CHAPTER 4

ODL POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

International ODL policy and implementation have a substantial influence on national and sub-regional perspectives. A study of the CDEP, a programme of national and sub-regional collaboration on ODL staff development, would therefore be incomplete if not situated within global policy and implementation debates. To address Question 1 of this study, namely “What conceptions of ODL inform the CDEP and practices in distance educations in Southern Africa, and what differences are commonly perceived to exist between the two”, it is crucial to understand the essence of ODL policy internationally. Because the CDEP is a SADC collaboration programme, the focus of this chapter is on ODL collaboration policies and implementation in this sub-region. This focus includes whether, why and how policies have realised their intended purposes. These questions are important because policy analysts have noted that in practice “even well designed and widely acclaimed policies can, and often do, fail to produce the intended results” (Pretorius in Politeia 22(1) 2003: 7).

This chapter aims to address Question 1 of the study by giving brief descriptions and analyses of policy and implementation of ODL collaboration at different levels. Its starting point is the last decade of the twentieth century, which is the period of the
introduction of the CDEP. The 1990s are a period dominated by the global discussions and outcomes of the Jomtien, Thailand, World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held from 5th to 10th March 1990 and whose aftermath saw intensified attempts to nurture collaboration in ODL worldwide and to develop and/or strengthen ODL as one of the channels for achieving education for all (EFA). The next level of description and analysis is the implementation of the WCEFA policy in the Africa region. In this level, the focus is both on the Pan African and sub-regional (SADC) levels. The latter receives more emphasis because it is the area of the CDEP implementation and also because of the existence of a SADC policy document on education, the SADC PET which was signed on the 8th September 1997, the year of the CDEP’s introduction. The national level is the third level of description and analysis and here the focus is on the five SADC countries that are members of DEASA and main users of the CDEP. This level also covers policy implementation by the participating institutions. There is a fourth level of analysis, also with a national outlook but differing from the previous level in the regional locus of coordination. This level covers collaboration initiatives implemented by member organisations but coordinated and supported by a regional association, DEASA. The CDEP and the Network for Advanced Professional Development of Open and Distance Learning in Southern Africa (NAPRODOLSA) are examples of this level. The latter is not covered in any detail in this study, as it is still at conception with no agreement reached among the participating organisations (UB, UNAM, UNISA, OUT, UNZA and ZOU) about issues of accreditation and roles of partners regarding the development and delivery of the envisaged Masters and Doctorate programme on ODL.
The above multi-level policy and implementation descriptions and analyses (global, regional, national and association) provide the backdrop for the description, analysis and interpretation of the CDEP instructional system and implementation. The description and analysis of the different policies include the specifications of goals, a scrutiny of the relevant implementation processes, results and how the outcomes approximate the policy goals. It also includes an identification of policy and implementation gaps. These approaches should lead to sharper contrasts through the juxtaposition of the similarities and differences of policy, implementation and gaps within the levels described above.

4.2 GLOBAL AND AFRICA REGION PERSPECTIVES

On a global level, the Jomtien, Thailand, World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) provides in several ways an important starting point for a description and analysis of ODL collaboration policy and practices. The conference took place at the beginning of the decade within which the CDEP was initiated. It was a major global conference attended by 155 countries and representatives from 150 organisations and its recommendations, particularly the notion of an “expanded vision and renewed commitment to education for all”, had major implications for ODL and collaboration (UNESCO 2001). It resulted in worldwide sequel activities aimed at developing concrete programmes of action regionally, sub-regionally and nationally. It also sought to develop north-south collaboration in resource mobilisation and programme implementation.
4.2.1 Policy goals and framework of action

The point of departure of the WCEFA, as elaborated in Article 1 of the World Declaration on EFA (WDEFA), is that the right to education is a universal human right and that everyone: children, youth and adults, should benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet basic learning needs. But it was noted with concern that despite “noble efforts by countries” very little progress had been achieved as evidenced by the following identified realities:

- No access to primary schooling for more than 100 million children, including 60 million girls.
- Over 960 million adults, two thirds of whom are women, are illiterate.
- More than one third of adults have no access to printed knowledge, new skills and technologies.
- More than 100 million children and countless adults fail to complete basic education.

(UNESCO 2001)

It was further noted that worldwide problems like the debt burden, rapid population growth, war and violence continue to thwart efforts to provide EFA. In order to address identified education problems, the WCEFA made a number of proposals which were covered in the ten articles of commitment to EFA (UNESCO 2001). Among these, Articles 2 – 5 and 7 - 10 have particular relevance to ODL and this study.
Article 2 is about the need for an “expanded vision” of education which is located within the notion of lifelong learning and which seeks to promote the use of a much wider range of learning and teaching modes. The expanded vision is further described as surpassing “present resource levels, institutional structures, curricula, and conventional delivery system while building on the best current practices”. Article 3 elaborates this vision to include the need to universalise access to education, promote equity and maintain quality and acceptable levels of learning for all. Article 4’s focus is on ensuring that basic education leads to meaningful learning whose outcomes would ensure that learners reach their full potential. Broadening the means and scope of basic education for children, youth and adults is the focus of Article 5. This is also where the notion of meeting needs through a variety of delivery systems, available instruments and channels of communication is amplified. Articles 7 is about strengthening partnerships in the provision of education because partnerships are deemed to be “at the heart” of the expanded vision and renewed commitment to EFA. Article 8 is on the development of a supportive policy context. The development of a supportive policy context is seen as the bedrock of implementation of the expanded vision of education in the sense that it demonstrates commitment to EFA and would ensure the provision of the requisite resources and practical arrangements for the implementation process. The last two Articles (9 and 10) are about mobilising resources and strengthening international solidarity for the provision of resources for EFA activities by different role players; public, private and voluntary organisations.
The section on the Framework for Action and focus areas provide guidelines for implementation and the desired impact of policy reform as adopted at the WCEFA. The proposals presented here are described as a “reference and guide for national governments, international agencies, bilateral aid agencies, non-governmental organisations” (UNESCO 2001) and include goals, targets, principles and priorities of action at national, regional and world levels. At the world level, international cooperation and sustained long-term support for national and regional implementation of activities of the expanded vision of EFA are recommended. In line with this recommendation, the four key sponsors of the WCEFA: UNDP; UNESCO; UNICEF and the World Bank affirm their commitment to supporting the international priority actions according to their mandates, special responsibilities and decisions of governing bodies. For example, UNESCO, as the agency responsible for education, would give priority to implementing the Framework of Action and to facilitating the provision of services needed for reinforced international coordination of cooperation. The two priority actions identified for the regional level are cooperation between countries through the exchange of information, experience and expertise and undertaking joint activities. Under joint activities, management and the use of distance education services are specifically mentioned among the six listed areas that include training of key personal, improving information collection and analysis, research, production of educational materials and the use of communication media. At the global level, international support for national and regional activities is re-emphasised.
The indicative period for phasing in the implementation of the programme of action include a planning and refinement of plans by all stakeholders and the first stage of implementation was scheduled from 1990 to 1995. The mid-term evaluation of implementation of plans by governments was envisaged between 1995 and 1996. The second stage of implementation would then take place from 1996 – 2000 and there would finally be an evaluation of achievements and comprehensive policy review by all stakeholders, that is, governments, organisations and development agencies.

4.2.2 Implementation in the Africa Region

The implementation of the WDEFA and programme of action was followed by several Africa region meetings/seminars. In this study the focus is only on the ODL-specific regional activities from the 1990s onward. Between 1990 and 1995 these activities began as consultative processes and culminated in the development of a regional programme of action for cooperation in ODL.

The first of these activities was the Arusha, Tanzania, Seminar of 24th – 28th September 1990. The Seminar was organised as part of the Priority Africa Programme of Action 1990 – 1994 which was proposed by the Director General of UNESCO (UNESCO 1990). The Seminar was followed by several initiatives sponsored by UNESCO in collaboration with other international agencies. These agencies included two ODL organisations, namely the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE), the largest worldwide association of distance education organisations and individuals, and the COL.
4.2.2.1 The three regional seminars/workshops: Arusha, Dar-es-Salaam and Nyanga

The Arusha Seminar was regarded as a landmark occasion in the sense that, like the WCEFA, but at a regional level, it brought together a large number of stakeholders from different parts of Africa who represented all the linguistic areas of the continent. These delegates consisted of representatives from:

- 33 African Member States of UNESCO,
- three organisations of the United Nations System,
- one international intergovernmental organisation,
- one international non-governmental organisation,
- five educational institutions,
- and several multilateral and bilateral funding bodies (UNESCO 1990: 3).

