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

Mary Jane Mahony

University of Wollongong
NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
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

Mary Jane Mahony

Bachelor of Science (University of California, Davis) 1969
Master of Science (University of California, Davis) 1971
Diploma in Education (University of New England) 1979
Graduate Diploma in Distance Education (S.A. College of Advanced Education) 1985

Faculty of Education

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
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
Political Change and Not Change ............................................................. 178

Key Agents Again Primarily Associated with Government .................. 185

Recurring Patterns in the Policy Cloth .............................................. 188

The End of the Story? ....................................................................... 189

PART III

INSIGHTS FROM THE WARP AND WEFT OF AUSTRALIAN DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

Chapter 9: Australian Distance Education Policy ................................ 193

The Inquiry Approach ....................................................................... 193

The Policy Cloth of Australian Distance Education .......................... 194

Will Convergence Occur? ................................................................ 203

Theory Development in Distance Education Policy .......................... 207

Future Research ............................................................................. 207

Chapter 10: Contributions to Policy Studies ...................................... 209

Grounded Theory Methodology and the Policy Space ..................... 209

Strengthening Conceptual Development through Cross-paradigmatic Inquiry ................................. 211

Change as a Focal Point for Policy Study ........................................ 213

Taking the Longer View .................................................................. 215

The Enlightenment of Policy Makers .............................................. 215
The Metaphor of the Policy Cloth ............................................................... 216

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
4.5 Socio-economic Patterns ........................................................... 122
4.6 Commonwealth Politics – Turbulence & Stability (1901-1989) ............ 122
4.7 Evolution of Distance Education in Australian Higher Education .......... 126
4.8 Investigation Periods for This Study ........................................... 126
8.1 Apparent Year 12 Retention Rates (1976-1987) ................................ 177
8.2 Designated Distance Education Centres ....................................... 184
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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

GENESIS OF THE STUDY

Distance education has been a part of Australian higher education since the beginning of the 20th century. Distance education professionals in Australia today believe that the mode, methodologies, costs and outcomes have been proven to be satisfactorily comparable with those of traditional face-to-face education. Jevons (1987) argues for parity of esteem and Smith (1987) points out the sophistication and flexibility of teaching methods. While some have predicted a convergence of distance and conventional education, that is, a blurring or elimination of the boundaries expressed by the juxtaposed terms 'internal' and 'external' (see, for example, Smith & Kelly 1987; Campion & Kelly 1988), to date this prediction remains mainly unfulfilled (Johnson, Lundin & Chippendale 1992; Ross 1993). This is despite the fact that the opportunities for improving teaching and learning practices, obtaining economies of scale, and limiting capital investment, while potentially extending access to higher education, have not gone unnoticed. What has constrained convergence?

1 The term 'distance education' (DE) is now used to subsume all forms of teaching which include spatial distance between teachers and learners; in most cases in Australia (though not necessarily, for example, in the USA where extensive use of various teleconferencing methods occurs), temporal distance is also assumed. There are, however, technological, cultural and pedagogical distinctions among the range of terms used by both educationists and the community at large. 'Distance education' is used in this study whenever education at a distance is meant in a generic sense. There is an extended discussion of distance education in Chapter 1.

2 The Commonwealth Government’s policy advisory body, the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (hereafter called NBEET) accepted the advice in this report and included it in its policy advice (NBEET 1992).

3 ‘Higher education’ is the sector of post-secondary education which includes universities and colleges of advanced education and excludes technical and further education (TAFE). In Australia the sector was established as a public system and remained fully public until the end of the 1980s when Australia’s first private university was established.
What has caused distance education policy and practice to continue to be set apart from that for conventional on-campus classroom-based programs? These questions provided the basis for examining the development of distance education policy in Australia reported in this study.

I confronted these questions as a distance education practitioner in Australian higher education. I worked as an educational developer and academic manager in distance education for eight years and completed two graduate-level qualifications by distance education prior to undertaking the doctoral studies leading to this work. During that experience I had observed that barriers to diffusion of educational developments were often located not at the level of academic practitioners, but rather at the level of policy.

Preliminary investigations suggested that decision makers creating and administering education policy in Australia had so structured the higher education system at both provider and government levels that it was difficult for convergence to occur in either policy or practice. This perspective was highlighted when a landmark public policy paper on Australian higher education was released in 1987 by the Minister of Education of the day, John Dawkins. This policy document focussed on creating a 'unified national system', yet at the same time reaffirmed the separateness of external and internal studies.

Highlighting the influence of public policy making on distance education policy and practice at all levels contrasts with the more usual perspective of practitioners of distance education. They include the immediate administrators (e.g. heads of distance education units), academic contributors (including subject matter specialists in the roles of instructors, authors, content consultants and instructional designers), educational technologists, editors, and staff in student support roles (e.g. liaison officers, library staff with the brief to support distance education students). These roles can be identified at any provider with a well-developed distance education program, and are also seen in the lists of participants at conferences devoted to distance education (as, for example, the regular ASPESA Forums listed in Appendix A). It should, however, be noted that the greater number of self-declared distance educators have been administrators of distance education units,
education. These would see the influences on their daily practice as being of provider or program policy rather than public policy. The one visible exception would be the influence of government through its control over the allocation of resources (highlighted, for example, by the threat posed by external student drop-out rates since government funding is now directly tied to student numbers). At the program implementation level, that of Lipsky’s ‘street level bureaucrats’ (1980), the focus is on the immediate clients, and rarely includes government bureaucrats or political leaders. The street level clients for people in distance education provision include both students and a range of internal client relationships among the distance education practitioners in a university.

The spotlight on policy intensified as I noted both a loose-coupling of public policy and local practice at innovative higher education providers, and the influence of other policy concerns upon distance education policy and practice at both government and provider levels.

Thus, a domain of inquiry existed which required an investigation ranging across levels of systems6) in the higher education system. Such an investigation could spotlight the more significant issues from amongst the noise of local and immediate concerns.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW INSIGHTS**

While studies of more conventional aspects of Australian higher education policy are not lacking (for example, Tannock 1975; Birch 1976; Williams 1978; Gelber 1986; Harman 1988; Davies 1989; Marginson 1993), studies focussed on distance education policy are more rare. There has, of course, been a body of work on Australian distance education instructional designers and educational technologists rather than subject matter specialists or senior policy makers of government or higher education providers.

---

6 This question of perspective is addressed in greater detail in Chapter 3 with regard to the value of an open systems perspective.
which has in some way addressed policy making. In the main, these works have been largely descriptive. When an analytical approach related to policy has been taken, it has either been reactive to existing or foreshadowed public policy, or has focussed on provision of a technological fix to Australia’s endemic problems of geographic isolation.

In the main such work has:

- focussed mainly on the provider and program level (for example, White 1973; 1982; Moodie 1991c; aspects of Smith and Kelly’s 1987 work *Distance Education and the Mainstream*);

- examined policy decisions in a utilitarian framework, responding in recent years to the economic rationalism and human capital theory framed agendas of Australian governments of the 1980s and 1990s (for example, Kelly 1987b; Nunan 1991);

- focussed on the application of ‘new’ technologies (for example, Lange 1986; Campion 1991).8

Furthermore, the study of Australian distance education policy has also been little informed by underpinning theory. There have been some exceptions. An instrumental view of distance education has been explored within a Fordist/post-Fordist framework. This consideration of distance education seems to have origins in German scholar Otto Peters’ concern with distance education as an industrialised form of education (1971, 1989) and has continued in Australia with critical work examining both the policy arena

---

7 This work has primarily taken the form of conference presentations and journal articles within the distance education purview rather than forming part of the general discourse on Australian higher education policy.

8 Satellite delivery services were the most obvious during the 1980s, drawing upon both enthusiasm for the new technologies and on national communications policy needs to justify the infrastructure. Videoconferencing has been one of the politically favoured technologies of the 1990s with infrastructure funding to the government selected Distance Education Centres as mentioned in Chapter 8.
and pedagogical practice (see, for example, Campion 1990; Campion & Guiton 1991; Campion & Renner 1992).

Evans and Nation (1992) recently drew the attention of the distance education community to the role of theory building when they noted that

These sorts of transformations are not merely to practice, but also to the theories and discourses which frame our understandings of distance education and open learning. Therefore the problem for those of us involved in the field is not just about how we keep up with new practices, but also how to theorise these changes in ways which help us to understand the broader social and historical contexts through which open and distance education is transformed. (p.3)

The strength of theoretically informed work in Australian distance education, however, is to be found emerging primarily in the related fields of learning theory, instructional science, and learner support, all areas of inquiry not of immediate concern in this work.

Possible Constraints on Theoretical Work in Australia

A plethora of government-initiated committees of inquiry which have formed a substantial part of higher education policy-making activities in recent years may have turned the potential community of policy thinkers to the reactive position, forcing them by circumstances to respond to an increasing range of government-initiated demands including access and equity policies, technological advances, vocational education and training, and other national agenda items. In association with this government focus, it should also be noted that a major source of funds for such research in recent times has been the Commonwealth's Investigations and Evaluations Program (see Livingston 1988). In the end, most Australian distance education researchers with a proactive bent appear to have turned their attention to questions of practice rather than policy.

10 Harman (1988) has commented on the constraints which this situation imposes in Australia, numbering among them a modest budget, a recent focus on reviewing disciplinary areas (e.g. law,
Another possibility for the relative scarcity of theoretically-based studies in Australia of distance education policy could have been the lack of appropriate communication vehicles. It was only with the establishment of the Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association in 1973 (ASPESA)\(^{11}\) that a specialised forum for the exploration of distance education issues of any kind was created. Examination of ASPESA Biennial Forum proceedings (see Appendix A for a list of Forums held), however, suggests a preoccupation with the politics of the day where policy matters are concerned. This is perhaps not unreasonable given the turbulence of the times from the mid-1970s to the present day (see in particular Chapter 9); such a preoccupation was not conducive to meta-level analysis. Hence, Australian distance education policy offered the opportunity for investigative work which could contribute to a greater understanding both of distance education and of higher education policy-making in Australia.

Finally, the paucity of theory-informed analyses, compared with distance education’s long role in Australian higher education, may also reflect Birch’s view on educational policy formation in Australia in general where he suggested that there was little policy about policy making (1976, pp.70-71). One result, he continues, is that there has been a rivalry in the provision of education, at the expense of a national policy – that is, practice has overtaken policy-making. Fasano and Winder (1991) more recently noted that ‘Australian education is a land of contrasts’ and offered the view that

> Few of the available conceptual frameworks in education in general, and in education policy in particular, allow the analyst to account for the complexity at hand in a concise and rigorous manner, without falling in some reductionist pitfalls. Other sources of insight have to be brought on stage to assist the analysts to ‘make sense’ of events. (p.1)

\(^{11}\)It is interesting to note that this was just two years after the first formal conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE). This may have exacerbated the separation between research and practice, as well as that between conventional and distance education, whether the concern was policy, research or other aspects of distance education.
This study has sought those 'other sources of insight' and brought them to bear on distance education\textsuperscript{12} policy.

\textbf{CONTRIBUTION TO POLICY STUDIES}

This work is, however, about more than a detailed analysis of Australian distance education policy for its own sake. It is a study seated in the discipline area of policy studies, drawn there initially by the observations mentioned above of the influence of events and forces beyond the boundaries of education policy and practice.

\textbf{Background to the Study of Policy}

The emergence of the study of policy in its own right was a post-war phenomenon initiated, according to Bobrow and Dryzek (1987), by Lerner and Lasswell's 1951 publication of \textit{The Policy Sciences: recent developments in scope and methods}. Lerner and Lasswell’s book acknowledged the need for a wide range of contributions to 'knowledge of and knowledge in the public decision process'. Extensive research towards both goals followed and now, according to some policy implementation theorists (Goggin et al 1990), policy research is in its 'third generation'. The first generation considered the study of policy as the study of problem-solving (primarily why problems weren't being solved by extant policy approaches), the second generation considered the study of policy as the study of the development and application of rational systems, and the third generation has addressed the 'missing link' (Hargrove 1975 reported by Ham and Hill 1984) between the projected outcomes (the apparent aims of the rational policy decision) and the actual outcomes. In this 'third generation' stage, researchers have not only looked at the implementation process specifically but have also stepped back to look at the whole of the policy process and its context. Thus, the underlying research questions in implementation studies generally take a more open form of inquiry, an

\textsuperscript{12}Hereafter referred to as DE.
illuminative\textsuperscript{13} approach which attempts to make visible what is actually happening rather than whether what is expected to be happening is actually happening. The question becomes: What \textit{is} going on?\textsuperscript{14} It is this form of general research question which fits the type of inquiry suggested by the observation that opened this Introduction. Why has convergence of conventional and distance education has been slow to occur? What is going on in higher education policy with regard to distance education policy?

**Relationship of Policy Study to Policy Making**

There is a debate among policy researchers as to the contribution that policy research makes to policy making. This study takes the perspective of the enlightenment function\textsuperscript{15} of policy research. In this view research best challenges existing perspectives and definitions of the problematic through development of new concepts and theoretical perspectives rather than prescribes how problems should be solved (Weiss 1977, 1982; Husen 1984). Views on the contribution of policy research within the enlightenment perspective range from Wilson’s focus on the provision of conceptual language, ruling paradigms and empirical examples (1981 reported by Trow 1988) to Finch’s view that the conceptualisations of an issue offered as a result of research are more important than the concrete findings (1986).

\textsuperscript{13}The illumination concept has been present in educational evaluation for some time (see, for example, Parleu & Hamilton 1977), and Winter’s (1990) reference to the value of the literature of evaluation for policy theorists is a timely one.

\textsuperscript{14}The tendency of researchers to take an atomised approach rather than an holistic approach is understandable. Policy analysis reflects by its very use of the term ‘analysis’ a tendency to unpack that which is to be studied into smaller and more manageable subsets. This approach, however, must be balanced by taking a more sweeping view in an effort to identify the links and loops among the policy stages recognised by policy scholars. These stages have been described by some, for example, as formation (issue identification and options development), formulation, implementation, review and evaluation, redirection/replacement/termination (Hogwood & Gunn 1984; Harman 1988).

\textsuperscript{15}Weiss (1979) suggests a range of seven different meanings associated with the concept of research utilisation. They include (1) the knowledge-driven model, (2) the problem-solving model, (3) the interactive model, (4) the political model, (5) the tactical model, (6) the enlightenment model, and (7) as part of the intellectual enterprise of society.
Policy research from the enlightenment stance can contribute to the extension of the ways in which policy makers think, and eventually, act (Weiss with Bucuvalas 1980; Winter 1990). From this perspective the current study offers food for thought to both policy researchers and policy makers.

**LINKING POLICY MAKING AND THEORY**

If, from one point of view policy making can be influenced by policy theory, then from another policy theorising can be influenced by studying policy making, and that is the basis of this study. It was set in an illuminative, or interpretative, framework, taking a grounded methodology approach (Glaser & Strauss 1965, 1967) following Saran (1985). This approach focuses on concept generation as a result of observation rather than prior to observation.

This was an exploratory inquiry, with methodology metaphors of the 'detective' and the 'investigative reporter' (Douglas 1976 as reported by Miles & Huberman 1984; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Benjaminson & Anderson 1990). These metaphors are particularly apt for an application of the 'what's going on here' question. Benjaminson & Anderson (1990, p.19) point out that

> the most fruitful investigations will often be [of] those institutions that function so unobtrusively and with so little fuss that the public assumes that they are doing their job as well as it can be done. A careful look at any long-established institution will often reveal a dense bureaucracy, grown up by custom and accretion, that is no longer doing the job that most people, if they thought about it, would want performed. The concerned reporter . . . will attempt to dig into the operations of such agencies and let the public know how they can be reformed or improved.

The study linked interpretive synthesis and empirical analysis (Majchrzak 1984) within a grounded methodology approach using the researcher as research instrument. Saran (1985) clarifies this approach by expressing it as a three phase method of hypothesis, deduction and induction applied in an iterative manner in what becomes a rising spiral of increasingly sophisticated data gathering, analysis, reflection and conceptual
development, testing and more data gathering until the developing model (substantive, or grounded, theory) is satisfactorily established.

This unifying approach goes some way towards responding to concerns about theory building expressed in the literature of various disciplines. Such concerns are reflected across a range of views, from Hammersley's 1985 challenge to researchers in education to develop theory from empirical observations in order to move beyond a wealth of theoretical development and a paucity of theory, to concerns about making sense of an abundance of theory development (as expressed for political science by Noble 1982). A unifying approach also can contribute to setting priorities among the plenitude of concepts and variables that emerge in active and multi-faceted policy research (a concern expressed directly for policy science by Winter 1990).

The application of a grounded theory approach proved to be of value both for policy theory building and for policy research methodology. This approach required an exploration of the empirical field to discover themes, followed by the development of a set of statements of emerging general principles. These principles were then tested, in this case both in the literature of several discipline areas flagged by those themes (leading to a cross-paradigmatic conceptual framework) and further in the selected empirical field of distance education.

**The Metaphor of Warp and Weft**

Miles and Huberman (1984) recommend the use of metaphors for interpretative analysis. The major metaphor shaping this study is that of a running woven fabric. The fabric displays particular patterns — the picture taken as a whole — which are formed by the interweaving of warp and weft (or woof as it may also be called).

The study draws upon the distant and recent past and thus has the appearance of an historical study. Its purpose is not, however, merely to describe what has happened in the past, but rather to search for the warp and weft, for the patterns of explanation and
prediction using the past as a field of inquiry (recommended by Fox 1990 and
demonstrated, for example, by Saran 1985; Yanow 1992; Fasano 1993). It is a search
for the patterns which connect to create policy. An enhanced understanding of those
patterns will not only enable a greater understanding of the present but also aid the
prediction, and the creation, of the future.

Throughout the study the metaphor of a woven cloth and the recurring patterns upon it is
used to reflect the search for common foundations – the warp, upon which the weft of a
particular policy issue area with its colours, textures and patterns is laid. The metaphor of
warp and weft in education does have an earlier user: Ely (1978, p.1) speaks of patterns
and says:

An analysis of the class history of Australia, and associated compromises and
rationalisations of politicians and educational administrators, reveals the warp of continuity
as well as the woof of change within the texture of Australian educational history.

but the metaphor does not appear widely used in public policy study.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

There are thus two aims in this study:

1. a contribution to greater understanding of distance education policy in Australian
   higher education as a policy issue area;

2. a contribution to the development of meta-policy theory and its expression in a
   conceptual framework which may improve and extend the formal study of policy.

The specific objectives of the research undertaken included:

• investigating DE policy in the Australian policy context to identify recurring themes
  and patterns in the forming and implementing of that policy which might explain the
  continuation of the dichotomy of internal and external studies;
• constructing a simple conceptual model for policy analysis drawing on a multi-disciplinary body of theory which would be both parsimonious and revealing using a grounded theory approach as methodology and distance education in Australian higher education policy as empirical field;

• testing and refining that model in the context of examining the Australian higher education ‘policy space’ with a focus on the issue area of distance education over a substantial period of time.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This study has been based on the introduction into Australian higher education of the innovation of distance education and shows how that innovation has fared in policy and practice.

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

The first step is to survey the higher education policy space in broad historical terms with attention focussed on the distance education issue area. First, an introduction to distance education as an educational concept is provided to establish the educational context of the policy issue area. Second, the evolution of the concept and practice in Australia over time from its origins in correspondence education to the current debate on open learning is presented. Finally, highlights of Australian distance education policy development for the period studied are provided as an overview of the policy issue area itself.

Chapter 2: Tools on Display – The Methodology

This chapter details the application of a grounded methodology approach to the study of Australian distance education policy making in association with the use of the policy space construct and with attention to multi-disciplinarity and scale. Grounded theory methodology is an interpretative method of enquiry in which concepts are generated from themes drawn from the rich data (qualitative and quantitative) of an empirical study. The
policy space is an heuristic which facilitates systematic identification of the components, forces and environmental factors involved in the formation of policy and its outcomes. The research design is a post hoc longitudinal study using a range of data sources and analytical methods. Some dilemmas facing the researcher are discussed.

Chapter 3: Discerning the Patterns in the Policy Cloth

This chapter draws out from the empirical work the emergent themes. These included distance education as innovation (a transformational change on its initiation), the use of distance education as a public policy tool, the dependence of distance education on technological development, the role of key people in distance education policy making and practice, and the influence of the policy 'marketplace' in a consideration of exchange. In association with these themes distance education policy making was recognised as a multi-level policy event with repeating patterns which move in and out of focus over time. These themes lead on to conceptual development drawing on a range of theory sources, and provide the theoretical basis for the conceptual framework, presented as a Change-Centred Policy Process Model, and for the specific research questions for the study.

Chapter 4: The Warp - Long-lasting Influences

In this chapter the researcher steps back to take a longer view of Australian policy and find that there are long-lasting factors which form a warp underpinning policy over time. Policy analysts and policy makers may work with, sometimes modify, but never completely change these variables within their lifetimes. Thus the warp of the policy tale presented here comprises the long-lasting factors difficult to influence, sometimes laid finely in the background, at other times prominent within the pattern of the cloth.

The method by which the period of study (1901-1989) has been segmented for reporting is also explained here. Chapters 5-8 then present the empirical analysis in more detail.
Chapter 5: Initiation 1901-1930

This chapter commences a more detailed presentation of the empirical analysis of Australian distance education policy from its initiation with the establishment of the University of Queensland to the beginning of the Depression. The conditions which enabled the transformational change producing distance education policy and programs in Australia are presented and the establishment of the foundation definition for distance education policy is reviewed.

Chapter 6: Review, Upheaval and Reconstruction 1930-1955

In this chapter the development of Australian distance education is shown to be buffeted by a series of discontinuities in the formal of external events including the Depression and World War II. Changes in the higher education system, particularly as it grows into a national system, are examined for the presence of transformational change and the factors which enable it to occur.

Chapter 7: Growth and Diversification 1955-1975

Once established, postwar Australian society reflected economic prosperity, a burgeoning population and increasing concerns with social justice. This chapter examines how these factors affected Australian higher education (and distance education within it). It also looks at the University of New England for the first time as the second provider site examined.

Chapter 8: Turbulent Times 1975-1989

In this chapter the focus is on the abrupt political and economic change coupled with growth and diversification of providers and students which caused an era of turbulence and change in Australian higher education. The now highly influential role of the federal government is examined, and the long term patterns of policy advice and policy making are illustrated.
Chapter 9: Australian Distance Education Policy

From the first external enrolments at the University of Queensland in 1911 to the present day, the demand for external studies has been demonstrated to have played an on-going and important role in higher education participation though policy moves have been significantly motivated by factors outside the education portfolio. Although frequently treated by policy makers at government and provider level as a transitory sector of education, it has persisted and prospered. All signs suggest that it has a growing role in the provision of education in Australia. It is suggested that policy makers at all levels wishing to ensure its effective use as a policy instrument in the future might look more carefully at some of the implications of the Change-Centred Model proposed in Chapter 3. Some future direction for research on Australian distance education policy-making are suggested.

Chapter 10: Contributions to Understanding Policy

This chapter reviews the answers to the research questions within the context of their value to future policy research. Some directions for further research using the conceptual framework of this study and about multi-disciplinary researchers are raised.
The diagram below draws together, showing the relationship among them:

- the approach used ('The Tools') – involving methodologies, protocols and the conceptual framework for policy study relevant to implementation policy research concerns,

- the domain of inquiry ('The Cloth') – the focal area of study, and

- the outcomes ('Warp, Weft, and Patterns') – an increased understanding of the policy space of Australian higher education, the same for the issue area of distance education, and a contribution to policy theory building, with potential recommendations for further efforts in all three.
PART I

THE CLOTH AND THE TOOLS

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

Chapter 2  Tools on Display – The Methodology

Chapter 3  Discerning the Patterns of the Policy Cloth
CHAPTER 1

SURVEYING THE CLOTH – AN OVERVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN DISTANCE EDUCATION

This chapter sets the context of the study through an introduction to distance education as an educational practice followed by a brief outline of the development of distance education within Australian higher education.

DEFINING DISTANCE EDUCATION: DIMENSIONS OF DISTANCE

A clear understanding of what is meant by distance education is essential when considering policy in the area. An exploration of policy and practice in distance education runs up against a range of terminology, a plethora of (often unstated) assumptions and a diversity of formally assigned meanings. This situation may be further confused by the differing perceptions among professionals in the field, policy makers, and the community at large. In Australia\(^1\) the commonly used and understood terms for what is now internationally known in professional\(^2\) and political circles as ‘distance education’ have included ‘correspondence studies’, ‘external studies’, and ‘distance education’, with ‘external studies’ the mostly commonly used at present in Australia. ‘Extra-mural studies’ has been used by Australia’s close neighbour New Zealand (Bewley 1972). ‘Home study’ is also used extensively; ‘independent study’\(^3\) is sometimes used, though the notion of independent study crosses other pedagogic watersheds related to non-classroom-based education but not necessarily to off-campus education. ‘Open’ is now a descriptor regularly added following the establishment of the British Open University (OU) in the late

---

1\(^{\text{moving to international circles offers additional confusions. One example of presumptions which must be confronted is the growing use in North America of the term ‘distance education’ as distance delivery of instruction using telecommunications media, usually in ‘real’ time (see Willis 1989 as an example).}}\)

2\(^{\text{White indicated in 1982 that the term ‘distance education’ had already achieved general acceptance in educational circles (p.255).}}\)

3\(^{\text{‘Independent study’ is a term much more widely used in North America than in Australia.}}\)
Chapter 1

1960s; 'open learning' is the phrase of the 1990s. 'Resource-based teaching' and 'distributed education' are other relevant terms.

There has been considerable academic discussion about a definition of distance education and the debate is not yet over. In 1973 White indicated that correspondence programs involved 'something more sophisticated than education-through-the-post', and in 1982 (pp.255-256) he proposed that

'distance' and 'external' refer to educational programs designed to fit the needs of students who were physically separated from their teachers in universities and colleges. Though the schemes rely heavily on the postal services to deliver study materials, they also incorporate many other techniques.

That simple definition left several aspects unstated. Keegan, a well-known Australian distance educator, provided a more thorough, widely quoted definition, first published in 1986:

Distance education is a form of education characterised by

- the quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the length of the learning process (this distinguishes it from conventional face-to-face education);

- the influence of an educational organisation both in the planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of student support services (this distinguishes it from private study and teach-yourself programs);

- the use of technical media – print, audio, video or computer – to unite teacher and learner and carry the content of the course;

- the provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue (this distinguishes it from other uses of technology in education); and

- the quasi-permanent absence of the learning group throughout the length of the learning process so that people are usually taught as individuals and not in groups, with the possibility of occasional meetings for both didactic and socialisation purposes. (1990, p.49)
Chapter 1

Australian distance education policy generally reflects the Keegan perspective, treating DE in particular as a teaching mode based on separation of student and teacher, and on the provision of pre-prepared learning materials.

Although Keegan's definition is of considerable utility, it leaves the first characteristic, 'the quasi-separation of the teacher and the learner', unqualified. Two implied dimensions of separation implied in Keegan's definition are separation in geographical location and separation in time; a third dimension, that of social distance, needs also to be recognised (Evans 1989).

Social context may be characterised in various ways, and is derived from the differing social milieus, stages of life, and multiple commitments of students. The latter characteristics reflect the situation that distance education students in Australian higher education are primarily part-time and mature-age (80% over the age of 25 years according to Anwyl, Powles & Patrick 1987, p.16). Social context can be identified by noting that the teacher is located in the social community of higher education while the learner is located somewhere else both physically and contextually (e.g. family home, workplace, hospital, defence services, etc.). This separation becomes more acute when distance education is used to address social and economic inequalities as, for example, indicated by Bolton (1986):

> Among the most important breakthroughs of the last twenty years I would place one which is psychological rather than technological: the recognition that distance from educational opportunity may be measured not only in terms of kilometres but also as a consequence of social or economic inequalities. We in Australia for instance have gradually come to realise that the difficulties of attending lectures and tutorials on campus must be no less great for an Aboriginal or a migrant in the inner suburbs of Sydney or a mother of small children in a new

---

4As noted in an earlier footnote, separation in time is not a characteristic universally associated with locational separation. Among distance education programs are included those which make use of real time interaction via video, audio or computer conferencing.
housing area thirty kilometres from the General Post Office as the difficulties confronting the schoolteacher posted to a small country town. (p.17)

Social distance can be seen from other perspectives as well – see, for example the reports of Grace (1991, 1994) on gender as a distancing factor within the social context and the psychological perspectives brought to the experience of being a distance student.

It should be acknowledged that there is a considerable debate in the international arena about defining distance education and about its place in the discipline of education (Holmberg 1988; Garrison & Shale 1989; Keegan 1989). Keegan’s characterisation of distance education presented above focuses more on spatial and temporal distance (bridged by various media). Dealing with these forms of separation fits with Holmberg’s theory of the guided didactic conversation (1989) founded on a view of facilitating the independent learner through an approach which draws upon and simulates the more traditional tutorial interaction model. A different though somewhat related perspective is offered by the American scholar, Moore (1972, 1983, 1990) who takes the perspective of the learning process and appears less concerned with externalities such as physical and temporal distance; instead he takes a stand concerned with learner autonomy, dialogue and structure with a central concept of transactional distance. Back in Australia, Evans and Nation (1992) take a dialogic approach which also is less concerned with externalities and is more concerned with social and humanist perspectives of an area of education which happens to be distance education.

Scholarly debate over the meaning of distance education has also recently been overtaken by that about open learning. Educational institutions and some government policy makers have tried to co-opt the term ‘open’ in various guises, most often open university,

5 The isolated schoolteacher long remained the image of the Australian distance learner, carrying with it the myth of the outback in one of the most urbanised countries in the world. The demand for external study has in fact also been an urban phenomenon even though constrained at times by institutional policy (shown in later chapters).

6 The OU probably started the ball rolling with its first intake of students in 1970 – its key characteristic of open enrolment was celebrated in its name, and its policy was to enroll on a first come, first serve basis.
college, or as in the more recent 1992 federal government supported initiative, the Open Learning Television Project; these symbolic approaches seem to have given substance to the term in Australia.

Open learning must reflect at least some of the dimensions listed in Figure 1.1; how many, what might be their relative importance, and in what context, is the substance of current debate by distance education professionals (see, for example, Harris 1987; Kember & Murphy 1990; Lewis 1990; Nation 1990; and others). Policy makers and the general public may merely be confused or may hold conflicting interpretations. The divergence of opinion arises from the multi-dimensional nature of open learning7.

Figure 1.1 Dimensions of Openness

- Open entry
- Flexible sequence
- Negotiated objectives & content
- Negotiated learning method
- Negotiated assessment
- Range of ‘delivery’ modes
- Tutors & other supporters available on student demand
- Study anywhere
- Flexible starting time
- Participate at any time
- Flexible finishing time
- Choice of support options
- Multiple options for accreditation

Source: Mahony & Morgan (1993)

should be noted, however, that its openness was in the main limited to enrolment and to the broadcasting of some course material by radio or television; thereafter its programs could be analysed as ‘closed’ (Harris 1987).

7Not the least of the confusions relates to the overlap of its dimensions with conventional education. One example is that of openness of entry which has been a characteristic (on a limited basis) of both internal and external studies for some decades in Australia (Ling 1972).
While open learning does not figure greatly in this study (except in its federal government policy level precursor, the federal government’s Open Tertiary Education exercise of the 1970s – see Chapter 8), the movement towards open learning must be acknowledged because of its close ties with distance education policy making. Open learning represents an increasingly credible plurality of approaches to offering higher education; it is becoming yet another public policy tool to be used in other public policy arenas than education such as labour market management (for example, in an attempt to provide more opportunities for school leavers to enter tertiary level education in a period of high unemployment among young people) and export development (treating higher education programs offered at a distance as a potential international commodity) (Foks 1987).

THE EVOLUTION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Figures 1.2 and 1.3 use the most common terms: correspondence studies, external studies, distance education and open learning in a framework showing their general characteristics, their relation to one another, and their overlapping development over time. In addition, Figure 1.2 illustrates schematically the influence of three other aspects of educational provision on the development of distance education. The first two: part-time study and workers’ education⁸, extension and adult education activities (all educational programs clearly focussed on adults but not usually leading to a formal academic award) generally serve the mature-age student population while independent study, usually based on individualised learning programs not requiring classroom activities, is more universally applicable.

⁸Workers’ education is noted here separately from the more general extension and adult education activities because of the considerable activities of the WEA (the Workers Education Association) in Australia (see Whitelock 1970b).
This presentation implies that open learning is an evolutionary step in a developmental sequence. Some would agree; others would suggest that open learning is an overarching concept, encompassing the confluence and culmination of all the approaches pictured within a wider context that acknowledges the social acceptance of mass education, the growing recognition of the need for recurrent education, the need for flexibility and the contributions of technological advances in communications and information technologies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Period</th>
<th>Student Perspective</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>Following university studies from a distance. Flexibility of time and place for study. Resources for learning sparse.</td>
<td>Provider centred. Mainstream teaching staff frequently not directly involved. Seen as add-on. Traditional definition of university education dominates the construction and evaluation of the external offering (e.g. process and form are drawn from existing concepts – on-campus lectures, lecture notes, tutorials, laboratory work, library use; being in residence).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>Remote student of an on-campus program. Perceived as second best.</td>
<td>Delivery is dominated by print and postal service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies (1910-1950s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>Flexibility of time and place for study appreciated. Resources for learning improved (learning materials, contact with teaching staff and peers, etc.)</td>
<td>Provider centred with improvement in concern for learner. External approach has gained validity through direct involvement of academic staff. Separate (‘but almost equal’ – still a deficiency model in that it is seen as a mode of study for students not able to take up conventional on-campus programs) teaching/learning model develops with some unique characteristics. Reflection of traditional university model continues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies/Distance</td>
<td>Perception as second best dampened.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1940s - Present)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Figure 1.3 Stages of Development (cont)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Period</th>
<th>Student Perspective</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Delivery makes use of a variety of additional communication technologies (e.g. phone, radio, television) and configurations (e.g. residential schools, audioconferences, etc.). Courses begin to be offered only in the external/distance mode.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Learning</td>
<td>Flexibility of time and place for study expected.</td>
<td>Client-centred (individual, employer, or community). Flexibility is a prime characteristic. Not necessarily based on a single higher education provider. Based more on outcomes rather than on institutional forms and processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s - Present</td>
<td>Too early to identify effect on perception as second best(^1).</td>
<td>Use of multiplicity of communication and information technologies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\)This perception is an area where further research would be useful to inform policy-making, program development and program promotion.
HIGHLIGHTS OF AUSTRALIAN DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

The public policy importance of distance education in Australia is amply supported when the cloth of Australian distance education is surveyed from its beginning to the present day. This section presents a brief chronological overview of distance education policy and practices (see also Appendix B).

The demands for education in a post-colonial, settler environment of immense geographic size led to the initiation of distance education in the States of Queensland and Western Australia. At this time education was fully the responsibility of the States, both constitutionally and practically (McKinnon 1991). The University of Queensland (University of Queensland Act 1909) and the University of Western Australia (White 1982), were both under state government direction (as were universities which later set up external programs) to satisfy certain community needs, particularly the support of rural development through the up-grading of teachers' qualifications while reducing the frequency of staff changes in rural schools. Both universities established their programs following investigation of similar programs set up in the USA to service more dispersed populations living often in a frontier or at least rural situation. External studies programs were launched at University of Queensland in 1911 and the University of Western Australia (UWA) in 1925. The majority (though not the totality) of students comprised teachers posted to remote towns who desired to continue their studies, and improve their qualifications and career prospects. In both cases community and/or bureaucratic leaders (for example, R.H. Roe in Queensland) played significant and extended roles.

Initiation of this innovative approach to education was a political action taken at the behest of politicians and public servants to serve community development and labour market imperatives. In Queensland the provision of more and better prepared teachers to rural

---

9 The relative responsibilities for and control over higher education by state and federal governments changed over the period studied.
areas was part of a response to concerns of rural politicians that all developments in the state were directed towards the capital city in the state’s southeast corner, Brisbane.

In 1925 the name ‘Department of External Studies’ replaced that of ‘Correspondence Studies’ at the University of Queensland, matching the name of the educational program provided to the concept.

The university level distance education story continued into the Depression years as that of just the two providers. Both were seriously reviewed at the demands of their respective State Governments during the 1930s, and both continued their external programs. External student numbers increased.

The contribution of external studies to the demands of war had been first recognised in a small way by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology when it offered some technical courses by external study to service personnel returning from World War I (Ling 1972). In World War II and its aftermath, however, external studies came to the fore. Its presence in the university sector proliferated as all universities contributed to the effort of winning the war and of reconstructing Australian society afterwards. Distance education approaches were also part of the army’s extensive education programs.

Concern with post-war reconstruction led the federal government to establish the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme in 1944. This scheme focussed on social re-construction and economic development through aiding thousands of ex-service personnel to undertake university and other level studies by correspondence and external studies approaches (while located overseas as well as throughout Australia). This scheme was also the federal government’s first major financial contribution to education as education was constitutionally a State responsibility (McKinnon 1991).

In 1949 the University of Queensland re-asserted its commitment to external studies by revising its organisational structure to transform the external studies department into an
academic department with its own teaching staff (this formed what has since been known as the Queensland model) and initiated other specialist support activities. Enrolment continued to be limited to Queensland residents except under special circumstances.

The third university to offer external studies in Australia, the University of New England (UNE), enrolled its first students in 1955. Agreement to offer external studies programs in New South Wales had been exchanged by the New England University College for the opportunity to become a university in its own right under the leadership of Dr. R.B. Madgwick (during the war a leading officer in the Army Education Services).

UNE, located in Armidale in the northern tablelands area of NSW far from the state’s commercial and political capital of Sydney, was the first regionally based university in the state (and in Australia). UNE took a different approach from UQ and developed what is now known as the dual mode approach in which courses were offered both internally and externally by the same teaching staff. The majority of UNE’s students studied externally. These were mainly school teachers and external courses were mainly in the humanities and social sciences. Enrolment was initially limited to people resident in NSW or the ACT. UNE initiated the move towards ‘openness’ by enrolling a portion of students who did not have the normal university entrance qualifications but were taken in under a variety of special criteria (generally grouped under mature age entry).

In the 1960s other universities joined the group providing external studies. In all cases, it was not an existing university choosing to diversify but rather a newly established university. Hence the new Macquarie University (Sydney, NSW) commenced teaching science externally in 1967. The new Murdoch University (Perth, WA) made an active commitment to external studies provision in a state where provision by UWA was weak.

Other factors in higher education came into play in 1964 when the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia made its report *Tertiary Education in Australia* (hereafter called the Martin Report after its chairperson). One outcome was the establishment of the
colleges of advanced education (CAEs) system\textsuperscript{10}, a second tier of higher education. External studies programs proliferated as the CAE sector expanded, particularly in regional areas where the viability of a college depended on topping up student numbers with external enrolments.

In 1974 the Open Tertiary Education in Australia report produced by a Commonwealth Committee of Enquiry was released. It recommended the establishment of a National Institute of Open Tertiary Education (NIOTE) and made a number of other suggestions which would acknowledge the value of distance and open education, and consolidate and support its processes in Australia. The committee's recommendations were lost in the economic stringencies of a difficult national budget and the political process of a radical change in government\textsuperscript{11}.

The process of expanding higher education (and distance education provision within it) did not, however, abate. Deakin University (Geelong, Vic.) was established in 1978 with the primary purpose of providing distance education to Victoria. CAEs continued to branch into external studies provision in all states.

