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## A NORMATIVE DISTANCE EDUCATION MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR DUAL MODE INSTITUTIONS

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### ABSTRACT

Due to the fact that not all learning can be provided through formal education on campus at schools, colleges and institutions of higher education, distance education has become a viable alternative. In this regard we have seen a rapid expansion of distance education programmes at traditional face-to-face institutions, becoming dual mode institutions. Therefore, if students are to learn on the distance education mode, they need effective educational and administrative support. This implies that the management approach used by dual mode institutions differ from conventional face-to-face institutions. The aim of this paper is to identify a normative distance education management model, which can be used in evaluating current distance education management models in operation. In order to develop a normative distance education management model, the open systems framework is used because it provide a bridge between the general managerial work and the key management issues as they relate to distance education institutions. The management functions related to distance education is identified and briefly explained. This paper concludes that the biggest challenge in the management of distance education institutions is that they remain flexible and innovative in their approach to student needs.

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## INTRODUCTION

The principal function of a distance education institution and a conventional education institution is the same, namely teaching. However, the methods of teaching are different, so are the structures of the institutions and their management. The management system of a distance education institution, for example, has to cater for the production of media-based teaching materials and for part-time students largely studying on their own, and off-campus.

Developing a normative management model for distance education at dual mode institutions require the identification of the different sub-systems that influence the management of distance education institutions. In this regard the sub-systems on both the macro and micro-management level needs to be identified. By making use of the open systems framework, which provides a bridge between the general managerial work and the key management issues as they relate to distance education institutions, it is possible to identify a normative distance education management model. The framework also provides a useful backdrop explanation of the key management issues confronting management at distance education institutions.

### 1 DEFINING THE NATURE OF MANAGEMENT

When the evolution of theoretical approaches to the study of management is considered, two tendencies are clear from the literature. According to the first tendency there is a move away from the closed systems perspective to an open systems perspective. The second tendency is involved in the search for a set of management principles, which can be applied universally to management irrespective of content or circumstances (Fox *et al.* 1997:8).

As far as the first tendency is concerned there is a move away from the closed systems to an open systems perspective regarding management. The closed systems perspective focuses mainly on the internal variables of management and excludes the external variables that may influence management. The open systems perspective focuses on the importance of the external environment in understanding and explaining management.

The second tendency is concerned with the search for the "one best way" of management. The modern view accepts that there is an array of widely different options in management and not a single best way. However, a selection of the correct options must be made in accordance with the demand of the particular management situation.

The most recent perspective on the study of management and organisation is known as the contingency theory. In the 1960s, there was widespread confusion as to which school of management theory was correct, and whether there was indeed, as earlier theorists had argued, universal principals of management, applicable to all situations (Petzall *et al.* 1990:17). Contingency theory was a response to this dilemma. This perspective utilises an open system theoretical foundation and stresses the importance of selecting the correct management options based upon a proper assessment of the management situation. It can therefore be concluded that there are two major trends in the evolution of management theory, namely a trend towards an open system and a trend towards a situational approach. However, the modern schools of theory like the open systems school and the contingency approach exemplify these trends. In this regard the open systems perspective will be used to describe the management of distance education.