The Arusha Seminar made provision for an appraisal of the total regional situation by taking stock of the continent’s ODL provision and also paying attention to the strategies and approaches used, available resources, results achieved including difficulties encountered. All this was meant to guide the specifics of the programme of action and to identify the seeds for the promotion of collaboration among African governments and other stakeholders. With regard to policy, the Arusha seminar urged African governments to:

- Recognise the importance of ODL and its potential contribution to the objectives of providing wider access to education.
- Provide adequate resources for ODL.
- Ensure that ODL programmes are integral parts of the education system.
• Establish in each country a unit or department responsible for coordination ODL and adult education.

With regard to the specifics of the programmes of action, three proposals for priority action were identified in the closing address of the representative of the UNESCO Director General and these are:

• Information, associated with studies and research.
• Training.
• The production of materials. (UNESCO 1990: 44).

Since the Seminar had demonstrated the importance of sharing of information, it was decided that this exchange of information on ODL should take place on a regular basis and should inform research on the development of new programmes including the use of new technologies and evaluation strategies. The development of an inventory of institutions, activities and expertise in ODL was deemed to be necessary since it would be an invaluable resource for all. With regard to training it was noted that the most crucial element was the development of sufficient, efficient, specialist and senior personnel for the operation of ODL systems and sub-systems like administration and management, materials development, learner support, evaluation and research. With regard to materials production, emphasis was placed on the development of materials in Africa, derived from African contexts and coordinated with school curricula, target audiences and needs of the region in mind. Another proposal believed to have emanated from the Arusha Meeting but only mentioned in a report of later activities, is the need to
establish a coordination structure or a “permanent facility” for all the activities planned for the region (ICDE/UNESCO 1995: 1).

Two post-Arusha regional activities, the Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, Workshop held in November 1994 and the Nyanga, Zimbabwe, March 1995 Workshop, were all aimed at consolidating the work started at Arusha by providing an update on ODL in the region, renewing the commitment to collaboration, refining the regional programme of action and preparing concrete proposals for the funding of the programme of action. Most of the DEASA member organisations participated in these activities. DEASA itself was represented for the first time at the Dar-es-Salaam workshop by this research and at the Nyanga Workshop as well.

The Dar-es-Salaam workshop confirmed the priority areas for cooperation as outlined at Arusha, namely cooperation in capacity building/training (but added an emphasis on women); materials development and sharing of information/knowledge. After the workshop, the UNESCO Harare Office, ICDE and the International Extension College (IEC), a UK based non-governmental organisation with extensive experience in ODL in developing countries, produced a working document on the programme of action. By this time the name of the regional cooperation programme in ODL had turned out to be the Multi-Channel Learning Base (MCLB), a name which was deemed to better describe the expanded vision of EFA because:
The concept of Multi-channel emphasises the intersectoral nature of learning and the utilisation of all available communication channels to promote learning. It covers the areas of formal, non-formal education and takes place in the context of different educational delivery systems (MCLB 1995: 3).

The working document on the MCLB was the main point of discussion at the Nyanga March 1995 Workshop which the organisers described as the “climax of various collaborative activities between UNESCO and the ICDE that were rooted in and guided by the WCEFA”. That a working document had been completed from the recommendations of previous workshops and the overall positive response to this document seemed to promise a brighter future for collaboration in the region. This promise was captured in the principles and objectives of the MCLB which were listed as follows:

**Figure 4.1: MCLB Principles and objectives**

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<th>1. Principles</th>
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<td>1.1 The MCLB should adopt a pragmatic approach.</td>
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<td>1.2 The programme should be responsive to country needs.</td>
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<td>1.3 One person, serving with minimum institutional creation.</td>
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<td>1.4 Self reliance and sufficiency of each programme.</td>
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<td>1.5 Pragmatic development approach</td>
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<td>1.6 Harness earlier initiatives and potential donor support.</td>
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<th>2. Objectives</th>
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<td>2.1 To set up and run an initial programme of MCL/DE professional staff development.</td>
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<td>2.2 To establish patterns of materials sharing and joint course development.</td>
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<td>2.3 To establish an effective network for the exchange of information</td>
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on MCL/DE.
2.4 To provide access to all countries specialist expertise and personnel in MCL/DE.

(MCLB 1995: 5)

The recommendations and conclusion from the Nyanga Workshop show remarkable progress in reaching agreement on the programme of action to meet the above principles and objectives and in setting up a structure to pursue the workshop recommendations including the development of the financial plan and budget. These recommendations emphasised that the MCLB should be an independent, sub-regional, non-governmental organisation with flexible membership consisting of governments, educational institutions, national and regional associations and individuals, but maintaining minimal secretariat and management structures. The MCLB aimed to be able to finance itself from resources obtained mainly from the sub-region in the form of fees and subscriptions, government/institutional contributions in cash and in kind, sponsorship and income generating activities. The Nyanga Workshop also established a working group (DEASA was a member) to pursue the recommendations of the workshop and get the programme of action going. The one issue that was not fully resolved was the location of the MCLB. While there was agreement that the MCLB should be an independent organisation housed in any selected organisation, there was no agreement on the host organisation: UNESCO Harare and Technikon SA in South Africa were the two organisations favoured by different groups.
4.2.2.2 Post-Nyanga Activities

Subsequent to the Nyanga Workshop, the Working Group established at this workshop completed their tasks of developing the constitution, project proposal and budget and by September 1995 had submitted these documents to the relevant stakeholders including potential donors. The project proposal made provision for the implementation of Phases 2 and 3 of the MCLB. Phase 2 covered pilot implementation runs of the main components of the MCLB, namely: capacity building and training; materials development and production; information sharing and networking; institution building including the establishment of delivery systems and resource mobilisation. Phase 3 aimed to continue and expand the activities developed during the pilot.

Until the end of 1998 very little progress on the implementation of Phases 2 and 3 had been achieved. Between 1999 and 2000, COL and UNESCO Harare Office resuscitated the idea of the MCLB and organised meetings in Harare and Cape Town which were attended by representatives from some of the institutions that had participated in the MCLB earlier discussions and DEASA. The 1999 Harare Meeting reviewed the MCLB proposal and “endorsed the validity and the need to undertake efforts to materialise the concept MCLB” (MCLB 1999), but the meeting also recognised that recent major developments within the sub-region would need to be taken into consideration. This meeting, therefore, recommended collaboration between the MCLB and the proposed Commonwealth Centre for Education Media in Southern Africa (CEMSA) which was to be based in Harare because the latter was regarded as an activity that falls within the ambit of the MCLB. Provision of secretariat services by MCLB for other regional
organisations like DEASA was another recommendation from this meeting. The second meeting held in Cape Town in 2000 mainly covered a progress report on the revision of the MCLB project proposal to accommodate recent regional developments and endorsement of the revised document.

To date the MCLB has not materialised even though at one stage a report on the acquisition of an office in Harare was given to the DEASA Regional Meeting. But, since then nothing has come to fruition. Neither has CEMSA materialised.

4.2.3 Analysis

From the above description, it is clear that the WCEFA policy held much promise even though as analysts have commented “none of the basic ideas adopted at the WCEFA were new” (Oxfam 2004). The WCEFA ideals provided a renewed impetus to the improvement of access to basic education and regional cooperation in ODL, especially because they were made at a time when cooperation, both North-South but particularly South-South was minimal:

South-South cooperation was still the exception, despite the role played by such institutions as INADES (Institut Africain pour le Developpement Economique et Social) formation (a private body based in Cote-d’Ivoire), the Southern African Distance Education Association, the African Centre for Higher Management Studies (CESAG), the International Consortium
of Distance Education in French-speaking Countries (CIFFAD) (UNESCO 1990: 21).

This was also a time when the debt burden and economic stagnation presented major challenges to basic education in developing countries. The sequel of WCEFA activities, the ODL specific ones described above promised a better chance for regional and international cooperation in the implementation of suitable programmes for EFA.

