Chapter Seven

Equivalency between ODL and Face-to-face in the UB Dual-mode System

7.1 Introduction and Overview

This Chapter is the last of the three data analysis chapters in this study. Analysis in Chapter Five established a high demand for higher education in Botswana, which could not be met by face-to-face mode of provision alone. ODL had been identified as one of the strategies to be adopted to increase enrolments at this level. In Chapter Six, the assessment confirmed a slow growth of ODL in the UB dual mode system which resulted in its insignificant contribution towards increased participation in higher education. Chapter Six also considered some of the external as well as internal factors perceived to be contributory to the low enrolments through ODL into UB programmes. Chapter Seven assessed the level of acceptance and value for ODL by the UB community. This last section of the analysis process was more concerned with establishing the perceptions of the UB community towards ODL and how these perceptions might be impacting on its growth. Assessment in this Chapter also looked at how the implementation of the distance education mainstreaming policy and the learning and teaching policy enhanced the acceptance and value of the ODL delivery mode by the UB community.

My last assumption was that the ODL mode did not get equal recognition and acceptance compared to the face-to-face mode in dual mode institutions. This chapter therefore also examined possible equivalency issues between ODL and face-to-face within the UB dual mode system of provision, in order to establish if such issues could be contributing towards its slow growth within UB.

7.2 Perceptions of the UB Community about ODL

The areas discussed below were intended to explore the participants' views and perceptions with regard to the importance and value attached to ODL by the UB community. This probe was intended to elicit equivalency issues that might be prevalent between the two modes of

delivery within the UB dual mode system, in order to understand whether such issues might be playing any role in ODL not achieving its intended objectives of substantially increasing enrolments and addressing diversified needs. I decided to look at various aspects through which to assess the UB community's perceptions about ODL.

7.2.1 Level of Acceptance and Value for ODL by the UB community

Figure 7.1 depicts respondents' perceptions of the level of acceptance and value for ODL by the UB community.
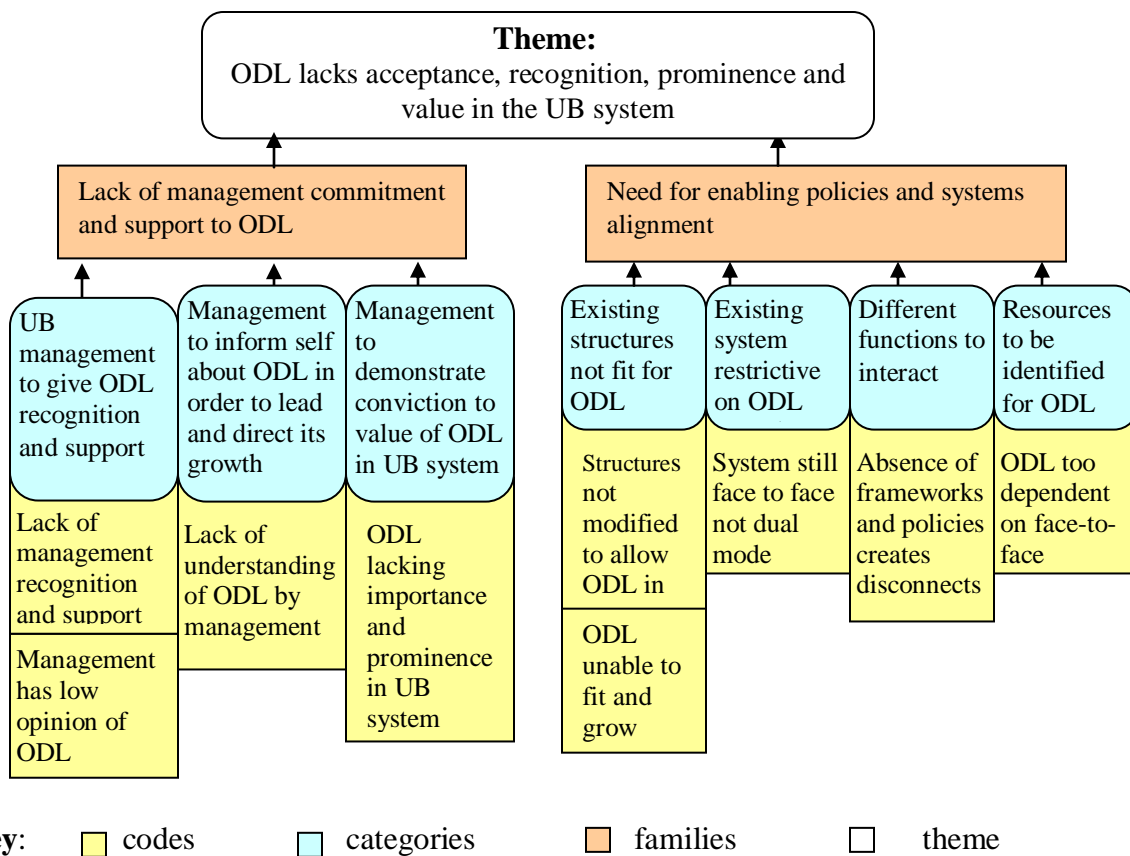

Figure 7.1 Respondents' perceptions of acceptance and value for ODL by the UB community

Two families that examined the acceptance and value attached to ODL by the UB community emerged from Figure 7.1. My first concern in this area was to find out the planned status of the two modes within the UB's dual mode of delivery. Generally participants indicated that on paper (e.g. UB, 2005), the two modes were supposed to be of equal status. They illustrated this

position by indicating that the students received the same qualifications for the programmes available on both modes. However, there was a perception that apart from the qualifications being the same, in practice, the UB community generally regarded the face-to-face mode of delivery as more important and of priority concern to the University than the ODL mode:

> *Well, according to the mainstreaming policy they are supposed to be treated equally… But the reality is that may be because of the mindset people still regard the other section ... that is the face-to-face as being more important than this one* (T4:11).

Another participant observed that:

> *the significance of distance education is somewhat ... has only ... come in as a background thing. It does echo here and there… in UB we talk of access and participation and we do talk of distance education. But when you really look at the kind of support that we get from the system you begin to see that there's a lot of gaps…* (T5:18).

Another participant believed that "*quality wise they're equal*" (T6:12). The next participant was of the opinion that "*they see it as an alternative mode*" (T7:15). Another participant knew that what was stated in the Strategic Plans was that "*the two should be at par, should be parity of esteem*" even though her assessment was that "*this is not always so…*" (T8:18). The other participant felt that "*the distance education part is just some appendage to the other mode*" (T9:12). The next participant was very clear that "*... obviously we're primarily a face-to-face institution*" (T11:17). On the issue of acceptance of ODL within the UB system as an important strategy, the participant's opinion was that "*I don't think ... I'm not sure that the University as an institution really adopted the overall strategy of distance as a significant direction it should be going*" (T11:13). According to the assessment of the next participant, "*the University still sees itself as a full-time enrolment institution ... open and distance learning is only an appendage of what is going on in the University*" (T12:11). The next participant thought that "*currently if we talk in numbers, the major mode is face-to-face ... and really, the ODL mode is still at a very low level, infancy level that… one really even feels it's*

not even worth talking about" (T13:25). From the responses of the participants, it appeared very likely that the UB community might not be taking ODL within their system as something of high value and importance when compared to the face-to-face mode of delivery.

The first family of factors under Figure 7.1, discussed management commitment and support for ODL, which participants perceived was lacking or very low. Three categories addressed the issues under this family. In the first category, participants seemed to believe that there was lack of recognition, commitment and support for ODL from UB Management. Some participants perceived that government had shown high commitment for the development and growth of ODL through existing education policies. They submitted that RNPE actually mandated UB to lead the ODL development and growth process at higher education level. Their assessment of the level of commitment of UB management in the implementation of this mandate was that it was very low. Asked to comment on the level of growth of ODL since 1994 when the RNPE committed CCE to become the national centre for the mode, one participant was of the opinion that *"there's very little that has been done"* (T7:22), another one noted that *"we have moved very little in that regard"* (T9:14). Yet another participant felt *"it's like nobody ever checks ... like the case of ODL ... whether UB is actually implementing the Revised National Policy on Education"* (T4:35). However, with regard to the CCE becoming the national centre for ODL, other participants believed that there had been no recognition and commitment to ODL growth from both government and the University management. This they perceived was demonstrated by the lack of allocation of resources to make this mandate implementable. One participant's comment on this issue was:

> *... it did say in Chapter 8 that UB Centre for Continuing Education should become a national resource ... I don't think that was ever achieved ... I don't think the recognition by the national system or by the University itself was made. And consequently there was never the investment of resources that would be required to make it possible* (T11:7).

It appeared that though ODL had been identified as a strategy that could alleviate the challenge of high demands for higher education, which the face-to-face delivery strategy had been found not to handle well on its own, when it came to development and growth of ODL, there

appeared to be slow action. The slow action with regard to UB sourcing funds and the Government allocating the requisite resources seemed to be perceived as a major factor for the slow growth of ODL at higher education level in Botswana. One participant felt that:

> Government or sponsors and institutions should ... start being proactive ... to move away from the fact of saying students will only apply for distance learning ... if they did not get a place in the full-time. They should actually apply and decide, as well as choose to take distance learning or part-time learning as a form of learning... The second thing is it should be resourced … distance learning should be resourced (T5:8).

However, participants seemed to believe that the mode had been neglected over the years and not resourced as much as it should have been. One participant felt that the growth of ODL at higher education level, particularly within UB, had been very slow despite the identified need for its urgent attention:

> One really would expect ... UB ... to be having a full fledged ODL programme, well oiled, running smoothly, without a lot of hitches ... especially that we have seen that over the years we are not able to satisfy the needs. Of course putting up physical structures takes so long. But really we should have put a lot of emphasis and a bit of money in developing that sector ... I believe that has been seriously and stressfully neglected... (T13:12-13).

Some participants felt that the lack of growth of ODL was partly due to lack of leadership in terms of guiding what ODL was supposed to be doing and how it was supposed to be doing it. Asked to give an opinion on why ODL seemed to grow slowly within the UB system over many years of its existence, one participant commented that "*the major failure within UB was clearly a lack of leadership of CCE... they needed to address that ...* (T3:16). Another participant thought that ODL development and growth lagged behind within the UB system due to several reasons, among them the lack of leadership:

> ...these are vehicles and every vehicle needs a driver. If you don't have a driver for a vehicle, then it will not move. And I think that is may be even one of the

problems in addition to the structures ... the drivers. ODL doesn't seem to have drivers with clout… that's why I think ... actually the University had pinned their hope on ... CCE (T7:25-26).

Sharing a similar opinion another participant thought that there was "*a lack of strategic leadership from the distance education cadre, because I believe they are the ones to convince this University, which direction to go*" (T12:16). Another participant was of a similar opinion that "*You come up with a new programme, a new approach… someone has to drive it. So ... I don't see any strategic leadership here*" (T4:27). Other participants thought that it was necessary for UB to have carefully identified and selected people who understood what ODL was about so that they could lead and guide its development and growth within the University. However, one participant observed that UB did not seem to make such a careful selection when it came to identifying leadership for CCE and ODL:

> *We don't seem to know how to man our institutions. I think what we do is that we just look for individuals who have got higher qualifications and then we place them into offices ... you run this office. But in terms of assessing people to see if they are visionary ... Our recruitment system is in such a way that it looks at paper qualifications…* (T9:29).

Commenting on the lack of planning for ODL as a new innovation, one participant felt that the mode was not well prepared for within the UB system:

> *… if you are starting a distance education programme, one should not be an off-shoot of the other. One should develop, even if it is in a dual mode institution, with the purpose that this is what we shall be doing and this is how we shall be doing it and with who and these are the resources, clearly identified* (T8:20).

Some of the participants believed that UB management had a low opinion of ODL "*I don't think they place a central role on distance education ... it's like distance education is just some appendage to the other mode*" (T9:12-13). Another participant echoed a similar observation:

The face-to-face takes priority for the University. The open is an avenue for expanding access. But the way that things are happening, it has not proved to be a major undertaking that the University is really working on (T12:17).