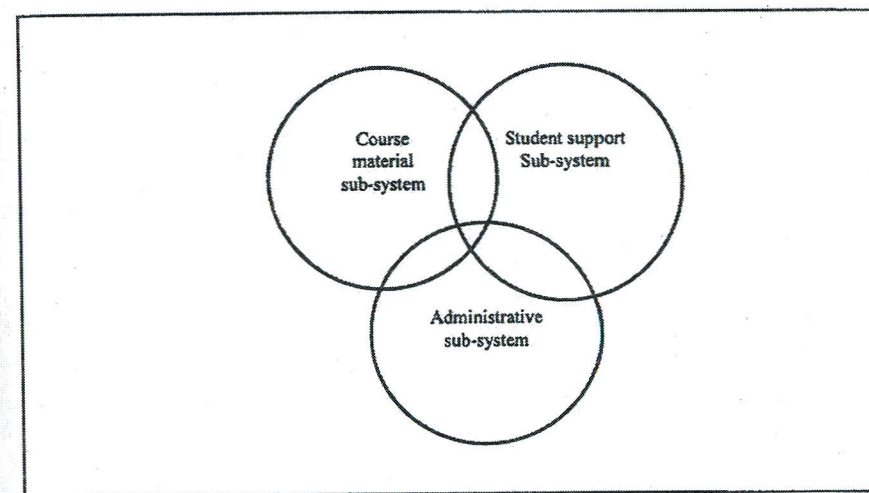
## 2 THE OPEN SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK

The open systems perspective is helpful to understand distance education as a field of study and is essential to its successful practice. A distance education system consists of sub-systems that make up distance education. According to the open systems framework a distance education system has two interrelated sub-systems on the macro-management level and three interrelated sub-systems on the micro-management level. The sub-systems on the macro-management level can be identified as the policy-making sub-system and the institutional management sub-system. On the micro-management level the following interrelated sub-systems can be identified, namely, a course material sub-system, a student support sub-system and an administrative and management sub-system (see figure 1). All these sub-systems are interrelated. Anything that happens in one part of the system has an effect on other parts of the system.

The open systems framework provides a tool that recognise many of the issues that separate distance education from conventional education, but also distinguish good distance education from bad.

The sub-systems on both the macro and micro-management level form the interconnected parts of a distance education system. The activities undertaken in each of the sub-systems can be described as follows:

Figure 1: Interrelated sub-systems of a distance education systems framework on micro-management level



Northcott (1985) in Deakin University (1993, Topic 1:17).

### 2.1 Policy-making sub-system

Making policy and ensuring it is implemented takes a major effort on the part of an institution's management. The fact that distance education is different from traditional classroom instruction, or involves the collaboration of different groups, or might even divert resources of money and people's time from conventional methods, will raise issues that require policies to be made not only within the institution, but also outside at state or national levels (Moore, 1996:184).

Before the concept policy-making is defined, the concept public policy is determined. There are many definitions of the concept public policy in the literature. Definitions of public policy found in the literature range from declarations of intent, a programme of goals, and general rules covering future behaviour to important government decisions, a selected line or course of action, to important government

decisions, a selected line or course of action, the consequences of action or inaction, and even all government action. (Huges, 1998:130). Public policy has been defined by Anderson (1999:9) as "a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with the problem matter or matter of concern. This statement focuses on what is actually done instead of what is only proposed or intended, and it differentiates a policy from a decision, which is essentially a choice among competing alternatives". The definition supplied by Dye (2002:1) contains the common denominator of most definitions, namely, "Public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do".

According to Van der Waldt *et al.* (1999: 208) public policy is seen as a series of related decisions, taken after liaison with public managers and political office-bearers, that convert certain needs of the community into objectives to be pursued by public institutions.

According to Fox *et al.* (1997:27-28), the following basic elements of public policy can be identified:

- public policy is policy developed by government role players, although non-governmental role players such as interest groups, can also influence the formulation and development of policy;
- public policy is purposive or goal-orientated action rather than a random one;
- policy general consists of a series of decisions taken jointly by politicians and/or officials rather than individual decisions; and
- policy is what governments actually do, for example to protect the environment.

From the foregoing it is apparent that no comprehensive definition of public policy exists. For the purpose of this paper public policy is a desired course of action and

interaction which is to serve as a guideline in the allocation of resources needed to meet the goals and objectives of society, decided upon and made publicly known by the legislative authority. Therefore, policy-making refers to the process of determining what actions governments will take, what effects those actions will have on social conditions, and how those actions can be changed if they produce unsatisfied outcomes. The process of policy-making requires that various activities be undertaken, for example:

- initiation, becoming aware of a public problem;
- agenda setting;
- processing the issue
- making the choice
- publication, making decision known;
- allocation of resources;
- implementation;
- adjudication;
- impact evaluation; and
- feedback.

