CHAPTER 9

GENERAL CONCLUSION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Against the background of the issues identified from the literature review and ODL policy, conceptions and practices internationally, but with emphasis on Africa and specifically the five SADC countries of the CDEP collaboration, this study has evaluated the delivery of the CDEP using techniques from Parlett & Hamilton’s (1975) evaluation as illumination model to compare and contrast the CDEP’s instructional system and learning milieu, identify matches and mismatches between the two and the issues that need to be addressed. The identified issues were then interpreted using McAnany’s (1975) five criteria model of evaluating ODL programmes in order to gauge the CDEP’s effectiveness.

In this concluding chapter the findings from this research are summarised. The concluding section of this report then sums up the contributions made by this study.

9.2 FINDINGS

The findings are summarised according to each of the five research questions of this study. Within each of these sections, the issues arising from the literature review are integrated. The last section of the findings summarises the interpretation of the CDEP effectiveness.
9.2.1 What conceptions of ODL inform the CDEP and its practices in distance education institutions in southern Africa, and what differences are commonly perceived to exist between the two?

9.2.1.1 CDEP ODL conceptions and practices

The conceptions informing the CDEP and its practices in Southern Africa have been shown to be largely based on notions of openness, flexibility, learner-centredness and collaboration in ODL programme development and delivery. These are notions that the literature review highlighted as essential for quality ODL provision.

Openness and flexibility in the CDEP have been demonstrated in the programme’s attempts to minimise barriers to entry to education and training by considering other access criteria than the strict national university entry policy and making registration deadlines more flexible (SACHED-DETU 1994: 6) and as described in Chapter 5. A South African Senior Certificate and/or Southern African Ordinary Level qualifications were the entry requirements and where these were not available, work experience in ODL was considered for enrolment in the CDEP. Instead of closing registration annually in February, the CDEP made it possible for learners to register up to May. Assignment deadlines were then adjusted according to date of registration and in most cases learners were granted extensions on request. Entry to examinations also attempted to ensure openness and flexibility by allowing for three examination sittings within a year that is in January/February, May/June and October/November. This enabled those who registered late to choose a suitable examination sitting. Until the end of the period of this study, these flexible conditions were applied, but in recent years the programme has been under pressure to conform to the more rigid UNISA conditions and the January/February examination sittings are likely to be discontinued.
The open and flexible practices of the CDEP show that the programme is striving to be learner-centred in its delivery. The interactive learning materials that build on learners’ current knowledge and nurture application of knowledge and skills in learners’ own work contexts, and the inclusion of support within the learning materials and through face-to-face and electronic tutorials and tutor-marked assignments, are other examples of the CDEP’s attempts to be learner-centred. All these attempts have been recognised by CDEP participants as some of the strengths of the programme. There were, however, weaknesses identified in the CDEP’s delivery and these have been noted as issues that need to be addressed to improve the quality of the programme. It is also worth noting that in all education programmes openness, flexibility and learner-centredness are never wholly achieved. They are ideals that each programme should aim towards and ensure that provision always sways towards perfection than below the mean. This study has shown that the CDEP is in danger of veering towards the latter unless the issues identified are addressed in order to improve the quality of the programme in line with the recommendations of South African ODL policy (CHE 2004).

When viewed from the perspective of the generations of ODL development, the CDEP can be seen to fall within the second generation which saw the introduction of other media like audio tapes, radio, face-to-face sessions and telephones to improve contact with and support for learners, see Section 2.2.1. The reasons cited for opting for these media and not moving on to include the latest ODL generations media are related to ensuring access for all CDEP learners. However, recent improvements in Southern African countries’ access to computer, internet and cell-phone technologies mean that the CDEP would need to consider including
some of these media in its envisaged revision of the software and learner support mechanisms.