Some participants thought that there was lack of accountability when it came to the growth of ODL within the UB system, which they attributed to the lack of involvement of the central management to direct that growth. One participant observed:

You come up with a new programme, a new approach ... someone has to drive it... I don't see any strategic leadership here ... I see that on paper these things are beautifully laid down... someone has to drive them. But I didn't see that coming (T4:27-28).

The participant went on to indicate that "…*the Administration that side... they should actually drive this thing …"* (T4:36-37). Responding to the question in which I wanted to know the participants' perceptions regarding how the central management of the University treated the two modes, a participant replied:

... When it comes to UB Management ... since most people in the Management area ... come from the conventional system ... their attention is towards the face-to-face. And when it comes to distance education ... the Management's attitude ... the Management's perception towards this distance education is not that high (T6:16-17).

Another participant pointed to the resource commitment towards ODL, which he perceived did not reflect any significant regard for ODL in the UB system:

The commitment of resources is not really indicative of the level of commitment towards the distance learning. To me that doesn't indicate mainstreaming ... or actually putting distance education as one of the engines of the institution (T5:17).

Commenting on planning for ODL, a participant expressed concern that "*mostly the type of planning that comes through from Management would normally come as an after thought or something*" (T9:11).

The second category under the family of commitment and support for ODL, discussed the perceived lack of knowledge of the ODL mode by the UB community including management. Responding to a question that wanted to establish why the growth of the UB ODL mode seemed to lag behind, one participant referred to the mode as a mode that required special skills "*the open and distance learning mode requires different skills from face-to-face ... It takes special skills and effort to develop that mode*" (T1:13). The participant went on to indicate that "*universities around the world tend not to have those skills*" (T1:13).

Some of the participants believed that since the inception of ODL in UB, the management did not understand the mode and were not in a position to lead and direct its growth. A participant shared a perception: "*What I've learnt is that people didn't quite understand or know what to expect ... Even today*" (T7:13). Another participant suspected that:

> *... may be the decision makers are not quite sensitive to the needs of distance education learners ... they don't seem to appreciate the needs of distance education learners* (T9:10).

Another participant alluded to a lack of preparedness, which presumably could have resulted from a lack of understanding of the ODL mode and observed that "*...people who man these other units ... they know there is a distance education ... but they are not sensitized to the needs of the learners ...*" (T7:13).

The participant had further observed that:

> *... a major, major lack ... was that ... the University was not prepared for that... And they didn't even know what animal it was ... they just knew that ... there is distance education, but they didn't plan for it very well* (T7:16-17).

One other participant echoed the possibility that management might be having a problem of lack of understanding for the ODL mode of delivery. The participant suspected that may be management did not even know whether or not to continue having ODL as part of the University's programme delivery strategies:

> *May be the powers that be don't have a clear picture as to exactly how they should handle this animal called ODL… Should it be part of the dual aspects of the business of the day… should it stand alone and move out of the University …* (T5:22).

However, the participant saw the limitation for making a conclusive decision about whether or not ODL should continue as an important mode of delivery for UB being in the lack of understanding of the mode by management. He believed that a recent needs assessment study conducted by UB on ODL was an important step that would bring *"some element of understanding… of trying to understand what ODL is for those who head"* (T5:24).

If indeed management was not very well informed about ODL and did not know how to handle it, then as some participants observed, it might be difficult for them to:

> *…accept the fact that distance education is another important way of offering programmes, not just by the way that it is one important way. Just as conventional is important, distance is another important way of offering …* (T10:12-13).

To sum up the concern of lack of understanding of ODL by management, one participant concluded that there was need for "*…sensitisation workshops for most of the Management groups… to sensitise them about our delivery system and the problems that we face*" (T6:17). However, one participant thought that management had already begun to inform themselves more about ODL through the needs assessment study conducted recently:

> *that kind of study has been an eye opener perhaps for the Management and the leadership of the University … now they're in a position to know exactly what is happening out there and what do they want to do with ODL … it's an indication that there is now some element … of trying to understand what ODL is…* (T5:24).

In the third category under the family of management commitment and support, the perceptions of participants were that management did not demonstrate the importance of ODL in the UB system and that it was a valuable mode of delivery. A participant viewed the significance of ODL in the UB system as just a background thing:

> *In UB we talk of access and participation and we do talk of distance education. But when you really look at the kind of support that we get from the system … you begin to see that there's a lot of gaps. There's quite a lot that needs to be done to accommodate the fact that there is distance education* (T5:16).

Possibly implying that ODL was not given the recognition that it deserved within the UB system, another participant was of the opinion that:

> *…first of all we should be willing to note or … accept the fact that distance education is another important way of offering programmes, not just by the way… Just as conventional is important, distance is another important way of offering… if that is done, then … the University would … be more organised* (T10:12-14).

The participant alluded to a possibility that ODL and the face-to-face mode of delivery were not perceived to have the same importance:

> *…modalities could be worked out to ensure that there is more commitment to the programme and have what we call … a dual mode of operation, whereby both distance and conventional … run together and they're given that equal importance… if they're given that equal importance it means even in terms of human resources* (T10:14).

Participants therefore perceived that UB management did not give ODL the recognition it deserved or acknowledge its importance in the UB system. As a result of that they felt ODL lacked importance and prominence in the UB system. One participant summed up this perception by concluding that the support that ODL received from management was not indicative of "*putting distance education as one of the engines of the institution*" (T5:19).

The second family of factors, which had four categories, discussed enabling policies and the lack of the alignment of UB systems at the stage of adopting ODL, in order to accommodate the new mode into the existing programme delivery system. The first category focused on existing structures that the participants perceived were not fit for ODL delivery. Having made an observation that management had made no plans of how the two modes were going to function together, one participant explained that:

> *...when you introduce a major change... something like distance education, you need ... to look at the whole system and say here is this new thing. How is it going to fit in ... in the existing system as a sub-system and how is it going to interact with other systems ... One thing that was a major, major lack ...was that the University was not prepared ... they didn't even know what animal it was* (T7:16).

The discussion in this category pointed to the lack of modification of the existing structures that hitherto served only the face-to-face mode of delivery. Participants felt that management and the support functions of the University understood the face-to-face mode better than ODL. Confirming the lack of preparedness for ODL, one participant shared experience on how it used to be a challenge to give attention to the planning and development of ODL at UB:

> *we were always subjected to enormous amount of pressure from the requests from government... that tended to take a lot of people's time from focusing on developing some of these innovative methods of programme delivery* (T1:20).

Another participant thought that there had not been much planning before the introduction of ODL in the UB programme delivery system:

> *…they just knew that there is distance education, but they didn't plan for it very well… therefore it didn't quite fit. It is still struggling to fit in, within the University* (T7:17).

Since it appeared management were not very well informed about ODL and there had been not much planning before the introduction of ODL in the system, participants perceived that the

management and the support structures of the University tended to do things the way they had always done them, without paying a lot of attention to the special requirements for the ODL mode and the ODL learner needs. One participant had observed that "*most of the time it would be more like the ODL is an attachment and has to follow … what is already on board*" (T5:26).

Responding to a question on why there tended to be more students enrolled on the face-to-face mode than on the ODL, one participant saw a lack of modification of the structures to accommodate ODL over the years, as a major challenge for the growth of ODL at UB:

> *An institution like this one was set up for the conventional mode… this one was introduced midway during its life-time… when it was introduced, the existing structures were really not … sensitised … not even modified to accommodate this other mode. And because of that they continue to be restrictive* (T7:25).

The participant reflected on the rigidity of existing systems and structures and how this affected ODL delivery:

> *ITS … for handling student information, student data… has closing and opening cycles …for…registration … there comes a time when they close registration period… But sometimes with our students … we need to register beyond the closing date… for security reasons sometimes is not as easy…* (T7:35).

Another participant had noticed rigidity in the area of internships:

> *..which, one would have believed are designed to give a full-time student who has never had an opportunity to work, to actually experience the working environment… is also done by a distance learner who is already working … has been working for the past eight … ten years. But then it's our structure that they do an internship. Now one questions why should a person who's already exposed to a working environment be forced to take that particular course* (T5:26-27).

Another area of major concern perceived to be brought about by alleged rigid face-to-face structures was the fee payment system. The participants believed that the system was rigid in

that students were expected to pay their fees only in two instalments. It had proved difficult for many students on ODL programmes and self-sponsoring, to manage the amount of money required in only two instalments:

many of our students are self-sponsored… sometimes they're forced to skip a semester because they couldn't raise enough tuition money… we have tried to argue it with our Finance … We haven't succeeded much … if they could bench mark with some of the …universities… where… people are self-sponsored… They have worked out schedules how students can pay over a period of time. But here, they've said students can pay in two instalments…at the beginning of the semester and somewhere midway. But we're saying … what if we can allow students to pay monthly… But they haven't come to that … it's the question of the rigidity of the financial structures. They are not looking at the students… They're looking at their structure … to say it would be cumbersome … (T7:48-49).

The second category under the family of enabling policies and systems alignment reiterated the restrictive nature of existing systems, which were perceived to be still for face-to-face and not for a dual mode programme delivery system. One participant believed that UB needed to:

…take a hard look at the structures and align them in such a way that they'll take into consideration distance education… and may be come to a point where they actually consider … institution to be dual mode (T7:44).

To illustrate this restrictive nature of existing systems, another participant indicated the perceptions of the UB community regarding the use of University facilities between the two modes:

…where the University is looking at increasing access, it means it would like to increase access given the very resources that are available. But my observation here at UB is like the Centre for Continuing Education seems to be operating as an individual entity… rather than for it to have been part of the mainstream University… So the separate development scenario that exists does take away from the open and distance learning the opportunity to maximise on, or to even

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increase on numbers. If you can imagine if they were to use these facilities only over the weekends, they would definitely have lots of space (T12:8-9).

However, facilities were generally perceived to belong to the full-time face-to-face mode of delivery and not to both modes. *"The full-time programmes … face-to-face programmes have got permanent facilities … permanent structures"* (T6:14). ODL seemed not to always have access to those facilities, even if they had booked in advance to use them *"some times facilities are not quite accessible…even though sometimes we may book. Someone might find a class and they think it's vacant. And yet we may have booked it for our students…* (T7:14).

The third category in the family of enabling policies and systems alignment looked at the need for different functions of the University to interact in their service for a dual mode system. The family discussed the absence of frameworks and policies which should guide the UB dual mode system. The perceived absence of such policies and frameworks was seen as creating disconnects between the different functions that service the students in a dual mode set-up. One participant remembered that it was difficult to try and orientate and even briefing for other faculties and departments, in order for them to understand and appreciate what ODL was about and how they should relate with CCE/DDE:

> *in 1994 we were trying to just sensitise the different faculties … but there were no policies… there was no framework that could assist even the other departments to … to interact and know even the mandate for this new baby…* (T7:17).

The last category under this family considered the perceptions that have so far indicated that ODL was ill-resourced and focused on the need to identify and provide resources that CCE could deploy and have some control over. Participants felt that CCE was too dependent on the face-to-face delivery mode for the growth of ODL. Asked what could be done to ensure the growth of ODL within the UB system, one participant responded:

> *If it were to grow or open access, the CCE as it is now will have to be restructured. There will be need for reorganising … to ensure that the Centre for Continuing Education can cater for more students* (T10:20-21).

The participant went on to indicate challenges that CCE faced as a result of being too dependent on the face-to-face resources for the facilitation of the ODL programmes:

The challenges that they have ... to rely on someone that you don't have total control... because to me CCE does not have total control on this ... the faculty that they are using to teach in the programme... at the end of the day really, that person has their full commitment somewhere else ... to that other programme its partial commitment (T10:29).

A participant observed that ODL required:

the availability of ICTs because you are looking at cutting down on the number of face-to-face...the students could also be coming to the University to may be use laboratories that are available to them. And then using facilities like the library. But you find the UB library closes over the weekend. And that is the time when most of the open and distance learning learners could have access to the facility (T12:9-10).

The participant further maintained that it was necessary for the ODL mode to have resources beyond the institution. However, she noted challenges where "*computers will not be available for study for many of the learners*" (T12:23).