(Fox *et al.* 1997:33)

## 2.2 Institutional management sub-system

Modern societies have developed three main institutions for meeting their needs, namely, public institutions, private and non-profit institutions. Public institutions, such as government department/ministries, are established by society primarily to:

- create and maintain law and order; and



- provide collective products and services on a non-profit basis, for example, education, health, transport, water and crime prevention (Van der Waldt *et al.* 1999:8).

Public institutions therefore exist to meet society's needs. Public institutions can therefore be seen as an orderly structure or group of persons created to perform specific functions (Cloete, 1995:39). Within each of these public institutions certain management functions need to be undertaken to ensure that set objectives are achieved. In this regard the following basic management functions need to be undertaken:

- planning: Cloete (1995:57) describes planning as "the forecasting of a collection, series or chain of actions to be performed to reach a specific goal." Cloete's definition implies that planning is not only about decision making, but also about choosing alternative ways in which objectives can be reached;
- organising: according to Fox *et al.* (1997:70) "...public managers organise when they are in the process of establishing a formalised, intentional structure." Establishing a formalised structure entails division of work into categories, centralisation or decentralisation of functions and authority, co-ordination, establishment of communication channels and the execution of control measures;
- financing: it entails obtaining, allocation, spending and controlling of public finances. At national/state level provision is made for how money is obtained, how specific amounts are allocated to particular institutions for certain objectives and how their spending should be controlled. In an individual government department/ministry, this entails estimating the amounts needed to continue activities, spending voted amounts and controlling how the money is spent (Van der Waldt, 1999:15);

- leading: leading implies the process of influencing others to achieve an objective or objectives (Van der Waldt *et al.* 1997:196). In this regard managers direct, motivate and inspire workers to perform better and to achieve goals;
- staffing: includes filling positions with an institution, which include practices such as recruitment, selection and training (Fox *et al.* 1996:122);
- control: control needs to be carried out by managers to ensure that goals are reached. The process of control requires specific steps to be taken to ensure that goals are achieved effectively and efficiently (Van der Waldt *et al.* 1999:16).

### 2.3 Management and administration sub-system

The management and administration sub-system involves those processes, which recruit students, support them in their learning and assess the extent to which they have learnt. This sub-system is concerned with such matters as:

- publicity;
- programme information;
- applications;
- selection of students;
- enrolment of students;
- record keeping of students;
- assignment traffic control;
- examinations; and
- certification.

(Deakin University, 1995, Topic 1:17)



## 2.4 Courseware development sub-system

The courseware development sub-system implies the preparation of print and non-print material plus the production of the material. In this regard the course material sub-system can be divided into a developmental and production stage and related activities. The developmental stage refers to the setting up of managerial structures to ensure that programmes are academically credible in terms of content, developed on time and within a set budget, and systematically evaluated and revised. However, the course material development activities include the following:

- structuring of a programme;
- identifying and selecting the media and teaching strategies;
- developing of course material; and
- evaluating a programme.

The activities to be undertaken as part of the production stage includes the following:

- editing;
- designing of course material;
- typesetting;
- copyright issues;
- printing;
- assistance by media specialist in the preparation of audiovisual material;
- developing experimental kits;
- use of computer technology;
- storage;
- packaging; and
- dispatch of course material.

(Deakin University, 1995, Topic 1: 17-18)

## 2.5 Student support sub-system

The provision of student support services achieve for distance education systems the essential feedback mechanisms that are essential to higher education. It is mainly through student support services that two-way communication is established between student and institution. The activities linked to the student support sub-system apply only after students have received the course materials and they are engaged in the programme. Problems faced by distance education students stem from the physical distance between the students and the institution, and the resulting feeling of isolation. Anything the institution can do to reduce the feelings of isolation and consequent problems will improve the students' chances of academic success. In order to support students, the following activities can be undertaken:

- telephone counselling and tutoring;
- vacation or residential schools;
- tutorials/seminars;
- self-help groups;
- individual consultations; and
- contacts, for example, a 'hot-line' telephone service.

