Warp and weft in policy analysis: Australian distance education policy: formation, formulation and implementation, 1901-1989

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Warp and Weft in Policy Analysis:

Australian Distance Education Policy
Formation, Formulation and Implementation 1901-1989

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

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1994
**Warp:** yarns placed lengthwise in the loom, across which the weft (or woof) is interlaced.

**Weft:** yarns travelling from selvedge to selvedge in a loom, interlacing with the warp; woof; filling

**Weave:** to interlace so as to form a fabric or texture; to form by combining various elements or details into a connected whole: to weave a tale or plot
CONTENTS

Abstract ............................................................................................ ix

Dedication ........................................................................................... x

Acknowledgement ................................................................................ xi

Acronyms ......................................................................................... xii

INTRODUCTION

Genesis of the Study .............................................................................. 1

Opportunities for New Insights .......................................................... 3

Contribution to Policy Studies .............................................................. 7

Linking Policy Making and Theory ...................................................... 9

Aims of the Study ................................................................................. 11

Structure of the Thesis ......................................................................... 12

Summary ............................................................................................. 16

PART I

THE CLOTH AND THE TOOLS

Chapter 1: Surveying the Cloth – An Overview of Australian Distance Education ......................................................... 18

Defining Distance Education: dimensions of distance ......................... 18
The Evolution of Distance Education in Australia ............................................ 23

Highlights of Australian Distance Education Policy ......................................... 27

Summary ........................................................................................................... 33

Chapter 2: Tools on Display – The Methodology .......................................... 34

The Policy Space .......................................................................................... 34

Multi-disciplinarity ....................................................................................... 38

Macro versus Micro: scale and system levels ................................................. 39

Use of Grounded Theory Methodology ......................................................... 40

Taking a Post Hoc Longitudinal Study Approach ........................................... 44

Bounding the Field of Inquiry ........................................................................ 45

Multiple Methods and Sources for Triangulation .......................................... 51

Data Sources ................................................................................................... 51

Methods of Analysis ...................................................................................... 58

Confronting Some Dilemmas ............................................................................ 63

Chapter 3: Discerning the Patterns of the Policy Cloth ................................... 67

Emerging Themes .......................................................................................... 67

The Emergent Conceptual Framework ........................................................... 72

Open Systems and the Ties that Bind ............................................................. 78
Change as the Central Focus ................................................................. 88

The Foundation Definition .................................................................. 103

A Change-Centred Policy Analysis Model .......................................... 107

The Research Questions .................................................................... 108

PART II

UNPICKING THE CLOTH: INVESTIGATING THE WARP AND WEFT

Chapter 4: The Warp – Long-lasting Influences ............................... 115

Geographic Perspectives ................................................................. 115

Population Perspectives ................................................................. 118

Socio-economic Influences ............................................................. 121

Historical and Cultural Influences .................................................. 123

Linking Warp and Weft ................................................................. 124

Chapter 5: Initiation – Establishment of External Studies in Australia  
(1901-1930) .................................................................................. 127

Layers of the System ................................................................. 127

Discontinuities Offer Opportunity for Change .................................. 128

Other Enabling Conditions ........................................................... 129

Community, Government and Bureaucratic Leaders as Key Agents .... 131

Tensions between Transformational Change and Institutional Isomorphism ...... 135
Who Sought the New Higher Education Opportunities? ........................................... 141

The Initiation Period Recapped ................................................................ 141

Chapter 6: Review, Upheaval and Reconstruction (1930-1955) .......... 143
Discontinuity and Change ...................................................................... 143

Resources from New Sources ................................................................. 145

The System Expands ........................................................................... 146

Key Agents in a National System......................................................... 150

Change and Counter Change .................................................................. 152

Chapter 7: Growth and Diversification (1955-1975) ...................... 155

Discontinuities at the Level of Education Provision ............................. 155

Key Agents Carry Both Innovation and Tradition across the System .... 159

The System Expands and Grows Complex .............................................. 162

The Effects of Institutional Isomorphism ................................................. 166

The Changing System .......................................................................... 168

Appropriate Timescales for Analysis and Review ................................. 170

The Commonwealth Looks at Transformational Change – and Turns Away 171

Chapter 8: Turbulence and Change (1975-1989) ............................... 174
The System (Over)extended .................................................................... 174

Change as Discontinuity ....................................................................... 175
PART III

INSIGHTS FROM THE WARP AND WEFT OF AUSTRALIAN DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

Chapter 9: Australian Distance Education Policy

The Inquiry Approach

The Policy Cloth of Australian Distance Education

Will Convergence Occur?

