmberg, 1977; Peters, 1992). The first phase saw the use of a correspondence mode without any form of teaching in between. The second phase saw the development of the open university, where multi-media material accompanied printed study material. The nature of the third phase is not yet clear, but one notices that ICT was being frequently used as a medium for teaching or to supplement learning. Each of these three phases is supported by various theories of the nature of distance and open learning.

This confusion of theory results in a situation where one cannot clearly define the nature of distance education. Attempting definitions, as in the past, serves a useful purpose, by explicitly revealing differing perspectives and assumptions, but they do not amount to theories (Garrison, 2000: 5). Of course, they are valuable, as they may be seen as setting or identifying principles which may either explain present practice or suggest future practice. The international literature points to confusion in the attempts to define distance education and its actual practice from time to time (Anderson, 2001; Bääth, 1979; Evans and Nation, 1983; Garrison, 1999; Holmberg, 2001; Keegan, 1980). What helps to fuel the contention is the proliferation of new concepts and terms, such as open learning, open and distance learning, flexible learning, or online or e-learning (Moore, 2001b; Moore and Thompson, 1990; Moore and Shattuck, 2001). The literature points to a number of theories relating to definitions of these concepts, and these will be explored in Chapter 2. The uncertainties arising from the existence of these many competing and conflicting theories, together with various other loose elements which influence how teaching and learning happen in distance education contexts, exacerbate the difficulties experienced



in trying to develop an efficacious tuition policy in a distance education context, and clearly demonstrate the interconnectedness of the elements dealt with in this study.

1.6.1 Distance Education, Open and Distance Learning, and Open Learning Constructs

The author has indicated in the introductory section that the task of defining DE, ODL and open learning (OL) is a challenging one. There are sources of debate relating to these concepts. Open learning may conceivably suggest an emphasis on open entry and access to learning opportunities, and a focus on removal of barriers to learning opportunities, whereas, on the other hand, it may mean flexible learning. The term denotes both an educational philosophy and a set of techniques for delivering knowledge and skills (Ragatt, Edwards & Small, 1996). As a philosophy, open learning implies greater accessibility, flexibility and student-centeredness, and places the learner at the core of educational practice. As a set of techniques, it is characterised by the use of resource-based teaching and training, often associated with the use of new communication media.

The term ODL is invoked when we want to address a whole range of related forms of teaching and learning, without concentrating too much on an exact delineation and definition. ODL eliminates the autocracy of the university as an institution where regular attendance of classes by the students is demanded (Simonson, 2000; Cyr, 1997).

The term DE often seems to suggest a concern for openness and flexibility, with a focus on the possibility of communication between participants in the learning process across time and space, this being brought about by the development of new technologies. UNESCO (2002) indicates that DE, as defined in different contexts, is becoming a more important part of the higher education spectrum worldwide. A further observation is that DE reaches a broader student audience than residential education, saves money and, more importantly, employs the principles of modern learning pedagogy. Hence, in some countries, public policy leaders are recommending the use of distance education as opposed to traditional learning.



In short, the concepts of OL and DE represent approaches that focus on enhancing access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. This study supports this approach, and the term ODL will therefore be preferred in this text.

1.6.2 Conceptions of Learning

There is an abundance of literature, with different points of departure, about the subject of ‘the conception of learning’ (Entwistle, 1997; Marton, Beaty & Dall’Alba, 1993). In order to understand the notion of learning as a process, one probably needs to tap the views and experiences of people involved in the process. Malen and Knapp (1997) explore the ideas surrounding deep and surface approaches to learning: the assumed relationships between ‘conceptions of learning’, ‘perceptions of the learning environment’, approaches to learning, and learning outcomes may be successful in creating a generalised description of the goals and values of the elite academic culture, but do not address the issues of the majority of the students within a mass system.

In most educational contexts, one cannot talk about learning without linking it to teaching. The author briefly looks at what teaching and learning are in the context of this study.

Teaching and Learning

In learning, factors that influence the learning process should be of interest to teachers. As teachers, we should be aware that learning is not always the outcome of a particular form of teaching. Learning manifests itself in various ways, and it is different from person to person. For example, some students learn more from their classmates than their teacher, while some learn by doing and others by exposure. There are also students who learn by imitating. Learning is not an automatic consequence of teaching. Students have various views on what teaching and learning are. Some students view assignments as doing what the teacher wants. The performance of students is directly tied to the values and standards of the instructor.



In the author's view, it is extremely important that teachers are also constantly learning. Formal values are the means for visually expressing concepts and delineating content. In learning, the problem of relevance affects students' interaction and productivity. Teachers must anticipate where problems will go before presenting them.

Teaching and learning strategies

Teaching and learning strategies become a tool for success when they are implemented in a system which implements and supports the process of teaching and learning as a 'team' or 'collaboration' between teachers and students, students and students, and students and the institution. We need to develop an approach in which teaching and learning strategies and a supportive and positive atmosphere prevail. In such an atmosphere and environment, there is recognition of the emotional, social and physical needs of students, so as to recognise, develop and nurture individual strengths.

Teaching can be defined as the interaction between a student and a teacher in terms of a subject (Davis, 1997). Davis further advises that if we want to be effective in teaching, we should employ some of the following teaching strategies:

- Training and coaching
- Lecturing and explaining
- Inquiry and discovery
- Groups and teams
- Experience and reflection

The above strategies can be applied across any setting and with any student, from the subject, setting and student's perspectives (Davis, 1997).

Defining Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: ODL perspective

In higher education institutions, teaching and learning, research and community engagement have for some time been the core business. CHE (2002) argues that the



two concepts (teaching and learning) should not be separated, as they are both an interactive process that requires the active cooperation of both the learner and the teacher. Therefore, a definition of teaching might be the inspiration and facilitation of learning, while a definition of learning might be conceptual and cognitive change as a result of direct or indirect interaction with a more knowledgeable and experienced other (CHE, 2002:8).

Defining learning is complex - thus, it can be broadly conceptualised not only to include what happens in the classroom in terms of teaching and learning, but also the policies, plans, procedures and activities that higher education institutions undertake to create suitable learning environments. One of the determining factors in the success of teaching and learning in distance education is the extent to which the institution and the teacher create an opportunity for quality dialogue between the teacher, learner and learning materials. Therefore, this implies that we reduce traditional distance by using multi-media to support printed material, so as to increase the dialogue.

In view of the above, the main question in this study is: what are the views and experiences of various stakeholders in teaching and learning in distance education? Thus, it is also critical to hear the views and experiences of the various stakeholders around tuition policy development and its implementation in distance education, and the author briefly discusses this issue below.

Traditionally, distance education is seen as a method of education in which the learner is physically separated from the teacher and the institution providing the tuition. Teaching happens through materials that are provided by the teacher, which will necessitate students learning in a structured way, so that there can be effective facilitation of learning. On the other hand, learning may be undertaken by an individual or group, in recognition of the physical absence of a teacher.

1.6.3 Policy Formulation and Implementation

Whether in the general public domain or specific to the field of education, policies are formulated from a variety of contexts, but are implemented by individuals or groups within organisations. Even with a number of highly detailed pieces of legislation

already in the statute books, South African educational policy is still being generated and implemented, both within and around the education system, in ways that have intended and unintended consequences both for education and its surrounding social milieu (Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1996; Sayed, 2002). Research shows that those who implement policy do not approach it as being ‘neutral’, but instead come with histories, experiences, values and purposes of their own, and may have vested interests in the meaning of a policy.

Policies will therefore be interpreted differently against the background of their different experiences. The implication is that policy writers cannot control the received meanings of their texts (Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1996). This means that parts of a policy text may be rejected, selected, ignored or deliberately misunderstood, and even that responses may be frivolous. In other words, when it comes to policy formulation, tension is unavoidable, due to the existence of conflicting ideologies amongst various stakeholders. In many instances, the effort to reform and transform distance education has been seen as an opportunity for government to formulate political statements. White Paper no.3 (DoE, 1997c) raises issues of equity and redress, development, quality, effectiveness and efficiency, academic freedom, institutional autonomy and public accountability as principles for regulating higher education. However, the document is not explicit as to how these principles will be applied, as most of them involve further policy formulation and implementation. Hence, the need for the South African Ministry of Education to brief the Council on Higher Education Task Team¹¹ to formulate a distance education policy will impact on this study, since the process only began in 2002.

Two distinct modes of state policy relating to distance education seem therefore to have been generated, or are being generated, and will perhaps need to be implemented. How the implementation of these top-down policies is to take place is still not clear. And one may ask whether the tensions in implementation that we see in the centrally-driven policy resemble those that happen in the development and implementation of an institutional policy such as the Unisa Tuition Policy. In policy

¹¹ Council on Higher Education Task Team was set up in 2002 to advise the Minister of Education on aspects of distance education in South Africa. The Report was released in March 2004.



development, one of the issues that come to the fore is why there is a need for policy development at all. This study refers briefly to this issue in the next section.

1.6.4 Policy Gap

There is a need to create opportunities for all distance learning participants to explore specific learning issues involved in their programmes. However, the creation of such opportunities may take time, and much remains to be done. The International Research Foundation for Open Learning (IRFOL: 2000) (1995-2000 report) makes a distinction between policy research in the context of ODL (of particular interest to policy and decision makers), and its application by practitioners. The report indicates that the widest gaps were found in the policy research context of ODL, while research units within a handful of open universities had produced a range of findings to guide ODL policy practitioners. The feasibility study stemming from this report confirmed that policy makers were still ill-served by existing research in ODL institutions. The policy gap may be filled by the development of distance learning policies in ODL (DoE, 2001a; Fay and Hill, 2003).

The South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) has commissioned research into learner support practices in South Africa. This was motivated by SAIDE's own interest in various national policy documents. The findings show that there is little policy commitment to learner support at ODL institutions in South Africa, and very little has been written on the issue. Policy should offer an environment for the planning of effective learner support and implementation at the level of pedagogy and practice. Current policy documents do not open up this domain (Mays, 2000). In sharing some African experiences, Bhalalusesa (2001) argues that successful continuation of the burgeoning distance learning programmes in Tanzania will depend, among other things, on the extent to which policy makers at the macro-level are committed to continuing with the innovation. This growth occurred in spite of the absence of clear direction in education policy, which is termed 'educational policy lag', wherein central authorities have lagged significantly behind developments in praxis (Bashir, 1998).



Without continuous implementation of an education policy, much work remains to be done before the educational policy lag can be overcome. Johnson and De Spain (2001) state that some of the issues that need to be addressed in the framing of policy for ODL are:

- The use of ICT, both in ordinary and distance teaching;
- Evaluation, research and development, learning from experience, and the growth of competence from activities in flexible learning in higher education;
- Relationships between the fields of higher education and adult education; and
- The provision to universities and colleges of the freedom to satisfy new demands for the restructuring and adaptation of study programmes for users.

Sayed (2002) argues that the notion of a policy gap should be understood as arising from a mismatch between policy intention and policy practice and outcome. This is a persuasive insight. In South Africa, between 1994 and 1999, the new government formulated great quantities of policy, but was faced with almost insurmountable difficulties in matching intention with outcome, and rhetoric with practice.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

In the South African context, a theoretical framework for a study of distance education is hard to find, as there is no effective national policy relating to distance education. There are several existing documents and position papers which need further development if they are to be used as a theoretical framework for distance education. To a certain extent, this is a reflection of an international trend, where the development of a theoretical framework for distance education still poses a challenge. Though distance education tends to proceed on a pragmatic basis, there is still disagreement as to whether or not the existing documents relating to distance education could guide research and practice (Moore and Kearsley, 2003; Moore, 2001a). On this issue, Garrison (2000:1) insists that, in order to build distance education into a long-term, credible and viable field of practice, we will need good theoretical frameworks and models. Gorsky and Caspi (2005:137) agree with this view. The existence of a theory or theoretical framework makes it possible to relate phenomena to one another, generate hypotheses, frame questions, and test them empirically. Despite many theoretical contributions to the field of distance education,



the questions that are not being asked are whether or not distance education has a sufficient theoretical foundation to move into the 21st century, and what the theoretical challenges that face distance education in keeping pace with emerging communications technology and new practices will be. The following has been used as a guide, in order to come up with the theoretical framework for this study: theories of distance education; models of distance education; historical developments and policy discourse; and the Unisa Tuition Policy.

Theories of Distance Education

The author notes that historically, the definition of distance education has focused on the separation of the teacher and the learner. The growth of distance education as a field of study has led to an expansion of the theories and conceptualisation, which in turn has led to new developments. The most well-known and well-developed theoretical basis is Michael Moore's transactional distance theory, which emphasises three key factors to be considered in distance education: structure, dialogue and learner autonomy. This theory will be elaborated on later on in this study. The challenges facing theorists in the development of distance education are reflected within the current practice. Models and approaches need to be developed to address legitimate institutional questions, and to provide a vision and approach consistent with the values and goals of these institutions. Garrison (2000) claims that distance education must be challenged by theory, in order to be able to provide an insightful framework that will promote a new era of praxis. Whether or not this will be realised is doubtful, as the balance between theory and practice may not be easy to achieve.

The point of departure for this study is that the theory of ODL is problematic, and that the development and implementation of institutional tuition policies for ODL may therefore raise conflict and tensions. This difficulty is aggravated by the fact that in the term ODL seems to denote different concepts in different theoretical works. Keegan (1986) classifies theories of DE into three broad categories, namely:

- Theories of independence and autonomy;
- Theories of the industrialisation of teaching; and
- Theories of interaction and communication.



Each of these categories of theory comes up with a specific definition or consensus as to how distance education can be practised. However, the distance education environment is always changing. One sees a close link between these theories and what Simonson et al (2003) refer to as terms that we can use to conceptualise the production of distance education. These terms are: fordism¹², neo-fordism and post-fordism. It is doubtful, however, that fordism has been able to respond to the needs of distance education stakeholders. In this context, the author reverts to Moore's theory of transactional distance. Moore's theory looks at three important factors in the learning process, namely the dialogue which happens between participants (instructor and learner); the structure of the elements of course design; and autonomy (elements of learning that are under the learner's control).

Simeroth, Butler, Kung, & Morrison (2003) believe that in this model, dialogue is reduced, whereas the structure of course elements predominates, and that this results in the autonomy of the learner being severely constricted. They also positively relate the autonomy of the learner to the extent of the transactional distance, and contend that the optimal blend can be achieved when the independence level of students can be witnessed. Saba and Shearer (1994) enhance Michael Moore's theory by saying that distance is not to be determined geographically, but instead is determined by the variety of transactions that occur between the learner and the teacher. In this regard, they conclude that as dialogue increases, transactional distance decreases. It is not the location that determines the effect of instruction, but the interaction between the student and the instructor. Regrettably, there is no consideration here of how this interaction happens in the teaching and learning situation, and whether or not a tuition policy can influence such interaction.

Models for Distance Education

Models for distance education were developed as a response to fordism and other theories. Different characteristics of ODL that may be seen in some of the following models cited by Holmberg (1995) are:

¹² Fordism: a term associated with a 'form of production' or 'production paradigm' which prevailed in post-war decades in Western industrial countries.



- Charles Wedemeyer's liberal, individualising, independent study;
- Manfred Delling's process model;
- Kathleen Forsythe's learning system;
- Otto Peter's view of distance education as an industrialised form of teaching and learning; and
- Michael Moore's theory of independent study, classifying education programmes according to the two dimensions of autonomy and distance, and the student-centred, small-scale approach.

There are many points of criticism one could raise in relation to the above theories, and these will indeed be raised in subsequent chapters of this study. Simonson et al (2003) claim that the following theories show the current thinking in ODL:

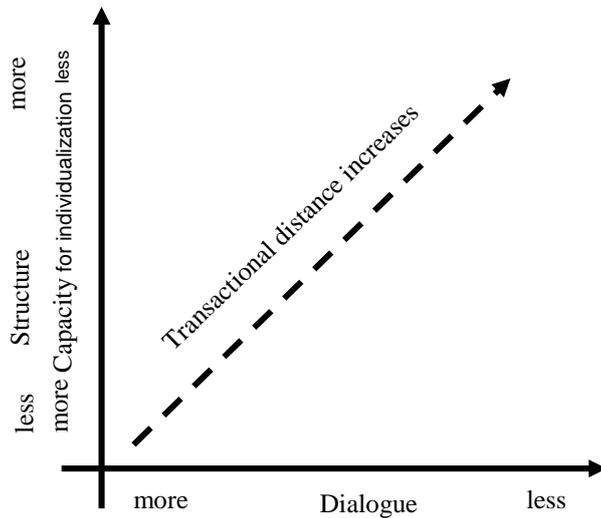
- Borje Holmberg's theory of interaction and communication;
- Malcolm Knowles's view of DE as andragogy;
- Hillary Perraton, who gives a synthesis of existing theories;
- Equivalency theory, an emerging American theory of DE; and
- Desmond Keegan, who provides a theoretical framework for DE.

The above theories of ODL are related to general theories of learning and teaching. In commenting on the relations among the above models, one can draw from Bääth's study in 1979, which concluded that models in DE should have at least some of the following features:

- Most models should be applicable to DE;
- Some models may be adaptable to DE in its reasonably structured form; and
- Some models can be applied with special measures.

This research is underpinned by the author's belief that ODL is an effective way of teaching and learning, which caters for various individuals in different contexts. Thus, the theoretical underpinnings begin with investigating and describing the theories of distance education. The author draws heavily on the theory of autonomy and independence of Michael Moore. The depiction of DE as intended to bridge the distance by and through various tools is emphasised for effective teaching and

learning. Therefore, throughout this research, the author makes reference to the theories which support and provide guidance in terms of effective teaching and learning in ODL.



Graph 1.1 Transactional nature (adopted from Moore, 1997).

The above graph simply shows how the variables of dialogue and structure determine transactional distance. In the diagram, one can see various elements used to achieve ‘transaction’ in ODL. The theory has two main dimensions: transactional distance and learner autonomy. The emphasis is on autonomy of the learner, in which s/he must be able to learn independently and autonomously. The transactional distance is not physical distance, but made up of two qualitative and continuous variables, namely dialogue and structure (Paulsen, 2003; Moore, 1993b). The dialogue between the teacher and the learner is not just an ordinary dialogue of interaction, but one with high positive qualities (Moore, 1993a; Moore, 1993b). The programmes with high levels of transaction increase the level and quality of dialogue. On the other hand, the programmes with low transactional distance show low structure and high dialogue (Paulsen, 2003). Therefore, when the level of autonomy of the learner increases, the transactional distance also increases. The transactional distance should assist us in designing courses that have varying dialogue and structure, so as to allow for different degrees of learner autonomy.



Saba (2007) describes transactional distance as an open system residing in a larger environment at the instructional system level, which is in turn part of a larger system in the hierarchical model. It is in this context that Moore says that transactional distance is only a pedagogical theory, and as such, it is a theory about teaching and learning (Moore, 2007). In terms of applying transactional distance among learners, we need to think of incorporating the new technology. Moore (2007) advises that with new interactive technology, we have the potential for dialogue between learners and a new form of learner (learner-to-learner autonomy aims at reducing the transaction distance for each student). Moore (2007) concludes that transactional distance theory is purely prescriptive and not descriptive - it is a summary of knowledge in one part of the field describing the teaching-learning process. The transactional distance theory has also assisted in promoting and grounding distance education as a field of study.

Peters (1998: 42) shows that transactional distance is not a fixed quantity, but a variable which results from the respective and changing interplay between dialogue, the structured nature of the teaching programme being presented, and the autonomy of the students. Thus, transactional distance theory provides a convincing explanation of the enormous flexibility of this form of academic teaching, and insight into the complex pedagogical world of distance education.

Tait (2003:5) affirms that, despite changes brought about by the ICT revolution, transactional theory remains the crucial framework of ideas, against which such assertions can be tested. Moore (2007) believes transactional distance subsumes concepts that are based on physical attributes such as electronics in e-learning, blendedness in blended learning, and wired or wireless telecommunications in online learning. Saba (2005:4) advocates that the theory of transactional distance should extend beyond the lower level system components and include fundamentals of psychology, sociology and education and other related areas of educational science. Jung (2001) suggests that in transactional distance education, more attention should be paid to learner-to-learner dialogue, which must be stimulated by constructivist philosophy and methodology, leading to a better understanding of learner autonomy, and a good response to what is an appropriate dialogue with the teacher, and what the appropriate course structures are.



The author suggests that the applicability of the variables of transactional distance to the conceptualisation of teaching and learning is grounded in the understanding of how to transact the distance between teacher and learner. Thus, in the pedagogical context, the transactional distance is grounded in the function of the dialogue and structure. Therefore, teaching and learning would be high on dialogue and low on structure.

The challenges to transactional distance should look at the demands on DE and ODL systems, so that we can inspire new developments inferred from the models and theories. The basis of the theoretical framework of this study must be viewed from the perspective that the relation between theoretical models and what happens in reality and the praxis of policy may be tenuous.

Development of Policy Discourse in Distance Education

Taylor (1997) presents a political model of policy, based on a theory of discourse, which can be applied in this study. He believes that ‘discourse theories’ have enhanced the scope of critical policy analysis in a number of ways. From the perspective of discourse theory, policy making is viewed as ‘an arena of struggle over meaning’. This study will adopt this view and use it to explore the views and experiences of various stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy, drawing on how policy problems are constructed and defined, and on how particular issues come to be on the policy agenda.

This study is also situated in the historical context of the development of DE. In the 1960s, there was a shift from the concept of correspondence study to that of independent study or learning. Principles of equity, access and independent study were also related to self-directed learning and self-regulation. The desire to learn was thought to be under the geographical and temporal control of learners. In the mid-1960s, the structure of distance education was analysed, and there was an adoption of ‘industrial production techniques’ such as the division of labour, mass production and efficient organisation, in order to realise economies of scale and reduce unit costs. Teaching and learning were not thought to be issues of particular concern in this model. This trend has influenced the development of distance education to a large

extent until today. In the early 1970s, the inclusion of the notion of dialogue in the structure of independent learning became the norm.

The late 1980s saw a move towards sustained, real, two-way communication, as being at the core of the educational experience, regardless of the spatial separation of teacher and student. Theory became crucial in guiding the complex practice of the rational process of teaching and learning at a distance. It can be argued that any distance education theory must reflect both the predetermined and spontaneous nature of an educational experience, and that the evolutionary quality of the practice of distance education must be reflected in the theory. Practitioners are at the moment incorporating into their practice new and sophisticated methods of communications technology that allow for the creation of synchronous and asynchronous collaborative communities of inquiry, and the challenge for theorists is to adapt current theories to these new realities and, where appropriate, to create new theories of learning and teaching.

Garrison (2000) points out that major theoretical contributions to distance education have provided an analysis and interpretation of the current state of the field, but he does not review all those which have influenced the nature of DE today. In the last three decades, we have started to see evidence of the growth of a sound theoretical foundation to underpin praxis (Garrison, 2000). However, one cannot say that the current state of knowledge development is adequate to explain and shape new practices in ODL. Garrison (2000) further argues that in this century, we will see the emergence of the post-modern era of distance education, characterised by an increase in diversity and choice, made possible by new communication technologies. The new models may take the form of whatever evolves from the existing Open University model, and will probably complement and exist side by side with the traditional, self-paced, independent learning model of the industrial era. The challenge facing the field of distance education, therefore, is to construct theories addressing specific components and concerns of post-industrial distance education.

Higher education should be concerned about the value and quality of education, associated with a highly interactive and adaptable educational transaction. Models and approaches need to be developed which will address legitimate institutional questions and provide a vision and approach consistent with the value and goals of



institutions. This has not often been the case to date. Most theoretical contributions were until recently dominated by organisational and structural concerns (Garrison, 2000).

Perraton (1981) argues that education is related to power, and makes a case for the expansion of education as an egalitarian requirement, and for the importance of emphasising the need for dialogue as an essential component of the process. His hypothesis is that it is possible to organise distance teaching in such a way that there is dialogue. At the moment, distance education practice relies heavily on printed material, and new distance education theorists are starting to recognise the unique characteristics of text-based communication and its impact on the facilitation of learning outcomes in different ways and because of this, they must develop theories to meet the needs and concerns of new audiences. Ross (1996) remarks that too many of the newcomers are looking at distance learning through rose-coloured glasses, seeing it as the panacea for all the ills facing their educational systems today. Mass education has opened new possibilities for the rising generations to become members of their developing industrial societies (Evans and Nation, 1996). However, educational policy, including tuition policy, has largely remained in the domain of theory, and has not been translated into practice. The extensive work on the generation of policy documents has, for the most part, become the field of interest of closed circles in institutions, where small groups such as the management theoretically analyse national policy documents and produce interpretations of their own, thus becoming makers of policy in their own right, eventually producing documents that have little effect on the actual practice of academic staff of the institutions they purport to lead.