(Deakin University, 1995, Topic 1: 18)

The value of the open systems perspective in distance education management can be summarised as follows:

"...it clearly identifies the principal activities involved in running a distance education enterprise, as well as the interrelationships that exist between them. It underlines the importance of the quasi-industrial processes that characterise the production and distribution of materials, and emphasises the specialisation of tasks and division of labour. It defines the difference between an educational publishing institution (which would only require a course materials subsystem) and a distance-



education institution (which must also provide an appropriate administration subsystem and student support subsystem). It also helps pinpoint the activities which are independent of student numbers (e.g. course development) and which are therefore susceptible to economies of scale, and is hence a useful starting point for financial modelling. Finally, it underlines the fact that, theoretically and in practice, different groups and institutions can collaborate in providing a distance-education system, each perhaps taking on responsibility for different activities, or clusters of activities, within each subsystem" (Rumble (1986) in Deakin University 1995, Topic 1: 18-19).

The interdependencies between the sub-systems are an outstanding characteristic of the open systems framework. Institutions need to have a clear strategy and policy on how activities are structured and linked in the parts of a distance education system. For example, the different kinds of courseware produced by the institution will influence the type of delivery and student support offered.

The open systems framework can also provide useful insight into the way a distance education institution can be structured, for example, the way in which common activities can be grouped together into sub-units, and the linkages required to connect the different sub-units together. This point is pertinent to large scale distance education institutions where there is a clear division and specialisation of labour. However, in small scale distance education institutions, the different distance education activities can be grouped together in one separate sub-unit devoted to servicing all the needs of the distance education students. Although the open systems framework is not equivalent to an institutional plan, it still provides a useful perspective about the issues to be faced by distance education institutions.

### 3 ISSUES IN THE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

In writing about the management of distance education, Mugrider at the University of London (1994:11-12) says:

"Management and organization are about making things in a particular situation or institution work as effectively as possible in difficult and unpredictable circumstances".

He goes on to say that hierarchy and structure is put in place to enable management functions and processes to happen. He is therefore saying that structure is there so that the functions can be carried out. In other words, management structure is not an end in itself.

The management of distance education programmes give rise to a number of issues to be addressed by managers of distance education programmes. These issues can be identified as follows:

- staffing for distance education programmes;
- integration of media in distance education programmes;
- managing project teams;
- systems thinking;
- collaboration with other distance education agencies and institutions;
- centralisation versus decentralisation of courseware and support;
- costing and budgeting;
- monitoring and supervising staff at a distance; and
- evaluating programme performance.

Each one of the above-mentioned issues related to the management of distance education will be discussed in more detail.



### 3.1 Staffing for distance education programmes

A practical task for planners, policy makers and others responsible for setting up and managing a distance education programme is the management of staffing and their training needs. The staff required to set up and implement a distance education programme will depend on two aspects, namely the institutional model chosen, and the nature of the educational task.

The offering of a non-formal distance education programme by a dual mode institution will differ tremendously from a formal programme offered by a single mode, distance teaching institution. However, the personnel needed to run any distance education programme can be categorised as follows:

- educational staff;
- courseware development, design and production staff; and
- administrative staff.