It is with regard to collaboration that the CDEP has demonstrated the strongest matches between conception and practices. In this era of globalisation when the world has become more like a village with interactions and relationships facilitated by ICT, international policy and implementation practices have substantial influence on continental, national and institutional programme development and implementation. This study has shown in Chapter 4 that the CDEP collaboration is located within the global ODL collaboration debates, policies and practices. The CDEP collaboration incorporates the WCEFA and SADC PET recommendations on ODL collaboration and has translated them into a programme that has survived and institutionalised itself in five southern African countries, spread to five other countries (Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, see Section 8.2.1.2) and which has the potential to spread even wider in Africa. In contrast, both the MCLB and SADC TCDE, the two regional attempts to develop collaboration programmes in ODL died before even reaching the pilot stage because donor funding for programme implementation did not materialise. The NAPRODOLSA initiative is also taking a long time to materialise because its development currently depends on external donor funding and institutions that have demonstrated varying commitment to the project. Institutional resources have been used in the CDEP for programme development and delivery. The programme only depended on donor funding (COL) for partial registration sponsorship. Even this partial dependency has been shown to be problematic in that it has contributed to low enrolments and no institutional provision for full registration fees in annual budgets. CDEP participants would need to find alternative sources of funding like committing allocations in annual budgets for
such staff development activities to ensure the programme’s survival. The dilemma of dependence on donor funding has also recently been exhibited in the CDEP when the COL sponsorship was denied to ZOU CDEP learners (though ZOU is a DEASA member) because this country has withdrawn its membership of the Commonwealth (DEASA 2006).

The CDEP collaboration has shown that ODL collaboration can do better than just hold “only a rather insubstantial hope of change” (Mugridge 1993). Collaboration can be implemented and sustained provided there is, among the partners, adequate commitment, mission clarity, effective delivery, effective leadership, management and administration, and agreement on partners’ roles and responsibilities. These are factors that have all been identified in the literature review as essential requirements for collaboration. The CDEP collaboration has shown that these factors are not insurmountable stumbling blocks. As the first formal undergraduate certificate level ODL collaboration in staff development and training in the SADC region which involves five countries and twenty one organisations (seventeen of which enrolled their staff in the programme), the CDEP is unique in its outreach, method of delivery, survival, diffusion and commitment by all partners to using it (though currently on a limited scale) for staff development purposes. It has demonstrated the potential for SADC-wide collaboration in ODL provision and illuminated the issues that need to be addressed to make such collaboration even more effective.

9.2.1.2 Southern Africa conceptions and practices

The collaboration discussion above and in the earlier chapters of this study have adequately covered southern African ODL conceptions and practices and demonstrated that regional education policy encourages collaboration in ODL.
The SADC PET, as noted in Section 4.3.2.1, devotes a sub-section under Article 9 to distance education and within this mode of delivery it specifically encourages the development of ODL policy and collaboration in programme development, delivery, training of educators and trainers and research at national and regional levels. Implementation of the SADC PET in the five DEASA member countries with regards to the development of national ODL policy and the introduction of ODL programmes has been shown in Section 4.4.2 of this study to be uneven in aspects like comprehensiveness, coordination and coverage of different education levels. South Africa, Botswana and Namibia have demonstrated stronger, though still uneven, ODL policy development. In South Africa, ODL policy development is at an advanced stage at the higher education level, while at secondary education level ODL policy remains under-developed. Botswana and Namibia ODL policy development is not as comprehensive as in the South Africa higher education sector, but these two countries’ current general education policies are comprehensive enough to cover details of ODL provision at all levels and assign implementation responsibilities to a variety of organisations. Lesotho’s MOET 2005 policy document shows some progress in improving policy development though the focus tends to be on lifelong learning and non-formal education generally and not ODL as such. Of the five countries, Swaziland seems not to have progressed beyond the 1999 general education policy statement in which ODL is mentioned as a mode of education that shall be used to provide lifelong learning. National ODL programme development and implementation in the five countries have also been shown to exhibit similar unevenness with South Africa focusing on higher education ODL provision partly because of its long history of vibrant provision in this sector and other countries like Botswana and Namibia demonstrating strengths and innovation at secondary education levels, where the greatest needs have been identified. But on the whole SADC countries are
striving to implement ODL programmes at national level and to encourage their institutions to collaborate in all facets of the delivery of ODL programmes.

The conceptions that inform ODL provision in these countries incorporate notions of openness, flexibility, learner-centredness and collaboration in delivery that are similar to the CDEP innovation, see Sections 4.4.1.1 – 4.4.1.5. The development of decentralised learning centres as nodes for providing support for learners at regional and local levels and institutional collaboration in the development and maintenance of these centres, for example the NOLNET, BOCODOL & UB collaborations, are all attempts to ensure learner-centred provision and easier access by learners to resources even in remote and rural areas. As in the CDEP, flexibility in terms of open access to registration in different programmes is, in these countries, limited by national policy. Recognition of prior learning is one of the mechanisms being investigated and/or implemented to address this shortcoming.

