

https://dspace.org/

Open and distance learning staff development : an impact evaluation of a southern African collaborative programme.

Nonyongo, Evelyn Pulane

2008-06-18T10:06:15Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/4961

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The review of the literature raised a number of issues that have a direct bearing on this study. From the ODL curriculum and programme development perspective, these issues cover conceptions of ODL, staff development and collaboration in the delivery of ODL programmes which are all issues directly concerned with curriculum implementation. From a research methodology perspective, the issues for consideration are related to the evaluation of programme impact.

2.2 ODL RELATED MATTERS

The two central ODL related matters for consideration are concerned with ODL conceptions and policy

2.2.1 Conceptions

In this study, the terms ODL and distance education are used interchangeably, except in instances where the correspondence nature (that is print-based programmes with centralised and minimal learner support) of a programme is emphasised. In such instances correspondence education is used.

In recent years the term ODL has become the preferred term than distance education because it encapsulates notions of openness, flexibility and minimising barriers to educational access as opposed to closed approaches in distance learning. Hence the names of some distance education institutions include the term open, for example the United Kingdom (UK) Open University, Indira Ghandi Open University, Namibia College of Open Learning, Zimbabwe Open University and so forth. However, the debate on the suitability of the terms distance education and ODL remains unresolved and some writers have lately included both aspects of this mode of education by using the much longer term distance education and open learning. As long as the introduction of new technologies keeps narrowing the difference between contact and distance education and thus blurring the difference between the two modes, the terminology debate is likely to continue. ODL is also said to be a term that captures notions of flexibility and learner-centred approaches in distance education and indicates the later stages of evolution of distance education. These later stages began with the second generation and are today in the fifth generation. The generations have been summarised as follows:

- The first generation (1700s - late 1800s) which entailed a wide separation (distance) between learners and the providing institutions or the correspondence education stage that relied on print as the medium of instruction. This generation coincided with the establishment of the railways and postal services as methods of communication that linked distant places of the industrialising world (Inquai 1991). Two examples of pioneers of correspondence education are Isaac Pitman who taught shorthand at a distance in Britain and Anna Elliot Tichnor founder of the Boston Society to Encourage Study at Home, whose students were mainly women studying literature.

- The second generation (1900s – mid 1950s) which saw the introduction of other media: audio tapes, radio, and telephones; all of which provided other forms of contact between the institution and the learner. This generation also saw a growth in the number of providing institutions and learners and a variety of programmes offered. Some of the institutions of this generation are the American International Correspondence Colleges and Hermods, the Swedish correspondence institute. UNISA became a distance education during this stage, in 1946 and is, thus, a pioneer in this mode of delivery at the higher education level. During this period most African countries were colonised by European Powers and, except for UNISA, distance education programmes available in Africa were branches of existing institutions in the "mother" countries of these colonies (UNISA 2004: 18) and the institutions were in the main were private and profit-making Limited availability of audio visual technology resulted in the use of mainly print-based correspondence type provision and limited interaction with learners which often resulted in high drop-out rates.
- The third generation (late 1950s – early 1980s) was one of rapid growth in numbers of providers, learners and innovation in the types of learning materials produced and methods of supporting learners. This period saw the introduction of open universities first in the UK and followed by others in other countries like Thailand, India etc. In Africa the use of distance education for secondary education increased. Greater opportunities for interaction in the teaching and learning process were made possible through the incorporation of a variety of learner support using direct and immediate or synchronous communication, for example telephone and face-to-face contact at decentralised learning centres. Though learner access to synchronous technology was

still a major disadvantage in Africa, institutions like UNISA and the Malawi College of Distance Education (founded in 1964) introduced face-to-face and radio contact to address the problems of correspondence type education (IEC/University of London 1991. Finding and/or creating the human resources to provide interaction with learners, inducting them into their roles and facilitating their development, were some of the challenges faced by distance education institutions in Africa during this generation (Robinson & Dodds 1989).