The staffing component of each of these categories is listed in table 1:

**Table 1: Staffing distance education programmes**

Education Staff	Materials Production Staff	Administrative Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject specialist.</li> <li>• Courseware production specialist.</li> <li>• Tutoring and counselling specialist.</li> <li>• Educators.</li> <li>• Broadcasting producers.</li> <li>• Research workers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Printers.</li> <li>• Copy editors.</li> <li>• Graphic designers.</li> <li>• Broadcast technicians.</li> <li>• Typists/word processing entry clerks.</li> <li>• Desktop publishing specialists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrators and managers.</li> <li>• Personnel staff.</li> <li>• Financial staff.</li> <li>• Records clerks.</li> <li>• Typists.</li> <li>• Storeroom and dispatch staff.</li> </ul>

(IEC Learning Kit, 1997, Topic 4: 3)

Due to the nature of distance education, the academic functions, the production and distribution function and the administrative functions are all associated with each other. The students do not distinguish between these different aspects of the programme they follow. Therefore, it is important that the departmental structure of the institution reflect not only the functions, but also the interrelationship between them.

The training of new and existing staff in distance education programmes is essential, because the practice of distance education requires a variety of roles and needs. Staff is often required to learn new work practices and skills.

The training strategy to be used by an institution will largely depend on the choice of institutional model used. Within a dual mode institution, where a course educator and writer is combining his/her role with one of teaching face-to-face special training programmes need to be designed for use in distance education. Within a single mode institution that makes use of contract educators, and writers, the same kind of sensitivity will be required in training.



### 3.2 Interaction of media in distance education programmes

As a manager of distance education programmes there are two types of decision making involved in selecting and using of media and technologies in distance education. Firstly a decision has to be taken whether a distance education programme will be set up based on certain technologies or not and secondly, how the media and technology can be used best.

The needs of the institution, the target group and the type of programmes to be offered on the distance education mode will determine the first mentioned set of decisions. According to Bates (1991:1) decision-making regarding the technology to be used should be based on an analysis of questions that each institution needs to ask, grouped according to the following criteria:

**Table 2: Criteria to group media in distance education**

<b>A</b>	<i>Accessibility</i>	Is the equipment the programme requires available to the students? Where will they be learning?
<b>C</b>	<i>Costs</i>	Are the costs of production, delivery and maintenance using this technology affordable?
<b>T</b>	<i>Teaching ability</i>	Does the technology convey the level of facts, attitudes and skills the programme requires?
<b>I</b>	<i>Interactivity</i>	Is the technology user-friendly?
<b>O</b>	<i>Institutional issues</i>	How open is the institution to change and the introduction of new media?
<b>N</b>	<i>Novelty</i>	Is it important to the institution to be at 'the leading edge'?
<b>S</b>	<i>Speed</i>	How fast can the programme implement this technology?

(IEC Learning Kit; 1997, Topic 3:13)

Technology will play a very important role in education and training in the twenty-first century. The value of technology in distance education is its ability to reach students who cannot be served by means of conventional educational institutions. Technology can also assist in meeting the emerging educational needs of an information society, and improve the quality of learning.

There are, however, a number of general points that can be made about the usage of technologies in distance education. Firstly, media are flexible. Secondly, all technologies have their strengths and weaknesses resulting in the fact that there is no technological "super medium". Finally, each medium has its own aesthetic requirement, thus requiring professional production and design of media to be used.

### 3.3 Managing project teams

The keyword in distance education is teamwork. The development and production of a programme in the distance education mode require collaboration between different role-players. In this regard collaboration needs to take place between content experts, instructional designers, editors, graphic designers, educators, counsellors, librarians, registry personnel, courseware developers and dispatch clerks.

Managing project teams place demands on managers involved in line management. The manager must have specified starting and finishing dates for the completion of a task. The manager needs to have a high degree of financial accountability, as projects are more difficult to cost and control than are routine line management functions. Lastly, the manager works with cross-functional teams of often-temporary members. Some of these members will be reporting to someone other than the manager.

In order to achieve teamwork the manager needs to implement a project management model, which integrates all parts of the institution involved in the



development, production and delivery of educational programmes. However, any project team has to work within the rules and regulations of the parent institution.