Theory Development in Distance Education Policy

Future Research

Chapter 10: Contributions to Policy Studies

Grounded Theory Methodology and the Policy Space

Strengthening Conceptual Development through Cross-paradigmatic Inquiry

Change as a Focal Point for Policy Study

Taking the Longer View

The Enlightenment of Policy Makers
APPENDICES

Appendix A  Australian Distance Education Congresses .................. 217
Appendix B  Chronology of Relevant Events .............................. 219
Appendix C  Development History of Higher Education Provider Sites Used in the Study .................. 226
Appendix D  Interviews ........................................ 228
Appendix E  The Researcher's Autobiography ............................ 231
Appendix F  Document Review Questions ............................... 237
Appendix G  State Legislative Reference to External Studies and Related Provision for Site Studies .................. 240

Site Sources Consulted ........................................ 242

General References ........................................ 248

LIST OF FIGURES

Analysing the Policy Cloth ........................................ 16

1.1 Dimensions of Openness ........................................ 22

1.2 The Evolution of Off-Campus Education .......................... 24
1.3 Stages of Development in Australian Off-Campus Higher Education .............. 25

1.4 Participation in Higher Education by Mode of Study (Australia) .................... 33

2.1 Saran's Three Phase Research Model .................................................. 42

2.2 Stages of the Study ....................................................................... 43

2.3 Provider Site Selection ................................................................... 49

2.4 Using Discontinuity to Bound a Site in Time .......................................... 50

3.1 Emergent Themes ......................................................................... 68

3.2 Emergent Concepts ....................................................................... 73

3.3 Multi-disciplinary Derivation of the Study Framework ............................... 74

3.4 Typology of Organisational Conformity ............................................. 85

3.5 Graphic Representation of Continuity and Discontinuity ............................. 94

3.6 Key Factors for Change.................................................................. 102

3.7 A Change-Centred Policy Process Model ............................................. 107

4.1 Scale Comparisons of Australia with Europe and North America............... 116

4.2 Patterns of Settlement in Australia ..................................................... 117

4.3 Components of Population Growth (1901-1984) .................................... 118

4.4 Participation by Mode of Enrolment for Three Higher Education Providers (Persons) ................................................................. 119
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Socio-economic Patterns</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Commonwealth Politics – Turbulence &amp; Stability (1901-1989)</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Evolution of Distance Education in Australian Higher Education</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 Investigation Periods for This Study</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1 Apparent Year 12 Retention Rates (1976-1987)</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Designated Distance Education Centres</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT


Descriptors: policy research, organisational studies, higher education, distance education, discontinuity, change, institutional isomorphism, systems, Australia

Why do distance education and conventional education continue as separate entities in Australian higher education? One answer to this question is the role which distance education has played as an instrument of public policy.

The research design used a grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Saran 1985) in association with the policy space heuristic (Fasano 1993) in a post hoc longitudinal study of distance education policy development and implementation in Australian higher education from its first introduction at the University of Queensland in 1911 to implementation of the Australian federal government’s White Paper on Higher Education (released in 1988). An interpretative metaphor of woven cloth is also used as an explanatory tool.

A change-centred policy process analysis model is presented with the roles of discontinuity, key agents, and the bridging mechanisms of an open systems perspective, particularly institutional isomorphism, emphasised. Suggestions for further research and possible change strategies in Australian distance education policy making are made, as well as some further recommendations for research within the general field of policy studies.
This work is dedicated to the memory of my father,

Kenneth Paul Mahony (1905-1978)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study would not have been completed without the belief and support offered to me by my mother, Mary Kathleen Mahony and my father, Kenneth Paul Mahony; without the enduring example of my mother’s persistent and wide-ranging interests; without the support of Christopher K. Morgan during an important part of my professional development; and, most particularly, without the intense intellectual stimulation and demands together with the generous guidance and support of my supervisor, Professor Carla Fasano.

I would also like to acknowledge the time and thought contributed by those who have discussed the development of Australian distance education policy and practice with me.

Finally, I thank Penny Marr for her very useful comments on an early draft as an intelligent reader from outside the field.
## Acronyms

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACDP</td>
<td>Australian Committee of Directors and Principals in Advanced Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASPESA</td>
<td>Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVCC</td>
<td>Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAE</td>
<td>College of Advanced Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTEC</td>
<td>Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission - advisory body to the Commonwealth Government prior to NBEET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Distance Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>Distance Education Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET</td>
<td>Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFTSU</td>
<td>Equivalent full-time student unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>Higher Education Council - one of three councils of NBEET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAE</td>
<td>Institute of Advanced Education (the same as a CAE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBEET</td>
<td>National Board of Employment, Education and Training - an advisory body to the Commonwealth Minister of Employment, Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIOTE</td>
<td>National Institute of Open Tertiary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAC</td>
<td>Orange Agricultural College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODLAA</td>
<td>Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OU</td>
<td>British Open University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEC</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Commission - predecessor to CTEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNE</td>
<td>University of New England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNS</td>
<td>Unified National System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UQ</td>
<td>University of Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWA</td>
<td>University of Western Australia</td>
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