It is clear from the description of the implementation processes, that the establishment of a regional cooperation programme that would introduce an extended vision of EFA through ODL in the Africa region was a dismal failure. The regionally agreed programme of action remained an idea on paper only. The only success achieved is the plans of a regional programme of action that included concrete steps for implementation and financial requirements in the form of a budget. But, even for this first phase of the programme, a comparison with the WCEFA timeframes indicated a mismatch. The MCLB planning phase exceeded the one year (1990 – 1991) WCEFA indicative timeframe for the planning process. It took five years for the Africa region to complete the MCLB planning which began in September 1990 with the Arusha Seminar and ended with the completion of the MCLB constitution and project proposal as developed by the Working Group by September 1995. This shows that the WCEFA timeframes were unrealistic in the case of regional cooperation programmes. While it might be possible for governments to plan and mobilise resources for national programmes within one year, to achieve this target in the case of regional collaboration programmes, has proved
impossible. The difficulties are particularly acute in a continent that is vast, has great diversity and limited resources such as Africa. The required regular and sustained consultation before consensus can be reached on the nature of the programme of action comes neither easy nor cheap. As it turned out the consultation on the MCLB process was not even as inclusive as Article 7 of the WCEFA suggested. For example, the first meeting excluded professional regional and national ODL associations like DEASA. There was also throughout the process very limited representation of the non-governmental sector and religious groups. The assumption seems to have been that these groups would be kept abreast of developments by governments, which in most cases did not happen.

Once consensus on the nature of the MCLB was reached, no resources were available to take forward the programme. Phases 2 and 3 of implementation, the introduction of pilot programmes and the eventual expansion of these programmes, never got off the ground. The WCEFA had envisaged partnerships and solidarity with international donors to include even the implementation phases of regional programmes. The envisaged long-term support for the MCLB as a regional cooperation programme in ODL was not achieved. The laudable principles and objectives of the MCLB which advocated self-sufficiency and independence through the mobilisation of resources from mainly the Africa region were never achieved. The form of resources provided by national governments during Phase 1, the planning process, was workshop attendance costs for their delegates. The rest of the funding for this stage came from international donors. With the bulk of funding and the coordination of the MCLB coming from external
agencies, implementation ceased when the external donor agencies lost interest in the programmes.

The reasons for the withdrawal of international support for the project are not easy to decipher. However, one of the reasons seems to be the focus of the EFA on national rather than regional cooperation programmes. This focus as clearly indicated in the WCEFA timeframes, the subsequent evaluation of implementation progress and substantial financial resources provided by funding agencies, was on national ODL programmes. For example, with regard to the latter, adult basic education and secondary education ODL programmes in Botswana (e.g. BOCODOL), Namibia (e.g. NAMCOL) and South Africa (UNISA’s ABET programme) received substantial funding from a UK funding agency during this period. With regard to evaluation of progress on the implementation EFA, there have been follow-up evaluative gatherings like the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000 and the Millennium Development Goals and Targets adopted in September 2000 by 149 Heads of State and Government, and both of these gatherings have included national progress in EFA and aggregated this into regional evaluation. The evaluation was facilitated by the fact that UNESCO commissioned systematic studies and forums for discussing the reports and agreeing on appropriate action with targets and timeframes. Another of these types of evaluative gatherings that included the five CDEP countries was the 15th Conference of the Commonwealth Education Ministers held in Edinburgh, Scotland, from 27 to 30 October 2003. A paper synthesising the country reports presented at this conference also confirm the national focus of EFA activities:
The Country Reports for the most part discuss educational issues and initiatives in a purely national context; references to international or regional issues are few. (Commonwealth Secretariat 2003: 6)

It seems that real progress has been made in most of the countries and that there is common awareness of relevance of access and inclusion in the attainment of the EFA targets.

Another reason cited by some of the MCLB participants related to the proposed location of the programme in Harare. Lack of consensus on the location of the MCLB during the Nyanga Workshop though criteria for choosing the location had been agreed (MCLB 1995) is cited as an indication of the beginning of the end of this cooperation. By then, it was argued that donor confidence about Zimbabwe was dwindling as a result of this country’s recent policies and political developments which have since then led to diminished interest in funding programmes located in this country. Whether this situation contributed to the closure of the COL Office in Harare in June 1996 is unclear. But for the MCLB, the closure reduced the capacity for coordination within the region and left the UNESCO Harare Office without the valuable close range support for planning follow-up action. Some of the MCLB Working Group members have indicated that COL’s stated reason for pulling out its support was that at the Dakar meeting reviewing EFA and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) meetings, an opinion was expressed that there was no need for new organisational structures as enough structures already exist to do what the MCLB wanted to do, for
example SADC, ADEA and DEASA. The problem with this point of view is that the SADC Technical Committee on Distance Education (TCDE) and ADEA Working Group on Distance Education, another regional organisation working in ODL, have to date not done what the MCLB was ready to introduce then.

The establishment in 2005 of the Southern African Regional Distance Education Centre (SARDEC) in Botswana by this country’s government in collaboration with COL and UNESCO might provide the necessary impetus for the continuation of the MCLB and TCDE ideals. The draft programme of action of this centre include the key components of the MCLB and TCDE plans, namely, the development of a clearing house of information, policy development, capacity building, research, advocacy and partnerships and its advisory board is meant to include all key ODL stakeholders in the region, including DEASA (DEASA 2004 (d): Addendum B). The provision of the infrastructure for SARDEC and staffing by the Botswana government augurs well for implementation provided the current programme funding by the two international agencies, COL and UNESCO, continues or is eventually provided by SADC. At the March 2006, DEASA Meeting, the Director of SARDEC reported that the centre has been approved by SADC and its name changed to SADC Centre for Distance Education. Hopefully, this approval will ensure growth and sustainability of the centre and its programmes.
4.3 SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL: SADC

OLD cooperation initiatives in the Southern African sub-region predate the WCEFA by at least two decades. The two ODL related cooperation initiatives concerned are DEASA and SADC initiatives.

4.3.1 Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA)

Established in 1972 as the Distance Learning Association in order to foster collaboration between ODL organisations in the three countries of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland but including SACHED because of its anti-apartheid stance and work in ODL, DEASA had by the turn of the millennium become an association with over 20 member organisations in five Southern African countries. As an association operating within SADC its policies are in line with the SADC PET and it has since 2000 amended its constitution to include membership from all SADC countries. The policy and implementation practices described at national level and with regard to the CDEP cover DEASA as its member countries and organisations are the ones described at this level. The CDEP is also the only long-term collaboration programme coordinated by DEASA. NAPRODDOLSA, if it eventually materialises, will be the second ODL professional development collaboration coordinated by DEASA.

Among DEASA’s achievements are its survival for over 30 years, diffusion to other countries in terms of expansion of membership (Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia have joined) and institutionalisation into a regional association that enjoys support and
recognition from SADC and COL, see its role in the SADC TCDE in Sections 4.3.2.2 and 4.2.2.3 and in the CDEP collaboration as described and analysed in this report. This survival was nurtured by the original DEASA member institutions’ commitment to this collaboration and preparedness to cover from their own resources the costs of the biannual meetings and other activities of the association. One DEASA strength cited by Dodds (2004: viii) is that the association has enabled smaller countries to “gain strength through mutual exchange, maintain contact with the outside world and, at least initially, hold at bay the dominance of the South African giant, UNISA”. In recent years DEASA has begun to publish its experience, for example it has produced a book of case studies edited by Nonyongo & Ngengebule (1998) and a collection of papers edited by Dodds (2005) and is, thus, contributing to the improvement of the limited southern African ODL research.

The challenges faced by DEASA are mainly structural. The association did not for many years have a permanent secretariat. Its executive and secretariat rotated among member countries every two years. This affected continuity and the momentum in the delivery of collaboration activities because every new secretariat took time to adjust and gain experience and when they had settled and were ready to implement plans it was time to hand over to the next country. A new structure approved in 2003 has made provision for an Executive Secretary located in one institution and empowered to play advocacy and pro-active programme development and implementation roles. It has also maintained the rotational aspects of the Executive Committee consisting of country representatives with the Executive Secretary participating as an ex-officio member (DEASA RSA 1999).
Financial problems have thwarted the full implementation of this structure, though for a short while UNISA hosted the secretariat and seconded one of its academic staff members to carry out this function.

4.3.2 SADC Initiatives

As early as April 1980, the then, Southern Africa Development and Coordination Conference was founded in Lusaka, Zambia by the nine countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe to foster cooperation in the region. The name was changed to SADC through a Treaty that was signed in August 1992 in Windhoek, Namibia. SADC has 14 Member States, the original nine and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Mauritius (recently withdrew), Namibia, Seychelles (which has recently joined) and South Africa.