Continued participation of DEASA member institutions in the CDEP is an indication of their commitment to regional collaboration. On a practical programme delivery level this commitment is demonstrated by DEASA member institutions’ payment of their portion of enrolment fees, making available their human resources (tutors, curriculum and material developers) and physical resources (venues and equipment) for collaborative learner support and materials development purposes in each country. The study has, however, showed that for the collaboration to be more effective and survive longer, providers and user organisations would need to find additional financial resources from institutions’ own sources because continued international donor funding is not guaranteed, see Section 8.2.2.4. This will also
demonstrate institutions’ recognition of the value of the CDEP, commitment to ODL staff development for the CDEP level of staff and commitment to ensuring the CDEP’s survival.

9.2.2 What contributions are CDEP participants making in their institutions and which of these contributions are as a result of participation in the CDEP?

Feedback from all three categories of CDEP participants (learners, tutors and organisations) has revealed the high regard they all have about the programme, see Section 6.2. This high regard stemmed from their views that the CDEP provided a sound orientation to ODL, improved participants’ skills, capacity or performance in ODL, met their reasons for participating in the programme, and broadened their understanding of good approaches and practices in ODL. Where the initial reason for participation was to evaluate the programme, participants were satisfied that the programme can be used for further training. What were seen as the CDEP’s major strengths were the quality of the teaching package in terms of learner friendliness, good coverage of best practice and mode of delivery which provided concurrent experience of learning through the ODL mode while implementing the knowledge, skills and practices gained from the programme in participants’ work contexts. The latter strength was deemed to make CDEP participants appreciate the problems faced by ODL learners enrolled in the different DEASA member organisations.

As indicated in Section 6.2.1, only one participant felt the programme had not met his/her needs. But in view of the fact that his/her interest was in designing and producing audio programmes, a programme that provided a general orientation to ODL would at first glance seem irrelevant. Since the CDEP content (see Section 5.7) begins with a general introduction to adult learning and distance education and learning materials development is only discussed
in the third module and since this learner admitted to have dropped out without submitting even one assignment, it is not surprising that he/she felt the programme was irrelevant.

The quality of and high regard for the programme and the concurrent learning through the ODL mode and application of ideas in work situations were deemed, as Sections 6.2 and 6.3 show, to encourage participants to use the knowledge and skills they developed from their participation in the CDEP to make contributions in their organisations in line with the nature of their work situations. For learner support practitioners, the contributions identified included the introduction of new support mechanisms like audio tapes, improved counselling services, strategies for sharing limited resources among learning centres and enhanced knowledge and learning and teaching resources for application in the training of part-time tutors. Materials developers noted the qualitative changes of learning packages produced by their institutions in terms of lay-out and language level as the contributions they made to improving learning and teaching in their organisations. Contributions in administration included the introduction of efficient filing and record keeping systems that facilitated easy retrieval of records and correspondence with learners and tutors and general knowledge of good practices in administration and management. In the case of academic staff, the knowledge of ODL contributed to informed discourse on ODL as a method of increasing access to education. This has enabled academics in dual mode institutions especially to argue for the importance of ODL in such situations and show that it should not be regarded as a second best educational mode of delivery and that its learners should be accommodated with minimal restrictions in such learning environments. The other contribution noted is participants’ increasing interest in conducting institutional research. Participants have attested that the contributions they are making in their organisations are as a result of
participation in the CDEP and these views have been corroborated by senior management in different organisations.

9.2.3 In what way/s are these contributions informed by learner-centred notions of ODL?

The contributions mentioned above have been informed by learner-centred notions of ODL in that respondents’ emphases on the nature of their contributions have been on how they “assist learner to learn better” or that they are now “able to speak the language of the learners” or “arranging his specific job in a way that facilitate a better service for learners”, Figures 6.6 and 6.7. Knowing not only what to do but also why the other sub-sections of an ODL organisation require things to be done in a particular way, has been said to be empowering for some of the CDEP participants who work as typists and who claim to now being able to make suggestions on how to improve their work to “serve the needs of the learner better”. Of course these claims cannot be interpreted as indicating ideal learner-centred provision. They are indicating the intentions and/or attempts, however small, to improve the quality of provision by ensuring that the needs of the learners are taken into consideration. The CDEP participants will need to continually strive to swing the provision pendulum towards the ideal by minimising practices that have been identified in this study as belonging to the opposite pole: institution-centredness and/or disregard of ODL best practices and learner needs.