Unisa Tuition Policy

The Unisa Tuition Policy investigated in this study was accepted by the Unisa Senate in June 1998 (See Appendix J). The policy starts by indicating that Unisa is a national asset and public institution dedicated to serving all of the people of South Africa, and to addressing the needs and challenges of our society. It then outlines the focus of the university, with its underlying principles. The next section discusses the philosophy and practice of ODL at Unisa, whereas the last section contains several guidelines on

tuition policy, on what is to be taught (qualifications offered, selection principles and criteria, curriculum principles), to whom, by what means, and by whom.

However, DE and ODL are complex practices, and teaching and learning cannot be satisfactorily contained in the categories used in the Unisa Tuition Policy document. In this context, there may be a need to review theories of teaching and learning in distance education. DE and ODL need the support of theory that is aligned to specific actions in educational practice seen as a transaction, and there is a need for theory-based policies that will define good practices of distance learning. Garrison's debate that a theoretical framework and models are essential to the long-term credibility and viability of DE and ODL as fields of practice supports this view (Garrison, 2000). He contends that ODL as a field of study should move from 'organisational' to 'transactional' issues if we want to make it effective. In the 21st century, which we could think of as the post-industrial era, transactional issues (teaching and learning) will predominate over structural constraints (geographical distance) (Garrison, 2000).

1.8 Research Design and Methodology

When researching policy development and implementation, it is necessary to take cognisance of the fact that policy is framed on three different levels: the national, the provincial and the institutional. This research focuses mainly on the institutional level. Most importantly, this is chiefly a qualitative study, and different qualitative methods were used to look at the institutional and social processes of ODL and DE. The author used a combination of data gathering techniques, namely qualitative and quantitative, for this study. These were merged so as to provide an intensive analysis of the research problem. Of course, one acknowledges that, in spite of the strengths of qualitative research, there are some obvious weaknesses and pitfalls (Miles and Huberman, 1984). Bryman (1993) identifies some of the contentious issues in qualitative methodology, and justifies the use of the multi-method approach to data gathering. Some of these issues are highlighted in Chapter 3, which focuses on research design and methodology. The research design contains a number of complementary components, such as the analysis of policy documents and other strategic documents such as acts and papers; a literature review; questionnaires to elicit empirical evidence; semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders; the

interpretation and analysis of data with the help of Atlas.ti; the report on the findings; the drawing of conclusions and the making of recommendations. A more detailed elaboration of the research design is given in Chapter 3. Appendix C provides a synopsis of the chosen methods, and states the value of the methods and techniques used to investigate the critical questions.

The author has analysed the Unisa Tuition Policy in order to obtain the historical background and foundation of the policy, so as to check the policy statements against the realities of current practice. Furthermore, he has looked at some international trends in distance education policy development, and has interrogated the assumption that a tuition policy may be used as an instrument to enhance effective teaching and learning in ODL. The development of a tuition policy was tested against the notion of policy development, and the following questions were asked:

- (a) To what degree are such policies framed by the global context, and what are their objectives?
- (b) How well do the proposed strategies appear to be founded in reality?
- (c) How likely is it that the implemented strategy will lead to the envisaged development objectives?

Although one could say that the above questions can enhance policy development in ODL, if the issue of how we teach is not explored, it is likely that problems will arise.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on the state of development and implementation of an institutional tuition policy in an ODL institution (Unisa) in South Africa. It is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of all of the conceivable issues with regard to a distance education institutional policy. However, this study believes that if the focus can be deepened to include an analysis of Unisa's policy-making and implementation in South Africa, one would have raised questions about the impact of institutional factors and other conditions that are affecting policy development and implementation in ODL at national and international levels.



Private distance education institutions in South Africa were excluded from this study, as the research was otherwise going to generate massive amounts of information. Although some of the literature is reviewed from an international perspective, it will only serve as a basis for the theoretical framework. Even though other institutional policies, such as the assessment policy and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy would have had an impact on the research findings, they were excluded from this study for practical reasons. The study focuses on the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy, but in some instances, generalisations were made to other institutions engaged in ODL practices. While acknowledging that other factors and practices outside the institution may have had an impact on the development and implementation of an institutional tuition policy, this study did not take them into account.

1.10 Organisation and Overview of the Study

This study consists of six chapters, divided according to the different organisational themes.

Chapter One is an introduction, which outlines the background, research problem, rationale and context of the study.

In Chapter Two, the author provides a review of literature relevant to this study and explains the significant concepts in the study. He also discusses the theorists who are regarded as the founding fathers of distance education and their relevant theories. The chapter also examines the development of distance education in the 1980s, and highlights policy formulation and framing in open and distance learning, with a focus on policymakers and managers. Within this context, one accepts that policy formulation, development and implementation create tension, as there is very little agreement within policy studies about what constitutes implementation (Fritz, 2001: 53).

Chapter Three provides a detailed plan of the research methodology and design, as well as a description of the context of the University of South Africa as the focus of this study. This includes an overview of the history and development of the University



of South Africa. In detailing the research methodology, the author describes the qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques which gave rise to the data on which the analysis is based.

Chapter Four presents the data analysis and interpretation. This chapter explains the data patterns against the background of the first research question, as given in Chapter 1. The focus is on the presentation of data according to collection techniques. The author provides descriptions of the setting, and delineates the analysis of the data collected through the qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. He concludes by looking at the impact of various acts and documents in terms of policy development and implementation in higher education in South Africa.

Chapter Five presents the data analysis in terms of its relevance to the critical research question. It proceeds to present the overall findings of the study in relation to the theoretical framework. It is in this chapter that the views of the various stakeholders, as described and interpreted with the aid of Atlas.ti software, are presented.

Chapter Six is the final chapter, and it presents some of the overall conclusions that one could draw with regard to distance education institutional tuition policy development. It also makes recommendations with respect to distance education institutional tuition development and implementation. It is in this chapter that the author attempts to look at the construction and foundation of distance education tuition policy development, policy significance in terms of distance education development, and contested spaces for policy development in distance education. He also draws some conclusions with regard to the broader impact of institutional tuition policy on distance education. Furthermore, he shares some of the experiences he had and lessons that he learned during this study, which might have an impact on future studies and further developments in terms of distance education policy.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the available literature in distance education, with regard to distance education tuition policy development and implementation at an institutional level. Naturally, it would be awkward not to acknowledge that there are different views on different aspects of distance education. Distance education is a multifaceted subject, and can be viewed from different perspectives. The literature reflects various positions and contentions regarding what the realities of distance education practice are, and this impacts on how we develop and implement a tuition policy in a particular context. This literature review intends to interrogate the various definitions and conceptualisations of distance education from various perspectives, with a view to coming up with a multi-dimensional view of institutional policy development and implementation. It therefore examines the different definitions of distance education, or the diverse paradigms of distance education practice, so as to determine the factors that are important in developing and implementing a distance education institutional tuition policy. In this regard, the literature reviewed deals with the various theories of distance education; the development of distance education over the last twenty years; education, teaching and learning theories; institutional policy development; various policy formulations; and framing in distance education.

There are certain salient characteristics in the literature that may be expected to influence the development and implementation of an institutional tuition policy. This literature review was therefore organised around the following sub-themes: definitions of distance education; the chronological development of theories of distance education; teaching and learning theories in education; theories of learning with regard to distance education; and trends in distance education policy development and implementation at an institutional level.

Despite the evidence that ODL is a fast-growing field internationally, and the fact that literature investigating the implementation of policies in ODL is starting to emerge, literature in this field is still limited. In most cases, such literature fails to discuss the issue of policy formulation and implementation in distance learning (Meyer, 2002; Perraton and Lentell, 2004; King, Nugent, Russell, Eich & Dara, 1999). While literature regarding policy in distance education remains problematic, there are still some shared views about the benefits of distance education (Marland, 1997; Lockwood, 1995; COL, 2000).

There is a great deal of debate about what distance education is and how it should be operationalised in relation to various theoretical frameworks. However, the literature suggests a variety of definitions of distance education (Keegan, 1996; Holmberg, 1982; Evans and Nation, 1989). Some of the beliefs and theories have benefited distance education, in that one can develop further from them. However, the beliefs and practices on which distance education is founded are very diverse, a fact which is confusing to practitioners and policy-makers. In the next section, the author focuses on the different definitions of distance education.

2.2 Defining Distance Education through various Development Phases

In accordance with this common practice, it is appropriate for this study to look at the definitions of distance education from a longitudinal perspective, tracing developments in thought on this topic from the traditional to the more recent. These definitions help in reflecting the development and practice of teaching and learning in distance education. However, such definitions lead to confusion if one attempts to use them to define what distance education is. There have been attempts to rely on comparative literature in defining what distance education is (Peters, 1998; Phipps and Merisotis, 1999). The Commonwealth of Learning (COL, 2000) asserts that the issue of the definition of distance education pervades the literature in this field. COL (2000) emphasises that there is no one definition of open and distance learning, but rather, there are many approaches to defining the concept, which may be done by looking at a variety of features. One may find a variety of terms describing the type of educational provision that involves some kind of an open learning approach, and that uses open and distance learning techniques.



Although the literature dealing with the definition of distance education is extensive (Keegan, 1998, Holmberg, 1982), it can be usefully organised into three distinct phases:

The Early Period in the Development of Distance Education

It was around late 1800 and early 1900 when distance education as a form of obtaining knowledge outside the normal classroom was acknowledged. Although this helped in trying to formalise distance education, its very conceptualisation was problematic in terms of an acceptable definition. The problems were not only compounded in defining it, but also in the various theories that are used to practise it.

The following are the three phases during which distance education began to gain recognition:

Phase One

This phase began in the mid 1700s and lasted until the late 1800s. It was dominated by the correspondence mode (Bääth, 1979; Holmberg, 1977). The emphasis was on printed material and study guides. This is what Moore and Shattuck (2001:2) describe as correspondence education, which they term ‘first generation’ distance education. Correspondence education was regarded as a breakthrough, despite the lack of an instructional element in the system.

Phase Two

The dawning of the Open University in the UK in the 1960s led to the second phase. During this phase, multi-media facilities and materials (including the use of audio cassettes, radio, telephones and teleconferencing) were added to the more conventional printed materials and study guides. However, the weakness of the second phase was still the fact that instructional elements were non-existent. Furthermore, what compounded the problem was the myth that the use of multi-media would enhance effective learning.



Phase Three

The development of advanced information and communications technology (ICT) led to the current phase, in which it is possible to observe the domination of different electronic technologies, networked by means of computers (Holmberg, 1995: 47-52). Rautenbach (2005:18) believes that this phase of distance education is still in its infancy and is yet to mature and develop.

However, some theorists have attempted to supply an overview of the entire process in the development of distance education, from its inception until modern times, and to design an overall framework according to which distance education may be viewed (Garrison, 1989; Keegan, 1986; Peters, 1983; Moore, 1993a; Sparkles, 1983). This school of thought will be briefly discussed in the next section.

2.2.1 Traditional to Modern Definitions of Distance Education

Literature defining distance education can be separated into that which relies on the usual, literal sense of the word 'distance,' and that which uses the term more metaphorically (Holmberg, 1977; Keegan, 1993; Peters, 1992; Moore, 1973). The traditional notion of distance conjures up the geographical separation of student and teacher. The most prominent author to use the more imaginative approach was Holmberg (1977:9), who thinks of distance as that which separates a teacher and a student, and concerns himself with the role of the institution in adding on to the learning process. The unfortunate weakness in his consideration is that he does not indicate what guidance and tuition from the institution should occur.

Another prominent voice in defining distance education is that of Otto Peters. He adds to Keegan's industrial metaphor (Keegan, 1986), by describing distance education as a way of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes based on different levels of labour divisions and institutional principles (Peters, 1992). He sees the need for an extensive use of technical media to produce high volumes of quality teaching material which will reach vast number of students, wherever they may be (Keegan, 1980; Keegan; 1986:41). Peters' definition of distance education is tied to his theoretical analysis,



which sees it as a form of indirect instruction imparted by media such as written correspondence, printed materials, teaching and learning aids, and audiovisual aids such as radio, TV and computers (Stewart, Keegan & Holmberg, 1983). Although this definition emphasises the planning and organisation to be done by the distance education institution, it does this against the background of being sensitive to the economics of the provision of education. In this model, quality teaching and learning may be sacrificed to economic imperatives. Another weakness here is that it makes teaching and learning look very technical, and seems to ignore the fact that learning is a human process.

Moore (1996) does not help when he adds to the complexity in viewing distance education as an industry, by placing an emphasis on production. Moore (1996:2) defines distance education as planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching, and as a result requires special techniques of course design, special instructional techniques, and special methods of communication via electronic and other media. Thus, the communication between the educator and the learner must be facilitated by the use of print, electronic, mechanical and other devices (Moore, 1973:664; Keegan; 1990b:13). Moore (1993b:22) regards distance education as ‘the universe of teacher-learner relationships that exist when learners are separated by space and/or by time’. He writes about three kinds of separation: the separation of teaching and learning behaviours; the separation in time and space; and the separation involved in the use of technical media to facilitate two-way communication (Moore, 1996). His views are related to Otto Peters’ theory of industrialisation. However, there may be more than these three essential elements that he identifies in terms of learning and teaching in distance education.

Later, in accordance with this system of thought, Moore and Kearsley (1996) define distance education as a planned learning event occurring in a different place to teaching. In distance education, one needs special techniques to do course and instructional design, as well as clever communication devices to deliver the teaching. These should be organised by the institution in such a way as to make them effective. The pitfall in this model is that it assumes that the institution can easily organise course design and instructional design, and provide devices for communication between teachers and students. Even though one sees the shift in Moore’s original



definition of distance education, one also sees that he has complicated the issue. Mugridge (1991) defines distance education as a situation in which there is normally a separation between teacher and learner, and the study guide, telephone, etc can be used to bridge the physical gap. However, this definition does not take cognisance of the time factor and whether or not such communication devices are available. Furthermore, one can see the influence of what he believes is open learning, when he says that open learning should provide whatever educational opportunities are needed by anyone, anywhere and at any time (Mugridge 1991).

King, Young, Richmond & Schrader (2001) note the lack of a precise vocabulary with which to describe the domains of distance learning and distance education. They advocate the use of a single definition of distance learning, in order to make progress possible. However, this impractical suggestion would, in the unlikely event of its adoption, tend to nullify the rich field of theory in this domain, which springs from a number of different perspectives and therefore relies on a number of varied definitions. King et al (2001) advise that distance education should be regarded as formalised, instructional learning, where the time/geographic situation constrains learning by not affording face-to-face contact between student and instructor.

It is evident from the above that a definitive description of distance education has eluded theorists so far. What compounds the problem is our general assumption that when we talk about distance education, we understand what we are talking about. It is also evident that the common idea of distance education is loaded with concepts such as self-study, correspondence, independent study, distance learning and distance teaching. Some of these concepts are loosely translated and used without acknowledging that they may mean different things in different contexts. What arises from the literature review, then, is an indication that distance education is an important form of learning, even though the term means different things to different people, and that theorising about it can be rendered useless if it is not contextually based.

In the shifting debates concerning what distance education is, there are some theories that are representative of paradigms that shape the debate. Also, and more simply, it is evident that each author tries to justify his/her theoretical foundations by making



reference to the particular model or models of practice in which he/she is working, and therefore, that the theories of distance education are influenced not only by developments in the field of general theory, but also by the development of distance education as a field of educational practice.

2.2.2 Development of Distance Education as a Field of Study

Keegan (1991) divides the study of distance education into four stages. The first stage is the study of terminology, and it was only after 1978 that there was general agreement that the field of study be referred to as distance education. In 1982, in Vancouver, the International Council for Correspondence (founded in 1930) became the International Council for Distance Education. Since then, it has been aligned with and has promoted the name of distance education. The second stage is the study of definitions. In the early 1980s, there was confusion about the definition of distance education, and this hampered developments in this field of study. It was only in the late 1980s that the problem with regard to the definition was solved, and there was general agreement that the study of the field of distance education should be endorsed. It was only in the 1990s that we started to see the precise nature of the field called distance education, and to distinguish the study of distance education from the study of other fields within the discipline of education (Keegan, 1990a).

In reflecting on the development of literature in distance education, one can see that the early literature concentrated mainly on writing about theories of distance education. In the late 1980s, there was a new energy directed towards the development of distance education. Daniel and Stroud (1981) regard this period as being of primary importance to the actual practice of distance education. The theories relating to the development of distance education practice were still characterised by differing views, which were related to what the theorists saw as the function of distance education. Daniel and Stroud (1981) believe that the unique function of distance teaching universities should be to reach out to all students, locally and abroad, and to provide tuition for them.

During the 1990s, there was an incredible growth in the conceptualisation of distance education, and in South Africa, we saw the enthusiastic introduction of ICT into the



delivery practice. Consequently, while traditional distance education models emphasised the independence of the learner, in the 1990s, there was a shift in the focus from the urge to define the phenomenon in terms of the separation of the teacher and the student, to pedagogy and the role of ICT. (The introduction of ICT in distance education and its effectiveness is a debate on its own, which is not covered by this study.) Evans and Nations (1989:25) claim that current debate in distance education circles seems to be largely pragmatic and obsessed with the issue of technology, especially in terms of matters such as the delivery of materials to students, hardware necessary for the delivery and receipt of materials, and the mechanisms whereby staff and students contact one another. They believe that distance education has been able to rise to new challenges, reshape itself to meet social changes, and transform itself in accordance with new contexts (Evans and Nations, 1989: 7).

Further developments in the field of ODL will largely depend on the policies and initiatives of individual institutions. State education policymakers will have to decide whether they want to exploit distance education and distance teaching as a stage in a more explicit educational strategy, or whether they want to leave it to the actors in the current education market to handle this development (Grepperud, Stokken & Toska, 2002). Hammond (1990) suggests that we need to look at the nature of policy implementation, the educational context of policy, the basis for teaching, and the process of change. In order to do this, one needs to look at how distance education theories influence actual practice.

2.3 Theories of Distance Education

Literature falls short in that it has, over the years, devoted so much time and effort to describing what distance education is, and very little to the effectiveness of teaching and learning at a distance (Keegan, 1991; Keegan, 1998; IRFOL, 2003). This generates the believable and acceptable view that if we can describe distance education, we can effectively use it for the purpose of teaching and learning.

Theories of distance education can be classified according to distinct periods. Each of these phases generally overlaps with, is critical of, and builds from, the previous ones.



Keegan (1983) conducts an analysis of the writings of great distance theorists whose views started to shape distance education theory in the 1960s. Among the prominent ones are Charles A Wedemeyer, Michael G Moore, Otto Peters, John A Bääth, Börje Holmberg and David Stewart. Since the 1960s, there have been demands from various sectors to build theoretical foundations for distance education practice. These demands were based on competing interests and perspectives, each fighting for domination in terms of developing distance education in the USA and Europe. The literature is therefore limited, in that the debates were grounded in practice in the USA and Europe. The literature relating to other developed and developing countries is sparse. In the next section, the author will refer to some of the literature on theories of distance education.

In order to be of practical use, research into distance education should provide the foundation on which structures addressing the need for, purpose of, and administration of, distance education can be erected (Keegan, 1983). A theory of distance education must provide a base on which all relevant decisions, political, financial, educational or social, can be taken (Keegan, 1983). Moore (1973) seems to be more interested in theories than in practice, when he suggests that we need to identify various critical elements of distance education, so as to start building a theoretical framework. This means that the theoretical framework would be the end product of research, not sound practice informed by theory. Wedemeyer (1974) believes that the failure to fully develop the theory of education contributes to the underdevelopment and under-recognition of distance education. This view is critical when the development of the theory of distance education is recognised as the chief issue for debate in this field.

Existing literature on distance education has been based on theories developed over a number of years, yet the literature does not suggest how to link theory and practice. Perraton (1988:13) finds this unproblematic, and believes that distance education has managed very well without any theory. On the other hand, Keegan (1983:3) proposes that a theory of distance education - which could eventually be reduced to a phrase, a sentence or a paragraph - could provide the touchstone against which decisions could be taken with confidence (Keegan, 1983).

The author has already indicated in his review of the literature that the many theoretical positions available to us can be organised into three categories as follows:

2.3.1 Theory of Autonomy and Independence (Late 1960s and Early 1970s)

Current theorising in distance education is largely devoted to descriptions and critiques of these theories (Perraton and Hulsman, 1998; Peters, 1992). The contributors are Rudolf Manfred Delling of the Federal Republic of Germany, Charles A. Wedemeyer of the USA, and Michael G. Moore of the United Kingdom.

Delling (1996) introduced the term ‘independent study’ to define and classify distance education at a university. He sees distance study as an artificial signal carrier which shortens the distance between the teacher and the learner. Therefore, the role of the teacher and the educational institution is reduced to the minimum (Stewart, Keegan & Holmberg, 1983).

Wedemeyer (1974) says that independent study comes in two forms, namely that involving internal students and that involving external students. He argues that independent study, for an external student, must be based on democratic social ideals and a liberal educational philosophy. This means that no-one must be denied education because s/he is poor, geographically isolated or suffering from ill health. The critical point of independent study should be that it is self-paced, individualised, and offers freedom in terms of goal selection. Learner autonomy is meant to allow for interaction with learning materials. This implies that learners must select goals and activities that will help them achieve their objectives. In order to justify his theory of independent study, Wedemeyer tries to distinguish open learning from distance education, by listing the characteristics of independent study (Wedemeyer, 1974). According to him, four elements are important in any educational situation: the teacher, the learner, the communication system and the content. This theory emphasises autonomy and independence, although it may be thought to do so at the expense of ignoring effective teaching in distance education, and by placing too great an emphasis on the learner’s autonomy and independence.



Moore argues that independent study means ‘apartness’ and ‘autonomy’ (Moore, 1972; Moore, 1973; Moore, 1974). His notion of independent study relates closely to two critical elements: his allegiance to democratic social ideals and to a liberal educational philosophy. The first suggests that the learner is autonomous to a greater or lesser extent, and a teacher modifies the concept of teaching to suit this autonomy and the distance mode. The second refers to the method of communication needed by the learner to cope with distance education. These elements are characterised by individualisation and dialogue. In the theoretical situation, we need the variables of ‘apartness’ and ‘self-direction’ in order to be able to develop a theory of distance education (Moore, 1974). Moore’s theory is based on liberal principles, and the criticism is that it is perhaps very difficult to practice. To sum up, his view says that all people must be given an opportunity to learn, despite their status in relation to factors such as poverty, regional isolation and physical weakness. Independent study, according to him, should at all times be self-paced, individualised and goal-free, and the institution must therefore not limit students’ freedom to learn (Stewart, Keegan & Holmberg, 1983). Although the contribution of this theory to distance education is enormous, it reduces almost all learning to the sole ‘responsibility of the learner’. It does not emphasise or promote the active role of the teacher, instructor or facilitator of learning in distance education.

Moore (1974) ramifies this theory by adding to it what he terms ‘transactional distance theory,’ which postulates that distance is a pedagogical/andragogical phenomenon which must be addressed by design, curriculum, forms of communication and interaction, and the appropriate management of distance education programmes (Moore and Kearsley, 1996:200; Moore and Shattuck, 2001:9). Moore’s (1972) theory of transactional distance is based on three major variables: dialogue or interaction between participants; structure or elements of course design; and autonomy or elements of learning that are under the learners’ control. He argues that the transactional distance becomes small if the structures are fully utilised, which results in a decrease in the student’s autonomy. The optimal blend can be achieved when we are aware that student autonomy and transactional distance are positively related. This theory can be most obviously criticised for oversimplifying the relationship between dialogue and transactional distance.



2.3.2 Theory of Industrialisation (throughout the 1960s and Early 1970s)

Otto Peters can be regarded as the founding father of the theory of industrialisation. His basic argument is that using conventional instructional theory to teach distance education has failed, as it is not producing any results (Peters, 1983). He recommends that distance education should be compared to the industrial production of goods. He believes that distance education is the most industrialised form of education, and we must therefore develop an industrialisation theory to define it. The difference between distance education and conventional education can be found in the choice of content, methodological and media structures, and personal and social changes. Peters (1998) concludes that we need an industrial theory for distance education, as conventional education cannot meet the needs of society.