Another participant reiterated the concern of unavailability of resources for ODL students compared to face-to-face students:

Here there are resources... But when they're out there they are complaining that they can't finish their projects on time because they don't have books. Reference materials are a problem ... They can't reach the internet when they are out there... and to get some of them the assistance that they need, you may find that a student has to be travelling ... Whereas if there were resources out there, there were some satellites where at least one could reach the internet … have books transported somehow to satellites … So it's the challenges of the library,

challenges of supervision, challenges of commitment of the faculty members (T10:33-34).

The participant indicated that there were resources in various units servicing mainly the full-time face-to-face programmes *"if these resources are pooled together and these people work together I think it will be better"* (T10:36).

Another participant observed that ODL was mainly utilising *"old ways of ... teaching"* (T5:9). This was related to the lack of resources for ODL. The participant felt that it was necessary for the University to make resources available for the ODL delivery mode such that it could *"incorporate modern learning aspects... particularly ... those that are enhanced by technology"* (T5:9).

Generally participants believed that the ODL delivery mode is poorly resourced compared to the face-to-face mode, such that service delivery through ODL provision was comparatively of poor quality:

> *When we have the results presented... you ask yourself ... this side there're gaps ... This is not in, this is missing. You wonder for instance, if the student has not completed their project... Because the conventional students ... do teaching practice which is fully supervised and is presented in time ... Then you get to the distance. You ask yourself ... how many times are they followed for this project... for this teaching assignment or teaching portfolio... So you find that, people think because its distance ... these students can go on and on and on ...* (T10:31-32).

Another participant had observed that in practice the two modes of delivery were not treated in the manner that is stated on paper, which results in poor resourcing of ODL:

> *When you look at the University's development plans and Strategic Plans, there is state that the two should be at par... should be parity of esteem. But this is not always so, because many of the distance education programmes that are here ... They're supposed to be developed and tutored by staff from face-to-face*

programmes, and that creates a constraint. Because the people …on a part-time basis, must first of all satisfy the requirements of their parent pre-service programme before they can concentrate fully and well in distance education programmes… So although the feeling is that at all should be at par in terms of offering, you find that distance education programmes get compromised because of the dual mode nature (T8:18-19).

The participant believed that for the two modes to have the planned equal status, one should not depend on the other for resources to the extent that it would not make any progress without the other:

… for equity to come, one should not have been… an off-shoot of the other… One should develop even if it is in a dual mode institution, with the purpose that this is what we shall be doing and this is how we shall be doing it and with who and these are the resources, clearly identified (T8:20).

The participant went on to illustrate the dependency level of ODL on the face-to-face mode:

You find that when it comes to course writing, you have to put the Department to get the course writers. When it comes to Content Editors you want to go there and get the reviewers. When it comes to tutors you must go there…(T8: 51).

The main problem identified with depending on part-time human resources for the development and delivery of ODL programmes was that "*you cannot rely solely on people from outside the institution* (T8:24).

Responding to a question trying to find out if ODL was more cost-effective than face-to-face as sometimes purported, the participant's response was more on the resources:

distance education in a dual mode institution gets constrained. The resources are there … you're using the same lecturers … in terms of subject expertise… Are they available? And that has been one of my questions… sometimes you'd be programming… the lecturers say they're coming. Come three or four days,

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they're not available. They're not refusing but something else has cropped up…
in terms of also decision making, where is it placed? (T8:49-50).

To sum up the concern about poorly resourcing the ODL mode of delivery, one participant believed that "*the commitment of resources is not really indicative of the level of commitment … actually putting distance education as one of the engines of the institution*" (T5:19).

Figure 7.2 assessed UB management's recognition and value for the contribution made by academic staff from face-to-face faculties towards the development and delivery of the ODL mode.
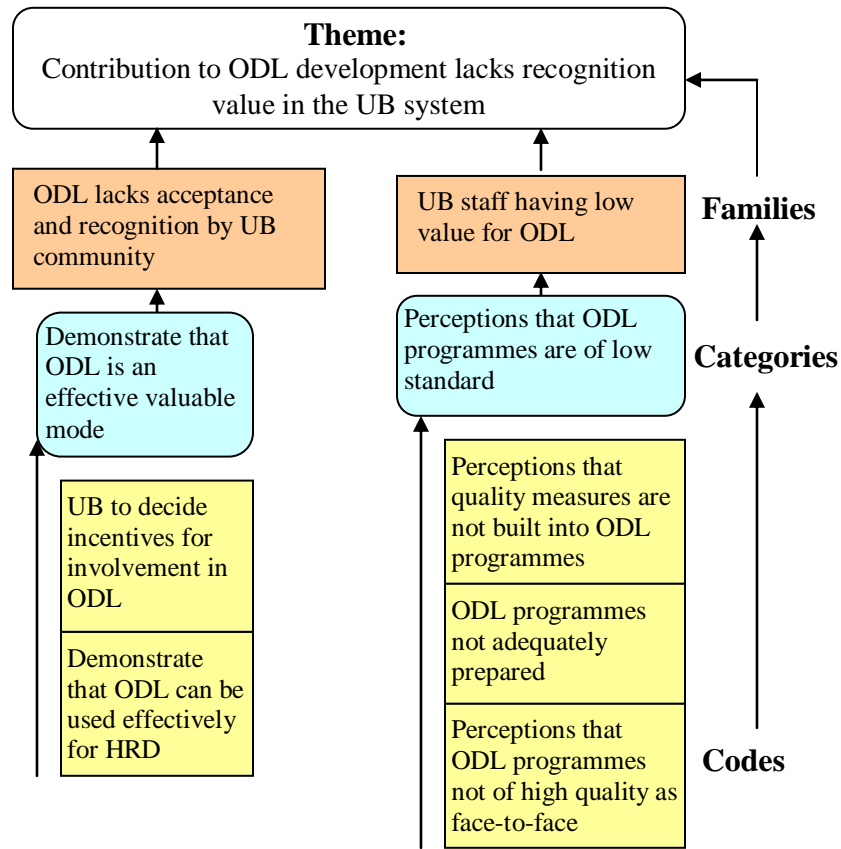

Figure 7.2 Recognition and value for contribution to ODL

Two families with one category each emerged from the data as depicted in Figure 7.2. The first family examined perceptions of the participants regarding recognition of the contribution made by academic staff towards ODL. Participants perceived that management did not demonstrate

the importance of ODL in the UB system and that it was a valuable mode of delivery by acknowledging the contribution that staff made towards its development and growth. In terms of recognition, the category looked at the state of incentives for the contribution made by the academic staff from other faculties being involved in ODL development and delivery. Participants felt that the University did not recognise the contribution that other staff members were making towards the success of ODL in any way, except through payment of part-time services. Similar observations had been made by some researchers elsewhere that those staff members rendering their services to ODL in some dual mode settings did not receive recognition from the University for their contribution, whereupon they would not feel encouraged to continue rendering such service (Rockwell *et al,* 1999; Morgan, 2000; Sikwibele and Mungoo, 2009). One participant noted that a contributing factor regarding lecturers and tutors was that "*distance education is not part of their job description. They come in and do it as part-time like anybody else. And yet they're serving the same entity*" (T5:19). This was perceived to make the lecturers and tutors more committed to the face-to-face mode of delivery than to ODL:

> *Because as long as distance education is taken as 'that thing I do after hours'… it's very, very frustrating. But where it is taken as 'part of my duties', then it will succeed. Changing that mindset takes time, particularly in a University like this one where sometimes teachers/lecturers are overworked because of student numbers, in the pre-service, conventional programmes* (T8: 50).

One participant stated that a major challenge was in the fact that work in ODL did not form part of the academics' job descriptions in that:

> *In the programmes that they are employed for which are the conventional they have the PMS to satisfy… may be 90% of their time … goes to this which they're committed to…* (T10:30).

To sum up this perceived major challenge, another participant recalled that "*… the academic departments will say that when they write ODL modules… that is not recognised in their performance through their PMS*" (T4:29). She was convinced that:

As long as its not there and yet they're the ones who are expected to be writing these modules, then they are going to give priority to that which is going to lead to their promotions (T4:29).

Another area of incentives that participants thought was causing unhappiness among academic staff who volunteered their services for the development and delivery of programmes in the ODL mode, was incentives in terms of payment for their services. Participants had observed that some of the part-time staff on ODL programmes were not satisfied with the payment levels "*And also in remuneration ... Sometimes may be your remuneration is not as they are expected*" (T6.30).

The last family of factors under Figure 7.2 looked at perceptions of UB staff with regard to the value of ODL. The only category in this family focused on perceptions towards the quality and standard of ODL programmes. Participants were of the opinion that the UB community perceived ODL programmes to be of low standard. They believed there was not equivalent rigour applied in the preparation of ODL programmes as well as in their delivery, to make them really of equal standard and value with the programmes delivered through the face-to-face mode. Asked to give their opinions on the quality of ODL programmes at UB currently, one participant thought "*[t]hey are superficial ...*" (T15B:30). Wikeley and Muschamp (2004) also expressed doubts concerning the standard and quality of delivery of doctoral level programmes through ODL, submitting that face-to-face discussions would be expected to yield much better quality than ODL. One participant in this study also believed that on paper, the ODL programme would look the same as the one taught on face-to-face. He would not have any query with programme preparation. However, the problem that the participant perceived was that when it came to provision of human resources for the delivery phase, the standard of ODL programmes was compromised:

> *...here at UB these are taught by highly qualified people, lecturers of face-to-face. But when you go to centres... mostly are secondary school teachers. And therefore you cannot say this is of quality really* (T15B:32-33).

Commenting on the preparation of ODL programmes one participant observed that:

...you have to structure the programme with quality in mind. You don't just ... say because this is an open and distance learning programme, it can go anyhow... If you know excellence is the motto of your institution then you want everything that is offered in your institution to be quality including the ODL programme. And I strongly believe that if the programme is structured well and quality measures are put in place, the open and distance education graduate will be the same as the conventional graduate... (T10:16-17).

The participant reiterated the importance of developing ODL programmes that have built in the same quality measures as those offered through face-to-face by ensuring that:

...the teaching strategies are innovative and they allow this distance learner to acquire the same knowledge ...at the end of the day they're going to receive the same certificate... An ODL person does not receive a lower certificate... because of that then, the quality has to be the same (T10:18).

Another participant was concerned about the quality of the graduates of ODL programmes and thought that ODL still had to:

...demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that a product that you get through ODL can be equivalent to a product that you get through face-to-face, or even better. Then ... slowly, the message will come to us. But at the beginning... we have not seen how the products can perform... But when the tertiary sector of the ODL... start having more products ... equivalent to the tertiary face-to-face ... they enter the market and ... compete ... then it will be able to send the message to us about the quality that you get out of ODL (T14:47-48).