The 1980s saw a continuing focus on distance education as part of the widespread concerns of government both with education and with economic (and later managerial) efficiency. Among them was the federal Government's request to Professor Richard Johnson to investigate the area, resulting in the publication of his report \textit{The Provision of External Studies in Australian Higher Education} (hereafter called the Johnson Report) in which both the value of external studies and the implications of many, small providers and duplication of courses were pointed out. In the next year the Commonwealth Tertiary

\textsuperscript{10}CAEs were given the brief to focus on teaching (to the exclusion of research), particularly in the context of vocational education.

\textsuperscript{11}The 'dismissal' of the prime minister, following budget and political difficulties, creation of a care-taker government under the former opposition party, double dissolution of parliament and subsequent national election which returned the former opposition to power.
Education Commission formed a Standing Committee on External Studies, chaired by Professor Johnson. Among his activities he fostered a focus in the Commonwealth Investigations and Evaluations Program on distance education.

Other activities in the 1980s included publication in 1985 by the University of Queensland of the first *Directory of External Studies Courses* published for Australia. Creation of the database and publication of the directory were initially a federal government funded project\(^\text{12}\).

In 1986 the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission’s *Review of Efficiency and Effectiveness in Higher Education* (hereafter called the Hudson Report) was published; it had strong messages for the many small colleges and universities, particularly those with small external studies programs. The production model bias reflected in the title of the review was a harbinger of things still to come. John Dawkins, the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, released *Higher Education: a Policy Statement* (hereafter called the White Paper) in 1988. In addition to sweeping changes for the higher education system as a whole (which were to include the end of the binary divide between universities and CAEs), a shake down of external studies provision was proposed which would limit funding for infrastructure and development to a small number of universities and colleges already prominent in distance education provision. Eight ‘Distance Education Centres’ (DECs) were eventually announced in 1989.

From the first external enrolments at the University of Queensland in 1911 to the declaration of the DECs in 1989, the demand for external studies (and, it also should be noted, part-time studies) has played a consistent role in higher education participation Australia-wide. Figure 1.4 on page 33 shows national trends from the time in which nationally collected data was available while Figure 4.4 in Chapter 4 shows participation

---

\(^{12}\)Professor John Chick directed its compilation at the University of Queensland where he was Director of External Studies. He later moved to UNE to become Director of the Department of External Studies. The Directory is now published by UNE.
trends for three university providers, including the University of Queensland from its inception to the present day. The persistent role of distance education in Australian higher education has occurred despite the frequent use of distance education as a 'temporary solution' to a range of perceived problems such as centralisation of higher education providers in the capital cities or a need to upgrade qualifications in a professionalising employment area (such as teaching). The demand for distance education provision by both government and students has persisted in spite of the much expanded conventional higher education system extant at the end of the 1980s.

**SUMMARY**

This chapter has briefly outlined distance education in terms of pedagogical theory, delivery models, and client groups, and has presented a chronological review of Australian distance education policy. The methodology by which this study of distance education policy was conducted, and the detailed theoretical and empirical results obtained, are presented in the next two chapters.

**Notes on Figure 1.4 (following page):** (1) Australia-wide data only available from official sources from 1943. Uniform definitions of full-time and part-time students were not adopted by all universities until 1961. This, however, is seen as unlikely to have any substantial effect on the trends illustrated. (2) In 1970 a major change at school level in NSW (wherein an additional year was added to high school), the Wyndham reform, may explain a portion of the jog seen in 1971 data; varying definitions of tertiary education in Victoria at the time (Ling 1972) may also effect as well as bringing teachers colleges and other specialist providers officially into higher education as they became CAEs. Other hiccups in data collection and categorisation have also been reported which may have affected the data for a given year but not had a significant effect on the trends pictured.
Figure 1.4 Australian Higher Education Participation by Mode of Study (Persons) 1943-1989

- Internal, full-time enrolment
- Internal, part-time enrolment
- External enrolment (presumed part-time)

This study undertook more than a general survey of the cloth of distance education policy in Australia. It sought to examine the many layers and disentangle the policy fabric to discover the more fundamental patterns and the substance of the warp and weft which formed them. In this chapter the methodology used is described. The study was based in an interpretative paradigm using a policy analysis protocol called the policy space with a grounded theory methodology. The researcher was the primary research instrument.

**THE POLICY SPACE**

Use of the policy space heuristic guides the exploration of causal and co-relational events underpinning a situation addressed by policy, and also of the way in which that policy is formulated and implemented over time (Fasano 1993). Analysis of the policy space requires identifying the stakeholders\(^1\), the policy actors\(^2\), the apparent and underlying content of the policy, the beliefs and values held by the actors, and the boundaries and constraints which exist. Fasano’s additions to these fairly commonly used policy investigation criteria include an emphasis on the dimension of time and on the use of a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives. In this study the time dimension is tested against identified patterns using a framework focussed on change. The use of a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives is associated with a refinement of grounded theory methodology (presented later in more detail).

A policy space can be said to be ‘established’ when a fundamental change introduces a situation in which new policy is required. Analysis of an emerging policy space may be

---

\(^1\) Any person, group, or organisation that can place a claim on an organisation’s attention, resources, or output, or is affected by that output (Bryson 1988).

\(^2\) Those directly involved in policy making and implementation.
perceived as a simple task (for example, international relations policies for the moon once the transport technology to take humans there and back was proven; or distance education policy at the beginning of the 20th century). For clarity it is suggested here that as an ideal type there is a beginning in time to a policy space; however, even when an apparently new policy situation begins, the policies of other situations (for example, in regard to the moon the USA’s ‘cold war’ approach to dealing with the USSR; or existing higher education policy and practices in Australia in regard to distance education) may have formed an already complex policy environment. Use of the policy space as an heuristic provides a means to discover the full complexity of the picture. In this study the environmental assessment approach recommended in strategic planning (Bryson 1988) in which the environment is reviewed in preparation for the identification of strategic issues was adapted to establish the wider context in which distance education policy development was occurring, as a way of discovering where the edges of the cloth might be located, and what the sources of the threads forming the patterns were.

Development and testing of policy theory inductively using the policy space approach must occur within a policy context, drawing upon an issue area. Thus, as indicated in the Introduction the issue area is distance education within the policy space of higher education.

Lenses of Analysis

Another way of looking at the policy space is to think in terms of Yanow’s four analysis ‘lenses’ (1990) which provide an initial framework for policy research when accompanied by a ‘fifth lens’, that of timescale. Yanow’s lenses include:

1. The human relations lens, which looks at the behaviour of individual actors within organisations and traits of interpersonal behaviour;

---

3 The distinction between a policy space and an issue area was introduced by Meltsner (1972) within a political science context. Meltsner stated: ‘A policy space is more inclusive than a policy issue area and contains those political ingredients that help us understand a broad area such as health or education’.
2 The political lens, which examines dynamics within groups and relations between and among groups;

3 The structural lens, which focuses on the organisation itself as a design set of behavioural rules;

4 The systems lens, which targets organisations as they relate to one another in a particular environment. (p.214)

The additional lens introduced here is

5 The wide angle lens of timescale which formalises the need to consider the policy space over a useful period of time (Fasano 1993).

The passage of time is not widely considered as a variable by policy researchers (although longitudinal studies are regularly found in other areas of ‘human’ research such as psychology, medicine, economics and education). Yet time passes, experience increases and context changes. Winter (1990) points out, for example, that

Studies covering a longer timeframe have found that some programs that were failures at first gradually become more successful as the policy proponents make use of experiences and experimentation to remedy deficiencies. (p.23)

while Scott (1987) notes that an organisation studied over time might not be the same organisation at the end of the study. Both scholars are emphasising not only the importance of timescale but also the dynamics of change. It takes time as well as resources and commitment to translate policy intention into programs, procedures and structures.

---

4 Although Hogwood and Gunn (1984) express gentle criticism of the political science case study approach and recommend a longer look through the several stages, they still take only a short term view of the time factor in the policy space. Saran’s work (1985) which provides some of the methodological underpinning for this study (discussed later in this chapter) is a useful exception.
Chapter 2

It is important to take note of change over a useful period of time. Consistency of period is also desirable, although the regularity of the use of five and ten year periods may be attributed to little more than custom. The researcher concerned with timescale who studies government documents and commentary in Australia is soon struck by the variation, even within a single document. Further, rarely is there a logical rationale offered for the period chosen.

Researchers whose intention is to feed their results into the making of policy (whether because the research is contracted for the purpose or because of the ideological commitment of the researcher), however, face a considerable dilemma. As Weiss with Bucuvalas (1980) point out, the research timescale even as it is usually set is frequently much longer than policy-makers are prepared to wait before coming to a decision. This constraint adds some value both to the post hoc longitudinal approach taken here as an alternative to short-term snapshot studies and to the emphasis on the enlightenment function of policy research.

Demographic researchers often study change over time, and their work has been considered a reliable descriptor and sometimes predictor of change. Demographic studies can be used to forecast medium and long term demands, and, combined with trend analysis, provide reliable predictors of opportunities or necessities for change. It is also the case, however, that population statistics no longer change slowly. Thus, there is a considerable challenge posed to policy researchers to develop means of identifying informative lengths of time for research which will enable the warp and weft, and the patterns they form, to emerge. In this study a beginning (the foundation of the University of Queensland) and an ending point for the study (the selection by the federal

---

5 Some concerned with timeframe suggest ten years (Kirst & Jung 1991), others twenty years (Finch 1986, for example, on the effects of different pre-schooling policies).

6 Other less savoury reasons for limitations on timescale (at least within public documents) might reflect political desire to show change only within a rhetorically useful period.
government of eight official Distance Education Centres in 1989) were chosen as being
clearcut policy events to demarcate the full period of the study. The emergence of
patterns which enabled interpretive segmentation of the period is presented later in
Chapter 4.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARITY

Policy is an area of study best served by multi-disciplinary approaches –

Real decisions, as we all know, do not respect the boundaries of the academic disciplines:
they always have political, economic, and organizational components; they may well also
have legal, educational, biological, or other technical implications as well. (Trow 1988,
p.179)

The value of such an approach has also been emphasised elsewhere (for example,
Linstone 1984; Markland & Keeves 19887), and the need for it to be applied to all aspects
of the study of distance education has been emphasised by Evans and Nation (1992).

‘Multi-disciplinary’ is a term used rather loosely (Klein 1990). It is used in this study to
mean taking an integrated approach drawing on two or more formally recognised
discipline areas. The shades of meaning represented by ‘inter-disciplinary’ (which
embraces cooperation) and ‘cross-disciplinary’ (which embraces cross-fertilisation) are
co-opted to enrich the term for the purpose of this work. Multi-disciplinarity is more than
just methodological pluralism; it embraces a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives as
well. Compared with a pluralistic approach purporting to be a multi-disciplinary one
(where more than one discipline is represented in an investigation but each contribution
seems to stand more or less independently of the rest), multi-disciplinarity should be
characterised by juxtaposition and integration of concepts drawn from different
disciplines.

7In this regard, Markland & Keeves (1985) make the comment that ‘perhaps the most interesting advances
occur at the borders between two or more disciplines’ (p.190).
Chapter 2

MACRO TO MICRO: SCALE AND SYSTEM LEVELS

Policy scholars are not in agreement as to what the most efficacious use of scale is.
Hogwood and Gunn (1984, p.49), in discussing rational models of policy making, point out that the 'public sector is particularly vulnerable to questions about the most appropriate scale on which to consider policy issues', and conclude that 'a truly rational policy would be based upon the largest relevant scale of values and interests'. Schier and Griffith (1990) suggest a building block approach in association with a focus on linkages, though in a unidirectional sense: a macro-to-micro pathway\(^8\). Schulman (1980) notes, however, that size is not the only factor in determining scale but rather that 'scale will apply not to a single narrow variable but to the relationship between multiple properties. Scale implies a notion of proportion – the relationship between plural characteristics as those characteristics are subject to enlargement or contraction' (p.xii).

In this study it was posited that no one scale is 'the appropriate scale' but rather that policy study may need to be carried out at several scales simultaneously. An open multi-level approach was thus applied. The 'macro' levels were considered to comprise federal and state government politicians and their bureaucracies. The 'meso' levels included the quasi-bureaucracies of political (such as the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee or the Australian Committee of Directors and Principals in Advanced Education) and professional (such as the Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association or the Australian Teachers Federation), major business and community leaders, as well as the chief executive officers and other senior academics of the higher education providers.

The 'micro' levels were found within the providers, primarily at the operational interfaces and included policy committees within the providers, directors of distance education units and their staff, academic staff offering distance education programs, and other administrative and support staff. Students would also be found in this micro layer.

\(^{8}\)This is part of the related debate on 'top down' versus 'bottom up' studies of policy (Winter 1990).
Chapter 2

USE OF GROUNDED THEORY METHODOLOGY

The study design follows the approach of Glaser and Strauss (1965, 1967). Their methodology is based on development of substantive theory:

By the discovery of substantive theory we mean the formulation of concepts and their interrelation into a set of hypotheses for a given substantive area – such as patient care, gang behavior, or education - based on research in the area (1967, p.288).

This approach generally though not exclusively uses qualitative research methods and can provide the basis on which to generate grounded formal theory. It is a suitable approach for areas of study in which little or no clear theory may exist (Segev 1988) as well as areas where theory is fragmented, conflicting, or simply overwhelming in its abundance creating difficulties for synthesis and perhaps leading to functional closure (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Segev 1988).

In particular, the design reflected the views of qualitative researchers that the conceptual framework should emerge empirically from the field in the course of the study (Glaser & Strauss 1965; Miles & Huberman 1984; Ball 1988) and that ‘various segments of the analytic framework get finned up during chronologically different stages of the fieldwork’ (Glaser & Strauss 1965, p.291).

---

9 The authors' use here of 'education' as an appropriate substantive area does not reflect well on the profile of education as a research area, at least as perceived by these authors at that time. The first two examples are clearly bounded subsets of social behavior while education is a broad, undefined category.

10 Substantive theory development contributes to the understanding of a substantive area while grounded formal theory (defined by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 as theory based on data in contrast with theory based on logical speculation, p.300) would be expected to be more widely applicable. The distinction between grounded formal theory and substantive theory made by Glaser and Strauss in their seminal paper is emphasised here both because of its contribution to this study design and because this distinction appears to be ignored in some research reported as using a 'grounded theory approach'. Concerns about this blurring were generated for this researcher by literature searches using only one of these terms at a time; those searches produced differing lists even though comparison of the resulting documents (at abstract level) suggested an overlap.
Miles and Huberman qualify their views on allowing the conceptual framework to emerge from the data with the statement that most qualitative work lies somewhere between the two extremes of no conceptual framework and a pre-conceived conceptual framework. It is their view that every researcher comes to a study with some previous thought and that most researchers begin hypothesising as soon as any data is collected. Hence they state that the qualitative researcher should be explicit about what is happening (p. 34) and imply that such explicit statements will appear early in the research. In practice this is not so different from the constant comparative approach suggested by Glaser and Strauss (described in more detail later in the section on Analysis), with the proviso that the researcher must actively retain an open mind so that all data are considered and the emerging conceptual framework remains open to revision. The use of the negative case approach (Miles & Huberman 1984) is one safeguard against reaching closure too early. In this approach the emerging conceptual framework is tested against a new case with the intention to disprove rather than confirm the explanatory value of the conceptual framework by seeking instances in which the emerging concepts and relationships do not appear to hold. They do not necessarily negate or disprove; they may, in fact, add variation and depth of understanding. Each provider site studied in more detail offered in turn the opportunity to become the negative case due to their chronologically sequential establishment and apparently differing reasons for undertaking distance education.

Saran’s three stage iterative research cycle (1985) establishes a method framework for this approach which prompts both divergence and convergence during inquiry. This study combined cycles of extensive ‘observation’ with extensive and wide-ranging hypothesising following Saran’s approach as illustrated in Figure 2.1.
In the abduction phase the researcher considers the data from a range of perspectives until this leads to the ‘inner recognition of an hypothesis through the use of informed intuition’. Deduction is the phase in which the hypothesis (the conceptual framework or model developed during the abduction process) is tested by using it to examine the existing data set with ‘new eyes’. In the induction phase the outcomes of the deduction phase (which include both how well the developing conceptual framework works with the existing data, and any emerging new insights) are used to examine further new data.

Multiple hypotheses regarding influential factors and emerging concepts were pursued in parallel; although at first the range of hypotheses appeared unrelated, through the cycles of observation and reflection, they integrated to form the basis of the central analytic framework (reported in Chapter 3).

**Concept Identification**

The initial and critical steps in theory building using a grounded theory methodology are concept identification and suggestion of a relational framework (Segev 1988). Brewer and Hunter (1989) note two potential approaches: the search for ‘sensitising concepts’ and the ‘suspension of expectations’. Both assist in avoiding early closure. They go on to say that

In the first view, new problems and hypotheses emerge from the confrontation between old theories and new data, much as in verification. In the second view, new problems and
hypotheses emerge from the confrontation between the data and a theoretically oriented and sensitised investigator.

The staged progression of this study (see Figure 2.2) made use of both orientations.

**Figure 2.2 Stages of the Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>General survey of substantive area (Australian distance education in higher education).</td>
<td>1989-1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thematic analysis and preliminary concept development in a substantive theory framework.</td>
<td>1990-1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Further data gathering and analysis prompted by emerging useful theory. Exploration of the disciplinary literatures emerging as relevant leading to development of a theoretical model underpinned by both emerging substantive theory and matching theoretical constructs found in the related literatures.</td>
<td>1991-1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Testing of conceptual framework against existing and additionally acquired data from the empirical field.</td>
<td>1991-1993</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Connecting Across Discipline Areas**

In its ideal form substantive theory is the development of theory entirely from the data collected. It is an interpretive approach looking for patterns and significances without reference to existing theoretical perspectives. To connect the emerging theory with the

---

See later discussion about the researcher as insider which points out that there can be no clear beginning to a study when the researcher is already contextually experienced.
established body of knowledge, however, as well as to discover useful constructs so that the researcher builds rather than re-invents, requires ranging across the literature of related and/or relevant bodies of thought (Brewer & Hunter 1989; Riley 1990). Additional theory is also used as heuristics for further data collection and theory building (Fasano pers.com.1993).

This work established a substantive theory base derived from a wide-ranging survey of Australian distance education; this developed a theoretical sensitivity (Straus & Corbin 1990) and a selection of emergent concepts (presented in Chapter 3) which were then used to explore the literature of discipline areas which appeared as relevant. Subsequently, the conceptual framework developed was used to investigate in greater depth policy developments at a set of selected sites of inquiry (named in Figure 2.3) in keeping with Saran’s three phase, spiralling research approach.

**TAKING A POST HOC LONGITUDINAL STUDY APPROACH**

As this study deals with data which existed before the study began, the research design is a post hoc study (Pyke & Agnew 1991). Using an extended timescale, from the distant to the recent past, puts the study into an historical framework (Cohen & Manion 1989) although the objective is breadth of vision rather than a detailed historical analysis. This expanded timescale offered the opportunity of discovering the unchanging factors, the warp upon which the patterns of the day were woven.

This study investigated trends and patterns in distance education policy development over a long period, a period selected for its natural beginning and for a clearly identifiable stopping place. Timescale is specifically addressed by beginning the empirical study with the initiation of Australian distance education policy in the states of Queensland and Western Australia and following it through to a clearly identifiable turning point, the Dawkins White Paper of 1988 with its prescriptions regarding distance education centres and the subsequent selection of those centres.
In any longitudinal study of a dynamic system it is expected that the situation (environmental influences, participants, etc.) will change. That situation is further affected in this study by the natural growth and extension of the system. This propensity to change is to some extent balanced by the timescale of the study. The value of the long time period applied to this study, however, is that these changes become visible and part of observed detail rather than influences in the shadows outside the field of inquiry.

**BOUNDING THE FIELD OF INQUIRY**

The policy space takes in the whole of Australian higher education but it was not practical to investigate every nook and cranny equally; instead boundaries were set by choosing a more limited number of 'sites'. The notion of site is drawn from Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 28): a bounded context in which one is studying events, processes and outcomes. This view of a site is tempered by the open systems perspective of Scott (1987) which focuses as much on permeability, that is, the bridging of boundaries, as on their creation and maintenance. As Scott's concepts were melded into the study, a linked and layered organisational system was identified. The organisation (to use Scott's term) of higher education comprises specific sites (the universities and their attachment communities\(^1\)), nested in an environment in which elected government (both state and federal) and government's supporting bureaucracies are both sites and overarching systems.

Some researchers (Sowden & Keeves 1988; Kirst & Jung 1991) suggest that a site can be determined by time as well as by geography and organisational structure; that view suggests taking each snapshot in time at a site as a 'case'. In this study the snapshot in time concept is both challenged and applied. The challenge is founded on the view that

\(^1\)An 'attachment community' is not necessarily a community of people living in the same place; rather it is a community of individuals sharing common interests and concerns (Wilmot 1986). This concept is a useful one for explaining the close system links across organisational boundaries which are discovered when the activities of key agents are investigated with regard to an issue area rather than within an organisational structure context.
the policy cloth is a continuous one which must be studied over time to obtain useful results. The utility of slices in time, however, contributes convenience for both data collection and interpretation.

Selecting the Discrete Sites

Australia is a small country in socio-political terms (although not in geographic; see Figure 4.1). The distance education sector of its higher education system is relatively small and potentially more comprehensible as a whole.\(^{13}\)

In order to obtain a long term longitudinal view of distance education policy development as well as a representative sample within the constraints of a single researcher's limited time (doctoral) study, it was necessary to bound the study area both organisationally and in time.

**Bounding the Sites Organisationally.** In organisational terms, the sites comprised the federal government and its bureaucracy, and selected higher education providers, with their associated state governments and government bureaucracies.\(^ {14}\)

The University of Queensland was selected as the higher education provider with the longest continuous history in Australian distance education (being both the initiator and a prominent provider up until the federal Government’s Distance Education Centre decision in 1989); its role in inaugurating university level external studies in Australia established it as an essential site for consideration.

---

\(^{13}\) By the late 1980s Australia had a population of about 16 million (Cameron & Hendon 1987). Its higher education system, however, is less easy to describe because of a rolling series of higher education provider amalgamations in the 1980s. The Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET 1989, Appendix 2) reported 25 higher education institutions each with over 300 external students and another 21 institutions each with fewer than 300 external students enrolled.

\(^{14}\) Overlapping and linking these sites were the growing organisation (in Scott's terms; see also Fasano 1993) of distance education professionals, as well as more formal associations such as the Association of College Directors and Principals (ACDP). These are mentioned where appropriate in the chapters reporting the empirical study but are not sites on which this research specifically focussed.
Other representative higher education providers were then selected to represent the following factors such that all factors were covered, preferably by at least two of the providers chosen:

1. An 'established' university (a pre-1987 university\textsuperscript{15})
2. A college of advanced education
3. A capital city provider
4. A regional provider
5. A long history in distance education provision (pre 1970s)
6. A recent entrant to distance education provision (1970s onwards)
7. A multi-disciplinary provider which was given Distance Education Centre (DEC) status
8. A multi-disciplinary provider with an acknowledged external studies program which did not gain DEC status
9. A reputation for special expertise or a specialist provider reputation within the distance education community and/or other client communities.

The University of Queensland has been known for its particular distance education model – most academics teaching externally were located within the Department of External Studies. Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education

\textsuperscript{15}Australian higher education has been besieged first by expansion in number of providers and then contraction as noted earlier. The parlance of 'pre-1987 university' is used in Australia to describe universities which are considered to have been established as universities from their foundation, as compared with universities which were formed from colleges of advanced education as part of the implementation of the White Paper.
(now the University College of Southern Queensland) has had a strong thrust in instructional design and was an early initiator first of programs targeted on engineering areas and later on overseas clients. The University of New England established the dual mode model in which both internal and external students are taught by the same academics. The University of Tasmania at Launceston developed the extended campus model in which there are academics located at study centres as well as support facilities and staff. Orange Agricultural College is a specialist provider of education for agricultural management, agribusiness and land use management.

10 A range of sizes by the late 1980s\textsuperscript{16}.

Further, for convenience of the researcher, it was found to be possible to choose three provider sites within the states of NSW and Queensland for more detailed site studies. On this basis the organisations listed in Figure 2.3 on the next page which are marked \# were used. Names used are those current in 1988 (see Appendix C for more on provider amalgamation and name change).

Data gathered at the specific site level focussed principally on evidence of the realities of policy making for the providers offering distance education. Australian government policy making is also not independent of provider views\textsuperscript{17} and the provider site material was related to contextual material at government level and to other environmental influences (see the section on the use of socio-economic trend information) to illustrate these interconnections.

\textsuperscript{16}This time period was chosen as the sites could be represented as clearly defined providers (bounded organisations in a rationalist’s view), a situation which was muddied in the turmoil of amalgamation and change arising with the implementation of the White Paper (see previous footnote).

\textsuperscript{17}As will later be demonstrated by the overlap in roles between consultants, researchers and policy makers, and between provider level policy makers and government policy makers. Compare the Site Sources consulted with the References list for Richard Johnson, James Taylor and Vernon White, for example, as immediate evidence of the cross-over activities of some distance education professionals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider Site</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10 Total Students ('000 EFTSU)</th>
<th>10 Ext.Stu. (persons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#University of Queensland</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>1686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of WA</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#University of New England</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmanian State Institute of Technology</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Agricultural College</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>540</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


[Descriptors are based on proposals within the White Paper that 8000 EFTSU be the minimum for a comprehensive research and teaching university, 5000 for a broad teaching institution and 2000 a minimum to enter the proposed unified national system as an autonomous higher education provider.}
Bounding the Sites in Time. As this study uses an extended time period the 'sites' examined were also bounded by event horizons determined part way through the study using the concept of discontinuity (presented in Chapter 3). These were identified (at least) at the site level (that is, affecting the whole of the university or the government) and were usually found to be socio-political or technological discontinuities. Figure 2.4 provides examples.

**Figure 2.4 Using Discontinuity to Bound a Site in Time**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discontinuity</th>
<th>Generalised example</th>
<th>Example of use in this study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiation of a transformative innovation</td>
<td>Initiation of a social service or technological provision not previously in existence in the context</td>
<td>Distance education in Australian higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiation of a discrete organisation</td>
<td>Foundation of a university</td>
<td>Foundation of UQ, UNE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-political discontinuity</td>
<td>War</td>
<td>World War II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic discontinuity</td>
<td>Economic depression</td>
<td>Great Depression of 1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-technological discontinuity</td>
<td>Mass/universal penetration of a technological innovation</td>
<td>Inexpensive, universal postal service established</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MULTIPLE METHODS AND SOURCES FOR TRIANGULATION

'Triangulation' conceptualises the use of multiple methods and/or multiple sources in a research design rather than a single method (such as the ubiquitous survey) or a single source of data (say, only public government documents). Triangulated studies improve the probability that findings and interpretations are credible (Miles & Huberman 1984; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Denzin 1988; Ball 1988). The use of a grounded theory research paradigm leads naturally to a multi-method (Brewer & Hunter 1989) approach, in keeping with the empirico-deductive approach recommended to policy researchers by Majchrzak (1984).

A multiple methods approach was used by including focussed synthesis, site studies, and participant observation, with some use of interviews. A multiple sources approach was used both with regard to multiple suppliers of the same type of information (for example, more than one document type or informant), and with a variety of data sources leading to the same inference (for example, the continuing importance of distance education programs in Queensland and their re-location to the colleges of advanced education is illustrated by the decrease in external studies enrolment in the late 1980s at UQ and the growing external enrolments at other Queensland institutions together with a UQ institutional decision to give more attention to on-campus, particularly post-graduate, studies). Use of multiple methods and data sources, within the context of examination of a longer period to allow the trends and themes to emerge from the day-to-day or year-to-year variations, provided a variety of triangulating perspectives.

DATA SOURCES

The empirical study drew upon the published literature, official documents from government and provider sites, participant observation and interviews.
Chapter 2

Documents

The main source of data for the study was existing documentation. Documents were chosen primarily because of the long timescale investigated, recognising that many of the policy actors would be deceased, noting also that documents of the day or recent past would offer greater currency and that the data they contained would be less subject to reconstruction and/or judgment in hindsight\(^\text{18}\). Glaser and Strauss (1965) note that ‘historical documents, or other library materials, lend themselves wonderfully to the comparative method’ (p.294).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe the use of documents and records, and of unobtrusive informational residues, as non-human sources, but, of course, these are at some time produced by humans. All documents are thus subject to human influence, whether through direct error, through inconsistencies in rule definition (for example, the collection of statistics of mode of study\(^\text{19}\)) or through selection and interpretation effects of the day.

Lincoln and Guba’s definition of document and record has been used (1985, pp.277-279). A record means ‘any written or recorded statement prepared by or for an individual or organisation for the purpose of attesting to an event or providing an accounting’ (for example: annual reports, university calendars and handbooks, T.E. Jones’ report on his visit on the behalf of the University of Queensland to overseas providers carrying out correspondence studies programs). A document denotes ‘any written or recorded material other than a record that was not prepared specifically in response to a request from the inquirer’. Within the category of documents both primary and secondary documents have been consulted. Primary documents are those which were created during the actual period to which they refer, and secondary documents are generally

\(^{18}\)Use of secondary sources in particular does require other considerations noted below.

\(^{19}\)For example, an external student is usually a part-time student but full-time students do study externally. ('Full-time' is currently defined by government data collectors as being enrolled in 70% or more of an expected full-time program, a factor which may not be recognised when full-time enrolment
interpretation written later, not generated from first hand experience of a particular situation or event but from other sources. Secondary documents included a range of histories and reviews (such as White's historical reviews of external studies at the University of Western Australian and the University of Queensland (1973, 1982), K.C. Smith's general review of Australian distance education (1984), and that of overseas visitor Ortmeier's review of external studies in Australia in 1982). Writer-informants reporting on the past are acknowledged to use a framework of hindsight; while such informant analysis can contribute to understanding, it may not present the picture of the times as they were perceived during the times.

Both 'witting' and 'unwitting' testimony can be drawn from documents (Marwick 1977). Examples of unwitting testimony are inferences of the relative importance of on and off campus students in the early days of the University of Queensland derived, for example from observation of the annual *University of Queensland Handbooks* and of histories of the university. In the Handbook information about becoming an external student was for many years included towards the end of the Bylaws, just preceding strict rules about student boarding houses. In the second example, Thomis' 1985 history of the University

---

20 Such a categorisation of documentary sources contributes to an understanding of the likely trustworthiness of the data sources used, but does have its limitations. For example, documents such as *Who's Who in Australia* (WWA) are in part at least self-reported but must undergo editing according to a plan held by the editors of the day, hence creative selection may filter the data provided. The effects of such judgments are difficult to predict, although editors of the most recent edition of WWA have confronted such issues. (See the Preface to the 1991 edition for its rationale that it is a reference book and not a 'vanity' publication. Earlier editions may or may not have aspired to the same standards.)

Another example is a report which combines (as does this study) direct observation with interviews and with documentary review (such as Ortmeier's work); in this case the documentary source may be categorised in different ways depending on the portion which is consulted.

21 And in reporting on Australian distance education are generally using a personal rather than a theoretically informed framework of analysis.
offers many photographs but none of them represent the university’s external studies programs.

Documents used included the higher education providers' annual *Handbook and Calendar* (a public document published for a generally similar purpose by all) and other policy documentation (including strategic plans, organisational structures and other relevant documents where available). The *Handbook and Calendar* is the most public face of a university or college's policies. It contains (either explicitly or implicitly) a published statement of the vision or mission, goals and objectives, and values of the university or college by the very choice of what is to be included and how it is to be presented. It usually also includes a reflection of organisational structure through its staff listings. Distribution is widespread and the organisation is held accountable for what is published within. While spectators scanning a single year’s issue may view it as a book of rules, regulations and ephemeral information, over time the university or college displays the perspectives and trends in its policies in the content and style in which it displays itself in its *Handbook and Calendar*.

**Observing as a Participant**

Participant observation is a frequently used technique in social science research (Majchrzak 1984) and is recommended to policy analysts who wish to 'sense the frames of policymakers and how situations, alternatives, and policy consequences are interpreted in terms of these frames' (Bobrow & Dryzek 1987, p.165). The purpose of the participant observer is to share and to understand the social world of the actors in the setting under study, to come to know that world as its regular inhabitants know it (Ball 1988, p.507). Glaser and Strauss (1965) 'note that the “real life” character of fieldwork knowledge deserves special underscoring' (p.295).

The use of a grounded theory approach presumes development of knowledge of the situation under investigation by the researcher. A researcher who enters the area to be researched without prior knowledge is a different instrument to that researcher who is part
of the context as well as acting as a research instrument. In both cases the researcher is guided by the question: What is going on here? The insider researcher, however, is also challenged to look at the ‘taken for granted’ propositional and tacit understandings that may be brought to the research project (Hockey 1993).

While most writers on qualitative research appear to base their views for the most part on researchers who introduce themselves into a situation and then exit when data collection is completed (technically an ‘outsider’ whatever the researcher’s actual experience during the field work), the situation of this study is that the researcher has been a participant, albeit a junior one, over a long period\(^{22}\). The situation of an employee or member of the profession (an ‘insider’ to some degree) as researcher\(^{23}\) offers considerable opportunity for both data gathering and constant comparison studies, and the value of such a situation may be supported by Lincoln and Guba’s statement that:

\[\ldots\text{in a naturalistic investigation tacit knowledge can and does come into play; the units of data upon which grounded theory is ultimately based may emerge because of the investigator's implicit apprehension of their importance rather than because a specific theoretical formulation brought them into focus. Admitting tacit knowledge not only widens the investigator's ability to apprehend and adjust to phenomena-in-context, it also enables the emergence of theory that could not otherwise have been articulated.} (1985, p.208)\]

Miles and Huberman (1984), writing not for the student researcher but for the professional researcher (and also working within a stated view that a team is better than a single individual), give their answer to the question ‘How valid and reliable is this person

---

\(^{22}\)It is worth noting here again the small size of the Australian higher education community, much less that of its distance education sector, which means that a participant can scarcely avoid being an observer of the system at various levels. This is also noted in Appendix E: The Researcher’s Autobiography.

\(^{23}\)The insider as policy researcher may be a worthy area for further research to investigate both contributions and constraints. The insider as researcher is regularly reported in some aspects of educational research (educational innovation, evaluation and classroom sociology are examples), but seems much less present in the policy studies literature.
likely to be as an information-gathering instrument? in this way. The person should possess the following characteristics:

- some familiarity with the phenomenon and the setting under study
- strong conceptual interests
- a multi-disciplinary approach, as opposed to a narrow grounding or focus in a single discipline
- good ‘investigative’ skills, including doggedness, the ability to draw people out, and the ability to ward off premature closure.24 (p.46)

In this form of inquiry the inquirer must acquaint her/himself with the field sites. Corsaro (1980, reported in Lincoln & Guba 1985) recommends

the use of what he terms ‘prior ethnography’: becoming a participant observer in a situation for a lengthy period of time before the study is actually undertaken. Such prior ethnography not only helps to diminish the obtrusiveness of the investigator but also provides a baseline of cultural accommodation and informational orientation that will be invaluable in increasing both the effectiveness and the efficiency of the formal work. It prepares the inquirer’s mind for what will come later and also serves to sensitize and hone the human instrument.’ (p.251)

Lincoln and Guba strongly recommend this ‘prior ethnography’ because of its utility.

The insider researcher brings this naturally to a study.

The role of participant-observer means that relevant information contributing to the research was sometimes received as part of activities not defined as part of the research25 and a range of mechanisms were used for collecting and compiling this information

24Miles and Huberman note that this list contrasts with lists found in many sociological or anthropological textbooks where lack of familiarity with the phenomenon and setting, and a strong single-disciplinary grounding are considered assets and offer an extended rationale for their opposing view.

25Delamont (1992) reports a particularly serendipitous research experience which creates an interesting model for professional activity by ‘insiders’ who may or may not recognise the value of immediate experiences within a research framework. In her case, a real case of participant observation, she systematically recorded her experience as a hospital patient, and only later discovered the value of her data. Again, the role and contribution of the insider as researcher is highlighted as an area for further investigation.
including use of a field notebook during all professional activities, a research diary and construction of a researcher’s autobiography.

**Interviews**

In addition, semi-structured and unstructured open ended interviews (in both formal and informal settings\textsuperscript{26}) with a number of key informants (Le Compte et al 1993) were used to collect additional data and to refine and test the emerging substantive theory, particularly for the mid to latter portion of the period under investigation (see Appendix D). Saran’s directed conversation or dialogue interview (1985), in which a controlled open ended conversational approach is founded in careful preparation for the interview, underpinned the approach. These interviews were directed towards uncovering the system layers and exchange relationships.

The main set of interviews reflected the emerging use of relevant theory to inform the questioning line (drawn from the literature of marketing), reflecting the interplay of the technical literature of a useful theory area with the developing substantive theory (Strauss & Corbin 1990). The protocol used for the semi-structured interviews included both general questions based on extending the researcher’s general knowledge of the situation, on confirming or disconfirming interpretations already made, and in the case of a cluster of interviews the use of questions based around a marketing/client orientation, a conceptual area considered at that stage of the research to offer utility for teasing out relationships among layers and perceptions of the current situation by offering a novel framework for reflection on the policy and practice situation to the informant. Leading questions were posed to elicit statements about all the clients who were to be served, about the relationships within the higher education organisation (with regard to distance education) and about relationships within the distance education/higher education and government communities (i.e. exploring the policy space).

\textsuperscript{26}Given the nature of the researcher’s position as a colleague within the distance education community, the line between ‘interview’ and ‘participant observation’ was a grey one. Those sessions which were formally identified to informants as interviews are listed in Appendix D.
These interviews were tape recorded where possible and a transcript made. In some instances, however, the opportunity to talk with the informant was unexpected or the situation not conducive to sound recording. Where possible field notes were taken during the interview/discussion (or made as soon as possible afterwards), and later written up as a record of discussion.

**METHODS OF ANALYSIS**

The analysis made use of techniques which fostered the emergence of patterns and themes: clustering, using metaphors and subsuming particulars into the general (Miles & Huberman 1984; Davis 1984). In working with text or other forms of displays the researcher will often note recurring patterns, themes or ‘gestalts’, which pull together a variety of separate pieces of data. The patterns produced can then be tested with the gathering of additional data, including looking for the negative or discrepant case which will disprove by contradiction the patterns so far established (Miles & Huberman 1984; Tesch 1987; Le Compte et al 1993).

The adaptation of these approaches as used here can be related to the focused synthesis approach suggested as a technical analysis tool for policy research by Majchrzak (1984); that approach involves the selective review of written materials, existing research findings, and information obtained from a variety of sources beyond published articles. This can include, for example, discussions with experts, personal past experience of the researcher (related to the insider researcher participant observer approach discussed above), as well as review of relevant unpublished and published documents. This study followed this approach as applied, for example by Burton (1979) to a study of rural water supply problems (as reported by Majchrzak 1984).

**Document Analysis**

A schedule of questions for analysing documents was used to evaluate documentary materials on their authenticity, credibility and the kind of interpretations which might be
made from what is communicated by the document (see Appendix F). The schedule was a tool which contributed to:

- mapping the array of documents consulted (Question 1)
- analysing the documents in terms of the policy space heuristic presented earlier in this chapter, and in terms of the evolving conceptual framework (see Chapter 3), in particular systems (Question 1), change (Question 3), agents (Question 2), bridging mechanisms (Questions 2, 3, 4, 6)
- testing the reliability of the document (Questions 1, 2, 3, 4).

The document analysis schedule provided the ‘prompt sheet’ similar to that which might be used in an unstructured or semi-structured interview situation, acting as a checklist and guide.

**The Constant Comparison Method**

The method of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss 1965; Davis 1984 [as reported by Le Compte et al]; Saran 1985; Le Compte et al 1993) using data elicited from a range of sites was applied as data was collected, following the iterative three phase research model described by Saran (refer back to Figure 2.1, p.42). Emerging themes were identified, categorised and reviewed throughout the data collection phase; thus data collection, paradigm search and selection, and analysis were carried out concurrently and iteratively.