Peters (1998) argues that conventional ways of teaching at a distance are not successful or productive, and sees successful distance education as an industrialised form of teaching grounded in technically formulated forms of communication. The author does not totally agree that all forms of distance education can be industrialised. His view suggests that operating a successful distance education system would be like operating a successful factory - it would be predominantly a technical operation. The production and distribution of learning materials can be industrialised, produced in bulk and dispatched quickly, but one cannot simplify the process of teaching and learning in the same way as an industry. Teaching and learning are complex human activities, and this human complexity must be taken into account when theorising about them.

2.3.3 Theory of Interaction and Communication (Late 1970s and Early 1980s)

The main contributors here are Börje Holmberg of Sweden, and later of the Federal Republic of Germany, John A. Bääth of Sweden, and David Stewart of the United Kingdom. Recently, we see Kevin C. Smith of Australia and John S. Daniel of the UK.

Holmberg believes that the theory of distance education must be grounded in didactic dialogue, the important feature of which is learning by individual students (Holmberg,



1981). All of the other issues in distance education are only important if they support individual learning. Didactic dialogue can be real or simulated. He outlines the basis on which didactic dialogue needs to develop, and suggests procedures for effective learning facilitation. His theory of distance education is that it is a guided didactic conversation between the institution and the student. This theory would perhaps have been strengthened if it did not only focus on the individual learner, but also took the needs of target groups or communities of practice into account.

2.3.3.1 Two-way Communication in Correspondence/Distance Education

Bääth provides critical input with regard to two-way communication in correspondence education (Bääth, 1979). He endorses Wedemeyer's view of distance learning as an individual act, and not a social interaction (Bääth, 1979). Bääth's analysis of distance education is in terms of teaching models. He believes that in order to help adult learners in distance education, we must define their learning goals, select appropriate learning materials, help with problems and difficulties, and evaluate their progress. In general, he introduces and critically emphasises the role of the tutor in the distance education system. He proposes that the theory of distance education should be based on two-way communication, in terms of which learning materials must have activities and self-check tests, and provision must be made for communicating with students via mail, computer and telephone. Although this study agrees with the importance of communication, one cannot reasonably reduce the process of learning and teaching in distance education to two-way communication. The author believes that two-way communication is a technique, not an end, and that its purpose should be to promote the proper end of distance education, which is deep and reflective learning.

2.3.3.2 Continuity of Concern for Students Learning at a Distance

One can clearly see the influence of dealing with the managerial task of providing support to many students in distance education in David Stewart's theory (Stewart, Keegan & Holmberg: 1983). His theory of distance education can be seen as being concerned with continuity for students learning at a distance. According to him, the provision of education by means of material packages cannot in itself be thought of as



teaching, because the teaching process is complex and complicated. Therefore, support to students in distance learning is crucial. The absence of immediate feedback and benchmarking is important to him in considering the nature of support to be given to the student. The motives behind his theory of distance education can be sensed in his interest in developing new communication technologies, and in catering for the dropouts and left-outs of residential universities and conventional teaching. His main criticism is that no matter how well developed materials are, they may not cater for all the demands of interactivity in distance learning.

Even though continuity in distance teaching and learning should be an issue of concern, it must not take away the responsibility of the learner. This study believes that continuity of teaching and learning can be seen in what learners are able to do after completing their studies via the distance education mode. A good teaching policy should be able to suggest how continuity can take place throughout the learner's life.

The theoretical literature fails in general to look into the operation of distance education from an empirical point of view. In a way, this lacuna reflects the nature of teaching and learning in distance education. Very little empirical evidence has been provided about the way in which teaching and learning manifest themselves in distance education.

After having looked at the theoretical writings produced over the last hundred years, one comes to the conclusion that there is still no single distance education theory that can claim to dominate the field or have had a profound effect, in isolation, on the practice of distance education. A number of authors show that many disparate attempts have been made to try to define and find the best theory of distance education. Surveying the field, Evans and Nation (1992) conclude that many theorists have emphasised the physical distance between teacher and learner. Shaffer (2005:10) suggests that we have become aware that there is no accepted theory of anything in distance education. Moore (2004) adds that, even though there are many theories of distance education, each new writing questions or ignores everything that has come before. This difficulty is compounded by a new development which requires fresh theorising. One cannot ignore the fact that more and more residential universities are



embarking on distance education learning in order to increase student enrolments, although they have little grounding in ODL (Trindade, Carmo & Bidarra, 2000; UNESCO, 1997). This trend has seen some South African universities introduce distance education or part-time learning programmes in addition to their face-to-face programmes.

Anderson (2003) contends that there must be an expansion of the theory of distance education to address the practice of educational research, as this would have an impact on the framing of public policy. It is therefore critical to look at some of the educational theories relating to teaching and learning.

2.4 Educational Theories relating to Teaching and Learning

In addition to debates on how to define distance education, there is disagreement regarding how the theoretical foundations of distance education affect teaching and learning. In this section, the author briefly examines some of the teaching and learning theories that have implications for distance education. Furthermore, he indicates how the theorists referred to earlier in this chapter justify the linking of their theoretical foundations to actual teaching and learning in distance education.

The literature includes many theories about how people learn, which may be used in different contexts (Burns, 1995a:99; Inglis, Ling & Joosten, 1999:104-105). However, teaching and learning that takes place in distance education are particularly complex phenomena, riddled with contradictions (Evan and Nations, 1989: 10). Key questions on learning should therefore be in terms of how we understand learning, and the implementation process. The lack of research on implementation of a tuition policy in distance education is of great concern. It does not help that many of the theories defining learning come from the psychological field, which is particularly fraught with vagueness and contradictions.

In attempting to design a teaching and learning policy, it is essential to understand the range of learning theories and take them into account. Some of them could conceivably influence learning in distance education, and should be used when we design and implement learning. For this reason, this study highlights some of the

general education learning theories that relate to distance education, which are: the behaviouristic orientation to learning, the humanistic orientation to learning, and the social/situational orientation to learning.

Smith (1999:5-6) regards the abovementioned as the major orientations to learning which actually influence teaching.

2.4.1 Behaviourist Approaches

Behaviourism was one of the first theories of learning. Obviously, it relies on the fact that a stimulus is generally followed by a response. Moore and Kearsley (1996:204) say that this has implications in the distance education context. Behaviourists believe that learning is evidenced by a change in behaviour, the teaching role is one of the presentations of facts and skills, and that learning takes the form of drill and practice. This approach fails to account for a great deal in distance learning, and may be contrary to the principles of adult learning. While behaviourism has contributed to theories of learning, it can no longer hold a dominant position, as cognitive-oriented approaches are gaining increasing favour.

2.4.2 Cognitive Theories

The emphasis in Moore and Shattuck's (2001:2) theory is on the learner's prior knowledge and style of learning. The inference is that the design of the learning activity is of paramount importance. Educators must immerse learners in complex interactive experiences which are real and meaningful to them, and students must be given problems so that they can, through engaging with them, gain insight and reflect on their learning experiences. The writers and designers of learning material have to be thoroughly conversant with the issues of 'deep design', in order to be able to conceptualise tasks that will challenge learners. This approach provides truly significant benefits for the learner, but it is very demanding.



2.4.3 Constructivism

Moore and Kearsley (1996:204) view learning as having a foundation in the autonomous or independent individuals who must construct their own knowledge, as influenced by their experiences. This theory relies on an epistemology that stresses subjectivism and relativism, and posits that reality is personal and unique. Knowledge is seen as an active process of subjectively building a system of meanings (Moore and Shattuck, 2001; 2). The premise is that learning reflects our own experiences, insofar as it is a construction or understanding of the world we live in. As individuals, we generate our own rules and mental models, and communication is possible only because many of our experiences are so similar. Thus, in order to teach, we must understand our student's mental models, as learning is a search for meaning, whether in whole or in part. The focus here is on general concepts rather than isolated facts. An individual must make personal meaning out of learning.

There is some empirical evidence to support the use of this approach in distance learning, but a major practical difficulty remains: how can we know and design materials based on a student's prior knowledge, and how can we provide hands-on problems relevant to that particular student?

2.4.4 Adult Learning (andragogy)

Knowles (1978) is regarded as the theorist who brought adult learning (andragogy) to the fore. He argues that when people change their lifestyle and are believed to behave as such, they can be regarded as adults. Moore and Shattuck (2001) call adult learning andragogy, and define it as an approach that is based on assumptions about learning, which include the following:

- Adults need to know why they need to learn something;
- Adults need to learn experientially;
- Adults approach learning as problem-solving; and
- Adults learn best when the topic is of immediate value.

Knowles (1978) believes that adult learning should be different from normal teaching.

Dunn (2000:4) lists some of the ways:

- Adult learners bring experience to learning, which must be used as a source of learning and reference;
- Adults are likely to indicate what and how they are to be taught;
- Adults want to be active participants, and should be encouraged to engage in designing and implementing educational programmes for themselves;
- Adults want to apply what they have learned;
- Adults are interested in how the learning will be evaluated; and
- Adults expect constant feedback about their learning progress.

Burns (1995b) argues that one cannot clearly define an adult and, therefore, one cannot define adult education. He believes that school education cannot be used as the sole basis for an adult learning model. Given the difficulties of definition, Burns (1995b:233) advocates that one should concentrate on the qualities of being an adult, which he calls adulthood, rather than on adults themselves. According to him, people with the qualities of adulthood are self-directing, a fact that lies at the heart of andragogy, which should be student-centred, experience-based, problem-oriented and collaborative, in the spirit of the humanistic approach to learning and education. The whole educational activity should focus on the student.

Even though there may be different ways of conceptualising adult learning theories on the whole, literature suggests that adult learning is close to distance education. Andragogy is regarded as a progressive educational theory that underpins curriculum design using problem-based strategies, and relates to the notion of the self-directed learner, but it is based on assumptions about adult learning that may be difficult to prove. It also suggests techniques of teaching which may be even more difficult to implement.

2.5 Deep and Surface Approaches to Learning

Originally, the notions of deep and surface learning were proposed by Marton and Säljö (1976). The approaches were further studied by Ramsden (1992), Biggs (1987,

1993) and Entwistle (1981). The concept or term ‘learning’ elicits different interpretations from different people in different contexts. Säljö (1979) asked a number of different adults what they understood by learning. Based on their replies, he came up with the following five categories:

- Learning as a quantitative increase in knowledge i.e. acquiring information or knowing a lot;
- Learning as memorising i.e. the storing and reproducing of information;
- Learning as acquiring facts, skills and methods that can be retained and used as necessary;
- Learning as making sense or abstracting meaning i.e. parts of the content are related to each other and the real world; and
- Learning as interpreting and understanding in a different way. This means that learning involves comprehending the world by reinterpreting knowledge.

Smith (1999:4) says that out of the five categories identified by Säljö (1979), we must be concerned with learning as a process (see paragraph 2.4.1). The question is: what happens when the learning takes place? Smith (1999) cites Ryle’s (1949:48-49) opinion that there is a difference between ‘knowing that’ and ‘knowing how’. The first two categories of Säljö (1979) concern ‘knowing that,’ whereas the third concerns ‘knowing how.’ In this regard, Ramsden (1992: 27) views students who can see learning as the basic understanding of what reality is as individuals who are increasing their capability or knowledge of doing things

Several other researchers, including (Ramsden (1992), Biggs (1987, 1993) and Entwistle (1981), conclude that ‘deep learning’ goes with intrinsic motivation, and ‘surface learning’ goes with extrinsic motivation. Atherton (2005:2) provides a table to summarise the features of deep and surface approaches:



Table 2.1 Deep and Surface approaches to learning

Deep approach	Surface approach
Focuses on 'what is signified'	Focuses on the 'signs' or on the learning as a signifier of something else
Relates previous knowledge to new knowledge	Focuses on unrelated parts of the task
Relates knowledge from different courses	Information for assessment is simply memorised
Relates theoretical ideas to everyday experience	Facts and concepts are ineffectively associated
Relates and distinguishes evidence and arguments	Principles are not distinguished from examples
Organises and structures content into coherent wholes	A task is treated as an external imposition
Emphasis is internal (within the student)	Emphasis is external, based on the demands of the assessment

Adapted from Atherton (2005); Ramsden (1992)

Surface learners fear failure, and attempts by teachers to make them deep learners cause them to reproduce features of the deep approach from a surface basis (Atherton, 2005; Ramsden, Beswick & Bowden, 1986). Therefore, surface learning is regarded as an uphill struggle, characterised by boredom and depressive feelings, whereas deep learning is experienced as an exciting and gratifying challenge. It is also worth noting that several authors have written about deep and surface approaches to learning in a variety of studies encompassing different contexts (Marton and Säljö, 1976; Biggs, 1979; Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983). Houghton (2006) provides a table depicting the characteristics and factors that encourage deep and surface approaches to learning. He based the table on the work of researchers such as Biggs (1999); Entwistle (1988) and Ramsden (1992).



Table 2.2 Characteristics and Factors in Deep and Surface Learning

Terms/ Concepts	Deep learning	Surface learning
Definition	Examining new facts and ideas critically, incorporating them into existing cognitive structures and making links between ideas	Accepting new facts and ideas uncritically and attempting to store them as isolated, unconnected items
Characteristics	Looking for meaning Focusing on the central arguments or concepts needed to solve a problem Interacting actively Distinguishing between argument and evidence Making connections between different modules Relating new and previous knowledge Linking a course to real life	Relying on rote learning Focusing on outwards signs and formulae needed to solve a problem Receiving information passively Failing to distinguish principles from examples Treating parts of modules and programmes separately Not recognising new material as building on previous work Seeing course content as material to be learnt for the examination
Encouraged by students	Having an intrinsic curiosity in the subject Being determined to do well and mentally engaging when doing academic work Having time to pursue interests, through good time management Positive experience of education and confidence in ability to understand and succeed	Studying a degree for the qualification, and not being interested in the subject Not focusing on academic areas, but emphasising others e.g. social, sport Not enough time/too high a workload Cynical view of education, believing that factual recall is what is required High anxiety
Encouraged by teachers	Showing personal interest in the subject Bringing out the structure of the subject Concentrating on and ensuring plenty of time for key concepts confronting students' misconceptions Engaging students in active learning Using assessment that requires thoughts and ideas to be used together Relating new material to what students already know and understand Allowing students to make mistakes without penalty, and rewarding effort	Showing a lack of interest or even distaste for the material Presenting material so that it can be perceived as a series of unrelated facts and ideas Allowing students to be passive Assessing for independent facts (short answer questions) Rushing to cover too much material Emphasising coverage at the expense of depth Creating undue anxiety or low expectations of success by making discouraging statements



Terms/ Concepts	Deep learning	Surface learning
	Being consistent and fair in assessing declared learning outcomes, and hence establishing trust	or imposing excessive workloads Having a short assessment cycle

Adapted from Houghton (2006); Biggs (1999); Entwistle (1988); and Ramsden (1992)

In the learning context, we try to be explicit about what students must do and why they must do it. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) insist that we must distinguish between a ‘deep approach’ and a ‘surface approach,’ whereby, in a deep approach, students aim to understand what they are learning, whereas in a surface approach, students have no motivation to learn. It is in this latter type of learning that, at times, students aim to get all the marks for the course. Entwistle (2003) proposes research about teaching and learning at a university level, and suggests that such research should have a conceptual framework describing what influences the outcomes of learning.

With regard to the characteristics of deep and surface learning, Entwistle (2006) provides the following contrasting characteristics, as adapted from Marton, Hounsell & Entwistle (1984) and Entwistle and Ramsden (1983):

Table 2.3 Intentions and Strategic Approaches in Deep and Surface Learning

Deep approach	Strategy	Surface approach	Strategy
Intention is to understand the material for oneself	Organising study thoughtfully	Intention is simply to produce parts of the content	None
Intention is to understand the material for oneself	Managing time and effort effectively	Accepting ideas and information passively	None
Relating ideas to previous knowledge and experience	Forcing oneself to concentrate on the work	Concentrating only on assessment requirements	None
Relating evidence to conclusions	Being alert to assessment requirements and criteria	Interacting with content vigorously and critically	None



Deep approach	Strategy	Surface approach	Strategy
Examining the logic of the argument	Monitoring the effectiveness of ways of studying	Not reflecting on purpose or strategies	None
		Memorising facts and procedures routinely	None
		Failing to recognise guiding principles or patterns	None

Adapted from Entwistle, 2006; Marton et al, 1984; Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983

In terms of this topic, Entwistle (2006:2) concludes that a deep approach is consistently linked to studying the subject for its own sake, and with self-confidence. The deep approach has been found to be more common in classes which have good teaching and a fair amount of freedom in learning. The surface approach is associated with anxiety and fear of failure, and to some extent, with vocational motives. Students who practice surface learning are often in classes where they have a heavy workload and where assessment procedures are overemphasised. They are inclined to reproduce detailed information without a grasp of the whole of which the details are a part. The following table indicates a selection of books and texts constituting the literature on the theme of teaching and learning in education, which are applicable to some extent to distance education.

Table 2.4 Summary of some of the literature dealing with teaching and learning related to distance education

Authors	Contents	Criticism/ or identified gap
Illeris, K. (2002). <i>The Three Dimensions of Learning. Contemporary Theory in the Tension Field between the Cognitive, the Emotional and the Social.</i> Frederiksberg, DN: Roskilde University Press	Adult education is situated within lifelong learning policies in the European Union. Tension between philosophical and pragmatic neo-liberal ideology	Views do not represent the entire landscape of adult education theories, policies, programs and practices
Merriam, S.B. & Caffarella, R.S. (1991, 1998). <i>Learning in Adulthood.</i> A comprehensive guide. San	The text looks at an overview of learning theory and explores adult development and learning, and the learning process	Lengthy and overly detailed description of learning in adulthood. Describes all major models and needs



Authors	Contents	Criticism/ or identified gap
Francisco: Jossey-Bass		serious exploration
Ramsden, P. (1992). Learning to Teach in Higher Education. London: Routledge	The text indicate the learning process and the implications for programme design and encounters in the classroom	Does not address the issue of providing high quality feedback on time
Rogers, A. (2003). What is the Difference? A New Critique of Adult Learning and Teaching. Leicester: NIACE	It explores the nature of learning, looks at debates around informal learning and compares adult learning and teaching to that of young people	Regards humanistic psychology, which shaped adult education, as misleading, inappropriate and unhelpful. Emphasises only the postmodernist perspective which draws on continental philosophy
Tennant, M. (1998). Psychology and Adult Learning. London: Routledge	Discusses the relevance of psychological theory to adult education. Issues included are humanistic psychology and the self- directed learner, the psychoanalytical approach, adult development, cognitive development, learning styles, behaviourism, group dynamics, critical awareness and situated learning	Advocates that we cannot develop independent, rational, autonomous and coherent adults in a world characterised by difference and diversity
Tennant, M. & Pogson, P. (1995). Learning and Change in the Adult Years. A Developmental Perspective. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass	The text looks at the relationships between development and learning in adulthood, intellectual development, practical intelligence and expertise, theories of the life course, autonomy and self-direction, experience and the teacher-learner relationship.	Theorises about a few aspects of adult learning. Makes for a critical understanding of psychological theory from the perspective of an adult educator
Jarvis, P. (1987). Adult Learning in the Social Context. London: Routledge	Adult learning in a sociological perspective is explored.	Explores and gives views on reflection and experiential learning from a very general point of view
Kolb, D. (1984). Experiential Learning. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall	Learning as a process leading to the production of knowledge	There is an over-emphasis on the thought that without reflection, we would repeat our mistakes. Reflection does not always lead to our recognising our mistakes.

Adapted from Smith (1999); Tennant (1998); Joyce, Calhoun and Hopkins (1997).

It is evident that the literature varies in terms of the extent to which it can be used to underpin teaching and learning in distance education. Most of the studies undertaken have remained on an abstract, fairly theoretical level, and have made little use of empirical evidence as a point of reference. Such studies can be expected to fail in their application to actual teaching and learning in distance education.

Nevertheless, questions regarding the relation between the theory of distance education and that of conventional education will not go away. For instance, the debate about whether distance education is as effective as conventional education has been with us since the inception of the first forms of distance education. The theorists agree, obviously, that one of the major differences between distance education and face-to-face education is that the teacher and students are not in at the same place at the same time (Keegan, 1980; Keegan, 1994). Whether distance education is just a different form of conventional education or not, Keegan (1996) proposes that the basis for any theory of distance education must be to regard it as a form of education. Many theorists who have written about distance education have made suggestions as to how teaching and learning should happen in the context of their theories. The next section will look at some of the general teaching and learning theories related to distance education.

2.6 Theories of Teaching and Learning in Distance Education

One of the points of agreement among theorists of teaching and learning in distance education is that there are several starting points which are valid, although some of them contradict each other (COL, 2005; Holmberg, 1977; Peters, 1998; Evans and Nation, 1992). Rivers (2006:3) believes that distance education is in a strong position to meet such challenges, as it is sufficiently flexible to meet the demands of the learners, while also conforming to the tenets of relevant theory. While this statement looks good, the lack of empirical evidence to back it up makes it questionable. Holmberg (1985b), on the other hand, argues that a theory of learning is descriptive, as it only attempts to describe and explain the learning process. Conversely, he asserts



that a theory of teaching is prescriptive, as it indicates what knowledge and skills must be gained through specific teaching practices. If this is so, theories of teaching can be deduced from theories of learning - however, learning may be influenced by other factors related to teaching. King et al (2001) strongly argue that we need to define distance learning before we define what distance education is. Perraton (1988) argues that the success or failure of distance education depends on the political context, as well as the methods of teaching. On the topic of the expansion of distance education, he offers the hypothesis that one can use any medium to teach anything. Distance education can also cater for the staffing problem, as more students can be taught by fewer staff, in comparison with the situation in a face-to-face classroom. What is critical in his argument is that distance teaching can reach audiences who would not be reached through orthodox means. With regard to dialogue Perraton writes that distance education can be organised in such a way as to be conducive to dialogue. For example, if there is a tutoring system, the role of the tutor is then to facilitate learning, not to communicate information. He also advocates that group discussion is an effective method of learning, as opposed to teaching, which is used to bring relevant information to the group. He concludes that in most communities, there are resources which can be used to support distance learning to educational and economic advantage. He argues that, in order to be effective, distance teaching materials should ensure that students undertake frequent and regular activities over and above reading, watching or listening. Perraton's views on teaching and learning in distance education are recent and seem to be reasonable.

Inevitably, the literature suggests that there is an indirect relationship between learning theory and teaching theory (Perraton, 1988; King et al, 2001). However, one must be aware that for the purpose of scholarship, there must be a theoretical framework to bring an explanation and understanding of teaching and learning in distance education together and there must be a specific model leading to the practical application of the theory (Holmberg, 1985a). Holmberg argues strongly that the theory of teaching in distance education should be empirically grounded or founded, and that there must be functional relationships between the conditions and outcomes of learning. All of these must be expressed in such a way that the research data that can be collected should refine the theory (Holmberg, 1985a). However, while



strongly advocating these views, he seems to be in doubt, regardless of his suggestion that we need data in order to refine the theory.

Peters fulfils one's expectations of him: he is so thoroughly grounded in the theory of industrialisation that he pays little attention to the functional relationship between the conditions in distance education and the outcomes of learning (Peters, 1974; Peters; 1988). This comes as no surprise, as he believes that distance education can be applied using an industrial model. Wedemeyer (1974) points to a number of problems when teaching and learning at a distance. One of these is the separation of teaching from individual learning. He does not hypothesise about how we can overcome this challenge. In a similar vein, Holmberg (1985b) believes that teaching in distance education is, and must be, nothing more than a guided didactic conversation. Therefore, any good distance education must be guided by good conversation, provided in the learning material, which facilitates learning. Thus, guided teaching invokes a pervasive didactic conversation that helps individuals to build strong relationships with the institution. If we make studying personally relevant to learners, there is a great chance that they will be personally involved and motivated to learn effectively. Holmberg emphasises the role of the institution, but he does not supply his vision of the role of the institution in facilitating this didactic conversation.