Data as depicted in Figure 7.1 and Figure 7.2 seemed to indicate a general perception by participants that ODL had low acceptance, value and recognition within the UB community and that it was therefore not given the prominence it could have received if the situation had been different. The next section examined the level of implementation of the Distance Education Mainstreaming policy and its impact on access to UB programmes through the ODL

mode since its inception in 2005. Another equivalency enhancing policy that I was interested in was the Learning and Teaching Policy. This latter policy became interesting to me as a quality assurance policy of UB and I wanted to examine its implementation with regard to ODL programmes.
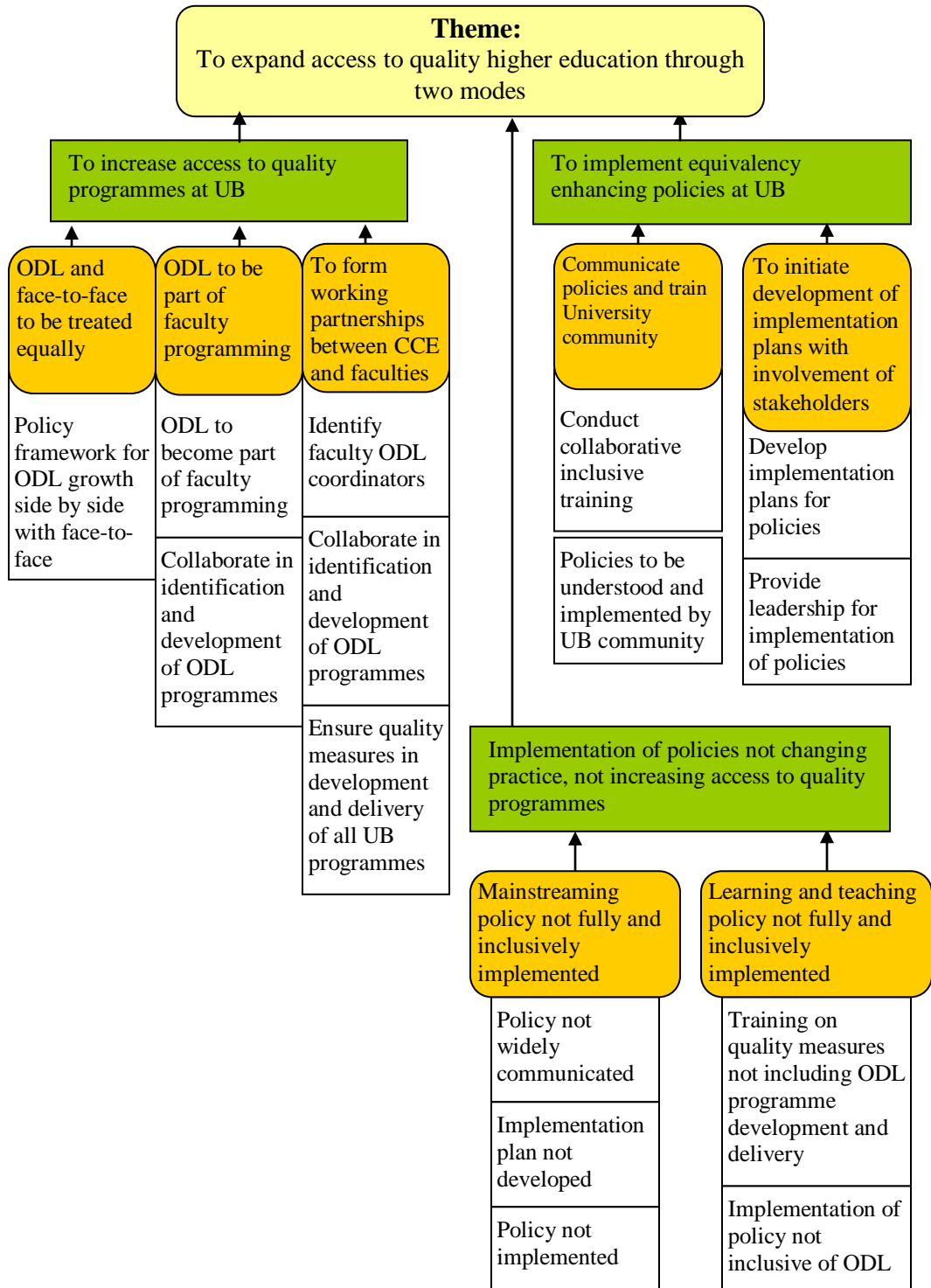
7.2.2. The Impact of the UB Equivalency Enhancing Policies on ODL

In Chapter Three (see § 3.9), I indicated my interest in finding out how far the UB community implemented the Distance Education Mainstreaming Policy and the Learning and Teaching Policy. These policies appeared to me to have the potential to enhance equivalency between the face-to-face and the ODL delivery modes within UB. The purpose of the Learning and Teaching Policy (UB, 2008f) was to enhance and maintain quality of all programmes of the University and to ensure that their development and delivery strategies adhere to set high quality standards. The implementation of this policy would apply to all UB programmes (UB, 2008f), which to me meant being inclusive of all face-to-face and ODL programmes. The purpose of the Distance Education Mainstreaming Policy was to provide a framework that would guide the UB faculties to work in collaboration with CCE DDE to provide their selected programmes through ODL, with the ultimate intention of making UB programmes available on both modes in order to open access to participation in higher education. Implementation of the two policies was to take effect during the NDP 9 Strategic Plan period (UB, 2003). The inclusiveness of the two policies appeared to encourage equivalency between the two modes of education provision within the UB dual mode of education provision. The implementation of the Distance Education Mainstreaming Policy would help the University to achieve its strategic goal of increasing access to its programmes. There would be more programmes available through the ODL mode and enable more potential students to enrol, having a larger pool of programmes to choose from through either of the modes. The quality level achieved through the Learning and Teaching Strategy would provide parity of esteem in the teaching and learning experiences between the two modes.

In this section of the analysis process, I wanted to explore the participants' views on the impact that the implementation of the two policies has had on bringing equivalency between the two

modes within the UB system. I asked participants when the Distance Education Mainstreaming Policy was adopted in UB. Some participants indicated that it was approved and adopted by the University around 2005 "... *the Distance Education Mainstreaming Policy ... was adopted in 2005*" (T11:14). I also wanted to find out what the policy intended to achieve. Many participants knew about the policy and understood its intentions quite well. However, there were some who indicated that they did not know about this policy. Many of the participants also knew about the Learning and Teaching Policy. Figure 7.3 depicts respondents' perceptions about the implementation of the two policies and its impact on expanded access to quality UB programmes. Three families emerged, as depicted in Figure 7.3, which discussed the need to expand access to quality higher education through the two UB modes of education provision. The first family looked at the need to increase access to quality programmes. This family had three categories. The first category indicated that the Distance Education Mainstreaming Policy and the Learning and Teaching Policy, both provide policy framework for the growth of ODL side by side the face-to-face mode of delivery. Participants indicated that the Mainstreaming Policy stated that face-to-face and ODL should be treated equally "*Well, according to the mainstreaming policy they are supposed to be treated ... equally*" (T4:10). Another participant indicated that the Mainstreaming Policy provided a framework for collaboration and guided programming through the ODL mode:

...it provides a framework ... now we have an idea of how things could be done and how we could relate with academic or teaching departments... it's supposed to facilitate the provision of programmes through ODL (T7:52).

Theme:
To expand access to quality higher education through two modes

To increase access to quality programmes at UB

ODL and face-to-face to be treated equally

Policy framework for ODL growth side by side with face-to-face

ODL to be part of faculty programming

ODL to become part of faculty programming

Collaborate in identification and development of ODL programmes

To form working partnerships between CCE and faculties

Identify faculty ODL coordinators

Collaborate in identification and development of ODL programmes

Ensure quality measures in development and delivery of all UB programmes

To implement equivalency enhancing policies at UB

Communicate policies and train University community

Conduct collaborative inclusive training

Policies to be understood and implemented by UB community

To initiate development of implementation plans with involvement of stakeholders

Develop implementation plans for policies

Provide leadership for implementation of policies

Implementation of policies not changing practice, not increasing access to quality programmes

Mainstreaming policy not fully and inclusively implemented

Policy not widely communicated

Implementation plan not developed

Policy not implemented

Learning and teaching policy not fully and inclusively implemented

Training on quality measures not including ODL programme development and delivery

Implementation of policy not inclusive of ODL

Key: ☐ codes   ☐ categories   ☐ families   ⬭ theme

Figure 7.3 Need to expand access to quality higher education through two modes

The growth of ODL through the Distance Education Mainstreaming Policy lied in the potential for faculties to identify programmes that they wanted delivered through ODL and work together with CCE to facilitate their availability through the ODL mode. The second category discussed this policy and indicated that ODL would become part of programming at faculty level, where the faculty would collaborate with CCE in the identification and development of programmes through the ODL mode. The last category under the family of increased access to quality programmes discussed working partnerships between CCE and faculties. The category looked at the provision of faculty based ODL coordinators as an enabling environment for enhancement of CCE/faculty collaboration. The category also touched on the need to utilise the Centre responsible for quality measures, so as to build such in the collaborative development of programmes.

The second family of factors was about the need to implement equivalency enhancing policies at UB. This family had two categories. The first category identified the need to communicate and train the UB community on the two policies. Participants indicated that each of the centres responsible for the given policy should ensure that they communicate that policy to all the relevant members of the UB community. Some participants indicated that the Mainstreaming Policy had not been communicated to all the faculties and relevant centres. Asked whether they knew about the policy one participant responded *"…which one … I would be lying… Yah in fact they're known by Management…"* (T15A:39-40). Asked whether he was aware that on the basis of that policy CCE was collaborating with some departments and co-offering their programmes through ODL, the participant indicated the policy had not yet been communicated widely:

> *…in fact, the collaboration you're talking about might be there but not necessarily driven by that policy. I'm not sure because I think those guys actually have to take communication very seriously…* (T15A:41).

Another participant reiterated the lack of wide communication of the Mainstreaming policy by the CCE, which was perceived to be the agency to lead in its implementation:

…that was forgotten along the line somewhere. I'm saying that the policy is there, but … still is the CCE which has to really push it ahead… The Policy is not with everybody in the faculties. Although it was approved by the Senate/Council, it doesn't mean that they know … So with our side… We have not acted as fast as expected… (T6:60-61).

There were indications that only one faculty was collaborating with CCE and having their programmes offered through both face-to-face and the ODL mode of delivery.

We didn't achieve that which we had set ourselves to achieve… And really, outside the Faculty of Business, there's no other faculty which has an ODL programme (T13.42).

With regard to the Learning and Teaching Policy, one participant indicated that all stakeholders had been trained and were implementing the policy, except CCE members of staff who were forgotten at the beginning and only remembered afterwards. Their training had just been started with regard to that policy:

Only recently we did have a workshop with them on where we were … we were talking about the Learning and Teaching Policy of the University. But you find that they even came as an afterthought, when we had … done the schedule for all the departments… We were like … by the way we have CCE … and in a way we're sort of beginning to think of them. But because … even them, we think they should also try and make themselves part of this setting (T12:25).

On collaborative and inclusive training envisaged by this category some participants alluded to the lack of cooperation from other organs of the University:

We normally, will invite all of them both the conventional lecturers and our colleagues in CCE. But one must say, for a very long time they have been resistant. It's only recently that we managed to work together where we're developing a Masters programme to be purely distance programme for the Faculty of Business … (T13:36).

The second category under this family discussed implementation of the two policies. The category looked at the need to start the process of implementation by collaboratively developing implementation plans in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. Some participants indicated that the lead agency for implementation of a given policy should initiate the implementation process and involve those affected. With regard to the Mainstreaming policy

> *…policy implementation is CCE … Academic Departments and faculties are to assist… So they should have come up with an implementation strategy in the CCE… to say…we would like to see so many faculties… I don't know, may be it's available, but I'm not … aware of … an implementation strategy* (T12:28-29).

The category also discussed the need for implementing agencies for the two policies to provide leadership for their implementation. Some of the participants indicated a lack of leadership involvement, both at the level of the implementing Centre and Central Management of the University:

> *the Centre that is charged with ODL provision… How much are they doing? The people at the top… they should be providing leadership. They should be talking to their counterparts in those Departments. Now it's like that is not happening … Leadership would come up with an action plan. And actually … monitoring of that plan would also be in place* (T4:38-39).

The last family on Figure 7.3 assessed the impact of the implementation of the two policies on practice and the intended purpose. Two categories discussed the implementation of each policy in turn. The first category assessed the Mainstreaming policy, where participants perceived that the policies were not fully implemented. They perceived that the CCE did not communicate the policy to the rest of the University and did not develop and communicate an implementation plan.

The assessment of implementation on both of the policies that I originally looked at as having the potential to bring about equivalency between the two modes of delivery showed that the policies had only been partially implemented and therefore did not change practice as

envisaged. In relation to the Distance Education Mainstreaming policy, participants felt that it was not really implemented and ended up not having any impact with regard to changing practice:

I think it was driven by CCE to overcome weaknesses that they felt and the marginalisation that distance education... Just trying to get the institution to commit itself towards expansion of distance education and to a commitment through the ordinary ... faculty structure at the University ... to involve them... In the end we only really have the... Faculty of Business that is really engaged in distance... So the policy has really not made impact ... (T11:22-23).