- The fourth generation (late 1980s – early 1990s) saw an advancement in the print, audio, telephone and video technologies of the previous generations. The immediate but often one-to-one contact was extended to group contact through tele- and video- conferencing. The growth in the use of computers also led to the use of computer conferencing during this stage. This generation introduced more flexibility in programme delivery and saw the emergence of dual mode institutions providing both contact and distance education programmes. Limited access to technology in Africa continued to retart the introduction of these new interactive and synchronous technologies. However, the growth of decentralised learning centres extended the use of face-to-face, telephone, audio and video cassettes and radio assisted in breaking the isolation of distance learners and fostering more interaction between learners and institutions.
- The fifth generation (late 1990 – the new millennium) is still developing. The CDEP was introduced during this period in 1997. The fifth generation of ODL is advancing the computer-mediated technologies of the previous generation further. One of its emerging features is the automated response systems which provide immediate feedback through interactive voice computer systems. New developments in the use of cellular telephones

are also providing a new dimension to interaction with learners in ODL systems. (Summarised from UNISA ODL101-F 2004: 14-23). The African Virtual University is one example of the use of advanced technologies in distance education in Africa. Because of the rapid growth of cell phones in Africa, experimentation on the use of the cell phones Short Message System for learner support and teaching is increasing (Mabusela & Nonyongo 2005). Computer-based internet and e-mail systems are also gradually been extended as access is improved especially through work-based solutions and/or internet cafes. But until access to electricity and telephones reaches remote and rural areas, the inclusion of most aspects of the fifth generation of ODL will not be achieved soon and Africa will continue to lag behind the developed world. The rapid spread of wireless technology in Africa suggests that these limitations could be overcome if costs are greatly reduced.

The changes evolving from the generations of ODL described above have, thus, transformed correspondence education based solely on print to multi-media provision made possible by the latest information and communication technologies that make both synchronous and asynchronous communication possible between providers and learners individually and in group contexts, for example one-to-one or conference communication by telephone, video and/or computer. They have resulted in shifting education from the campus to the home and workplace. These changes, especially those emerging from the third, fourth and fifth generations of ODL, are:

> … based on a fusion of new technologies with some of the values and practices from open and distance learning and with some of those from traditional face-to-face education (Reddy et al 2000: 474).

These changes have brought about more flexibility, choices and control for learners and have resulted in the blurring of the distinction between distance and contact teaching (Kirby 1993). But they have also widened the divide between the haves and have-nots and resulted in developing countries, especially those in Africa, still relying mainly on the second and third generation of ODL delivery, for example, the CDEP uses mainly print (for both learning materials, assignments and feedback from tutors), audio cassettes, and limited face-to-face contact.

Underlying the first two ODL generations was the Fordist manufacturing industry notion of uniform mass production of education in order to achieve economies of scale. Recent developments attempt to shift ODL away from Fordism towards notions of individualisation (Evans & Nation 1993), learner-centredness and service industry (Sewart 1992) that, inter alia, focus on learner needs and allow learners to have more control in the teaching and learning process and, thus, recognise the centrality of learner support in, especially, increasing learner retention and success (Tait & Mills 2003).

In contrast with emerging international conceptions and practices of ODL, the review of distance education in South Africa (SAIDE 1995) highlighted major weaknesses in the public ODL provision, weaknesses suggesting that the South African provision was still largely concentrating

on Fordist notions of the correspondence model of ODL. The National Commission on Higher Education Report (NCHE 1996) confirmed these weaknesses and recommended transformation from correspondence education to well-functioning distance education practices encompassing improvement of the quality and relevance of learning materials, proper learner support (including the development of a coordinated national network of learning centres as structures for providing localised learner support and access to technology), more participatory and democratic governance structures and extended partnerships among all types of organisations for maximum use of resources and elimination of competition. An investigation of tertiary distance education undertaken between 2002 and 2004 by the South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) at the request of the Minister of Education notes that despite the development of policy (DoE 1997), criteria for quality (DoE 1998) and a national plan (DoE 2001) "there are quality difficulties both in the programmes that are offered by dedicated distance education institutions and in those offered in formerly face-to-face institutions and that this a cause for concern (CHE 2004: 142-44). Transformation of ODL to achieve quality is, thus, high on the agenda of the government's education strategy for providing greater access to and success in education. Whether and how programmes are contributing to ODL transformation will continue to play a central role in South Africa.

It is against this backdrop of emerging conceptions of ODL nationally, regionally and internationally that the delivery of the CDEP is evaluated. The international focus is necessitated by the nature of the CDEP as a Southern African ODL collaboration programme (currently the only programme being offered) and as one of the few certificate level ODL staff development programmes worldwide.