Lincoln and Guba recommend the constant comparative method primarily as a means to process data, enthusiastically supporting the ‘continuously developing process’ perspective of research. They do not suggest using the method for deriving theory, saying that this method was not developed for the naturalistic paradigm and that naturalists would probably not agree with the Glaser and Strauss statement that the major purpose of theory in a field [their field is sociology] is to ‘enable prediction and
explanation of behaviour’ (1967, p.3). Saran (1985) and others, however, support its use for theory development in the context of interpretative synthesis.

The constant comparative method works at two levels. First, as Saran and others point out, the value of the researcher as a research instrument (able to work continuously and on parallel activities) is to be found throughout the recording, ordering, synthesising, inducing and deducing process. Thus the gathering of data is concomitant with data analysis. Second, at the more methodical and documentable level the researcher is able to order and re-order data and emerging concepts by charting and other methods. Saran provides a chart example relevant to this study: a chronological decision-chart (1985, pp.234-237); Miles and Huberman offer a range of examples of matrices, concept maps and other approaches. It is not any single analysis tool which is important but rather the application of a range of them to provide a multi-dimensional picture.

Application of this method required a flexible and wide ranging use of analytical approaches to data as it was obtained and analysed. Themes were coded and categorised in various ways, grouped and regrouped, and eventually collapsed from a large number of groups into a smaller, more representative range. Themes were also juxtaposed in various ways in order to highlight emerging patterns. Using the constant comparative approach categories and relationship patterns were developed first from the overview survey, then in particular for UQ. Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education was then compared with the first case to examine whether the same and/or new categories and patterns emerge; UNE followed. The categories and patterns were reinforced, revised and/or consolidated as the work progressed.

Career Histories

Brief career histories (Le Compte et al 1993) were constructed for key actors identified during the study using in particular the Australian Dictionary of Biography (Nairn et al 1983), Who's Who in Australia (various editions), and Notable Australians (1978), other published documents and in some cases interview information. These provided data on
the context of actors enabling inferences to be made about their influence on establishment and maintenance or change activities. These data also shed light on linkages among agents and institutions with shared experiences. Recognising that career history, cultural background and personal values also influence a researcher's way of seeing (Sowden & Keeves 1988b; Le Compte et al 1993), a career history of the researcher was constructed (see Appendix E) which in itself provided data on the way the distance education sector works, particularly in terms of levels and linkages.

**Socio-economic Trends**

Published Australian socio-economic trends over the period (particularly population growth, participation in education, geographical distribution) were examined to relate the changing social and economic environment in which distance education policy making occurred. This provided indicators of stability and change in the socio-economic environment.

Trend data were used to provide a useful backdrop for consideration of policy development in the wider arena of significant events in the government and the society. Such data are now widely available. It is interesting to note that most reports take relatively short, neat time scales, of five to ten years, yet the dangers of short period samples have been recognised (noted, for example, by Webb et al 1984).

While in most cases data already analysed by other researchers were used as published, compilation and analysis of reported enrolment by mode data were carried out to examine trends in this area over the selected timescale.

**Focussed Synthesis and Reflective Analysis – Metaphors, Memos and the Research Journal**

Making sense of the data meant not only looking for patterns and themes but discovering ways in which to express them. The articulation of these discoveries was an aspect of the analysis. The use of metaphor (Miles & Huberman 1984) in describing the emerging
analysis linked synthesis and articulation. During the progress of the study analytical
metaphors ranged from a food services model of distance education through a
topographic map perspective to the warp and weft metaphor used in the final reporting.
Each provided a different perspective from which to view the accumulating data and in
scattered instances are used in this report to highlight particular ways of seeing.

While the importance of contextualisation is recognised (as discussed earlier in the section
on observing as a participant), Lincoln and Guba (1985) caution against the researcher
‘going native’. (In making this statement they, as many writers about social science
methodologies, assume that the researcher enters the study as an outsider and remains
aloof\(^27\). This implicit assumption is challenged when a researcher engages in a research
project while immersed in the context which is to be researched, that is, as an insider, but
the cautions are still valid.) The methodology of such a study must include methods
through which the researcher is able to retreat from that context to review and reflect.

Both the issues of being an ‘insider’ researcher and the grounded theory methodology
approach were addressed in a reflective/ analytic approach which acknowledged the close
links between the research perspective and the learning perspective, drawing upon the
experiential learning models of Kolb (1984), Morrison and Brock (1991) and others.
This approach was coupled with the philosophies expressed in the perspective known as
the ‘reflective practitioner’; see, for example, Schön (1983) and Boud et al (1985). One
reflective method is to use a research diary (Ball 1988; Riley 1990).

In this study the research diary was a multimedia collection encompassing (in addition to
the direct data collection), a written research diary, a range of synthesis reports (similar to
the memos recommended to qualitative researchers in field situations) prepared at periodic
intervals for the research supervisor and audiotapes of discussions with the research
supervisor and others.

\(^27\) A notable exception is in the field of action research which, as a general paradigm, depends on the
researcher being ‘involved’ in the research as an actor as well as an observer.
Chapter 2

CONFRONTING SOME DILEMMAS

Sampling Over a Long Period

Taking a long, sweeping view in order to identify patterns and follow their development limits the detail and size of samples. Recognising the biases in reporting, keeping in mind the influence of the perspectives of the reporters and key informants on the reporting which finds its way into documents, and maintaining concern with what isn’t there\(^28\), are also issues for a policy researcher looking at a long period. The researcher must make judgements as to the reliability of the reporting, the likely built-in biases of the informants and reporters (addressed not only as artifact but also importantly as part of development in the concept of the ‘foundation definition’ presented later in this study), and the representative nature of the sampling whether using ‘unobtrusive measures’, interviews or participant observation (Webb et al. 1984).

In this study triangulation was used to minimise these concerns. One approach was to use the reported research and views of others outside the immediate Australian distance education community but still within education (for example, the work of Alan Barcan, a noted historian of Australian education); overseas scholars (who might bring biases and assumptions of their own but these would at least differ from those embedded in the organisational [using Scott’s meaning] culture of Australian distance education); and where possible the work of people outside the wider education policy community such as historian Geoffrey Bolton. Again it must be noted that the documentary evidence represents that which has been published of the thoughts and reporting of what continues to be a small higher education system as compared with those in other western countries.

Australian Distance Education as a Self-Examining Community

Distance education in Australia seems to be little studied by researchers who are not also practitioners, especially Australian practitioners. This appears to have prompted a

\(^{28}\text{Both by straightforwardly looking for the emperor’s new clothes, and by looking for the elements of a picture as predicted by the use of a range of theoretical frameworks developed in various disciplines.}\)
prevailing inward focus\textsuperscript{29} in the distance education community. This inward focus may have been reinforced by the tendency (in recent years in particular) for governments and providers to use Australian peer reviewers, the small size of the distance education sector and, one might add, the continuing perception of distance education as an educational sector of marginal and, perhaps, ephemeral, importance. External examiners bringing a fresh eye to the scene also may soon lose their ‘external’ perspective through continued involvement (Professor Richard Johnson, previously Professor of Classics and an academic administrator at the Australian National University, a university which has never offered external studies, could be considered one such example when one considers his career of involvement with DE; his involvement is discussed in Chapter 8). Hence the sector is to some extent a self-examining community, and both documentation and key informant comments must be considered in this light. This is not just a distance education problem; the phenomenon, tied to investigation and learned discussion based on a possibly insufficient research base, is commented on as the ‘literature which grows up consisting of university administrators and academics [and, I might add, Australian public servants and government advisors] talking to one another about common problems’ (Gross & Western 1981b, p.130).

The Researcher as Research Instrument

Lincoln and Guba (1985) note these characteristics of the human as instrument of choice for inquiries such as these:

1. Responsiveness. The human-as-instrument can sense and respond to all personal and environmental cues that exist. By virtue of that responsiveness he or she can interact with the situation to sense its dimensions and make them explicit.

2. Adaptability. . . . The multi-purpose human can collect information about multiple factors — and at multiple levels — simultaneously. Like a smart bomb, the human instrument can locate and strike a target without having been pre-programed to do so.

3. Holistic emphasis. The world of any phenomenon and its surrounding context are ‘all of a piece’, and the human instrument is the only one available capable of grasping all this buzzing confusion in one view.

\textsuperscript{29}Noted by Fasano (1993) for Australian education in general.
4 Knowledge base expansion. The human instrument is competent to function simultaneously in the domains of propositional and tacit knowledge.

5 Processual immediacy. By ‘processual immediacy’ we mean the ability of the human instrument (and only the human instrument) to process data just as soon as they become available, to generate hypotheses on the spot, and to test those hypotheses with respondents in the very situation in which they are created.

6 Opportunities for clarification and summarisation. The human instrument has the unique capability of summarising data on the spot and feeding them back to a respondent for clarification, correction, and amplification.

7 Opportunity to explore atypical or idiosyncratic responses. The atypical response has no utility on an ordinary instrument; it may even have to be discarded because it cannot be coded or otherwise aggregated. The human instrument can explore such responses not only to test their validity but to achieve a higher level of understanding than might otherwise be possible. (pp.193-194)

These strengths are tempered by a potential for investigator bias, particularly when the investigator is a long term participant. Lincoln and Guba recommend a range of strategies to guard against such bias and to ensure ‘balance and fairness’ (pp.108-109). In this study the strategies of triangulation (cross-checking data and interpretations through the use of multiple data sources and/or data collection techniques), prolonged engagement and persistent observation (maintaining long-term, in-depth contact in relation to salient features), a reflexive journal (prompting introspection that displays the investigator’s mind processes, emerging philosophical position, and bases of decisions about the inquiry) and debriefings by peers (systematically talking through research experiences, findings, and decisions with non-involved professional peers for a variety of purposes – catharsis, challenge, design of next steps, or legitimation, for example) were applied.

**Naming Universities and Colleges in this Study**

For anyone attempting a study of higher education in Australia after about 1950, the naming of the higher education providers soon becomes a nightmare. By the end of the 1980s, in the latest period of amalgamation (fortunately after the end of the period addressed by this study), even the immediate players found it difficult at times to know who was who. Consequently, Appendix C includes a chronology of name changes for
the universities and colleges mentioned in this study. In most cases in the main text, the name used is that applicable at the appropriate period under discussion and/or is most likely to be found in the literature.

Change, which this naming dilemma symbolically represents, is the central focus of the analytical model developed in this study through the application of the multi-disciplinary, grounded theory approach just described. The development of this model is presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3

DISCERNING THE PATTERNS OF THE POLICY CLOTH

The methodology just described produced an array of data. As it was examined from different perspectives over time patterns became discernible as well as the threads which interweave to create them.

EMERGING THEMES

A number of themes emerged from the survey of Australian distance education undertaken in the early stage of the study. These, together with the disciplinary areas of potential relevance towards which they pointed, are summarised in Figure 3.1 on the next page.

Distance Education as Innovation

Examination of the history of distance education shows that it was a major innovation. First of all, it was an activity new to the educational policy makers, to the educational provider organisations and to the participants themselves (teachers, students and administrators) when it was conceived and when it was formulated as part of the enabling state legislation establishing the University of Queensland and the University of Western Australia. Its innovative characteristics in particular included a focus on part-time study and on opportunity for participation by students normally hindered by economic or social status, and depended on communications and transport technology – these were significant changes from traditional university programs.
### Figure 3.1 Emergent Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Useful Discipline Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Distance education as innovation</td>
<td>Policy studies, technology studies, marketing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use of distance education as a instrument of public policy</td>
<td>Policy studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dependence of distance education on technological developments</td>
<td>Technology studies, policy studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Influence of 'market' forces</td>
<td>Marketing, organisational studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Importance of key people of influence in distance education policy making</td>
<td>Policy studies, organisational studies, technology studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Distance education as a multilevel policy phenomenon</td>
<td>Organisational studies, policy studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recurring patterns</td>
<td>Organisational studies, policy studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Importance of macro, meso and micro perspectives in time and in systems</strong></td>
<td>Organisational studies, policy studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, the educational innovation of distance education was based on a separation of teacher and learner, required a radically new form of primary delivery\(^1\), addressed a

---

\(^1\)Via mediated communication initially using text transmitted by post, though eventually making use of a range of commonly available communications technologies.
new student sector 2, required an organisational infrastructure not previously needed, could not be based on implicit assumptions of the traditional university 3, and implicitly assumed considerable learner independence.

Finally, the new model of university education sought by government and community leaders was unlike any university educational experience undergone by the academics employed to form the university or by those few community and government leaders of the time who had experienced university education. Everyone was new to the approach. Thus innovation was highlighted as an area of study which might fruitfully inform this work.

Distance Education as an Instrument of Public Policy

Distance education was not just an innovative educational mode with pedagogical and organisational concerns – it was a component of public policy in Australia, connecting in particular with regional development, labour market management, and economic development (presented in more detail in Chapters 6-9). A repetitive theme in the political decisions made regarding provision of university level distance education was response to the demands of rural politicians and community leaders (for example, to be seen to be countering the forces of ‘Brisbanisation’ in Queensland at the turn of the century, or in acknowledging the political importance of Armidale, as a remote regional centre in NSW in the 1950s) as well as pursuit of more general government agendas for regional development. Contribution to labour market management was another example. This included, for example, direct intervention through post-war reconstruction education and training activities for service and ex-service personnel, and indirect intervention through

---

2 Students who were in the workforce or with domestic responsibilities whose span of responsibilities meant they could not be fully committed to university study as full-time students were expected to be, and who were likely to be older than on-campus students.

3 For example, that fellow students would informally tutor one another, that students understood, or would come to understand through immersion in a particular socio-physical environment the ways of academic life and the types of thinking expected.
providing opportunity for upgrading of skills and qualifications by those already in the workforce (particularly in education and later business and health).

The role of education and training in economic development has been a general theme throughout (in the early part of the study period at state level, later at federal as well). It became explicit first during the post-war reconstruction phase where the Federal Government took the lead. Since the 1970s economic development (with a long term recurring focus on rural and regional development, and a more recent concern with international competitiveness) has been a major tenet of government policy at all levels. Distance education was an essential part of that thrust, first through meeting the needs of scattered service and ex-service personnel, and later through support of the survival and growth of higher education providers in regional centres. In yet another policy arena, DE has been used in social justice policy, addressed to providing access to higher education for the geographically isolated and the house-bound. Clearly policy studies could contribute.

**Dependence on Technological Developments**

*Technological innovation* was highlighted by the obvious role which technology played. Distance education could not have developed as an educational innovation without fundamental advances in transport (with the development of rail and road transport) and communication technologies (in particular a universal postal system and the telephone). It was, however, not technology theory itself, but innovation theory which particularly emerged to inform this study at the conceptual level.

---

4C.S. Smith (1975) pointed out that “Education as an industry” is prominent in the minds of many local citizens, and many country towns (even cities) are desperately keen to attract industries’ (p.604) and later, ‘At the system level there has been a growing recognition of the need to consider decentralisation aspects when planning the location of new post-secondary institutions or the expansion of existing institutions’ (p.605). Smith, together with Breen (1976), provide a useful insight into this level of thinking about the provision of education as ‘industrial’ development in regional centres. In 1994 the McKinsey report *Lead Local, Compete Global* echoed the same themes with regard to education as a tool for economic development.
The Influences of 'Market Forces'

The increasing treatment of external studies learning materials and academic services as product was the initial pointer to taking a marketing perspective. A consumer focus emerged as part of a growing user-pays emphasis on educational provision brought about by decreasing government-supplied resources in the mass higher education seen by the 1980s. Taking a marketing perspective highlighted the importance of considering target audiences and the utility of an exchange paradigm which highlighted all levels of demand (Bagozzi 1988)\(^5\). *Marketing* could thus be seen as a source of concepts with which to explore the policy issue area further.

People of Influence

The roles of individuals (and of corporate bodies acting in such roles) were seen to have exerted a particular influence on policy making and implementation. These people included politicians, business and community leaders, bureaucrats, leading academics in universities, and program administrators. The personal context and commitments of these, particularly as advocates of external studies, recurred as a key element (examples include the long term and cross-system involvement of R.H. Roe in Queensland’s educational system and R.B. Madgwick’s pathway from the University of Sydney into the Army Education Service and on to UNE). Where key people were located within the levels of policy making was also crucial. Both the roles played by these people and the number of levels and systems in which they carried out those roles, pointed to organisational studies and to policy studies.

Distance Education Policy as a Multilevel Event

The observations that distance education policy and practice were strongly affected by organisational structures and procedures, and the visible interconnectedness among governmental and provider layers also prompted consideration of organisational studies. In particular the open systems framework, with particular emphasis on the permeability

\(^5\)The concept of exchange relationships also exists in organisational studies (Scott 1987).
of the boundaries and the linkages across complex systems (Scott 1987) was spotlighted (the early history of the University of Queensland made this apparent as did contemporary observation of the cross-linkages between government and providers). This observation connected with the recognition by policy researchers of the importance of political, organisational and behavioural aspects of the policy space (Palumbo & Calista 1990c), thus emphasising the value of policy studies as a contributing area.

Recurring Patterns

Finally, recurring patterns were observed over the extended period of the study. These included the use of distance education as a public policy instrument beyond the education domain, in the recognition of the contribution of key people over time, and in the movement of those people across the educational system. A survey over a long time period enabled those patterns to surface, become obscure, and resurface, as the warp and weft of distance education policy making intertwined in different ways. The recurrence of patterns and the importance of timescale in perceiving patterns has already been addressed within the more fundamental protocols of policy study suggested in Chapter 2 and its importance, acknowledged in the last chapter, is reinforced by these observations.

The Emergent Conceptual Framework

As the themes identified above emerged, the utility of an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach in developing the study’s conceptual framework was confirmed. While the conceptual background of each element initially emerged from one area, variations on the same theme could often be discovered in other disciplines (as illustrated in Figures 3.1 above and 3.3 below). For example, an open systems perspective as presented for organisational studies by Scott (1987) also appears in the literature of technological innovation articulated as the importance of considering boundaries and relationships as shown by Scott-Kemmis, Darling & Johnston (1990). These variations added substance to the conceptual focus, provided additional dimensions for investigation and aided triangulation of the process (Fox 1990).
The concepts distilled from the multi-disciplinary review carried out during this study which eventually appeared efficacious for a systemic investigation included those listed in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Emergent Concepts

- **Open systems**
  - Layers and interconnections – where, how
  - Institutional isomorphism– what, why, how

- **Change as the central focus**
  - Conditions for transformational change
    - discontinuity – what, when
    - agents – who and why
    - other enabling conditions – present or absent
  - Outcomes of transformational change
    - the foundation definition

- **Patterns over time**

The points listed in Figure 3.2 will now be presented in greater detail leading to the development of the specific analytical framework and the associated research questions underpinning this study.

The scholar undertaking a multi-disciplinary approach encounters both differing concepts and similar concepts which are called by different names (one of the difficulties of paradigm synthesis pointed out by Noble 1982). Figure 3.3 presents the sources of the concepts used, their translation where necessary, and their operationalisation.
Figure 3.3 Multi-disciplinary Derivation of the Study Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the discipline area of...</th>
<th>which translates and is indicated by...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...comes the concept of...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Studies</th>
<th>Incremental and fundamental change</th>
<th>Transitional change</th>
<th>Amendment and refinement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transformational change</td>
<td></td>
<td>Creation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders Agents</th>
<th>Ownership (protector role)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program champions Agents</td>
<td>Advocacy (visionary, protector roles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative, legislative, executive roles Agents</td>
<td>Linkages (operator, protector roles)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political networks Bridging mechanisms</th>
<th>Committee memberships, movement between government and higher education organisations, shared political ideologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exchange relationships</td>
<td>Exchange of political goods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-political-economic forces Enabling conditions</th>
<th>Socio-economic changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discontinuity</td>
<td>Social-economic changes as discontinuity events, limits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Timescale Timescale | Repeating patterns, trends, placement of critical events relative to timescales of different magnitude (e.g. electoral rhythms, generational rhythms) |
Figure 3.3 Multi-disciplinary Derivation of Study Framework (cont)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the discipline area of...</th>
<th>...comes the concept of... which translates and is indicated by...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology Studies</td>
<td>Technology Studies innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Translational change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation champions</td>
<td>Agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological discontinuity</td>
<td>Discontinuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply chain links</td>
<td>Bridging mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3.3 Multi-disciplinary Derivation of Study Framework (cont)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the discipline area of...</th>
<th>which translates into...</th>
<th>and is indicated by...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Studies</td>
<td>Organisational change</td>
<td>Adaptation of existing models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(cultural, structural)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transitional change</td>
<td>Creation of a new system, culture or core technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transformational change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>Agents</td>
<td>Visionary, protector roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change agents</td>
<td>Agents</td>
<td>Protector, operator roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>Agents</td>
<td>Visionary, protector, operator roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open systems</td>
<td>Systems and subsystems</td>
<td>Layers and clusters (of roles, responsibilities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bridging mechanisms</td>
<td>Loose coupling between layers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Categorical conformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exchange relationships</td>
<td>Historical, cultural and current links among agents (indicated by shared educational backgrounds, workplaces, professional relationships, overlapping roles and responsibilities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional isomorphism</td>
<td>Exchange of legitimacy, information, resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Effect of agent(s)’s institutional culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rules and exceptions compared with historical model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Categorical conformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Characteristics of foundation definition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 3.3 Multi-disciplinary Derivation of Study Framework (cont)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the discipline area of:</th>
<th>Concept of</th>
<th>translates into</th>
<th>and is indicated by:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Product champions</td>
<td>Agents</td>
<td>Visionary, protector, operator roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market segmentation</td>
<td>Enabling conditions</td>
<td>Increasing number of separately identifiable participants/groups (natural or corporate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing number and diversity of products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market discontinuities</td>
<td>Discontinuity</td>
<td>Reaching limits or thresholds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Critical events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing market environment</td>
<td>Enabling conditions</td>
<td>Demographic changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Socio-economic changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product/process innovation</td>
<td>Transitional change</td>
<td>Adaptation and/or diversification by incremental changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transformational change</td>
<td>Foundation definition for something which did not previously exist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These concepts drawn from a multi-disciplinary base and suggesting robustness and utility from their presence in more than one discipline area will now discussed at greater length.
Recognition that issues of institutional and organisational structure were prominent in the policy area chosen as the context for this study initially pointed towards organisational studies as a source of explanatory theory; the concept of open systems found in organisational theory, however, offered insight into more than organisational structure imperatives. The intertwined, multi-layer nature of the policy cloth with its linkages and recurring patterns grew particularly from open systems theory.

Public policy involves many different system layers – overlapping and interlocking layers. They are all likely to affect policy making over time. This recognition, coupled with the view that policy research requires a multi-dimensional, multi-perspective approach (as indicated in Chapter 2), led to the application of systems concepts as developed by organisational systems researchers (Scott 1987). Palumbo and Calista (1990b) support this in policy studies within their view that delivery of services shapes policy outcomes more than policy design because the behaviour of those in each level of delivery ‘must be understood as by-products of the complex political, organisational, social and economic context in which they work’ (p.xiii).

In his review, Organizations: Rational, Natural and Open Systems, Scott distinguishes among three views of organisations saying:

The interdependence of the organization and its environment receives primary attention in the open systems perspective. Rather than overlooking the environment, as tends to be true of the rational system perspective, or viewing it as alien and hostile, as is characteristic of the natural system perspective, the open systems model stresses the reciprocal ties that bind and relates the organisation with those elements that surround and penetrate it. (Scott 1987, p.91)

The initial survey of Australian DE showed that the environment beyond the higher education provider could not be overlooked (environmental factors ranged from the geographic factors of the physical environment to educational history and tradition),
hence the rational system perspective was inappropriate. The natural system perspective offered some insight into the relationship between government and providers, and between state and federal governments, but could not contribute to an explanation of the complex interlocking and overlapping clusters of policy activities which were observed. The open systems perspective, however, offered a framework for investigating the shape and complexity of the policy space. The open systems model makes it clear that an organisation is not necessarily a system defined by physical boundaries, nor is it one whose boundaries remain constant or concise, whether a business, a government or a university is considered. According to Scott (1987), an open system’s characteristics include:

- throughput from the environment (p.82)
- adaptation to the environment (p.83)
- subsystems – subunits – which are generally stable, but definitely embedded within a definable system/set of systems
- loose coupling (pp.83, 91)
- clusters and levels, though not necessarily arrayed in a traditional administrative hierarchy (p.84)
- amorphous system boundaries (p.91)
- the importance of process as compared with structure in analysis of the system.

An open system, then, has several characteristics by which it can be identified. In particular, identification of its boundaries in order to show the relationship of a system (or subsystem) with its environment contributes both structural insight about the policy space and an understanding of linkages and barriers within it.
New systems may be fairly simple, enabling them to be easily understood and managed. (The small business can be considered an example of a simple system; the initiation of distance education in Australian universities in the early part of the twentieth century another6.) As a system develops, its degree of complexity usually increases – there are more and more intertwining threads and overlapping patterns. Indicators of increasing complexity include addition of new players, addition of new links among the players and a multiplication of (sometimes overlapping) policies.

The concept of open systems offers a useful perspective for examining any policy space. It particularly contributed to the examination of distance education policy in Australian higher education because it brought into relief the nature of higher education providers as subsystems of an open system rather than (in Scott’s terms) rational systems.

**Boundaries and Bridging Mechanisms**

An open systems view does not consider an organisation (such as a higher education provider or a government) as a discrete entity, but instead takes a more organic view in which boundaries depend upon the level or cluster of activities under examination. Use of the policy cloth metaphor emphasises this understanding. Whether the cloth as a whole, its pattern or the individual threads are considered, each can be examined on its own but must also be examined with regard to the others to understand the whole. Thus, the cloth of policy can be seen as a diversity of systems, interacting and overlapping in different ways; observers will see what they are looking for according to their perceptions, interests and objectives. (Scott points out the simple example in business systems that an exchange is in one system a sale and in another a purchase, and that without that exchange both systems are incomplete.)

---

6 It will be seen later in the analysis, however, that the apparent simplicity with which the introduction of external studies was viewed by policy makers contributed to a foundation definition which did not fully incorporate the potential of the transformational change that was occurring.
Boundaries are both permeable and multi-dimensional (in space, time, socio-economic context) because human activities are not confined within sharp organisational boundaries, because linkages are made for a range of purposes, and because environments change over time. What today may be described as a functioning system may tomorrow be incorporated as a subsystem by the organisation, and vice versa (Scott 1987). He continues:

In a fully developed open system conception, all of the ‘materials’ used to create organisations – resources and equipment, but also personnel and procedures – are obtained from the environment. If we add to this the institutionalist ingredients – beliefs, meanings, conceptual categories – then it is no longer possible to think of the environment as something ‘out there’; its elements are part of the organisation, not absorbed by it so that they become separated from the environment but interpenetrating it, infusing it with value, and connecting it with larger systems. (p.139)

Looking at a policy situation in open system terms requires exploration of both the boundaries and linkages within it to discover the nature of the system and its relationship to its environment. Scott presents viewpoints on the nature of boundaries by defining his more general concept, that of a ‘collectivity’, with

- a delimited social structure – that is, a bounded network of social relations

- a normative order applicable to the participants linked by the network. (p.171)

In this study an activities focus was generally used to ascertain the boundaries and linkages. This approach requires observing change in perspective as a boundary is crossed. In this approach temporal systems and spatial boundaries (and their guardians) are important.

Scott points out (p.172) that most studies of boundary setting incorporate a dimension of membership. This aspect is useful to consider in association with the concept of key agents which will be introduced in a later section. What are the membership links of the key agents? What priorities might be set upon those links? The answers to these questions offer insight into the strength and direction of the forces operating in a policy
space. When the system is not tightly structured and the boundary spanning activities required are numerous, the role of the agent may also become confused.

Open systems interact with their environment and maintain themselves on the basis of a throughput of resources from the environment. Open systems do have boundaries, though these boundaries are considerably more fluid than in other views of systems. Both boundary maintenance and boundary spanning activities are discerned in open systems (Scott 1987). Boundary spanning includes interpenetration with other systems within the environment (for example, the role that interlocking boards of directors play, or the role that academics play for their peers at other universities in evaluation and standard setting as well as aspects of career advancement). Identification of the boundaries becomes dependent on the level and scale of the system under consideration; there are several types of boundary formation.

**Structural Forms.** The nature of human society is to create physical structures both to house physically and to represent human activities. For example, the marketplace has evolved into forms such as the shopping mall, the stock exchange, and printed catalogues of university programs. Organisational structures are also created to support functions and to delimit them (the 1989 establishment of a set of Distance Education Centres created not only policy and organisational structures but also in some cases a physical structure).

**Categories.** Categories are methods of organising and boundary setting (perhaps most starkly exemplified in Australia in the former binary system of universities and colleges of advanced education which existed in the 1970s and 1980s).

**Membership.** Membership is to be located within identified boundaries, but can also lead both to boundary spanning and boundary conflicts. The threads of the cloth intertwine at

---

7Such as the *Good Universities Guide* to Australian Universities (Ashenden and Milligan 1991) or *The Directory of Tertiary Distance Education and Open Learning Courses in Australia* (University of New England, now published annually).
many levels, especially when a system is complex – key agents are members of groups within and across the various layers/clusters of organisations in the system. This occurs both prior to entering active participation and during active participation. This is indicated by the role of the employment and educational background of key agents, and by the multiplicity of roles played by key agents (or not played as the absence of a role which is needed is also of note). The value of examining this background has been demonstrated, for example, in reports on the influences of the social origins of American sociologists on the development of sociology in the USA (for example, Glenn & Weiner 1969) and on the social origins and educational backgrounds of Australian federal public servants on Australian public policy in the 1980s (Pusey 1991). In some cases, the agitation to achieve such membership links is itself an indicator of boundary-spanning activities which are perceived as important.

Scott (1987, p.194 in particular) acknowledges that the exploration and understanding of institutional environments can be addressed at both the technical and institutional levels. He indicates that understanding of the institutional environment is less well developed than of technical environments because less organisational systems research has been conducted in that area. Within the study of institutional environments, however, various concepts have been developed. Central is the need to develop bridging mechanisms. One powerful bridging strategy presented by Scott is the tendency towards institutional isomorphism, an aspect of managing an institutional environment. Institutional isomorphism is suggested as the master bridging process pursued by organisations in their institutional environments wherein, as they incorporate established institutional rules within their own structures, they become more internally homogeneous and more similar to one another over time (Meyer & Rowan 1977; De Maggio & Powell 1983).

**Institutional Isomorphism**

The role of institutional isomorphism in providing stability, predictability and legitimacy is emphasised in this study. Each of these characteristics contributes to an organisation's
(or innovation's) ability to *enter and survive* in a stable, relatively unchanging environment. This is supported in the policy studies field when, for example, Winter (1990, p.35) points out that 'successful implementation of a statute is more likely when its prescriptions are in accord with already existing behaviour and norms'. If significant change is needed to meet a new set of environmental characteristics, the tendency to institutional isomorphism may become counter-productive.

In an institutional environment the likelihood is for organisations to tend towards sameness through conformity with established structures, organisational language, missions and goals. In long-lived institutional environments (for example, those which serve historical and/or universal community needs, such as a legal system or higher education), this is particularly predictable. As Scott points out, organisations are constituted by elements drawn from their institutional environments, and, in fact, that institutional elements are visible (1987, p.194). Thus tendency towards isomorphism produces a feedback loop which can reinforce the tendency, and by so doing, exclude or deflect opportunity for change from the mainstream of policy direction.

**Indicators of Institutional Isomorphism.** Organisational studies researchers have suggested a number of indicators of institutional isomorphism as they try to create a typology of bridging mechanisms. Figure 3.4 on the next page is based heavily on Scott's review but with adaptation, particularly with more emphasis on the role of organisational language presented by Meyer and Rowan. Scott's term 'categorical conformity' may seem to embraces various classifications of observable characteristics, but it must also stand by itself as a term of classification directly reflecting the tendency to categorise.
### Figure 3.4 Typology of Organisational Conformity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Categorical/structural conformity</td>
<td>Research and development, blue collar and white collar, professionals and support staff, internal and external studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural conformity</td>
<td>Organisational charts – hierarchical rather than matrix, mapped, or non-existent; recognisable departments – student administration, library (rather than information resource centre.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural conformity</td>
<td>Baptism, 21st birthday parties, lecture delivery, definition of a course of study by time taken by a typical full-time student (e.g. 2 year associate diplomas, three year diplomas or degrees, 1 year post-graduate diploma).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel conformity</td>
<td>Certification requirements, prestige appointments, tendency to hire similar people, results of small pool of options, young people as the student norm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational language</td>
<td>The same language used everywhere, e.g. research and development, blue collar and white collar, professionals and support staff, internal and external studies, lecturers, lectures, tutorials, assignments and examinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical conformity</td>
<td>Churches, entrance gates at most universities; relative importance given to lecture theatres, seminar rooms, tutorial rooms compared with meeting rooms, open plan spaces, communications technology, provision of information resource access throughout a campus, etc.; organisational hierarchies reflected in size of office, quality of furniture; playing fields rather than playgrounds for the children of students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Categorising both allows new policies and practices to be understood within an existing framework and constrains them by the parameters of that existing framework. Policies which do not fit the existing classification system can be rejected.

Classification can also set up comparative frameworks (as illustrated in Figure 3.4) which may embody, through juxtaposition, not only useful information but also values. Once so categorised, it is difficult to change the value perceptions of any specific policy or its outcomes. For example, white collar and blue collar jobs elicit quite different value judgments; in Australian education 'external' study in comparison with 'internal' offers the commonly understood information that students are primarily located off-campus and are geographically distant, are studying part-time and in higher education are probably mature age. It also, for some at least, contains values which have accumulated over time – external study is 'second best', these are not 'real' students and are not as important, teaching or adminstering these students is not what our 'real' job is, and so, on compared with internal study which, by implication of this classification juxtaposition, must be the opposite of those characteristics.

While some of the structural and categorical components contributing to institutional isomorphism may be obvious, the role of language is more subtle. Oehler, Snizek and Nicholas (1989) considered the influence of institutional language when they reported a study on the role which the use of institutional scientific terminology has in influencing the ways in which claims are built into facts in scientific papers. Meyer and Rowan (1977) indicated the role in legitimisation that use of organisational language plays. Maynard-Moody and Stull (1987) point out the symbolic role that 'public language' plays in the expressive (as contrasted with the instrumental) role of policy.

---

8 Examples of this effect appear in commentaries on Australian higher education such as that of Meek and O'Neill (1990).

9 Rejection can here be taken in the broader sense than outright repudiation, i.e. the policy may never be allowed to move from one stage to the next such as being formulated but never implemented.
Organisational (or public) language offers

- legitimisation

- identification of organisational boundaries

- bridging of cultural boundaries

As organisations diversify their approaches, and as there are new entrants, use of a common language allows more than a shared understanding at operational level; it implies commonly held values and intentions (without these values and intentions being questioned) and it sets boundaries for what agents can do.

This constraint of language can be seen in many contexts. Innovations which do not in themselves create a new institutional space must build on known concepts, hence airships, microwave oven, open campus, television university. The gain is the connection to a known reality. By comparison, renaming (for example, when ‘rubbish collectors’ become ‘sanitary engineers’) or naming of a new concept (virtual reality, the global community) attempts to re-structure the institutional environment.

Innovative use of organisational language has been reported as an essential strategy in the search for excellence in business and industry. Peters and Waterman (1984, pp.167) illustrate their own thesis about excellence with emphasis on the use of organisational language: for example, employees at Disneyland are ‘cast members’, the personnel department is ‘casting’, and whenever employees are working with the public (not customers but ‘Guests’ with a capital G) they are ‘on stage’.

Thus institutional language can contribute both to isomorphism (sameness, stability, legitimacy) and to change (innovation, redefinition, creation) depending on the power of its use (and its users), while institutional isomorphism can be seen more generally to lead to the repetition of existing patterns even when change is desired.
Chapter 3

CHANGE AS THE CENTRAL FOCUS

The central focus of the conceptual model developed in this study is a consideration of change. All patterns show incremental variations as they unfold, whether those variations are described as the results of growth and development, or of adaption and refinement. When the pattern changes significantly, even to the extent of creating what appears to be a new pattern, then fundamental change occurs.

Roe (1978) suggests that a focus on change may be a European value, imposed on our view of the past by scholars looking for change rather than continuity. In his view, when this bias is shed, it is continuity rather than change which is the essence of Australian history (p.ii). Ely’s work on the history of Australian education (to which Roe’s remarks stand as Foreword) support this contention. Mayer (1981) in his work on European history stresses this view of the importance of continuity over change even in the midst of great change. The prominence of incrementalism as a major theory of policy development (Hogwood & Gunn 1984) also gives credence to this view. In higher education the fundamental nature of the system also appears to remain the same rather than change.

Clark offers a theory of change, or more correctly, non-change for the field10. He notes, for example,

innovation, reform, and change are not topics that leave structure and tradition behind.
Academic structures do not simply move aside or let go: what is in place heavily conditions what will be. The heavy hand of history is felt in the structures and beliefs that development has set in place (1983, p.114).

Theories of change and non-change can be seen as mirror images, or as foreground and background in the pattern of the policy cloth. The researcher who is looking for a fresh perspective is cautioned to look for both the foreground elements of change and the background of continuity, and to draw from both the insights needed for new understanding. Thus, a framework for identifying both the necessary circumstances for, and the barriers to, change can contribute to policy studies.

10Meek and O’Neill (1990, p.5) report that Clark is often quoted for this view.
In spite of the apparent value given to continuity, students of policy soon realise that there is relatively little interest in the status quo for its own sake. Most policy making and policy research has to do with change, and this study follows that trend.

Change has been extensively explored within policy studies along a continuum of theoretical perspectives ranging from a focus purely on incremental change to a consideration of fundamental change – the schools of thought derived from work of prominent policy theorists such as Lindblom (1959, 1968, 1979), Simon (1977) and Etzioni (1967) all include consideration of change in their models of policy development.

Change (as innovation) has been extensively explored in technology development (e.g. Abernathy & Clark 1985, who suggest not a dichotomy between incremental and fundamental but rather a development path from one to the other), management studies where the need to respond to changing external environments is considered (e.g. Drucker 1991), and marketing (where innovation is used to meet the bottom line of maintaining or increasing profitability through increasing the customer base and/or by maintaining/increasing returns, e.g. Brown 1981). Syntheses of perspectives on innovation from different disciplines exist (e.g. Rogers & Shoemaker 1971 applied to innovation diffusion in community development) warrant further exploration in contributing to frameworks for policy analysis and design. Change may be improvement, correction, or extension of existing policies, or may be fundamental change.

Types of Change

Levy (1986) summarised the criteria of nineteen theoretical models of change drawn from the literature of organisational studies, management, systems thinking, creative thinking, learning theory, problem-solving and evolutionary theory and concluded that

\footnote{Levy's work was set in the context of 'planned change'. While policy is set in such a context, policy scholars and policy makers must also take into account the environmental factors which prompt change}
there are two types of change. Levy's preferred category terms are 'first order' and 'second order'; incremental and fundamental (or root) are often used in the policy studies literature for these same groupings. In this study, however, different terms will be used. These, included in Levy's survey, are 'transitional' and 'transformational'. They have been selected because they express both difference in order of magnitude and fundamentality (also expressed by the terminology of first order and second order), and process, that is, on-going action (as expressed by transitional and transformational).

**Transitional change** describes growth, maintenance, adaptation, maturation – each transitional increment is small and reversible. Transitional change is a state of interest mainly in times of stability (Abernathy & Clark 1985) and regular competition. In times of turbulence, uncertainty and strong competition, transformational (or revolutionary) change may not only find opportunity but be essential (Foster 1986).