The number of programmes remained fewer through ODL, which had been seen as restrictive on choice for potential students who would have preferred to enrol on the ODL mode of delivery. Therefore impact on increasing enrolment through the ODL mode of delivery remained insignificant. The impact of the Learning and Teaching Policy on improving the perceptions on the quality of ODL programmes was perceived to have remained insignificant since CCE was seen as not really fully involved in aligning itself with the policy and its implementation. One participant echoed the general perception that ODL programmes were less rigorously prepared and did not have equivalent quality measures inbuilt as was the case with those on the face-to-face mode of delivery *"They are superficial"* (T15B:30). Another participant doubted the rigour in preparing people for the world of work through ODL *"…how do I equate… I'm not sure whether you're getting the same competencies that I'm getting when I'm face-to-face and you're distance"* (T14:51).

7.3   Conclusion

This chapter assessed responses of the participants with regard to the perceptions of the UB community on the value of ODL. The participants seemed to have perceptions that the UB community generally regard ODL as having low value and less important than the face-to-face mode of delivery. Comparisons were also drawn between participants' perceptions with similar perceptions expressed through some literature, where some authors felt that delivery of university education through ODL was less effective than through face-to-face. Participants in

this study perceived that the UB community did not really accept and adopt ODL as an equally important strategy as the face-to-face mode of delivery. The chapter also indicated perceptions that CCE did not seem to work closely with other organs of the University and seemed to have remained unnoticed as an important partner in the achievement of UB's strategic goals. There seemed to be a concern about limited leadership involvement in guiding the growth of ODL, both from the CCE itself and from Central Management of the University.

The next chapter discusses the findings, draws conclusions and makes some recommendations.

Chapter Eight

Main Findings and Recommendations

8.1   Introduction and Overview

The academic puzzle driving my research was: Why do some dual mode higher education institutions in Southern Africa continue to enrol lower figures through their ODL than their face-to-face mode of delivery, though ODL is purported to have the potential to increase access more substantially than face-to-face? My main interest was to study the University of Botswana as a case to understand the puzzle. UB was the only public dual mode higher education institution in Botswana. To try and map out the route of the investigation, I made four working assumptions as follows:

1.   That there was high demand for participation in higher education in Botswana, which the local higher education providers were not able to satisfy through using the face-to-face mode of delivery alone.

2.   That ODL had been adopted within the UB system to substantially increase participation in higher education in Botswana and to address diverse needs of the potential clientele.

3.   That even though UB had adopted ODL as one of its strategies to increase participation, the expansion of the ODL mode within the UB system was slow compared to that of the face-to-face mode.

4.   That there was a low opinion of the ODL mode within the UB community compared to the face-to-face mode.

Having made these assumptions, I then embarked on an investigative journey to try and have a better understanding of why some dual mode higher education institutions in Southern Africa continued to enrol low figures through their ODL than their face-to-face

mode of delivery. I investigated the University of Botswana as one of the dual mode higher education institutions in Southern Africa, to have a better understanding of the phenomenon.

8.2. An Overview of the Investigative Journey

After noticing that there was a high demand for higher education in Botswana, which the only public higher education institution in the country at the time did not seem to cope with, I was intrigued by the seemingly very low enrolments on UB's ODL mode of delivery than their face-to-face mode. I thought there might be something that was hindering ODL at UB from making a significant contribution towards increasing the University's potential to admit more of the applicants who were coming in large numbers out of senior secondary schools and from the adult populations. I thought the ODL mode of delivery was supposed to enable the University to enrol very large numbers better than the face-to-face mode. However, this appeared not to be true in the case of UB. I had to study the literature first of all to establish firmly that indeed ODL was supposed to address high and diversified demands better than the face-to-face mode of delivery. I therefore embarked on a short literature search in Chapter One (see § 1.2). The findings from this literature indicated that the ODL mode of delivery was expected to respond better than the face-to-face mode to high and diversified demands (Peters, 1967; Sewart, 1983; Dhanarajan, 2001; Ipaye, 2007; Dodds, 2002; Daniel, 2007; Pityana, 2008; Kanwar and Daniel, 2008). From the literature search, it also looked like it was not only at UB that the ODL mode of delivery was recording lower enrolment figures than the face-to-face mode. This appeared to be a Southern African pattern or even a pattern prevalent beyond Southern Africa (Siaciwena, 2006; Mbwesa, 2009; Ipaye, 2007; Robbins *et al*, 2009). I noticed that in dedicated ODL institutions, there appeared to be very large enrolments, while in dedicated contact institutions, the enrolments appeared not be as large (SARUA, 2009). I also noticed that in institutions which deployed both ODL and face-to-face modes of delivery, the ODL mode appeared to be recording lower enrolment figures than the face-to-face mode (see Table 1.1) in Chapter One. This concern was triggered by comparison of ODL and face-to-face enrolment figures, university wide and

not just enrolments within a few selected faculties. I became even more curious that something might be prohibiting or restricting ODL from expanding enrolments substantially when it was in dual mode than when it was in dedicated ODL universities. Therefore my quest to find out why ODL appeared to be unable to enrol larger numbers of students than face-to-face, when it was within dual mode institutions, crystallised my main research question: "why do some dual mode higher education institutions in Southern Africa continue to enrol lower figures through their ODL than their face-to-face mode of delivery, though ODL is purported to have the potential to increase access more substantially than face-to-face?" I also came up with two other critical questions (see § 1.6).

The literature review in Chapter Two revealed an important consideration for countries to urgently find means of increasing participation and higher achievement in higher education. This was the link that the literature seemed to draw between high participation and high achievement in higher education and economic development of countries. It became clear from the literature that those countries which had achieved higher participation ratios and realised higher achievement in higher education were the same countries that had also achieved economic advancement (Williams, 1997; Young, 2006; Bloom *et al*, 2006). There was conviction that for countries to achieve sustainable economic development, their participation rates in higher education should be in the range of about 40% to 50% of the APR (Kanwar and Daniel, 2008). Chapter Two also highlighted challenges of diminishing resources to expand face-to-face provision enough to cope with anticipated higher pressure from demands on the higher education sector (Ekhaguere, 2000; Daniel, 2007; World Bank, 1999) and concluded that a different approach was necessary to increase participation rates substantially at higher education level (see § 2.5). Although Chapter Two identified ODL as one of the most viable strategies to be considered to assist in achieving the required higher enrolments and participation in higher education, it also pointed out the long existing ODL quality and effectiveness debate, and that perceptions inherent in this debate had the potential to slow down the growth of ODL at higher education level. Since the short literature check in Chapter One (see § 1.2.1), as well as the literature review in Chapter Three had clearly

demonstrated a very low participation rate for Southern Africa and Botswana was amongst the lowest in participation of the APRs, I thought it was urgent to find out why at the University of Botswana ODL did not seem to live up to its expectations with regard to increasing enrolments substantially.

Literature review in Chapter Three focused on the Botswana higher education sector, its environment, challenges and priorities. This review acknowledged commendable progress made by the Botswana higher education sector considering its level of development at independence, as well as initial education priorities, which had put more emphasis on developing the primary and then the secondary levels of education, almost at the exclusion of higher education for many years (see § 3.4.1). However, looking at the country's low participation rate in higher education, Chapter Three also noted that in spite of the progress made so far, the sector still faced major challenges to deal with, if it was to achieve its major priority goal for the NDP 10 period (2009 – 2016), of ensuring the country's successful transition from a resource driven economy to a knowledge driven, diversified economy with a high skilled, knowledge intensive service sector and competitiveness in the knowledge-based global economy (Ministry of Education & Skills Development, 2008; SARUA, 2009). The literature review, as well as the participants' opinions noted Botswana's continued poor ranking in the provision of higher education compared to other middle income comparator countries. It therefore seemed urgent for the country to device means through which to ensure the achievement of the planned 17% increase of its APR participation rate by 2016.

Chapter Three indicated that ODL had been identified as an important strategy for Botswana to enhance the process of increased participation in higher education. However, it became apparent both from the documents reviewed and from the participants' responses that the status of ODL in the Botswana's higher education sector was undefined, as well as ODL's expected contribution to the planned higher education participation growth rate within NDP 10. I perceived this to be a major gap in planning as it could have implications of low commitment of resources for the expansion of ODL and possible low levels of commitment and accountability on the part of ODL providers,

without a specified national target for ODL, which they would be held responsible and accountable for during the plan period. The literature review in Chapter Three also indicated that the higher education sector was undergoing restructuring and reorganisation and recognising both the ODL and face-to-face modes of education delivery as important players in the higher education expansion process. That being the case therefore, I thought that it would have been prudent at that juncture then to clarify at national policy level, the status and roles of the two modes. I thought clarity of status of the two modes would have provided guidance in terms of roles and responsibilities for each of the modes, as well as how they should relate.

An issue of possible marginalisation of the ODL mode through the government sponsorship policy became apparent through the review of literature as well as participants' responses, both of which revealed that in Botswana individuals enrolled in ODL programmes were not sponsored by government, while those enrolled on full-time face-to-face programmes were sponsored (Department of Tertiary Education and Financing, 2008). Since the government had been the major sponsor for higher education in Botswana, this policy position had the potential to disadvantage ODL growth. As observed by Simonson *et al* (1999), if potential students were to suspect that ODL was not receiving equivalent recognition and support as face-to-face, they would prefer to choose full-time face-to-face over ODL. The lack of financial support from government for ODL was identified as one of the factors that either discouraged potential students to enrol on ODL programmes, or contributed to high dropout rates in UB ODL programmes. Since higher education is an expensive level of education, the lack of sponsorship for participation at this level through the ODL mode seemed to have the potential to force prospective students to opt for the face-to-face mode, which had opportunities for sponsorship.

Even though the discussion on the ODL effectiveness debate in Chapter Two had revealed that the suspicions and doubts held by some people that ODL was less effective than the face-to-face mode of delivery were just perceptions and not backed by research (Burgon and Williams, 2003; Campbell and Swift, 2006; Bernard *et al*, 2004a), I became

uncomfortable with such perceptions, especially when the data analysis in Chapters Six and Seven also revealed that the UB community, including Management seemed to be holding similar opinions about ODL. I thought that if such perceptions were prevalent in UB as many participants seemed to believe it was the case, then such a low opinion of ODL at that level might have had some contribution to the low development of the ODL mode within the UB system. It was worrying that only one faculty of UB seemed to have found the value of ODL in expanding access opportunities for its programmes. Unfortunately, this appeared to be a trend in some dual mode universities, where only one or a few faculties in a dual mode university would make some of their programmes available through both the face-to-face and ODL modes of delivery as could be deduced from some documents (UB, 2006; UNAM, 2007; UB, 2008d; University of Pretoria, 2009).

When I realised that the Botswana Ministry of Education sponsorship policy also excluded ODL learners, some concerns loomed in my mind. What if the formulation of the sponsorship policy had been influenced by perceptions of some people within the Ministry that ODL was less effective than face-to-face and therefore too risky to invest scarce resources in? What would the implication of such perceptions be on allocation of resources for its development and growth? My second concern was that even if that was not the case, what if the potential learners had that perception of ODL and they interpreted the policy position as confirming their suspicions? What implications would that have on their choice of mode to further their studies? In my mind one implication of the policy, even if not intended, could be that the ODL mode was still perceived as less important than the full-time face-to-face mode of delivery.

The literature review in the first three chapters already elaborated the need for increased participation in higher education in Botswana and other SADC countries. It also revealed the existence of a problem of high and diversified demands for higher education, particularly in Botswana, which the face-to-face mode of delivery was not coping with on its own. The literature review had also revealed that ODL had already been identified as a strategy that could alleviate the problem. I realised that I needed the best route to get to

the bottom of this problem where some dual mode higher education institutions in Southern Africa, particularly UB, continued to enrol lower figures through their ODL than their face-to-face mode of delivery, though ODL was contended to have the potential to increase access more substantially than face-to-face.