The SADCC was formed in order to transform the positive experiences gained from cooperating as frontline States in the political struggle against apartheid to the quest for social and economic development of the sub-region. SADCC translated this quest into four objectives:

- To reduce Member States dependence, particularly, but not only on apartheid South Africa.
- To implement programmes and projects with national and regional impact.
- To mobilise Member States’ resources, in the quest for collective self-reliance.
- To secure international understanding and support (SADC 2003 [a]: 1)
One important ODL-related regional project of the SADCC was the study on the nature and form that cooperation in the area of ODL should take. This study proposed the establishment of a SADCC institute that will coordinate cooperation in ODL. In accepting the proposals emanating from the study, SADCC in July 1987 limited the role of the initiative to that of a centre, the SADCC Centre for Distance Learning, which would not be a fully-fleshed institution with its own learners, but rather a centre that supports and strengthens ODL at all levels and national ODL institutions in the region:

The SADCC Centre for Distance Learning (SADCC - CDL) is a supporting and coordinating institution, the main function of which is to strengthen Distance Education at all levels in the SADCC region. To achieve this, the Centre will seek not only to help existing institutions, but also to be of assistance in the establishment of new institutions for distance education within the Region.

The SADCC Centre for Distance Learning is aimed solely at serving and strengthening the national institutions of the region, and as such it has no hierarchical authority over these institutions. (Leibbrandt 1991: 6).

The above limitation ensured a manageable role for the centre away from the minefield of in-country ODL provision. It also sought to strike a balance between national autonomy and responsibility in education provision and regional cooperation. The suggested
assistance to ODL institutions in the region included facilitation of the sharing of information, experience and expertise.

The SADCC gained valuable experience which informed the organisation’s decision to change from a coordination conference to a more formal and legal structure of cooperation, SADC. Some of the constraints experienced by SADC include lack of institutional reforms for ensuring effective transformation from SADCC to SADC, lack of synergy between the objectives of the Treaty and the existing SADC Programme of Action and institutional frameworks and lack of appropriate mechanisms for translating political commitment into concrete programmes of community building and integration (SADC 2004: 3). The restructuring of SADC approved in March 2001 was aimed at addressing these constraints through centralisation of SADC activities in one country, Botswana and increasing efficiency. Despite these challenges, SADC has grown to become a strong organisation with a Programme of Action that covers several economic and social sectors. It has also developed relevant Protocols for these sectors. The Protocol on Education and Training (PET) is the one that has relevance to the study.

4.3 2.1 Policy goals and framework of action

The SADC PET was signed in Blantyre, Malawi, on 8th September 1997 (the year of the CDEP first offering) by 11 of the 14 SADC Member States, namely Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Though signed in 1997, the actual ratification of the SADC PET took several years thereafter to take effect. To “enter into force” and have legal status required
two thirds of the signatories to have “completed the ratification process and deposited instruments of ratification to the SADC Secretariat” and by January 1999 only four countries had done so (SADC 1999: 1). The required two thirds for ratification materialised in 2000 (SADC 2005).

The formulation, development and coordination of policy are central to the SADC PET and this is demonstrated by the fact that four of its eleven objectives are devoted to this aspect of cooperation. The policy matters that these objectives focus on are comparability and appropriateness of policies, involvement of other stakeholders than governments in policy development (for example NGOs; private sector etc), application of information and communications technology and creation of an enabling environment for personnel to use their knowledge and skills effectively, Article 3(c), (d), (e) & (h), respectively (SADC PET 1997: 6). All are basic requirements for any cooperation activity and do assist in the establishment of arrangements for pooling resources as envisaged in Article 3(b). These objectives also encompass other elements for effective cooperation. Objective c), for example, is not just on formulation and implementation of appropriate policies but also on comparability of policies, strategies and systems. Objectives d), e) and h), on the other hand, concentrate on inclusive processes and encourage the participation by other civil society sectors. Objective f) addresses the issue of mobility of learners and staff within the region, through the relaxation of immigration formalities to create opportunities for greater access to services provided in different parts of the sub-region.
The other requisite building blocks for facilitating cooperation are covered by objectives dealing with the development of a conducive environment through the implementation of a common system for information collection and reporting, Article 3 (a), establishment of mechanisms and institutional arrangements for pooling human resources, Article 3 (b), creation of freer access to quality education and training within the region, (Article 3 (f), and the eventual elimination of immigration formalities, Article 3 (g). Language as an important vehicle for communication and negotiation is also addressed. Article 3(i) focuses on the issue of language and specifically seeks to promote the learning of the major official languages of the sub-region: English and Portuguese.

Article 4 (SADC PET 1997: 7-8) amplifies the policy related objectives by identifying issues or conditions that facilitate and expand cooperation and eventually lead to standardised policies. The identified issues are related to equity (for example widening access to gender education; addressing gender equality; increasing equitable access); to quality and relevance; to rationalisation of the education systems; and to encouraging joint development and delivery of programmes.

In line with the WCEFA Article VIII concerning the development of a supportive policy context for the “expanded vision of EFA”, the SADC PET devotes Article 9 to lifelong education and training and within this there is a sub-section, (A), covering distance education specifically. Here distance education is acknowledged as an important methodology for improving access to education and training, reducing education and training costs and achieving universal literacy and numeracy. This sub-section commits
Member States to several activities: i) the establishment, where non-existent, of distance education institutions for all levels of education and training; ii) formulation of national policies that promote cooperation; iii) cooperation in the design, development and dissemination of materials; iv) cooperation in the training of educators and trainers; v) encouraging and supporting the creation of regional professional associations and vi) the establishment of the SADC Distance Education Centre. The latter activity affirms the proposal made during the SADCC period. The prominent role of distance education as envisaged in the SADC PET is further strengthened by the provision for a dedicated Technical Committee for Distance Education (TCDE) as one of the institutional arrangements catered for in Article 11 (SADC PET 1997: 29). The composition of the TCDE is also very inclusive covering all major stakeholders; government, NGOs, private sector, professional associations, higher education councils and even student organisations.

As far as the issue of timeframes is concerned, the SADC PET includes a target date for achieving the objectives of regional cooperation, namely not more than 20 years, (SADC PET Article 3 (j)). From the date of signature, 1997, the target date for fully operationalising cooperation would be the year 2017. If the date of coming into force is considered, then 2020 would be deadline. This means that by that date SADC envisages that the ultimate objective of their collaboration would have been achieved, namely that the sub-region would have “progressively achieve(d) the equivalence, harmonisation and standardisation of the education and training systems in the Region” as stipulated in the ultimate objective of SADC PET, Article 3 (k) (SADC PET 1997: 7).
An institutional mechanism for implementation was established as a Sub-Sector for Cooperation in Education and Training located within the Human Resource Development Sector (HRD). This Sub-Sector was responsible for establishing and coordinating seven Technical Committees: Basic Education; Intermediate Education and Training; Higher Education and Training and Research and Development; Lifelong Education and Training; Training Fund; Certification and Accreditation; Distance Education. The Sub-Sector was also empowered to establish additional Technical Committees as needed.

4.3.2.2 Implementation

During the period between the signing of the SADC PET and to-date considerable progress in the implementation of the agreed policy has been achieved. The Technical Committees envisaged in the protocol have been established and have met regularly, at least twice per year. Member States and/or institutions have provided funds for government officials and specialists in ODL to attend these meetings which have been hosted by Member States on a rota basis.

The Technical Committee relevant for this study, namely the Technical Committee on Distance Education (TCDE), in discharging its function of “dealing with matters of cooperation as agreed under this Protocol in the area of distance education” (SADC PET: 35), has organised regional meetings and has already met six times under the chairpersonship of Zambia. The fact that implementation of the institutional framework began before the ratification of the SADC PET facilitated progress. As a result by 2001,
the TCDE had developed a programme of action for its specialist area, prioritised the projects that need to be implemented immediately and developed budgets for each of these projects.

The priority projects identified in TCDE strategic plan cover the following topics:

- Policy development.
- Capacity building.
- Database development.
- Sharing materials, books and expertise.
- Networking of national, regional and international associations.
- Information and communication technologies
- Establishment and networking of ODL centres of specialisation.