**Transformational change** is a change in essence, in core technology (Scott 1987), and is not reversible, except by further transformational change. It is the realisation not only of new output, but also of new input and throughput. 'Transformational' particularly appears in the literature of leadership and learning (Tichy & Devan 1986), contributing both the importance of process and a connection with the concept of key agents presented later.

and which are outside the control of the planner – these aspects are acknowledged later in the sections on discontinuities and key agents.

12 The small increments may, of course, over time accumulate into an apparently irreversible situation which becomes transformation on a larger scale. Examples include the wearing away of rock into sand by wind and water in the natural environment; the technological transformation of the Model T from a luxury consumer item priced at $1200 in 1908 to an item widely purchasable at a price of $290 in 1926 as the price fell through the cumulative effect of many individual, small innovations (Abernathy & Clark 1985); or the social transformation of schooling in Australia to an expectation of year 10 and, more recently, of year 12 or equivalent completion leading to a mass expectation of undertaking higher education.
Transformational change means a paradigm shift (Kuhn 1970), a reframing (London 1988) and, sometimes, a revolution. It is a change in four dimensions: core processes, culture, mission and paradigm (Levy 1986).

Transformational change alters the policy space, or at least some of the system layers and connections found within it. The change could be the emergence of a new dimension such as advanced information technology (see, for example, Friar and Horwitch 1985) creating a demand for a new set of policies (for example, the invention of the videorecorder which provided the public with the ability to record and duplicate broadcast television programs), or the emergence of a new set of customers (such as the demand for nurses, long practically trained within hospitals, to upgrade their qualifications to university standard). The initiation of Australian distance education was such a transformation. As was indicated earlier, this was a radical educational innovation in which a new pattern of educational policy making, educational provision and educational participation was established.

When does transformational change occur? In the next section the conditions needed for transformational change are explored. Can it be predicted? Can it be fostered? These questions will be addressed in the final chapters of this study.

Conditions for Transformational Change

Transformational change occurs in the presence of three sets of conditions. These are: discontinuity of some type (Levy 1986 drawing upon Lundberg 1984; Drucker 1991), with the key agent roles of visionary, protector and operator (which will developed in more detail later) filled, and at least one of a set of enabling conditions (Levy 1986 drawing upon Lundberg 1984).

Discontinuities (triggers) introduce an opportunity (or necessity) which can only be met through transformational change. Discontinuities are discrete and unique elements, the presence or absence of which can be identified and sometimes predicted.
Discontinuities may ‘just happen’, may result from the convergence of a number of forces, or may be engineered.

**Key agents** are the human instruments of policy ideas, design and implementation. This concept introduces the human condition (which contributes elements of unpredictability, serendipity and propinquity) to policy making. Key agents may also ‘just happen’ to be present but their presence can be engineered.

**Enabling conditions** are necessary but not sufficient for transformational change. They include: adequate\(^{13}\) (appropriate) resources; a perception of a need for change (associated with a readiness to cope with change present in the key layers of the system); and appropriate technological advances. (The second of these characteristics connects with the role of key agents and the *perception* of discontinuity\(^{14}\).) Enabling conditions may be, in at least some cases, the most obviously malleable\(^{15}\).

Each of these condition sets does not stand alone but has linkages to the others. Abernathy and Clark’s discussion of ‘architectural’ innovation, for example, establishes these linkages where they say:

> The potential for stimulating architectural innovation seems to hinge on the juxtaposition of individuals with prior experience in relevant technologies and new user environments latent with needs. (1985, p.8)\(^{16}\).

---

\(^{13}\)In this study the conditions were categorised as adequate/inadequate. An interesting research question, however, would be to explore the dimensions of adequacy and how it is satisfied.

\(^{14}\)Discontinuities which are not perceived cannot contribute to managed change. There is much literature (marketing and technological innovation) pointing out blindness to opportunities which can be read as unperceived discontinuity.

\(^{15}\)Malleability indicates the extent to which the factor can be affected by policy actions (Majchrzak 1984). This malleability can be formal (as in the formal allocation of resources by budget and staffing plans) or informal (such as when an insufficiency of official staff resources may be resolved by unpaid overtime and contributions of friends and family members – there is a link to the concept of key agent here).

\(^{16}\)Another pointer to the relative importance of system interfaces.
Transformational change is most closely associated with discontinuity, as will be shown in the next section.

**Discontinuity – An Essential Condition**

Within Levy’s summary of models of change mentioned above a frequently cited factor leading to transformational change is that of discontinuity. In the metaphor of the policy cloth, discontinuities can be considered variously as tears in the fabric, as a change in the threads available, or as demands for new patterns in the fabric to reflect new needs.

The role of discontinuity has been widely investigated with regard to technological change. Its occurrence is not unique to the latter part of the 20th century although recognition of the range, diversity and continued presence of discontinuity may well be. Foster (1986, p.52) reports that among economists there is a belief that waves of technological innovation (each wave caused by transformational change) have occurred more or less regularly over the past 250 years in roughly 50-year cycles.\(^{17}\) Note that these patterns were not necessarily visible within a single generation but became prominent when a longer timescale was applied.

Discontinuity can be empirically distinguishable by quantitative and qualitative indicators summarised as limits (or thresholds), trend reversals and discontinuity events.

\(^{17}\text{Foster reports that these cycles are named after Russian economist Nikolai Kondratiev, who first proposed the idea. German economist Joseph Schumpeter (known for his study of business cycles) specified the waves as 1790-1840 in which the potential of coal and steam power were exploited largely in the textile industry (industrial products); 1840-1890 in the development of the railways and the mechanisation of production (industrial products and transport); 1890-1940 based on electric power, advances in chemistry and the internal combustion engine (transport, labour-savings); the fourth wave 1940-continuing to the present is based on electronics (labour savings, communication and information technology). He continues by suggesting that the pace of innovation may not pause as it has between previous cycles. This is supported by the growing literature on coping with change in a variety of disciplines.}\)
Limits. The growth (or sigmoid) curve\textsuperscript{18} can be used to describe a single continuity (Foster 1986) as illustrated in Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5 Graphic Representation of Continuity and Discontinuity

Common examples of growth seen as improvement are often stated in terms of dollars gained for dollars input (Foster 1986). Other descriptors include actual growth compared with potential for growth (of customers, of product units):

But in all these cases what we want to know is the relationship between effort put in and results achieved [my emphasis]. (p.100)

A limit, or threshold, is reached at the top of the growth curve where the gain in rate of improvement (be it proportion of market captured, cost/benefit ratio, efficiency, or, say, proportion of a student segment served) is no longer increasing in relation to the inputs.

\textsuperscript{18}This relationship of inputs to change is found in the biological world as birth, growth and senescence; in the commercial world as business establishment, growth and maturity; and in marketing as creation, diffusion and saturation.
A single continuity curve represents the transitional (or incremental) development of a phenomenon (be it policy, process or product) while the shift to a new representative curve represents a transformational change.

In policy analysis there is a range of approaches which draw on the relationship expressed here (such as the range of cost-effectiveness methods; see, for example, Levin 1983) but there are also other areas which draw on this relationship. A particular example is the use of demographics in innovation demand and diffusion studies and in market analyses. Demographic studies offer insights into the absolute increases and decreases in population numbers in categories of interest, as well as rates of change and trends over time in relative proportions and distributions. Reaching an absolute limit (such as the number of qualified students seeking university places compared with the number of university places available) demands a more immediate response. Identifying a trend which can both forecast a future reaching of a limit and also suggest the rate at which that limit will be reached (such as forecasting future demand for university places based on current demographic data, demographic trends and participation patterns) potentially provides more useful information.

To illustrate the value of studying and juxtaposing trends to search for potential discontinuities, Drucker (1991) tells this story of AT&T’s application of this approach leading to one of its earlier successes:

Around 1901, a statistician at the American Telephone & Telegraph Company projected two curves 15 years out: telephone traffic and American population. Viewed together, they showed that by 1920 or so every single female in the United States would have to work as a switchboard operator. The process need was obvious, and within two years, AT&T had developed and installed the automatic switchboard. (p.6)

In the above example the importance of the overall evolution of an industry (Abernathy & Clark 1985) underlies the thinking; this, too, supports not only taking a longer view but also ranging across the levels of a system, viewing the whole as well as the threads of warp and weft.
There is, however, a cautionary note when considering the passage of time with regard to limits and trends. Sometimes it is potentially misleading to consider time at all; for example, to look at the S-curve framework for understanding discontinuity discussed above in terms of a time dimension gives substance to an assumption that a given amount of time is needed for development; in fact time may be the least of the constraints and one of the more malleable of factors (Foster 1986).

*Trend reversals* can also be indicators of discontinuity. (In technical innovation the most common example is a dramatic change in the prices of inputs. Such a change may be as often due to socio-political phenomena as to technological causes.)

Discontinuity ‘events’ are often unique and/or apparently unpredictable. Physical events include geographical features (such as the size, shape and location of the Australian continent) and natural disasters (such as volcanic eruption, epidemic and drought). Other discontinuities are generally socio-political or technological. Thus they can be identified as geographical attributes, historic events, political shifts, cultural shifts or technological change. Discontinuity events are often described in polar (either/or) terms, for example, coastal/inland (geographic), war declared/absence of hostilities (historic events), change in the party holding government (political shifts) and so on.

Systemic Discontinuities. Discontinuities which occur at one level or in one cluster within a complex open system (but not at a global or holistic level) create system discontinuities through the mismatch of expectations and functions (see, for example, Goldstein & Hagel 1988 for an organisational example). This can lead to dysfunction with regard to agreed goals and objectives or to a move to decoupling, that is, a loosening of the links between the rhetoric (that provides meaning and legitimacy to the formal structures) and the reality at hand (Meyer & Rowan 1977; Yanow 1992). Observation of such decoupling activities can point to the presence of systemic discontinuity.
Key Agents: the Human Element

Whenever discontinuity appears in an open system, it is the response of people which matters. In every discipline area examined during this study the role of people had a visible profile, not only the role of the technical expert but also the role of those who influenced outcomes in other ways. The agent in the role of the champion and/or entrepreneur has been widely canvassed in innovation studies (J.B. Quinn 1985a; Maidique 1980); the business and management literature uses entrepreneur, champion (Drucker 1985) and leader. These role titles refer to the key players with regard both to product or process innovation, and to the establishment of organisational entities to support it. In management studies (which for this work is related to both organisational studies and marketing) the focus is on leadership, both specifically relating to change (Tichy & Devan 1986) and more generally recognising the multiplicity of roles required (R.E. Quinn et al. 1990). In policy studies the relative importance of stakeholders is a common element with their role most often examined using political science paradigms of power and influence relationships (Ham & Hill 1984). Key agents are often scattered across a range of functions and organisational entities, and discovering their full effect emphasises the value of an open systems perspective as presented earlier in this chapter.

The presence of key agents represents the second of the conditions needed for transformational change. The roles, or ‘faces’, of key agents are conceptually used to analyse the human element of the policy process (commonly represented in policy and management literatures as ‘actor’, ‘player’, ‘stakeholder’) in order to represent a confluence of attributes. ‘Actor’ and ‘player’ both indicate being an active part of the policy process pattern but do not usually include further distinctions. ‘Stakeholder’ carries a more direct sense of purpose and value-laden concerns in its expression of involvement and ownership but the term does not distinguish the types of issue ownership, power, influence and attention which might be brought to bear.
'Agent' is thus used here as the conceptual term to subsume two notions. The first is that of an act of agency, as a force producing outcomes (including thus the notion of championship). The second is that of the agent as a person (the individual or corporate entrepreneur, the leader, the nurturer). Drawing on two definitions from the *Macquarie Dictionary*, an agent is

one who or that which acts or has the power to act

and

a natural force or object producing or used for obtaining results; instrumentality

Thus it can be seen that the concept of key agents links the action of human beings in a policy environment with the forces prevailing in it. As human beings, however, agents are influenced and can influence because of their personalities, their individual experiences and their ideologies as well as act as agent from an organisational perspective. Their roles can be discussed in two dimensions, the type of attention given and the level of attention.

*Type of Attention: the Key Agent Roles.* Type of attention is described here in terms of three essential attributes of agency: vision, protection and operation. Without the action of individuals and/or corporate bodies in the three specific agent roles described below transformational change does not occur. These roles may all be filled by one person (or corporate entity), or each by a different person, both at a given time and over time.

**The visionary** recognises the opportunity (or necessity) raised by a discontinuity and proposes a transformational change policy, process or product to take advantage of it.

The **protector** agrees with the vision (even though not always seeing all implications) and acts to ensure that the vision is carried out in an action program. Birch (1976, p.2) is an Australian educational policy analyst who points this need out in the policy context when he says it is necessary for the policy maker to have 'authoritative

---

19 The influence of these personal characteristics can stem from many sources, including their political party affiliation, where they went to school or university, or what sports team they may follow.
support’ (both rhetorical and financial) to operationalise policies while Bardach (1979 as reported by Winter 1990) calls the role that of the ‘fixer’. Marklund and Keeves (1988) recognise this role as change or linkage agent. In that context, the protector is most likely to facilitate the change by linking the vision with the operator.

The operator is responsible for implementing the vision, and holds the appropriate technical expertise. The operator (Quinn’s pediatrician, 1985b) makes the innovation happen by translating it into action.

*Level of Attention* (Winter 1990) is a second dimension of importance when considering agents. Limited attention can produce decisions where no direct relationship and internal consistency among policy formation, policy formulation and implementation occurs.

*Corporate Agents – a Note.* The role of the corporate body should be noted. A statutory body or a committee driven by a key agent or by a group holding a wider agenda may influence the character of the corporate agents (see, for example, Winder’s 1991 comments on Australian policies and policy process). In Australia very few education policy initiatives have been taken without consultation with expert committees (Birch 1976; Harman 1988); thus in the official lexicon of Australian higher education the role of the corporate entity (for example, the Murray Committee appointed to investigate the problems of Australia’s universities in the mid 1950s, or the Martin Committee appointed in the mid 1960s to report on the future of tertiary education in Australia) is also of interest with regard to key agent roles.

**Key Agents and Change**

A situation in transitional change is much less dependent upon the actions of key agents than one of transformational change. Analysis and change is at the level of tinkering and refinement – fixing this problem, improving that situation, adding this new option. A

---

20 A detailed look at the role of key agents within policy advice committees in Australian higher education is an interesting research question for another time.
good operator is certainly needed; protection may be useful if there are competitive forces in the environment; vision is not essential.

Innovations researcher James Quinn (1985b) emphasises the role of the visionary and protector (his champion) in the context of transformational change, citing the need for qualities of commitment, determination and persistence. His analysis:

A champion desperately needs other expertise and support – both business and technical – at crucial times. Some of the most difficult problems for large organizations are: (1) how to tolerate and nurture the kinds of off-beat, driven personalities who tend to become champions; and (2) how to reward both champions and experts appropriately. (p.273)

supports the theory proposed here of the need for different roles to be filled.

An agent with the vision recognises the need and the solution, and an agent with the power to protect fosters the shift. Stacey succinctly encompasses the roles of both the visionary and the protector in his view:

The role of the champion is to turn any detected change, any identified opportunity or problem, into a strategic issue which receives the attention of that level of management having the power to progress it. . . . (1990, p.107)

while Quinn pictures the visionary and protector roles and adds the role of operator (his pediatrician):

Innovations seem to be much like human babies. For a high probability of success an innovation needs a mother (champion) who loves it emotionally and will stay with it when others would give up, a father (authority figure with resources) who can support it, and pediatricians (experts) who can see it through technical difficulties. Unfortunately many companies assign the task only to their pediatricians. (p.273)

That championing is a political process, not merely a management role, has also been recognised:

The kind of change we are talking about is generally small, its causes and its consequences are unclear and it is not adequately backed by information. Analytical processes consequently make a relatively small contribution to its detection and early structuring. It is the intuitive, judgemental processes of control which have most heavily to be called upon in
this situation. Because intuitive reasoning is personal and subjective, it is open to far
greater dispute than analytical reasoning. Persuasion and negotiation are the control
processes required to get others to understand and back the issue. Turning a detected problem
or opportunity into an issue is therefore a political process. A champion who believes in
the relevance of the issue to the organization, a champion with political power, is essential
if the issue is to be attended at all. [my emphasis] (Stacey 1990, p.102).

The role of the protector/visionary is that of an effective political actor. The strategies
which may eventually be pursued depend critically on the process of developing agendas
(Stacey 1990). Putting matters into a formulated plan, however, does not implement
them and hence the role of operator is crucial.

In transformational change, all three roles – visionary, protector and operator – are
required. These may be provided by a single key agent carrying out multiple roles (the
role of the entrepreneur in the initiation of a new business is often like this) or by different
individuals/corporate bodies carrying out different aspects of the key agent role. In this
study the presence/absence of one or more of the roles at crucial policy stages (formation,
formulation and implementation) in each layer is examined in Chapters 5-8.

Enabling Conditions

The last of the factors which may promote transformational change comprises a range of
enabling conditions, of which at least some must be present. Adequate appropriate
resources is perhaps the most universal condition. Other enabling conditions are
appropriate technological advances (particularly in communications and transport
technology in this study), increasing demands, and a perception of the need for change
(in the case of systemic discontinuity such as World War II that perception pervades the
society; in other situations, where the discontinuity is more localised, the need for change
may remain unperceived even by those who would otherwise be willing to change).
Summary of Key Factors for Change

The three sets of factors enabling transformational change are summarised in Figure 3.6.

**Figure 3.6 Key Factors for Change**

Determining the nature of the observed, desired or intended change includes both looking at the agents in place at the crucial periods, as just discussed, and at the visionary and operational traditions with which they are familiar. The opportunity (or necessity) for transformational change (offered by conditions of discontinuity as discussed above) can, however, be constrained by the forces of institutional isomorphism, a powerful bridging mechanism. These forces prevent or constrain transformational change, creating a tension between the past and the future, and between intention and reality. Levy captures that tension when he says:

Transformation entails learning to create or discover a reality beyond that one that currently exists, and to choose one that fits one’s needs. (1986, p.11)

The impact of the existing (and/or dominant) tradition and the creation of a foundation definition for the transformative situation are examined next.
THE FOUNDATION DEFINITION

Transformational change leads to an altered condition while the tendency to institutional isomorphism leans towards sameness; these are two usually opposing forces which resolve in the creation of a new policy situation.

At a time of transformational change, there is usually a perceived existing tradition (drawn from historical experience and/or extant practices and physical examples) and its characteristics are influential. For example, the automobile was a transformational change in transport. Its creation was influenced by the existing model of animal-powered transport, its design structurally followed the previous tradition and it was called a 'horseless carriage'; the microwave 'oven' is an example of transformational change in cooking technology although described in a manner which presumed transitional change; and electronic mail is treated as a postal analogy when in fact it combines telephone 'conversations' with the memo, the telegram, facsimile transfer and activities not previously possible (such as remote access).

In transformational change a new situation model, hereafter called the foundation definition, is established. It is the product of the intention yet also represents the effects of the transition period (taking here the meaning used in change management – see Bridges 1991). The foundation definition encompasses both the strengths of the innovation and the constraints of its history. It must be a model which carries within itself the means and the drive for its own success and for its survival. (This foundation definition then undergoes transitional change in its growth and development period.)

The foundation definition expresses the translation of the intention into reality under the influence of organisational, intergovernmental, ideological and street-level bureaucracy factors recognised by implementation researchers (Palumbo & Calista 1990b; Winter 1990).
THE FOUNDATION DEFINITION

Transformational change leads to an altered condition while the tendency to institutional isomorphism leans towards sameness; these are two usually opposing forces which resolve in the creation of a new policy situation.

At a time of transformational change, there is usually a perceived existing tradition (drawn from historical experience and/or extant practices and physical examples) and its characteristics are influential. For example, the automobile was a transformational change in transport. Its creation was influenced by the existing model of animal-powered transport, its design structurally followed the previous tradition and it was called a 'horseless carriage'; the microwave 'oven' is an example of transformational change in cooking technology although described in a manner which presumed transitional change; and electronic mail is treated as a postal analogy when in fact it combines telephone 'conversations' with the memo, the telegram, facsimile transfer and activities not previously possible (such as remote access).

In transformational change a new situation model, hereafter called the foundation definition, is established. It is the product of the intention yet also represents the effects of the transition period (taking here the meaning used in change management – see Bridges 1991). The foundation definition encompasses both the strengths of the innovation and the constraints of its history. It must be a model which carries within itself the means and the drive for its own success and for its survival. (This foundation definition then undergoes transitional change in its growth and development period.)

The foundation definition expresses the translation of the intention into reality under the influence of organisational, intergovernmental, ideological and street-level bureaucracy factors recognised by implementation researchers (Palumbo & Calista 1990b; Winter 1990).
Levy's (1986) ideal type discussion on models of change implies an either/or situation in looking at transitional and transformational change; Foster's (1986) discussion of innovative response to discontinuities seems to support this. The concept of the foundation definition developed here, however, is the expression of intention as reality rather than an ideal type. On examination it often shows hybrid characteristics which reflect the forces of institutional isomorphism (Scott 1987). In the empirical portion of this study distinction is made between the ideal types postulated during transformational change and the reality which emerges as the foundation definition; this form of reality reflects the likely outcomes of Etzioni's mixed scanning model of decision-making (Etzioni 1967; Hogwood & Gunn 1984).

Boeker (1989) reports research on the effects of founding events on the creation of foundation definitions (in organisations using an industrial context). He argues that the influence of founding events must be considered equally with present conditions when examining distribution of power and function. Founding events create an organisational definition which strongly influences subsequent development and activities. That definition is influenced both by environmental factors extant during the transformative phase and the personal characteristics of the entrepreneur (key agent) setting up a new business. The strength of these environmental, organisational and personal factors manifests itself in the tendency towards institutional isomorphism.

Boeker points out that the activities and structures with which the key agent is most familiar are likely to be considered the more important and that

The status or importance of functions in the organisation at founding sets boundaries on the range of subsequent changes in functional importance that are likely to be considered. Patterns of functional importance are perpetuated over time as participants come to view them as an objective reality, setting rules and norms for the proper role of each functional area. The current importance of functions in the organisation can be viewed in part as a product of earlier-established patterns of functional importance that have become institutionalised. (p.407)
Thus previous values, function and structure are incorporated in the foundation definition, whether or not they were part of the intention.

In this study founding events were examined in terms of the historical context, the key agent roles and the institutional context. All three dimensions can be strongly influenced by tendencies towards institutional isomorphism (Scott 1987).

What then is the foundation definition? It begins with the prescription (formulation including implementation plan where explicit) for the transformative response. In Boeker's research the entrepreneur (a key agent) develops this prescription through combining the action desired with what is known of existing models. On the one hand, at the entrepreneurial level this prescription is usually informal, that is, held within the vision of the key agent(s). If the key agents are independent it is their opportunity to say 'this is how we will do it'. True independence is rare, however; and agents are usually influenced by levels of power and influence, availability of resources, and ability and/or inclination to take risks. On the other hand, within a well developed institutional environment, the constraints of the existing legislative rules and bureaucratic tradition as well as other cultural features also come into play.

The concept of foundation definition can be used to analyse any situation in which fundamental change has occurred or in which it is desired; it takes into account not only structure and function but also values. A simple example of the development and effects of a foundation definition is that of the settling of Australia. One perspective is that the country was used as a dumping ground for rejected members of British society, the convicts. Another perspective was that it was an extension of the British trading empire. While these are not mutually exclusive definitions of the situation, in Australia the influence of the first is more often remarked upon for its influence on the formation of Australian society. In an example closer to the focus of this study universities can be variously seen as a place in which the nation's culture is preserved and passed on to the best and the brightest; as a place which is a special kind of finishing school for the
intellectually more able of the social and economic elite, a place where rites of passage are completed; or as a place to get the right kind of ‘ticket’ for a career. Each of these perspectives could contribute to the foundation definition of a new university. Which perspectives are dominant in a foundation definition, and how that might be influenced, is the stuff of this research.

Five elements were examined when investigating the establishment of the foundation definition:

- Impact of the agents’ institutional culture (with relation to agent roles and systems levels)
- Impact of choices in the translation of intention into action (with relation to change and system levels)
- Impact of temporal and spatial relationships (in relation to agent roles, system levels, and time)
- Impact of relevant supporting technology (in relation to enabling conditions)
- Tendency towards institutional isomorphism (in relation to change and to systemic factors)
A CHANGED-CENTRED POLICY ANALYSIS MODEL

In this chapter a policy analysis framework centred on change has been developed. The major concepts and their inter-relationships are summarised in Figure 3.6 and 3.7. An important aspect of the diagram is the cyclic nature of the relationships among the elements, pointing out that even within a conceptual framework the dynamics of the system must be acknowledged.

Figure 3.7 A Change Centred Policy Process Model

Given policy situation

Are All Key Factors for Change Present?

Yes, all: Transformational Change

No, only some: Transitional Change

Creation of a Foundation Definition

New policy situation
THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Change-Centred Policy Process Model summarised in Figure 3.7 (drawing also on Figure 3.6) provided the analytic framework used to investigate the multi-layer system of Australian higher education in which the distance education sector is embedded. This section presents the specific research questions drawn from that framework. It was considered that the answers to these questions might lead to an answer for the overarching question for this study: what has caused distance education policy and practice to continue to be set apart from that for conventional on-campus classroom-based programs. The answers lie in both the warp and the weft of distance education policy.

The Warp

Within the metaphor of warp and weft, the warp represents those long-lasting factors which affect not only a specific domain but which are influential across many domains.

In this work, the factors with unavoidable and lasting influence on the life of the country, including higher education policy making (and in particular, distance education) during the period studied are identified in Chapter 4. These factors include the geographic (from the physical shape and size of the continent and the distribution of its resources to the location of its major cities and its centres of higher education) and the socio-economic (including colonisation, World Wars, economic prosperity and depression, historical and cultural traditions). In brief:

Which general geographic and socio-economic factors have influenced distance education, and for how long?

Recognising these factors and their influence contributes to a basic understanding of the policy situation. Because these factors are all pervasive and not easily altered by policy making, policy analysts and policy makers must work within the constraints they impose.
Chapter 3

The Weft

The weft represents the important but more variable factors which interact to shape the policies of the domain under study, higher education, and the particular policy issue area, distance education. The factors in the weft of the distance education policy cloth studied here are drawn from an open systems perspective (specifically, the layers and linkages of the system, and the impact of institutional isomorphism), the occurrence of transformational change, and the presence (or absence) of conditions (discontinuity, key agents and other enabling conditions) for transformational change.

First of all, policy-making and analysis in an open system requires particular attention to the layers of the system and identification of the opportunities and constraints in each layer. The layers where policy-making occurs, for example, are not always the layers in which implementation occurs. Ignoring a layer which is crucial to success may lead to inadequate policy design and implementation.

The possible system layers within the higher education policy space have been identified. These included the macro-elements of federal and state governments; the meso-elements of higher education providers\(^{21}\), the government bureaucracies, and the quasi-bureaucracies found in industrial, professional and community associations; and the micro-elements comprising the groupings of individuals directly concerned with and affected by distance education policy and its implementation. This study thus seeks answers to the questions:

How many of the layers – governments, bureaucracies and quasi-bureaucracies (professional, industrial and community associations), higher education providers, and other groupings – influenced distance education policy and practices, and was it a consistent or an intermittent effect?

---

\(^{21}\)All were government-funded universities and colleges during the period of study.
It is not enough, however, merely to identify the system layers of the policy space, informative though that may be. The linkages between them are also of importance as the exchange of influence and outcomes between layers are important in policy-making and analysis. What is the nature of the linkages: policy, structural, cultural or pragmatic? Were policies and structures mirrored between layers? What evidence was there of shared educational and social backgrounds, common employment experiences and professional activities, and/or shared ideologies among the key agents? Or, in short:

*What types of linkages among the system layers were present in the higher education policy space, particularly with regard to distance education?*

Parallel with a concern about existing linkages is the importance of highlighting the forces of institutional isomorphism within a system, particularly at a time of transformational change. What other institutional conformities across layers and within layers were visible? What effect did institutional isomorphism play (through the influence of historical tradition and practices – of the society, of higher education, of distance education, of already extant policies and organisational structures, and of the personal experiences of key agents) on policy design and implementation encompassed in the foundation definition?

*What effects of institutional isomorphism, if any, were visible during the phase which produced a foundation definition following a transformational change in distance education policy?*

Next, after outlining the system layers and linkages, attention is turned to the place of transformational change within it. For policy scholars, the question of whether transformational change can be engineered is one of debate. If the essential conditions can be identified and verified, then policy scholars may find new interpretations for past policy situations, and be able to develop new tools for policy analysis and advice to policy makers.
The essential factors for transformational change as drawn from the conceptual framework developed earlier in this chapter include the presence of discontinuity, the filling of three key agent roles and the presence of other enabling conditions. Discontinuity provides the ‘trigger’ for change. Key agents envisage, protect and ensure that the change occurs. The other enabling conditions provide a supportive environment for change.

Considering discontinuity, were there limits reached with regard to provision of higher education, and/or of education and employment participation? Did relevant trends change, including society’s expectation of educational attainment and the dominance of pre-service education? Were there other discontinuity phenomena present which appeared essential for the transformational change observed? Were any of the above lacking when it would have otherwise been expected that transformational change might occur but did not? With regard to key agent roles, were all three roles of visionary, protector and operator filled? With respect to the other enabling conditions, was it clear that necessary technological advances had been made and that resources were adequate? In other words:

Were all the essential factors (discontinuity, key agent roles and the other enabling conditions) present when transformational change in relevant policy and practice was observed?

While the three sets of factors are all postulated as essential for transformational change, the first two – discontinuity and key agent roles – are of additional interest to policy analysts because of their potential value as analytic tools.

Discontinuity may be particularly visible in a survey of a policy space, and may thus be a useful indicator of opportunity for change. Hence the question:

Was the presence/absence of discontinuity a dependable indicator of the opportunity/lack of opportunity for transformational change?
If the presence of discontinuity becomes a dependable indicator, policy scholars may be more readily able to interpret the success of policies aimed at transformational change, and policy makers may be able to predict, and perhaps engineer, the success of proposed fundamental policy change.

Key agent roles were also further highlighted as a concept with value as an analytic tool both because of their relationship to linkages between system layers as indicated earlier and with the view that key agents are usually dominantly located in a specific system layer – which may or may not be the appropriate layer for achieving the intended policy outcome. Thus, the question

*Were all the key agents roles (visionary, protector and operator) located in appropriate layers when transformational change in relevant policy and practice was observed? If not, what were the effects?*

If the key agent roles prove to contribute significantly to transformational change, the key agent concept would enable policy scholars to investigate policy from a new perspective, and enable policy makers to contribute to, or constrain, policy making by influencing the presence/absence of such roles in the appropriate layers of the system.

To see the patterns of the cloth clearly, it is examined over considerable length. Just as one wave dashing itself upon a shore does not say anything of the direction of the tide, a scrap of the policy cloth bounded by a few short years does not necessarily show the fundamental patterns. Rather it is the ongoing series of waves which shows tidal direction and it is the pattern and direction of the whole which provides the observer of a policy situation with useful information. Studies of dynamic systems over time more clearly illuminate patterns of change. This study looked for patterns which might relate to known roughly-periodical events, for example, government elections, as well as other patterns which became evident through the study of change as detailed in later chapters.
Are there patterns over time? What are those patterns? Can they be described in any meaningful way in terms of period and/or amplitude?

Thus, the weft then intertwines with the warp to form the pattern. The agents live and act, threads break or are re-tied in a new way as discontinuities appear in previously smooth cloth, cross-linkages appear from the stuff of the weft, and change (both planned and unexpected), all come together to produce the pattern and the tale as to why external and internal studies policies and practices have remained apart. Chapters 4-8 present that tale.
PART II

UNPICKING THE CLOTH:

INVESTIGATING THE WARP AND WEFT

Chapter 4 The Warp – Long-lasting Influences
Chapter 5 Initiation (1901-1930)
Chapter 6 Review, Upheaval and Reconstruction (1930-1955)
Chapter 7 Growth and Diversification (1955-1975)
Chapter 8 Turbulence & Challenge (1975-1989)
CHAPTER 4
THE WARP – LONG-LASTING INFLUENCES

In this chapter the long-lasting geographic and socio-economic factors which have influenced distance education policy are presented – these are the unchanging or slowly changing attributes of the policy space which are long present, though not always immediately or directly visible to the analyst or policy maker. This type of information is often relegated to appendices; such placement obscures the importance of these factors. Here are acknowledged the impact of the geographic context and the patterns of the events, people and ideas which more often are only silent influences in policy analyses. These form the warp upon which the weft is woven to create the patterns in the policy cloth.

GEOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES

The physical nature of the Australian continent, with its associated patterns of settlement, established a unique physical underpinning for all that happens in Australia. Australia is a country of extreme distances and sparse settlement. At its settlement the extremities of distance were of a greater order of magnitude than ever confronted in western European communities as shown in Figure 4.1 on the next page.

Today the situation of a geographically immense island state still relatively sparsely populated but in a significantly skewed pattern (see Figure 4.2), continues to be a factor which must not be ignored in the analysis of Australian public policy. All roads do not lead to Rome (whether Rome is Canberra – the political capital since 1927, or to the vying commercial capitals – Sydney and Melbourne). Settlement was, and is, asymmetrically nodal, with each state possessing one major node, its seacoast-based capital city. (The country’s capital, Canberra, on the other hand, is located inland in a geographic compromise.)
For much of its development period Australia was but an archipelago of city states (Bolton 1992). The recent population patterns illustrated in Figure 4.2 suggest that the physical changes have not been so great as to disrupt that pattern entirely.
The separateness engendered by the physical geography in association with the separate development of the six colonies led to a separateness and independence codified in the Australian constitution where many powers remained with the states (and continues as a political stance today) as 'States' rights' – education was a State's right and responsibility. This geographic constellation supported state level rather than national development.

Figure 4.2 Patterns of Settlement in Australia

Source: Commonwealth of Australia 1980. Note that Settlement Zone 1 (which contained 79% of Australia's population that year) although appearing continuous in the figure has 84% of its population concentrated in six core urban areas. The country's population at this time was nearly 15 million in 1980.

Australia's geographic paradox is that it is both one of the most urbanised countries in the world and one of the most sparsely settled. Thus, Australia has throughout its history been required to confront three different attributes of geography and population

Symbolised by differing rail gauges among the states. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Report on the Unification of Australian Trunk Railways was tabled in 1956, the first standard gauge line from Sydney to Melbourne was opened in 1962, and the standard gauge line from Sydney through to Perth finally completed in only 1969 (Fraser 1983).
distribution: vast distances between political and population centres, an extremely sparse population distribution in its influential hinterlands (mining and agriculture, the primary industries, have been major contributors to the economy of the country throughout the period), and a small number of densely populated urban centres located on its coasts. This has produced economic and political tensions which have affected many policy areas including the initiation and maintenance of distance education policy.

**Population Perspectives**

The data in Figure 4.3 indicate an overall fairly stable rate of population growth over the period of this study with significant migration following World War II and later. At the beginning of the century, the population was predominantly of British and Irish origin (Fraser 1983). Migration led to a changed population. By the end of the 1980s 40% of the Australian population has been reported as immigrants or the children of immigrants with half of these of non-British origin (Castles et al 1988).

**Figure 4.3 Components of Population Growth (1901-1984)**

![Figure 4.3 Components of Population Growth (1901-1984)](image)

Figure 1.4 in Chapter 1 presented higher education participation data for the period for which nationally collected figures were obtainable. The national pattern, as well as the patterns for individual providers (as represented in this study by the University of Queensland and the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education in Queensland, and the University of New England in New South Wales, see Figure 4.4) demonstrate trends that are remarkably stable over the timescale represented. The one consistent characteristic is growth.

Sources for Figure 4.4 (on next page): University of Queensland Statistics, University of New England Statistics, University of Southern Queensland Statistics, Selected Advanced Education Statistics, Selected University Statistics. Note: The absence of full-time external students at other times at UQ and in the data for the other providers is more likely an artefact of limited data collection categories rather than a total absence of students in this category.
Figure 4.4 Participation by Mode of Enrolment for
Three Higher Education Providers (Persons) (Cont)

- Int: Full-time  □ Int: Part-time  • Ext: Part-time  ■ Ext: Fulltime

University of Queensland

University of New England

Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education
Socio-economic Influences

On the one hand, periods of war and peace, economic prosperity and economic decline are visible and commonly recognised on a macro scale though their exact boundaries are blurred; this blurring is less important than the insights which emerge from their comparison with other domains of activity in the same period. Phases of these national and international phenomena are presented in Figure 4.5, reflecting the general socio-economic environments experienced in Australia. These could influence policy makers not only through direct influence on the priorities on the policy agenda of the day but also through influence on the level of attention which key agents in the macro layers might put towards education. The characteristics of the socio-economic environments as represented in Figure 4.5 could also affect the other layers, the most obvious influence being the effect of economic upturn and downturn on the provision of resources to higher education.

On the other hand, easier to identify are clearly bounded actions such as the changing faces of elected government (as in Figure 4.6). At the federal level periods of instability (particularly during the early years following federation) and stability (particularly in the post-war era of Prime Minister Menzies) appear. The political turbulence and change in the first part of the century suggests that at the federal level there were other matters on the minds of the players such as securing power, stabilising the government and establishing its federal role.

---

2 From all sources, including the government funds allocated, the ability of students to pay fees and to support themselves as full-time students, and the willingness of business, industry and community leaders to contribute.
Figure 4.5 Socio-Economic Patterns of the Study Period

- Federation, nationhood and prosperity
- Economic downturn and uncertainty
- Disruption and reconstruction
- Post-war prosperity
- Economic & political ups and downs

World War I  Great Depression  World War II


Figure 4.6 Commonwealth Politics – Turbulence and Stability

- Australian Labor Party
- Protectionist Party
- Nationalist Party [merger of National Labor and Liberal]
- Free Trade Party
- United Australia Party
- Australian Country [later National] Party
- Liberal Party
- Coalition: Free Trade/Labour Parties
- Coalition: Nationalist/ Australian Country Parties
- Coalition: United Australia/ Australian Country Parties
- Coalition: Liberal/ Australian Country Parties [later Liberal/National Parties]
- Change of Prime Minister
HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The patterns of the new nation's policies could not but be drawn in significant part from those of Britain because of Australia's peaceful colonial history. These antecedents of the new country were well symbolised by the necessity for the Australian Constitution to be contained in an Act of the British Parliament as this was the only legal way to establish a system of government for the whole of Australia (Australia. Parliamentary Education Office 1991). Furthermore, although they were to leave a lasting impression on the country's people, the legal and social distinctions between convict and free, between land-owner and worker found in the earlier colonies had faded by 1901 when Australia became an independent country. Democratic and egalitarian ideals became more influential (some indicators of this, for example, were the provision of full adult franchise, with no property qualifications, at the federal level in 1902; and, at the instigation of the Labor Party, no fees for university instruction at the University of Western Australia from its beginnings in 1911). These were conditions supporting requirements for extended access and equity in the provision of higher education which, although not publicly well articulated for higher education until the 1970s, are a theme in Australian educational policy throughout the century.

More sophisticated insights arise from the consideration of time and space relationships within an analysis of social, cultural and technological developments. For example, Australia had been colonised by Europeans very late in the colonial era. It was already the beginning of the industrial age. The European community in Australia had neither a peasant culture nor a network of interwoven communities on which to build an emerging educational system (unlike the traditional European, and later, the American models upon which the founders of distance education drew). Hence geographic factors, history and humankind met at a unique nexus in Australia (Clark 1981; Molony 1987; Bolton 1992).