Literature seemed to point at possible factors that might be contributory to an apparent poor performance of ODL in increasing participation in UB programmes. This made me more curious to find out what really could be factors contributing to low enrolment on ODL programmes at UB. It also helped me to develop some questions which I ultimately used in the semi structured interviews that I conducted later to explore the phenomenon further. In Chapter Four I firmed up the route to follow in my exploration. I considered that I needed to explore the opinions and perceptions of people who had some experience with higher education level ODL in Botswana, as education planners, policy makers, administrators and provider practitioners at national and institutional level. This pointed me to the qualitative approach for the study. Since I would be exploring people's interpretations of their situations, my knowledge claim ended up in the interpretive constructivist perspective, where reality is socially constructed and multi faceted, opinions and interpretations influenced by the environment, the time of occurrences, the believe systems of the participants and past experiences (Bell, 1987; Robson, 2002; Creswell, 2003; Neuman, 2006). Having noted from the continuing effectiveness debate in Chapter Two (see § 2.7) that some people still have perceptions that ODL could be less effective and of lower quality and value compared to the face-to-face mode of delivery, the equivalency concept (Simonson *et al*, 1999) became very interesting to me, to explore in the UB dual mode set up as I try to understand why ODL appeared to be attracting very low enrolment figures compared to the face-to-face mode.

8.3   Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness

Semi-structured interviews and document review became my preferred data collection methods for this case study since I was seeking context-based multiple perspectives on the phenomenon. I also preferred semi-structured interview method because it would

afford me more probing into the issues during the interview sessions. I decided to also utilise the document review method to collect the data. Using both interviews and document review afforded me the opportunity to cross-check and validate the data. Patton (2002) advises on combining data collection techniques to provide data validity checks for qualitative data, through methodological triangulation, as well as for purposes of triangulation of data sources. To go further with the idea of triangulation of data sources, it became necessary for me in my quest to understand why ODL was enrolling fewer students than the face-to-face mode of delivery in the UB dual mode set up, to select participants from a spectrum of experiences at national and institutional level. Policy makers and practitioners provided the triangulation of both data and the data sources. So for sampling I used purposive selection of institutions and participants within those institutions in order to afford the study the triangulation of data sources and to provide reliability, trustworthiness and validity of the data. Chapter Four therefore mapped this route.

8.4   Main Findings and their Implications

Analysis of data was presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. Chapter Five focused mainly on challenges contributing to the Botswana higher education sector's perceived inability to adequately provide for high demands for access into this level of education. Chapter Six was concerned with the challenges that the growth of ODL might be facing within dual mode institutions, with specific reference to UB's experiences. Chapter Seven analysed data that was concerned with equivalency issues between the face-to-face and the ODL delivery modes in a dual mode institution and again the University of Botswana's experience was the one explored. I have presented the main findings below on the basis of the four assumptions that I had made earlier.

8.4.1   Demand for Participation in Higher Education in Botswana

My first assumption was that there was high demand for participation in higher education in Botswana, which the local higher education providers were not able to satisfy through

using the face-to-face mode of delivery alone. The review of the documents listed in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 in Chapter Four seemed to confirm high demands for higher education from different types of clientele and bottlenecks in the sector when trying to meet these demands (Kamau, 2007; Dodds *et al*, 2008; Sikwibele and Mungoo, 2009; Richardson, 2009). An analysis of the participants' responses on the question in which I wanted to know their views on the participation rate of both youth and adults also revealed a very low participation rate for Botswana. The participants estimated the rate of participation in higher education at around 11% for 2008, which was closely related to the 11.4% given by Tertiary Education Council (2008a).

The high demand for higher education in Botswana, putting a lot of pressure on the higher education sector, was influenced by several factors. Participants cited environmental, social, economic and job requirement factors as some of the reasons demand for higher education continued to escalate (see Table 5.1). Literature reviewed in Chapter Three also indicated that Botswana's population was skewed more towards being a youthful population, with about 52% of the population falling between 15 – 49 years (see § 3.3.2). This age group was of critical concern for the planning of increased participation in higher education, as it was made up of the APR group as well as the younger working population, who had been found to put more pressure for opportunities to enter higher education (Dodds *et al*, 2008; Richardson, 2009). The pressure put on the higher education sector to provide opportunities for participation was therefore to be expected to continue to escalate. On one hand, secondary school transition rates were expected to improve and more students to graduate at senior secondary level (Ministry of Education and Skills Development, 2008). On the other hand, more younger and a significant number of older adults had also been found to respond positively to Vision 2016 ideals, and wanted to re-align themselves to elevated job requirements, job security and/or competitiveness in the global environment (see Table 5.1).

Considering Botswana's Vision 2016's expectation on higher education as a significant player in the country's transition from a resource driven to a knowledge driven, diversified economy, with a high skilled knowledge intensive service sector (Republic of

Botswana, 2008), the challenge for the sector to increase participation rates seemed daunting. The participants perceived that the planned 17% participation rate for the APRs for 2016 and 20% to be achieved by 2026 were very low targets considering that other Botswana comparator countries were already at those rates. South Africa had achieved that participation rate of 17% by 2006 according to Pityana (2008), and Mauritius was at 17.15% in the same year (UNESCO, 2007). The literature review in Chapter Two also indicated that for a country to be considered competitive globally, its APRs should be around 40% to 50% (Kanwar and Daniel, 2008). Considering the need for higher participation and higher achievement in higher education, a continued low participation rate would have a negative implication on the Botswana economy and the country's global competitiveness (see § 3.4.2).

From the above findings it became evident that the high demand for higher education that Botswana was experiencing was going to continue for a long time to come, since the young population would continue to need opportunities to participate in higher education. The economic and social environment would also continue to influence the need to acquire higher level skills in order to remain competitive for individuals as well as countries, in the globalised world. Also evident from these findings was that the face-to-face mode of delivery would continue to be limited on its own to handle the kind of demands expected to increase on the higher education sector. A conclusion from these findings therefore would be that Botswana still needed a catching up strategy for increased participation in higher education. As the literature indicated in Chapter Three, as well as the data analysis in Chapter Five, that catching up strategy seemed to still be ODL, since the face-to-face mode of delivery could not be expected to cope with the ever increasing and diversified demands on its own.

However, it also appeared as if although ODL had been identified at national level as a strategy to be employed to increase participation in higher education, the Tertiary Education Policy (Ministry of Education and Skills Development, 2008) seemed not to have clearly defined its status and expected contribution to the planned growth process. The resources for the implementation of its development and growth did not seem to have

been clearly defined and identified. Its clear development path seemed not to have been covered through the National Development Plan 10 (NDP 10), which would guide all developments and their allocation of resources from 2009 to 2016. This might be a major omission at national level that might affect the growth of ODL during the NDP 10 period. An implication of this observation is that for ODL and face-to-face mode to be prepared to deal with the expected growth in the demand for higher education, resources have to be identified for their development and growth. The identification and allocation of such resources would be guided by the contribution that each mode would be expected to make towards increased participation. Therefore it was important at the stage of the re-organisation and re-structuring of the Botswana higher education sector (Ministry of Education and Skills Development, 2008), to clarify roles, status, target audiences as necessary and expected output levels for each mode. It would then be necessary to acknowledge the need to invest in the development of ODL, which had lagged behind and which was known to require a large amount of capital outlay, as data in this study have indicated. Another implication of the foregoing findings would be that it was necessary once the country had committed to the mode through policy, to follow that through with a firm commitment of the right type and amount of resources for the implementation of that policy for it to bear fruit. Otherwise, it might remain a policy on paper.

8.4.2   The Rationale for ODL within the UB System

The second assumption I had made was that ODL had been adopted within the UB system to substantially increase participation in higher education and to address diverse needs of the potential clientele. The investigation through the document review process, as well as analysing data from the interviews confirmed that the main goal of adopting ODL in the UB programme delivery system was to help the University to adequately address high demands for participation in its programmes, as well as for the University to make a significant contribution to human resource development of the country. Both data sources indicated that UB had not been able to cope with the high and diversified demands through its face-to-face delivery mode alone. Some policy documents of the

University specified the need for expanded access opportunities for participation in higher education through UB programmes (UB, 1999; UB, 2000; UB, 2004; UB, 2008a). These documents indicated ODL as important in the expansion process towards achieving the envisaged increased participation. Noting its important contribution towards the achievement of Vision 2016, the delivery of the National Human Resource Development Strategy and economic development of the country in a global economy, UB set itself up to deliver growth (UB, 2008a). Participants perceived that ODL was introduced in the UB system primarily to widen access to University programmes and to provide an optional access route to participate in UB programmes, since some people were unable to access programmes through the full-time face-to-face mode of delivery (see Figure 6.1 and Figure 6.2). So both data collection methods came with the same finding that UB adopted ODL to increase access and participation in higher education in answering on national policy and strategy. Analysis of data from documents also indicated that there was very high demand for UB programmes, which the University was unable to adequately address through its face-to-face delivery strategy alone (UB, 2000; UB, 2004; UB, 2008a; Kamau, 2002; Sikwibele and Mungoo, 2009; Dodds *et al*, 2008; Richardson, 2009). Also coming from the data was that UB was still the only higher education institution in the country offering degree programmes until January 2010, when BOCODOL introduced a few programmes at that level.

Several conclusions could be drawn from the findings under this assumption. One conclusion was that there were still high and diversified demands for participation in UB degree programmes since UB was still primarily the largest provider of degree programmes in Botswana at both under-graduate and post-graduate levels by 2010. Another conclusion was that UB still needed to expand opportunities for participation in its programmes and to reach people who were unable to access higher education through the full-time face-to-face mode of delivery. ODL therefore still remained a necessary optional access route that could allow UB to expand enrolments into its various programmes, and affording working potential students to access UB programmes. UB would still need ODL if it needed to continue to achieve its mandate of growth and excellence. However, the University might need to adopt a more advanced model of ODL

for its programme delivery strategy since the correspondence model and the multimedia model based mainly on print, audio and video technologies, appeared to have become less effective. The choice would appear to remain between the tele-learning model based on tele-communications technologies and the flexible learning model based on on-line delivery through the Internet (Taylor, 2001). Once the University had decided on its model of delivering its ODL programmes, then it would be necessary to commit the right kind and amount of resources for the development and continued expansion of the ODL strategy in that model. UB might also need to look at the target audiences for its ODL and face-to-face programmes. Some participants made reference to a possibility to consider targeting adults and employees with the ODL mode and leaving face-to-face for the younger, APR audiences only.

8.4.3   The growth and Expansion of ODL within the UB System

My third assumption was that even though UB had adopted ODL as one of its strategies to increase participation, the expansion of the ODL mode of delivery within the UB system was slow compared to that of the face-to-face mode. Documents from the University (UB, 2008d) and participants' observations confirmed this assumption by elucidating the contribution of ODL to access into UB programmes compared with the face-to-face mode of delivery. Data from both sources indicated that the contribution made by ODL towards increased participation was insignificant. Findings indicated that ODL within UB did not seem to address high demands adequately. UB (2008d) indicated an enrolment through ODL of 485 students compared to 13,791 full-time face-to-face students by the 2007/08 academic year (see Table 3.1). Participants estimated the enrolment at 300 to 500 ODL students during 2008/09 (see Figure 6.5).

There were external and internal factors perceived to have contributed to the low contribution towards increased participation that data from interviews came up with. From the external environment stigma and low opinion of ODL by the general Botswana public was picked up as a possible major contributing factor. It came out that ODL was regarded as being of low quality and having low value compared to the face-to-face mode

of delivery. It seemed to be associated with failure, since people regarded it as meant for people who could not make it into face-to-face programmes at higher education level. It was also noted that people were generally not well informed about ODL, which could be perpetuating the inferior quality perception (see Figure 6.4). Another major concern deduced from the data was that of lack of sponsorship for people undertaking ODL as well as part-time evening programmes at UB. This was noted as a worrying factor as it had the potential to reinforce the identified challenge of stigma for ODL.