The 2002 Report of the TCDE to the SADC HRD Meeting noted that it had been difficult to implement most of the projects because of resource constraints but that some progress had been achieved in four strategic areas, three of these falling within capacity building and the last involving planning. With the support of COL, the TCDE had implemented Phase 1 of the Capacity Building Project which provided training of the TCDE Members in distance education policy development. This was an online course using the internet as a platform for delivery. Twenty three members from Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Swaziland, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated. The evaluation of the course was very positive and it was recommended that this form of course structure be used for professional development in other areas of training within the
region. The second activity covered sponsorship by COL for ODL practitioners in four SADC countries that were not DEASA members to enrol on the CDEP. These countries were Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique and Zambia and 14 practitioners benefited from this offer, that is, sponsorship for 4, 3, 4 and 3 practitioners per country respectively. The third activity involved an analysis and improvement of the projects contained in the strategic plan and the refinement of budgets. The fourth activity entailed the introduction of discussion of topical issues during the course of TCDE meetings in order to promote information sharing and cooperation. The first discussion took place during the fifth TCDE Meeting held in Namibia in April 2002. Presentations were made by Namibian organisations on cooperation in ODL among Namibian institutions, the use of ICT and combating HIV/AIDS in the education and training sector. At the Sixth TCDE Meeting held in Botswana in September 2002 this country’s experience in the latter topic was the content of the presentation to the TCDE. Both these presentations (Botswana and Namibia) and the discussions that ensued were found informative and very useful ways for sharing of information and networking with providers. The Botswana Meeting was also used by the TCDE to get firsthand information from the SADC Headquarters on the restructuring process and its implications for the work of the TCDE. Two lessons emerging from these presentations were that the extension of decentralised learning centres to rural and remote areas was possible if institutions collaborate to resource (human, financial and materials including ICT resources) and share the use of these centres as in the Namibian NOLNet collaboration and that innovative ways of dealing with the HIV/AIDS epidemic are emerging in southern African countries and ODL institutions in the region should investigate and implement ways of mainstreaming
HIV/AIDS in their curricula. The SADC restructuring process suggested that the TCDE needs to investigate ways of ensuring that its programme of action is not left out of the new SADC plans.

By 2003, SADC had advanced far in its process of restructuring which had been approved at the 9th March 2001 Meeting held in Windhoek, Namibia. The restructuring introduced a centralised approach, in contrast to the decentralised country approach of the earlier years in which each Member State coordinated at least one Sector Coordinating Unit (SCU). The decentralised SCU system was said to lead to unclear lines of authority and accountability, disparity in resource provision, different management and administration procedures and styles and proliferation of meetings. The centralised approach rationalised the 21 Coordinating Units into four clusters located in Gaborone, Botswana, the SADC Headquarters. These clusters are: Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment; Infrastructure and Services; Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources; Social and Human Development Special Programmes. A decision to phase out the SCUs within a period of two years was taken at an Extra-Ordinary Summit, held in Windhoek, Namibia on 9th March 2001. Prior to centralisation, the HRD SCU was located in Swaziland and the TCDE fell within its ambit of operation. The decision to phase out these units before the implementation of new structures for coordination of the Technical Committees has led to the demise of the TCDE. As a result no meetings have been held since 2002 and there has been no feedback on the attempts to raise funds for the projects of the TCDE. It was only in April 2005 that the SADC Office convened a meeting in Johannesburg to “revise the Implementation Plan developed in 1999 to take cognizance
of the new operations of SADC (SADC 2005: 2). The ODL specific strategies mentioned in the draft include facilitating the creation and/or strengthening of professional associations, policy development and fostering cooperation in the design and development, production and use of ODL materials. The new timeframes are 2006 – 2010.

4.3.2.3 Analysis

The SADCC CDL initiative shows that by the time of the WCEFA in 1990, the SADCC countries had for some time been involved in discussions on cooperation in ODL and these had even led to a proposal to establish a structure to facilitate this cooperation. It is, thus, not surprising that the SADC region (despite the challenges of poverty, debt burden and expansion of the organisation as new democracies like South Africa and Namibia joined) has managed to make considerable progress in regional cooperation, for example, the development of regional policy, the SADC PET and others, concrete proposals for cooperation in the various facets of education and training and the TCDE developed strategic plans for priority projects in ODL. All these are no mean feats which have been achieved over a period of about twenty years of consolidation of the original plan to cooperate through the SADCC. In recent years the limitations of this structure were recognised and the necessary changes made. The latest restructuring of SADC is an attempt to further improve the nature of collaboration in the region. Through rationalisation and centralisation of the organisation, SADC is aiming to be better able to reach its ultimate objective of building:
… a Region in which there will be a high degree of harmonisation and rationalisation to enable the pooling of resources to achieve collective self-reliance in order to improve the living standards of the people of the region. (SADC 2003)

However, with regard to the implementation of the SADC PET ODL related activities, two major problems have been identified and these centre on participation in TCDE meetings and absence of national structures to coordinate and ensure implementation of the SADC PET activities in Member States. According to the SADC PET, the TCDE membership should include all major stakeholders: government, NGOs, the private sector, professional associations, higher education councils and student organisations. A review of participants who have attended the six TCDE Meetings held up to September 2002 reveals that not all these stakeholders have been part of this process. For example, no student organisation, higher education council, private sector, national associations and NGOs have participated in the SADC TCDE. Several SADC countries have national ODL associations, but there were no official representation of these in TCDE meetings. The South African national association, namely the National Association of Distance Education Organisations of South Africa (NADEOSA) is active and has a broad membership that include most ODL organisations from public, private and NGO sectors including government. It won the bid and successfully hosted an international conference on ODL in Durban in August 2002, the Second Pan Commonwealth Forum in ODL. But NADEOSA and other countries’ national associations were not invited to participate in the SADC TCDE activities. Participation by Member States has also been uneven, with
some countries having attended only one or two of the six meetings. The Report of the TCDE to the 2002 HRD Meeting summarised the participation level as follows:

The fourth meeting that was held in Mozambique was attended by eight countries and six were absent namely: Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Seychelles, South Africa and Tanzania. Only seven countries participated at the fifth meeting that took place in Namibia, and the following countries did not attend: Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Seychelles, South Africa and Zimbabwe (SADC 2002).

During 2002 alone, five countries (Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Seychelles and South Africa) had not attended two consecutive meetings. Even in cases where participation has been regular, the main problem identified by the SADC TCDE was that of lack of consistency. Country representatives to the TCDE were often changed and at each meeting, the new participants had to be brought on board before discussion of the items on the agenda. Both limited country participation and inconsistency of representation resulted in action items being postponed or assigned to new members. This delayed the finalisation and implementation of TCDE decisions greatly. Budget constraints have been cited by Members States as one reason for this uneven participation in regional activities like those of the SADC TCDE. Broader participation at national level prior to regional meetings might be one way of ensuring that the views of all stakeholders are taken into consideration. But, in some countries
participation at national level as proposed by the SADC PET and the Lusaka Workshop (SADC 1999) has also not materialised or where it has started the major ODL stakeholder outside government are unaware of the existence or are excluded from such national structures.

The SADC restructuring has also presented challenges for the implementation of TCDE programmes. The TCDE at its meeting of 2002 noted the two main and interlinked challenges as lack of continuity and inadequate coordination. There was concern that the new SADC structure does not provide for the support and coordination of the ODL sub-sector and that especially during the transitional phase of restructuring the work of the TCDE would be adversely affected. After the closure of the HRD SCU and during the establishment of the relevant Directorate at the SADC Headquarters in Botswana, there was likely to be a vacuum in coordination of the TCDE activities. The TCDE, therefore, made a proposal that either the TCDE Chairperson should be mandated to convene future meetings of the TCDE, that is in the place of the HRD SCU, or that DEASA be given this mandate (SADC 2002). Faced with the potential closure due to the organisation’s restructuring process, the SADC TCDE at its September 2002 Meeting in Botswana requested the SADC representative present at this meeting that in future all stakeholders should be included in national structures meant to drive activities which were previously coordinated by the SADC HRD SCU located in Swaziland (2002 SADC TCDE Minutes). That the work of the TCDE has been adversely affected is evidenced by the fact that no meetings have taken place since the 2002 Botswana Meeting. Neither have the TCDE strategic plans been implemented, except for the capacity building initiatives started in
collaboration with COL on the CDEP and the online course. Neither has SADC officially mandated DEASA to take forwards the TCDE plans. It has taken about three years till April 2005 for SADC to convene a meeting to revive the activities of the TCDE and other Technical Committees. This shows that at both national and regional levels implementation of the SADC PET still faces major challenges. Government participation is crucial, but without the buy-in and active involvement by major national and regional stakeholders in all categories of provision, the envisaged programme of action will be difficult to implement timeously and effectively.