9.2.4 What problems are CDEP participants encountering in their application of CDEP ideas/practices/approached in their job situations and how are DEASA member institutions assisting or hindering participants’ application attempts?
Two interrelated main problems have been identified by CDEP participants in their application of CDEP ideas, practices and approaches in their job situations and these are lack of resources and job insecurity. Financial problems have been a recurrent theme in the literature review on collaboration, especially with regard to cross border collaboration. These problems have been shown to be partly the cause of the demise of two African collaboration initiatives, the MCLB and SADC TCDE activities which were discussed in Chapter 4, Sections 4.2.2 and 4.3.2.2 respectively. The CDEP collaboration has also suffered from these problems but, unlike the other two initiatives, has managed to survive because of DEASA and its member institutions’ and also COL’s financial contributions and commitment to sustain the collaboration. And though the CDEP learners have faced financial problems in their application of CDEP ideas in their organisations, they have all shown that there are aspects that can be improved even with limited resources.

Incidents cited on how the problem of lack of or limited resources impacted negatively on participants’ application of ideas included staffing and job insecurity, space problems impeding confidential counselling sessions with learners and inadequate financial resources for production of higher quality materials and for extending CDEP type collaboration in other programmes or carrying out inter-institutional study visits, see Section 7.2. DEASA member institutions cannot be regarded as purposely hindering participants’ attempts to address these problems because the problem of limited financial resources faces most Southern African institutions and countries. The challenge is for each institution to strive towards providing efficient service within the limited available resources and also to accommodate within limited annual budgets provision for improvement of identified problems and for continued staff development and training.
Job insecurity has also been shown (in Section 7.2.2) to have emanated from institutional application of national policy that prescribes preferential employment of previously disadvantaged groups as cited by a South Africa learner with regard to the employment equity requirements and by non-nationals working in other southern African countries like Botswana and Namibia where once nationals have the requisite qualifications and/or experience the job contracts of these non-nationals are terminated. Again institutions cannot be said to be willy-nilly hindering participants’ attempts to apply CDEP ideas as public institutions, in particular, are required to adhere to national policy and most of the DEASA member institutions fall within this category of institutions. But CDEP participants caught up in this situation have voiced their personal and work related frustrations both of which, they have emphasised, do impact negatively on the quality of provision.

9.2.5 What issues surrounding delivery, for example materials, teaching and learning, learners’ responsibility in the learning/teaching process and collaboration in delivery need to be addressed, for feedback purposes?

This study has shown in Chapter 5 that the CDEP collaboration between the SACHED-DETU and UNISA-ICE was based on a written contract which spelt out the roles and responsibilities of the partners. During the earlier years of the collaboration, both members carried out these roles according to plan. Management change and the eventual demise of SACHED-DETU affected the collaboration negatively and led to problems with regard to marketing and support for remote learners.

Though there is generally a very positive response to the CDEP programme as a whole from participants who took part in the programme during the period of this study, two clusters of
issues surrounding the delivery of the programme that have emerged, see Section 7.3, embrace participation, throughput and attrition rates and organisational issues.

As demonstrated in Figure 6.1 and Section 7.3.2.2 b) participation in the form of enrolments during the four year period never matched the planned annual figure of 100. Throughput rates, though relatively good, that is between 60% and 78%, showed a worrying progressive decline which was contrary to similar certificate level programmes internationally. The attrition rates in Section 8.3.2, Figure 8.1 showed that most learners dropped out during the non-start stage without any or only one assignment submitted and if early follow-up mechanisms were in place, these learners could have been encouraged to continue with their studies or the actual reasons for their drop-out documented. Follow-up of the no-show learners, who completed all the course requirements but did not sit for the exam, could likewise have produced concrete reasons for their drop-out.