Internal factors included restrictive plans and limited resources. It came out that UB planned very low enrolment figures to be contributed by the ODL mode of delivery to the projected overall UB student body, as compared to the planned contribution of the face-to-face mode (see Table 3.2 and Table 3.3). The plans were perceived to be restrictive since the allocation of resources for the ODL mode was anticipated to be proportionate to its planned output and contribution. The growth of the mode would be restricted by the limited resources allocated. Also coming out of the planned expansion of ODL was a possible mismatch in the UB NDP 10 plan, where one part of the plan (*A Strategy for Excellence: The UB Strategic Plan to 2016 and Beyond)*, seemed to be planning for growth of the ODL and part-time delivery mode. This part of the plan seemed to envisage increased part-time and ODL student enrolments. On another part of the same plan the planned contribution of ODL seemed to indicate remaining at 3% which seemed to have been its contribution during the out-gone NDP 9 Strategic Plan. This percentage therefore would appear to give an impression that no growth was planned in this area for NDP 10.

Another internal factor restricting the growth of ODL was the restrictive internal environment. In this area data pointed to the limited number of programmes available through the ODL mode. Four degree programmes and three programmes at diploma level were identified as available for people who wanted to pursue their higher education through the ODL mode at UB. This was seen as limiting the choice of programmes for the potential students who preferred to study through ODL or for those whose circumstances dictated that they could study only through ODL. Only one faculty had decided to offer its degree programmes through both the face-to-face and the ODL mode

of delivery. A related constraint pointed out was the length of the study period on ODL programmes at UB. Data pointed out that students had taken too long to graduate on some of the UB ODL programmes compared to the time taken on similar programmes undertaken through the face-to-face mode of delivery. The long period before achieving one's goal and a possibility of losing on opportunities, was perceived as a potential deterrent for people considering ODL as an option to pursue higher education studies at UB. Some of the UB regulations were perceived to be restrictive. Student admissions, internship requirements, fee payment regulations were some of the regulations cited as suitable for the face-to-face mode but rigid and restrictive for the ODL mode and therefore some of them leading to inability to access UB programmes by ODL students or high dropout rates on the ODL mode of delivery. Limited capacity of the CCE was pointed out, as leading to poor service delivery. There were constraints of the structure, inadequate training for ODL management, development and delivery, lack of commitment by some part-time staff who were perceived to be disgruntled about lack of recognition for their contribution to ODL, which was not part of their job description. Many students enrolled on ODL programmes were perceived to be disappointed in the service and in doubt whether the ODL mode of delivery was giving them quality education (see Figure 6.5). Limited advocacy and marketing for ODL also came out as a factor that could have contributed to its low enrolments.

Slow growth and expansion of the ODL mode in the UB system appeared to have resulted in limited capacity of the CCE to enrol more students. Since CCE/DDE seemed to have been limited in its capacity to service the few students that had enrolled, the implication of these constraints could be that its image could not sell ODL positively to the public that was already prejudiced against the mode. The lack of sponsorship for ODL had an implication of limited growth for the mode and continued unmet demands for higher education, as potential students might have failed to raise enough tuition fees for this expensive level of education. The sponsorship policy might be denying a lot of potential students the opportunity to study if ODL was the only mode available to them and they did not have sources of funding for their participation in higher education. Implications of the lack of growth of ODL in the UB system might be that the University

might need to refocus its ODL strategy. It might be necessary to go back and plan, put policies and frameworks in place, identify and train staff adequately for the model of ODL identified to be the most suitable for the University and allocate resources for its implementation.

8.4.4 Equivalency between ODL and Face-to-face in the UB Dual Mode System

My fourth and last assumption was that there was a low opinion of the ODL mode within the UB community compared to the face-to-face mode. This assumption dealt with equivalency issues between ODL and the face-to-face mode of delivery, assessed through the level of acceptance and value for ODL by the UB community, as perceived by the participants, as well as deduced from reviewed documents. The equivalency theory effectively asserts that if perceptions about ODL are that it is inferior in standard, quality, effectiveness and value, compared to other modes of delivering education and training, or if it is suspected that it produces low quality human resources, it will never be widely accepted and it will never become first choice for students, parents, employers and even teachers (Simonson *et al,* 1999). It was therefore very important to establish how much importance and value did the UB community put on ODL. I assumed that the level of acceptance and value for ODL by the UB community would have implications for its growth and performance in contributing towards increased participation in UB programmes. The assessment of the perceptions of the participants revealed that the UB community had a very low regard and value for ODL compared to the face-to-face mode of delivery. Participants felt that the UB ODL mode of delivery lacked Management commitment and support (see Figure 7.1). They noted a lack of enabling policies and that of systems alignment to accommodate the ODL mode when it was introduced in the UB system. UB records also indicated that although the University had identified ODL as a mode that should be developed so that it could increase participation in its programmes (UB, 1999; UB, 2004), only one faculty of the University offered some of its programmes through both ODL and the on-campus face-to-face mode of delivery by 2010. Only seven programmes appeared to be available through the ODL mode and serviced only 3% of the UB student population. Participants in this study concluded that

ODL was making a very insignificant input towards increasing participation in higher education (see Figure 6.3).

When planning for expansion of enrolment, ODL seemed to be allocated extremely low quotas in the UB plans (UB, 2008a; UB, 2008d). Planning for ODL also reflected no details when compared to planning for the face-to-face mode of delivery (see UB, 2000). This could be interpreted as reflecting the University Management's lack of commitment to ODL as a mode that could enhance increased participation. It could also be reflecting a lack of trust or acceptance of ODL and hence lack of detailed planning, that could result in inadequate resource allocation to the mode, enough to enable it to address large numbers of students. Many participants shared a similar perception that UB Management did not give ODL due support to enable it to make any meaningful contribution to the University's expansion process.

Institutionalization of a new innovation includes the development of rules and regulations, as well as policies, frameworks and detailed plans to guide its effective implementation and growth (Simonson, 2002; Bates, 2000a; Tau, 2008; Dodds and Youngman, 1994; Siaciwena, 2006). According to Tau (2006b) and the opinions of many of the participants in this study, when introducing ODL into the UB delivery system, the University did not develop any policies or frameworks to guide ODL direction, or make any adjustments to some of the existing support structures that were initially set up just for the support of the face-to-face mode of delivery. This could have led to lack of clarity on what was expected of ODL in expanding access to higher education in Botswana and consequently contributed to the perceived and evident low performance of the mode within the UB dual mode system in terms of increasing participation in higher education. The University seemed to have remained stuck with large numbers of adequately qualified applicants which it could not absorb (UB, 1999; Dodds *et al*, 2008; Richardson, 2009), even when the ODL mode was at its disposal. This problem appeared to have continued unabated as UB facilities and resources continued to be too limited, as if the University's focus was on catering for such large numbers through the face-to-face mode of delivery only. Literature from other parts of the world indicated that lack of adequate

planning and preparedness for the introduction of ODL was usually the main constraint faced by ODL initiatives in dual mode universities and a major challenge to its effective and efficient delivery (Abrioux, 2006; Bates, 2000a; COL, 2000a; Mbwesa, 2009; Ipaye, 2007). This study has revealed that lack of planning and preparation in terms of policies, frameworks and guidelines for ODL delivery, was one of the major constraints for the ODL initiatives in dual mode universities. Various experiences from the literature indicated that when introducing ODL in an institution which was originally only face-to-face, adjustments were necessary to accommodate the new mode, which usually required a different set of circumstances for its effective delivery, amongst them policy. A scan of the records seemed to indicate a lack of both a policy for ODL at UB and an adjustment of structures that are supposed to support both modes, to accommodate the ODL mode.

During NDP 9, two policies were adopted within the UB programme development and delivery system, the Distance Education Mainstreaming Policy and the Learning and Teaching Policy. The former policy envisaged expansion of ODL through increased programmes on the ODL mode, with participation of all UB faculties in making such programmes available through the mode. The latter policy envisaged all UB organs ensuring adherence to set quality standards in the structuring, development and delivery of all UB programmes. I envisaged the implementation of both policies having the potential to enhance and maintain equivalency between the two modes of delivery. However, this research revealed a lack of University wide communication, understanding and subsequent ownership of these two policies and their implementation. Some faculties and departments seemed to have some knowledge of the existence of one or the other of the two policies. Where people did not know fully about a policy or how it affected their work, some seemed not really worried about it "...*What policy ... I would be lying ...* (T15A). Implementation plans, where available, appeared not have been inclusive of all stakeholders and staff preparedness was varied. Overall, the Distance Education Mainstreaming Policy was barely implemented, while the Learning and Teaching Policy was not implemented to scale, since the department responsible for ODL had just been trained on it, having been forgotten when the rest of the departments were trained and started implementing it. As a result of the foregoing, it was evident that both policies had

not yet had any impact on improving ODL performance in terms of mainstreaming of the mode, as well as ensuring the set standard and quality of all programmes of the University delivered through both modes of delivery.

With regard to the status of the two modes within the system, some participants seemed to cite only the Mainstreaming policy document as the one which specified that the two modes were expected to be of equal status. Perceptions were that the other policy documents just mentioned ODL in relation to expansion of access but without reference to its planned status relative to the face-to-face mode. Almost all the participants maintained that despite what was written in various documents, in practice, the face-to-face mode of delivery was the most important between the two modes in the UB system. Allocation of the target contributions for each mode towards the student body was seen as indicative of the significance of each of the modes and through that assessment ODL was perceived an insignificant mode between the two. So the finding in this area was that the face-to-face mode seemed to be considered more important than the ODL mode of provision within the UB dual mode system.

It came out that there was need for guidance from the management and leadership of the CCE on ODL matters since ODL was perceived to be a unique, specialised, and new area that was not understood by many people in both management and the entire UB community. The need to ensure that leadership and managers of the different aspects of ODL were fully informed and knowledgeable about ODL so that they could lead and guide those who might not know about the mode also came out. The perceived limited knowledge of ODL on the part of leadership was perceived as a major setback for the growth of ODL within UB. The allocations for the target contributions for ODL as well as resource allocation, distribution and utilisation were perceived to have lacked informed input and guidance from the CCE leadership over the years. Implementation of some CCE led policies was perceived to have also lacked leadership direction and monitoring from within the Centre (see Figure 7.3). It also came up that the University's Central Management did not seem to have provided guidance on the expected outputs for CCE through the ODL mode and to have set and monitored accountability measures for the

CCE leadership on the growth of the ODL mode within the UB system. CCE therefore was perceived to have appeared like a separate entity from the entire University and assumed not to have taken full advantage of the developed facilities and infrastructure of the University at its various sites.

Findings also seemed to indicate a lack of acceptance, recognition, prominence and value for ODL in the UB system generally. Participants perceived a lack of demonstrated management commitment and support to the ODL mode of delivery compared to the face-to-face mode (see Figure 7.1). The UB plans (UB, 2000; UB, 2004; UB, 2008a), where allocation of target figures were reflected for ODL contribution to the access problem could also be interpreted as indicating a lack of commitment to and recognition for ODL by the UB management and a lack of prominence of the mode in the process of improving access to higher education through UB programmes. Participants' perceptions were that there were no enabling policies and frameworks for ODL to fit in and be understood by the existing hitherto face-to-face structures, which participants perceived were never modified, re-aligned and/or sensitised to accommodate ODL peculiarities, when the mode was introduced into the system. ODL was also perceived to be too dependent on the face-to-face mode for resources in order for it to survive. Human resources and facilities were cited as the resources which were inequitably distributed between the two modes, rendering CCE/DDE with limited control over the resources they depended on for the facilitation of teaching and learning through the ODL mode.

Another finding was that the contribution of academic members of staff from face-to-face faculties to ODL development lacked recognition and acknowledgement in the UB system. Lack of consideration of this staff input for promotional purposes or recognition through some incentives, were cited as evidence of a lack of recognition of the importance and value of ODL in the system. Similar observations had been made by some researchers in some of the dual mode universities, with similar conclusions that this impeded further growth of ODL in dual mode institutions (Morgan, 2000; Rockwell *et al,* 1999; Badu-Nyarko, 2006; Beaudoin, 2003; Lehman, 1998; Stephens and Jacobson, 1999; Maguire, 2005; Mannan, 2008; Siaciwena, 2006). Participants perceived that the

UB system did not demonstrate that the mode was effective and valuable. UB's practice of not facilitating any human resource development through ODL and not encouraging academic staff to undertake study programmes through the ODL mode was also seen as a demonstration of a lack of conviction in ODL's effectiveness as a human resource development strategy. UB academic staff from the face-to-face mode was perceived to generally have a perception that structuring, preparation and delivery of ODL programmes was less rigorous and did not observe quality procedures and standards compared to that of face-to-face programmes. Therefore ODL programmes were generally perceived by the University community to be of inferior quality and standard compared to face-to-face programmes.