---

3At the state level full adult franchise without property qualification was legislated as early as 1894 in South Australia and as late as 1908 in Victoria with Queensland agreeing to it in 1905.
LINKING WARP AND WEFT

This overview of the influential geographic and socio-economic relationships provides the background upon which the development of Australian distance education policy within the higher education system is further analysed in the next chapters. The period of study, from 1901 to 1989, is divided into four chapters representing four periods (see Figure 4.8 for a diagrammatic representation of the four periods shown together with their general relationship to the stages of development of distance education presented in Figure 4.7). This provided a mechanism for closer, more focussed analysis.

Discontinuity was used as the breakpoint for segmenting the study:

- The beginning is set on Federation Day, 1 January 1901, a symbolic discontinuity event which established a new nation, a new century and the opportunity for new policy. The initiation period which followed saw the establishment of distance education within Australian higher education policy and practice.

- The first break comes at the beginning of the Depression at the end of 1929. The period of review and upheaval which followed extended through World War II and its reconstruction aftermath. This was a period of considerable socio-economic upheaval, uncertainty and change – a period in which reversals in economic and employment trends occurred;

- The second break comes at the end of the war and reconstruction period. The country entered into a period of considerable political stability and economic prosperity during which it (and its higher education system) could grow and diversify;

---

4It could be argued that an additional break should have been used, that of the ending of the 1930s Depression. While that socio-economic event did indeed have an effect on the development of distance education, the system at that time was small and relatively simple, and hence the focus of a separate chapter in this study is not warranted.
• The third break comes at the end of that stable period when a phase of political instability and significant change in the economic fortunes of the country began. The discontinuity event used here was the dismissal of the Whitlam Labor Government in November 1975, an event symbolic of the already increasing turbulence and challenge in political, economic and education circles.

• The end of the study, in 1989, is set at a discrete policy event within the country’s higher education system, the selection of the Distance Education Centres, for this is, after all, a story about distance education.
Figure 4.7 Evolution of Distance Education in Australian Higher Education

Note: The External Studies band up to the post-war period represents the documented planned but unimplemented improvements to external studies provision at the University of Queensland. Resource allocation priorities to other activities within the University during the period coupled with the disruption of World War II generally appear to have caused the delay in implementation.

Figure 4.8 Investigation Period for This Study

- **Initiation:** New models for geographically challenged states
- **Review, Upheaval and Reconstruction:** Response to national and global disaster, dislocation and re-invention
- **Growth & Diversification:** The community prospers and with it the education system
- **Turbulence & Challenge:** Searching for the way through an era of rapid change
CHAPTER 5

INITIATION: ESTABLISHMENT OF EXTERNAL STUDIES POLICY IN AUSTRALIA (1901-1930)

In this chapter the establishment of external studies policy in Australia is reported, with particular attention to the foundation definition which resulted.

LAYERS OF THE SYSTEM

Australian distance education policies were formed and formulated in the first decades of the twentieth century at government direction (incorporated in the state legislation founding the Universities of Queensland and Western Australia). At this time Australia was a nation newly born. National politics and government activity were focussed primarily on establishing the newly created nation state, and, it appears, on the basic need of establishing a stable federal government (refer back to Figure 4.5 for a picture of the instability of the federal government in the early part of the century).

Responsibility for education was assigned in the Australian Constitution to the States. Action was therefore state-centred. The policy space for higher education during this period was small and simple compared with that in existence by the end of this study. Of the six Australian states which emerged in 1901, two were geographically large, with later, less distinctly colonial, histories¹; these states also possessed more widely dispersed settlement patterns. Neither of these states, Queensland and Western Australia, had universities at Federation – theirs were legislated in 1909 and 1911 respectively,

¹The colonies were established as follows. 1788 – the first settlement was NSW (eastern Australia had been declared the British possession of NSW in 1770 by Captain James Cook) – all of eastern Australia was treated as a single colony until the separate colonies were established with their own governors and legislators. 1825 – Tasmania. 1834 – South Australia. 1850 – Victoria. 1859 - Queensland. 1890 –
much later than those of the other colonies\(^2\) and thus on the opposite side of the political divide created by Federation.

**DISCONTINUITIES OFFER OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE**

The twentieth century began in Australia with a key event symbolising transformational change: the new nation declared with the proclamation of the Federal Constitution\(^3\) on January 1, 1901.

The population was now large and distinctly Australian – 77% of the population of 3.8 million as recorded in the 1901 census were born in Australia (with almost 96% born in Australia, New Zealand or Britain (Fraser 1983). It could thus have been expected that a distinctly Australian model of education might be sought. Although the majority of citizens still lived in urban centres, with the generally rising population the rural population was also increasing, approaching a critical mass for new demands on services. Settlement was particularly dispersed in the states of Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory\(^4\).

Education was now being treated as a public good, in particular as associated with the valuing of universal literacy and vocational skills\(^5\). There was an established school

---

2 The universities of the colonial era were established as follows: University of Sydney, 1850; University of Melbourne, 1853; University of Adelaide, 1876; University of Tasmania, 1889.

3 For the domain of education the establishment of the Commonwealth remained largely symbolic. The constitution gave formal control to the States and most concern with education remained there until World War II (see Chapter 7).

4 Tasmania already had its university established under the capital city model of the colonial era and the population of the Northern Territory was too small, too remote and too politically unimportant at this time – it would be post-World War II before the Northern Territory caught up.

5 Barcan (1980 passim), who specifically notes (p.175) that 'By 1885 all the Australian colonies except Western Australia had reorganised their systems of State education along principles summed up by the phrase “free, compulsory and secular”'.

---
system in each state with a need for more, and better qualified, teachers. There was also an established 'technology of teaching' based on classroom teaching of groups of students; home-schooling was becoming an option sometimes of necessity but not of choice.

The growth of rural towns of sufficient size for a school led to an increasing demand for teachers; demand exceeded supply particularly in those rural areas. Teachers could be employed with a minimum of qualifications. If they remained in the metropolitan areas they could then continue to add to these through part-time study but if they took up positions in rural Australia they were cut off from this opportunity. A quality differential between city and country based teachers on both level of qualifications and stability of appointment developed. As this population segment, school teachers whose need for higher educational opportunities could not be satisfied by the traditional higher education model in any way other than their return to the cities reached a critical mass, it became a trigger for change within a political context in which urban politicians sought for trade-offs with a powerful rural political elite.

**OTHER ENABLING CONDITIONS**

Although the widely dispersed settlement outside the capital cities offered a geographic challenge to the provision of education, in the 20th century the challenge could now be more easily met through the use of technology. Transportation and communications

---

6 The schooling of children on a mass scale in a classroom-based situation as accepted practice was established only in the latter part of the 19th century. Class teaching was introduced, for example, at Fort Street Model School in Sydney in 1851; this was associated with the pupil teacher system, use of which continued in some schools well into the 20th century. Teaching of individual students within a class was nearly gone by the 1870s (Barcan 1988).

7 Home-schooling, which made use of tutors (usually governesses), and related alternatives continued in rural Australia and encompassed a range of innovations, such as the School of the Air. These educational innovations seem to have had little impact on higher education models apart from a shared use of the correspondence model.

8 Or in the framework of marketing management, a market niche.
networks were improving\(^9\). Even the global communications and transport network was sufficient not only for appropriate Queensland government and university officials to be aware of the state of post-secondary correspondence education elsewhere, but also for them to be able to send a representative to the USA and on to Britain to investigate; the Queensland official (T.E. Jones) was able to complete the trip within the space of five months (Jones 1912).

Postal systems were also well established and nationally consistent – the Postal Rates Act of 1910 came into force on 1 May 1911, replacing varying state rates and introducing an Australia-wide penny postage for half-ounce letters\(^{10}\). Within Western Australia the first regular internal Australian airmail service had begun between Geraldton and Derby. The telephone system was emerging: the first public phone went into operation in 1893 at the Sydney GPO; the first automatic exchange was established in Geelong, Victoria, in 1912 and trunk lines were established between the major metropolitan centres by 1923 (Barker 1992; Fraser 1983). The vision was clear but the resources did not immediately follow for national provision:

> When the federated post and telegraph service came into operation after 1 March 1901, it struggled for more than two decades to develop an efficient and economical service for the Australian public. Yet, the problems of the PMG between 1901 and 1921 were caused by a lack of political will among politicians in successive federal governments. They were simply not geared to providing sufficient federal resources for such a major public enterprise. It was this lack of awareness of decision-making by federal politicians, rather than any lack of preparedness on the part of public servants who transferred from the colonial post and telegraph department to the new Commonwealth department, which caused the problems of the new federal service (Livingston 1994, p.116)

\(^9\)In fact, according to Livingston (1993) there was a strong link between the development of an Australia-wide telecommunication system during the second half of the 19th century and the movement towards federation.

\(^{10}\)In this same year external studies provision commenced at the University of Queensland as will be noted later. Australia-wide postal rates did not, however, mean Australia-wide provision of off-campus education.
The instability in the Federal parliament (refer back to Figure 4.6) suggests a concentration on the creation of government at the time with less attention available for the substance of government at a national level.

A more Australian view of higher education compared with that held in the already established universities was at this time being born. Not only were two universities established based on more prevailing egalitarian principles (White 1982; Thomis 1985) but external studies policy was included as part of the state establishing legislation for both universities, the Universities of Queensland (UQ) and Western Australia (UWA). The similarities of the situation in the two states in the inaugural days, though separated by the whole of the Australian continent, were greater than the differences. The initiation of higher education provision was grounded in state politics. In Queensland the final impetus for moving from a drawn-out policy formation stage to formulation of the legislation and its subsequent implementation is reported by Thomis (1985) as the need for something symbolic with which to mark the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the State of Queensland.

COMMUNITY, POLITICAL AND BUREAUCRACY LEADERS AS KEY AGENTS

All reports indicate that the formation of a Queensland higher education policy which included the provision of external studies was led by community, political and education bureaucracy leaders seeking the establishment of a university in the state. The strength of the rural elites, politically well represented and an important part of the wealth producing sector during the establishment of the country (as today), was a key force. Their success in fighting against 'Brisbanisation' (Thomis 1985) and the influence of the geographic dimension is symbolised in the new University's name – the University of Queensland was the first university in the mainland states not to be named after the metropolitan centre in which it was located.
Identifying the key agents and examining their backgrounds highlights the layers of the system in which external studies was established in Queensland. In terms of organisational subsystems, the Australian members of the State government, the government’s bureaucracy, and the newly established university’s personnel were all closely interwoven both by shared concern for improved access to teacher education programs and by interlocking ‘memberships’. The vision of extended opportunity for higher education in Queensland was held by a number of community leaders. It was first successfully embodied in the University Extension movement established in 1893.

R.H. Roe, Inspector-General of Schools, member of the University’s first Senate and its first Vice-Chancellor was a president of the movement’s Committee. Later he and J.D. Storey, Under Secretary for Public Instruction, member of the first University Senate and a later Vice-Chancellor, played a crucial role in forming and protecting the vision for the new university (University of Queensland 1935).

State political and bureaucratic leaders initiated the distance education policies for the new university to serve a specific purpose of common concern to them. The vision and drive came from community leaders rather than from the commitment of university academics (as yet unselected) to extending the opportunity for university level learning:

The Australian higher education external programmes were significant experiments at the time they started, since there were only a few examples of anything similar elsewhere in the world, although they owed more to State Government pressures than academic enthusiasm. (White 1982, p.256)

---

11 This qualification is used as, for example, the State Governor-General, Sir William MacGregor, who gave the Royal Assent to the legislation, was appointed from Britain.

12 The success of this movement which included the opportunity for flexible pathways to university level education was the achievement of BA by some participants whom the University of Melbourne allowed to sit some of its university examinations in Brisbane, without having attended lectures in Melbourne (University of Queensland 1935).

13 Vice-Chancellors (VC) were elected by the Senate from amongst their number at this time.

14 Providing leadership and continuity as VC from 1938 until 1960 when he retired from the position, though he did remain in the University Senate until 1963.
Without these community and educational bureaucracy based key agents, distance education would not have begun at that time in Australian higher education. These agents confronted the traditional model of higher education and insisted that it be extended; within the university their vision was to be in conflict with academic views but during the formation of this government policy there was no academic community to comment.

These key agents did not appear concerned that the educational approach they sought was a transformational change in higher education for both the university institutional system into which it was introduced and for the educators who were asked to deliver it, nor did they later seem particularly concerned with the tensions and constraints about provision of external studies which subsequently arose within the university. Their cause of concern was neither with education and learning nor with institutional, organisational and cultural change. Their concern was plainly with extending access and opportunity to pursue higher education, and in this they succeeded.

Government direction set the scene but individuals acted to protect the policy innovation and ensure that it was implemented. J.D. Storey and R.H. Roe were on hand in the University Senate to lead the university in its inaugural days to ensure that their vision was implemented; through them the macro and meso layers were linked. That, however, was not in itself sufficient; to carry out the academic program agents at the micro level were required. White, an historian who has extensively studied the early developments of distance education at both the University of Western Australia and the University of Queensland, points out that ‘Ultimately, correspondence schemes depend for their success upon leadership from personnel whose status in conventional academic circles is beyond question’ (1973, p.58). His statement highlights the need for key agents within the distance education provider who are able to protect and legitimate unconventional approaches as well as in the government sphere where public policy is made. In the initiation of external studies this need for key agents in the micro layer who also had acknowledged academic status was not immediately recognised.
The new Director of Correspondence Studies at the University, T.E. Jones (prior to his appointment a teacher at Brisbane Grammar School, a school where Roe had been Headmaster until appointment as Queensland Inspector General of Schools in 1909), was appointed and immediately sent (1911) to the USA\(^{15}\). There he visited universities which offered, or were considering offering, correspondence studies (Jones 1912). These were primarily universities with state-wide responsibilities and serving rural populaces.

White (1982) reports an earlier commentator 'painted external studies as an unwelcome responsibility foisted on the University by outside interests', who also described Jones as something of a 'hack' called upon to perform an unrewarding task (p.262). White defends Jones saying:

> University history is replete with examples of innovations that have frequently been forced upon unwilling academics who later broadened the conception of university education to absorb them. In Jones' time, when the policy battles were highly visible, he battled on in the face of vigorous academic opposition and money deficiencies to defend a programme that lacked real academic merit until his 1932 proposals [for vacation schools, library support, etc.] opened a window to genuine quality. In the meantime, the State Government and J.D. Storey in particular, although maligned as interfering with University freedoms in promoting external studies, deserve credit for longer vision than many academics at the time. (p.262)

The operator concerned with practical implementation at the micro-level ensured survival of the innovation, albeit in a compromised form as a result of the forces of institutional isomorphism and limitation on resources, under the protection of a key agent located elsewhere and with substantial links in both meso and macro layers.

The brief analysis above of the establishment of external studies in Queensland higher education has noted the close linkages among the key agents through their employment and community activities. Those personal links represented system bridging mechanisms particularly between the state education bureaucracy and the nascent university. Two important sets of links existed at this time. One set comprised real links

\(^{15}\)White notes (1982, p.256), that R.H. Roe was 'a great admirer of the American state universities'.
among the key agents resulting from the nature of the small and interconnected community in Queensland concerned with the development of higher education. The other set of links arose through the tendency to institutional isomorphism which lead to the establishment of a particular foundation definition of external studies at university level as presented in the next section.

**TENSIONS BETWEEN TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE AND INSTITUTIONAL ISOMORPHISM**

Distance, dispersion and new societal needs\(^{16}\) demanded alternatives which were *not* traditional, yet the forces for institutional isomorphism were strong. In a country such as Australia with a colonial history reflected in significant cultural ties to its ‘mother country’, the desire to establish a social order reflecting that of the home country model was strong (especially as its move to independence was evolutionary than revolutionary).

The Australian higher education system was established on the British model drawing heavily on the form of the English and Scottish universities (Bolton 1986), and sought to be part of the existing university pantheon of Great Britain\(^{17}\). When UQ and UWA were established the political rhetoric was more in favour of flexible and community oriented universities (looking towards the models of American mid-west state universities and the provincial universities of Britain) but the influences of the mid-19th century remained strong through the influence of the already established Australian universities. Two particular institutional isomorphic forces existed. First was a factor of culture: the foundation academic staff came primarily from British universities, bringing a shared experience of the traditions, standards and practices of those universities. Second was a factor of legitimacy: both universities wanted to ensure that their students (and quite possibly their staff) would be acceptable at the older universities in Australia and at

\(^{16}\)The first two factors are part of the warp as described in the last chapter while changing societal needs (for more education, etc.) reflect aspects of discontinuity.

\(^{17}\)The University of Sydney's motto reflects this: *Sidere mens eadem mutato*. 
British universities (students wishing to undertake post graduate studies had to seek entry overseas).

The dominant university model was that on which Australia’s first four universities had been founded. The basic model of the university continued to be an elitist one which now needed to meet populist concerns.

Bolton (1986) follows a discussion of the development of the forms of delivery of university education with comments which highlight the contradictions which the new model had to appease:

...Nevertheless all these methods of communication were founded on the unassailable presumption that university teaching could and should take place only on campus. Without regular supervision by a duly accredited authority in the field it was impossible to moderate academic standards.

This was a rational and defensible position but it cloaked two assumptions. The first was that presupposition which is implicit in a word such as civilization; that learning and the polite arts are essentially civic matters which will be associated with urban society and not in agricultural or pastoral communities. ... To get a higher education it was necessary to come to the city, or at least to the university town. It was thought unlikely that the country dwellers would appreciate education even if anyone was quixotic enough to bring it to them.

Implicit in the nineteenth century view of the university there was also an assumption that education was intended for the young as a training for their life’s work. For a long time it was not even intended for all the young, although starting with Prussia at the beginning of the century one European nation after another gradually introduced the principle of compulsory elementary education, aimed at producing well-trained and socially well-adapted citizens. (p.19)

Thus, at the government (or macro) level there was an expectation imposed by external regulation of the universities. At micro level of provider policy-making there was a response to conflicting demands for innovation and for institutional legitimacy. T.E. Jones, wishing to ensure that the new external programs were seen as equal to those
offered in the dominant university model\(^{18}\), proposed a compromise to counter negative views of university level correspondence education. His five basic principles were accepted by the University Senate:

- The work of external students should *synchronise* as closely as possible with that of internal students;
- External students should submit to *the same examination tests* as internal students, and receive identical credit;
- External students should receive *as far as possible the same* assistance as internal students;
- External and internal students should pay the same fees;
- External students should be able to sit for examinations at centres in rural areas.

*(University of Queensland Annual Calendar and Handbook [hereafter referred to as UQHB] 1912, p.173, with my emphases)*

These policy guidelines were reproduced across Australia in decades to come as external studies programs were established at other universities.

Jones’ proposal was devised to ensure legitimacy and acceptance through its close conformity both in *study sequence* and *in time* to the model used for on-campus students. The dominance of the terminal examination for university assessment, associated with the lack of a well developed body of thought on teaching and learning at university level, may in part explain why the proposal was heavily biased towards structural, procedural and temporal conformity but it is the forces of institutional isomorphism which were the more telling.

In spite of efforts made to align the model of the innovation with institutional standards, attitudes indicated that it was not given parity of esteem; external students were identified through a series of exclusionary statements. From the onset external students were described ‘... as teachers or other persons who are *unable* to attend lectures at or in

---

\(^{18}\)Jones’ impressions from his tour to the USA where university correspondence studies programs in operation showed signs of flexibility, novelty and academic involvement was still highly influenced by the marginalisation he also perceived there (Jones 1912 passim).
connection with the University . . . [my emphasis]’ (*University of Queensland Act 1909*).

To ensure that such students were truly unable to attend and not simply choosing not to attend, ‘a statutory declaration by a candidate to the effect that he is unable to attend lectures shall be accepted as sufficient evidence to claim for him exemption . . . ’ (UQHB 1913). Later UQHBs repeated this rule and added varying admonitions directed towards students living in Brisbane such as ‘No person living within the Greater Brisbane Area can be permitted to enrol as an External Student unless by special permission of the Senate on the recommendation of the Faculty concerned’.

External students were also a third tier at the University, with the second tier comprising students attending evening lectures, for the University was also directed to offer instruction ‘in the evening as well as in daytime’ (*University of Queensland Act*) — this produced both a hierarchy of status and also an increased workload not always well accounted for (emphasised by Professor John Michie at the time as reported below, and by Professor John Bishop for another time and university in Chapter 7).

Jones also proposed (1912) that the mode of operation was to be, not involvement of academics, but rather dependence on himself as the mediator of instruction:

> ... my intention is to send weekly assignments corresponding to the lectures delivered; these assignments I propose to prepare by attending the lectures and taking my own notes on them. (p.197)

*This approach*, which effectively distanced academics from responsibility and concern for distance students, was supported by Michie (one of the first four professors appointed to UQ):

> Michie at the time considered that Jones’ lecture reporting scheme was ‘the best means of keeping External students in touch with [their] work’. To ask lecturers to provide the reports would ‘be a heavy drain on the energy of the lecturer, and the inevitable result would be to tie him down to a fixed line of treatment’. Michie was attracted to the idea of using the study circles for tutorials, although he feared that the sessions might generate into occasions for tutors simply to read the external lecture notes. (White 1982, p.260)
This initial detachment of university academics from the external program was a step which Jones and his successors at UQ subsequently spent some years trying to retrieve. They were eventually successful, in a sense, moving to a further exclusionary model which included academic staff in it (see Chapter 6). Recognising the implications of this policy, the University of New England chose a different model when its external studies program was established in the 1950s (see Chapter 7); however, the foundation distinction between the mainstream model and external study made during this seminal period contributed to the separation of the two modes long after other constraints had diminished.

There were thus three important aspects to the foundation definition of external studies in Australian higher education:

1 Defined as 'outside of' or 'additional to'.

The early use of the terms 'internal' and 'external' suggested a 'them and us' approach. This was not limited to external studies. While part-time (or evening studies as it was called at the University of Queensland) also existed and was the option of study for many students (see Figure 4.4) this approach was also frequently treated as additional to, not an equal part of, the main task of a university.

2 Defined as 'disadvantaged'

The political dimension of the foundation definition for external studies was that it was for disadvantaged students who were defined as those students who did not live near enough to a traditional university to attend, at least as a part-time (evening) student, and undertake the 'real' university education.
3 Defined by delivery method rather than pedagogical approach and learning outcomes.\textsuperscript{19}

The accepted institutional model of university education was that the delivery should occur in a face-to-face situation, in a particular lifestyle environment (called the university or college). This focus on delivery spilled over to external study which many continued to call 'correspondence studies' even after decades of compulsory student participation in residential schools in many programs and the widespread use of 'external studies' as the descriptor in most policy documents and by professionals in the area.

A lack of an informed body of teaching and learning theory and expertise for higher education in any mode, or even interest in such by university teaching staff, meant that the technology of the university (Scott's definition: the work performed by an organisation, 1987, p.211) depended strongly on the tradition of information and synthesis delivery via lectures, contiguous opportunity for interaction, directly supervised practical classes where relevant, and guided reading (in fact, an input model) rather than on the outcomes of learning. This focus on alternative delivery methods of the same 'technology', rather than reconceptualising the teaching/learning situation\textsuperscript{20} limited options for improving the pedagogy and thus also weakened commitment at the micro level to the approach as educationally justifiable.

Taken together, these three points strongly implied that external studies in the longer term might be a temporary phenomenon. It also implied that the 'best' students could not be served in this fashion, and, given the prevailing elitist model, external studies was thus apparently assured of disappearing as the country developed and consolidated. This was to be disproved by history (refer back to Figure 1.4).

\textsuperscript{19}These distinctions are reflected in the continuing debate over theorising distance education presented briefly in Chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{20}The approach implied, for example, by Moore (1990), Evans & Nation (1992), etc.
WHO SOUGHT THE NEW HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES?

The immediate traditional client base for universities was the social and professional elite – a university education was part of the tradition for the ruling and professional classes. Historian Geoffrey Bolton points out that university education was aimed at the maintenance of the society as it was, not as a tool for social change:

> Advanced education was reserved for the affluent or the fortunate, and professors were indubitably members of the respectable classes. (1986, p.6)

This was a quite different view to that being promulgated through the initiation of alternative approaches to higher education provision.

The client groups for higher education had expanded – specifically, the state government and the rural communities were pressing, through their leaders, for more and better qualified teachers. The request could not (immediately) be met by increasing pre-service teacher education, nor by offering greater opportunity for part-time studies in Brisbane or Perth, given the geographic dispersal of the population.

THE INITIATION PERIOD RECAPPED

The environmental and social context of Queensland and Western Australia differed from that which had prevailed at the time of university establishment in other states; those differences contributed to the window of opportunity for an innovation in higher education. The demand for more flexibility in credentialling may not have been new (the University of London had offered an external degree since 1858 which required no attendance), but other demands were. Geographic dispersion of a relatively small

21 Behind these pressures can be seen the changes in social class which were occurring. According to Barcan (1980, p.203), ‘The growth of a “new” professional middle class, prepared in the universities, increased the importance of universities and hence of secondary schools as a means of access to the universities or teachers’ colleges.’

22 A systemic problem in Australian school education from its inception has been to attract and retain expert teachers in remote areas. Younger, less experienced teachers were, and are, more likely to take up such posts.
population, the rising influence of a rural politically influential elite, and increasing
demand for the trappings of 'civilisation' provided the background warp for the creation
of distance education policy. A new demand for extended access to education, by new
client groups (educational bureaucracy leaders, rural leaders and rurally located teachers),
was supported by a distinctive group of community and educational bureaucracy leaders.
These themes in the policy patterns were established through the interplay of key agents,
establishing a foundation definition which would endure, in spite of challenges at the
meso and micro level as implementation took place. Implementation activities quickly
made visible the forces of institutional isomorphism when the values and culture of the
traditional university impacted.

Once established, Australian distance education policies and practices endured a long
development period, and were well-established when the nation had to face a major
discontinuity which affected all levels of the system. This challenge is examined in the
next chapter.
This period particularly shows the effects of geographic (on both a national and global scale) and socio-economic factors (the Great Depression and World War II) on a growing system.

**DISCONTINUITY AND CHANGE**

During the Depression years and their aftermath the official story of external studies in Australian higher education continued to be the story of just two universities, the University of Queensland and the University of WA\(^1\). Both reviewed their external programs at the demand of their respective State Governments and noted that improvements were needed (White 1973, 1982). During the review period distance education events were less influenced by agents in the state political system than was the case in the initiation phase; instead, action shifted to agents at the micro level within the technical core of the two universities. World War II, however, offered a new opportunity for transformational change throughout the higher education system.

**Socio-economic Event as Discontinuity**

World War I was the first of a series of events which forged Australia as a nation; it had only a little effect on higher education. The global and national crises of the Great Depression and World War II, however, served to strengthen the role of the federal

---

\(^1\)Other universities permitted 'external' students at various times but have never been recognised as offering formal, organised external programs (Barcan 1988). UNE's foundation Director of External Studies reports completing his studies at the University of Adelaide as an external student (Nelson 1979). More recently, White Paper data on external enrolments for 1988 officially included universities not known for external studies programs, e.g. University of Melbourne with an enrolment of 196, University of Adelaide 163, James Cook University 310 and the University of NSW 543.
government with regard to intra-Australia matters, not the least of which was education. Both events offered the opportunity for a rethink of university education.

The Great Depression – When Economic Trends Reversed. Opportunity for transformational change was offered for the first time since its initiation during the disastrous economic Depression of the 1930s. At this time many otherwise qualified students could not afford to undertake full time, on-campus study. A shift to part-time and distance study demonstrated not only the plight of the students but also the value of these optional pathways for higher education in times of economic and social stress.

World War II – Socio-Economic Discontinuity on a Global Scale. World War II produced both social-economic and geographic discontinuity which demanded a transformational change in the provision of education. Universities were forced to confront alternative educational approaches, both at the direction of the federal government and by virtue of the absence of the cream of young scholars who were drawn into the armed services. The need for people to undertake national service both in Australia and overseas also shifted community expectations. Finally, the Great Depression followed by the War had created a pool of willing people ready to undertake further study in unusual circumstances. This acceptance, together with a Parliament apparently united on the question of further education, and a Reconstruction Cabinet committed to manpower planning and development (Tannock 1975), offered opportunity for transformational change not to be expected in more stable times.

World War II created discontinuity at all system levels, and some form of response occurred in educational policies and practices at all levels. Change did occur, albeit only

2As illustrated, for example, in Figure 4.4 by the increasing proportions in this mode compared with full-time enrolments at the University of Queensland.

3Bolton (1990) points out that many members of the armed services due for post-war rehabilitation belonged to a generation that had been forced to cease formal education early because of the Depression. Inquiry into the changing nature of ‘early’ and what it means for ‘second chance’ opportunities is addressed further in Chapter 7.
temporarily in some layers. Even Australia's most long-lived and traditional universities, Sydney and Melbourne, undertook to serve significant numbers of Australian service personnel with external programs and all universities were represented in the scheme. Fundamental and lasting changes were made, again primarily initiated outside of the universities in the government arena (the most durable change at the macro level was the involvement of the federal government in the funding of higher education). The impetus this time was at federal rather than state government level.

Data for higher education at that time in Australia (refer to Figures 1.4, p.33 and 4.3, pp.119-120) illustrate the ups and downs of participation during World War II and the post-war era. Provision during this period was focussed on defence and reconstruction efforts and a move towards using higher education as a development tool to achieve objectives of the national agenda, particularly with regard to science and technology (Tannock 1975). The use of external studies was a response to the dispersion of the education target groups due to the national needs of the time.

RESOURCES FROM NEW SOURCES

Mobilisation for the war and reconstruction period was an 'all in' effort. The infrastructure of the defence forces provided much of the communications, transport and administration. Aspects of the transformational change now taking place in higher education included both its national and global nature (transcending state boundaries), a blurring of boundaries between external and internal delivery (for example, through the use of broadcast media and local tutorial groups), and its multimedia approach (use of print, radio, film, etc.). This transformational change in educational provision (occurring at all levels in educational programs supported by the Australian Army Education Service in particular) was driven by the objective of the defence (and later reconstruction) of

---

4In this work the post-war reconstruction era is defined as the period in which the federal government was supporting serving and returned service personnel through the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme.
Australia created by the discontinuity of war rather than by a more altruistic community concern with the education of Australia.

Diversification of Resource Provision

When external studies was first introduced it was an initiative tied in with other initiatives about university education in states where there was no prior higher education provision and where the notion of state-wide development was still nascent\(^5\). That left each university to be concerned with how it would make use of the funds granted to it by its state government. The intervention of the federal government changed this, beginning with the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, to reflect a 'predominant assumption that the national parliament should assist the states in the provision of education' (Birch 1976, p.7). The states remained the distributors of the funds received and the universities within them continued to play by state-based rules; solid links, however, had been built with the federal government through the growing dependency on tied financial support.

THE SYSTEM EXPANDS

The federal government actively entered the higher education system not only because of the socio-economic discontinuities of the period but also because of nation-building issues with which it was now mature enough and stable enough (particularly postwar) to be concerned.

Reconstruction and New Construction

The post-war Menzies' Governments (1949-1966) were the era of 'halcyon' (Clark 1987, p.495) university expansion in Australia (see also Bolton 1990). On the side of on-campus, pre-service education, the expansion was not only a response to a growing

\(^5\)Queensland was perhaps the exception as the anti-Brisbanisation forces continued strong, and a statewide system continued to be envisaged. By the postwar period it was as a network of colleges to form the 'people's university' of the initial vision (Thomis 1985).
population (refer back to Figure 4.2) but also to a growing expectation of mass higher education provision. Universal participation in education had been slowly rising through the levels of the school system, and in an era of economic well-being the choice between employment and study was possible for a growing number of young people. Davies in her review of the activities of the Martin Committee supports the view that this was the period in which the divide was crossed from elite to mass. She saw the implications and noted the results of the pattern elsewhere, saying 'If we do follow the American pattern, the twenty-first century will see Australia enter the era of almost universal tertiary education. Many more institutions will be required and a new situation will call for a judicious allocation of resources across a wide range of tertiary institutions . . .' (1989, p.176).

Expansion of external studies provision might have been seen as a reasonable response to these new demands on the higher education system. External studies programs could extend access while controlling the demand for extensive capital outlay for the 'many more institutions required' should both trends continue. Until the late 1960s, however, external programs were offered (outside of the war and reconstruction period) by only five institutions at tertiary level.

On the other hand, the demand for part-time and distance education was supported by both the increasing demands for higher qualifications (with school teachers continuing as the major client group) and the growing recognition of the need for recurrent (mid-career) education. The massive return to university studies (and technical studies) by mature-age people (supported by the federal government's reconstruction funding) contributed to extending the foundation model for distance education. It now clearly included mature-age people with a substantial gap between their schooling and their tertiary studies where previously it had addressed the needs of younger people who could not continue their

---

6The Universities of Western Australia, Queensland, and New England (in New South Wales) plus the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (in Victoria) and the Western Australian Institute of Technology (K.C. Smith 1979, p.viii).
education by conventional means. External studies thus continued its part in the provision of higher education, even in spite of continuing constraints postwar which will be highlighted in a later section.

**Boundaries and Linkages**

There remained, however, political boundaries to the practice of external studies on a national basis, in spite of a proportion of funding now being more directly tied to the desires of the federal government. The continued independent actions by the states in regard to higher education contrasted with the national view of the value of education to the nation. It also contrasted with the increasing intertwining of policy makers and their advisers through a variety of linkages.

The motivation of the universities to provide off-campus programs combined both altruism and recognition of financial opportunity. Funds made available by the federal government offered the opportunity for universities long starved of sufficient funds to obtain additional financial resources; these were often used for building and other infrastructure developments rather than towards developing innovative alternative ways of delivering more educational opportunity to more people. The Murray Committee’s postwar comments on the long-term deficit in resources provided to universities (1958) were one indication that Reconstruction funds only tempered an insufficiency of resources.

**Increasing System Complexity**

The federal government made its first significant direct intervention in higher education policy during World War II; its two focal areas were (1) those educational areas deemed urgent for the war and reconstruction efforts, and (2) the general morale and the increased education of service people. The latter, it was clearly recognised, required non-traditional means of program design and delivery. Considerable financial investment by the federal government was made.
Chapter 6

... [Activities] through such agencies as the Universities Commission and such programmes as the Services Education Scheme and the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, added significantly to external enrolments in Australian higher education. All of the universities co-operated to enable servicemen and women to continue with university studies, find intellectual satisfaction and relief from boredom, and prepare for re-entry to civilian life. Under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, which commenced in 1944, ex-service personnel were assisted to undertake university and other level studies, at first by means of external and correspondence studies, and later by full-time or part-time attendance at relevant institutions. (White 1982, p.263)

In the post war era the higher education system expanded:

- in the number of participants (as individuals and as corporate persons such as professional associations)
- in the number of suppliers of university education
- in the bureaucracy which managed it (at both state and federal levels).

Initially this growth was fuelled by the financial assistance made available through the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme. The federal government was now firmly involved in what was (and still is) constitutionally a state matter. That involvement would continue to grow, and would foster the growth of parallel developments in state and federal education bureaucracies. The intervention of the federal government in both policy and resource provision terms put education on the national agenda and created the foundations for viewing higher education as a ‘national system’.

System Linkages

The challenges of World War II saw the establishment of an array of, albeit temporary, bridging mechanisms of a organisational structure nature. These included:

- the Reconstruction Ministry at federal government level
- the Australian Army Education Service
Through these organisational structures persons knowledgeable about the provision of
education targeted on adults and the need for alternative approaches to provision were
temporarily brought together to serve short term national purposes. A particular example
was the Walker Committee mentioned in more detail below. This confluence led to short-
term policy change recognising and favouring non-traditional educational programs to
meet the immediate defence and reconstruction objectives. Linkages among agents
(described in the next section) were also established which would continue to bear fruit
well beyond the war and reconstruction period.

**KEY AGENTS IN A NATIONAL SYSTEM**

The role of corporate key agent appears in the role of the Australian Defence Forces
where the Australian Army Education Service played a role similar to that of the state
education bureaucracy in Queensland in an earlier era. The Australian Army Education
Service

> was unique in that it was a full-scale experiment in comprehensive adult education affecting
a cross-section of Australian society – an experiment, moreover, blessed with adequate
resources, imagination, disciplined and consistent leadership, and an indisputable, clear-cut
need to fulfil. . . . Only the exigencies of war had made it possible. (Whitelock 1974,
pp.214-215)

The extensive undertaking of external studies programs during the War years (refer back
to Figure 1.4) is lightly touched upon in the distance education literature yet it was part

---

7The contribution of war time educational efforts to the development of adult education in Australia is
more regularly acknowledged in the adult education literature. This ‘experiment’ not only brought higher
and/or adult education to the lives of many more adults than would have experienced it in peacetime but
also developed a number of resource-based learning approaches using printed materials, film etc;
circulating libraries and tutorial support were also provided in a model which began to appear seriously in
the external programs of universities only after the war.

More detailed research into the agents, systems boundaries and bridging mechanisms, as well as the actual
nature of the practices of external and adult education during the war and reconstruction period is
recommended as it appears these distance education aspects are an area little investigated (D.Nation,
of the first national example of how education could be mobilised on a dispersed basis, not only nationally but also globally. Key to the success of the operation were visionaries, protectors and operators at all levels, some of them strongly grounded in commitment to principles and provision of adult education. Particularly relevant was Dr. R.B. Madgwick, educated as an economist, at the beginning of the war Secretary to the Extension Board at the University of Sydney. Madgwick was soon seconded to establish the Australian Army Education Service which he led throughout the war, envisaging, protecting and implementing provision of education to Australians in the armed services on a global scale; his role effectively linked macro and meso layers.

**The Federal Government** In no small measure it was the members of the Reconstruction Cabinet, and in particular the Walker Committee\(^8\) who caused the change at the macro level (Tannock 1975). It was they who recommended, among other important recommendations for higher education, that the Commonwealth should take greater responsibility and that this be enacted through the provision of financial assistance to students (eventually expressed as Section 51(xxii) added to the constitution, the 'benefit to students' section).

**Queensland.** The story of distance education at UQ continued\(^9\) through the determination of succeeding directors of external studies to support and improve the external studies program in the face of competing demands in other parts of the university. The University of Queensland had faced an upsurge in enrolments during the prewar, depression era and these continued.

The heavy enrolments in Queensland, however, added a sense of urgency to State Government proposals, under the legislation of 1941, to decentralise the provision of university education. State Premier at the time, E.M. Hanlon, in 1947 asked Vice

---

\(^8\)The Walker committee, established in October 1943 on the initiative of the Minister for War Organisation of Industry, J.J.Dedman, was officially the Interdepartmental Committee on Education.

\(^9\)No new permanent external studies programs were initiated in Australian higher education until 1954 when the New England University College became the University of New England.
Chancellor Storey to consider the matter in connection with the review of university activities due under the 1941 Act. Storey for his part in 1948 and 1949 started the University upon a major self-examination to comply with the Act and consider future possibilities. Amongst these, external studies featured strongly in plans to reach out into the rural areas and ultimately to plan for the opening of a university college at Townsville. (White 1982, p.264)

Conflict between the visions held by key agents at varying levels (and note that at least one key agent from the Initiation period, Storey, was still present) is indicated. The micro level operators of external studies at the University, intent on ensuring that external studies was available in Queensland, demonstrated a vision of statewide provision from the University of Queensland campus in Brisbane and sought to expand and improve that provision as a system in itself. Visionaries and political operators at other levels, however, saw extension of the external studies provision as but a means to a different end: the eventual establishment of other higher education providers in Queensland, the traditional model.

T.E. Jones’ scheme for improved student support, originally proposed in 1932 but not implemented for want of resources, was finally put into practice after the War. On-campus ‘vacation’ schools on the University’s campus were introduced, study circles were encouraged in major provincial towns with the cooperation of the State Education Department, and the Thomas Thatcher Memorial Library was established for external students. The unexpected outcome of the study circles has been mentioned above: the heightened profile of university education in the regional centres offering an apparent basis for the establishment of ‘bricks-and-mortar’ based providers.