4.4 NATIONAL LEVEL: FIVE DEASA COUNTRIES

At national level, as dictated by the focus of the study, the description and analysis of policy and practices centre on the five SADC countries that are participants of the CDEP collaboration, namely Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. Writing about cooperation, competition or dominance in ODL higher education in Southern Africa, Dodds, Nonyongo and Glennie in Harry (ed) 1999 provided a brief but useful analysis of policy development in these five countries, which, inter alia, noted that at that stage there was “no clearly defined or coordinated policy on distance education development, on the division of responsibility between institutions or collaboration and the sharing of resources” (Harry 1999: 99), in some of the five countries of the CDEP collaboration. The intention, in this section, is to extend this analysis by including any latest developments, indicating contrasts among these five countries’ new developments
and providing a comparison with the issues raised from the policy analysis presented in the earlier section on the WCEFA, wider Africa and the SADC PET.

4.4.1 Policy goals and framework of action

This section combines the description of ODL policy and implementation in each country during the period of the CDEP implementation, that is, the 1990’s to the turn of the new millennium. It is also important to note that the discussion of policy implementation is based mainly on the DEASA member organisations that are participants of the CDEP.

4.4.1.1 Botswana

In Botswana the key education policy during this period is the The Revised National Policy on Education which was approved by the Botswana National Assembly on the 7th March 1994, four years after the WCEFA and three years before the signing of the SADC PET. This policy shows considerable commitment to ODL in providing access to education at all levels or providing “lifelong education to all sections of the population” as stated in the policy (Botswana Government 1994: 5). The policy also recognises that the out-of-school sector (that is the sector within which ODL plays a prominent role) had until that date lacked a “comprehensive policy as it was left out of the Government Paper No 1 of 1977" (Botswana Government 1994: 10). The revised policy, therefore, makes substantial provision to address this situation.

In its provisions, the revised policy recognises ODL as integral to the education system and makes recommendations on its role at each level of provision. At the tertiary level,
expansion of part-time education is recommended and ODL is specifically mentioned as an enabling mode for access to tertiary education by anyone interested and eligible (Botswana Government 1994: 33). The different education institutions are then assigned roles according to their area of specialisation. The lead responsibility for training of out-of-school personnel and for research and evaluation in this sector is assigned to the Department of Adult Education (DAE) at the University of Botswana (UB) (Botswana Government 1994: 35) while this university’s Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) becomes the lead agency for distance education programmes at the tertiary level (Botswana Government 1994: 38). For secondary education, the policy makes provision for the establishment of the Botswana Distance Education College (now called Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning, BOCODOL) to meet the needs of adults and provide a “comprehensive and extensive “O” level programme’ to cater for ‘out-of-school’ education at senior secondary level” (Botswana Government 1994: 17). The establishment of a “nation-wide distance education study centre system of junior secondary level study” for out-of-school children was also included (Botswana Government 1994: 36). The basic education level of out-of-school education is assigned to the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) within the Ministry of Education. This Department’s brief covers the responsibilities for continuing with the National Literacy Programme, out-of school for primary school children in rural and those in urban areas. The latter are said to deserve special mention because they are mainly “street children” and require special attention different from their rural counter parts (Botswana Government 1994: 36). DNFE is also charged with the responsibility for
introducing an Adult Basic Education Course for adults which should be equivalent to standard seven of schooling (Botswana Government 1994: 37).

The policy, thus, covers ODL at all levels and two of the above organisations, BOCODOL, UB-CCE are the lead agencies for ODL implementation (Tau in COL 2002: 8). But importantly, the policy also includes provision for shared use of all facilities “in order to optimize their utilization and promote out-of-school education” (Botswana Government 1994: 35). This together with the establishment of nationwide study centres has made it possible for ODL programmes to provide learner support in a decentralised manner and to minimise infrastructural costs through sharing. In addition, the policy has made provision for staff development for the DNFE staff members to prepare themselves for their new responsibilities in out-of-school education in rural and urban areas and resources to undertake this task (Botswana Government 1994: 36); recommends “appropriate resources to develop the Centre for Continuing Education of the University of Botswana” (Botswana Government 1994: 38). With regard to structures for driving, coordinating and delivering the different programmes for out-of-school education, the policy not only identified and assigned these responsibilities to the relevant existing structures mentioned above and where necessary expanded these structures to cater for the new responsibilities (for example the DNFE and UB), but it also provided for the establishment of suitable new institutions where necessary (for example the BOCODOL, to address out-of-school education at secondary level) and/or the expansion of existing structures to cater for the new tasks (for example, in the case of the CCE and DNFE).
Progress in implementing the new policy in the two ODL lead agencies is substantial. CCE through its Distance Education Unit has increased its ODL provision from one programme, the Certificate in Adult Education, to include the following programmes:

- The Diploma in Primary Education, with 2400 students
- The Diploma in Adult Education, with 27 students
- Commonwealth Diploma in Youth Development Work, (CYP) with 22 students
- Four Degree Programmes in Business Studies in: Accounting, Finance, Marketing and Management, with 250 students
- Diploma in Accounting and Business Studies (DABS)*
- M.Ed in Management and Administration*

(DEASA 17-18 April 2004 (a): 5)

* = Materials development and production is in progress.

By 2000 the new College, BOCODOL, proposed in the revised policy had been established. The core distance education staff members of DNFE were assimilated in the College by December 2000 (Tau 2004: 3). In its project proposal BOCODOL is described as:

… a new initiative, distinctive in status, purpose and organisation. Though born of an existing operation, the College will be transformed from a centralised traditional distance education, to an institution providing learning open to all. It will have a central but strong
management and production unit and a decentralised delivery system with a regional focus to take learning to the people (BOCODOL 1998).

To effect this transformation BOCODOL began with a thorough review of the different facets of its provision as inherited from the DNFE and also undertook study visits to various organisations within the region and internationally to inform their planning. The lessons learnt from these activities informed the strategic plans of the College and BOCODOL has made considerable progress in implementing these plans. It currently offers three categories of programmes: the Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education, Junior Certificate and Vocational Courses. In 2002 it had 90 full-time and 700 part-time staff (tutors and writers) and 10 000 learners served by five regional centres and 50 community study centres (Tau 2002: 8).

In its new mandate, the DNFE offers several courses and skills programmes. The basic education programmes include literacy courses provided at various centres and workplaces. The literacy programmes cover reading, writing and numeracy skills to the equivalence of primary education Standard 4. There are also courses on English as a Second Language (a post literacy course), Life Skills courses; Income Generation projects and Business Management training. The Field Outreach section provides support services in the regions, districts and clusters. Radio broadcasts are used to support literacy programmes and to provide information on civic matters. DNFE’s future plans include the introduction of out-of-school education for children, an extension of the Post Literacy Programme and the upgrade of the adult basic education programme to the
equivalency of Standard 7 of schooling (www.moe.gov.bw/moe/dnfe/course 2004/01/14). DNFE no longer participates in DEASA because it no longer has an ODL unit as BOCODOL has now taken over this responsibility, hence the absence of learner statistics in this section.

4.4.1.2 Lesotho

Discussions with DEASA members and a search of the government of Lesotho website in 2004 indicated no specific ODL policy in Lesotho. However the latest (2006) internet search produced the 2005 Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), Lesotho Education Sector Strategic Plan: 2005-2015 on the government website. This strategic plan contains policy statements that have relevance to all education provision including ODL. Two sector objectives in this plan have direct relevance to ODL and these are: To improve access, efficiency and equity of education and training at all levels and to ensure that both vocational-technical and non-formal education programmes respond to the needs of industry and the communities in general. With regard to access it is further noted that:

Although this principle is often taken to be primarily concerned with opportunities for the school-age population, the Government of Lesotho maintains that it shall also embrace the provision for the adult population, which in the earlier years did not have access to such opportunities (MOET 2005: 21).
And also:

In terms of actual activities the Ministry shall facilitate distance learning for all learners, in addition to face-to-face teaching and learning activities (MOET 2005: 64)

Under the Lifelong Learning and Non-Formal Education Section, the document then lists the non-formal education institutions as the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC), the Institute of Extra Mural Studies (IEMS) which is part of the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and NGOs.