The quality of ODL programmes is also related to learner retention, pass and throughput rates. Kember (1995: 25) notes that the ODL higher drop-out rates in comparison with contact education are of concern and/or interest to various stakeholders. To students, failure leads to disappointment, distress and material loss. To institutions, it could lead to a loss of revenue and reputation because attrition rates are used as performance indicators and for governments it could imply inefficient use of resources. However, attrition rates in shorter duration programmes offered by higher education at lower levels (certificate or undergraduate diploma) and/or postgraduate programmes are much better (Perraton 2000; Raza 2004). Of the two types of programmes, shorter duration professional programmes seem to be more successful (Raza 2004) and the reasons for this are:

> …threefold: shorter courses are likely to seem more attainable given their shorter time horizon; more often than not, shorter courses feed into degree programmes providing an incentive to complete; compared to the master's programmes, shorter courses are likely to be less technically challenging for the self-learner at this lower level (Raza 2004: 219).

The CDEP falls within the shorter professional development programme category of certificate programmes. This study contributes to research on retention, pass and throughput rates of such programmes by presenting the situation of a Southern African collaborative programme.

2.2.2 Policy

Regional, national and institutional formulation of ODL policy is regarded as central to effective planning and implementation of programmes. Perraton & Lentell (2004: 250) argue that articulation of policy "is likely to help the cost-effective and educationally sound expansion of open and distance learning". Understanding of the state of ODL policy formulation in the countries participating in the CDEP is, therefore, central to this study.

ODL policy formulation in the five southern African countries participating in this innovation is in varying states of development, as Chapter 4 will explain in some detail. South Africa has the longest ODL experience and in comparison to the other four countries, has a clearly defined and coordinated distance education policy (Dodds et al 1999) most of which was developed after the ascendancy of the democratic government in 1994. Botswana and Namibia are revising their education policies to ensure a greater role for ODL. As members of SADC, all five countries subscribe to the SADC Protocol on Education and Training which sees ODL as a method of education that is central to greater access and participation in education. Progress on the formulation of ODL policy in general and collaboration specific policy in these countries, forms the backdrop to the evaluation of the CDEP impact.

The benefits of this study to Southern African policy debates will be in two main ways. It will provide a regional state of affairs on policy formulation and implementation in the five countries concerned. This should provide a basis for comparison of the five countries' policies which in turn should shed light on potential areas needing revision within each country's policies in relation to the SADC Protocol and emerging international trends.

For South Africa, given the fact that the main collaboration partners, that is, the originator (SACHED-DETU) and the provider (UNISA – ICE) of this innovation, are South African, this study should inform policy implementation in the critical areas specified in the country's ODL policy, especially with regard ODL conceptions, implementation including institutional provision, collaboration, quality assurance and the contribution that such ODL staff development programmes can make in ODL delivery generally.

2.3 COLLABORATION

Citing Canadian experience, Mugridge (1993) endorsed Neil's (1983) view that "although inter-institutional collaboration was to all appearances not merely useful but also a simple undertaking, it had been attended by only irregular success" and that it held out "only a rather insubstantial hope of change". But due mainly to economic, social, technological and educational reasons and the fact that ODL stands a better chance of improving access to education than the conventional mode of education, collaboration continues to play an important role in ODL.

Collaboration is at the heart of the formation of SADC and Articles 21 and 22 of the SADC Treaty provide for co-operation and development of Protocols that may be necessary for co-operation (SADC 2004: 1). The Protocol on Education and Training (PET) is one of these protocols and it recognises, inter alia, that:

> … no SADC Member State can alone offer the full range of world quality education and training programme at affordable costs and on a sustainable basis.

And

> … programmes of human resource development, utilisation and increased productivity must have both national and regional dimensions (SADC 2004: 1-2).

In addition, PET recognises distance education as a method that can improve access to education and training and, therefore urges Member States to formulate national policies on distance education, establish such institutions, promote cooperation among them and encourage the creation of regional professional associations (SADC 2004: 21-22).

International and South African ODL case studies (Moran & Mugridge 1993; Nonyongo 1996; Nonyongo & Ngengebule 1998: Dodds et al 1999) demonstrate increased interest in collaboration and commitment to make it succeed. These case studies provide useful comparisons for this study, especially because some of them are on professional development of ODL staff. The main difference between them and the CDEP is in terms of level (graduate or post-graduate courses in comparison with the CDEP's focus on the undergraduate certificate level). But numerous pitfalls related to funding policy, institutional commitment, mission clarity, articulation, organisational structure, effectiveness, leadership, institutionalisation and member complementarity (Moran & Mugridge 1993) continue to haunt collaboration and make it a difficult undertaking.