The organisational issues in Figure 7.2 were of two groups: the users and providers issues. The issues emerging from the users group were about the absence of an enabling staff development policy, CDEP recognition, currency and reward and limited resources. ODL policy development at the macro national level has already been shown to exist in Chapter 4 of this report. However, at the micro institutional level of staff development, the decision by DEASA member organisations to enrol staff on the CDEP was often not matched by suitable policy and practices of supporting and motivating staff during the course of their studies and after completion. The absence of support was deemed to manifest itself in the lack of recognition and reward for successful completion of the CDEP by organisations and which meant that the qualification had no currency. The DEASA member institutions were also
faced by financial problems which resulted in low enrolment numbers on the CDEP and inability to give financial reward for successful completion of the programme. But another view on this matter was that in higher education institutions especially, funding, reward and recognition were linked to the bias of these institutions towards funding full-time faculty staff mainly and not administrative and part-time staff like tutors, see Section 7.3.2.1 a), b) and c).

Section 7.3.2.2 a), b) and c) shows that the providers’ group issues covered marketing, level and national focus of the programme and management and administration issues. Inadequate marketing of the programme was regarded as partly responsible for the low enrolments as those who needed the programme might not be aware of its existence. Some learners felt that the programme was good and should be taken by senior level management so that they have a working knowledge of ODL as most of them do not have this. The marketing of the programme needed to be wider than DEASA members and also in terms of target audience, that is, include senior management.

There we three contradictory positions about the level of the CDEP. Learners with lower educational backgrounds found the programme difficult to complete within the nine months available for study (that is from March when registrations end to October/November examinations) and suggested that the programme duration should be twelve months. Some of those with higher qualifications found it too basic and suggested additional advanced activities and reading materials while others within this group found the programme not as basic as it might have seemed at first and appreciated the role of the tutor-marker in helping them the pitch the programme at their individual level.
The issue about the national bias of the programme is an important lesson for ODL programmes which, on the whole, are developed to address national needs but eventually end up enrolling international learners. The South African education transformation issues raised in the CDEP like examples of the 1976 Soweto uprisings are not necessarily appreciated by learners from other countries and ways of internationalising programme content have to be found. The CDEP experience over this period has provided useful indicators for addressing this problem, for example, the use of additional case studies from the countries participating in the collaboration. However, the revision of the materials, if the programme continues, will need to integrate this improvisation within the new study materials and ensure a much broader international focus of the programme. The revision of the materials will also need to include changing and Africanising the module covers.

Management and administration issues raised included aspects of teaching and learning. Poor communication with learners, assignment turnaround time and limited provision of face-to-face tutorial support were among the most frequently mentioned issues. The limited number of enrolments and widely dispersed learner population in five countries made regular contact between learners and tutors difficult because tutors were located in one major city per country while some of the learners were located in widely dispersed regional and/or learning centres. Learners in Namibia were greatly affected because of the vast country and huge distances from the major city. Alternative contact methods need to be found. The extension of information and communications technology to learning centres in remote and rural areas of southern Africa should in future facilitate the implementation of alternative contact methods for most ODL institutions in SADC. Initiatives like NOLNet, the BOCODOL-UB collaboration in the provision of learner support and the merger of ODL institutions in South
Africa which has made available the combined infrastructure including the network of learning centres of three institutions for learning and teaching purposes, should in future provide ways of addressing identified learning and teaching concerns of learners. In instances where poor communication was as a result of inefficiency, then the providers need to address this matter urgently through existing performance management systems to ensure that the programme practices what it preaches.

The issues surrounding the delivery of the CDEP have raised several paradoxical situations. On the one hand, the CDEP was highly regarded by all participants but, on the other, the actual enrolments and/or use of the programme as an ODL staff development and training programme do not match this regard. With enrolments that never over the four year period reached the planned 100 learners per year, the CDEP has proved to have not met one of its objectives. This paradox cascades into other areas of implementation to produce additional paradoxes. The CDEP is highly regarded but successful completion of the programme does not receive due recognition and reward by both provider and user groups. This situation questions the voiced commitment of all participants to the collaboration and to their appreciation of the contributions that their trained staff members are bringing to the organisations. There was also no clear articulation with other programmes, progression and career path until recently when these issues began to be addressed through the development of new programmes. On another level the providers’ practices raise another paradox concerning the variance between precepts of the CDEP as an ODL staff development and training programme that is meant to teach best ODL practices but which in the course of its delivery during the four years of this study has provided the kinds of shoddy services learners have been exposed to with regard to communication and feedback turn-around time.
9.2.6 CDEP effectiveness