It is this context that Keegan suggests that we need a theoretical framework for distance education before we look at teaching and learning in distance education (Keegan, 1994; Keegan, 1996). With regard to the theoretical framework, Keegan (1996) says that one is confronted with a cluster of activities which give rise to questions which need answers, for example on whether distance education is a particular sort of educational activity or a conventional one, and/or whether distance education is possible or just a contradiction in terms. Asking whether or not distance education is an educational activity, Keegan says that there have been suggestions that distance education does not involve a teaching activity, and can therefore not be regarded as an educational activity (Keegan, 1996). This is a radical view and open to question, especially when one looks at the empirical evidence of teaching as an educational activity in distance education. He outlines the consequences of, as he puts it, reintegrating the act of teaching into distance education. These consequences are the industrialisation of teaching, the privatisation of institutional learning, the change

in administrative structures, different plants and buildings, and changes in costing structures. He strongly advocates the reintegration of the act of teaching into distance education, thus taking a position which ignores the fact that teaching is already the core function of distance institutions.

Peters (2002) believes that distance education is fundamental to the introduction of adult learning as a field of education, and an important pedagogical innovation. This study discussed this issue in the section on adult learning (andragogy). In the same vein, Holmberg (1995; 1997; 2001) suggests that distance education is a non-contact type of teaching and learning, since students and teachers do not meet face-to-face most of the time. And, since it enables people to do other things instead of only focusing on learning, he affirms that it is mostly good and is suitable for adults. The critical thing is that teaching and learning happen within a mediated situation, and we see the use of technical media for both subject matter presentation and interaction. Furthermore, Peters (2000) agrees that the digitised distance education era helps us to cope with major societal changes. Peters (2002) concludes that distance education is now at a premium, and helps societies to break traditions and design new ways of teaching which are relevant to the post-industrial knowledge society. He believes that the university of the future will acknowledge and integrate more than one type of presentation, ranging from face-to-face to digital, and that the teaching typologies in play will differ totally from traditional forms of teaching. The university of the future will be flexible, variable and adaptable, providing tailor-made programmes for any kind of undergraduate or graduate student, and for any who want to continue with their education. These are strong, challenging views, which may represent an altogether too optimistic vision of the future. It is difficult to see how the institutions of the future, which are likely to be as bedevilled with human error as our present ones, are going to be able to cope with being flexible, variable and adaptable, and are going to be able to provide tailor-made programmes for both undergraduate and post-graduate studies.

One can see the interrelationships between the array of theories briefly referred to above, and how they agree with or oppose each other. One of the strengths to be derived from all of them is that they agree that, from the historical and social point of view, distance education suits adult learning. However, in this study's view, there



seems to be too much emphasis on producing learning materials and the facilitation of interaction via various electronic media. Such an emphasis at times ignores that we are communicating with human beings, and that the media are only tools required for the presentation of subject matter and communication. One demand is that the institution providing distance education must apply empathy as the guiding principle for distance education. With regard to learning and teaching in distance education methodology, Holmberg (2001:47) says that teaching must be in support of learning, and must rely on media, since this is a non-contact mode, but he also insists that the conversation-like interaction between distance students and their providing institution should promote motivation, learning pleasure and study results.

Since the introduction of media into distance education, one sees new trends and debates regarding teaching and learning. In this context, Rivers (2006:2) says that a challenge in distance education is to move away from print-based to online delivery. However, Holmberg (1982) emphasises that distance learning should enable optimum use to be made of both learning and educational technology. Rivers (2006) believes that the focus should be on how to move away from the role of an educator, as a director of the learner's studies, to that of a facilitator (someone to guide students during the learning process), and how to ensure that learning rather than technology is the driving force, since the teaching element is separated in time and place from the learning element.

2.7 Other Views on Teaching and Learning in the Context of the Practice of Distance Education

Holmberg (1995) indicates that the term 'distance education' covers various forms of study at all levels, and that planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organisation guide it. Therefore, distance education should be described by its characteristics, which concern its applications and interpretations. Although Holmberg's contribution in terms of distance education theory provides the basic framework for understanding distance education, his work lacks the empirical studies that would suggest what teaching and learning should be like.

Marland's (1997) argument is that the practice of distance teaching can only be understood through the practical theories which underpin and shape a distance teacher's practice, which must be scrutinised by the particular teacher. The author finds this to be of critical importance, but the challenge is what to do after achieving such an understanding. Marland talks of distance education as promoting and developing reflective practitioners, but the issue is what one does with one's reflection.

On the other hand, Keegan (1994) argues that distance education could primarily be considered to be a complete method of teaching and learning, an instruction method in its own right. Despite the fact that he argues that didactic principles in distance education can be based on twenty-seven elements – which he supplies - he does not indicate how these teaching elements can be implemented. Furthermore, he does not indicate how this will relate to the development and implementation of teaching policy. However, theory in distance education should be connected to other major theories of learning and instruction (Moore and Kearsley, 2003:1). Delling (1996) writes that, despite the existence of distance teaching critics, we must begin to rely on theory. He acknowledges that there is a systematic theory of distance teaching, but warns that to regard the systematic theory of distance teaching as the only relevant theory would be dangerous and intrinsically flawed.

Holmberg (1985a) suggests that the demands of distance education should inspire new developments which can be inferred from the theories. However, we must acknowledge that some learning theories can work better with distance education than others. He argues that people in distance education are concerned with management, that is, the constant preoccupation with deadlines, print-runs, transmission times, fonts and making lists, instead of pedagogy. It is the argument of this study that regardless of whether we accept or reject distance education's theoretical foundations, they will influence the way in which we operationalise teaching and learning. The literature shows that a common criticism of distance education practice is the supposed behaviourist, programmed-learning approach (Simonson et al, 2003). This suggests rigid curricula and content, and uniform learning strategies required of students, not taking into account their different cognitive profiles.



2.8 International Trends in Policy Formulation and Framing in Open and Distance Learning: Issues for Policymakers and Managers

One area of consensus in the literature about policy formulation and framing is that there are various issues that open and distance learning policy should address (Perraton and Lentell, 2004). The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and other organisations with an interest in distance education, such as the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), have carried out a great deal of research in distance education in various countries. The kind of literature they provide is massive, but despite this, intensive debates still rage on about how to define distance education, the conflicting theories of distance education, and what the nature of policy should be. Due to their positioning, UNESCO and the World Bank are driving policy choices in most developing countries. COL, the World Bank and the United Nations (UN), through UNESCO, are the big organisations that are promoting the benefits of open and distance learning worldwide.

The literature reflects the tension between what ODL institutions should be able to achieve and what policies need to be in place in order for them to do so. Lentell (2004) says that a clear policy for open and distance learning is often lacking. She holds the belief that the framing of policy would help in the cost-effective and educationally sound expansion of open and distance learning. Many countries have not yet developed clear and well-articulated national policies for open and distance learning, in order to demonstrate the clear benefits that can be achieved through ODL, including South Africa. Some countries are still trapped in the stage of trying to define distance education. One can postulate that the absence of national policies and frameworks in any particular country reflects the lack of knowledge and skills among national and institutional policy makers. Lentell also remarks that the neo-liberal agenda has eroded the capacity of governments to plan centrally, and believes that this contributes to the absence of a coherent, integrated policy on ODL at national and even institutional level.



In formulating policies aimed at bringing distance and open learning to the forefront of national development, it is suggested that, as most ODL students are employed, they must participate in decision-making regarding the shaping of their careers and the type of knowledge needed. Policymakers should be warned against spending less on ensuring a sound through-put rate and more on access, without considering what the outcome will be. Unisa is a typical example of this.

Peratton and Lentell (2004) outline questions that planners and policymakers in open and distance learning must address at any level of education. In practice, policymakers, educators, managers and citizens must allocate resources in a rational way between educational alternatives. Farrel, Ryan & Hope (2004) state that, in driving the policy agenda, one can make a distinction between forces driving and constraining global activity in education. It is quite obvious that the literature indicates the tension between policymaking and policy implementation at national and institutional levels.

There are many contested issues in distance education policymaking, as in any other sphere of education. Robinson (2003) lists strategic questions for policymakers and planners in reviewing or planning good governance for open and distance education. However, with regard to policy, he focuses on the question of whether or not the policy basis for ODL is adequate for its governance and regulation. Lentell (2004) says that policy decisions need to be taken with regard to the framework of education and training policies in general. Furthermore, she advocates that, in practice, planning and implementation must be interactive processes. She identifies crucial policy-making areas and some issues for distance education policymakers. These areas are: identifying target audiences and types of ODL systems, choosing the appropriate technology for the distribution of materials and interaction with students, business planning and costing, materials, tutoring and supporting students, recruiting and enrolling students, assessing students, managing and administering the ODL system, and monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance. She concludes by saying that we need to concentrate on national and institutional policies and identify policy frameworks at the other two levels, which are regional and international. She argues that fundamental policy and planning issues at international, national and institutional levels must be in place, otherwise access to education and investment will be in vain. However, in reality, such planning may not be aligned at international, national and

institutional levels. And, in some instances, there are tensions between what policy envisages at international, national and institutional levels.

UNESCO (2002) states that the mission of a distance learning system must define its role within the context of national policy. In its review of ODL, UNESCO (2005) advises that we must look at opportunities, definition of relevant concepts and contributions, current global and regional trends, policy and strategy considerations, capacity building and international cooperation in ODL. In most countries, distance education has been introduced to increase access to learning and training opportunities, provide increased opportunities for updating, retraining and personal enrichment, improve the cost-effectiveness of educational resources, support the quality and variety of existing educational structures, and enhance and consolidate capacity (UNESCO, 2002). Consequently, policy in ODL focuses on these issues and not on teaching and learning. Upon reflection, it would seem to be self-evident that the policy framework should place learners at the heart of the teaching and learning process. It should focus on learners' characteristics, circumstances and learning needs. Such a focus is difficult to achieve, as there is not yet a shared view of who the learners in distance education are and what and how policy can drive this.

In examining why the operational effectiveness of distance education has been below expectations, Kinyanjui (1998) raises three issues. Firstly, at the policy level, the introduction of distance education strategies has not been properly coordinated, and as such lacks planning for adequate resources. Secondly, at the organisational level, distance education technology has been introduced without an adequate understanding of how it will improve teaching and learning. Thirdly, the interaction between policy formulation and practical effectiveness has not been clearly defined or understood.

He concludes that a policy needs to show greater sensitivity to contextual issues at the organisational level. Kinyanjui (1997) states that policymakers tend to assume that the mere introduction of distance education will bring about the desired changes in organisational work ethics and productivity. He says that the purpose of national distance education policy should be to promote the achievement of economic and social benefits, ensure that the utilisation of resources is optimised, encourage domestic technological capabilities, and ensure that procurement decisions are rationally taken.



At the institutional level, there must be recognition of excellence in the design, development and delivery of distance education courses. Kinyanjui (1998) says that it is important that national policy on distance education is integrated into the general educational policy framework for the country, and distance education, along with open learning, must not be marginalised. After conducting an observation of international trends and policy framing in distance education, this study will briefly look at the influence of policy development in higher education in the South African context, insofar as it has an impact on distance education provision.

2.9 The Development of Higher Education Policies in South Africa

Generally speaking, the developments in higher education in South Africa since 1994 have been accompanied by minimal policy formulation, compared to other education sectors. The establishment of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) (DoE, 1996a) in February 1995, the release of the Green Paper on Higher Education in December 1996, the Draft White Paper on Higher Education (DoE, 1997b) in April 1997, and, finally, the release of the Education White Paper 3 (A Programme for Higher Education Transformation) (DoE, 1997c), have all indicated that higher education in South Africa is facing massive challenges in terms of vision and principles.

When looking at what has been reflected in the NPHE (DoE, 2001a) (with regard to distance education and open and distance learning), and in Outcomes 10 (Regulation of Distance Education Programmes) and 11 (Establishment of a single dedicated Distance Education institution), nothing more is said about institutional tuition policy formulation and implementation. In contrast to the attention that has been given to other types of higher education (face-to-face education), there has been little effort to address the issues that affect both public and private higher education institutions of open and distance learning in South Africa.

All of the abovementioned documents provide a vision for the future of higher education, but they do not suggest ideas for the development and implementation of a tuition policy for societal transformation. The documents have opened up an arena



for debating various issues within higher education institutions in South Africa. In Chapter 4 of this study, the author will review and analyse them in order to gain informed insights into issues that impact on policy formulation, and especially the lack of direction in terms of policy formulation concerning various issues affecting ODL institutions, discussing each document separately and comparing their points of emphasis. A decision taken on the recommendation of the National Working Group, which was to have far-reaching, complex consequences in many dimensions, was the merger of the University of South Africa (Unisa), Vista University Distance Education Campus (VUDEC), and Technikon Southern Africa (TSA). However, there is no indication of the effects that this will have on tuition policy formulation and development. Developing countries such as South Africa need to meet the challenge to provide quality education, in order to improve the quality of life of the mass of their citizens. Public higher education remains the key to their participation in the global economy and knowledge society, and the distance education mode is the only mode which makes it possible to provide higher education to the bulk of those who could benefit from it. Given this situation, it would seem to be strange that there is so little national policy addressing the provision of distance education per se. There has not been any major policy directive on distance learning from the Ministry of Education, except the Distance Education Task Team report from the CHE (CHE, 2004d).

2.10 Some Considerations for Policy Issues in Distance Education in the South African Context

An examination of the literature on education policy shows that there are many policy issues to be addressed at institutional, state and other levels (Sayed, 2002; Kraak and Young, 2001). Though not writing about distance education, Jansen (2001) makes a critical input by showing that the literature in South Africa around policy debates has been characterised by controversies and arguments. Distance education cannot simply grow on the back of existing educational structures and policies - therefore, conditions must be created and policymaking organs must be set up. Young (2000) indicates that after 1990, many policies for a new system of education and training were launched in South Africa. Jansen (2001) argues that recent education policy development in South Africa can be divided into three phases:



- The early 1990s and the race for policy positions;
- The mid 1990s and the race for policy frameworks; and
- The late 1990s and the race for policy implementation.

The development of educational policies in the 1990s in South Africa was characterised by vicious and gruelling debates. Some of the policy initiatives were centrally driven (hence the fact that there was political, rather than educational, will behind their development and little drive towards implementation). One political motive was the desire to change things as quickly as possible (from an oppressive apartheid system to a democratic one). An obvious element in the activities arising from this initiative was the minimal input in terms of the debates on policy in distance education.

Some local authors also discuss the issue of policy development in distance education. According to Waghid (1998), we need to look critically at how distance education institutions bring about excellence in teaching and learning. He argues that the development of the practice of good teaching and learning at distance education institutions is driven by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Therefore, to develop DE practitioners to improve teaching and learning, with a specific focus on course-design, development, production and delivery, will require collegiality. International research has also shown that in order to improve teaching, we need to focus on learning.

When considering tuition policy, one must think of a policy that brings together education and training. Knowledge and skills formation are also critical. The development of new ideas through teaching and learning, scientific discovery and scholarly research lead to the management of knowledge production and reproduction. Therefore, learning policy must primarily be concerned with attempting to manage knowledge and skills production and reproduction through education and training. This implies that the emergence of learning policy is linked to the economy in a systematic way, which goes beyond anything that has been previously noted. Jansen (2001) shares this view in saying that the change and theory of policymaking are influenced by two forces: firstly, global and economic influences driven by the



international political economy, and secondly, the fragile position of states which appear to be modern and legitimate. The major concern for Jansen is that the implementation of such policies is a problem. The inclusion of guidelines for implementation in policy documents is a prerequisite for effective national planning and the utilisation of open and distance learning as part of a consistent education and training strategy. However, as Jansen (2001) indicates, policy change does not easily follow linear steps between policy and practice.

One of the milestones for distance education in South Africa was the Report of the International Commission, compiled by the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) in 1994 (DoE, 1994). It stated clearly that the aim of the review and assessment was to make a thorough assessment of the current provision of distance education in the country. Based on this, the commission was then to propose ways in which distance education could contribute integrally to the realisation of the principles and goals proposed for the new education and training system, including open learning, and was to recommend how the then education provisions would need to be changed. The commission was limited to a political context, as it was working within the ANC education department's Policy Framework for Education and Training. As a result, it was to recommend changes in policy direction, including structure and finance, and provide policymakers with the main elements of initial policy and organisation for open learning and distance education. It operated from the viewpoint that the distance education system must be maximised in order to contribute to a democratic South Africa. The Commission made several recommendations on various issues, which included a vision for open learning, a review and assessment of current provisions, new goals and priorities, the organisation and management of open learning, adult basic education, further education and training, and science, engineering and technology. The limitations of the recommendations are that they focused mainly on increasing access, achieving redress and reaching priorities of reconstruction and development, as the key policy instruments. There was no proposed strategy regarding how the recommendations were to be implemented. There was therefore no clarity on how effective teaching and learning would take place in open learning/ distance education.



In the end, the commission emphasised the role of national and international development agencies in assisting by coming up with adequate policies that would pursue open learning in a wider context of reconstruction, development and social equity. But will they be relevant, and can they be contextualised in South Africa? The main conclusion drawn by the commission was that commitment to the practice of open learning should be regarded as a national policy by all education and training institutions. However, one question that arises is whether or not all South African higher education institutions are subscribing to open and distance learning. Their conclusion also fails to acknowledge that the adoption of open learning as a philosophy will have implications for how we operationalise distance learning. Expert policy advisers and decision-makers who have implemented policies for open and distance education in other systems advise on the need for advocacy, indicating that the benefits of open learning are apparent even to conventional teaching institutions, and must be driven by money.

Internationally, as in South Africa, research on policy in education concentrates on areas other than teaching and learning in distance education. In writing about the development of responsive academic policy, Willis (1994) argues that once distance educators and administrators have developed the content and software, they feel that their work has been done and tend to forget the plethora of challenging academic policy issues that arise. Policies regarding access, assessment and governance have been explored to a certain extent. The COL (1992) symposium concludes that the use of distance education offers significant potential for higher education during a period of increased access and quality. Willis (1994) agrees that distance education and its variants have the potential to provide equity of access on a worldwide scale by the beginning of the new millennium. However, exploration of teaching and learning policies is still an under-researched area. In the 2000s, with the new millennium well under way, we are still generally spending time looking at policies such as access, the recognition of prior learning, assessment and ICT, and spending very little time on institutional policies based on the core tasks of distance education institutions, namely teaching and learning. This study propounds the view that we will have to look at the views and experiences of those engaged in the development and implementation of tuition policy at an institutional level, in order to be able to develop truly useful policy in this area. COL (2000) argues that national education policies in ODL are generally



meant to extend access to higher education, provide upgrading opportunities to those employees without degrees, deliver continuing technical or professional education to graduates already in the workforce, and encourage closer economic ties between industries and education institutions. COL (2000) describes the type of national policy that could lead to ineffective distance education institutional policy development, and also describes the type of state or national policy that could help distance education policy development.

The Council on Higher Education's (CHE) (2004a) Distance Education Task Team argues that the 'Size and Shape document in Higher Education' gave rise to tension and resulted in conflicts, doubts about policy, retractions and reversals. In addition, the CHE (2004a) has released a report commissioned by the Ministry of Education on distance education. It is surprising that even this recent report is preoccupied with matters of governance, accessibility and ICT.

2.11 Trends in Open and Distance Learning Policy Development

Gellman-Danley and Fetzner (1998) present the only model that this study has found to date of a truly powerful policy framework capable of helping decision-makers to productively address the policy arena of distance education. Gellman-Danley and Fetzner acknowledge that advanced policy deliberation and development is essential to the success of distance learning programmes and their students. They emphasise that asking tough policy questions in advance can mitigate future bureaucratic problems and roadblocks. They suggest seven elements that need attention, namely 'academic, governance/administration/fiscal, faculty, legal, student support services, technical, and cultural aspects'. However, in the academic policy area, they emphasise issues such as calendars, course integrity, transferability, transcripts, student/course evaluations, admission standards, curriculum/course approval, accreditation, class cancellations, course/programme/degree availability and recruiting/marketing.

Their study presents the idea that most educators know that even a minor midstream policy skirmish draws the focus away from their most critical concern, which is teaching and learning. According to them, policies can provide a framework for operation - an agreed upon set of rules that explains all participants' roles and



responsibilities. They delineate the field in order to retain focus, by grouping policies into several operational areas: academic, fiscal, geographic service areas, governance, labour-management, legal and student support services. In the academic development area, they highlight key issues such as academic calendars, course integrity, transferability, transcription, evaluation processes, admission standards, curriculum approval processes and accreditation. Their study is limited, as it does not clearly pinpoint teaching and learning as a policy development area. It offers and reinforces key policy issues and provides one example of an ongoing distance learning discussion at state level, and not at institutional level. The author believes that this study will, to some extent, provide a more detailed scenario (based on views and experiences of different stakeholders) of the development and implementation of a tuition policy at institutional level.

A number of authors have expressed concern about various policy developments in distance education (Berg, 1998; Chang, 1998; COL, 1992). Moore and Anderson (2003:463) indicate that policy issues of higher education to consider in developing distance education programmes are the institutional context and commitment, curriculum and instruction, faculty support, student support, and evaluation and assessment. Berg (1998) observes that we need to move beyond the learning theory debates about the value and validity of DE, and focus on the policy issues, as well as on the forces behind the policies. He analyses what he believes to be the central issues of policy formulation which, for distance education, are competency-based credit, state residency and funding issues, accreditation, finance, private involvement of industry in higher education, and university governance. The methodology used in Berg's study was an analytical comparison (showing the similarities and differences) of learning policies in DE. The findings of his study demonstrate that business and university administration collaboration seeks only profit and control to drive distance learning. Students, professionals and university administration are at one end of the tug-of-war, and at the other is the company that wants to sell 'educational products'.

The significance of these matters for this study is that it will be shown that administrative and management issues have a major impact on the implementation of a tuition policy for distance education at the University of South Africa. Schifter



(2002) agrees that faculty participating in DE and ODL education are much more likely to be motivated by those issues that possess intrinsic motivations.

Meyer (2002) argues that it is difficult to outline the role that policy plays in DE, as there are strong market forces at work in this phenomenon. He suggests that one reason why institutions frame policies is to avoid lawsuits or to justify their actions on the basis that they are following an adopted policy. The point here is that policies do actually affect human behaviour. Even though one acknowledges that there are many complexities in distance education, with many variables and elements involved in any instructional setting, there is no clear direction on how these building blocks can be integrated into ODL.

This study argues that the most promising beginning to framing an institutional teaching and learning policy would be to start with the core issue of instructional interaction, grounded on the theory of transactional distance learning (Saba, 2000). Subsequently, the changes with regard to how education should be facilitated at an institutional level would bring other dimensions to bear on the approaches to teaching and learning. Such changes would influence the development and review of institutional policies. On the other hand, the demands of a learning society cannot be ignored any longer. Increasingly, academics in distance teaching need more time to plan, more instructional support and additional training, in order to modify courses for all of the potential delivery formats of distance teaching. Thus, flexible learning is education and training offered in ways intended to make its provision more adaptable to the needs of different learners.

Some other authors have noted that in terms of policy development in institutions, various stakeholders are ignored or denied an opportunity to participate in such initiatives (Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2004; Perraton and Lentell, 2004). Sayed (2002) concludes that the voices of university-based academics and other stakeholders are not included in many policy developments. In this regard, he suggests a move towards 'jointed up' policy analysis, by including other stakeholders. However, ways in which these stakeholders will contribute to the process are not indicated.

2.12 Institutional Policy Issues for Distance Education



Moore and Thompson (1990) agree that distance education units and programmes must be supported by institutional policies that encourage their development and implementation. In their view, without the support of the highest level of administration, the value and effectiveness of distance education will be limited. They argue that many distance education institutions deal with different administrative or management policy issues in distance education, mistaking them for academic policy matters. They further argue that an institution offering distance education must draw up policies on choice of courses, contact methodology, credit grants and transfers, and methods for accrediting courses. Their argument that institutional policies must be established regarding faculty support, evaluation and compensation is of critical importance.

Moore and Thompson (1990) argue that the most recent worldwide writings on policy in distance education fall into either of two general categories, namely prescriptive and descriptive. The prescriptive ones indicate what should be, and emphasise the area of policy development and implementation. The descriptive ones focus on what is included in the inventories and case studies of policies within particular political or organisational divisions, where reports on government actions and legislation become critical.

The prescriptive or theoretical policy literature covers policy areas such as terminology, purpose of policies and regulations, broad issues in policy and regulation, and guidelines for establishing policy regulation and/or oversights. On the other hand, descriptive policy literature deals with policies originating from legislation, policy documents, technical plans, district education plans or telecommunication plans.