Cross border educational delivery and collaboration and the impact of globalisation on ODL have policy implications on issues related to learner support, quality assurance and organisational structure, all of which centre around resources and quality. Resources required for cross border education present challenges to both the developing and developed world. Farrell et al in Perraton and Lentell (2004: 176) note that the losses incurred from cross border university education, for example, the closure of the British Open University American branch at a reported loss of £9 million, suggest that the "scale and pace of the development of the global campus remains unclear and difficult to predict" and that for continued operation across borders protocols for partnerships would be needed. At national level, one of the resource issues needing attention is scholarship policy, especially because scholarships have tended to cover contact education learners and nationals only. Examples of experimental scholarship programmes for ODL and across national boundaries programmes cited in Perraton et al (2004: 177) are the COL funding for the Indira Gandhi National Open University Masters course, the Canadian government funding for linked courses between Canada and the Caribbean and the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission of the UK which supports partnerships with overseas institutions. The CDEP is also one such initiative funded partly by COL and DEASA member institutions.

2.4 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Staff development issues that have had a direct bearing on this study relate to effective methods of developing ODL staff, the extent to which development programmes perpetuate the status

quo, levels of staff needing staff development programmes, content and form of staff development programmes and institutional rewards.

The review of ODL literature endorsed, as an important activity, ODL practitioners' capacity building in its various names ranging from orientation, briefing, training, professional development and staff development. Professional development and staff development tend to be the preferred terms since they are said to shift the emphasis away from an external, instructional, one-way and narrow skills development for pre-defined roles towards a self-development focus (Lee 1978; Lewis 1992). Briefing and training are also said to have inappropriate associations for activities that go under these names (Thorpe 1985). But whatever name used, it is clear that capacity building of staff involved in ODL is necessary, important and has, in fact, gained greater focus in recent years (Jenkins 1999). The reasons for this are related to the appreciation of the difference between ODL and conventional face-to-face education; the recognition that the training and experience of most practitioners has been in and for traditional face-to-face contexts (Jenkins 1990; Robinson 1999); and that, though the knowledge, values and skills of ODL can be acquired on the job, this type of discovery learning is time consuming and does not adequately cover the multi-faceted and complex nature of ODL (Jenkins 1990). Orientation and development of staff is viewed as essential for improving the quality of ODL. It is, thus, not surprising that most ODL organisations provide some type of orientation or staff development programmes in the form of workshops, seminars, mentorship and even longer duration formal courses covering various aspects of ODL. This research is evaluating the CDEP as a one year ODL practitioner capacity building programme delivered through the distance mode.

Human resource development aims to improve staff's competence and on-the-job application of skills, including acceptable standards of practice, a view that falls within the human capital theory (Schultz 1961; Denison 1962; Becker 1964) and which assumes that formal education is central to the production capacity of society (Fagerlind & Saha 1989). It is also deemed to aim at improving the sum of people's capabilities, experiences, competencies, attitudes and behaviours that can be turned into outputs (Rees & McBain 2004: 33). The latter authors also state that the two central issues to take into consideration in measuring human resource development are the capital individuals bring into an organisation, that is people's education, qualifications and skills and 'synergistic human capital" created by people working together, that is:

> The way in which the team works together and interacts with other departments can influence the overall business performance of the company (Rees & McBain 2004: 33).

The aims of the CDEP to a great extent encapsulate the above views about human resource development in their recognition of the wealth of experience, knowledge, skills and attitude that ODL practitioners bring to their organisation. But they also recognise that to a large extent for ODL practitioners this wealth of experience excludes ODL-specific theoretical understanding and competencies. The industrial nature of ODL involving an organisational structure with interrelated sub-systems and operational processes, for example materials development, learner support, management and administration and monitoring and evaluation sub-systems, demand the development of teams that work collaboratively, effectively and efficiently to deliver

educational programme to learners at a distance (Peters 1983). Some of the issues that this study raises are the relationship between the knowledge gained from a certificate level formal education programme, on the one hand, and productivity, skills acquisition, appropriate attitudes, values, motivation and personal characteristics, on the other. A related concern is the extent to which such education and training perpetuates, rather than challenges, the status quo, a concern emanating from the argument that education produces a "docile and adaptive work force which serves the needs of the power structure of the economy" (Fagerlind & Saha 1989: 49). These concerns are pertinent, particularly to Question 3 of this study, that is, the kinds of changes that the CDEP and its participants are able to make in organisations and the region.