Using both McAnany’s (1975) model of ODL programmes impact evaluation and Parlett and Hamilton’s (1975) illuminative evaluation model to interpret the delivery and impact of the CDEP for feedback purposes, this study has found matches and mismatches between the aims and objectives of the programme. The overall interpretation is that the CDEP delivery has demonstrated greater mismatches in the criteria of effort and performance, while the adequacy and efficiency criteria have shown an even spread between matches and mismatches in the different dimensions. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the CDEP could be interpreted as having failed to achieve its objectives in more of the dimensions of these criteria as the next sections will demonstrate.

In terms of effort, the findings are that the quantitative dimensions of effort, namely survival and institutionalisation, diffusion and number of people served cumulatively demonstrated more mismatches between the plans and implementation. Among these dimensions, survival and institutionalisation of the programme produced a strong match in that the CDEP has survived from 1997 to date and has institutionalised itself into a highly regarded ODL staff development programme serving the needs of a variety of practitioners ranging from full-time academic, managerial and administrative staff to part-time tutors. But, although it has also diffused from its country of origin to the five DEASA member countries and has currently spread to additional four Southern Africa countries making a total of nine countries, it has not achieved the dimension of replication as currently no other similar programme exists in SADC. Such replication is likely to affect the programme even more adversely as the UNISA-ICE enrolment numbers are likely to decrease further. Again, in terms of the dimension of number of people served, the CDEP has demonstrated a mismatch in that
during the four year period, it never achieved the planned annual 100 learner enrolments. The qualitative aspects of effort demonstrate a similar trend. There is a match between the plans and delivery with regard to the dimension of ability to plan and clearly state objectives as the CDEP has turned out to be kind of useful ODL staff development programme that the producers envisaged. However, the issues emerging from the dimensions of financing and management and administration of the CDEP both demonstrate mismatches. The overall position for the effort criterion can, thus, be deemed to reveal more mismatches than matches.

With regard to performance, the 60% and above annual successful completion rates matches the intention to produce and deliver a successful ODL programme but the progressive decline in completion rates diminishes the overall strength of this match. The converse increasing attrition rates, on the other hand, results in a mismatch between intended development of a successful programme and the reality. The overall performance could, thus, also be deemed to have had more mismatches than matches because of the qualified successful completion dimension.

The next two criteria, adequacy and efficiency have demonstrated overall evenness between matches and mismatches of the different dimensions. In terms of the adequacy dimension of relevance to needs, the CDEP was found to have adequately addressed participants’ needs and provided them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes that they have applied in their work contexts to improve the quality of their institutions’ ODL provision. This means that the CDEP’s implementation has matched the intended objectives of producing a programme that will provide the necessary ODL knowledge, skills and attitude for southern African practitioners. The upward social mobility dimension of adequacy was, however, found to
have been partly matched because of lack of recognition and reward for successful completion of the programme. The development of new programmes like the BA ODL and the NAPRODOLSA Masters in Distance Education were noted as attempts to address this issue. However, until such time that these new programmes are fully operational, the partial match will continue. The dimension of target audience, on the other hand, showed a strong match between the audience envisaged in the CDEP plans and those actually enrolled in the programme over the four year period. The CDEP audience included educators and administrative staff both full-time and part-time and at different educational and job status levels. The fact that the CDEP during the four years under study had available reliable performance data means that CDEP delivery matched its intension to produce a quality ODL programme in terms of this dimension of efficiency. The available data on performance has been used in this report to evaluate aspects like completion, attrition and audience etc. Due to the limited enrolment numbers, the dimension of costs has not been matched because the CDEP has not been able to break even financially and has survived mainly through cross-subsidisation of programmes within ICE. But while, as noted in Chapter 8, distance education changes the production function of education by substituting cheaper management of learners’ learning for the expensive process of applying teacher time to it and, thus, creating the potential for lower costs per student (CHE 2004: 107), low enrolment numbers reduce this potential and cross-subsidisation cannot be a permanent solution as:

… empirical research suggests clearly that per-student costs of small distance education programmes are actually at least as high as, if not higher than, the equivalent delivery of contact programmes (because these programmes are not able to exploit the economies of scale) (CHE 2004: 179).
And, unless ways are found to increase enrolments and generate adequate income to run the programme, the CDEP is likely to be discontinued when cross-subsidisation becomes impossible to implement and/or institutional policy on number of learners per module or course is changed.