CHE (2004b) categorically states that enabling policies and procedures must be in place in order to maintain and enhance the quality of postgraduate programmes. Strangely, however, they do not say anything about enhancing undergraduate programmes. The report also requires that the areas of programme design, student recruitment, admission, selection, staffing, and teaching and learning strategies must be attended to. COL (2000) states that dual-mode institutional teaching on campus



and at a distance tends to focus the institution's policy on campus students, and neglects distance students, since they are usually small in number and are therefore of only peripheral interest to the institution.

Furthermore, COL (2000) concludes that due to rapid developments, distance education policies must be reviewed, adapted or developed in order to accommodate changes. It is difficult to apply established general educational policy to distance education without adapting it to the distance education context. In order for policies to work, policymakers in the institution must consider how distance education policies are influenced and shaped by state and national policies.

2.13 Conclusion

In looking at various issues relating to the development of distance education, the literature shows that it is grounded in different theoretical frameworks, which are to a certain extent influenced by the major theorists in education. This literature review has attempted to obtain a general understanding of the notion of distance education from a variety of definitions, as seen through the eyes of various theorists. The literature dealing with the definitions and theories of distance education provides some insights into how distance education is conceptualised and practised in different contexts. The literature on the development of distance education follows certain patterns, but contention still surrounds the nature of distance education, theories of distance education, operation and administration of distance education, and teaching and learning in distance education. In addition, the literature points out the importance of distance education practice as a growing field of study in South Africa and internationally. The current literature in South Africa on distance education is sparse and does not cover enough ground in terms of the development and implementation of an institutional tuition policy in distance education.

Literature on distance education theory emphasises that the foundation of distance education should be based on educational theories. In comparing different educational theories on teaching and learning, the literature shows that it is done according to a conventional approach. Cognitive theory, constructivism and action learning contribute to effective teaching and learning in distance education, but it is andragogy

that is the most promising. Andragogy has an influence on distance education tuition policy, as it describes the art and science of helping adults to learn. Therefore, it is obvious that the field of adult learning theory still needs further research. However, this will depend on whether or not one has a clear understanding as to what really affects adult learning.

In examining teaching practices, the literature refers to a conventional range of activities in distance education, using terms such as curriculum, course development, examination, assessment, tutoring, course writing, pedagogy, andragogy and teaching methods or strategies. Thus, the theorists critically reflect on assumptions, concepts and theories behind the teaching practices existing in distance education, especially those brought about by good teaching and the fostering of the freedom to learn. There is a tendency for most distance education theorists to write from a prescriptive position, and not to take into account how real learning and teaching occur.

The literature contains a great deal about the principles and theories of distance education, but very little has been written about policies in distance education. Furthermore, even those who have written about policies have concentrated on areas such as costs, admission, planning and administration. Most of the literature on tuition policy refers to such matters as the rate of fees that students have to pay at distance education institutions. In addition, much of the literature addresses international trends in policy formulation, framing and implementation in distance education as an issue of national development, and thus falls into the trap of using a top-down approach, being prescriptive, and not taking into account how real learning and teaching occur. In the South African context, there are various views from a variety of researchers on how government policies and regulations should be developed for effective implementation. Therefore, literature focuses a lot on what the basis for policy development is, and what the best way would be of ensuring effective implementation.

International literature has concentrated on other areas of distance education and not on policy issues, but in some instances, the literature suggests policy framework models for distance education. The following general trends may be derived from the literature as a whole:



- Agreement that the whole concept of distance education is still evasive;
- As the theories underpinning the various contradictory definitions are mutually exclusive, we are still struggling to come up with a coherent theoretical framework for distance education;
- The conditions for the development and implementation of teaching and learning policies in distance education are a contested terrain; and
- The development of national and institutional policy is characterised by tensions, contentions and high emotion.

There are attempts in some of the writings to acknowledge and endorse developments around policy issues in distance education. However, such attempts fail to acknowledge the various guidelines and policies already in existence in teaching and learning in distance education, and can therefore not respond to issues relating to the development of institutional tuition policy or render any assistance to academics and policymakers in making critical teaching and learning decisions.



CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the author outlines the research methods used in conducting this study. The focus is on exploring the views and experiences of various stakeholders in the development and implementation of the University of South Africa's tuition policy, in and outside the institution. The author presents and elaborates the work-plan as a research design. Subsequently, he explains why a qualitative research design was used, and provides the context in which the research was undertaken. This study chose to use a qualitative research design, as the methods would help in investigating the research question. Firstly, the author accepted that he needed to understand the complex relationships in the area of study, rather than attempt an explanation by isolation of single relationships, such as 'cause-and-effect' relationships (Flick, Kardorff & Steinke, 2004: 8). Secondly, he believes that qualitative research methodology requires that one must attempt to study human action in the context of social factors, the primary goal being to describe and understand human behaviour rather than to explain it (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). He is aware of the fact that this view is contested by Phillips (1987), but continues to hold it. Thus, in exploring the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy, the author tried to gain insight into the views and perceptions of various groups of Unisa stakeholders.

3.2 Qualitative Research

There are various classes of definitions of qualitative research, beginning with those that compare it to quantitative research, stating that it does not depend on statistical processes which go on to more complex methods that focus on the interpretation of data collected from individuals in a specific context. However, despite their differences, the author could still choose a contextualised definition for the purpose of this study. McMillan and Schumacher (1993:372) view qualitative research as a naturalistic enquiry in which one uses non-interventionist data collection strategies to



discover the natural flow of events, and constructs an interpretation thereof in a natural surrounding. In her call for qualitative research, Hoepfl (1997:47) agrees that it uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings. Strauss and Corbin (1990:17) assert that in qualitative research, we arrive at our findings without using statistical procedures or any other form of quantification. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:12) define qualitative research as a learning process in which we want to learn by investigation and through involvement and participation. On the other hand Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) see qualitative research as having a multi-method focus similar to an interpretative naturalistic approach to the subject matter, studying things in their natural setting, and attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people attach to them.

There are many characteristics of qualitative research, and one of them that influence this study is that the report is a rich narrative based on individual interpretation. In addition, the basic element of analysis is words/ideas. The above descriptions characterise qualitative research and are important for this study, as it focuses on the views and experiences of various stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy.

3.2.1 The Role of the Researcher

There are numbers of roles that the researcher can play in qualitative research. Hoepfl (1997), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that the researcher must embrace and internalise naturalistic enquiry. This implies that the researcher must be skilled and ready to conduct the qualitative research. Such skills can be acquired by reading, as well as personal or even professional experiences. Furthermore, the researcher must be able to be a 'human instrument,' a tool which will be used for the collection and interpretation of data. S/he must be able to view situations in a holistic way, collect and process data, give feedback and verify the data (Hoepfl, 1997: 51). The implication is that, as a researcher, the author had to be aware of what he was doing, so as to be able to critically reflect on the research process, including his own situation within it.



It was central to this study for the author to investigate the actions of different stakeholders in relation to the development of the Unisa Tuition Policy, and their views on the meaning, development and implementation of the policy. Furthermore, he needed to acknowledge that conducting this type of study involved him in a number of tricky situations in his attempts to collect valid and reliable data. Qualitative inquiry aims to cultivate the most useful facet of all human capacity, which is the capacity to learn. Through this study, the author learnt about tuition policy development and implementation, but also about the members of his research population, and ultimately about himself.

As a researcher, the author aimed at gaining a holistic view on how things were happening, and through the presentation of the purpose of the research to participants, he has always given them an overview of what he wanted to achieve. He attempted to understand people's management of activities indicated in the Unisa Tuition Policy. The author also tried to ensure that when he interacted with the participants, they were in their natural setting and were performing their core tasks. The data collection process took place from 2004 to 2006.

The implication of the above approach in this study is that as a researcher, he wanted to learn about and understand the views and experiences of various stakeholders in relation to the Unisa Tuition Policy development and implementation. The author also strived to make a contribution to knowledge in the discipline, in particular by addressing some of the fundamental questions of the discipline, and using Unisa as a case study was a key strategy which allowed him, as a researcher, to use a wide range of methods to gather empirical evidence. Furthermore, he aimed at gaining a deep understanding of the participants in context, so that he could understand their reactions and meanings.

3.2.2 Description of the Research Context of this Study

There are many ways to describe the research context. Since this study is about an institution, the first attempt was to try to describe it as a case study. In building a case study, one can follow three steps (Patton, 2002). Firstly, one assembles the raw case data of the organisation and writes it down. Secondly, one constructs a case record,



where the data is condensed, classified and edited into a manageable and accessible file. Lastly, one writes a final case study in a narrative form. The case study should be readable, make sense of the information provided, and the reader should be able to understand it. The case study should offer an integrated portrayal, presented with any context necessary for the understanding of the case.

Yin (1994) remarks that the body of literature in case study research is still 'primitive and limited', and will need some major contributions. There are some suggestions that case studies should follow a general approach in design which can be exploratory, explanatory and descriptive (Tellis, 1997:7) If so, one must select a case study that offers the opportunity to maximise what can be learned, and knowing that time is limited, one should select 'easy and willing' subjects (Stake, 1995).

Alvarez, Binkley, Bivens, Highers, Poole & Walker (1990) believe that case studies have been used to develop critical thinking. Yin (1994:64) says that any case study should follow a certain platform, and what stands out in this study is the section concerning questions to focus on during data collection.

The unit of analysis is a critical factor in a case study and is a system of action, rather than an individual or a group of individuals (Tellis, 1997: 8). In the author's view, case studies tend to be selective, focusing on one or two issues that are fundamental to understanding the system being examined, and should result in a multi-perceptual analysis. Hence, the researcher must consider the voices and perspectives of the relevant group of actors and the interaction between them (Tellis, 1997:9). Yin (1994) recommends that a case study researcher must operate like a senior researcher during the course of data collection. As such, the researcher needs to know the reason for the study, the type of evidence being sought, and what variations in responses might be expected (Tellis, 1997). This study used interviews to align the author's method with these requirements, as they are one of the most important sources of case study information (Tellis, 1997:11).



Yin (1994:20) advises that when we design case studies, we should consider a study's research questions, propositions, logical linking of data to propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings. The case study method provides a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analysing information and reporting the results. Yin (2004) suggests that it is usually possible to take over operations at a suitable point, in the role of an external adviser or from a position in the case. This is an exploratory inquiry, as the study may allow for a large-scale investigation of the same issues in the future (Rogers, 1978).

In qualitative data collection, analytical and interpretive procedures are locked into the notion of contextuality (Flick, Kardorff & Steinke, 2004). Therefore, we must focus on everyday events and various forms of knowledge within reach. At the time of conducting this study, the author was a member of staff at Unisa, a fact which afforded him an opportunity to be aware of the various events and influences with regard to teaching and learning at the institution.

Flick, Kardorff & Steinke (2004) state strongly that any form of qualitative study must begin with the analysis and reconstruction of specific cases. This is done to allow for the process to proceed to the next stage, which will come up with a generalisation or comparative or contrasting point of view.

3.3 Research Design

A research design must show two outstanding features: firstly, it must be specific and highly flexible. Secondly, it must be expansive enough to adapt to these very complexities, while still pointing towards relevant data (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research is used in this study because of its characteristics, as summarised by Flick, Kardorff & Steinke (2004:9). It may be useful to look briefly at such characteristics in order to justify the choice of the design of this study. The author has also linked the characteristics to Lincoln and Guba's list of a number of tenets relating to the typical design of a qualitative research study, as follows:



- Determine the focus for the enquiry by clearly defining things to include in and exclude from the study;
- Align the focus of the research with the research paradigm;
- Be clear on where, when, by whom, and how data will be collected;
- Plan the data collection, recording modes, other instruments, logistics, scheduling and budgeting; and
- Put measures in place to examine the trustworthiness of the analysis of the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Furthermore, an effective research design links abstract and stylised concepts and questions to the empirical world. This implies that a variety of methods which may come from different approaches can be used (Flick, Kardorff & Steinke, 2004). The author decided to use certain methods and designed this case study focusing on Unisa, in accordance with those methods. In his research proposal, he outlined the various instruments that would be used for collecting data, and how the data would be analysed. He also dealt with issues pertaining to ethical considerations, strategies for ensuring validity and reliability, and research instruments to be used.

Unit of Analysis

Qualitative research must start with the construction of a reality (Flick, Kardorff & Steinke (2004). Paton (2002) says that the design specifies the unit or units of analysis to be studied. This influences the decisions about sampling strategies. This study's focus on Unisa tuition policy development and implementation is intended to uncover the various ways in which individuals and groups (within and outside the institution) participated in the process, which they see as a reality. In the author's view, policy development and implementation are processes which happen in reality, are ongoing, and are influenced by negotiations and interpretations by various participants. In the process of policy development, issues that seem to be natural and that obviously demand implementation may just be the images of a reality for a particular individual or group at that given moment.

The key issue in selecting and making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what it is one wants to be able to say something about at the end of the



study (Patton, 2002). Bernard (2000) advises that, no matter what one is studying, one should always collect data on the lowest level unit of analysis possible. The unit of analysis refers to the ‘what’ of a study, i.e. what object, phenomenon, entity, process or event one is interested in investigating (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). In this study, the central unit of analysis is the Unisa Tuition Policy. This unit of analysis will be used as a springboard to elicit several responses from various participants’ groupings: students, academics, learning developers, managers and external stakeholders.

Vygotsky (1987) suggests that a new method of study requires a new unit of study, and a new conception of method. By a unit, he means a product of analysis which, unlike elements, retains all the basic properties of the whole, and which cannot be further divided without losing them (Vygotsky, 1963). Thus, ‘not the chemical composition of water molecules and their behaviour is the key to the understanding of the properties of water. The true unit of biological analysis is the living cell, possessing the basic properties of the living organism’ (Vygotsky, 1987). Cole (1985:158) adds that the unit of analysis should ‘consist of an individual engaged in goal-directed activity under conventionalised constraints’.

We can use the following three elements to try and describe some of the individuals in this study, namely:

Characteristics: Individuals can be characterised by age, height, etc. and organisations by structure, location and description. Unisa, as a unit of analysis, may be described as an institution of higher education operating in the open and distance education delivery mode. It is centrally situated in Pretoria, and has five regional offices across South Africa. In 2003, 82% of the registered students were from South Africa, 10% from SADC regions and 6% from other countries in Africa. 2% were international students.

Orientation: Individuals can be characterised by describing their attitudes, beliefs, values, etc. Organisations might be characterised by general tendencies, inclinations and policies. In this study, individual beliefs, values, and attitudes towards the Unisa Tuition Policy will be dealt with through several questions during the interviews.



Action: Individuals may be characterised by describing their actions, as may organisations. As there are various participants in this study, one will be able to account for the various actions of the respondents, and for how these influence Unisa as an organisation.

The primary participants in the study were from the University of South Africa. There were secondary participants from outside Unisa, who were indirectly involved in the distance education process. The collection of data was spread over a two-year period (2004 to 2006). Data was collected from the participants, as indicated below in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Stakeholders and participants

Primary participants	Members
Unisa management	2 Unisa members of staff (management level)
Unisa academic staff members	2 Academic members of staff
Unisa learning developers ¹³	2 Learning developers 2 Learning Developers who had worked on the Entrepreneurship Law Study Guide
Unisa authors/writers of a specific guide	2 Authors of the Entrepreneurship Law Study Guide
Unisa students (3 groups)	8 Students using the Entrepreneurship Law Study Guide 2 Focus Groups of Students (8 in each group) on Unisa policy.
External stakeholders from 3 organisations or institutions having a direct or indirect relationship with Unisa	1 member of the South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE) (an external stakeholder) 1 member from the National Distance Education and Open Learning of Southern Africa (NADEOSA) (an external stakeholder)

The data collection schedule is presented in Appendix A. The design of the interview schedule was influenced by the following: the objective, nature of the subject matter, need to solicit facts, opinions and attitudes, need to seek specificity or depth, kind of

¹³ In the Unisa context, the term Learning Developer is used instead of Instructional Designer.

information expected, respondents' level of education, extent of the interviewer's own insights into the respondents' situation, and the kind of relationship that the interviewer could expect to develop with the respondents. The author has strived to give full details and insights into participants' experiences of the Unisa Tuition Policy development and implementation and how this makes meaning (Stake, 1995:5; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

3.4 Data Collection Plan and Analysis

There are various methods that can be used for data collection in a case study. In this study, interviews were used for data collection, and several documents were also analysed. The views and experiences of various stakeholders regarding the Unisa Tuition Policy would contribute towards a better understanding of the actions, values and practices of these individuals in relation to the development and implementation of such a policy.

3.4.1 Phase 1: Document Review and Analysis: Acts and White Papers

In this phase, the author reviewed the national documents (Acts, White Papers and Reports) that are linked to higher education development in South Africa. Some of these documents had a direct influence on distance education practice in South Africa. He also reviewed the Open University of United Kingdom Teaching and Learning Strategy (2003-2008) Institute, as this institution is one of the leaders in open and distance learning. The purpose of the analysis of these documents was to have a better understanding of policy development and implementation at a national level, which then influences what happens at an institutional level. Furthermore, the analysis helped the author to understand the crucial policy issues in open and distance education in terms of the legislative framework. In the design of the interviews, he picked up on the same issues that are referred to in the White Papers and Acts pertaining to policy development and implementation.

3.4.2 Phase 2: Steps in Data Collection

Step 1: Pre-interview Phase

This phase presented the author with an opportunity to work on the research questions and their alignment to the theoretical framework. At first, it became apparent that he did not have sufficient insight into the theoretical framework. It was after the presentation of provisional findings that he started to develop insight into the theoretical framework. In the pre-interview questions, the author wanted, as far as possible, to test his methods in advance. This proved valuable, as it made it possible for him to eliminate some of the questions, refine some of the phrasing of the questions, and look again at the approaches to the questions. Furthermore, this helped him to determine which methods were appropriate and could be conveniently used.

Step 2: Pre-Interview Questions

It is in this section of the study that the author formalised the dates of the interviews and the process (ethics and recording of responses). This afforded him the opportunity to also send pre-interview questions to some of the participants, so as to generate some thinking and self-reflection about their role in policy development and implementation.

3.5 Data Collection Techniques

As a researcher, the author chose different instruments to collect and interpret data. To collect his data, he chose to conduct interviews and focus-group interviews, distribute questionnaires and keep a diary of activities. He also chose the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, so that one approach was used to inform the other, which increased validity in this study. Furthermore, this helped to create new lines of thinking, by the emergence of fresh perspectives and contradictions. These methods of collection were chosen with the convenience of data analysis in mind.



3.5.1 Interviews

Patton (2002) says that the quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer. One can use different types of qualitative interviewing such as informal, conversational, semi-structured and standardised, open-ended interviews (Patton, 1990). The author used a standardised, open-ended interview, in which he arranged questions in sequence and allowed some probing. As Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) state, the purposes of an interview are many and varied. The purpose of the interviews in this study was to gather data to address the critical research question. The author was deeply exposed to issues relating to the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. Data collection is influenced by the purpose of the research. There are many purposes of social research, and the most common and useful ones are exploration, description and explanation (Babbie, 2001). As this study is an exploration into the views and experiences of stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy, it involved exploration through the use of interviews.

Hoepfl (1997:52) points out that ‘qualitative interviewing utilizes open-ended questions that allow for individual variations.’ As qualitative research is one of the two major approaches to research methodology in social science and involves investigating participants’ points of view, it will be crucial to capture participants’ views in clear and unambiguous terms (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 2002). It is essential that when one goes into the interview process, one must determine how the data will be recorded (Hoepfl, 1997:52). Patton (1990) recommends tape recording, but Lincoln and Guba (1985) say that this must only be done when there are very good reasons for it.

The literature suggests that there are several ways in which the interviewer can guide the interview process. Kvale (1996) identifies seven steps or guidelines in the interviewing process, which the author found to be very useful for this study. These are the following:

- **Thematising:** this is clarifying the purpose of the interviews and the concepts to be explained. The five major themes relating to the Unisa Tuition Policy as



the focus of this study were the understanding of the policy, focuses of the policy, development of the policy, major threats, obstacles or hurdles, and major opportunities or strengths in terms of the implementation and impact of the policy on teaching and learning at Unisa;

- **Designing:** this is laying out the process in order to accomplish the purpose. A set of questions was developed for the semi-structured interviews. For example, one of the first interview questions was: ‘Do you have a basic understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy?’
- **Interviewing:** this is the process of conducting the actual interview, and includes the process of questioning, probing and recording the interview. The author used a tape recorder to capture all of the responses;
- **Transcribing:** this is writing a text of the interview, typing up all the responses, and includes the use of Atlas.ti software to develop families, codes and recoding of the responses;
- **Analysing:** this is determining the meaning of gathered materials in relation to the purpose of the study. This is elaborated on in Chapter 5;
- **Verifying:** this is checking the reliability and validity of the materials, including taking the responses back to the interviewees for them to check their responses; and
- **Reporting:** this is telling others what one has learned - the presentation of the findings. This includes writing up the research findings, as is done in Chapter 6 of this study.

The interviews were primarily used to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for people’s attitudes, preferences or behaviours with regard to the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. Semi-structured questions were used to allow the respondents to have room to express themselves. Therefore, in these semi-structured and focus-group interviews, the author was influenced by the following questions:

- (a) What do I really want to get out of the interviews?
- (b) Who should I interview, and will they talk to me?



- (c) How many interviews should I conduct?

The author made the following arrangements for each interview:

- (a) He sent a letter to the respondent, containing the interview questions.
- (b) He did a follow-up by setting an appointment for the interview on an electronic diary or by telephone.
- (c) He made a telephone call or sent an SMS message a day or two before the arranged date, in order to remind the respondent about the appointment.

The individual interviews lasted for anything between 40 minutes to about an hour and a half. The focus group interviews lasted much longer, and ran for anything from one hour to two hours.

The first part of the interview was intended to build a relationship. This involved the revisiting of the purpose of the interviews and the process that would be followed for data analysis, some ethical issues, and an expression of appreciation for the willingness of the respondent to participate. It was at this point that the author indicated the seriousness of the research, that he intended no harm to the participants, and that he relied on their willingness to cooperate (Wolff in Flick, Kardorff & Steinke: 2004:195). This part of the interview started with very simple questions, such as 'Are you aware of the Unisa Tuition Policy?' and, if the response was yes, this was followed by 'How did you become aware of it?'. This helped in securing and setting up an appropriate situational context for the research and interview process (Wolff in Flick, Kardorff & Steinke; 2004:202).

The second part of the interview was intended to determine the participants' understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy. The author also wanted to find out about their views on the different focuses of the Unisa Tuition Policy. The third part of the questionnaire was about the role of the participants in the development of the Unisa Tuition Policy. Those who did not play any role in its development were asked: 'What do you see as your role if a new Unisa Tuition Policy were to be developed?' The fourth section of the interview dealt with two major issues in the implementation



of the Unisa Tuition Policy. Firstly, were there any challenges, hurdles or threats in implementing the policy; and secondly, were there any particular opportunities, strengths or chances to implement or apply the Unisa Tuition Policy? The author also asked them whether they envisaged any changes, or whether they had experienced any impact in terms of teaching and learning as a result of the existence of the policy, and if they thought that such a policy should include an implementation plan.

The last section of the interview gave the respondents an opportunity to state what they felt needed to be said on the topic of teaching and learning at Unisa. This could include anything about the Unisa Tuition Policy or outside it. The intention of this section was to attempt to add a description of the phenomenon from the respondent's perspective and a description from the researcher's perspective (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

The conclusion of the interviews was an explanation of what would be done with the responses, and how the respondents would be contacted again after the transcription of the interview responses had been completed. The conducting of the interviews involved prompting and trying to draw relevant responses from interviewees. The author showed them that he was appearing in their context for a short period of time, and reassured them that they would be rid of him as a researcher in the foreseeable future (Wolff in Flick, Kardorff & Steinke; 2004:200).

The timing of the interview was critical. For instance, when interviewing the academics, the author had to ensure that he did not attempt to do so during the peak times of examination marking and submission of study guides to scheduling departments. With learning developers, he had to ensure that the interviews were not during the peak time of learning development projects to be submitted for scheduling. In interviewing the students, he scheduled interviews after examinations, and also immediately after registration.