### 3.4 Systems approach

A systems approach needs to be followed in the implementation of a distance education programme. In this regard the systems approach requires thinking about the various tasks as components of a system. The way decisions are made and tasks are carried out in any one of the components will automatically have knock-on effects for all the other components.

**Table 3: The components and tasks of a distance education programme**

COMPONENT	TASKS
Needs analysis	Design research method; Carry out research; Analyse results; and Draw conclusions for course.
Specifications	Write course specifications, including aims and objectives; Technologies and media of presentation; and Technologies and media of delivery.
Costing	Allocate resources required for course; Produce a budget; and Develop costs.
Staff	Specify staff skills required; Identify current staff available; Recruit additional staff as required; and Brief and train staff as required.

<i>Materials</i>	Search for existing materials; Write or adapt materials; Seek additional production staff as required; Draw up appropriate contacts; Edit materials; Pilot materials; and Produce materials.
<i>Assessment</i>	Identify types of assessment required; Specify assessment methods; Write assessment plan; and Write assessment items.
<i>Support</i>	Specify support systems; Write tutorial guides; Create record systems; Brief educators; and Agree systems with collaborating agencies.
<i>Marketing</i>	Identify market segments; Produce sales and publicity materials; Market the programmes; Advise applicants; Register students; and Induct students.
<i>Monitoring</i>	Write monitoring plan; Agree plan with staff and collaborating agencies; and Implement plan.
<i>Evaluation</i>	Write evaluation plan; Agree plan with stakeholders; Implement evaluation; and Make revisions based on evaluation.

(IEC Learning Kit, 1997, Topic 3: 10–11)



From the above-mentioned it is clear that the systems approach is not a linear process, because the programme staff will be involved in several of these tasks at the same time, and the interdependency of tasks need to be taken into consideration.

### 3.5 Collaboration

Worldwide collaboration in distance education is becoming the order of the day. Collaboration in the distance education context is taken to mean individuals or institutions working together for mutual benefit. In this regard collaboration can take place within and between nations, between different distance education institutions, and between distance education institutions and conventional teaching institutions.

According to Paul (1990:144-145) the main reasons for collaboration can be as follows:

- public funding for education at all levels is decreasing, and governments are requiring institutions to work with each other and in many cases with industry in order to qualify for funding; and
- institutions and agencies are responding to decreasing levels of funding by seeking collaborative arrangements that can make scarce resources go further.

Worldwide a number of international institutions have been created to foster course sharing and other kinds of collaboration among their members. In this regard the following institutions can be identified:

- the Open Learning Agency in British Columbia, Canada, collaborates in course sharing arrangements with a number of institutions, including

Laurentian University and Athabasca University in Canada and the Open Learning Institute in Hong Kong;

- some postgraduate degrees in distance education have been the results of collaboration, for example, between Deakin University and the University of South Australia, and between the University of London Institute of Education, the International Extension College, Deakin University and the Open Learning Agency;
- the Contract North network in northern Ontario, Canada, makes delivery facilities available for a number of institutions to offer secondary and tertiary-level programmes to widely scattered populations;
- a number of international institutions have been created to foster course-sharing and other kinds of collaboration among their members, including the Commonwealth of Learning, "Consortium d'institutions francophones de formation a distance" and the "Consortio-red de educacion a distancia" (IEC Learning Kit, 1997, Topic 3:12).

The management of a distance education programme cannot be successful without taking note of this increasing collaboration between educational institutions, agencies and programmes.

### 3.6 Centralisation versus decentralisation of distance education activities

A common practice amongst distance education providers is to deliver courseware and support to students on a decentralised basis. In this regard distance educational institutions provide learning and support through a series of regional learning centres. According to Paul (1990:100-101), the advantages of regional networks are as follows:



Table 4: Advantages of regional networks

- Provide localised and personalised services to students.
- Strengthen the local identity of the educational programme or institution.
- Reduce turnaround time of feedback to students on assignments.
- Provide enhanced support to students via laboratories, libraries, computer facilities, audio and video conferencing.