The findings from the participants' responses seemed to indicate that UB management and staff regarded ODL as being of low quality and value compared to the face-to-face mode of delivery and therefore ODL seemed to have received less recognition and acceptance within the UB community. The implication of the perceived low recognition, acceptance and value of ODL by the UB community might have resulted in its negligence and lack of growth. It might have also made it difficult for the UB management and staff to convince the external stakeholders including funding agencies, government, employers and potential students about the importance and value of the mode if they had not managed to fully convince each other about that from within. ODL's seemingly struggling existence within the UB system which might be emanating from the perceived lack of acceptance due to its perceived inferior quality, might have contributed to its low development and subsequent poor performance.

With regard to the impact of the Distance Education Mainstreaming and the Learning and Teaching policies, findings were that they were not fully implemented within CCE and therefore their impact on bringing equivalency of quality to all UB programmes and increasing the number of UB programmes on the ODL mode appeared not to have been achieved (see Figure 7.3) and not to have changed practice.

Overall, data seemed to indicate that ODL as a strategy for increasing participation in higher education had not been adequately and thoroughly planned for, as was the case with the face-to-face strategy, both at national and institutional level. A clearly mapped out growth path for ODL appeared to be missing from NDP 10, both at national and UB institutional level. Since higher education had been sponsored mainly by government, the lack of resources clearly identified at national level for the development and growth of ODL seemed to adversely affect its growth and development. Even in an environment where the ODL growth path appeared to be comparatively well planned, as in the case of BOCODOL, implementation appeared to be hampered by resource constraints. It was also noted that although CCE had been identified as a national centre for ODL, there was never an identification and allocation of resources to make this RNPE mandate implementable. Even though the Tertiary Education Policy emphasised the importance of ODL in the delivery of higher education in the country, it would appear that a follow through implementation plan for this policy with regard to ODL might have been somehow omitted from the National Development Plan 10. The

8.5   Significance of the Study

This study has demonstrated that there would be continued need to increase participation in higher education in Botswana and in Southern Africa, since achievement at this level of education and training remain necessary for the enhancement of economic development of any country. It has also clearly indicated the constraints that make it difficult for universities to adequately address the escalating demands for higher education, as more graduates come from secondary schools qualified to enter into higher education programmes, as well as more adults and employees require continuous up-grading of skills and qualifications. The lack of resources to meet such requirements through expansion of face-to-face the provision indicated that ODL would remain a necessary alternative strategy to achieve increased participation in higher education and training for UB, Botswana and for Southern Africa in the foreseeable future. It became apparent that the face-to-face mode of delivery would remain inadequate to fully address the demand for this level of education. The study however pointed out that dual mode

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universities seemed to prefer the improvement of the on-campus face-to-face mode of delivery and tended to neglect further development of the ODL mode. It appeared that in many dual mode universities, only a few faculties would have just a handful of programmes delivered through the on-campus face-to-face mode of delivery and through ODL. This has tended to result in overall enrolments on the ODL mode being very low compared to the on-campus face-to-face enrolments at such universities. Even where within the one faculty that had employed both ODL and the on-campus face-to-face modes, there was evidence that ODL enrolled larger numbers of students than the face-to-face, such universities would still seem to limit their ODL provisions to just a few faculties and a few programmes, rather than have more faculties opening up access to more of their programmes through ODL.

The study has elicited some of the constraints that could be expected in dual mode settings, and which could possibly be avoided for the mode to make the intended contribution towards increased enrolments. It has clearly indicated the need to urgently demonstrate commitment and support for the ODL mode, at national as well as dual mode institutional level, by the investment of resources towards ODL growth and expansion, in order to enable the mode to increase enrolments. The study has also indicated that ODL provision in dual mode settings needs to be carefully planned for, structures, policies and frameworks put in place, to guide its development and delivery. It appeared imperative that an institution should identify the ODL model that it planned to adopt since that appeared to influence the kind and level of resources required to make it work. The study pointed out that different models of distance education, which exists in a continuum, determine the success and effectiveness of the mode. It has emphasised the need to provide resources for the ODL mode, as well as relevantly trained human resources. Sponsorship for ODL came out strongly as a necessary tool to enhance an enabling environment for its growth as well as its acceptance by stakeholders including potential students. It has also drawn attention to the importance of alertness of dual mode universities for equivalency issues, and acceptance of ODL as an equally valuable mode of delivery like the face-to-face mode. The risk of ODL being relegated to second best position, which would result in students and staff in that mode feeling inferior, was

pointed out as having the potential to impact negatively on its growth and contribution towards increased participation. The study very clearly demonstrated that negative perceptions about ODL may impede its growth and that the continued negativity towards the mode, may be delaying enhanced economic development of the region and further innovations, both of which require increased participation and achievement in higher education. It demonstrated that in the face of diminishing resources and increasing demands for higher education and the continued inability for the on-campus face-to-face provision to adequately address the demands on its own, the reality would be to put aside negativity towards ODL and embrace it as a viable alternative strategy to expand opportunities for increased participation in higher education.

The study has built on and made a contribution to the ODL research literature in Botswana and in the region. Though the findings are not generalisable, some lessons might be drawn from the study for some institutions considering dual mode approaches, and it might contribute towards policy and practice. The study has indicated that policy commitment alone, either at government or dual mode institutional level, is not enough without strategies, implementation plans, monitoring mechanisms and resources. It has demonstrated that ODL might comparatively be the less expensive of the two modes. However, it needs a heavy initial capital outlay, relevantly trained and experienced human resources and access to facilities, for it to produce equitable quality and achieve high enrolments and ultimately economies of scale.

8.6 Limitations of the Study

The scope of the study was limited to Botswana though its interest covered Southern Africa. The sample identified for the study, though it was suitable for its scope, was too small to be considered representative of regional experiences. Its findings are not generalisable. The study could not have taken a larger sample and included participation from other SADC countries. That kind of scope would have been too large for the purposes of this study and would have rendered it undoable.

8.7 Recommendations

The aim of this study was not to find solutions for the perceived constraints of ODL in dual mode institutions, or to come up with any prescriptive best practice for dual mode delivery of education at higher education. However, a few issues can be shared for consideration.

8.7.1 Theoretical Recommendations

ODL has been considered as a strategy to achieve expanded access and equitable distribution of education where demand outstrips the capacity for full-time face-to-face provision, as well as to reach otherwise difficult to reach areas. However, in practice, it appeared to have been stigmatised as an inferior and ineffective mode of provision, within some dual mode universities in Southern Africa, where for many years a dual mode university would have only one or very few faculties providing their programmes through both the ODL and face-to-face modes of delivery. Through document analysis and an analysis of interview transcripts, this research uncovered the presence of doubts within the dual mode university itself, concerning the effectiveness of the ODL mode of delivery and the quality of its products. The equivalency theory indicated that for as long as there were doubts as to the effectiveness of ODL, and the quality of its graduates, it would be difficult to have it accepted as a mode that could produce equivalent quality as the face-to-face mode. It would appear that it was further difficult, with such doubts, to allocate the ODL mode resources enough to allow it to give its students and staff the teaching and learning experiences comparable in quality to that in the face-to-face mode of provision in dual mode higher education institutions.

There seemed to have lingered an assumption that the ODL mode did not need a large amount of resources to reach its large and diversified clientele. As a result of this assumption, the resources dedicated to ODL in dual mode universities appeared to have been severely constrained and over-stretched. This appeared to have affected the quality of services provided to ODL students, compared to those studying through the face-to-

face mode of delivery. Therefore the ODL mode of provision within dual mode settings appeared to have failed to live up to its promise of substantially and cost-effectively expanding opportunities for quality higher education. Consequently, the comparatively poor quality student support services mainly emanating from constrained resources, appeared to have earned negative perceptions towards the ODL mode of provision. The continued effectiveness debate indicated continued doubt regarding the effectiveness of the mode in providing quality higher education. That seemed to result in a condition where resources would be suspected to be wasted if invested in ODL and the lack of resources perpetuating the stigma of poor performance. The recommendation in this area would therefore be for countries like Botswana, which actually appeared to need ODL in order to achieve the required expanded participation, to consider planning for ODL adequately and providing resources enough to turn around the mindset which classified ODL as an inferior, last resort type of delivery mode. As a nation, it appeared necessary to seriously consider the concepts of equivalency as discussed by Simonson *et al* (1999) and Shale (1988) when introducing and expanding ODL within dual mode higher education institutions.

8.7.2 Recommendations for Practice

My quest to have a better understanding of why some dual mode institutions in Southern Africa and particularly in Botswana, continued to enrol low numbers of students on the ODL mode than on the face-to-face mode, though ODL is supposed to have better chances of enrolling more, has revealed a few constraints that might need to be considered for the planned expansion of participation in higher education:

1. For Botswana the option is not **whether** to embrace, develop and employ ODL to expand participation in higher education. The option is **how** to develop and enhance its capacity to do so. Therefore it appears necessary to look around for best practice, draw lessons and act as a matter of urgency. Otherwise the country could be talking about transition but remaining an agro-based middle income economy for a long while because the face-to-face mode is not about to begin to cope with the demand

2. Innovations need the guidance and direction of committed, well informed, visionary and accountable leadership

3. Setting low and unchallenging performance targets does not build capacity, it kills it, kills self-esteem and wastes resources

4. Commitment to innovations should be effectively demonstrated by commitment of adequate and relevant resources, policies, planning and effective monitoring of implementation

5. The sponsorship policy for higher education should be inclusive of ODL if contribution of the higher education sector to the achievement of the national developmental targets is to be realised

6. ODL and the face-to-face mode of delivery can co-exist, maximise resources and make a significant contribution to increased participation in higher education. However, the landscape has to be clearly defined for their co-existence. Nothing need be taken for granted at planning stage. The players should be very clear of their and one another's mandates and roles, with resources clearly identified

8.7.3   Recommendations for Future Research

This study has indicated the need for future research to investigate further and discover the necessary strategies that can be employed for ODL in dual mode institutions to gain respect, trust, recognition and acceptance in its own environment. An area of possible focus for future research might be the area of stigma and low perceptions for ODL quality and value, which seem to have tarnished equivalency considerations between the two modes. Research could find out what ODL should do to be rid of the stigma. In this area, it might prove prudent to research on other dual mode higher education institutions where ODL appear to be effective in addressing the problem of limited access to higher education and factors contributory to that success.

Future research could also focus on finding out the opinions and perceptions of other stakeholders, concerning the quality and value of education provided through ODL compared to the face-to-face mode of delivery. This future investigation could include prospective and current students on both ODL and on-campus programmes in dual mode universities, parents, as well as prospective and current employers of graduates of ODL programmes. Their experiences and opinions on the quality of higher education and training delivered through ODL would enrich the knowledge base in this field and guide future developments.

Another area of possible future research could be an assessment of infrastructure development to establish the level of internet and other media connectivity and accessibility for the provision of higher education. On the basis of findings from such research, ODL institutions might be in a more informed position to decide which model of ODL would be suitable, viable, accessible and effective for their purposes.

8.8   Conclusion

This study has pointed out some challenges that ODL might experience in some dual mode settings, as well as opportunities that can be taken advantage of to grow the mode. Some of the challenges might be from the external environment of the institution while others might be from the internal environment. From both the internal and external factors inhibiting the growth of ODL, the study has pointed out some issues of equivalency, where ODL seems to be given less attention and less value than the face-to-face mode of delivery. Emphasis is laid on the need for the decision makers at national as well as institutional level to believe that ODL and the face-to-face mode have equivalent value and that needs to be demonstrated at decision making level. The study has pointed out that support for ODL through policy decisions only is not enough without the commitment of resources for implementation. It has also indicated that ODL has the potential to address the challenges of high and diversified demands, if it could benefit from pre-planning and resourced adequately, if staff manning the programme could be adequately trained.