3.5.2 Focus Group Interviews

In recent years, we have seen researchers moving beyond experimental comparative studies to introducing new methods such as discourse analysis and in-depth interviewing of learners (Saba, 1989). Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) agree that group interviewing is a useful way of conducting interviews. The author used focus group interviews for these reasons, since in this type of interview, there is the potential for discussions to develop, yielding a wide range of responses.

The focus group interview schedules included open-ended questions and probes, so that responses regarding people's experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge could be interpreted in context. The scope or spectrum of problems addressed in the focus group interviews needed to be not too narrow. The questions had to be posed in a specific way, and the dimension of depth had to be appropriately represented. The focus group interviews involved small groups of 6 to 10 people, focusing on specific topics. The author had four focus groups. Three of them focused on their understanding of the policy, and one group focused on the Entrepreneurship Law Study Guide and Unisa Tuition Policy implications.¹⁴ This study guide was one of those that implemented the Unisa Tuition Policy guidelines, and was entered for the Unisa Excellence in Tuition Awards competition. Appendix HI contains a letter sent to Unisa students using the Entrepreneurship Law 1 Study Guide. Appendix H2 presents the interview questions for students using the Entrepreneurship Law 1 Study Guide.

Another reason for using the focus group interview technique was that participants' responses are usually made in social context. Focus group interviews have several advantages:

- Data collection can be done within a short time, hence it is cost-effective;
- Interaction among participants enhances data quality, as they tend to provide checks and balances for each other;
- There is a relatively consistent sharing of views, and a great diversity of views can be assessed; and

¹⁴ This study guide was entered in the Excellence in Tuition Awards of 2004 on the basis of having applied the Unisa Tuition Policy of 1998.



- Participants tend to enjoy working as a group, as people are social beings (Patton, 2002).

The focus group interview can also identify issues that the researcher never thought of, hence inspiring new ideas. Furthermore, focus group interviews can help in reflecting group behaviour and thinking (Morgan, 1997). According to Patton (2002), the power of focus group interviews resides in the interviewer being focused, and focus groups are recruited to discuss a particular topic. On the other hand, Bernard (2000) concludes that the key to successful interviewing is learning how to probe effectively, by stimulating a respondent to produce more information without injecting oneself so much into the interaction that one gets only a reflection of oneself in the data. In choosing the participants for the focus groups, the author checked that there were enough participants, and that the array of topics to be covered provided an opportunity for all of the people to participate. Babbie (2001) advises that exploratory research uses focus group interviews most of the time. This study is exploratory research, and used focus group interviews to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding, and to test the feasibility of an undertaking.

In order to construct the interviews as an effective exercise, the author conducted the interview as carefully and sensitively as he could. He considered the dynamics of the situation by addressing interpersonal interactions and communicative and emotional aspects during the interviews. He avoided loaded or leading questions. The disadvantage of open questions is that many different responses are possible, and will eventually have to be summarised and possibly coded. The author was very careful when transcribing the data, as this was crucial to this study. He avoided massive data loss, distortion and reduction of complexity, by taking necessary precautions such as backing up the data and saving it (writing of the files onto CD and saving the data on a memory stick).

The letter sent to all of the participants asking them to participate indicated that the interviews would be recorded for the purpose of analysis. This letter also indicated that there was an ethics statement dealing fully with all 'ethical issues' relating to the



interviews. Appendix E is a letter sent to all students requesting them to participate in this study. It was followed by the contents of Appendix G1, which contains the pre-interview questions, and Appendix G2, which contains the questions used in the focus-group interviews.

During the research investigation, the author had to be sensitive to the fact that the participants were diverse, and that their different perspectives needed to be considered. The questions therefore had to be open and, as the researcher, the author had to acknowledge that any investigation using this method of data collection could not be bound by a predetermined pattern. He attempted to be open in relation to participants' concerns and questions, which he addressed to the best of his ability.

3.5.3 Questionnaire

The Thames Valley University Dissertation Guide (2006) states that it is highly unlikely that research will be purely qualitative or quantitative - it will probably be a mixture of the two approaches. In this study, the author chose to work with a small sample, something which is normally associated with qualitative research, and he also used a questionnaire, something which is normally associated with a quantitative approach, in order to determine the attitudes and perceptions of management, academics, authors of study guides, learning developers, external stakeholders and students regarding the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. One misconception, a source of confusion for many people, is the belief that quantitative research only generates quantitative data (numbers and statistics). At times, this is the case, but both types of data can be generated by both approaches. Another misconception is that statistical techniques are only applicable to quantitative data. There are in fact many statistical techniques that can be applied to qualitative data (Thames Valley University Dissertation Guide, 2006). One of the criticisms of the qualitative approach is that the relationship between theory and research is not strong, as there is no emphasis on instilling theoretical elements. The use of questionnaires was an indication that the linking of some of the research issues in this study to a larger theoretical framework and construct was significant in this study. Another concern in the use of a qualitative research method is the extent to which the findings can be generalised beyond the limits of a particular case study. One way in



which the author addressed this issue in this study was through the use of a number of data gathering methods (including quantitative) and processes.

Questionnaires are a popular means of collecting data, and may need many revisions before the final one. The main advantage of the questionnaire is that it can be used as a method of data collection in its own right or as a basis for interviewing. The author designed a questionnaire for academics and learning developers, which was divided into several parts as follows:

(a) **Personal information:** The researcher asked about their position in the university, their qualifications, age, gender and learning development or teaching experience.

(b) **Availability and accessibility of the Unisa Tuition Policy:** The researcher asked about their awareness of the policy, if they had a copy, and if so, how they obtained it, and if they thought they had a general understanding of the policy.

(c) **Understanding and guidelines for implementation:** In this section, the interviewer provided statements, and interviewees had to respond by choosing one of five options: strongly agree; agree; not sure; disagree; or strongly disagree. The statements were about policy understanding and implementation guidelines.

(d) **Understanding of the policy:** The researcher wanted here to find out whether or not academics and learning developers understood the expectations of the Unisa Tuition Policy. He made statements to which they had to respond by choosing one out of five options: strongly agree; agree; not sure; disagree; or strongly disagree.

(e) **Unisa Tuition Policy intentions:** In this section, the researcher wanted to establish whether or not participants aligned themselves with some of the intentions stated in the policy. Issues ranged from curriculum guidelines to the development of the study guide. Appendix I contains all the sections of the questionnaire.

3.5.4 Qualitative Document Analysis

There is a limited amount of research that focuses on the development and implementation of tuition policies in distance education. Most of the policies that talk



about tuition in distance education refer to fees and the cost of studying at distance. In the process of document analysis, one focuses a lot on data that has been captured in a way that records and preserves context (Patton, 2002). Documents are written texts that serve as a piece of evidence or record of an event or fact, and as such have an important position in our societies (Wolff, 2004). One can view the Unisa Tuition Policy as a piece of such writing.

One can see that documents are significant because of the increasing legalisation and organisation in all areas of life. The written documents in an organisation may be a preferred form of representing reality, as seen in the way that the Unisa Tuition Policy describes teaching and learning. According to Wolff (2004), documents are standardised artefacts, as they may appear in notes, case reports, etc. Their main intention is legitimisation of the recipients, and as such may be legally used to draw conclusions about an organisation, as may be seen in various acts and policies.

If one views and reads documents as a basic representation of something else, one is looking at them as a 'window-pane,' and this action may distort the 'view,' which we can rectify by means of a more transparent representation or more profound interpretation (Wolff, 2004; Patton, 2002). Thus, documents may be used as evidence or indication of factual content or decision-making processes. Therefore, documents present an independent (objective) level of data. Wolff (2004) further argues that documents should be treated and analysed as methodologically created, communicative objects. On the other hand, Hoepfl (1997:54) notes that another source of information which is very valuable to qualitative research is the analysis of documents, and these may include official records, letters, newspaper accounts, diaries, published data in literature reviews and reports.

Wolff (2004) recommends that in analysing documents, we must adopt the maxim derived from conversation analysis of ordering all points that present themselves through various formulations and strategies. There are a number of documents that provide a theoretical and policy framework for this study. In order to provide some responses to critical questions in this study, the following documents were analysed:

- (a) Unisa Tuition Policy: 1998



- (b) Open University of United Kingdom Teaching and Learning Strategy 2003-2008
- (c) National Plan for Higher Education: 2001 (DoE, 2001a)
- (d) The New Academic Policy (DoE, 2002)
- (e) Council on Higher Education: Distance Education Task Team Report (CHE, 2004b).

In order to determine some of the views and experiences that may underlie distance education policy, the author had to analyse these documents, looking for the purpose of each, the process or procedures for implementation, challenges of implementation, and a description of the envisaged change or impact to be brought about by the implementation. In other words, the documents were analysed with the intention of gaining insight into the issues that influence policy development and implementation.

The University of South Africa's Tuition Policy was also examined in terms of its guidelines, principles and criteria, and curriculum principles.

3.6 Research Ethics

3.6.1 Ethical Considerations

The biggest problem in conducting a research project investigating human behaviour is not selecting the right sample size or making the right measurement, but in doing these things ethically, especially with regard to the effect on the research population of their participation in the project (Bernard, 2000:22). In everyday language, ethics is associated with the issue of what is right and wrong, and the regulation of individuals or groups belonging to an organisation or institution. Babbie (2001) advises that anyone involved in social scientific research should be aware of general consensus by researchers as to what is proper and good conduct when conducting a scientific enquiry. Bernard (2000) echoes this opinion, and says that the key ethical issue in conducting all social research is whether or not those doing the studying place those being studied at risk.



The first step in dealing with ethical issues in this research was to submit an ethics statement to the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee to request permission to conduct this study, as it involved human beings. Furthermore, the author asked permission from the Research Committee of the University of South Africa (Office of the Vice Principal: Research). In this section, the aspects considered as forming a code of ethics are elaborated on below.

In the context of the interviews, the researcher had to consider many ethical issues, ranging from considering management's views, learners' attitudes and feelings towards Unisa, external stakeholders' perceptions and views of Unisa, and his own values, attitudes, knowledge and beliefs regarding Unisa. Informed consent was explained to the members of the research population time and again, and furthermore, the researcher had to inform them of the whole ethics statement, as agreed upon and submitted to the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee.

During the interviewing process, there were times when the author was confused about what to do, especially when participants started to vent their anger and frustrations about some of the issues they were not satisfied with at Unisa. He had to do a balancing act of handling the situation so as not to frustrate them, as he was going to lose their vital inputs, without colluding with them in the denigration of the institution. He tried to maintain his project's moral accountability and responsibility, by reminding himself of the ethical codes and principles with which he had begun the research. However, he also found himself experiencing divided loyalties, to both individual respondents and the institution. It was difficult to deal with the question of 'to whom am I accountable?'

The institution had partially sponsored this study, and the author was also under the watchful eye of the management in terms of what this study would come up with. However, on the other hand, he had to consider his participants, who were from inside and outside of Unisa. And, to a certain extent, those from inside had the expectations and wishes that he would listen to some of their complaints. There were times when he was sympathetic towards what they were saying, but he had to remind myself of his intentions as a researcher. The author recalls that in one interview, when he indicated to the interviewee that he had also interviewed a member of the



management, the interviewee immediately wanted to know what his/her response to the question had been.

A difficulty which arose in working with external stakeholders was that they were sceptical when it came to them having to comment, since they had their own views on internal issues regarding the Unisa Tuition Policy and other programmes. What stands out here is that there is a history, whereby stakeholders had previously been required to evaluate Unisa's programmes, and the comments from facilitators after such evaluations had not been positive. Another issue for them was that they felt that Unisa had an international status and credibility, whereas they themselves belonged to a small organisation, and therefore they thought that those stakeholders from Unisa would question their credentials and be inclined to ignore whatever they said.

3.6.2 Voluntary Participation

The ethical norms of voluntary participation and of doing no harm to participants have become formalised in the concept of informed consent. The participants were asked for their consent, and open communication was maintained throughout the research. It was obvious that, since participation was voluntary, the author had to ensure that the participants were not being harmed because of their participation.

3.6.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Anonymity refers to a situation in which even the researcher cannot link specific information to the individuals it describes, whereas confidentially refers to a situation in which the researcher (although knowing which data describe which subjects) agrees to keep the information confidential. For this reason, one must destroy identifying information as soon as it is no longer needed. The principles of anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout this study. The author used the term 'anonymous' to mean confidential, and he assured respondents that the study guaranteed confidentiality, so that even if he could identify a given person's responses, he promised not to do so publicly. As a researcher involved in obtaining intimate knowledge given in confidence, he believes that he has a moral obligation to



uphold the confidentiality of the data. Therefore, no names are given in the coding and data analysis process.

3.6.4 Deception, fairness and caring

Participants were assured that sharing information about their institution would not result in repercussions at their workplace or institution. However, there were also stages during the interview process in which a lot of responses generated sympathy. It was also very difficult to deal with some of the issues raised, for instance by students who were repeating one course for the fifth time, those who felt that ‘Unisa does not care’ and that ‘Unisa fails students.’ It was difficult not to express an opinion or say anything about this. However, the author often responded by informing participants about who to contact with regard to any issues that they were not satisfied with. He also dealt with some of these issues in a polite way, by saying that he would set time aside to talk about these issues after the interviews. He had to deal with the fact that because he was working at Unisa, he became the ‘face of Unisa’ to the students who, in most instances, wanted to express their views about how they perceived things at Unisa. In interviewing academics and learning developers, the author had to deal with emotional issues such as complaints from academics who have to mark fifteen thousand examination scripts, or those who have four or five projects on their tables. He was emotionally and ethically challenged by some of these issues. Sometimes, in cases such as these, he would pretend to a measure of naivety, in order to avoid ‘being or wishing to appear too wise too quickly’ (Wolff in Flick, Kardorff & Steinke, 2004: 200). He did not intend to conduct any casual chats with colleagues and some of the participants in the interviews, but after their interviews had ended, some persisted in talking about this study and the tuition policy at Unisa. Such conversations often shifted from issues such as ‘this is the type of research we want to do as Unisa’s management’ to ‘why are you studying through the University of Pretoria (a face-to-face institution) while you are investigating policy at a distance education institution (Unisa)?’ This highlighted the perception and view that some people still regard ‘distance education’ as second best to ‘face-to-face education’. The author also had students, who had participated in the interview, who would afterwards swamp his office on the pretext that they wanted to know how the research was proceeding. Then, suddenly they

would ask for something, anything from ‘printing something’ to ‘how can I tackle this assignment.’

3.6.5 Sampling

Patton (1990:169-186) provides about sixteen different types of purposeful sampling. A sample can be described as a special subset of a population observed in order to make inferences about the nature of the total population (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The author has set a number of limitations for this study in terms of data collection, as indicated in section 3.9 below. Another dimension which impacts on the validity and reliability of this study is the sampling method. The literature shows that sampling is a complex issue, as there are many variations and overlaps in the available types of sampling. The intention of qualitative research is not to generalise but to gain an in-depth understanding about the issue under investigation. Therefore, purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases to illuminate the questions under investigation (Patton, 2002). In this study, the author used a combination or mixed purposeful sampling, as this combines various strategies such as random purposeful and typical case approaches to sampling. He used random purposeful sampling to select students who participated in this study, and typical case sampling in choosing other participants (academics, learning developers, management and external stakeholders), as he was interested in what one would call ‘typical, normal or average for a particular phenomenon’ (Patton, 2002).

An effort was made to select participants from as broad a base as possible, but this does not imply that the author managed to capture all of the issues that this study would like to have presented. The study was limited to Unisa, and one can see that a variety of related concerns might have been presented if other ODL institutions had been included. However, the author cannot make generalisations which may be applicable to contexts other than Unisa. Nevertheless, this study still offers value in terms of an understanding of the development and implementation of tuition policies in ODL institutions, and it may have a significant impact on future policymaking in distance education in South Africa.



Patton (2002) argues that the validity, meaningfulness and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size. As previously mentioned, Patton (1990) indicates that there are sixteen different types of purposeful sampling, and advises that we must always be sure that we seek information-rich cases that can be deeply explored. For this reason, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest the extensive use of variation sampling. Bernard (2000) suggests that the credibility of research results comes from the power of the methods used in measurement and sampling. He says that good measurement is the key to internal validity, and that representative sampling is the key to external validity. The author selected his sample on the basis of his own knowledge of the population, and the elements and nature of the research aims. Another issue that influenced his decisions on sampling was the fact that neither he nor the members of his research population could spare very large amounts of time to carry out the research.

3.6.6 Documenting the Interview Process

As with most qualitative processes, the author used a diary to document the research process. His prior understanding of policy development and implementation in open and distance learning was highlighted. The data collection instruments, collection methods and collection contexts were outlined. Steinke (2004) stipulates that the documentation of the data demonstrates whether a particular type of interview has been correctly carried out or not, and that the documentation of the method of analysis allows for an evaluation of the interpretation. The documentation of information sources includes the verbal statements of interviewees, records of meetings, descriptions of the context of statements, and investigations and interpretations on the part of the investigator (Steinke, 2004). The documentation of decisions and problems includes considerations of sampling and the choice of method, as well as criteria that the study must satisfy. For this purpose, the author kept a diary to document the interview processes. The diary had the following sections for reflections: process, communication, contact, main themes or issues in the discussion, interesting or disappointing views, future visit(s), and anything else worth noting.



3.7 Data Analysis: Transcription of Conversations using Atlas.ti.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:295) define data analysis as the way in which a researcher moves from a description of what the case is to an explanation of why 'what is the case' is the case. Marshall and Rossman (1989:111) say that data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion - it is not neat. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data. Patton (2002) states that two primary sources in data analysis are the questions that were generated during the conceptual and design phases of the study, and analytic insights and interpretations that emerged during data collection. In this study, the main purpose of analysing the data was to obtain usable and useful information, which was done through describing and summarising the data, identifying relationships between and similarities and differences in issues. The first steps after conducting the interviews were to transcribe and organise the data. Thereafter, the author continued to analyse the transcripts systematically, grouping similar themes together and attempting to interpret and draw conclusions from them. He had to guard against the fact that there are many different ways of presenting qualitative research data, which is invariably subjective, as qualitative information is normally presented in the form of words. This allowed him an entrance into the process and outcomes of the research through the analysis of the data that he collected and, furthermore, he was able to get an insight into what he was researching.

Bernard (2000) advises that analysis is the search for patterns in data, and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place. He continues by saying that an analysis is qualitative and may start before one collects data, as one should have some idea as to what one is going to study. Thus, the analysis of data must pass through the stages of data reduction, data display and verification, so as to draw conclusions (Keeves and Sowden, 1997, citing Keeves, 1997). Once the data was collected, it was analysed on the basis of reflexive and reactive interactions



between the researcher and interpretations of social encounters reflected in the data. In interpretative analysis, one must look at descriptions of characteristics, processes, transactions and contexts which build the process or even the study which the researcher is investigating (TerreBlanche and Durrheim, 1999:139). This study further followed the advice from Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) and Neuman (2000) that strategies of data analysis should include generating natural units of meaning; classifying, categorising and ordering units into meaning; structuring narratives to describe the interview contents; and interpreting the interview data. The analytical focus draws from what has been learned, which will make a contribution to the literature in the field of enquiry. Some of the analysis will be provided as a summarised evaluation in terms of its contribution to the policy.

This phase involved listening to the interview responses and writing them down. The responses were typed out at a later stage. The author conducted the data analysis based on the interview transcripts. He used Atlas.ti (Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software - CAQDAS). Atlas.ti is a relational database software tool with special capabilities that allowed him, as a researcher, to code chunks of text and fit them according to set criteria (Bernard, 2000:431). The Atlas.ti tool helped him to build networks of codes and then produce reports in a set of text (Bernard, 2000:431). The Atlas.ti software has various tools that assisted him in data analysis. One of the advantages of this software is that it affords the researcher an opportunity to have an interface in the data analysis process. This involved the coding and recoding of the responses and, at the same time, the creating of different 'family trees.' The coding and recoding involved the sifting of the data.

Data interpretation can vary, but needs theoretical underpinning for consistency (Miles and Huberman, 1994:6-7). The implication is that there is a variety of data interpretation, but one must have measures to check consistency and must rely on coherent theoretical underpinnings.

Transcription is understood as the graphic representation of selected aspects of the behaviour of individuals engaged in a conversation or interview (Kowal and O'Connell, 2004).

In the transcription, the author was guided by the abovementioned authors' recommendations, which are:

- Only conversation to be analysed should be transcribed (including all interviews);
- Letters should be used to represent verbal features of utterances, and punctuation marks should only be used for their conventional function (See Appendix F); and
- In the transcripts, clear distinctions between descriptions, explanations, comments and interpretations should be made.

Atlas.ti allowed the author, as a researcher, to be creative with the qualitative data (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). However, he had to guard against the danger of overly subjective interpretation, by trying to reflect on the views of the interviewees in a thorough and methodical way. Another advantage of using Atlas.ti is that data can be coded in various ways, as one can formulate codes which have no segments attached to them, or create new codes and attach text to them. He used its auto-coding feature to automatically find and code certain segments of text. With this package, it is easy to retrieve codes and quotes.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) recommend the package because it allows one to make extensive notes and memos while analysing the data and one can make field notes and write down other thoughts for a better quality of analysis. In the analysing process, the package can also do query searches on the data. The package also helps in organising classification codes for segments of texts. One can also make hypertext links without coding. Finally, the package helped to create images of the data in terms of the context of interrelationships, which allowed the author to come to some form of theory as an output. If, after analysis of the data, there is a need to create a SPSS output, then the package can assist in giving frequency tables of codes and texts, which may be put onto the World Wide Web.



Atlas.ti provided the author with a platform on which all the transcripts of the interviews were coded and recorded. This was done verbatim, and assisted him in creating and choosing the themes on various ideas and concepts. The Atlas.ti illustration can be viewed in the following:

```
HU: Policy studies
File: [c:\documents and settings\tshivac\my documents\Policy
studies]
Edited by: Super
Date/Time: 07/07/09 10:49:41 AM
```

```
-----
PD-Filter: All
-----
```

```
P 1: Interview10FGIStudents1.txt [C:\Policy Studies\Text
documents\Interview10FGIStudents1.txt] ANSI
  Families:
    focus of the policy
    major opportunities
    transforming teaching and learning
    Understanding policy
```

```
P 2: Interview11FGIStudents2.txt [C:\Policy Studies\Text
documents\Interview11FGIStudents2.txt] ANSI
  Families: transforming teaching and learning
```

P stands for primary documents (therefore P 1 means Primary Document 1, which was the first interview). Families are indicated under each primary document, as in P1 we see families of the focus of the policy, major opportunities, transforming teaching and learning, and understanding policy. It was important that the author started by creating families and associating codes with each family. Such codes had to be aligned with different views and experiences as they came out of the interviewees' responses.

```
All (34) quotations from primary document: P 4:
Interview13FGIStudents2UsingStudyGuide.txt (C:\Policy Studies\Text
documents\Interview13FGIStudents2UsingStudyGuide.txt)
```

The above indicates that the quotations used were from Primary Document 4 (which was schedule interview 4).

```
HU: Policy studies
File: [c:\documents and settings\tshivac\my documents\Policy
studies]
Edited by: Super
Date/Time: 07/07/06 10:47:43 AM
```

```
-----
All current quotations (380): Quotation-Filter: All
-----
```



P 1: Interview10FGIStudents1.txt - 1:1 (13:13) (Super)
 Codes: [writing study guide]

P 1: Interview10FGIStudents1.txt - 1:2 (15:15) (Super)
 Codes: [students' involvement]

P 2: Interview11FGIStudents2.txt - 2:1 (26:28) (Super)
 Codes: [policy focuses]

P 2: Interview11FGIStudents2.txt - 2:2 (12:12) (Super)
 Codes: [how to study]

P 3: Interview12FGIStudents1UsingStudyGuide.txt - 3:1 (11:13)
 (Super)
 Codes: [objectives of Unisa policy]

P 3: Interview12FGIStudents1UsingStudyGuide.txt - 3:2 (21:21)
 (Super)
 Codes: [teaching policy]

P11: Interview5LD1helpStudyGuide.txt - 11:35 (185:185) (Super)
 Codes: [anything on policy]

P11: Interview5LD1helpStudyGuide.txt - 11:36 (189:189) (Super)
 Codes: [new tuition rule]

The above entries indicate that in Primary Document 1 (which is interview 1), one of the codes is 'writing study guide'. This continues for all of the other interviews. Thus, the code 'writing study guide' indicates different views and experiences on the use of the Unisa Tuition Policy to accomplish this task. Further views to be classified under this family would be issues such as: 'well, I think that as you know in my work. My belief is that material development should happen in a team' and 'But I do know that it should give clear guidelines'.