The latest development at NUL mentioned in reports to DEASA Meetings, is the restructuring process introduced in 2003. The process is said not to aim at changing the mandate of NUL. It aims to use distance education to bring the “University to the people of Lesotho, especially those disadvantaged by full-time face-to-face education systems” (DEASA April 2004(b): 2). The implication of the restructuring for established DEASA members within NUL is that the Institute of Education and the Institute of Labour Studies “have been disbanded and their staff redeployed” (DEASA 2004 (b): 2). The newly created Institute of Distance and Continuing Studies (IDCS) consists of these centres:

- Centre for Degree and Post Graduate Studies which in 2003/4 had 159 students registered in the B Ed in Adult Education. The Centre had also obtained approval to launch the M Ed in Adult Education
• Centre for Sub-Degree Studies which offered three part-time diploma programmes in Adult Education (551 students), Mass Communication (224 students) and Business Management (778 students)

• Centre for Outreach and Development whose purpose is to ensure that non-formal education stakeholders are included in the national agenda, was involved in revising existing programmes and had conducted training for administrative staff of UNICEF (DEASA 2004 (b): 3-9)

The LDTC, on the other hand, in 2004 reported that it had attained most of its goals. Among its achievements it listed:

• Learner support work conducted and tutorials run in five operational districts of Lesotho, namely Quthing, Thaba-Tseka, Qacha’s Nek and Mokhotlong.

• 400 continuing education students registered to write the Junior and O’Level examinations in various subjects.

• Pre-testing of several workbooks and modules.

• Literacy and numeracy final tests administered in four districts with a total of 489 learners tested and 400 passed.

• 12 issues of the LDTC newspaper supplement produced and distributed with each issue having a circulation of 12 000.

• 2597 literacy and numeracy books distributed in all five operational areas (DEASA 2004 (b): 10-12).
4.4.1.3 Namibia

The post independence period has seen great transformation in the education system of Namibia to shift it away from the apartheid system of the past. A Presidential Commission set up to review the education system produced their report in 1999, the Report of the Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training. Among the observations made in this report is that adult learning at all levels of provision is a burgeoning activity offered by several strong institutions but that public perception did not fully recognise adult learning as an important learning process capable of changing lives. To address this perception and to coordinate and strengthen adult education, several recommendations were made, amongst which the following are important for ODL:

- Developing an overall policy for adult education which could start with the 1998 National Plan of Action for Adult Learning serving as the initial policy document and then improved later.

- Coordination of adult education to avoid resource wastage and duplication by developing and strengthening partnerships with for example publicly funded open and distance institutions.

- Developing a computerised database to capture diverse learning opportunities available to adult Namibians and on an annual basis publishing, in different languages, a directory containing this information.

- Appreciation of the joint operation of open learning centres and recommending that such collaboration should be extended to include other services.
- Development of a joint training programme by all Ministries with adult education or extension programmes.

- Establishing a council on Adult Education consisting of representatives of interested parties and whose responsibilities would include:
  1. Negotiation of national policies and follow up implementation.
  2. Spearheading a programme to develop multi-purpose community learning centres.
  3. Allocation of grants to deserving and innovative projects in the field of adult education.
  4. Establishment by Ministers of Education and Lifelong Learning of a high level task force on educational use of ICT to advise the Minister and devise collaborative projects.

The 2001 Education Act endorsed the recommendations of the above Commission in two ways. Firstly it made provision for Ministerial allocation of financial resources upon application of any community “to establish, maintain and support adult education or literacy programs”, but with the proviso that the Minister would prescribe conditions for aspects such as admission requirements, entitlement to free or subsidised tuition, measures of control and monitoring of study groups, curricula, standards and other aspects of delivery (GRN Education Act 2001: 36, 67 [1]). Secondly the Act provided for the establishment of the Advisory Council, Regional Council, Local Authority Councils and other bodies that would coordinate and ensure efficient administration of adult education programmes at national, regional and local levels.
Both the Education Act and the Report of the Presidential Commission do not provide for ODL specifically but incorporate it within adult education broadly. The Report recommended the further development of policy on adult education and proposed the establishment of a Council on Adult Education to carry out this task and other responsibilities that would facilitate the implementation of programmes in adult education and ODL. The Act also endorsed the establishment of councils or other bodies to coordinate adult education after consultation with the Advisory Council.

DEASA members charged with the responsibility to implement ODL policy are NAMCOL, CES and the Namibia Polytechnic (NP) whose ODL unit is now called the Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL). According to the report submitted to the DEASA April 2004 Meeting, NAMCOL is the largest educational institution in Namibia with over 26 000 learners. It has successfully implemented a new mode of study called OPEN through which all learners enrolled for the Alternative Secondary Education programme (Grades 10 and 12) receive a basic package consisting of a one-day orientation workshop, study guide, a set of study materials, one hour face-to-face tuition per subject per week, assignments (3 per subject) and self-supervised study facilities. The 2003 examination results showed a marked improvement with pass rates of 83.3% for Grade 10 and 75.3% for Grade 12. NAMCOL also offers the Commonwealth Diploma in Youth Development Work in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Open University, but has recently been accredited as a Partner Institution and will in future offer the programme on its own (DEASA 2004 (c): 3-4).
COLL in 2004 had 886 distance education students and 1858 full-time and part-time students enrolled for two courses through ODL, bringing the total of students enrolled through ODL to 2744. It had 6 full-time staff, 75 part-time tutors, 23 course writers and content editors, 3 instructional designers and 55 face-to-face tutors in nine regional centres (DEASA 2004 (c): 4-5).

CES at UNAM was established in 1992 and caters for the needs of people who, for a variety of reasons, cannot study full-time at any of the UNAM campuses. It operates through three departments: Materials Development, Student Support and Continuing Education and collaborates with internal university faculties in offering formal and non-formal courses. The formal courses include degree programmes in education, business administration and nursing science. The diploma courses offered are in education, adult education, mathematics and science education and home economics. Several certificate programmes are also offered (www.unam.na/centres/ces/programmes.html 2006/02/22) and these include the Certificate in Aids Counselling and Mid Level Management funded by the Ford Foundation (DEASA 2004 (c): 8).

The continuing growth of the Diploma in Education: Maths and Science with 115 registered students was noted as one of CES' highlights in the 2004 report to the DEASA Regional Meeting. The innovations mentioned in this report include the production of two CDs on Human Biology and Physics and the training of staff on web design and putting material on CD (DEASA 2004 (c): 9). CES plans include the development of a

CES also manages eight UNAM regional centres and a large office at the Northern Campus.

The three Namibia institutions, NAMCOL, COLL and CES/UNAM collaborate through the Namibia Open Learning Network (NOLNet) in resourcing and sharing a network of learning centres throughout Namibia.

4.4.1.4 South Africa

In South Africa, the onset of the new dispensation in 1994 presented great opportunities and challenges for transforming the apartheid education system. The new dispensation provided an opportunity to develop education policies that transformed the whole system of education. However, the most comprehensive ODL policy development is in the higher education sector. The further education sector, as a provincially based system, has tended to focus on schooling and ODL on a national scale has been neglected. As a result, in comparison with countries like Botswana and Namibia, there are in South Africa no national ODL programmes like those at BOCODOL and NAMCOL.

Ngengebule (2004) has provided a useful summary of distance education policy in the higher education sector from 1948-1989. She has noted that the chronology of policy development in this sector during the period 1995 - 2003 began with the March 1995

As an important initial national policy document on the transformation of education and training in democratic South Africa, The White Paper on Education and Training noted that:

The development of policy is a learning process. The Ministry of Education’s policies will evolve, and they will be open to correction, not through trial and error, but on the basis of a variety of academic, professional and consultative sources of critique and advice (Department of Education 1995: 7).

The policy documents listed above were all part of the evolution of South African general education and ODL policy. Taking as a basis, the tenets of ODL as outlined in the 1995 White Paper, the Ministry of Education noted that:
The Ministry of Education is anxious to encourage the development of an open learning approach, since it resonates with the values and principles of the national education and training policy which underpins this document and has applicability in all learning contexts (DoE 1995: 28 paragraph 26),

Subsequent policy documents delineated and clarified the type of higher education system envisaged for the country. The NCHE’s recommendation which were contained in the 1997 White Paper, inter alia: recognised three types of higher education institutions, namely universities, technikons and colleges; encouraged regional cooperation and partnerships; noted that distance education and resource-based learning based on the principles of open learning have a crucial role to play in higher education and announced the intention to conduct, in collaboration with the CHE, an assessment of the optimal number and types of institutions needed for a transformed higher education system. This assessment was duly carried out by the CHE and resulted in the 2000 Report that recommended mergers of higher education institutions. In the ODL arena, a new single dedicated distance education university was proposed merging UNISA and TSA and incorporating the Vista University Distance Education Centre. ODL provision in contact institutions would continue provided it formed part of the agreed institutional plans. The Ministry of Education’s NPHE (2001) then spelt out how the recommendations of the CHE would be implemented and later asked the CHE to provide advice on the conditions and criteria that should govern the provision of distance education, the broader role of distance education in the higher education sector and the role of a single dedicated distance education institution in South Africa. The CHE has
duly completed this task and produced a report to the Minister, namely Enhancing the
Contribution of Distance Education in South Africa- Report of an investigation led by the
South African Institute for Distance Education, September 2004. This report has noted
the importance of distance education but cautioned that:

… mechanisms need to be found to steer the sector in a way that will
enhance the vast potential of distance education to fulfil its wide-ranging
roles, while simultaneously stimulating transformation of the sector (CHE

Extrapolating from the 2001 data, the CHE concluded that the new UNISA will in 2004
have at least 200 000 headcount students, that is, 30% of the headcount of the public
higher education sector and will thus continue to be a mega-university (CHE 2004: 184).