Using McAnany’s (1975) process criterion, to gauge the CDEP’s effectiveness and juxtaposing this with the issues emerging from the illumination model (Parlett & Hamilton 1975) which highlights matches and mismatches between plans and delivery, the overall conclusion to be drawn about the CDEP is that the mismatches exceed the matches and this then suggests that the CDEP innovation is not as successful as the providers would have envisaged. However, the high regard for the programme and matches between objectives and implementation in terms of the dimensions of survival and institutionalisation, successful completion, diffusion, target audience and reliable performance data show that the potential for changing the CDEP into a successful programme exists. What needs to be done as suggested by CDEP participants themselves, is to market the programme widely, address the identified management and administration weaknesses, revise the content of the programme to address the issues of South African bias and European scenery on the module covers and ensure that the programme receives the recognition and reward it deserves from organisations that are part of this partnership and also in terms of creating articulation and a clearer career path for successful completers of the programme. The recent (UNISA-ICE 2006) proactive marketing of the programme within UNISA has resulted in a decision to use the programme for staff development purposes within this institution. The internal adverts have, according to the Coordinator of the programme, generated good interest from staff and should by the end of the selection process result in much higher enrolment numbers in this institution than in
the past. Similar attempts in other DEASA member countries need to be nurtured and could also lead to the programme achieving at least its envisaged annual 100 enrolments and thus address the issues of costs and cross-subsidisation and ensure sustainability. But, in addition, the suggested wider marketing of the programme should go beyond the current users and target other organisations, countries and individual learners that wish to enhance their knowledge and skills in ODL.

9.3 CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY THIS STUDY

The contributions of this study are in terms of learning from the evaluation by those involved in this study (DEASA members and this researcher), extension of theoretical ideas on ODL staff development and the development of an innovative evaluation design resulting from a combination and expansion of two existing evaluation models.

9.3.1 Learning from the evaluation

As the first systematic evaluation of the CDEP impact, this study is making a crucial contribution to an understanding of the CDEP as DEASA’s first collaborative formal programme on ODL staff development. This understanding should assist CDEP participants to arrive at informed decisions about the future of the programme. As promised by this researcher in the negotiation of access for the research, progress on the evaluation was provided to DEASA members after analysis of the postal survey responses. A detailed report on the initial findings and the steps that would follow to complete the evaluation was presented at the 2002 DEASA Meeting. This report was subsequently included in a DEASA publication (Nonyongo & Kuhn 2005). These initial findings and other feedback that
DEASA members themselves had gathered in their daily interaction with learners in work contexts contributed to the decision to develop the BA ODL and finding other ways of articulating this initiative with emerging regional attempts to create a career path for ODL practitioners in the SADC region like the NAPRODOLSA initiative.

For this researcher, this study of the CDEP has confirmed Parlett & Dearden’s (1977: 154-155) views that such evaluations can provide vicarious experience for those who by their organisational position may be denied the experience first hand. This study has exposed me to the CDEP participants, the places and conditions under which they study and work and the events that are part of their learning milieu. It has highlighted crucial aspects of the CDEP like the important role of the tutor-marker in learner motivation and study progression, the effects of change in programme management and the need for systematic monitoring of distance learners’ progress at every stage of the learning cycle. These aspects are theoretically known by ODL practitioners, but in practice tend to be neglected when the daily operational workloads increase and/or are not adequately appreciated, recognised and rewarded even where exceptional work performance has been achieved as in the case of Mosadi, the CDEP tutor-marker. This study has, thus, been a sound learning experience which has empowered me, as the director of the Institute providing the CDEP, in the use of evaluation concepts and techniques. It is an empowerment that has been made possible by the contributions of all the CDEP participants and the coaching from my supervisor during the course of this research. It will lead to more a focused implementation of the findings as part of a continual process of self-evaluation, reflection (Fetterman et al 1996: 4) and improvement of the CDEP to meet the needs of its audience.
9.3.2 Extension of ideas on staff development