All Codes Alphabetical

HU: Policy studies
 File: [c:\documents and settings\tshivac\my documents\Policy studies]
 Edited by: Super
 Date/Time: 07/07/06 10:42:36 AM

 Codes hierarchy
 Code-Filter: All

academic participation <is> Root
 research, students <is> Root

African perspectives, ICT <is> Root

Africanisation <is> Root
 basic understanding <is> Root

understanding of policy <is> Root



capacity and ICT <is> Root

challenges to ODL <is> Root

The above indicates the codes in a hierarchical order, and the codes have been ‘filtered.’

HU: Policy studies
 File: [c:\documents and settings\tshivac\my documents\Policy studies]
 Edited by: Super
 Date/Time: 07/07/06 10:45:00 AM

 Code neighbours list
 Code-Filter: All

- academic research, students
- basic understanding
- basic understanding of policy
- change teaching and learning
- college offerings
- college tuition committees

The above terms/concepts indicate the ‘code neighbours list.’

HU: Policy studies
 File: [c:\documents and settings\tshivac\my documents\Policy studies]
 Edited by: Super
 Date/Time: 07/07/06 10:45:24 AM

 Codes-Primary-Documents-Table

 Code-Filter: All
 PD-Filter: All

CODES	PRIMARY DOCS											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 14 15 16 Totals												
academic participati	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1												
academic research, s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1												
basic understanding	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 2												
broad transformation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1												
capacity and ICT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1												



challenges to ODL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1													
democratic context	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1													
development process	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1													
writing study guide	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1													
young students	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1													
young students and a	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1													

Totals	25	54	56	34	21	20	20	18	25	27	42	37	
0 0 0 0 0 1 380													

The above table indicates ‘Codes-Primary Documents Table’

HU: Policy studies

File: [c:\documents and settings\tshivac\my documents\Policy studies]

Edited by: Super

Date/Time: 07/07/06 10:47:00 AM

List of current quotations (380): Quotation-Filter: All

1:1 I don't think they must be involved.. (13:13)
 2:13 Yes, I knew about it and is on.. (382:386)
 3:17 Generally as they are lecturer.. (101:101)
 4:29 The Unisa fees are very reason.. (135:135)
 5:8 The tuition policy provides guidelines.. (45:45)
 6:5 Do the various stakeholders come.. (26:26)
 6:6 I think it's bit difficult to .. (31:31)
 7:7 What is the policy addressing?.. (30:30)
 8:16 The tuition policy - do you think.. (77:77)
 9:13 I don't think it is that much .. (67:67)
 10:5 Did you play any role in the development.. (24:25)
 11:16 Well I don't think we have ach.. (73:73)
 12:7 I think everyone needs to play.. (38:38)

2:13 Yes, I knew about it and is on....(32:36) - this means that it is quotation 13 in the Primary 2 document, which is interview number 2 and lines 32-36. Thus, P 5: Interview14AcadAuth1StudyGuide.txt [C:\Policy Studies\Text documents 5:8 means that this is coming from Primary document 5 (which is interview 5) and quotation 8 line 45. The quotation is ‘The tuition policy provides guidelines..’.

Within each family, the author grouped together specific views and perceptions, then associated them with a specific code. In the whole process of coding, recording and creating families, he was guided by the three critical questions of the research.

Thinking within the context of the questions, he looked for concepts that would unpack them, such as the role of the respondents in the development of the Unisa Tuition Policy, their understanding of the tuition policy, focus, major hurdles and opportunities to implement the policy, and the impact of the policy on learning and teaching at Unisa.

Due to the complexity of the Atlas.ti software, the author at times became confused in terms of coding, and had to rely on experts to assist him. The result was that he had to recode and, at times, even had some responses listed under different codes. However, the benefit of using the Atlas.ti tool is that each interview was grouped separately, and one could easily follow up on a respondent's views from such transcriptions. And, now and then, he had to guard against taking responses out of context. When going through the views that he had grouped in all the families, there was a link in terms of the depth of meaning and the views expressed during the process of the interviews.

Flick, Kardorff & Steinke (2004) conclude that the discovery of new phenomena in collected data is linked to the overall aim of developing theories on the basis of empirical evidence. Therefore, the discipline of discovery is still the focal point of qualitative research, and the author contrasted and compared the trends and patterns in the data that was collected.

3.8 Validity

This phase of the project involved the 'member-check' by respondents of the accuracy of their responses and the author's interpretations thereof. He went back to check the accuracy of the captured transcripts with the respondents. This was done to lend a form of validity and credibility to the study. This also allowed the sharing of emerging findings with participants in terms of data analysis.

There are various views of validity in qualitative research. Tellis (1997:9) believes the need for triangulation must arise from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes. In qualitative research, the term 'validity' refers to the accuracy and

trustworthiness of the researcher in presenting the data and findings of the study (Bernard, 2000). Patton (2002) defines it as the cross-checking of data using multiple data sources or two or more methods of data collection. Validity in this study refers to the criteria used to make the collection of data, interpretations, insights and applicability of the research trustworthy.

In this study, the author used the following validity checks:

Triangulation: This is regarded as one of the most used and reliable method of checking validity. In this study, triangulation was used to obtain deeper meanings and a better understanding of responses and views from participants. As there were different participants, the author had to triangulate between the different methods of data collection, which included interviews, document analysis, questionnaires and personal reflection. He went back to participants to check and reflect on their responses. Flick (2004a) advises that a method such as triangulation should involve checking the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods, and that it should be understood as a means of extending our knowledge of the research issue (Flick, 2004b). Therefore, the author had to keep on cross-checking data and information from various sources. This involved a comparison of data obtained through interviews and that obtained through questionnaires. The comparison was done on a superficial level, since if it had been intensive, it would have consumed a lot of time. Another factor was that qualitative research does not offer the pretence of replication. The primary external evaluators were the supervisors, who now and again had to do a quality check which provided a platform for validity checking. Their input in terms of validity was relating the quality of the work to the standard for PhD research. The author also benefited from the input of a few colleagues who were sounding boards for what he was trying to write in terms of transcribing the data. Some of these colleagues were supervisors of masters and doctoral students at the university.

Member checks were carried out. This involved taking the transcripts and analysed texts back to participants and checking whether or not such transcripts and analyses were a true reflection of their views and input. The author also had to deal with some of the ethical issues in this approach. Some participants were anxious. The fact that



he could come back to them with their responses clearly demonstrated that he could identify them. Their responses had therefore not been anonymous, and they were concerned that he might breach confidentiality. Another weakness in member checking was that some of the participants said they were a ‘bit shocked with what they said during the interviews’ and ‘it sounded very harsh.’ However, member checking also allowed the author to reflect on his epistemological view that, when it comes to policy development and implementation, there are many factors which come into play, which are regarded as obvious – as elements that need not be taken for granted when it comes to policy development and implementation. On the other hand, there were also additional issues that some of the participants wanted to raise, such as issues relating to the ‘changes brought by the merger’ and ‘how will that impact on the teaching and learning?’ Some divergent views emerged, as suggested by a question such as ‘how do we teach at a comprehensive university when we do not know what a comprehensive university is?’

Authenticity: The author had to look at issues such as participants/interviewees’ statements and their underlying value, the orientation of interviewees before the interviews, and the purpose of the research. He ensured that the environment was conducive to interviews, by allowing respondents to speak freely and by not distorting what they said. He took personal notes to describe the environment in which the interviews took place, and the issues that emerged during the interview. This helped him to deal with his personal influence, views, perceptions, opinions and beliefs, as they would always influence any act of qualitative research. During the interview, he had to ensure that he kept on checking that his views were not influencing those of the respondents, and he had to remain focused on the crux of the question. He tried to be realistic and reflected on two critical issues: had he gained full access to the knowledge and meanings of informants as a researcher, and would experienced researchers use the same questions or methods if they were to undertake this study? The documenting of the interview process was discussed in section 3.5.3.3, and forms part of checking for validity in this study.



3.9 Limitations of the Research

This is a qualitative research project focusing on Unisa as a case study. Because of this, the extent to which one can generalise the findings is limited. The research aimed at exploring views and experiences of various stakeholders in the development and implementation of a tuition policy at Unisa, and the area of focus was therefore only Unisa. The time period of the study was limited, as the author had to fulfil the requirement of completing it within the stipulated period. He would have liked to continue up to a point where the impact of the research could have been investigated, but this was not possible.

As the research was an exploration of the views and experiences of various stakeholders in the development and implementation of the tuition policy accepted by Senate in 1998, the issue of the merger promulgated by DoE in 2002 was a reality that could not be investigated. Now and then it reared its ugly head, and one could sense some anxiety about the changes that the merger had brought about.

Another limitation of the research is that the researcher may have gained a better understanding of why the 'tuition policy' happened as it did, but could not look extensively at what would happen in terms of future research, except to make recommendations. Furthermore, another major limitation of this study as a case study per se is that one cannot necessarily generalise from its conclusions (Yin, 2004). In terms of limitations relating to the sampling, one can see distortion as a major issue i.e. distortion caused by insufficient breadth in the sampling; distortion related to the brevity of the time-span of the project, and distortion caused by a lack of depth in the data collection at each site (Hoepfl, 1997:52; Patton, 1990). In addition, the author was involved in the research to a greater extent than usual in a qualitative research project, and could not easily detach himself from the process. As a past Unisa student and present member of staff, he had strong views and beliefs about what should be happening. This could have led to a lot of subjectivity, and he was rigorous in attempting to maintain his research and professional stance. A further dilemma arose in relation to the issue under investigation. What was the author to do with the findings, which would end up in the public arena, as the study had been registered at a different, competing institution?

The study was conducted in the English language, something which may have been a barrier for first-year students and may, therefore, have had an impact on their interpretation of the questions and their responses.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to present a more detailed explanation of the research design of this study. It has looked at different issues, such as methodology, ethics, and the data collection instruments. Qualitative research places an emphasis on in-depth knowledge and the elaboration of images and concepts. Hence, the qualitative methods have been viewed as particularly useful for the areas of social research, such as those which ‘give voice’ to marginalised groups, the formulation of new interpretations of the historical and cultural significance of various events, and the advancement of theory. In-depth, empirical qualitative studies may capture important facts missed by more general, quantitative studies.



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:

- The role of distance education in increasing participation and access;
- The balancing of resources to achieve cost-effectiveness;
- The distinction between face-to-face and distance education;
- The formation of a single, dedicated distance education institution;
- Quality in distance education programmes;
- Course design and the course development process; and
- 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 Olszen, 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:

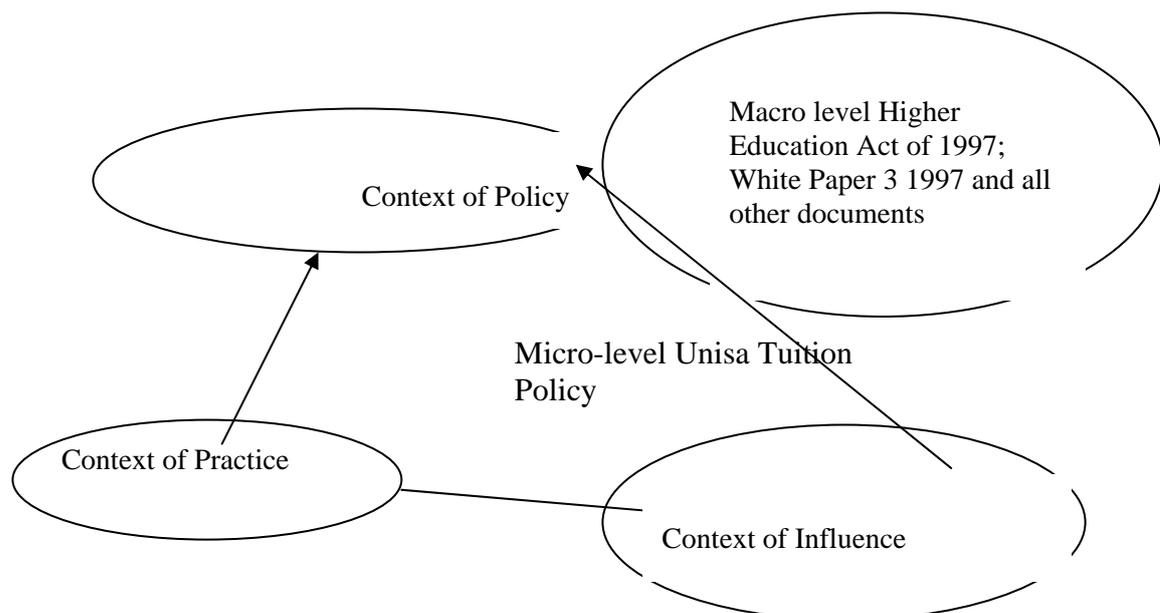


Figure 4.1 Policy process



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:

- 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
- 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:

- Accessibility of higher education opportunities to all the people of South Africa, particularly those previously excluded from obtaining higher education;
- Academic excellence of an international standard which is contextually relevant to lifelong learning in South Africa and Africa in general;
- Affordability;
- Advantageous use of partnerships; and
- 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:

- 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;
- There is only a small shift from traditional teaching and learning approaches;
- The strategy will only change a few individuals and not many academics;
- It fails to address institutional issues such as the provision of time and funding for research;
- It is not grounded in theories of learning; and
- 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:

- The context is a policy trajectory aimed at building a single, coherent and coordinated higher education system in the long-term; and
- 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:

- learning opportunities should be lifelong and should encompass both education and training;
- the learning process should centre on the learners, build on their experience and encourage independent and critical thinking;
- 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;
- 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;
- learners should be able to accumulate credits from different learning contexts; and
- 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:

- To ensure that higher education transformation takes place (in accordance with the recommendations made in White Paper 3);
- To ensure the systematic provision of higher education at a national level;
- To effectively manage resources and public funds; and
- 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:

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



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:

- Distance education plays a very significant role in higher education provision;
- The dedicated distance education institution is currently the major provider (Unisa);
- The pattern of distance education provision is very different from national targets;
- There is little evidence of any large-scale convergence to the middle on the continuum of contact and distance education;
- Within the continuum, there is a clear role for the new, dedicated distance education institution (Unisa); and
- 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 is 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:

- Increase meaningful access to higher education, especially for the disadvantaged;
- Increase access by providing affordable opportunities and flexible entry requirements;
- Concentrate on large enrolment courses so as to benefit from economies of scale;
- Develop capacity in distance education delivery through reflective practices and staff development;
- Implement student support nationally;
- Engage in research and development of distance education practices; and
- 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 SAQA¹ 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

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-makers 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:

- 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;
- 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
- 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 OBE² 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).

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 Matric³ 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

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 restructure 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:

- Curriculum changes due to the introduction of OBE into the South African educational scene (involving changes to teaching and assessment methods);
- 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);
- The development of a policy framework based on the descriptions of various concepts of distance education; and
- 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.

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)	

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.



(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:

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

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

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:

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

- Opportunities and chances for the implementation of policy; and
- 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:

- Individual incentives and beliefs are central to local responses;
- Policy cannot always mandate what matters to outcomes at the local level;
- Effective implementation requires a strategic balance of pressure and support;
and
- 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.



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:

- The assessment at the university, including self-assessment;
- Contact with lecturers and study groups;
- Study or learning material; and
- 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:

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



- The development of programmes and courses;
- The articulation of various types of qualifications;
- ODL principles and their influence on course development; and
- 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 policies, 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



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 than 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.



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:

- Developing a plan for change;
- Identifying change agents;
- Recognising barriers to change, building support for reform;
- Reforming organisational structure; and
- 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. Crosby (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 policies 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 that 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:

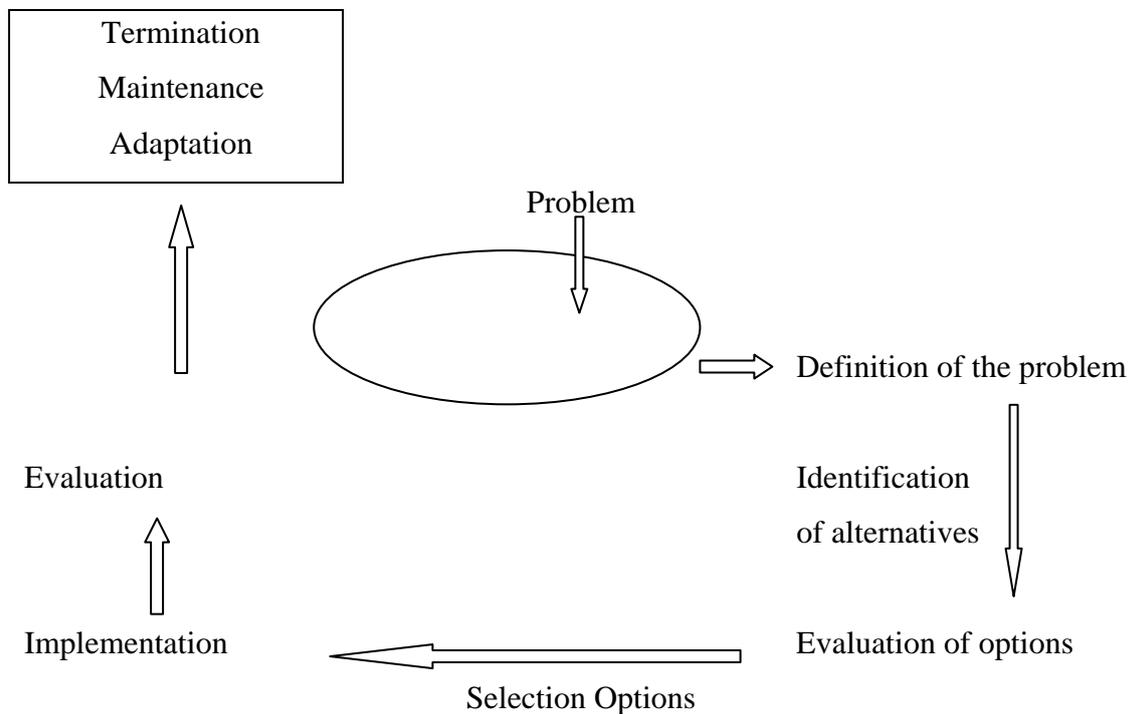


Figure 6.1 Policy Development and Implementation Process

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:

- 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;
- 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



- 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 Vinjevoid, 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:

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



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Appendix A

Data Collection Schedule

The following table indicates the data collection schedule:

Schedule	Components	
		The participants in this research may be described according to the following interview schedule:
A	Interview Schedule AI: Unisa members of staff (management involved in Unisa Tuition Policy development)	Unisa members of staff (management involved in the Unisa Tuition Policy development). The purpose of the questionnaire is to interview members of Unisa management who were involved in the development of Unisa's Tuition Policy. They will be the targeted participants. One special criterion on which they will be selected is that they should have participated in or contributed to the formulation of the tuition policy.
B	Interview Schedule AII: Academics/Lecturers	The purpose of this schedule is to elicit the understanding of Unisa's Tuition Policy by the academics. Furthermore, the author wants to explore how these understandings influence the implementation of the policy in terms of the development and writing of learning materials. Academics or lecturers in different academic departments at Unisa will be asked to participate in this research. Only two colleges/faculties, namely the College of Law and the College of Economics and Management Sciences, will be used
C	Interview Schedule AIII: Learning Developers	The purpose of this interview schedule is to draw the understanding of learning developers on the Unisa Tuition Policy. Furthermore, the author wants to explore how these understandings influence the implementation of the policy in terms of the development and writing of learning materials.
D	Interview Schedule CI: External Stakeholders: SAIDE and NADEOSA	The purpose of this interview schedule is to try to determine



		<p>how external stakeholders understand the Unisa Tuition Policy, and whether it influences or contributes to the transformation of learning and teaching in distance education. One of the criteria will be that the staff member should at least be familiar with teaching and learning in distance education.</p>
E	<p>Interview Schedule DI: Pre-interview Questionnaire: Students/Learners</p>	<p>Interview Schedule DI: Pre-interview Questionnaire: Students/Learners. During registration time, students/learners who are registering for level two or three will be requested to voluntarily participate in this study. A letter will be issued explaining the process and the purpose of their participation. However, only students registered for qualifications in the College of Law and the College of Economic and Management Sciences will be requested to participate in this study. Students will be expected to answer five questions in the form of a pre-interview questionnaire. There will be two sessions for focus group interviews, each with eight participants, and lasting for an hour. One of the focus groups should be students who have registered for Entrepreneurial Law</p>
F	<p>Interview Schedule DII: Students/Learners' understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy</p>	<p>The purpose of this interview schedule is to draw the understanding of students or learners regarding the Unisa Tuition Policy and how it influences their learning. Students/learners who are registering for level two or three will be requested to voluntarily participate in this study. A letter will be issued explaining the process and the purpose of their participation. However, only students that are registered for the qualifications in the College of Law and the College of Economic and Management Sciences will be requested to participate in this study. One of the focus groups will be students who have registered for Entrepreneurial</p>



		Law. The participants will be requested to read the Tuition Policy before the interviews. During the interviews, they will be asked to respond to nine questions. These will be the focus group interviews, so only eight students will be taken per session. There will be two sessions with eight participants for each session, making a total of sixteen participants.
G	Interview Schedule EI: Learning Developers who worked on the learning design of a Study Guide	The purpose of this interview schedule is to draw the understanding of learning developers who helped the authors of the study guide which was developed according to the Tuition Policy, so as to establish an understanding of the development of the study guide process. Learning developers who worked on the Entrepreneurship Law study guide will be interviewed.
H	Interview Schedule EII: Authors/Academics of a Study Guide	The purpose of this interview schedule is to draw the understanding of the authors of a study guide developed according to the Unisa Tuition Policy, so as to establish their understanding of the development of the study guide. Five academics who assisted or contributed in the writing of the Entrepreneurship Law study guide will be interviewed.
I	Interview Schedule EIII: Students or Learners using the Study Guide	One of the focus groups will be students who have registered for Entrepreneurial Law. These participants will be requested to read the Unisa Tuition Policy before the interview. During the interview, they will be asked to respond to nine questions. These will be focus group interviews, so only eight students will be taken per session. The sessions are intended to last for 1 hour 45 minutes.
J	Schedule FI: Document Analysis:	Unisa Tuition Policy Open University of United Kingdom Teaching and Learning strategy



		National Plan for Higher Education The New Academic Policy Council on Higher Education-Distance Education Task Team
K	Interview Schedule GI: Questionnaire	Academics/Lecturers and Learning Developers Questionnaire Semi-structured Questionnaire: Academics and Learning Developers: Understanding of Tuition Policy

The choice of the above participants was largely influenced by the research question of this study.



Appendix B

Research Question, Propositions and Methods¹

Research Question	Propositions	Methods
1. 'What are the various stakeholders' views and experiences of the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy?'	Unisa, as a national public institution, must be dedicated to serving people inside and outside South Africa, and address the needs and challenges of society. It aims at serving the communities through its expertise, teaching and research. What are the critical issues from the Unisa Tuition Policy on these issues?	<p>1. Unstructured and semi-structured interviews with the members/participants from/of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 members of management who were involved in tuition policy development. (Schedule AI) ○ 2 Learning developers/instructional designers involved in tuition policy development. (Schedule AII) ○ 2 External stakeholders: 1 from SAIDE and 1 from NADEOSA. (Schedule AIII) ○ 16 Students/learners to be divided into 2 groups, 8 in each group, for focus group interviews. (Schedule DI) ○ 2 learning developers who worked on a study guide. (Schedule EI) ○ 2 authors of a study guide. (Schedule EII) ○ 2 students/learners registered for a specific course. (Schedule EIII) ○ In-depth analysis of the proposed strategies of the tuition policy. (Schedule F1 to FIV) <p>Recording and updating of events in the personal diary schedule</p>
2. In terms of the above question, the focus is on interaction among selected Unisa participants and their experiences in the development and implementation	The principles underpinning teaching and learning at Unisa, as stated by the Unisa Tuition Policy	<p>1. Unstructured and semi-structured interviews with the members/participants from/of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Management who were involved in tuition policy development. ○ Learning Developers/Instructional Designers involved in tuition policy development. ○ External stakeholders (South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE)). ○ Students/learners. ○ Authors of a study guide. ○ Students/learners registered for a specific course.

¹ The proposal for data collection was now and then refined during the process. The propositions were mere guidelines, as more complex relationships came out during the interview and data gathering process.