**CHANGE AND COUNTER CHANGE**

This chapter has focussed on World War II and the reconstruction period which followed it, while acknowledging that the economic depression which preceded the War was also

---

10This was real the beginning of the external studies model replacing the correspondence model, and was a first effective attempt to address concerns both with geographic distance, and with transactive distance.
an influence (both on the initiation period by the slowing down of development due to constrained resources, and on the wartime period in which a generation of people who had not been able to undertake higher education were offered a second chance as part of human resources management for the nation’s defence and reconstruction)\textsuperscript{11}.

The War period drew together key agent roles in all layers of the system, and suspended some value concerns with regard to non-traditional provision of higher education for the duration through the motivation to win the war. During the War and Reconstruction period external studies programs were used in the national interest as both an educational and manpower planning policy mechanism, responding to discontinuities at all levels of the system. In the face of the crisis the influence of institutional isomorphism was weakened; this was temporary, however, as external studies programs (and other non-traditional options) were rejected in a return to traditional values in a post-war society patterning itself on pre-war values (as will be shown in the next chapter). Thus new patterns in distance education policy and practice, caused by the rip and tear of unexpected discontinuity, were to a significant extent abandoned in the transition to the next period; at the same time, however, the new interest and involvement of the federal government in higher education increased as will be seen in the next chapter.

Attitudes within the universities hindered the development of a new paradigm of educational provision. In New South Wales the University of Sydney flatly rejected any overtures from the Government\textsuperscript{12} to undertake external studies as a means of extending

\textsuperscript{11}This is one example of the caution which must be taken when slicing a period of study arbitrarily into sections without looking carefully for such overlapping influences. The use of discontinuity such as the beginning and ending of a wartime period, however, does enable the researcher to identify segments of a period to examine more closely.

\textsuperscript{12}The opposition by the Professorial Board (as reported by Smith) was evident in response to pressure as early as 1948. He reports the Board as saying in 1953:

a. External studies are necessarily greatly inferior to internal studies and even with the most carefully organised and well staffed external department so little could be achieved and that so imperfectly that the establishment of external studies cannot be recommended.
educational opportunities (Smith 1979). This view led to a politically motivated compromise by which the New England University College located in Armidale, in northern NSW (and established under the sponsorship of the University of Sydney) undertook the responsibility of delivering external studies programs to NSW residents as part of its new charter as an autonomous university. Again it required the right constellation of key agents (discussed in the next chapter) to facilitate this.

b. The external systems in other Australian Universities do not provide an example that would be recommended for imitation and do not encourage the view that anything like a true University education even at a lower standard can be provided by this method.

c. Indeed, there is a pressing danger that external studies will give the illusion of a University education without the reality. Students will go through the motions of study and believe that they have had a true University education when they have not. (p.2)

Damning words, yet associated neither with specified criteria describing what makes a true 'University education' nor with any suggestion as to how an intelligent and highly educated academic community might overcome the constraints of off-campus study to expand opportunity and access to that mystical experience.
CHAPTER 7

GROWTH AND DIVERSIFICATION (1955-1975)

In this chapter the increasing complexity of the system is noted as well as the rising importance of regionally based providers of higher education.

DISCONTINUITIES AT THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION PROVISION

Australia was now a changed country. ‘In the second half of the twentieth century Australians lived in a country where neither the historians, the prophets, the poets nor the priests had drawn the maps. Revolution in transport and communication finally ended the material backwardness and the isolation’ (Clark 1987, p.499). This was the legacy of the changes wrought particularly during World War II and its aftermath, though full recognition of the impact occurred only later in the century.

Several factors now affected the development of higher education policy and practice (including distance education). These included an increasing retention rate at school level, changes in employment opportunity (a trend away from full employment towards the latter part of the period), the post-World War II baby boom bulge passing through the education system, and the changing and increasing demands for new knowledge and understanding. Education became more closely entwined with government (and to a lesser extent, public service, business and industry\(^1\)) labour market policies.

The pressure of the post-war ‘baby boom’ on the education system was intense, increasing the demand for qualified teachers. In addition there was pressure to respond to the rising demand for higher education as the level of retention at school rose.

Economist, educator and administrator Peter Karmel, for example, acknowledged this increasing pressure in 1974 pointing out that about ‘one-third of the relevant age group

\(^1\)Particularly the internal labour market policies of the latter.
completes secondary school; 20 years ago [the early part of the 1950s] the proportion was only one-tenth’ (Committee on Open University 1975, p.5); this trend continued upwards, bolstered by labour market strategies driven both by rising unemployment rates and government workforce-skilling strategies.

The overall qualifications of teachers in the high schools were, on the other hand, decreasing. Between 1944 and 1966 the proportion of graduates teaching in state secondary schools fell in NSW from 85% to 41%; in Queensland it was to 20% (Barcan 1980). The pressure to counter this trend supported the extension of external studies as a temporary method for correcting an imbalance.

The influence of the USA as an alternative model for university education appeared again. It may be reasonable to connect the general leadership model offered by the USA in the successful climax of World War II with its rise as a model for higher education participation. Menzies (to become the longest serving prime minister during the postwar era and beyond, refer back to Figure 4.6, p.122), although otherwise known for his focus on British models, had drawn upon the USA’s model for the changes in higher education which he forecast in 1945:

\[
\text{It is quite clear that there will be a big increase of our university populations. In Australia for every one person in 10,000 who attends a university, in America there are five or six. (Hansard 1945, p.4614)}
\]

Later in that address he suggested that someone from Great Britain and someone else from the USA should sit on a commission to review university education in Australia and make recommendations (p.4619). His vision was limited, however, to extending the existing traditional models. While acknowledging issues of crowded classrooms and the pressure on staff of large classes, he implied a conventional ‘bricks and mortar’ solution rather than a new one:

\[2\] The Murray Committee was commissioned by Menzies in the late 1950s to carry out this task; it does not appear to have included anyone knowledgeable about the USA system.
... the time has come for us to consider not the packing of more and more students into already crowded institutions, but the establishment of new universities.

It is interesting to note this limit in vision since later in the same speech he acknowledged the value of second chance opportunities for university education. The flaw in his vision may, however, be an understandable one. With the school leaving age at fourteen or fifteen, his view that 'five years later, at nineteen or twenty, [these same young men and women] may have developed a burning desire for knowledge' may have then reasonably reflected the necessary time gap and period of maturation associated with extended experience in the working world that can lead to appreciation of and desire for further education. The difference was perhaps with the leaving age and the working world of the time\(^3\) rather than with Menzies' perspective. Students wishing to return at the ages nominated by Menzies were less likely to have made the commitments to employment and domestic responsibilities which constrain return to full-time, on-campus education by mature age students today.

The landmark year for the Federal (Labor) Government was 1974 when it expressed its commitment to tertiary education, albeit to extending the dominant model of provision along more democratic lines by assuming responsibility for full funding of higher education. Fees for university education were abolished. The Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme (TEAS) was introduced, providing subsistence support for full-time students who qualified; no such TEAS support was offered then (or later) to part-time students, and most external students enrol on a part-time\(^4\) basis.

---

\(^3\) And, perhaps, the number of years a person endures an apparently irrelevant and classroom bound educational experience.

\(^4\) University of Queensland enrolment statistics began reporting full-time external students in 1984. Neither DEET nor the AVCC have as yet considered such data of sufficient value to seek its collection on a national basis (S. Pincus, pers.com. 1994).
Socio-economic Discontinuities and Regional Higher Education Providers

Social and political discontinuities in the form of new groups seeking more education, of regional centres seeking justification for the presence of a university or college of advanced education, and of the onset of a departure from the social norm of full employment, now affected distance education policy.

The University of New England was proclaimed in NSW in December 1953 with a brief to offer external studies (University of New England Bill, Act No. 34). Smith and others (for example, Lazenby 1972) report that this was ‘basically to serve the needs of high school teachers in country areas seeking to upgrade professional qualifications’ (p.viii, Smith 1979); and elsewhere (pp.1-2) that this was a politically and economically astute move as it was the only way in which the new university could grow at a viable rate. The move to external studies was made in the face of considerable scepticism by some influential academics and others; pragmatism and the desire for survival and growth was the greater influence. External students have in fact formed the bulk of the UNE student community throughout its existence (refer back to Figure 4.4, p.120).

A new educational participation concept, that of recurrent education also foreshadowed new demands upon the less traditional educational sectors. It emerged in the questions

Is a continuous process of schooling, from pre-primary through primary, secondary, and higher education, the best way to prepare all individuals for their future role in society and to provide optimal opportunities for self-development; and secondly, is a continuous lengthening of the schooling period, and hence a continuous further expansion of the conventional educational system, the best way to respond to the increasingly important role of knowledge and abilities in modern society? (CERI 1973 quoted in Committee on Open University 1975, p.9)

5In NSW Macquarie University was established in 1967; its Act also required provision of courses for part-time and external students (Committee on Open University 1975). Its special focus was initially on teaching science externally (White 1982) and later law was added but special care was taken to ensure that UNE and Macquarie did not find themselves in competition.
Recurrent education needs and second chance options for adults without initial qualifications overlap.

Expansion of distance education in the past fifteen years has coincided with a new phenomenon in the West: a concern to offer higher education to adults without formal qualifications. But there has also been an increase in demand of a more traditional kind: from adults with tertiary qualifications for recurrent education (re-training, upgrading qualifications, or refresher courses.) (Anwyl, Powles & Patrick 1987, p.7)

Thus distance education whether in new types of institutions or in traditional institutions is now frequently seen to have a role in reducing some institutional barriers to study, such as course offerings, entry requirements, and pedagogy, as well as its more traditional role of reducing the importance of situational barriers such as distance or work or family commitments. In principle, where no situational barriers exist, part-time courses could serve adults as conveniently as distance courses; in practice, distance teaching institutions frequently offer programmes which are deliberately responsive to the needs of adult learners in terms of institutional as well as situational barriers. The salient feature of distance education in the more developed countries is that it now caters predominantly for working adults. (Anwyl, Powles & Patrick, 1987, p.9).

KEY AGENTS CARRY BOTH TRADITION AND INNOVATION ACROSS THE SYSTEM

Agents with Multi-Layer Roles

In NSW the original purpose for establishing a university presence in Armidale had not been to establish a base from which to deliver external studies programs. T.R. Forster, a local New England pastoralist had contributed a property and mansion and the local community had raised a further £10,000 to set up a college whose unique characteristic was to be that it was wholly residential, the New England University College6 (Barcan 1988). This changed, however, with the necessity in the postwar period to make the small college a viable concern coupled with macro level pressures for provision of external studies within NSW and key agents were visible during this change.

6Hereafter referred to as NEUC.
Dr. R.B. Madgwick, the second Warden of the New England University College and in due course its first vice-chancellor, exemplified a key agent with connections across the layers of the system who fosters transformational change. He had been Chief of Army Education Services during World War II where he had observed and promoted the education of Australian service personnel in a variety of ways (including its facilitation via external studies) not only nationally but globally; he carried the view that external studies was a valid and viable approach to higher education for the rest of his life. His influence on the thinking of other political actors is indicated through his direct presence (for example, on the Walker Committee concerned with post-war reconstruction) or the reference to his views (by Schonell during the Martin Committee deliberations as reported by Davies 1989). He strongly supported the notion of part-time studies and within that both evening and external options (as quoted by Davies 1989). At UNE Madgwick offered vision and protection and was assisted by capable operators at the micro level.

In the early days of establishment it appeared that the external program would be set up with its focus on adult education; the background and interests of (now Vice-Chancellor) Madgwick might be recognised here. Arch Nelson, at the university from August 1954 as head of the Department of Adult Education, temporarily took on the additional role in order to see that the first offering of an external program could be achieved in 1955. Nelson brought commitment to the extension of access to higher education to adults, which he had himself experienced as an undergraduate 'country student of the University of Adelaide “with exemption from lectures”’. He also saw its potential as a result of his experience in liaison with Australians studying in Europe and the UK under the postwar training scheme. Nelson’s views, of being responsible for two types of adult education, credit and non-credit (Nelson 1979), did not prevail. Howard Sheath, already a long term educational bureaucrat, who eventually took up the appointment, took the stance that his role was to be a strong administrator.

7 Briefly on establishment by committed adult educator Arch Nelson, then by Howard Sheath, in the position of Director of the Department of External Studies.
Corporate Agents Confront the ‘Problems’ of the Universities: the Murray and Martin Committees Change the System

In 1956 the Murray Committee (as mentioned above, foreshadowed by Prime Minister Menzies while still in opposition in 1945) was established by the federal government to investigate the ‘problems’ of universities. In its 1957 report, the Committee’s recommendations included advice that the federal government should take over more financial responsibilities for universities. As a result, the Australian Universities Commission was established and the federal government became more directly involved in higher education. This was, however, not the end of the review story. The view that there was a lack of diversity in tertiary education and that the universities were failing to respond to increasing demands for tertiary education with a distinct vocational bias led to the federal government appointing a committee of inquiry in 1961, the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia, with Sir Leslie Martin as Chairman. This committee was charged to consider the pattern of tertiary education in relation to the needs and resources of Australia, and to make recommendations on its future development to the Australian Universities Commission (Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education 1977).

The Martin Committee reported in 1964, pointing out the need for expansion of higher education while recommending that the universities eliminate sub-degree work, reduce their number of part-time students substantially and extend post-graduate education. The report presented a confused view of external and part-time studies but in essence said that there should be no further expansion of external studies as the Committee did not consider provision of external studies to be a university function. The Report’s vision of the university was that of an institution providing mainly full-time undergraduate and postgraduate courses. It suggested demand for external studies would diminish as steps were taken to remove the conditions that it believed made external study necessary for

---

8 This was in spite of considerable difference of opinion within the committee, with support for external studies led by Schonell of the University of Queensland. This is documented by Davies (1989, see particularly p.116).
individual students (Martin Report, Vol.1, p.81); this was premised on provision of opportunity for on-campus attendance for all (the 'bricks and mortar' option) and appeared based on the assumption that pre-service higher education was all that was required – this officially continued the viewpoint that external studies was but an ephemeral part of education policy, to meet temporary needs.

**THE SYSTEM EXPANDS AND GROWS COMPLEX**

One of the outcomes of the Martin Report’s recommendations was a significant structural change in the system: the introduction of the college of advanced education (CAE) sector. Thus began the ‘binary system’ in which the universities were to concentrate on research and teaching to degree and postgraduate degree level (and be funded accordingly), while the CAEs were to be concerned with teaching primarily at the subdegree and degree level (and be funded at a lesser level). This increased the number of higher education providers and broadened their brief with a new focus on vocational education which had considerable ramifications for external studies policy at the provider level. The doubt thrown on external studies in the Martin Report, however, left the future of university external studies programs uncertain until a change in the political climate (*Proceedings of a Forum on External Studies* 1972).

By 1974 eight universities and twenty-eight colleges of advanced education offered part-time, external courses⁹; however, only seven institutions enrolled more than 500 external students each (both the University of New England and the University of Queensland had well over 3000 external students each while Mitchell College of Advance Education (NSW), Western Australian Institute of Technology (WA), the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (Victoria), Adelaide College of Advanced Education (SA) and Macquarie University (NSW) each enrolled between 500 and 1000 external students) (Committee on

---

⁹This total of 36 universities and colleges in the mid 1970s can be compared with the 46 listed by DEET about a decade later (DEET 1989, Appendix 2).
Open University 1975, p.29). The implications of this growth and diversification in terms of thinly-spread resources were not lost on UNE Vice-Chancellor Alec Lazenby:

I believe it is necessary for universities and colleges of advanced education to get together and develop between them a spectrum of courses which should be offered externally. Certainly it would be possible to rationalise such development in NSW through the NSW Universities Board and the Advanced Education board. Surely it is right, in the planning of developments in our tertiary institutes to provide in both the external as well as the internal courses offered a rationalised and complementary role for universities and colleges of advanced education rather than to allow a highly competitive cut-throat situation to develop between them. (1972)

This theme reverberates at the macro and meso levels throughout the remaining portion of the study period.

The Queensland Story Continues. During this period

Formation of the study circles and on-campus intensive schools not only created new personal links between academics and external students, but also established a highly visible university presence in rural parts of Queensland. The Townsville University College opened in 1960 built upon a base of study circle activity, and its first Warden, Professor F.J. Olsen, was Ringrose's successor as Director of External Studies. Local financial support later led to the opening of specific external studies centres at Toowoomba and Cairns. Study circle activity also preceded the eventual establishment of colleges of advanced education at Rockhampton and Toowoomba. The University of Queensland later provided for external students resident in the Northern Territory and contributed to rising demands for post-secondary education in Darwin, the administrative capital (White 1982, p.265).

This geographic clustering of student demand offered useful political capital for the establishment of new providers, particularly the colleges of advanced education following the Martin Report's recommendations. The dependency of the new CAEs on external students for viability initially went largely unremarked. Their commitment to part-time study, however, was to be expected as the Martin Report made every attempt to shift part-time and external students from the universities to the new CAE sector. The success of this move is illustrated by comparison of student enrolment data for the University of
Queensland and for the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education (refer back to Figure 4.4, pp.119-120).

*The University of New England Story.* The state of New South Wales in the 1950s also showed that ‘decentralisation of education’ was a bi-partisan policy stance with both the ALP and the Liberal-Country Party coalition supporting it though the Labor Party shows the more dogged intention\(^{10}\) (p.3). In the end, the conversion of the New England University College to the autonomous University of New England with a specific brief for external studies (which included special provision into the Newcastle area where the local community had also been putting pressure on the state government for university facilities) removed the pressure on the state’s existing university, Sydney, for an external program and gave NSW (and Australia) its first autonomous, rural university.

The further training of school teachers was clearly a concern of the government of the day: 68% of the first intake of external students were Departmental teachers, 247 of 363. Smith also reports the support of the external studies program by other professional interest groups representing various government departments, bank officers, solicitors and accountants and the armed forces.

*In Other States.* Victoria continued without in-state university level external studies provision. In 1963 the Ramsay Committee on Tertiary Education in Victoria suggested that Monash University (founded in 1958) should offer external studies; forces within the university militated against this (Moodie 1991c). Consequently, it was not until 1978, with the opening of Deakin University (Australia’s 19th university) that the state of Victoria provided university external studies programs within its state boundaries. Again, the impetus came from outside the academy – its enacting legislation required it to offer

---

\(^{10}\)Smith reports that correspondence between the Advisory Council of the New England University College and the Minister of Education from 1948 to 1953 indicates that the NSW ALP did not intend to be diverted by academic conservatism from offering statewide opportunities for university education.
external studies programs as part of its justification for being (Committee on Open University 1975).

Barriers and Linkages

The strong political and parochial forces in Australia meant that each state continued to act as an independent entity. The responsibility for higher education still rested symbolically (constitutionally) in state control and this fostered the development of many providers with similar programs throughout Australia.

The higher education system had expanded, stretched and made itself complex, confronting transformation to a mass higher education system. Neither governments nor higher education providers had needed to confront the full implications, for the move had been sheltered by an era of economic well-being and political righteousness.

The Role of Government

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter Prime Minister Menzies made education a national concern by dint of his personal interest and direction as Prime Minister. During his long leadership of the federal government key changes were made in the higher education system as a whole. His commitment to education was a personal one, a commitment to extension of provision but not particularly to innovation.

Sheath made it clear, however, that it was not Menzies' interest alone:

The provision of external studies at university level has been proclaimed as one particular national need in education by popular demand, by expert committees and by governments. Former Prime Ministers, Sir Robert Menzies and Mr. Gorton, made special reference to the need for external teaching at university level and guaranteed Commonwealth financial backing for external studies at the tertiary level. The present Minister for Education and Science, Mr. Fraser, has frequently referred to the importance of external teaching at the tertiary level and it is just hard to believe that universities outside of New South Wales and Queensland, have ignored the Commonwealth plea for expanded facilities in external teaching. (Proceedings of a Forum on External Studies 1972, pp.2-3).
Both sides of politics were represented in expressing a symbolic vision for an extended approach to education. As part of its party platform following its 1971 Federal Conference the government opposition, the Australian Labor Party (ALP), discussed education 'in terms of freedom, justice, social responsibility and equal rights' and with regard to tertiary education was committed 'to assuming full responsibility for the financing and co-ordinating of tertiary institutions and to establishing open tertiary institutions for tertiary students' (Birch 1976, p.27).

The Effects of Institutional Isomorphism

At the provider level, however, external studies (and with it a focus on adults, not school-leavers) had been returned to its marginal role following the end of the postwar reconstruction period:

... universities recruit their staff from people who have not had experience in external studies and noted that, in the pecking order, pure research gives you the highest status, followed by post-graduate supervision and teaching, then the higher levels of undergraduate teaching, then the lower undergraduate teaching and then external studies. The low order puts external studies rather beyond the pale. (Anderson 1972, p.i)

Nelson (1979) later suggested

a tendency of higher educational institutions to regard the education of adults, whether externally or otherwise, as a marginal extra, rather than integral to their purpose.

... one manifestation... at New England has been a nervous anxiety to ensure an adequate intake of internal students direct from school, and a concomitant fear that we might come to be regarded as an 'adult' university. To my mind such attitudes are irrational. For surely thinking young adults fresh from school are likely to be attracted – along with older adults – to a university which is 'adult' in the sense that it has a sound reputation for the education of adults (p.6).

Nelson’s comments reflect the tendency towards institutional isomorphism in attitudes to purpose, enrolment and educational practices. The tendency to institutional isomorphism, which had produced a foundation definition of external studies that sought to mimic on-campus programs, continued.
The University of New England. External studies as it was established at UNE experienced much the same cautions earlier reported for the University of Queensland. This was demonstrated by the motion made by Davis Hughes, the Country Party member of the NSW Legislative Assembly for Armidale, and carried in October 1953 by the University College’s Advisory Council, with regard to establishing external studies at the new university:

That the following general principles on External Studies be adopted:-

(1) The external courses must be so organised that they do not in any way harm the reputation of the University . . .

(2) The external courses should be so organised as to reduce as far as possible (within the limits of staff and finance available) the disabilities under which the external student works.

(NEUC Advisory Council Minutes 1953 October, p.97)

Tensions within the dual mode approach established at UNE also continued. Many higher education provider administrators and academics continued to hold the view that external studies was something that was done on top of everything else, that it was an educational approach which a higher education provider was directed to carry out, and that it was not a mainstream educational activity. These views lent support to the perspective that external programs would be deficient, that they needed to be assisted to reach the ‘higher or better’ status, and that because they were ‘second class’, efforts here would be at the expense of the real mission of the university.

According to Sheath (Director of the Department of External Studies at UNE from 1955 to 1979) government interpretation of external studies was also deficient, as expressed in terms of its resourcing formula:

The Australian Universities Commission has calculated and expressed enrolment at universities in terms of equivalent full-time students (E.F.T.S.) and for many years an external student was equated to only one-quarter of a full student, notwithstanding the fact

---

11 The dual mode concept was based on the view that the same academics would teach both internal and external students, during the same period, to the same curriculum, and that all students would sit the same examinations at the end of the period.
that an external student at New England undertakes approximately half the study load undertaken by a full-time student . . . (1972, p.8)

UNE took up the challenge and argued for the change. They had analysed the full number of teaching hours devoted to all the activities and concluded they were the same. This fight against a financial marginalisation of external studies was based on an argument of institutional sameness.

These various comments suggest that there were some inherent tensions in what became known as the Australian model, the dual mode provider. The innovative option of trying a different, nationally focussed, approach was taken not in Australia, but in Britain with the establishment of a single mode institution, the Open University. In response the federal government established the Kannel Committee to consider a similar move in Australia (yet another in the long series of formal committees to examine higher education in Australia which had begun twenty years earlier with the Murray Committee).

**Responding to the Forces of Institutional Isomorphism**

What is now called the University of New England, or dual mode, model reflected the impact of the forces of institutional isomorphism:

> . . . the courses offered externally will be identical in all respects with the courses offered internally and that external and internal students will sit for the same examinations at the same time and be examined at the same standard. The residential school is a compulsory requirement in all second and third year courses and many first year courses. . . . (Sheath 1972, p.8)

The forces of institutional isomorphism continued to push strongly at the provider level towards the mainstream model of university education with the attempt to replicate experiences and outcomes, without question as to whether the students undertaking the courses, or the desirable outcomes for them, were in fact exactly the same as those for young people in full-time, on-campus programs. This reiteration of a foundation model based on conventional university education designed for young people highlights an approach of seeking legitimacy by asserting equality of inputs.
THE CHANGING SYSTEM

With the advent of additional universities and then the college of advanced education system, as well as the breakdown of the barriers to enrolment in external studies programs across state boundaries, the situation at the provider level had changed dramatically. Alternatives were now available in every state; competition at the level of educational provision increased, replacing indifference and hindering cooperation.

Finally, the end of full employment produced another demand. The federal government had first explicitly acknowledged the role of higher education as a social and vocational tool to be used to achieve national goals during World War II. With the disappearance of full employment in Australia new demands for education in this light arose, both constructive – to increase the vocational skills and knowledge of the populace, particularly the young; and politically opportunistic – to diminish the numbers of unemployed people by having them engage in education, again focussed primarily on the young.

The dilemma faced by government was the conflict between increasing unemployment, the rising level of required educational achievement and appropriate labour market strategies. The rationale put in the Karmel report on open tertiary education ‘In terms of social costs, part-time study, like external study, has the advantage that it obviates the withdrawal of the student from productive employment’ (Committee on Open University 1975, p.10) was opposed by the force of growing unemployment.

Some of the forces from another discontinuity, the trend change from elite to mass demand for higher education, occurring in the context of these socio-economic factors are uncomfortably reflected in this comment from a government committee of inquiry:

... while the rewards for persisting with education are not necessarily as great as they once were, the penalties for not doing so are considerable. This means that as the trend towards more and more education persists, the importance of providing access to education for all people grows. (Committee on Open University 1975, p.7)
APPROPRIATE TIMESCale FOR ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

It should be evident by now that the passage of time plays a significant role not only in the type of policy analysis which can be attempted but also in the actual formation and implementation of policy. Long periods have been regularly reported for the formation stage (a stage primarily involving community leaders, politicians and to only a limited extent university leaders). When the implementation stage is reached shorter periods are the concern, ranging from the election cycle (three years or less) to the annual cycle of the university calendar year. This last, well highlighted by Professor John Bishop (1975)12 pointed out the unequal aspects of both timescale and resource provision of providers offering external studies programs particularly in colleges of advanced education:

Academic staff are supposed to indulge in teaching and research, even those who work in CAE’s in spite of what Professor Karmel said, when he suggested that perhaps one of the distinctions between a University and a C.A.E. was that people weren’t supposed to do research in CAE’s. It’s like saying that people who work in a particular institution are not allowed to have an idea. It just doesn’t work. If we are supposed to do all this there is a REAL problem. This is the only serious point I wish to make tonight, because it is a REAL problem. Man is entitled in a university (a) to teach, (b) to get on with scholarly work in his own subject and (c) and I put the most important last, he is entitled to a bit of time off. Now if you’re not careful, the way the external studies program runs from the point of view of preparation, it will neatly cover the time off which you hope to get from your internal teaching, and I think one of the things we have got to impress upon the Commissions, is that if people are engaged in internal and external teaching, they are in fact involved in about one and half times the work if not more. I think about 1-3/4 times of the teacher who is involved in only internal or external teaching. In other words, the government is getting something a little on the cheap if it expects the average teacher to do both these things, because the sheer difficulty, the simple organisational problem of the fact that, while he is involved with this year’s work internally, he’s got to be thinking about next year’s work externally.

His views about the extra demands put on academic staff teaching both internally and externally are echoed in comments by Ortmeier (1982) who suggested that the teaching

12Unfortunately essentially preaching to the converted at a conference about external studies.
load of UNE academics must be much higher and more time-consuming than that of their colleagues at traditional university sites.

Submissions to the Karmel Committee echoed these views:

Although many respondents recognised the valuable part which had been played in Australian higher education by part-time and external studies, they felt that the care of part-time and external students had tended to be treated as a second-class and irritating activity to be undertaken with the resources and energy left over after the institution's other responsibilities – the teaching of the full-time student and the conduct of research – had been discharged. (Committee on Open University 1975, pp.64-65)

Thus the importance of timescale as a lens of observation and time as a resource to be valued are both emphasised.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LOOKS AT TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE – AND TURNS AWAY

The launch of the Open University in Britain offered an educational planning discontinuity in the international higher education system which stimulated the federal government to consider a new model. Peter Karmel was appointed in March 1973 to chair the macro/meso level committee which would examine the option for Australia. The result was the report Open Tertiary Education in Australia, released in December 1974. Its analysis included a strong theme of labour market consideration and a recognition that disadvantage begins well before exiting from school level education. Among the report's recommendations was the establishment of a National Institute of Open Tertiary Education [NIOTE, recommended to be established in 1975] as a non-teaching statutory body with the general objective of encouraging expansion of opportunities in tertiary education. It would be the function of the Institute to facilitate the entry to tertiary institutions of students with other than the usual qualifications; to develop opportunities for part-time and external study and the quality and range of the courses offered in these ways; to seek out new clienteles of students whose needs are not adequately met; to encourage tertiary institutions to liberalise mutual recognition of credit;
This recommendation to create NIOTE apparently drew together themes expressed in what amounted to two camps among the submissions made to the Committee. The first supported the establishment of a national organisation on the lines of the OU – ‘a clean break with the old ways’, and the second the view of capitalising on the diversity and existing expertise in the institutions already offering external studies (a network of providers would be facilitated). In addition to NIOTE and its charter the Karmel Committee recommended that a new university planned at Albury-Wodonga (on the NSW-Victorian border) play a special role in the provision/support of open tertiary education (in association with other government moves towards a decentralisation from the capital cities to the regional hinterlands). The tensions represented in this array of compromise recommendations reflected the strength of States’ rights, maintenance of the status quo with incremental change offered through an institute which would have to work through and with existing providers.

Political leaders, however, had set up too many higher education providers to serve regional development and other agendas. This reality coupled with the a diminishing level of attention due to the demise of the era of plentiful resources and ensuing political turmoil meant that NIOTE dropped from sight in the year of economic crisis and political change at the level of the federal government 1975.

In summary, numerous benign discontinuities occurred during the period reported in this Chapter, relating to the growth in demand and complexity of the education system and its larger environment. In a period generally well resourced these offered opportunities for

---

13Falk (1975) states that NIOTE was developed from a notion of a National Resources and Accrediting Institute developed by her and John Anwyl at Melbourne University. Moves for such a body (particularly with reference to accreditation and credit transfer) resurfaced in the 1990s (Johnson 1990; Pritchard 1990).

14Towards the end of this year Prime Minister Gough Whitlam was ‘sacked’ by the Governor-General, and the opposition took over first as a care-taker government and later, following an election, in its own right.
innovative policy on educational provision. Rather than innovation, however, there was
extension of the foundation definition of external studies. The same forces of institutional
isomorphism tried to preserve the elite reserve of the university by a dual categorisation of
provider type in which vocational, part-time, and external students were to be relegated to
what was, through the effects of categorical conformity, often considered a second class
tier of educational provision. Rural and regional political and economic pressures
supported a continuation of a fragmented network of small higher education providers,
most of whom depended on external studies provision for their viability.

This was not the happy ending which political leaders sought, however; in the next
chapter it will be seen that the turmoil and challenge of rapid change at all levels was to
further increase.
By this period the centre of higher education policy was without question the federal government with providers, state governments and state government bureaucracies all facing towards Canberra.

**The System (Over)Extended**

Growth of the higher education system in both number of participants (see Figure 1.4, p.33) and number of providers of external studies continued throughout the 1970s and the 1980s. The federal educational bureaucracy soon wanted to know more about what was going on in the external studies sector of higher education and commissioned Professor Richard Johnson (an experienced senior academic at the Australian National University) to find out what was going on and write it up (R. Johnson, pers.com.1992). This led to his report *The Provision of External Studies in Australian Higher Education* (April 1983). External studies was now on the policy agenda of the federal government.

The visibility of external studies continued with the release of the *Review of Efficiency and Effectiveness in Higher Education* report (Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission¹ 1986), also known as the Hudson Report. Both reports noted the large number of providers and existence of course duplication, and remarked on the need for consolidation, with the Hudson report taking a strong stand on economic efficiency and effectiveness. The response from the distance education community generally fell into two categories: the practitioner perspective and the economic instrumentalism explanation. Kelly (1987a) exemplifies the first where she correctly points out that the CTEC report would serve to maintain the distinctions between face-to-face and distance education;

¹Hereafter referred to as CTEC.
however, the alternatives she proposed focussed on altering views of program management and practice at the provider and subprovider level, advice of little use to an educational bureaucracy working within the framework of the ‘big picture’. The second category is represented by works such as that of Campion (1990) and Campion and Guiton (1991) which recognised the externality of the forces impinging on distance education policy but seemed unable to see the longer term themes which led to these policy statements (Johnson 1991a).

Demand continued to grow and diversify. The long dominant customers for distance education, teachers, had been in part diluted. Other groups of professionals with the same needs for qualification upgrading as teachers but a much different working environment, and a wide range of business and industry professionals, as well as a growing group of participants seeking mid-career change options, were now part of a much more diversified demand for non-traditional and/or part-time higher education.

**CHANGE AS DISCONTINUITY**

The turbulence and discontinuity becoming evident in the early 1970s (as addressed in the last chapter) increased in this period. The vocational education and training demands arising in a situation in which the government’s focus was primarily on its economic agenda (in both national and international terms) increasingly affected higher education. Policy stakeholders – government, business, industry and the community – were becoming more vocal about what was wanted from the nation’s higher education system (to a certain extent this statement is too broad brush as the CAEs were compelled by legislative and bureaucratic expectations throughout their history to consult with community stakeholders with regard to course development and review). By the mid 1980s government rhetoric suggested that the time was ripe for transformational change:

> The Government reaffirms its wish to see far-reaching reforms in the organisation and practices of the higher education system that are to the benefit of students and the community generally. Equally, it reaffirms its view that our higher education institutions
should not be isolated from the major changes occurring in Australian society and the economy. Rather, they should be one of the prime agents in the process of change, through both their teaching activities and their contribution to research and innovation. (White Paper, p.5)

The time to make a fresh assessment about provision of higher education appeared to have arrived, and such an assessment could draw both on the now well-established practical knowledge of distance educators and on the growing recognition among some sectors of education and industry that not only was pre-career education and training an increasing necessity but so also was mid-career education and training (the concept of recurrent education was being legitimised in the workplace by necessity). For students in the recurrent education group, it would seem unlikely that any economic argument would support a massive return to the campus and/or to full-time study.

The ideological views expressed in the White Paper extract above were underpinned by the reality of increasing participation rates in education coupled with a higher education system perceived as overextended. Government policy to keep more young people on at school for longer for altruism (the common good), for the national economic agenda (improved educational levels expected to lead to improved economic development and production), and for political reasons (holding the official rate of unemployment down) contributed to the increased school retention rates (see Figure 8.1).

---

2 Points against a massive increase in campus-based education for mid-career education and training include lost time on the job, shift work, the need for capital investment to increase the provision of places for campus-centred educational programs, and so on.

3 The bureaucratic assumption that people studying are not unemployed, even if their choice to undertake further study directly stems from an inability to find a job, exemplifies the artificial formation of these as mutually exclusive categories. In an era of rising unemployment it is hard not to take a cynical view here.

4 When one reads of Clark Kerr (leader of the large University of California system) talking to Australian educators in 1973 of the discontinuities facing higher education and naming among them: 1- From elite to middle class to universal higher education (supported by definitions and statistics which suggest that California at that time had nearly reached universal higher education); 2- From ivory tower to public freeway, one senses that the soothsayer had not been sufficiently acknowledged in those earlier days.
In a school system in which the systemic design of the final years of schooling focusses on university entrance as a central goal, increasing retention rates led inexorably to increasing demand for places in higher education. Policies to meet this demand were based on the model that increased demand by young people was equivalent to increased demand for traditional on-campus places.

**Figure 8.1 Apparent Year 12 Retention Rates (1976-1987)**

![Graph showing apparent Year 12 retention rates from 1977 to 1987.](image)

Source: DEET (1988), Figure 6.

At the same time participation of mature aged students rapidly increased in the 1970s and nearly half were not second chance students but recyclers, participants either upgrading existing qualifications or seeking additional qualifications in a different area (West et al 1986). These two trends together increased the pressure on the system both to provide additional student places and to cope with increasing diversity.
POLITICAL CHANGE AND NOT-CHANGE

The election of the Third Hawke Labor Government in July 1987 led to a subsequent re-organisation of the education bureaucracy in the creation of a ‘super’ ministry, the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), with a mission for reform:

The Government’s strategy for the development of the higher education system is part of a wider agenda of reform spanning all elements of the employment, education and training portfolio’ (White Paper, p.3).

These political moves were a response to the changing labour and education environments, set in the context of a corporatist approach to government where the decision-makers were using an economic rationalist framework (Nunan 1991). The new Minister set his team to work immediately to create a blueprint for an improved higher education system, a blueprint strongly driven by principles of economic rationalism but also clearly reflecting the recommendations of previous reviews and advice. In December 1987 Higher Education: A Policy Discussion Paper (the Green Paper) was circulated and in July 1988 Higher Education: A Policy Statement (the White Paper) was released. The policy initiatives contained within these documents threw Australian higher education into upheaval; the external studies sector was included in this upheaval particularly as it was confronted by two pages which concentrated on organisational and academic rationalisation for greater cost-effectiveness.

When the dust had settled, a number of political decisions had been made about the tertiary education system as a whole. These included reducing the binary system of universities and CAEs to a single pattern of higher education as a Unified National System (UNS). CTEC was abolished and a new policy advisory body established, the National Board for Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) ‘as a channel for

---

5Even in a period of relative stability at federal government level (refer back to Figure 4.6), in the Australian pattern elections were regularly called before the full term of an elected government.

independent and expert advice on portfolio matters’ (White Paper, p.73). At the same
time distance education development activities (though not necessarily ‘provision’) were
to be concentrated in a smaller number of higher education providers.

Was there transformational change occurring? There is but one answer to this question,
yes, though again it resided not in what was happening in distance education policy but
rather with regard to Government’s role in the system as a whole.

Higher education policy was now determined by the federal government with little but lip
service to the constitutional responsibilities of states. Control over the higher education
sector was now explicitly centralised, exerted through control of funding and prescription
of standards. The increasing demands by business, industry and community leaders on
both government and higher education providers for greater and more flexible access to
higher education might have predicted an integrating transformational change with regard
to external studies: after all, the White Paper acknowledged that distance education had ‘a
key role to play in achieving the Government’s objectives of growth and greater equity in
higher education’ (p.49).

The White Paper followed a short discussion period within the constraints established by
the initial government discussion paper (Green Paper), with few changes. Neither
document showed evidence of rethinking the existing traditional approach to higher
education. As an illustration, while the traditional term ‘external studies’ is well

---

7The Government’s desire to streamline and/or integrate policy advice led to NBEET combining the
functions of numerous separate bodies including the Commonwealth Schools Commission, CTEC, the
Australian Council for Employment and Training and the Australian Research Council; however, within
NBEET four councils were established representing these same subsets. Of NBEET’s thirteen members
two were to represent ‘expertise or experience’ with unions and two with the same for business or
industry.

8The White Paper acknowledged this term which had been absent in the Green Paper.