Though the need for training and development exists in all categories of ODL staff (COL 1990; Nonyongo & Ngengebule 1998) ranging from senior managers to lower level support staff and covering both full-time and part-time staff in all ODL sub-subsystems (for example policy, planning, administration and management, instructional design, course development and production, student support, research and evaluation including media and technologies used) (Jenkins 1990), institutional staff development practices tend to favour academic staff (Paul 1990; Panda 2004). The generous sabbatical, professional and research leave enjoyed by academic staff is one example of this practice. In contrast full-time administrative staff and part-time tutors of ODL programmes tend to have little, if any, of such benefits. Both these latter groups of staff are, in most cases, more at the coal-face of student contact than ODL academic staff, and, therefore, need as much training and development in ODL as academic staff to ensure effective and qualitative interaction with students (Paul 1990). In comparison between the two, the part-time tutors have tended to enjoy more support and development than administrative

staff. The reasons for this are related to the academic nature of tutors' roles. As face-to-face teaching and counselling contact people in decentralised learning centres, and also as markers of assignments, tutors are representatives of the providing institution and the academics that developed the materials. Their understanding of the institution and the content and methodologies contained in the learning materials is crucial. Most tutors are, however, unfamiliar with ODL, most work full-time in traditional face-to-face further and higher education institutions or in industry (Lewis 1992). The focus on tutor training in ODL is thus understandable. In contrast, the development of administrative staff receives the least attention.

Debates around the content and form of staff development also have a direct bearing on this study. Content and form of staff development raise issues categorised into two groups by Lewis (1992): philosophical and logistics. The former entails the view that methods used in ODL should be worthy of reflection and development. In ODL the course content is pre-developed and packaged in the study materials. The professional development and training of part-time tutors should, therefore, not occupy a central role since as subject experts tutors should have adequate knowledge of the subjects they are employed to tutor and be able to support learners to effectively use the pre-developed materials provided by ODL institutions. In addition face-to-face staff development sessions are deemed to undermine the efficacy of distance education, a method which ODL staff are employed to implement. Logistical issues are related to the difficulties of organising and managing the face-to-face staff development sessions in a distance education context where the low numbers of tutors involved in one subject and the costs of bringing all tutors together at one venue could be quite high given the distances and scattered nature of tutors within one country and/or even internationally. Gibbs' (1981) strategy of

training tutors at a distance was, thus, seen as groundbreaking in its attempt to both make tutors take charge of their training and model the methodology of their programmes' delivery, that is, distance education. Since then other similar programmes have been developed including formal training courses leading up to degree or diploma qualifications (Calvert et al 1993; Nonyongo 1997; IEC/University of London 1991). The CDEP is another example.

Lastly, institutional rewards based on proper training for practitioners involved in staff development programmes is another issue highlighted by the literature review. Parer, Croker and Shaw (1988) argue that ODL will remain peripheral unless major providers determine clear policies on their roles in distance education, train their academic staff in the requisite skills and develop a clear reward structure and career path for academics involved in this mode of delivery. In a recent book on policy in open and distance learning (Perraton & Lentell 2004), Panda returns to the issues of policy and reward and argues that staff development should be viewed both as organisational change in which teaching and other professional staff are central and as an investment in people for individual professional development and institutional effectiveness. Therefore, human resource development policy that includes clear implementation plans, tenure, promotion and reward needs to be put in place (Perraton & Lentel 2004: 91-4).

But staff development and training also raises questions of what is meant by being properly trained, having the requisite skills and how these skills or competences can be recognised, which in turn implies the existence of publicly defined, agreed and recognised standards of competence. An example of how this could be done is provided by the UK Open College's admirable work in the development of competence-based awards for open learning (Lewis 1992), that has resulted in the first award as the Certificate for Open Learning Delivery, which was coordinated by three

awarding bodies and operated in 14 centres. Individuals have used the awards to gain new jobs or promotions. The noted benefits to organisations have been in attaining greater credibility for existing and new programmes and the development of standardised evaluation of staff competence.