Research Question	Propositions	Methods
of the tuition policy.		2. In-depth analysis of the proposed strategies in the tuition policy. 3. Recording and updating of events in the personal diary schedule.
3. Linked to above is whether or not the proposed implementation of the institutional tuition policy leads to the envisaged view of transforming learning and teaching in DE and ODL.	Unisa Tuition Policy proposal and implementation process and impact on teaching and learning	1. In-depth unstructured and semi-structured interviews with participants mentioned in 1, based on the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lifelong learning ○ Affordability ○ Cost-effectiveness ○ Advantageous use of partnerships ○ Collaboration with all bodies governing the field of education, training and development (ETD) ○ Commitment to ODL philosophy and practice ○ Conform to curriculum development principles ○ Seek and secure internal and external partnerships to facilitate collaboration in curriculum development and delivery ○ Put in curricula the basic values underlying an open and democratic society, as indicated in the constitution of South Africa. 2. In-depth analysis of Unisa Tuition Policy based on the above issues 3. Recording and updating events in the personal diary.



Appendix C

Synopsis of Chosen Methods, Research Question, Techniques and Value

Synopsis of the chosen methods, research question, techniques and value attached to the chosen method:

Research Question	Methods	Value of the Method in this study
1. 'What are the various stakeholders' views and experiences of the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy?'	Interviews (one-to-one and focus group interviews)	The interview schedule will provide the author with critical information regarding the current nature and status of the Tuition Policy at Unisa. Furthermore, it will point to the reasons behind the Tuition Policy's development and present status.
	Questionnaires	The questionnaires will provide the written responses of the participants. This will be compared with the responses recorded during the semi-structured interviews.
	Document Analysis	This will provide the author with the critical aspects of the Tuition Policy. It will indicate the university's focus and underlying principles. Furthermore, it will allow the author to critically look at ODL philosophy and practice, subsequently determining whether or Unisa is following these principles. The information will help in the determination and clarification of issues from the interviews etc.
	Personal Diary	This will record all the author's personal reflections, in terms of how the interviews are going. As such, views, experiences, feelings and relations to formal and informal meetings and conversations will be recorded. The diary will also indicate the critical issues that came out during the interviews and, furthermore, whether or not the main purpose of the interviews has been achieved. This will also record any behavioural or situational issues, which may help in follow-up or subsequent interviews pertaining to the study. New issues that emerge will be recorded and presented.
	Interviews (one-to-one and focus group interviews)	This will provide me with information regarding whether the tuition policy's strategies are based on reality. It will furthermore indicate whether such



Research Question	Methods	Value of the Method in this study
		strategies can be achieved.
	Document Analysis	This will provide information on the envisaged strategies. Furthermore, it will critically indicate whether the way in which strategies are to be achieved is based on reality or theory.
	Personal diary	The author will record critical issues that may emerge during formal or informal conversations or interviews. This will allow him to be objective about recording of the issues, and keep checks and balances on prejudices or biases.
	Questionnaires	The questionnaires will provide valuable input in terms of making the participants relate what the policy says to their daily work experience. This will also provide an added value in terms of evaluating the policy.
	Interview (one-to-one and focus group interviews)	This will provide the author with information regarding the implementation of the policy. Hurdles, obstacles, opportunities, constraints and breakthroughs in terms of implementation will be noted. Any noteworthy issue for transforming learning and teaching will be noted, including constraints which the policy may not have envisaged.
	Document Analysis	This will provide data that is critical to the implementation of the policy. Furthermore, it will complement the interview responses in terms of whether or not teaching and learning in DE and ODL is being transformed.
	Questionnaires	The questionnaires probe the participants to check their present circumstances in terms of implementing the policy, and how this will influence their future practice.
	Personal Diary	This will record all noteworthy issues during formal or informal conversations. This data may supplement and determine the way future interviews should go.



Appendix D

**Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct
Research and Interviews at Unisa**

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

PO Box 911-3439
ROSSLYN
0200
19 February 2005

Prof N Baijnath
The Vice Principal: Research and Planning
University of South Africa

Dear Prof N Baijnath

**REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FOR A DOCTORAL STUDY AT
UNISA: 2005**

I am currently a part-time doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. This is a special doctoral programme focusing on various aspects of educational policy studies. I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at the University of South Africa. I am presently working at the Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development, hence my choice of Unisa as an institution at which to conduct part of my research. Furthermore, part of my responsibility is to look into the implementation of various policies at the institution. The title of my research is ‘an exploration into the development and implementation of a tuition policy: a case study of Unisa’. I believe that this research will also benefit Unisa as, on completion, it will be shared with the various stakeholders.

This research will involve a number of people at Unisa (management, academic staff members, learning developers, learners etc) in the form of structured and unstructured interviews. The interviews will be done with the specific individuals, after permission has been granted. These individuals will be asked, on a voluntary basis, to participate in this study. To this end, an ethical statement will be read to the participants. (See attachment).

Thank you
Regards

.....
Azwinndini Christopher Tshivhase
Coordinator: Continuing Professional Learning
Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development
TVW 4-47 Tel: 012 429 6789 Fax: 012 420 3551
Cell: 082 375 5479 Email: Tshivac@Unisa.ac.za



Appendix E

Letter A Unisa Management and Interview Questions²

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

PO Box 911-3439
ROSSLYN
0200
18 February 2005

Member of Staff: Unisa Management³

Dear Participant

REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH INTERVIEW: DOCTORAL STUDY AT UNISA: 2005

I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. This is a special doctoral programme that focuses on educational policy studies. I am writing to kindly request you to participate in an interview for the above research. While the success of this research will contribute to the completion of my doctoral qualification, it will also contribute to the exploration of policy issues regarding teaching and learning at Unisa.

The interview will focus on the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. I am attaching the following documents to this letter:

- (a) the Unisa Tuition Policy, and
- (b) the interview questionnaire.

The interview is scheduled to last for about 45 to 60 minutes. If you agree, the interview session will be audio-taped in order to be later transcribed. The transcripts and tapes will be destroyed once the study has been completed. For this purpose, an undertaking will be signed by both interviewer and interviewee. Furthermore, the interview responses will be treated as confidential, and anonymity will be guaranteed. You may request my ethics statement, which outlines the ethics pertaining to this research.

Thank you
Regards

.....
Azwinndini Christopher Tshivhase
TVW 4-47 Tel: 012 429 6789 Fax: 012 420 3551
Cell: 082 375 5479 Email: Tshivac@Unisa.ac.za

² The questions and questionnaire were adapted as per participant/s.

³ This item was changed, depending on the intended participant/s.



The purpose of this questionnaire is to interview specific members of staff (Unisa management) who were involved in the development of the Unisa Tuition Policy.

1. What was your role in the development of Unisa's Tuition Policy
 - How did you become involved in the process/team?
 - What was the instruction from management with regard to the Tuition Policy? Did you receive any specific instructions from the university management?
 - Was there any consideration given to the implementation of the policy?
 - Were you given any timeframe for the completion of the policy document?
 - Did you come across any hurdles in the process?
2. What was the extent of involvement of and consultation with stakeholders?
 - What was the extent of involvement of and consultation with stakeholders?
 - Who did you regard as the key stakeholder in the development of the Tuition Policy?
 - How did you involve them?
 - Were there any stakeholders from whom you would have expected more input?
3. What do you think were the main goals of the Tuition Policy?
 - What was the policy broadly aiming to address?
4. Did you relate the Tuition Policy to any other university policy such as the Assessment Policy or Accreditation of Experiential Learning, etc?
 - Did you find any similarities and differences between the Tuition Policy and other policies?
 - How did you respond to these similarities and differences?
5. What do you think are going to be the major challenges when coming to the implementation of this policy?
 - Human resources in terms of academics
 - Relevant training for the implementation
 - Buy-in from academics
 - Role of students
 - Misinterpretation of the policy
6. What do you think will be the main effects of the Tuition Policy on the learning process?
 - The development of learning material
 - The teaching and learning process
 - The impact on transforming learning and teaching in DE and ODL



Appendix F

Letter E Unisa Students

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

PO Box 911-3439
ROSSLYN
0200

18 February 2005

Student
Unisa

Dear Student

REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH INTERVIEW: DOCTORAL STUDY AT UNISA: 2005

I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. This is a special doctoral programme that focuses on educational policy studies. I am writing to kindly request you to participate in an interview for the above research. While the success of this research will contribute to the completion of my doctoral qualification, it will also contribute to the exploration of policy issues regarding teaching and learning at Unisa.

The interview will focus on the development and implementation of the Unisa tuition Policy. I am attaching the following documents to this letter:

- (a) the Unisa Tuition Policy, and
- (b) the interview questionnaire.

The interview is scheduled to last for about 45 to 60 minutes. If you agree, the interview session will be audio-taped for later transcription. The transcripts and tapes will be destroyed once the study has been completed. For this purpose, an undertaking will be signed by both interviewer and interviewee. Furthermore, the interview responses will be treated as confidential, and anonymity will be guaranteed. You may request my ethics statement, which outlines the ethics pertaining to this research.

Thank you

Regards

.....
Azwinndini Christopher Tshivhase
TWV 4-47 Tel: 012 429 6789 Fax: 012 420 3551
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Appendix G1

Pre-Interview Questions: Unisa Students

The following questions will be sent to students or learners registered at Unisa before conducting focus group interviews. The students will be encouraged to briefly write down their responses i.e. just their thoughts.

1. What is your understanding of the Tuition Policy? (Briefly)
2. In your view, what do you think the Tuition Policy is responding to?
3. What are the main aims of this policy?
4. When it comes to the implementation of this policy, what do you see as the major obstacles, limitations or constraints?
5. When it comes to its successful implementation, what do you see as the major possibilities or opportunities?



Appendix G2

Interview Questions: Unisa Students

The purpose of this interview schedule is to elicit the understanding of students or learners regarding the Tuition Policy and how it influences their learning.

1. What is your understanding of the Tuition Policy? (Briefly)
2. In your view, what do you think the Tuition Policy is addressing?
3. Please comment briefly on the following issues as stated in the policy. Your comments should indicate whether or not you feel that the issue is successfully addressed, and whether or not it has been implemented:
 - Producing independent, critical graduates who are able to play a creative role in the community and society in general
 - Accessibility of higher education opportunities to all the people of South Africa, particularly those previously excluded from obtaining quality higher education
 - Academic excellence of an international standard which is contextually relevant to South Africa and Africa in general
 - Lifelong learning
 - Affordability
 - Cost effectiveness
 - Student assessment practice as an integral part of curricula
 - Basic values of an open and democratic society.
4. The Tuition Policy states that programmes and courses will be taught by means of ODL and according to ODL principles. Do you think that the following is reflected in your study material or packages?
 - A team approach to course/programme design will be mandatory
 - Appropriate student support strategies will be embedded in every course
 - Unisa must create and sustain a student-friendly environment by coordinating and integrating resources and services, e.g. study materials, calendars, counselling, forms of interaction, tutoring, registration and general support
 - Quality evaluation of learning resources, involving a range of evaluators, including peers, learners and other public and private sector clients.
5. In your opinion, what is the main goal of the Tuition Policy?
6. In terms of the implementation of the Tuition Policy, what do you see as the major obstacles, limitations or hurdles?
7. In terms of the successful implementation of the Tuition Policy, what do you see as the major possibilities or opportunities?
8. Do you think that learners or students should be involved in the development and implementation of this Tuition Policy? Briefly state the reason for your response.
9. In general, do you think that the policy will contribute to the transformation of learning and teaching in DE and ODL? Briefly state the reason for your response.



Appendix H1

Letter H Unisa Students using Entrepreneurship Law 1 Study Guide

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

PO Box 911- 3439
ROSSLYN
0200

18 February 2005

Students using a Study Guide
Unisa

Dear Students

REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH INTERVIEW: DOCTORAL STUDY AT UNISA: 2005

I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. This is a special doctoral programme that focuses on educational policy studies. I am writing to kindly request you to participate in an interview for the above research. While the success of this research will contribute to the completion of my doctoral qualification, it will also contribute to the exploration of policy issues regarding teaching and learning at Unisa.

The interview will focus on the development and implementation of the Unisa Tuition Policy. I am attaching the following documents to this letter:

- (a) the Unisa Tuition Policy, and
- (b) the interview questionnaire.

The interview is scheduled to last for about 45 to 60 minutes. If you agree, the interview session will be audio-taped for later transcription. The transcripts and tapes will be destroyed once the study has been completed. For this purpose, an undertaking will be signed by both interviewer and interviewee. Furthermore, the interview responses will be treated as confidential, and anonymity will be guaranteed. You may request my ethics statement, which outlines the ethics pertaining to this research.

Thank you

Regards

.....
Azwinndini Christopher Tshivhase TVW 4-47 Tel: 012 429 6789
Fax: 012 420 3551: Cell: 082 375 5479 Email: Tshivac@Unisa.ac.za



Appendix H2

Interview Questions: Students using Entrepreneurship Law 1 Study Guide

Before commencing with the focus group interviews, the author will give students copies of the Tuition Policy, and ask them to read it prior to the interviews.

1. What is your understanding of the Tuition Policy? (Briefly)
2. In your view, what is the Tuition Policy responding to?
3. What role does the Tuition Policy play in relation to:
 - The development of the study guide
 - The implementation of various issues such as a team approach, appropriate student support strategies, and a student-friendly environment in the study guide
4. One of the focuses of the Tuition Policy is that it aims at producing independent, critical graduates who are able to play a creative role in the community and society in general. Do you think the study guide works towards the achievement of this goal?
5. Do you think that students should have been involved in the development of the study guide? Maybe as:
 - Developers
 - Critical readers and reviewers
6. In terms of the implementation of the Tuition Policy in this study guide, what do you see as the major hurdles, limitations, constraints or obstacles?
7. In terms of the successful implementation of the Tuition Policy, what do you see as the major possibilities or opportunities, if this study guide was to be revised or rewritten?
8. Comment briefly on anything you can think of regarding the relation of the Tuition Policy to this study guide.



Appendix I

Questionnaire to Unisa Academics and Learning Developers

SECTION A PART A

1. PERSONAL INFORMATION: POSITION IN THE UNIVERSITY

LECTURER	SENIOR LECTURER	HOD	ASSISTANT DEAN	DEAN	LEARNING DEVELOPER	OTHER (SPECIFY)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS COMPLETED

HONOURS	MASTERS	PHD	OTHER (SPECIFY)
1	2	3	4

3. COLLEGE DIVISION

HUMANITIES EDUCATION THEOLOGY	ECONOMIC & MANAGEMENT SCIENCES	LAW	AGRI-CULTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES/ OTHERS (SPECIFY)	APPLIED SCIENCES	BUREAU FOR LEARNING DEVELOPMENT
1	2	3	4	5	6

4. AGE

UNDER 30	30-35	35-40	40-45	45-50	50-55	55-60	ABOVE 60
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

5. GENDER

MALE	FEMALE
1	2

6. LECTURING EXPERIENCE /LEARNING DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE (IN YEARS) AT UNISA

0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	MORE THAN 20
1	2	3	4	5



PART B

The Tuition Policy was accepted by the Unisa Senate in June 1998. Many learning developers and academics/lecturers became aware of it through the Unisa communication structures and systems. The purpose of the following questions is to enquire about the information available about the Tuition Policy.

1. Are you aware of the Tuition Policy that has been in existence since June 1998?

YES	NO
1	2

2. Do you have a copy of the Tuition Policy?

YES	NO
1	2

3. If yes, how did you get a copy?

BLD	DEPARTMENT	INTCOM	WORKSHOP/ TRAINING	ONLINE/ INTERNET	OTHER (SPECIFY)
1	2	3	4	5	6

4. How did you first become aware of the Tuition Policy?

I was told by the Dean	1
I was told by the HOD	2
I was told by a colleague	3
I read the policy	4
I attended training or a workshop	5
It was discussed at our staff meeting	6
Other (Specify)	7

5. Do you understand the Tuition Policy in general?

YES	NO
1	2



PART C

IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED YES TO QUESTION 5, THEN PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SECTION:

Place a cross (X) in the appropriate block	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	SA	A	NS	D	SD
1. The Unisa Tuition Policy was easy to understand	1	2	3	4	5
2. The Unisa Tuition Policy gives very clear guidelines on what is required of academics	1	2	3	4	5
3. The Unisa Tuition Policy gives clear guidelines for implementation	1	2	3	4	5
4. The Unisa Tuition Policy allows for flexibility in implementation	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have personally implemented some of the policy's aspects in the development of my study guide(s)	1	2	3	4	5

PART D

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information about academics and learning developers' understanding of the Unisa Tuition Policy. There are certain views when it comes to whether or not the Unisa Tuition Policy clearly states what is expected of academics. How strongly do you feel about each of the following statements, which mention some of the issues concerning the understanding of the policy?

Place a cross (X) in the appropriate block	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	SA	A	NS	D	SD
1. The Unisa Tuition Policy clearly states what is expected of academics.					
2. The Unisa Tuition Policy, if implemented, will lead to the improvement of learning and teaching.					
3. The Unisa Tuition Policy clearly states the university's focus and its underlying principles.					
4. The Unisa Tuition Policy very clearly articulates the ODL philosophy and practice.					
5. The Unisa Tuition Policy clearly states the					



Place a cross (X) in the appropriate block	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
principles to be followed when developing curricula.					
6. The Unisa Tuition Policy clearly indicates the principles and criteria for the actual range of courses to be offered.					
7. The Unisa Tuition Policy clearly states the limitations that need to be taken into account when determining the range of programmes and courses.					
8. There is a clear articulation of the requirements for types of qualifications to be offered.					
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.					
10. The Unisa Tuition Policy clearly states who is responsible for course development.					

SECTION B

PART B

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

PART C

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

PART D

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

PART E

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



PART F

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 the effective development of study guides.					
2. The Unisa Tuition Policy recognises different “voices” in study guide development.					
3. The Unisa Tuition Policy is based on sound ODL principles.					
4. The Unisa Tuition Policy will address the needs and challenges of South African society.					
5. The use of the Unisa Tuition Policy will lead to clear curriculum design.					
6. Whatever the Unisa Tuition Policy articulates can be implemented.					
7. The Unisa Tuition Policy will help academics to develop interactive learning material.					
8. The Unisa Tuition Policy provides clear guidelines on what is to be taught.					
9. The Unisa Tuition Policy encourages open debate on material development.					
10. The Unisa Tuition Policy will lead academics from developing content-centred to learner-centred materials.					



Appendix J

Unisa Tuition Policy 1998

The University of South Africa (Unisa) is a national asset and public institution dedicated to serving all the people of South Africa and to addressing the needs and challenges of our society

The university focuses on the following:

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

These endeavours are underpinned by the following principles:

- accessibility of higher education opportunities to all the people of South Africa, particularly those previously excluded from obtaining quality higher education
- academic excellence of an international standard which is contextually relevant to South Africa and Africa in general
- lifelong learning
- affordability
- cost-effectiveness
- advantageous use of partnerships
- collaboration with all bodies governing the field of education, training and development (ETD)

2. Open and distance learning (ODL) at Unisa

As a provider of open and distance learning, Unisa commits itself to the following philosophy and practice Open learning promotes open access to courses, flexibility in learning provision, and methods and criteria of assessing learning progress and achievement. Open learning denotes a shift in emphasis from the institutional lecturer or content-centered learning to a learner-centered and Outcomes-based approach.

Distance [earning is a form of planned learning which provides learning opportunities aimed at limiting the constraints of time/place/pace. It involves [he design and development of learning experiences using various technologies and student-support strategies to effect interaction among teachers and learners. It enables learners to become independent and critical thinkers, and to attain their educational goals

3. Guidelines on Tuition Policy

3.1 What is to be taught?

Unisa should offer

- undergraduate and postgraduate diplomas and degrees
- access courses for learners who lack matriculation exemption but hold a senior certificate, and bridging or foundation courses for learners who do have matriculation exemption but lack adequate preparation for university studies
- Certificate courses and programmes
- Intermediate qualifications
- are contextually relevant to South Africa and Africa in general
- can fulfil international needs, where appropriate,



- conform to internationally acceptable academic standards and quality ODL standards
- adhere to the requirements of professional and other regulatory bodies (e.g. accountants, psychologists, social workers, lawyers)
- respond to South Africa's priority needs and problems (e.g. education, administration, science and technology, agriculture) directly or through collaboration and partnerships
- are cost-effective
- conform to the curriculum development principles set out below.

Selection principles and criteria

All of Unisa's courses will conform to the above description, but selection of the actual range of courses to be offered will be done on the basis of the following:

- emphasizing meaningful programmes which satisfy South Africa's priority needs and responding to student requirements, client needs, and career opportunities
 - maintaining academic and ODL quality standards
 - seeking, developing and securing internal and external partnerships to facilitate collaboration in curriculum development and delivery
- When determining the range of programmes and courses, the following limitations will be taken into account:
- Affordability to learners, the university and the state in terms of academic and administrative resources
 - Availability of expertise
 - The need to eliminate duplication
 - The need to explore the implementation of certain courses across disciplines and faculties

Curriculum principles

Unisa should develop its curricula in accordance with the following principles:

- Curriculum encompasses content, delivery and assessment.
- Curricula should be the result of specific needs and situation analyses - quantitative and qualitative.
- All stakeholders should have the opportunity of contributing to the curriculum. Student involvement is important.
- Curriculum design should embody a learner-centered approach, including Recognition of what the learner brings to the learning situation acquisition of appropriate learning strategies development of the intellectual skills that will foster learning, creativity and critical thinking
- Wherever applicable, curricula should be developed on an interdisciplinary basis.
- Curricula should acknowledge that teaching is more than a process of transmitting knowledge; it also incorporates the inculcation of an attitude that encourages a critical approach.
- Different forms of interaction should be planned to provide quality learning opportunities and experiences.
- Curriculum design and development include the responsibility of keeping abreast of current and innovative developments in curriculum philosophy and practice, and in academic thinking in the subject, evaluating these, and implementing appropriate approaches for varying learning contexts.

Student assessment practice is an integral part of curricula and should be consistent with the principles outlined above. It should also enhance student progress and ensure the status and value of Unisa qualifications.

- Within curricula, the basic values underlying an open and democratic society, such as those contained in the Constitution of South Africa, should be upheld, and at the same time a critical understanding of these values should be inculcated.



3.2 To whom?

Unisa affirms the principle of open access to the university, mediated by a variety of mechanisms such as matriculation, placement tests and initiatives, recognition of prior learning, access and bridging courses and through national (e.g. the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)) and international articulation arrangements. At postgraduate level access would also be through articulation arrangements or through recognition of prior learning and experience.

3.3 By what means?

3.3.1 Programmes and courses will be taught by means of ODL and according to ODL principles.

Some implications of this are highlighted below:

- A team approach to course/programme design will be mandatory, with flexibly composed course teams whose specific roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated.
- Appropriate student support strategies will be embedded in every course.
- Unisa must create and sustain a student-friendly environment by coordinating and integrating resources, structures and services (e.g. study material, the calendar, counselling, forms of interaction, tutoring, registration and general support and Administrative services), supported by an organizational ethos of commitment to learners.
- Quality promotion, assurance and control mechanisms will be required to ensure adherence to national and international quality standards of distance education. These will include quality evaluation of learning resources and performance evaluation of staff, and will involve a range of evaluators, including peers, learners and other public and private sector clients.

3.3.2 There should be an agreed and planned process of course design, development, production and delivery with a view to integrating and co-coordinating Unisa's systems.

3.3.3 Appropriate and detailed approval processes are essential to ensure that courses adhere to the principles outlined above.

3.3.2 By whom?

- Suitably qualified and experienced teams will be selected from the academic departments involved and from academic support departments such as design, development, production and delivery staff including teaching and learner support staff, tutors, demonstrators (as well as external organizations/partners) who are expected to participate in a range of staff development opportunities, planned and coordinated through the institution's staff appraisal system. This implies a management responsibility to support and recognize such participation, and provide appropriate incentives. It is accepted that the roles of academic and support staff should be examined and redefined where appropriate to ensure quality service to learners.
- Unisa also recognizes the contribution that learners can make to the delivery of courses, particularly to facilitating peer group discussion, and commits itself to developing learners to play this role.
- External reviews of study material will be done by critical readers selected on the basis of their expertise in the subject and their sensitivity to the needs of the learners.

Policy as accepted by Senate: June 1998