9Challenged later on the lack of change or ‘new thinking’ in the document, Dawkins indicated that few
academics had responded/offered any new thinking during the Green Paper discussion period.
represented in the White Paper's index, other representative terms already in use\textsuperscript{10} were not, e.g. open learning, flexi-learning, resource-based teaching, resource-based learning, fleximode, extended campus. The only suggestion of wider thinking is in a single, wishful rather than substantiated paragraph at the end of the White Paper's pronouncements on external studies, a section of a chapter on 'Institutional Structures':

There is a growing trend towards the use of high quality instructional packages developed for external studies to improve the quality of teaching for internal students. The Government has no wish to discourage such developments. All institutions should have access to accepted national external course materials, and supporting technologies, for use in the courses provided for their on-campus students. (White Paper, p.52)

In spite of this mildly directive statement\textsuperscript{11} the government policy perspective which had created the internal and external studies dichotomy was treated as immutable and the changes proposed at the level of distance education provision were transitional in nature.

The continuing use of external studies programs as a social justice tool (equity and access) to provide educational opportunity to marginal groups, rather than as an alternative form of mainstream higher education, was suggested in the section's leading statement that external studies had a key role in the achievement of the Government's objectives of growth and greater equity (p.49). Later, the document says that the federal government was committed to further substantial expansion of external studies opportunities, especially for people from more isolated communities. Nowhere other

\textsuperscript{10} Within the distance education community and at some of the interfaces between technical and further education providers and their business and industry partners.

\textsuperscript{11} The suggestion that the 'high quality instructional packages' were being used with internal students went officially uninvestigated and unchallenged until NBEET published its commissioned report \textit{Changing Patterns of Teaching and Learning} by Johnson, Chippendale and Lundin (1992), and its subsequent advice to government (NBEET 1992). In Johnson et al., the writer of the Foreword focusses also on the DEC decision, adding the interpretive comment that 'There was no particular expectation, then, that the principles, methods or materials of distance education should be turned to the advantage of all students, whether on-campus or off-campus . . .' (p.v). [Note that 'then' is being used for a time only four years earlier.]
than the page 52 paragraph cited above is there a suggestion that rethinking the basic approaches to the provision of higher education, drawing upon the wealth of experience and review, might be in order. The reforms expected more of the same, only managed more efficiently and effectively on an economic input/output model.

Yet the rising retention rates at secondary school, the increasing participation rates in higher education, and the continuing level of participation in external and part-time study all pointed to an increasing, heterogeneous demand from both the school-leaving group and the mature-age group. The White Paper acknowledged the two student groups in terms of age, noting that

> While participation in higher education is in relative terms highest among the 17-19 year age group, a majority of all higher education students (nearly 70% in 1987) are currently aged 20 or more, and 40% are 25 years or older. (White Paper, p.15)

This data, clearly in the hands of policy makers, strongly suggests that relevant demographic thresholds were being reached.

Recognition in principle of the expanding demand, as well as the current participation by the mature age cohort was also noted in the White Paper:

> Apart from the projected strong growth in the size of the population aged 25 years and over, the proportion of this age group who have completed Year 12 and experienced some form of post-secondary education will increase. There will, therefore, be a larger pool of people who appreciate the benefits of higher education, many of whom will seek to re-enter the system during their working lives. (p.16).

Educational policy makers at the macro level were thus facing a picture of change, including increasing competition for student places, an increasingly diverse student population and a diversification of preferred modes of study, yet continued to assume mainly traditional models of provision within a framework of increasing economies of scale, and continuing institutional isomorphism.
The Distance Education Centres\textsuperscript{12} (DECS) Decision

The DEC decision was an expression particularly of the categorical conformism aspect of institutional isomorphism as it appears in Australian higher education policy. The decision to establish the DECs reflected a continuation of a conservative, narrowly defined model of higher education by applying the advice given to Government over the better part of a decade with regard to rationalisation of providers (and programs of study). Although lauded as such, it was not a move responding to the real changes in the Australian environment.

The DEC decision eliminated options rather than stimulated their development in a turbulent and changing environment. It constrained the rich texturing of approaches to serve the enlarging and diversifying client base for higher education by continuing to perpetuate the traditional bi-modal system of internal and external studies. By continuing to distinguish between modes in a policy structure manner it also weakened claims to legitimacy by the diversifying range of approaches developing under the banner of distance education which in fact contribute to the blurring of the divide between modes of practice.

Many of the ideas encompassed in the DEC decision were not new and a number had first appeared before the distance education community in the Johnson report (1983). The 'principal providers'\textsuperscript{13} of Australian distance education were now required to offer detailed proposals to the federal educational bureaucracy as to why they should continue as both developers and providers of a broad range of course programs by distance

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Distance Education Centre' was the official designation given to a higher education provider which was commissioned to be a principal provider of distance education under the terms of the White Paper. Care must be taken not to confuse the policy appellation with a higher education provider's operational structure in some cases called by the same name, an example of the muddling of symbolically assigned exclusive authority and responsibility to act as a centre of distance education expertise with the operational reality of implementing that direction.
\item This term was first used in Victoria by the state government educational body concerned with post-secondary education, VipSec, according to Professor Johnson (1983, p.31).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
education. ‘Specialist’ providers were expected to make appropriate alliances. Any provider which wished to continue to offer distance education had either to become a DEC or see a decrease in per student funding over the next three years as resources for educational development of distance education programs were to be funneled into the DECs; non-DECs initiating new distance education programs were expected to contract development services from a DEC.

In 1989 the federal Government established eight Distance Education Centres, making its choice on the basis of submissions by providers ostensibly showing that they could meet the criteria set by the federal government, criteria for an oligopolistic, industrial approach to education. Some of the choice was determined, as usual, through concern with the viability of rurally located higher education providers a key factor (R. Linke, pers. com. 1991; R. Johnson, pers. com. 1992).

The University of Queensland was unsuccessful, ‘losing’ to two of Queensland’s regional colleges of advanced education, DDIAE and Capricornia IAE, soon to become universities in their own right. UNE (by this time a networked university located in several rural electorates) was selected but not as the sole provider in NSW – the college of advanced education consortium which became Charles Sturt University (located in three other rural electorates) shared the prize in that state.

---

14Fourteen applications were received but these included proposed collaboration between two of the NSW applicants, two of the Queensland applicants and three of the WA applicants.

15These were spawned originally as university centres created by the University of Queensland in cooperation with local communities, and strengthened by the UQ Directors of External Studies, Ringrose and Olsen. These laudably community-based endeavours were soon underpinned by gifts of land and other physical resources (Thomis 1985), with obvious local intentions of achieving their own provider of higher education (a university). The introduction of the college of advanced education system made this more possible. The establishing of the Unified National System completed the exercise.
## Figure 8.2 Designated Distance Education Centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>UNS Identity</th>
<th>Immediate Previous Identity</th>
<th>Geographic Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>UNE</td>
<td>UNE, Armidale CAE, Northern Rivers CAE¹⁷</td>
<td>Rural northern NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charles Sturt University</td>
<td>Riverina-Murray IAE (two campuses), Mitchell CAE</td>
<td>Rural central &amp; southern NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>University of Southern Qld</td>
<td>DDIAE</td>
<td>Rural southern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Central Qld</td>
<td>Capricornia IAE</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>Deakin University, Warrnambool CAE</td>
<td>Geelong &amp; rural western Victoria¹⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monash University²⁸</td>
<td>Monash University¹⁸, Gippsland IAE, and others</td>
<td>Melbourne &amp; rural eastern Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>University of South Australia</td>
<td>South Australia CAE (5 campuses), South Australian Institute of Technology</td>
<td>Adelaide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>WA Distance Education Consortium</td>
<td>Consortium members, not amalgamated institutions: Murdoch University, Edith Cowan University, Curtin University</td>
<td>Perth &amp; various other locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tas</td>
<td>No DEC but special consideration</td>
<td>University of Tasmania, Tasmanian State Institute of Technology. The new University of Tasmania was allowed an extended campus approach</td>
<td>Statewide extended campus network centred on Launceston</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁶The small Australian Capital Territory was expected to be served by the NSW DECs and the distant Northern Territory (NT) by a number of DECs. The NT already had a history of cooperative arrangements with universities in other states which offered external studies programs. These followed a model originally developed by UQ for the provision of higher education to Papua-New Guinea during its period as an Australian trust territory.

¹⁷Orange Agricultural College, located in rural central NSW, eventually joined the new University of New England; during the period in which bids were made for DEC status it was not part of UNE.

¹⁸Monash University was a wildcard in the choice having no experience in distance education except that which it gained by amalgamation with Gippsland IAE in eastern Victoria; however, it offered both an entrepreneurial approach and a solid university base for coverage of eastern Victoria under the emerging model of distance education provision.

¹⁹In later rounds of amalgamations Deakin University took on a larger Melbourne base.
KEY AGENTS AGAIN PRIMARILY ASSOCIATED WITH GOVERNMENT

On the basis of the analysis of the 1980s activities leading to the White Paper, it appeared that during this crucial period in Australian higher education, the government vision with regard to distance education, and to higher education in general, focussed on efficiency and effectiveness themes bent on stream-lining a higher education system perceived as inefficient and unwieldy (particularly by the politicians and bureaucrats of the federal government now in control of the system). Key agents were located there or were coopted to the government’s service.

The Role of the Minister

The agent for the transformational structural change of the higher education system through abolition of the binary system and consolidation of federal control of higher education was Minister John Dawkins. His leadership during the changes made to the higher education system during his Ministry is captured in a phrase used by the popular press ‘Dawkinisation’. The Minister not only stated a policy focussed on change but also ensured that it was implemented. Most visible for the general higher education system were amalgamations among the providers (driven by funding tied to size as determined by total student numbers) and a significant increase in number of government-funded student places (though not all at equal funding). Intertwined with those general demands for increased size and decreased numbers of higher education providers was a similar demand placed on the provision of external studies: the theme of principal and specialist providers was now more than a policy recommendation – it was Government policy.

John Dawkins (an economist/politician) was significant at this period, principally in his role as protector and, through the actions of DEET, as operator. To the casual observer it might appear that John Dawkins was also the visionary; however, while he ‘supplied the

---

20Richard Johnson’s advice to the providers of external studies had long been to organise themselves to be seen to be more efficient and effective through greater cooperation. He regularly expressed the view that it was likely to be imposed if it was not voluntarily achieved (1983, 1991b).
power' to establish and carry out the policies set out in the White Paper, those policies, particularly in relation to external studies, reflected (as can be discerned in the sections above) policy formation themes which had been prominent at least since the early 1980s and with some roots in the early 1970s (Johnson 1991a). Dawkins apparently could not see (or was prevented by the demands of other policy areas such as regional development) the emerging educational scene for what it was becoming, a range of educational market niches21 which might be better served by diversity and a blurring of boundaries. Consequently, when some leaders in individual higher education providers recognised the opportunities which did not easily fit into the internal/external dichotomy, more often than not, they had to confront the boundaries of the existing higher educational system to serve (or from another perspective, to take advantage of) these emerging markets, and search for ways to loosen the tight bonds applied by the federal government through its rules about distance education, the latest of which was the DEC policy.

The Others

The now formulated distance policy themes, established long before Dawkins moved from the Trade portfolio to that of Education, were acceptable in an era of economic rationalism. They had developed at CTEC under the leadership of Peter Karmel (Chair of CTEC 1977-1982, an economics academic and education specialist, with a long career in university leadership and policy advice to government), Hugh Hudson (Chair of CTEC 1982-1987, an economics academic before becoming an active politician in SA) and Gregor Ramsay (Chair of CTEC's Advanced Education Council 1984-1987 and an active CEO in the advanced education sector in SA beginning in the early 1970s; a scientist). In addition, there had been nearly a decade of contributions from Richard Johnson (a

---

21For example, offering specialty majors across universities where a single provider might not have the necessary range of expertise, student demand or resources (e.g. the women's studies major offered through a consortium of five universities following an agreement known as the Toowoomba Accord, professional upgrading opportunities (e.g. nursing), and specialised continuing professional development for various established professions (e.g. engineers).
classicist whose professional life had primarily been located in Canberra at the Australian National University) through his opportunity to examine and report (initially as a neutral special investigator travelling between provider and bureaucratic leaders, later as Special Commissioner for External Studies, and thereafter as a regular consultant to Government in distance, open and adult education).

The National Distance Education Consortium

In association with the DEC structures and under the guidance of NBEET, the National Distance Education Consortium (NDEC) was also established. Although at first a gathering of somewhat suspicious competitors, NDEC (with a limited number of officially designated members comprising delegates of all DECs and representatives of the non-DECs) established a forum for collaboration and cooperation among providers. Such a collaborative group, first hinted at by the Committee on Open University, later prescribed by Johnson (1983), and eventually sought after during the 1980s by Barker and the Australian Committee of Directors and Principals22 (L. Barker, pers.com.October 1991) has been reported as making a valuable contribution to the distance education developments in Australia (J. Taylor, pers.com.October 1991; NBEET 199223). That it was, however, a policy initiative highly desirable at the beginning of the 1980s, but only implemented at the beginning of the 1990s following a transformational change in higher education policy is illustrated by what next occurred. With the advent of the TV Open Learning Project (Moodie 1991b) and its successor the Open Learning Initiative24, there was a return to an uncertain and somewhat competitive environment

22This association of the chief executive officers of CAEs offering distance education created a new corporate agent in the meso layer, and offered a venue for the collaboration recommended. The Dawkins era, however, overtook it.
23The NBEET document, however, states that the achievement of ‘some degree of esprit de corps and a measure of collaborative activity’ resulted not from ‘designation of DECS but of the abolition of the university-CAE distinction and of amalgamations’(p.6), pointing again to the influence of other activities within the system.
24Fostered by the Commonwealth Government and using the government’s national broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, as delivery medium of the broadcast portion.
and a plethora of piecemeal government and institutional initiatives to improve the situation, but that is a story for another day.

**RECURRING PATTERNS IN THE POLICY CLOTH**

The higher education community reacted to the 1988 White Paper as though it was radically new thinking, yet many of its themes were seen in policy discussion papers stretching back a decade or more – the patterns appearing were in no way new. The proposals for distance education were not unusual in this regard.

With regard to distance education itself the White Paper showed recognition of:

- the long and energetic efforts of the supporters of external studies to establish it as a valid educational delivery option in higher education, in particular by promoting the strengths which were believed attractive to Government, namely its cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness (given at least a specified minimum number of students) and its social justice contribution to disadvantaged groups (among them geographically isolated people, second-chance students, and professionalising groups already in the workforce such as teachers and health workers) [but not the educational potential for contributing to meeting the increasing demands being placed on traditional on-campus delivery]

- the high educational quality (but also expense) of teaching materials prepared under regimes which included not only subject experts but also specialists in instructional design, adult learning, media production [while hardly acknowledging the potential value of these materials for on-campus education]

---

25Fashioned in the 1990s as quality initiatives.
• the contribution of the emerging ‘new’ information and communication
  technologies to distance education [but not their equal potential for on-campus
  education]

These issues led, wittingly or otherwise, to the belief that larger and fewer centres of
distance education activities would be both more cost-effective and more educationally-
effective, and to a focus on the development of learning materials and delivery structures.
Hence,

The area where most economies could be achieved by concentrating resources is in the
development and production of external programs. Expensive infrastructure – in terms of
both staff expertise and equipment – is necessary for the production of high quality external
materials (White Paper, p.50)

Thus, visible in the policy-making foreground was the emphasis on achieving economies
in the educational budget overall, not in diversifying educational provision to meet
emerging needs both on and off campus. The story above also indicates that key factors
in this period were the federal government’s public need to respond both to a generalised
demand from the community at large for more university places (without providing more
funds to support that extension) and to its own more specific need to find policy tools to
implement its national agenda for economic reform and a more skilled (or at least
employed) workforce. Responding to concerns for maintaining the viability of regional
higher education providers in association with regional development and other regional
agendas in all states was present in the background of the policy-making.

THE END OF THE STORY . . .?

John Dawkins’ White Paper with its many prescriptions for increased efficiency and
accountability re-enforced the existing distance education situation by taking the essential
structural and procedural dimensions of an already existing educational provision system
for granted instead of asking the system to reinvent itself to meet emerging needs in an era
of turbulence and change at all levels. This reflected both the effects of institutional isomorphism and the impact of the wider national agenda focussed on economic issues.

The announcement of the designated DECs was a stationary or even backward step with regard to educational policy to meet Australia's emerging needs. The selected DECs, similar to the number predicted in the White Paper and little different from the number and idea of the Principal Providers recommended in previous policy advice (Johnson 1983) reflected greater intention and power towards implementation of existing policy advice on the part of the federal government but little new in the way of educational policy development (Johnson 1991a).

That the selected DECs were, without real exception, regional providers of higher education also reflected other long term government policy with regard to the development and stabilisation of rural centres and of their higher education providers - the geographic factor had also not disappeared.

In moving to the DECs, government bureaucrats also effectively reduced the queue of supplicants for special favours for small providers without the infrastructure or scale to justify it. Although dressed in the rhetoric of improved access, equity and increasingly quality, the purpose continued to be confined within a primarily economic rationalist model. Other pressures, such as the increasing demands for higher education, the link between work and education, and the demand for recurrent/lifelong education, issues which appeared to require solutions of flexibility and increasing diversity, were hardly addressed. That demand, a reflection of discontinuity caused by a fast emerging relationship between universities and the world of work and a consolidation of the change to mass higher education, is part of the continuing change of patterns in Australian higher
education. The continuing unfolding of the patterns, and whether they are new or old, remains to be seen: 'Beyond the DECS', however, is a tale for another day\textsuperscript{26}.

\textsuperscript{26}"The present division between external and internal provision should not remain beyond 1995" (NBEET 1992, p.8).
PART III

INSIGHTS FROM THE WARP AND WEFT OF AUSTRALIAN DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

Chapter 9  Australian Distance Education Policy
Chapter 10  Contributions to Understanding Policy
CHAPTER 9

AUSTRALIAN DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

The first aim of this research project (as stated in the Introduction) was to contribute to further understanding of distance education policy as a policy issue area within Australian higher education policy.

THE INQUIRY APPROACH

A post hoc longitudinal study was undertaken using a grounded theory approach in association with the policy space protocol. This exploratory search was for patterns which could suggest answers to the central question: why have conventional and distance education policy and practices not converged? The research investigated federal and state government, and a selection of distance education providers (three in particular: the University of Queensland, the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education, and the University of New England in New South Wales), all part of an expanding, diversifying, and uniformly public higher education system.

The strengths of this approach lay particularly in two areas. First, research over a long timescale facilitated the highlighting of patterns in policy making which might otherwise be obscured when too short a time period and/or too much detail is sought. Second, the iterative spiral of data gathering, reflection and concept building facilitated the discovery of insights and the development of a conceptual framework grounded in the data (an open and illuminating approach) as the research progressed. In this way the research sought to observe both the forest as a whole and the characteristics of the individual trees, or, in the words of the main interpretative metaphor used in the study, both the scope and patterns of the policy cloth as a whole and the characteristics of key factors (warp and weft) which intertwined to produce those patterns.

1 Now the University of Southern Queensland.
There were weaknesses in this approach as well. The long timescale studied, coupled with the finite period for study, a limited number of sites, and a research team of one offered the potential for insufficient or selective data gathering. This was countered in so far as possible by the triangulating approach described in more detail in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the iterative data gathering and analysis approach (which of necessity occurs in a sequence of activities over a period of time) also meant that it was not always possible to ensure a fully consistent approach to data gathering

With these points about the methodology acknowledged this chapter draws a series of conclusions from the research within its framework as an exploratory investigation.

**The Policy Cloth of Australian Distance Education**

The research highlighted a number of patterns of influence and activity in the development of distance education policy. Some of the factors underpinning these patterns were of a long-lasting and not easily changed nature (*the warp of the distance education policy cloth*) – they contributed to an understanding of the long-term forces impacting on distance education policy making and practice in Australia. Other factors appeared as continuing or newly introduced threads, as breaks, and as cross-linkages (comprising *the weft*). Examination of the weft not only offered understanding but also suggested opportunities for policy makers wishing to effect change. Interaction of warp and weft was seen to lead to the recurring patterns in the distance education policy cloth.

*The Value of an Open Systems View.* The research supported the view that understanding Australian distance education policy is enhanced by investigating it using an open systems perspective (Scott 1987). Even at the beginning, when distance

---

2One example of this was the interview segment of the data gathering. This work was primarily carried out during a fixed period of time during the project, a period during which the inductive work was suggesting useful understanding could be achieved through the application of a questioning scheme conceptualised within a marketing context. The data obtained from those interviews and other concurrent
education was generally state-based (developing in the states of Queensland and Western Australia), the characteristics of an open system were demonstrated through the identification of the multiple layers of influence in its establishment and implementation (highlighted, for example, by the interconnections in Queensland among educational bureaucracy, government, community leaders and leading educators). Furthermore, the influence of universities in other states and overseas also emphasised the openness of the system. Following World War II the higher education system expanded and clearly became a national one, growing in size (both in number of students and in number of providers) and complexity (with more inter-relationships between state and federal government politicians and bureaucracies, and with increasing interconnections among providers) as the century progressed. Taking an open systems perspective assisted understanding of the multi-layered, interconnected higher education system in which distance education policy and practice is seated.

The Warp of Australian Distance Education Policy

In the more detailed analysis of the last five chapters it appeared evident that a warp of geographic and socio-economic factors has influenced distance education (and indeed higher education) policy making throughout the period studied. There were three themes particularly evident.

First, the vast physical distances of the Australian continent were, and continue to be, coupled with a relatively small, asymmetrically distributed population. The majority of the population is clustered in urban coastal developments while an influential minority is much

work suggested further insights which then shifted the focus of the emerging substantive theory from one with the role of exchange as an organising concept to one with change at its centre.

3 This is exemplified by the influences on the University of Queensland during its foundation. The new University could hardly escape the consequences of being part of a larger university system. Its best students would have to go overseas were they to take up postgraduate study. Should members of its academic staff wish to move to another post in an Australian or overseas university, their achievements and academic status would be measured against that of the existing higher education system. Furthermore, it should be noted that the foundation academic staff were graduates of British universities.
more widely dispersed in the hinterlands. This regional and rural population, though scattered, has distinctly influenced policy making, maintaining the pressure for educational provision and regional development as a priority throughout the period of study (from the period of distance education initiation at state government level to more recent times\(^4\) of substantially increased federal control).

Second, the combination of the continent’s geographic features and colonial history led to the establishment of separate, independent states with political, transport and communication systems primarily pointed towards the coastal capital cities. Physical and constitutional separation of the states, together with an asymmetric population distribution, contributed to the inward focus of the states on education and other policies. The physical and the political situation made it difficult to bridge state boundaries (exemplified by the long reluctance of the University of Queensland to take out-of-state external students as a matter of course even though there was continuing demonstrated demand from as close as just across the border from Brisbane in northern NSW). The transport and communications infrastructure development funneling into the coastal capitals also pragmatically reinforced the state level focus on higher education policy making and practices.

Third, the links of Australia’s historical and cultural traditions led to a continuing influence from the university traditions and educational policy making of Great Britain. These influences affected not only policy making, organisational structure and staffing decisions directly but also the values and expectations put on the higher education system. These values included both a view of university education as an educational provision for an elite, and a muted interest in vocational outcomes, both of which contrasted with the expressed commitment to egalitarian and extended opportunities demonstrated, for

\(^4\)Demonstrated yet again in July 1994 with the recommendations for the use of higher education provision as a regional development tool in the recommendations of the McKinsey Report to the federal government, *Lead Local, Compete Global*. 
example, in the establishment of the University of Queensland and carried on in much of the government rhetoric on higher education throughout the century.

**The Weft of Australian Distance Education Policy**

*Layers and linkages.* As indicated above, the open systems perspective brought into vivid relief the many layers and linkages within the domain under study. In all segments of the period studied the interconnections between the macro layers (governments and their bureaucracies) and the meso layers (the quasi-bureaucracies of professional and other common interest associations, and the leaders of higher education providers) have been visible, with the bureaucrat and the politician regularly playing significant key agent roles. These included, for example, R.H. Roe and J.D. Storey in the initiation period in Queensland, the federal government officials of the Walker Committee, and Dr.R.B. Madgwick during the war and reconstruction period, state and government officials during the expansion period with Madgwick in a key link role at the University of New England, and Minister J. Dawkins and his federal bureaucracy in the most recent period.

University academics have appeared less influential in the macro and meso levels (most exceptions have been those individuals with substantial cross-system linkages, usually developed through personal involvement with the government at federal and/or state level). At the micro level the influence of academics has been greater, contributing to setting distance education apart. This was illustrated early at the University of Queensland, for example, by Professor Michie’s expressed disdain for direct involvement in external studies (refer back to page 138), later by the comments made by the University of Sydney professorial board during the period leading to the establishment of the University of New England (footnote 11, page 153), and throughout the period studied in the competition for resources within providers and between providers.

Over the period of study as a whole, some shifts have occurred. For example, at the beginning of the century the influence of the federal government on higher education was
negligible; today it dominates while the influence of the state governments is nearly invisible.

Linkages among all the system layers were visible in all segments of the period studied although most prominent at times of transformational change. Transformational change was linked to both policy formulation and education delivery (from macro to micro) in the initiation phase in Queensland and again during the upheaval period of World War II and Reconstruction. More recently, transformational change has occurred in the higher education system at the macro level in the formulation of the White Paper on Higher Education and its implementation, associated with the systemic transformational change from higher education provision as an elitist activity to an increasing community expectation of mass participation. These changes, however, did not mean transformational change for distance education policy and practice. Instead policy making activities aimed at continuing the separation and containment of distance education practice were enshrined in government policy. These included controls on the number of distance education providers argued on the bases of economies of scale and of maintaining and improving quality of provision. Linkages seemed to fall into three categories: key agent links, states/federal governments mirroring one another in bureaucracies and other activities, and the more subtle but highly influential aspects of institutional isomorphism (including adherence to existing higher education models, traditions and values across the higher education system as established in the foundation definition of distance education).

Key agent links developed through a range of mechanisms. These included shared employment experiences, committee memberships and other advisory work, social backgrounds, education, and/or ideologies; these links often appeared to have been a result of the closely bound professional, political and social networks found generally in
Australia. The employment experiences, committee memberships and other advisory work appeared to recur most often.

With regard to the states/federal government, the mirroring of bureaucracies and other activities reflected the impact of federation. State governments initially were essentially autonomous with regard to higher education. Following World War II, the states grew dependent on the federal government in the domain of higher education until finally in the late 1980s the federal government had subsumed the states' role.

Institutional Isomorphism. The linkages just described strongly contributed, as one set of bridging mechanisms, to institutional isomorphism within the domain. With regard to the other aspects of institutional isomorphism, a 'traditional university model' normally dominated. At the institutional level (both in government and in most higher education providers) there was a strong force pushing for continuity of tradition represented by:

- a dependence on historical models of higher education provision (particularly on those of Great Britain) during establishment of new policies and practices (the establishment of the foundation definition)

---

5Key agents seem to undertake regular consultancy and advisory roles with governments and other providers as well as move from one related employment position to another. Examples include Roe, Storey and Jones in UQ's early history in the initiation period, and Madgwick and Sheath in the upheaval and reconstruction period, particularly with reference to UNE. In the last tumultuous period these linkages among senior federal education bureaucrats, leaders of the quasi-bureaucracies and senior university leaders (in the macro and meso layers) are illustrated by, for example, Karmel, Ramsey, and Johnson.

6The history of the Australian Education Council (established in 1936) is but one reflection of this shift. Initially the federal government was excluded from membership. By the end of the 1980s it had an established role in the Council.

7Expressed particularly in the providers' rules and regulations about distance education. The rhetoric was for equivalency through similarity in so far as possible using the traditional on-campus program delivery and experiences as the bench mark. The dominance of the traditional model was also expressed through the continuing implicit message that distance education was second best to on-campus, classroom based programs. (Recurring evidence of this message appeared in Handbooks at most sites, though most prominently in that of the University of Queensland.)
• maintenance of perceived legitimacy and the status quo through regular reference to long-standing tradition and historical experience (of key agents in particular);

• continuing marginalisation of the major innovation of distance education, through continuing treatment of it as ephemeral, additional to normal expectations, or not up to standards defined by traditional classroom-based education programs for young people.

• use of a range of categorisations to separate internal and external studies.

The forces of institutional isomorphism eased most at times of transformational change, usually for reasons of a political and/or economic nature (regional development and autonomy, exchange of political favours, access for the disadvantaged, national defence or economic agendas of the time), but regularly became dominant again.

The effects of institutional isomorphism can be seen in the initial distance education policy making in Queensland in the form of the legislation establishing the University of Queensland (which, although clearly a transformational change in the nature of educational provision, still treated external studies as a less desirable alternative for the disadvantaged) and in the university provision guidelines proposed by Jones (which did all they could to show that external studies could be the same as the traditional model). These forces strongly affected the establishment of the foundation definition of external studies. They continued to be evident in the distance education policies and practices of the increasing number of distance education providers. Counters to these forces are visible mainly in the defence of distance education as a policy tool rather than as an estimable alternative set of pedagogical practices.

Discontinuity. Throughout the study it has been shown that some form of discontinuity has been present when transformational change has occurred. The discontinuity may appear in a particular layer of the system (macro, meso or micro) or may in fact be
systemic (that is, evident throughout all layers of the system). Discontinuity was most likely to be an indicator of opportunity for successful change when it directly affected those who were to carry out the change. Hence in Queensland at initiation there was a confluence of discontinuities including the physically large size of the state and its dispersed population (a systemic discontinuity), a new demand placed on government for access to higher education from the hinterlands (macro), the need to create a new university where there was none (meso/micro), and a complete lack of any local model or experience in the provision of either higher education or distance education (micro).

During the upheaval and reconstruction periods a new confluence of discontinuity occurred including social, political and economic discontinuities at all levels – community, state, national and global – in the form of economic depression, world war and postwar reconstruction, and a temporary transformation of the system at all levels occurred; a closely following transformation, or reversion within some levels, notably at the micro layer, followed the reconstruction period. In most recent times the national economic situation (characterised by high unemployment and high inflation) coupled with the perception that Australia was now part of a global economic community in which it must compete to survive provided a new discontinuity at all levels.

*Key agents* were found to have been present at the time of transformational change, though not always all located in the same layers. Throughout the analysis it was shown that for distance education policy to be made there had to be a visionary. That visionary was most effective when located in the macro (and to a lesser extent meso) layers of the system. More often than not, those grasping that vision (in all three agent roles – visionary, protector and operator) saw distance education as a policy instrument which could provide a range of policy outcomes such as increasing access to higher education (a social justice vision), contributing to regional development and stability (a socio-economic and political vision) or an opportunity for increased foreign exchange (a global marketplace economic vision). Further, the emphasis was usually on access – it was enough to have the opportunity of studying by distance education in place. The link at the macro
policy making level between a vision of access and program provision (seated primarily in
the micro level) was usually tenuous or even non-existent (during the initiation period in
Queensland there was no educational plan until Jones had been appointed and completed
his overseas tour; during the war and reconstruction period the universities appear simply
to have been expected to 'get on with it', and throughout the expansion period any
provider which wanted to get into distance education found a way to undertake it).

Other Enabling Conditions. Other conditions were necessary, though not in themselves
sufficient, to support transformational change. Enabling technologies and financial
resources have been recurring and intertwining factors in the weft. The development of
communication and information technology as part of society’s general technological
development considerably enabled the spread and diversification of distance education
practice. Resources were sometimes provided for a reason not directly related to higher
education provision (for example, the extensive communications and transport
infrastructure of Australia’s World War II activities on which the innovative approaches of
the time piggybacked). More usually, however, there was an insufficiency of resources
(for example in the late 1970s and early 1980s when distance education systems
proliferated on an insufficient resource base for quality of provision in an attempt to
maintain and increase student numbers so as to be considered viable higher education
providers).

The Relationship between Conditions for Change. The importance of all three sets of
conditions for transformational change (discontinuity, key agents and other enabling
conditions) appeared to be confirmed. A more subtle relationship among them with
regard to transformational change also emerged, comprising two characteristics. The first
is the location of each within the layers of the system\(^8\) – this has implications for both the

\(^8\)For example, strong key agent roles at the micro layer can have only limited effect (e.g. the various
Directors of External Studies located in providers known for their distance education programs) while such
roles located in the macro layer are more likely to have transformative effects on the system as a whole
substance of the transformational change itself, and for its longevity. The second is the location of the conditions within the larger perspective of timescale.

WILL CONVERGENCE OCCUR?

In the Introduction to this thesis it was noted that many distance education professionals now believe that the mode, methodologies, costs and outcomes of distance education practices have been demonstrated to be satisfactorily comparable with those of traditional face-to-face education yet convergence of policy and practices had not occurred. What constrained convergence?

The Constraints of Institutional Isomorphism

The seeds for separation were sown during the initiation period with the creation of the foundation definition of distance education. The forces of institutional isomorphism at that time (and continuing throughout the period studied) constrained the development of distance education policy and practice to one which would have difficulty in being accepted as having parity to the existing conventional practice.

Use of Distance Education as Public Policy Instrument

Introduction of external studies in Australia was an educational innovation primarily initiated from outside the existing education industry. Political direction to universities to provide a particular form of education, coupled with a determination for organisational survival, are suggested as the factors most responsible for the initiation, maintenance and (e.g. the contribution of Minister John Dawkins to the transformation of the higher education system at the end of the 1980s).

9For example, the establishment of external studies at the University of New England appears to have resulted not only because of some necessary political trade-offs within the arena of New South Wales state politics but also both because of the experiences and linkages established by Madgwick across the layers of the system over time and because of the extended experience first of the University College in attempting to be a fully residential college (unsuccesful in terms of viability).
expansion of external studies throughout the period of study. The research findings thus suggested that the goals expressed in Australian distance education policy making were often grounded far from the actual practice of education provision in terms of teaching and learning.

Development of distance education policies began at the state government level. In general they were responses to regional economic and development needs (and power) perceived by politicians and other government and community leaders and expressed in the development of new higher education opportunities. The shift to a nationally centralised system (which began with the World War II decisions regarding the use of education for manpower management and reconstruction purposes, and the management of its funding) did not much change this basic pattern: that distance education policy has been strongly influenced by matters outside governments' education portfolio.

At the federal government level there has been a drift from an ideology which coupled general concern for the improvement of society with economic development mechanisms (seen, for example, in the Reconstruction views in Chapter 6) to a drive to apply and/or maintain more narrow economic rationalist perspectives. This could be both a result of the narrowing theoretical perspectives of the decision-makers in recent years (suggested by Pusey 1991) and a response to a bureaucratic desire to simplify administration while managing an ever expanding (in size, diversity and cost) system.

The research thus suggested that policy makers creating and administering education in Australia so structured distance education policy at both provider and government levels that it was difficult for convergence to occur in either policy or practice, even in the face of national agenda education demands which might be furthered by such convergence. One could perhaps further suggest that it was of value for policy makers to continue to

10 Refer to the historical review in which this is highlighted for the University of Queensland, the University of Western Australia, the University of Queensland, the University of New England and Macquarie University in New South Wales, and the like.
maintain a discrete and visible policy tool called distance education; convergence might eliminate this option.

**Key Agents Mislocated?**

If convergence is to occur then key agents with the vision of what convergence has to offer may need to be located in the macro layer (the government and its bureaucracies) and the meso layer (at the senior leadership level in the providers and in the influential quasi-bureaucracies). If only located in the micro level, visionaries are weakly positioned, protectors able only to protect niche innovations, and operators (without strong institutional policy and protectors in the appropriate levels) will always remain marginalised, no matter how defensible their stances.

**The Future of Australian Distance Education Policy**

What does the future hold? Those who continue to suggest that alternatives to full-time study (as, for example, suggested by the Martin Committee who wished to see all part-time study removed from the universities in the 1960s) and alternatives to on-campus part-time study might be temporary phenomena could benefit from examining the history of external studies as chronicled here. The generic needs for which distance education was originally devised (to improve professionalising groups, to meet regional development imperatives, in response to the balance of political power) have recurred throughout the period studied. These have regularly been joined by additional needs (such as organisational survival, access and equity policies, and more recently the demands expressed as the need for lifelong learning). The view that distance education is only a temporary catch-up or second-chance option has been disproved. Previously the goal of participants might have been to attain some basic qualifications in higher education (the certificate, then the diploma, then the degree); but should the whole of the able population

---

11 For example, the pressure to improve qualifications and expertise existing in 1910 in Queensland continues into the 1990s with the pressure for every teacher to possess at least a bachelor's degree and a professional teaching qualification – the upgrade to the four year trained teacher status programs serves a
attain the bachelor's degree, that would not be the end of the demand for alternatives to full-time, on-campus education\(^\text{12}\). The continuing role of distance education appears assured; whether convergence on a system level will occur remains problematic.

In recent times, although discontinuity and enabling conditions have been present, there has been a gap. Two key agent roles seem to have been missing. The first is that of a visionary at the political (or macro) level, a key agent who esteems the value of non-traditional approaches to higher education as more than an instrument of economic necessity; who sees, supports and promotes the alternatives (whether bundled together under the sobriquets of distance education or open learning, or even workplace learning) as not only having equal parity of esteem but as having the potential to extend conventional forms of educational provision for conventional students. The second role is that of protector in all layers to ensure that the plethora of alternatives are treated, not as added on or necessary devices to meet needs which are perceived as temporary, but rather that the outcomes of higher education achieved by conventional provision could, and should, increasingly take a multi-faceted approach drawing on the strengths which have been developed in distance education. Should these two roles also be appropriately filled in the macro layers, there could then truly be a transformational change in higher education policy with regard to distance education (and the education issues associated with it in the 1990s, recurrent education and workplace-based education).

---

\(^{12}\) Currently Australian labour market policies through the competency movement are consolidating the need for certification of attainment at ever advancing levels. Associated with the increasing competitiveness in most professional and para-professional areas, increased demand on higher education for further certification opportunities is highly predictable although its form may extend beyond demand for the existing hierarchy of academic qualifications. (This, of course, ignores the possibility of a rise in concern for education for good citizenship which could again add to the demand.)
THEORY DEVELOPMENT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

In the Introduction to this study it was also noted that the study of Australian distance education policy appeared little informed by underpinning theory. This work has sought to contribute to improving on that situation by linking a study of distance education policy with the more generic area of public policy studies. It has also emphasised the usefulness of looking not only beyond the immediate issue area, distance education, but also beyond the apparent edges of higher education by using the policy space as an heuristic in a policy study. The importance of seeking informative theory from a variety of disciplines was also supported by the study. It was useful to move not only beyond current distance education theorising but beyond theory within the discipline of education (and educational policy) to other disciplines which could offer robust theoretical constructs with which to examine distance education policy and practice. In this approach the plea of Evans and Nation (1992) for more theorising to achieve greater understanding of all aspects of distance education has been supported. A more sophisticated understanding of Australian distance education policy (and in association, higher education policy) could emerge through the use of a multiplicity of theoretical constructs to extend a deeper understanding of what has gone before and what might come after. Such activity (to which this work contributes) may also have a practical outcome, in line with the enlightenment perspective in public policy research. It may more widely inform those many government-initiated committees of inquiry (should they continue to be convened as part of Australian government practice) as the effects of more rigorous theoretical work contribute to the weaving of the cloth of Australian higher education policy.

FURTHER RESEARCH

The grounded theory approach coupled with the policy space heuristic proved useful in exposing the many threads which make up Australian distance education policy. The long timescale proved valuable in identifying recurring patterns and concepts of explanatory utility. This approach offers a useful tool for extending understanding of distance
education policy at macro, meso and micro level. Among its strengths this approach enables researchers to see familiar territory from new perspectives, and to identify patterns of importance which may be less visible in a specific theory-driven research design, and less visible, or even invisible, when the snapshot in time is too brief. Consequently, more work using this methodology to examine the policies and practice of distance education is recommended.