### 3.7 Costing and budgeting

Budgeting and costing are crucial in maintaining the financial health of a distance education institution. Operating any institution without a fiscal framework would be virtually impossible. "Value for money" is the key principle to be considered in the costing and budgeting of a distance education programme. The starting point in determining the costs and budget for any programme to be offered on the distance education mode is to consider the following aspects:

- the purpose of the programme;
- the anticipated number of students to be enrolled; and
- the numbers of programmes to be developed for distance education.

In determining costs for distance education programmes, a distinction can be made between fixed costs and variable costs. The distinction between fixed and variable costs is an essential part of the development of costs for decision-making and control (IEC Learning Kit, 1997, Topic 4:16).

Fixed costs can be divided into committed costs and managed costs. Committed costs include salaries to staff members, rental and rates paid on buildings, insurance, furniture, and equipment for courseware production, printing facilities, broadcasting and studio equipment, and vehicles.

Managed costs however are annual or medium-term costs which can be reduced without immediate major disruptions to the objectives, and profits of the institution. Examples can include advertising and marketing, staff training, minor works and maintenance of buildings, and support for research.

Variable costs are those that tend to vary directly with fluctuations in the volume of output. The variable costs will include those, which vary with the number of students and the number of programmes. Variable costs include salaries for consultants and outside writers, broadcasting production and transmission costs, and preparation of teaching materials, including editing and graphic design.

The budgeting process for distance education institutions consists of a series of steps by which estimates of revenue and expenses and related statistical data are used to compile a plan for expenditure for the next financial period. The budget for distance education activities will differ from a budget for conventional activities because of the higher proportion of fixed expenses for programme development and revision. This distinction implies that a distance education institution needs to prepare a production budget, which reflects the costs of production, and develop a budget reflecting the volume and cost of services delivered.

### 3.8 Monitoring and supporting staff involved in distance education

The management of distance education programmes will always entail the monitoring and supporting of staff involved in distance education. These staff will include educators, writers, editors, moderators and regional centre staff.

Staff involved in distance education need support and monitoring, especially since they tend to be:

- part-time employees in distance education;
- are on short-term or annual contracts;



- have no regular face-to-face contact with peers, colleagues and supervisors in distance education;
- no clear definition of their role and responsibilities; and
- policy decisions and procedures are made without taking their needs and circumstances into consideration.

Distance education students also need continuing contact with and support from staff as they work through their studies. In this regard we can distinguish between instructional support and non-instructional support. Instructional support refers to providing tuition and academic advice to distance students. Non-instructional support includes admissions and registration, counselling, and administrative support.

Due to the distance factor, it is very important that management maintaining effective staff relations in order to ensure an efficient service to distance students. By having an effective monitoring and support system in place, distance education institutions can provide a high quality service to both its staff and students.

### 3.9 Evaluating distance education programmes

Evaluating distance education programmes will ensure their relevance and applicability. In this regard three steps of evaluation can be identified, namely measuring, comparing and correcting. Each one of these three steps presents special problems in a distance education programme (IEC Learning Kit, 1997, Topic 4:18).

By making use of the team approach in the development of distance education courseware, the academic quality of the programmes can be measured. Although the team approach gives distance education programmes more quality and quantity than their conventional counterparts, there is still the notion that distance education is substandard. Determining indicators such as student progress or drop-out rates

is difficult to do on a continuous basis, especially in programmes, which follow an open learning policy where students enrol throughout the year.

Distance education programmes can also be compared with conventional programmes in terms of economic and student performance. In the area of economic performance, the standards borrowed from conventional education should be used with caution, for example, capital operating cost ratios tend to be higher for conventional than for distance education programmes. The only difference might be in cases where a distance education programme has to make a major investment in terms of technological infrastructure. As far as student performance is concerned, comparing distance education with conventional education may be difficult, because of differences in entry qualification and circumstances of study.