The above policy recommendations and plans are in an advanced state of
implementation. The three distance education institutions were merged into a new
UNISA in 2004 and the finer details of the merger are being worked out. The new
UNISA has exceeded the CHE student number projections and is reported to have a total
student body (in both formal and non-formal programmes) in the region of 250 000
(www.unisa.ac.za/default.asp?Cmd 11/08/06. On this webpage, UNISA also describes
its defining characteristic as its comprehensive nature that combines vocational courses
usually associated with technikons and general formative courses usually associated with
universities. UNISA offers a great variety of courses in its five Colleges: College of
Agriculture and Environmental Sciences; College of Economic and Management Sciences; College of Human Sciences; College of Law and College of Science, Engineering and Technology.

4.4.1.5 Swaziland

The policy currently guiding ODL provision in Swaziland is the National Education Policy 1999 in which the section on Adult and Continuing Education describes education as a “continuous process with no possible end” providing lifelong learning in formal and informal situation. It lists the following adult and continuing education initiatives that the Ministry would support:

- Adult Education shall provide numeracy, literacy and life skills
- Distance Learning shall be used as one of the means to provide life-long leaning,
- Adult education and Life-long programmes shall be designed to meet the demands of the target group.

(Swaziland Government 1999: 4)

The Swaziland DEASA members responsible for implementing the ODL-related programmes are the Emlalatini Development Centre (EDC) and the University of Swaziland’s (UNISWA) Department of Extra-Mural Services (DEMS) and Institute for Distance Education (IDE). UNISWA’s restructuring process at the turn of the new century has led to the demise of the DEMS and the UNISWA, Department of Adult Education (DAE) has become a new DEASA member instead.
EDC operates as a government institution under the Ministry of Education and provides secondary education programmes. It offers Junior Certificate, GCE O level and the HIGSE. One of the weaknesses identified is that EDC does not offer enough subjects at all levels to provide students with enough choice and, therefore, in 2002 EDC began a restructuring process that would include:

- Infrastructure development: a new studio, additional offices and modern print shop.
- Strengthened Student Support Services Department
- Improved communication with Rural Education Centres and other strategic centres throughout the country and the introduction of part-time classes.
- Improved communication between distance education providers and the Ministry of Education through the establishment of a distance education officer at the Ministry of Education.
- A functional staff development programme
- Diversified distance education curriculum that will better meet the needs of learners.

(Zikalala 2002: 26 - 27)

In the 2004 report to the DEASA Meeting, EDC reported that learner enrolments continue to increase in all three levels of offerings, namely Junior Certificate, O’Level and the HIGSE level “which comprises of students who have passed O’Level but due to competition for entry at UNISWA, fail to enter the university”. This report also noted that the revival of study centres has encouraged many students scattered throughout the country to enrol for courses (DEASA 2004 (e): 4).
DAE reported that it was planning to review/revise year one for the B ED Adult Education under the IDE and that the M ED adult education programme proposal had been revised and re-submitted for enrolment. Student enrolment for 2003/2004 academic year was as follows:

- Certificate in Adult Education 36
- Diploma in Adult Education 38
- Bachelor of Education (Ad.Ed) 64
  
  Total 138

(DEASA 2004 (e): 5)

IDE, on the other hand, is said to be the largest faculty at UNISWA with an enrolment of 1446 students. A record number of students are also expected to graduate with the BA Humanities degree, B Ed (Adult Education) degree, Diploma in Law and Diploma in Commerce. Another highlight reported by IDE was that it continues to play a crucial role in the development of distance education and it had a record (unspecified) number of students who had already completed their certificates, diplomas and degrees in 2003.

4.4.2 Analysis

From the above information from the five DEASA member countries, it can be concluded that there are still in some of these countries no “clearly defined or coordinated policy on distance education development” (Dodds et al in Harry (ed) 1999: 99). South Africa continues to be the one country with a comprehensive ODL policy. But even in this country, this situation applies only to higher education. The further education sector still
needs to formulate a clear and coordinated ODL policy and an implementation plan. As a result, ODL provision at the further education level tends to be provided mainly by the private sector, except in the vocational area where Technical College on South Africa (TECHNISA) plays an important role as a “state subsidised technical college for vocational training in Engineering, Business and General Studies” (SAIDE 1995: 12). Botswana and Namibia have made some progress in policy formulation and there are clear indications of institutional responsibilities in each of the levels of ODL provision. These countries secondary/further education ODL provision has seen great transformation and development and the two national colleges (BOCODOL and NAMCOL) are doing very well. In Lesotho, the LDTC and the EDC in Swaziland which have been in existence for a longer period than the other two organisations are also doing well in the area of secondary and further education. Lesotho’s MOET 2005 has made significant progress in improving the policy development situation, although the details in this policy tend to focus on lifelong learning and non-formal education generally and not on ODL per se. Swaziland, on the other hand, does not seem to have moved further in ODL policy development since the 1999 general education policy.

Transformation of education systems, mergers and restructuring are common themes within the policy documents from these five countries. Botswana, Namibia and South Africa created new institutions, BOCODOL, NAMCOL and the new UNISA while Lesotho and Swaziland restructured existing institutions to cater for improved access to education through ODL.
Collaboration and partnerships both nationally and regionally are also mentioned as important in all these countries policies. Collaboration in the development and use of learning centres is a common theme that emphasises the need to establish a vibrant network of centres to ensure support for urban and rural ODL learners. In all these countries considerable progress has been made to achieve this aim.

As members of DEASA all the above mentioned countries are putting in practice the policy ideals of the SADC PET and the WCEFA. Their involvement in the CDEP and continued though limited use of this programme as a staff development programme, demonstrate their dedication to institutionalising ODL collaboration in the region which the WCEFA saw as being “at the heart” of the expanded vision and renewed commitment to EFA (WCEFA Article 7).

4.5 CONCLUSION

Internationally, nationally and institutionally there is common agreement on the crucial role of ODL in opening access to education at all levels of provision. Collaboration in delivery is also recommended and various collaboration initiatives were initiated in the Africa region after the WCEFA but all of these have not materialised; the plans developed collaboratively have remained on paper only, except for the COL/Botswana Government initiative that has led to the establishment of SARDEC in 2005. But this latest development has still not implemented concrete programmes.
At the national level, the WCEFA recommendation on the need to develop national ODL policy has shown progress in that the majority of the DEASA member countries now have ODL policies even though some still have a few policy statements within general education policies. Implementation of these policies is also at an advanced stage.

Though collaboration is encouraged regionally, there are no concrete ODL regional programmes because the plans developed by the TCDE have remained on paper only. The only regional collaboration programmes operational currently are those driven by the regional association, DEASA, which include the CDEP/BA ODL collaboration, the bi-annual capacity building workshops and sharing of information through the DEASA regional meetings and attempts to develop a collaborative Masters in ODL through the NAPRODOLSA initiative. This position suggests that ODL collaboration in the region is likely to succeed if driven, within the parameters of existing policies, by existing specialist associations and/or individual institutions, with the support but not the lead of government/s. The CDEP has certainly followed this route with the two South African originators, SACHED-DETU and UNISA-ICE forming a partnership with DEASA supported by COL. The NAPRODOLSA initiative, on the other hand, is driven by the UNAM-CES with the support of the collaboration partners: UB; UNISA; UNAM, UNZA; OUT and ZOU. Unsuccessful attempts by DEASA to get SADC support to continue the work started by the TCDE are recognition of the crucial role of ODL institutions and associations in driving collaboration ventures.