In addition, some basic questions need to be asked by those concerned with the well-being and advancement of distance education in Australia: what do the key agents at macro and meso levels (politicians, government officials, community and university leaders) really know and understand about distance education today? Is the rhetorical use of distance education concepts within higher education politics too often taken for understanding? Research into these questions undertaken within a grounded methodology context could prove to be particularly enlightening to those advocates of distance education trying both to understand and to overcome the dichotomy of internal and external studies.

Finally, what are the backgrounds of the key agents involved in the formation, formulation and implementation of policies concerned with distance education? Studies in this area (perhaps following the approach of Glenn 1969 or Pusey 1991), particularly in combination with the previously mentioned query regarding the substance of understanding about distance education, might provide a more substantial picture of the forces contributing to institutional isomorphism within higher education. Once the sources of the strength of these forces are recognised, it may be possible to offer a framework for explanation and a strategy for future policy making and implementation which makes use of the full value of developments within distance education, perhaps leading to a new pattern which is labelled not only 'beyond the DECs' but 'beyond distance education'.
CHAPTER 10

CONTRIBUTIONS TO POLICY STUDIES

The second aim for this work was to make a contribution to meta-policy theory, that is, an understanding both of the elements which may contribute to the patterns of the cloth of policy and to the tools used to discern them. The study began with questions specifically directed at the policy issue area of distance education in Australia. These questions led to meta-level questions about policy (grounded within the implementation school of policy research) in addition to the more pragmatic questions addressing distance education policy. The meta-level questions included seeking appropriate methodology and conceptual development and also took note of Winter’s (1990) call for more research into the whole policy process from problem identification through to outcome identification, and the linkages of all phases involved. The results offered useful insight regarding the use of grounded theory methodology and the policy space, a multi-disciplinary and cross-paradigmatic approach, an open systems perspective, a conceptual model focussed on change, and the value of considering timescale in policy study.

GROUNDED THEORY METHODOLOGY AND THE POLICY SPACE

To facilitate an holistic approach, a research design within an interpretative framework was based on grounded theory methodology associated with the policy space heuristic, resulting in a focussed synthesis (Glaser & Strauss 1965, 1967 following Saran 1985; Majchrzak 1984; Fasano 1993). This integrating approach sought to disclose all facets of a policy situation including those which may be hidden from researchers embedded in a particular theoretical framework and/or within a particular issue area.

The policy issue area (distance education) within a domain of inquiry (Australian higher education) required an investigation that ranged across the Australian higher education system to identify the major patterns in the policy cloth as well as the actions of the day
which formed them. This approach was applied to an extended period (1901-1989) which facilitated the observation of recurring patterns less visible in research focussed on much shorter time periods. Those patterns showed both particular recurring patterns of Australian distance education policy (presented in Chapter 9) and meta-policy characteristics which formed the basis of an explanatory conceptual framework. Both the methodology and the conceptual framework which emerged may well make a useful contribution if used in other domains of inquiry.

The Usefulness of a Grounded Theory Approach

The grounded theory approach offers value for both policy theory building and for policy research methodology. It offers the researcher an opportunity to move beyond the constraints both of an established framework of theoretical constructs and of methodological preferences, and is conducive to multi-disciplinary approaches of potential value for future paradigm synthesis. These statements are made in a context of acknowledging Winter's view that 'one's preferred methodology tends to affect one's theoretical conceptions' (1990, p.21).

The Usefulness of the Policy Space as an Heuristic

The 'policy space' widens the view taken by the researcher (Fasano pers.com.1992). It offers an approach which enables the researcher to observe all of the factors and forces impinging on a policy issue area. Used in conjunction with the grounded theory approach, it does have the potential to overwhelm the researcher with data, and with a complex and multi-layered system offering more and more threads for examination. As well there is a potential for identification of a multiplicity of themes which challenge the researcher to extract concepts with difficulty. (These concerns are, of course, not unfamiliar to researchers who undertake a qualitative approach.) Avoiding the temptation to early closure with a large array of concepts and variables which then demand testing during the deductive phase requires mental discipline and a determined focus on analysis. It is here, however, that cross-paradigmatic exploration makes a particular contribution.
Those concepts which are found in more than one discipline area tend to have greater resilience and robustness, and thus offer greater utility to the research at hand. It is essential to note here the key difference from the more usual cross-disciplinary research approach, that of importing concepts. In the policy space approach used in this study concepts were selected based on their potential contribution in interpreting, improving and confirming a preliminary conceptual analysis. Thus substantive theory was developed and then used to search for and select useful concepts from other areas for further concept development. The result is more likely to withstand further research and become well grounded theory.

Open Systems.

The model developed in this study points at the importance of looking for the layers and linkages of a system for which policy is being made, an open systems perspective. Often students of policy focus narrowly on an issue, the stakeholders concerned with that issue, and/or just one formulated policy. The construct of the policy space which directs the attention of the policy researcher towards all components and forces which have an effect on a particular policy issue of concern is enhanced by application of an open systems perspective and enables research to uncover a fuller story. This study provided a useful example, for it turned out to be not the story of Australian distance education policy per se, nor even, in reality only of higher education in Australia.

STRENGTHENING CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CROSS-PARADIGMATIC INQUIRY

The emerging conceptual framework in this study was informed and tested by use of theory as heuristic (Fasano pers.com.1993). Two forms of cross-disciplinary inquiry were pursued. In the first, use of methods developed in different discipline areas were used, particularly the grounded theory methodology which originated in the behavioural sciences (Glaser & Strauss 1967) and focussed synthesis used as a policy analysis tool (Majchrzak 1984). In the second and more significant approach, areas of relevance
highlighted by emerging themes (e.g. innovation, technological change, systems relationships, the role of key players) were tracked to discipline areas where they had been usefully investigated (e.g. policy studies, technology studies, organisational studies and marketing). The use of a range of theory sources for verifying the utility of emergent concepts would benefit from further research.

This cross-disciplinary, multi-paradigmatic approach provided insights into the concepts which were emerging, alternative perspectives on the themes and concepts, and terminology which could be compared for its usefulness (an approach encouraged by Noble’s 1982 reflections on Manheim’s problem in paradigm synthesis). The synthesis at this level of research led to a conceptual framework developed from the empirical base, informed and integrated with existing theoretical work in a range of disciplines, and confronting the challenge of Manheim’s Paradox by drawing upon well developed concepts in a variety of areas rather than inventing new concepts (or at least new terminology for concepts already identified elsewhere).

One of the important outcomes of an investigation located within the policy implementation studies approach has been recognition of the need to look at a larger whole (theorised by Winter as including the policy formation process/legislation, the implementation process and the implementation results in terms of both outputs and outcomes). This work contributes to that view in its demonstration of complex influences on distance education policy and practice in Australia.

The Researcher as a Research Design Factor

The background of any researcher (or research team) undertaking policy research is recognised as a variable in that research in more ways than just that of methodology choice. Use of a research team has been the usual way of dealing both with the inevitable human quirks and biases which may affect qualitative research and with a desire for multi-disciplinary input (Miles & Huberman 1984).
If, however, there is to be greater synthesis across a range of theoretical contributions within and across established disciplines, in a search for new insights as well as greater elegance of theory through paradigm synthesis, then a focus on the nature of the researcher might be suggested. The approach may well demand an unusual combination of education, training and experience in researchers, yet most researchers seem likely to have been trained in a single or narrow range of theories and methodologies. The work reported here has been carried out by a researcher with a more eclectic background under the supervision of a researcher also with a diverse background. This is not the common situation. Consequently, an area of future research which may be of interest at the meta-policy level could well be into the backgrounds of policy researchers in an exploration of the contributors to the literature of theory integration. This may also have something to say about the education and training of policy scholars in the future.

**CHANGE AS A FOCAL POINT FOR POLICY STUDY**

The conceptual model developed for this study offers a preliminary model that links concepts generated through the use of the grounded theory approach and subsequently found to recur in several different bodies of theory. It was both developed from and then tested empirically in domain of Australian higher education focussing on distance education policy. The model has as its focus change in both its transformational and transitional states. Three particular aspects of the model warrant particular further comment here: discontinuity, key agents and the foundation definition.

Discontinuity proved to be a key factor in considering change. Without the presence of discontinuity, transformational change (particularly systemic) appears unlikely and the patterns of policy merely repeat as the cloth unfolds. Furthermore, the location where discontinuity occurs within a complex, open system appears important and warrants further study.
The role of key agents highlights policy making as a human activity, and suggests that there are more dimensions to that aspect than those of power and influence. The key agent dimensions of interest include on the one hand aptitude and attitude (with regard to vision, protection and operation) and on the other hand linkages and locations within the layers of a complex system. More synthesis of existing work on leadership from a number of discipline areas, and more empirical work on the backgrounds and network links of key agents in a policy space might test and improve the utility of this construct for the study of policy.

The concept of the foundation definition proved to be the explanatory bridge which linked the past and the present. Identifying the likely influences on the establishment of the foundation definition, and deciding whether to confront them or accept them can turn both policy making and policy implementation into a more proactive process. The foundation definition concept is a contribution to giving theoretical substance to that transition period between policy formation and implementation. It acknowledges that an 'implementation structure can rarely be created from scratch' (Winter 1990, p.29). This concept facilitates the focus of attention on a phase of policy making which, although already touched upon through studies of policy making compromises and of street level bureaucracy, may benefit from further exploration within an open systems framework. In so doing some contribution to Winter's suggested need for more research into the behaviour of target groups might be satisfied while at the same time some light might be shone on who really are the target groups of the policy investigated (as in this study in which the target groups were frequently shown to be not the more widely assumed end users, students, but rather the higher education providers and the regions in which they were located).

Further work with the study's model, or with some of the concepts within it, in the context of other policy issue areas may now be warranted to test the strength of its explanatory efficacy within the field of policy studies. Such work would contribute to estimating its potential value as a tool of policy analysis and of policy making.
This study deliberately took a long period of time (over 80 years) as its field of inquiry in looking for trends and patterns. There are a number of overlapping events which are often described by periods and these periods are frequently used to set the parameters for policy studies. In this study it has been shown that social and economic periods (delimited by recognised discontinuities) offer a useful framework for analysis. On the other hand, political parties in power and change of government offer little useful insight as movements, trends and influences in Australian education policy making at least, appeared to have much longer period.

Part of the inquiry was to identify whether any particular patterns emerged which would contribute to understanding policy in a wider sense. The short term constraints dictated by the Australian election cycle, necessitating views little longer than three years, and often less, and the concept of triennial funding patterns which appear to have evolved from that cycle, although contributing to periods of instability, offered much less insight than recognition of discontinuity.

More longitudinal studies, over a period of at least a generation and preferably longer would test this view further and contribute to a confirmation of its explanatory and prediction value.

The contribution of policy research to policy making with regard to Australian distance education was addressed briefly in the last chapter. At the meta-level the perspective of the enlightenment function of policy research is tied in with two of the concepts found to be of value and warrants further investigation. Can policy makers learn to see, or to create, discontinuity? Is there value in targeting (or creating) key agents?
The major metaphor shaping this study was that of policy as a running woven fabric. The metaphor of woven cloth is used to reflect the search for common foundations – the warp, a set of long lasting influences upon which the weft of a particular policy issue area with its colours, textures and patterns is laid. The fabric displays both overall patterns – the picture taken as a whole – and component patterns contributing to the greater picture, all formed by the interweaving of warp and weft. The value of this metaphor to the study of policy is to keep the focus of the researcher on several levels simultaneously, and to keep in mind the recognition that no policy or practice stands alone either in time or over time. The use of the policy cloth metaphor differs from a more traditional analytic approach of separating aspects of a policy situation into a number of separate boxes for greater analysis by emphasising the interconnectedness of all elements, and the sometimes unexpected influences of threads which although more prominent in one part of the pattern may be less visible but still important elsewhere. Such is the real story of the study of policy.
**APPENDIX A**

**AUSTRALIAN DISTANCE EDUCATION CONGRESSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>3rd ASPESA Forum: 17-20 August Implementing the Open Tertiary Education Report</td>
<td>Melbourne University, Melbourne, Victoria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>4th ASPESA Forum External Studies: Ways Ahead for Education</td>
<td>Perth, Western Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>5th ASPESA Forum Dimensions of Distance: Distance Education in a Pacific Setting</td>
<td>University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>7th Biennial ASPESA Forum: 13-20 August 1985 (in association with the Thirteenth World Conference of the International Council for Distance Education, ICDE) Flexible Designs for Learning</td>
<td>Latrobe University, Melbourne, Victoria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1The term congresses is used here as the collective noun as used by the Dewey Decimal library system of classification. The use of this word (less familiar in Australia) is to represent professional gatherings of people concerned with aspects of distance education (primarily post-secondary) in Australia.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1987 | 8th Biennial ASPESA Forum: 27-31 July  
*Distance Education: Access, Equity and Participation* | University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales |
*Distance Education for Training in Business and Industry* | Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education, Churchill, Victoria |
*Quality in Distance Education* | Charles Sturt University - Mitchell, Bathurst, New South Wales |
| 1993 | 11th Biennial ASPESA Forum: July 1993  
*Distance Education Futures* | Terrace International Hotel, Adelaide, South Australia |
APPENDIX B

CHRONOLOGY OF RELEVANT EVENTS

1788
England establishes first settlement in NSW.

1850
The Act to Incorporate the University of Sydney received the assent of the Governor on 1 October. This established Australia’s first university.

1901
Proclamation of the Federal Constitution and beginning of the Commonwealth of Australia on January 1st.

1909
Founding of the University of Queensland; the University of Queensland Act carried specific clauses requiring the introduction of a correspondence programme.

1911
The University of Queensland commences both internal and external teaching (3 out of a total of 83 enrolled are external students).

The University of Western Australia founded. Student fees abolished by the WA state Labor Government (continuing as the only ‘free’ Australian university for sixty years).

1914 - 1919
World War I,

1919
External courses first offered at the technical college level by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. These courses were to cater for the needs of returned service personnel.

1925
University of Western Australia commences correspondence education.
The name ‘Department of External Studies’ replaced that of ‘Correspondence Studies’ at the University of Queensland.

1929
School broadcasts began with the Education Hour. Authorities warn that the ‘machines may instruct but the living teacher must educate’.

1936
Australian Education Council (AEC), the council of ministries of education from states and territory) established (the Commonwealth was not admitted as a member until 1972).

1937
*University and University Colleges (Amendment) Act*. This included a provision permitting the University of Sydney to establish colleges outside the metropolitan area and permitting governmental finance for such action.

New England University College established as a university college of the University of Sydney in Armidale, NSW.

1939 - 1945
World War II.

1940
Federal Department of Labour and National Service established.

Establishment of the Army Education Corps.

1944
Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme commences to assist ex-service personnel to undertake university and other level studies, at first by external/correspondence study and later by full-time or part-time attendance.

1945
Universities Commission established . . .’as part of the war effort’. 

1946
Section 51(xxiii)(a) added to the Australian constitution, giving the federal government power to intervene in state education under the ‘benefit to students’ umbrella.

University of Sydney (NSW) stopped taking war effort external students although the University of Melbourne (Victoria) and others continued into the 1950s.

1949
The external studies department of the University of Queensland transformed into an academic department with its own teaching staff - establishment of the Queensland model of external studies.

Mills Committee appointed by Prime Minister Chiefly to look into needs of universities.

1950
Commonwealth decides, after a report to Prime Minister Menzies from the Mills Committee of Inquiry, to provide Section 96 grants to the States to enable their universities to develop beyond the levels of activity in 1950.

1951
The first School of the Air broadcasts, a service for children in isolated areas, were made from the Flying Doctor base at Alice Springs (Northern Territory).

1954
University of New England (UNE) established as a university in its own right.

1955
UNE first offered external studies. Enrolment of external undergraduates restricted to NSW and ACT until 1978.

1956
Murray Committee appointed by Commonwealth Government. This was officially a Committee on Australian Universities, to investigate their ‘problems’.
1957
Murray Committee reports. Recommended: a commission on the lines of the Universities Grants Committee in Britain; substantial matching grants to states for the purpose of universities and a system of triennial funding.

1958-1960
The first triennium of Commonwealth government funding arising from the Murray Committee’s recommendations.

1959
The Australian Universities Commission established.

1960
The Australian Universities Commission announced its decision to request the appointment of a committee of inquiry in its first report to the prime minister (25 October 1960).

The *University of the Air* began on ABC TV. The program aimed to bring university resources to a wider audience, but was short lived (ceasing in 1965).

1964
Martin Committee (Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia) reports. Recommended the universities eliminate sub-degree work, reduce substantially number of part-time students and extend post-graduate education. The colleges of advanced education were established as a response to the report.

1966
Commonwealth Ministry of Education and Science (CMES) established to replace the Office of Education.

1968
Tasmanian Council of Advanced Education established.

1967
Macquarie University (NSW) commences teaching science externally.

Queensland Institute of Technology (Darling Downs) established.
1970
The University of Queensland liberalises rules for admission of external students.

The Queensland Institute of Technology (Darling Downs) becomes the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education.

1971
The British Open University begins teaching.

1972
Orange Agricultural College (NSW) founded.

Tasmanian College of Advanced Education established on a foundation of several small specialist providers of music, art and teacher education.

1973
Australian South Pacific and External Studies Association (ASPESA) established.

The Australian Government financed teachers' colleges and brought them into the ambit of control of the Commission on Advanced Education.

1974
*Open Tertiary Education in Australia*, a report produced by a committee chaired by Professor Peter Karmel. Recommended the establishment of the National Institute of Open Tertiary Education (NIOTE) to foster development of open educational processes in Australian tertiary education.

Commonwealth abolishes full fees for university education and at the same time assumes responsibility for full funding of higher education.

Introduction of the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme (TEAS).

1975

Dismissal of the Whitlam Labor Government and installation of a Fraser 'caretaker' Government followed by an election which confirmed the conservative Fraser in power.
1976

1977
Tertiary Education Commission established by Parliament to replace three separate commissions concerned with university, advanced education and technical education and training.

1978
Deakin University (19th university) officially opened in Victoria. Strong brief to offer external studies.

1979
Williams report, the report of the Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training, released in March 1979.

1980
Queensland State Board of Advanced Education policy statement on external studies.

*Distance Education*, the journal of the Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association, was published for the first time.

1981

1982

1983

1985
CTEC forms its Standing Committee on External Studies.
First *Directory of External Studies Courses* published for Australia funded by a Commonwealth grant to the University of Queensland.

**1986**

The Tasmanian College of Advanced Education becomes the Tasmanian State Institute of Technology.

**1987**
Creation of the superministry, the Department of Employment, Education and Training.

NBEET (National Board for Employment, Education and Training) created along with four advisory councils. The Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission disappears... or is absorbed into the new body (depending on your perspective).

Minister decides to plan government funding for only one year ahead, instead of the expected triennium 1988-90 while a task force carries out a major review of tertiary education and training in Australia.

Bond University, Australia’s first ‘private’ university, established in Queensland near Brisbane.

**1988**
*Higher Education: a Policy Statement* published by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, John Dawkins. Distance Education Centres are part of the proposals for external studies.

**1989**
Appendix C

Development History of Higher Education Provider Sites Used in the Study

Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education (DDIAE) - Queensland
Original base as study centre for the University of Queensland. DDIAE was formally established as the Queensland Institute of Technology (Darling Downs) in 1967 under The Queensland Education Act. It became the DDIAE in 1971, the University College of Southern Queensland in 1990 and the University of Southern Queensland in 1992.
  First student intake: 1967
  First intake of external students: 1969

Orange Agricultural College (OAC) - New South Wales
Orange Agricultural College was established in 1972 as a college of the Department of Agriculture. It became a college of advanced education in 1975. During the formation of the UNS it became a University College of the networked University of New England in 1990.
  First student intake: 1973
  First intake of external students: 1979

Tasmanian State Institute of Technology (TSIT) - Tasmania
The Tasmanian Council of Advanced Education was established by an Act of the Tasmanian State Government in 1968 with the charge to consolidate all tertiary level courses (representing the Hobart Teachers College 1906, Tasmanian School of Music 1964 which became the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music in 1965, the Tasmanian School of Art 1888 and the Launceston Teachers College 1948) not being conducted by the University of Tasmania into a small multi-disciplinary college of advanced education. Two campuses were established in 1972 (Mt.Nelson was purpose-built in Hobart and Newnham was based on the existing teachers' college in Launceston). Various re-distributions of course responsibilities occurred between the campuses and the University in 1976 and 1979, with the Mt.Nelson campus eventually being abandoned by the CAE. In 1985 the College was redesignated the Tasmanian State Institute of Technology. In 1991 TSIT was amalgamated with the University of Tasmania to form the new University of Tasmania.
  First student intake: 1972 (as TCAE)
  First intake of external students: 1978
University of New England (UNE) - New South Wales
Established as the New England University College in 1937. Declared a university in 1954. Recreated as the networked University of New England in 1990 – this included both full amalgamation of the Armidale College of Advanced Education (formerly the Armidale Teachers College) with the original UNE to become UNE-Armidale and networked association with the Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education which became UNE-Northern Rivers1.
First student intake: 1938
First intake of external students: 1954

University of Queensland (UQ) - Queensland
Established as the University of Queensland in 1909 and has remained nearly untouched (Gatton Agricultural College was amalgamated with it during the last round of Dawkins led amalgamations).
First student intake: 1911
First intake of external students: 1911

University of Western Australia (UWA) - Western Australia
Established as the University of Western Australia in 1911 and has remained essentially untouched2.
First student intake: 1913
First intake of external students: 1921

1 The networked University of New England was unsuccessful and was officially disamalgamated as of 1 January 1994. The Armidale entity was re-constituted as the University of New England (but not the 'original' UNE as it now contains a fully amalgamated former college of advanced education while it has lost control of a satellite campus at Coffs Harbour). The Northern Rivers entity became Southern Cross University under the sponsorship of the University of New South Wales; it apparently gained control of the Coffs Harbour campus as the southern end of a coastal distributed set of access points called Open Learning Centres. Orange Agricultural College became an academic college of The University of Sydney.
2 Although involved in the early meetings of the Interim Board of Management of the Western Australian Distance Education Consortium (WADEC), UWA withdrew from the initiative in 1990. According to WADEC (1990) it does not provide external studies courses.
Clusters of interviews were undertaken in 1991 with key distance education people at what were at the time called the University College of Southern Queensland (which was awarded Distance Education Centre status), the University of Tasmania at Launceston (which was not awarded DEC status but which continued its distance education offerings through an arrangement called its ‘extended campus’ program), and the Orange Agricultural College. At both locations the interviewer was already personally acquainted with the informants through membership in the community of Australian distance education professionals, or was assisted in the contact by professional colleagues at the location.

**Questioning Line**

The semi-structured questions took the following line:

*What is the distance education situation like here now, after the dust of the DEC decision has somewhat settled? [Follow-up questions including attempts to elicit the informants views on how the decision came to be made]*

*What do you think will happen next (with regard to DECs, government policy about distance education)?*

*What is going on if we think about distance education in marketing terms. There are people involved who could be called customers, or consumers or donors, or sponsors. Who are the primary customers for what [organisation name] has been about or wants to be about?*

1 The customer descriptions take account of both a commercial perspective (customers, consumers, producers) and a non-profit perspective (donors, sponsors, clients).
What is the product (or service) which those 'customers' are seeking?

The developments in distance education suggest a wider use of learning materials and delivery methods. Why is it happening or not happening at your university?

Who do you think have been the important people for distance education at your university? Why?

University College of Southern Queensland

Barker, Prof. Lindsay. Interview 25 October 1991. [Long term Principal who had recently left that post]

Taylor, Prof. James. 1991. Director, Distance Education Centre. Interview 25 October.

White, Associate Prof. Vernon. 1991. Pro-Vice-chancellor. Interview 25 October. [Previously Head of Distance Education and Continuing Education]

University of Tasmania at Launceston

Hawkins, Dr. Luz Ruiz. 1991. Deputy Head and Instructional Designer. Extended Campus Unit. Interview October.


University of New England - Orange Agricultural College

Napier, R.J. 1992. University of New England Pro-Vice Chancellor-Planning. Interview October. [Formerly Principal of Orange Agricultural College]

**OTHER INTERVIEWS**

Later interviews followed a more informal conversational approach (after Saran) with particular attention to exploring situations which might be particularly known to the informant, and in seeking confirmation or a second opinion. Formal conversations following this approach were held with:


Appendix E

The Researcher's Autobiography

Mary Jane Mahony

BS, MS University of California, Davis, USA (botany; plant morphogenesis)
DipEd University of New England, Australia (specialisation in secondary science)
GradDipDistEd South Australian College of Advanced Education, Australia

Throughout this thesis the conceptual framework is used to show the contribution of the foundation definition, linkages, discontinuities and agents, within a background influenced by time, geography and cultural traditions, to the development of a particular policy area. So let me here describe my own experiences in those terms to present the nature of the 'human instrument' carrying out this research.

The Context and Preparatory Period

To begin, I am an American by birth and by culture antecedents and an Australian by choice. I grew up as a transient (having lived in six cities by the time I finished high school, and have lived for extended periods in five countries on five continents since then) – this is not a traditional Australia experience but it is one which provides an extended experience of education systems and the needs of learners.

I came to distance education much as the early settlers came to the new country of Australia, with little knowledge of the new and with assumptions about higher education based on experience in other countries. When I arrived in Australia in 1975 I had no concept of external studies (as was the favoured term at the time). The NSW education department, rejecting the half qualification and experience as a school teacher which I
already possessed, directed me to the University of New England, to its external program leading to the Diploma in Education. I was accepted for the 1977 intake and began my external studies without preconceptions about external study, correspondence classes or any understanding of the Australian higher education system. I was working full time at the CSIRO in Canberra. As far as I was concerned, I was just another student at the university, albeit in a mode new to me.

External studies was a new form of part-time study but that fitted into my existing framework; part-time study and evening classes are a very visible part of the system of higher education in the USA. I had studied at two American institutions as an undergraduate and post-graduate (San Francisco State College and the University of California at Davis and at the Georg August University in Göttingen, Germany (as part of the University of California’s study abroad program). I had also worked as an academic at Malaysia’s University of Agriculture. While the traditional full-time, face-to-face model prevailed, I was also personally no stranger to part-time studies in odd places (having undertaken University of California extension courses for credit), to mature age students (during my M.S. studies a memorable proportion of the postgraduate students in the department seemed to be in that category with the associated conflict of family commitments, needs to earn income and so on), and to long distance relationships (my extensive travels meant that family, friends and professional networks demanded print and and telecommunication contacts to maintain them). Thus my own framework for understanding distance education and subsequently being involved in it, was that of flexibility, making use of opportunity, and cultural diversity.

Flexibility was an asset; all university education was targetted on the same ends, wasn’t it? My worldview was far removed from that brought by Australian students to the same situation, but that took years to become clear to me.
Two years later, after wading through a wide range of study packages, four sets of compulsory residential schools (which included two airline strikes, a challenge to a full-time worker living in Canberra and using recreational leave to attend), one examination taken supervised by the local pastor in a church hall in a small town on the NSW south coast, and sundry other experiences of interest (some of them academic), I graduated; by now I was living in Tasmania.

In 1981, events took me to employment in the External Studies Unit at the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education (TCAE), initially as part-time editor, eventually as full time acting instructional designer. It was the other side of the fence. The Unit was directed by Ross Metzger whose experiential grounding derived from his prior employment in the University of Queensland’s Department of External Studies and who particularly took the role of visionary agent with regard to instructional design in the development of learning materials for external students. For the next three years the tensions and intentions of an external studies section in an institution in which external students formed a large proportion, and who were therefore essential to the continuing well being of the institution informed my understanding of this mode of education called external. The small size of the unit and the college meant that (even as a junior staff member) I was exposed to the institutional and governmental forces impacting on external studies at the TCAE in a way less likely at a larger institution.

In 1983 the South Australian College of Advanced Education finally launched a long heralded course leading to a Graduate Diploma in Distance Education. My colleague David Kember (likewise an expatriate with an idiosyncratic background, a Ph.D. in chemistry who had subsequently worked in distance education in three countries) and I joined the inaugural intake.

In 1984 I returned to NSW to take up an appointment as the foundation instructional designer in the Division of External Studies at the Orange Agricultural College. Again I
found myself at an institution where external students were in the majority, and the continuing well-being of the College depended on their numbers. Again I found myself in a small institution in which I was increasingly exposed to the layers of the distance education sector of the higher education system.

In 1985 I began to participate actively in the distance education professional community. I attended the International Council for Distance Education’s International Conference, held in association with the Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association’s Biennial Forum, in Melbourne. At that event I was elected to the ASPESA national executive for the period 1985-1987. In 1989 I again stood for the executive and was elected for the 1989-1991 period. I have in fact enthusiastically participated in the ASPESA Biennial Forums for 1985, 87, 89, 91 (co-organiser) and 93, as well as the ICDE Conferences of 1985 (Melbourne) and 1990 (Caracas), and co-organised the 1986 ASPESA National Workshop which was held at Orange Agricultural College.

Australia is a small place and it is not only at distance education events that practitioners, administrators and politicians meet and other conferences and similar activities could also be named. One becomes part of the web of the Australian distance education community.

Working in small institutions has been an advantage rather than a disadvantage to the research as it has required working in several subsystems, particularly at Orange Agricultural College where the Division of External Studies is administratively part of the School of Rural Management, and where the systems layers are thin, compactly located (both physically and organisationally), and where crossing between the layers occurs on a regular basis by people holding multiple responsibilities.

It was this background that stimulated me, as the instructional design practitioner to ask myself (and others) as academic managers about the apparent dissonance between
educational practice and educational policy. These questions appeared to have worth at each level at which they were tested. When I began doctoral studies in this area in 1989 it was a natural progression. From that time to the completion of this thesis my professional practice and my research have both informed and assisted each other.

The Period of the Study

During the period of doctoral studies (1989 to 1994) I was more involved in distance education policy and practice than previously, acting in a variety of roles which continued my exposure to the system beyond the confines of the College at which I am employed.

This period was highlighted in particular by the turbulent change affecting higher education: during 1989 my own institution, Orange Agricultural College, was forced to find a partner as required by the minimum institutional sizes directed in the *White Paper*, an activity which attempted to take cognizance of pedagogic and client factors, but which also was affected by the values embedded in the binary system, the influence of geography (with the amalgamation with a neighboring campus held up by some as the most appropriate partner), and, of course, the need to be associated with a Distance Education Centre (DEC). The end result was adoption into the networked University of New England, an institution comprising a mixture of university and colleges of advanced education, with a guernsey to be a DEC, and sufficient agricultural and rural links to be seen as appropriate by the College’s primary clients – the history of rural institutions repeated itself as evidenced by the strong political support by those rural clients (mainly situated within the rural Australian community).

The political realities of DECs were well demonstrated during the period of the relationship (which officially ended on 1 January 1994 when the College moved to The University of Sydney following the dis-association of the networked University of New England). Distance education programs were offered from three campuses (Arimdale, Lismore and Orange Agricultural College) with little of the concentration of resources
and expertise directed by the White Paper. The symbolic relationship was sufficient for government and for the university.

The networked University of New England was led at the time of the amalgamation activities in 1989-90 by Professor Don McNicol as Vice-Chancellor. It is illustrative of the close linkages and small community of Australian higher education that Professor McNicol is now Vice-Chancellor of The University of Sydney, the university to which the College moved in 1994.¹ Further linkages are illustrated by the history of the succeeding Vice-Chancellor, Professor Robert Smith. Professor Smith was previously Chair of the Higher Education Council and a well-known proponent of open learning (see, for example, Johnson 1989). He brought these views to UNE, and sought to apply them to the newly amalgamated university through the establishment of a university-wide working party on open learning of which I was a member. Though one campus (Northern Rivers) was firmly committed to the highest level to the principles of open learning, and another (Orange) was interested in moving in that direction, the efforts of that Working Party were largely ineffective with regard to the university as an entity. Here was an example of the visionary agent role not supported at the appropriate levels by operators or even protectors.

¹Professor McNicol, in reassuring words to staff in November 1993, joked that he didn’t intend to amalgamate with the College a third time.
# Appendix F Document Review Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 What kind of source is it?</th>
<th>1a Primary or secondary?</th>
<th>Was it prepared for a purpose or a secondary analysis?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1b Official or unofficial?</td>
<td>If an official document, what contribution is it making to the foundation definition? How does it reflect the forces of institutional isomorphism?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1c Central or local?¹</td>
<td>Is it a document proposing to reflect a system or a subsystem perspective? On what parts of the system is the document targeted?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1d Writer-initiated or solicited?</td>
<td>What is the motivation of the writer and of the publisher? How do they relate to agency and to the forces of institutional isomorphism?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 Who was responsible for creating it (person, persons or group)?</th>
<th>2a What expertise/experiences/philosophical stance may have shaped the creator’s worldview?</th>
<th>What influence might these have on the message (and thus the foundation definition) and the balancing of the forces of institutional isomorphism?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2b What interests, biases, or prejudices might thus be in the document?</td>
<td>What influences might these have on the development of the foundation definition? What indications are given of the three agency roles?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Hitchcock and Hughes are writing for school teachers and express this distinction as ‘central or local government’. It can, however, be extended to be used as a generic distinction within any system or subsystem, thus commonwealth or state, university-wide or departmental, etc.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2c What were the personal and institutional linkages of the creator?</td>
<td>What evidence do these offer about system linkages?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d What was the capability of the creator (trustworthiness as an observer/researcher/interpreter)?</td>
<td>What judgements can be made about the validity and reliability of the statements made?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 What was its purpose?</td>
<td>Why was the document created?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was there a contribution to one or more of the agency roles?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How was the document created?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Were there opportunities for filters which might reflect the influence of institutional isomorphism?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For what audience was the document created?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the motivation of the writer and of the publisher? How do they relate to agency and to the forces of institutional isomorphism?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 How 'first hand' was the content?</td>
<td>To what extent were the person(s) creating the document in a position to provide first-hand detailed information about the situation/subject?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What environmental context influenced the statements? Were forces of institutional isomorphism already at work? How well-informed was the creator?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 What was the context of the document/document's creators?</strong></td>
<td>How would the document been understood by the creator's contemporaries? (Which contemporaries?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6 To what genre (if any) does the document belong?</strong></td>
<td>Is the document influenced by the conventions of form and expression applying to that genre?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Was there an established genre to which the document would belong?</strong></td>
<td>Was there an established genre to which the document would belong?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Were forces of institutional isomorphism reflected in the form of the</strong></td>
<td>Were forces of institutional isomorphism reflected in the form of the publication?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>publication?</strong></td>
<td><strong>How was the document intended to be read?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What agency roles (if any) were being expressed?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What agency roles (if any) were being expressed?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX G

STATE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE TO EXTERNAL STUDIES AND RELATED PROVISION FOR SITE STUDIES

University of Queensland

The University of Queensland Act of 1909

20.1

(3) Provision shall be made by the Statutes for giving instruction in the evening as well as in day time.

(4) Provision shall be made by the Statutes for the granting after examination of degrees and the diploma of education to persons engaged in the profession of teaching or other persons in cases where such teachers or other persons are unable to attend lectures at or in connection with the university.

University of New England

25.

(1) The Council may make By-laws, not inconsistent with this Act, with respect to all or any of the following matters:

(i) The times, places and manner of holding lectures, classes and examinations, and the number and character of such lectures, classes and examinations:

(ii) The teaching and examination of external students:

31. Without prejudice to the generality of section seven of this Act the Council may, under and in accordance with By-laws made for the purpose, establish within the University a Department of External Studies for the purpose of providing appropriate tuition for students who are unable to attend lectures at the University and of enabling degrees to be conferred upon such of them as, by examination, satisfy the requirements of the University.

Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education

Established under the Education Act 1964-70

51F. Functions and powers of Council

(1) Subject to this Act, the Council of a college of advanced education shall provide courses in advanced education suitable for the needs of the community. . . .
(2) Subject to this Act, the functions of a Council shall be -

(b) to cooperate with the Board of Advanced Education and, where applicable, the Board of Teacher Education to ensure that the college provides courses or programs of study to meet the needs of the region that the colleges serves and of the State . . .

Orange Agricultural College

*Colleges of Advanced Education Act No. 11 1975*¹

**Powers, etc, of corporate college**

10.(1) Subject to this Act and the regulations, a corporate college -

(b) shall, at such place as is, or such places as are, approved by the Minister in respect of the college, provide such advanced education courses as are approved by the Board by an order relating to that college (p.9)

¹The objects of the Bill leading to this act were 'to remove from the Higher Education Act, 1969, the provisions relating to colleges of advanced education and to revise and expand those provisions in legislation dealing only with the subject of those colleges'.

SITE SOURCES CONSULTED

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS AND COMMISSIONED REPORTS


National Board of Employment, Education and Training, December. [HEC 1990]


Australia. Panel to Advise on Arrangements for Amalgamating the Universities Commission and the Commission on Advanced Education 1975. *Report to the Minister for Education.*


**PROVIDER SITE DOCUMENTS**

**Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education**


---

1The full text of relevant legislation about a higher education institution is generally included in the Annual Handbook of the institution and so is not listed separately here.
Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education/University of Southern Queensland. Annual Handbook. [USQ/HB]


White, V. 1992. The Development of a Distance Education Centre: the University of Southern Queensland. Open Forum 2(2):7-16.

Orange Agricultural College


Orange Agricultural College. Annual Handbook. [OAC/HB]


Tasmanian State Institute of Technology

Tasmanian College of Advanced Education. *Annual Handbook* [TCAE/HB]

**University of New England**


University of New England. *Annual Calendar and Handbook*. This official document of the University of New England has been published annually since 1954. [UNE/HB]

**University of Queensland**


University of Queensland Annual Calendar and Handbook. Annually produced (with the exceptions of three combined editions) since 1912. [UQ/HB]

University of Queensland. Statistics. [UQ/STAT]

University of Queensland. Vice-Chancellor’s Report. Annually produced as a separate document 1961-1973. NB: Annual Reports were included within the Handbook prior to this. [UQ/AP]

University of Queensland 1935. An Account of the University of Queensland During Its First Twenty-five Years, 1910-1935. University of Queensland, Brisbane.
University of Western Australia


Western Australian Distance Education Consortium [WADEC] 1990. *Annual Report.*


Campion, M.G. 1990. Distance Education and the Debate about Fordism in Industry. Distance Education for Training in Business and Industry. 9th ASPESA Biennial Forum Papers. Gippsland Institute Centre for Distance Learning, Churchill, Vic.: 176-194.


References


References


Fraser, B. (ed.) 1983. The Macquarie Book of Events. Macquarie Library, McMahon’s Point, NSW.


*Hansard*. 1945. 4612-4649.


Holmberg, B. 1988. Is Distance Education a Mode of Education in Its Own Right Or Is It a Substitute for Conventional Education. ICDE 14th World Conference: 245-248.


Kember, D. 1989. An Illustration with Case Studies of a Linear-process Model of Dropout from Distance Education. *Distance Education* 10(2): 196-211.

Kember, D. & Kelly, M. 1991. Lessons to Be Learned? Parallels between Australia and Hong Kong in the Development of Distance Education. *Distance Education* 12(1): 7-26.


Livingston, K.T. 1988. Recent Commissioned Reports on Tertiary Distance Education in Australia: Context and Critique. *Distance Education* 9(1): 48-70.


Moore, M.G. & Clark, C.G. (eds) 1989. *Readings in Principles of Distance Education.* No.1 - Readings in Distance Education Series. American Centre for the Study of Distance Education. The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.


University of New England (compiler). *The Directory - Tertiary Distance Education and Open Learning Courses in Australia*. Distance Education & Open Learning Centre, The University of New England, Armidale, NSW. [As of 1994 nine editions have been published]


White, M.A. 1982. Distance Education in Australian Higher Education – A History. *Distance Education* 3(2): 255-278.


Who's Who in Australia. There have been 27 editions of this reference book and its predecessor, starting with the first published in 1906.