2.5 EVALUATION OF IMPACT

Predicting the future of distance education towards the year 2000, Bradley and Dodds (1991) forecast that given the increasing growth of distance education and of providing institutions, it was inevitable that the number of people needing distance education skills would grow and that courses meeting this demand were already available in India, Australia, Nigeria, Germany and the UK. The CDEP is the latest addition to these courses. However, the impact of these courses (that is the print-based courses) has, to my knowledge, as yet, not been systematically evaluated. An Internet search on ODL staff development and professional development of the databases of the Australian Education Index, British Education Index and Canadian Education Index, International Centre for Distance Learning/The Open University UK revealed no entries on the evaluation of these courses, except for the Online Masters in Distance Education (Bernath & Rubin 2003) whose mode of delivery (online) differs from that of the CDEP. This evaluation of the impact of the CDEP is certainly the first impact evaluation study of such programmes in the Southern Africa region.

Innovations proliferate worldwide and interest in gauging their impact is increasing to the extent that donors often include evaluation as part of the funding package. Evaluation of ODL

programmes is even more crucial because by its very nature (the distance between learners and educators and also its claim of providing greater access to education) ODL needs to demonstrate its impact especially with regard to promise and performance, plans and implementation of these programmes in dispersed communities of learners. Evaluation of programmes impact is often based on quantitative methods of enquiry which do not cover the all aspects of educational programmes but instead focus on outcomes and prespecified objectives:

> Impact evaluations assess the specific outcomes attributable to a particular intervention or program. They do so by comparing outcomes where the intervention is applied against outcomes where the intervention does not exist. An appropriate comparison group represents what would have happened in the absence of the intervention. By establishing a good comparison of outcomes for these two groups, an impact evaluation seeks to provide direct evidence of the extent to which an intervention changes outcomes. (http://go.worldbank.org/1F1W42VYV0) downloaded on 11 October 2007.

This study is informed by various landmark studies on curriculum implementation (McAnany 1975; Parlett & Hamilton 1975 & 1977; Parlett & Dearden 1977; Stake 1975, 2004), some of which though dated remain the authorities on this type of evaluation. These studies approach programme impact evaluation from an intensive study of educational programmes point of view, that is examining educational programmes not in isolation but within their context or learning milieu and covering each programme's "evolution, its operations, achievements and difficulties" (Parlett & Dearden 1977: 10). These approaches have been termed illuminative or responsive curriculum evaluation They are qualitative in nature, in that they do not aim at measurement

and generalisable conclusions based on pre-specified standards or criteria, but, instead, focus on description, analysis and interpretation of the whole programme, that is, both its instructional system (the programme plans or blue print) and the total learning milieu, namely, the social-psychological and material environment in which the programmes' stakeholders and/or participants work or interact. Informed by these evaluation approaches, the description and interpretation of the CDEP innovation in the chapters that follow cover both the different aspects of the CDEP instructional system and the issues emerging from its learning milieu. The interpretation of the impact of the innovation has applied the McAnany (1975) criteria for impact evaluation of ODL programmes which consists of five categories covering effort, performance, adequacy, efficiency and process. Details are covered in Chapter 3: Research Design, Data Collection and Analysis.

2.6 CONCLUSION

The issues emanating from the literature review revolve around ODL conceptions and quality, policy, collaboration, staff development and evaluation of programme impact. These issues have informed the evaluation of the CDEP as an ODL regional staff development programme that is collaborative in nature and intended to improve the quality of ODL provision in the five countries where it is implemented. After the description, analysis and interpretation of the CDEP in terms of policy issues guiding the implementation of collaboration programmes like the CDEP and the issues emerging from the implementation of the CDEP, the general conclusion of this study will return to the issues discussed in the literature review for purposes of corroboration and/or highlighting the differences.

The literature review has also highlighted the limited availability of systematic evaluation of ODL programme impact internationally. The Bernath & Rubin (2003) evaluation of the Online Masters in Distance Education was the only entry found from an internet search of ODL staff development and professional development. This study is, in fact, the first impact evaluation of an ODL staff development programme in southern Africa.

While highlighting the strengths of the different evaluation designs used by authors like McAnany 1975; Parlett & Hamilton 1975 & 1977; Parlett & Dearden 1977 and Stake 1975, 2004, the literature review brought to light the possibility of combining McAnany 1975 and Parlett & Hamilton (1975) to produce an expanded design capturing the detailed description and focus on emergent issues of illuminative evaluation with the interpretation of the key emergent issues through McAnany's criteria-based model. This design is described in detail in Chapter 3 and the subsequent chapters apply this design in the evaluation of the CDEP.