The study has confirmed that the development and training of ODL staff on the theory, approaches and practices of this mode of delivery is essential as the prior knowledge and training of most of these practitioners is from conventional face-to-face education. It has also confirmed that all categories of ODL staff require such training as shown by the occupational range of CDEP learners with educators (tutors/lecturers (68) and materials developers/editors (7) a total of 75) forming the largest number followed by administrative staff (57) and managers (12), see Figure 8.2 for the full range. This suggests that all ODL practitioners would participate in staff development activities, if given the opportunity, and that institutional preferential focus on academic staff development and training, as indicated in the Literature Review Section 2.4, needs to be reviewed. It also suggests that the original intention of the CDEP providers regarding the focus on ODL administrative staff and part-time tutors for this training, needs to be re-visited as well as the content of the CDEP to ensure that the needs of much wider range of ODL practitioners are met. In the case of tutors, the view that their training should not occupy central stage as they merely support learners to use pre-packaged materials, see Section 2.4, has been discounted because this evaluation has shown that tutors need and appreciate such training and development, see Figures 6.6, 6.7, 6.9 and 6.10, and that some recognise the multiplier effect of the CDEP is deemed to cascade the knowledge and skills from the learner to others in a training of trainers fashion. The overwhelmingly positive response to the CDEP and the variety of ways in which participants say ideas from the programme are being implemented, suggest that all involved in this programme recognise, have articulated and are applying the competencies acquired through participation in this programme.
The CDEP experience has shown that the costs and logistical issues of organising and managing the face-face-face staff development sessions in an ODL context can be addressed by delivering such programmes through the ODL mode which gives practitioners concomitant experience of studying through this mode and applying ideas immediately in ODL organisations. Collaboration with local organisations in the provision of local support and training assists in minimising costs by decentralising these activities locally in the participating countries and organisations and also developing a sense of ownership of the programme. The Gibbs (1981) model of training through the ODL mode has been extended in the CDEP to a regional collaborative model involving organisations and individuals in five countries assisting with the logistical problems like finding venues and tutors, providing financial support for learners and keeping abreast of the programme’s development and evaluation.

Lastly, the CDEP experience has confirmed Parer, Croker and Shaw’s (1988) view that a clear reward structure for successful completion of staff development programmes needs to be developed and implemented. CDEP learners have commented about the absence of recognition, currency and reward after completion of the programme, have associated this with the “certificate” label of the CDEP and suggested that this be changed to “diploma” which is seen to have more currency than the former, see Figures 7.9 and 7.10. Clearer organisational policy and reward structures for staff development programmes like the CDEP are, thus, crucial in DEASA member organisations.
9.3.3 Innovative evaluation design

Lastly, this study has combined two evaluation models: Parlett & Hamilton’s evaluation as illumination (1975) and McAnany’s (1975) evaluation of impact through five criteria. The combination of these two models has produced an innovative evaluation design which provides a much more comprehensive understanding of the “complex reality (or realities) surrounding the programme” (Partlett & Hamilton 1977: 24). The illumination that has resulted from this combination of evaluation perspectives is richer, nuanced and multi-layered than either of the two models would singly have achieved. Evaluation as illumination has facilitated the description, comparison and contrast of the complex CDEP instructional system and learning milieu and the processes involved in a way that has captured the views of all the participants and illuminated the central issues emerging from the delivery of the programme. McAnany’s criteria, on the other hand, have enabled interpretation of the identified issues from different angles and dimensions. Both these methods have “open(ed) up crucial value issues to discussion on a firmer basis” (Parlett & Dearden 1977: 154) and also ensured that while acknowledging the interests of all the participants, decisions are not based on one group’s evaluation criteria which could be disputed by other groups (Parlett & Dearden 1977: 24), but that other criteria (McAnany’s), widely used in the interpretation of ODL provision, are included to provide a much sounder interpretation. The final product emerging from this research is an innovative and expanded model of evaluating ODL programme: a model that combines to good effect the crucial elements of two separate evaluation models, that is evaluation as illumination and criteria based impact evaluation models.