Corrective action can also be used if the standards of conventional programmes are not appropriate to distance education programmes. However, the complex and integrated nature of a distance education programme may make implementation of new standards somewhat problematic. The flexible nature of distance education, which can respond effectively to students' needs and circumstances, should not be abused in this corrective action.

## 4 NORMATIVE MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

After examining the internal workings of a distance education unit or institution, a normative distance education management model is proposed. This model integrates all aspects, related to the management of distance education. The functions to be undertaken for each of the three sub-systems are as follows:

- the policy-making subsystem;
- the institutional management sub-system;



- the management and administration sub-system;
- the courseware development sub-system; and
- the student support sub-system.

Each of the sub-systems will be briefly examined to establish what exactly it covers, and how it relates to the other sub-systems. A schematic representation will also be made to illustrate the relationship between the different sub-systems.

#### 4.1 Policy-making sub-system

As far as the macro-management level of policy-making is concerned, it refers to the process of putting the activities to be performed into words and obtaining approval to implement a policy. The policy-making process usually start with the collection of all relevant information about the subject matter of the envisaged policy. This process is usually done by obtaining information and opinions from public, private, non-governmental institutions, interest and pressure groups within society. The process of policy-making can only be successful if certain criteria are taken into consideration. In this regard the following normative criteria related to the policy-making sub-system is identified:

- setting policy objectives;
- democratic participation in determining policy;
- accommodating needs and values of the public;
- measurement of potential impacts;
- measurement of costs; and
- infrastructure and organisational support for policy decisions.

### 5 INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT SUB-SYSTEM

The public sector in any given country consists of a number of public institutions that render specific services to the citizens/taxpayers of that country, for example

education, law and order and health services. In order to provide services to the taxpayers/citizens, public institutions need to be properly managed. Institutional management therefore refers to a person(s) who within the general political, social, economic, technological and cultural environments is charged with specific functions. In this regard the normative functions to be performed are:

- planning
- organising;
- financing;
- leading;
- staffing; and
- control.

#### 5.1 Management and administration sub-system

According to the writer this is the key system that holds all the operations of the institution together on micro-management level. The administration provides both supervision and logistical support. The overall institutional planning, the budgeting, accounting, purchasing, stores and personnel matters are handled by this department/unit/center. The head of this department/unit/centre is responsible for coordinating and managing all distance education related matters.

The aim of dividing the work of an institution involved in distance education is to ensure a suitable division of labour, through the delegation of responsibility. The institution should also ensure that the distance education work is properly coordinated, so that departments within the institution do not move in opposing directions, and that they get the support they need to carry out their respective tasks. The normative criteria related to the management and administration sub-system are:

- market and publicise programmes;
- provide information on programmes;



- process student applications;
- process student registrations;
- keep student records;
- answer student queries in relation to administrative matters;
- process payments from students;
- process claims by part-time staff;
- process invoices from suppliers;
- administer assignment process;
- administer examinations process; and
- cost and budget distance education activities.

Effectively managing distance education involves establishing performance criteria and targets for the institution. An efficient management and administrative system supports the activities of the institution.

### 5.2 Courseware development sub-system

Courseware development covers an extended process, starting from the conceptualisation of what programmes and subjects to offer and the various stages of development of each programme until it is ready to go out to the students. In this regard courseware development includes curriculum design for each course, laying down the boundaries of the programme, getting it written or recorded in a certain format and having it printed and ready for use, and the class notes delivered to internal students.

The following normative criteria have been identified as part of the courseware development sub-system:

- generate ideas for programmes;
- market research on programmes;
- coordinate courseware development process;

- devise curriculum and syllabus;
- write courseware;
- edit courseware for content;
- edit courseware for language;
- edit courseware for distance education methodology;
- layout of courseware and desk-top publishing;
- print courseware;
- store and distribute courseware;
- devise assessment tools (assignments);
- carry out assessment (mark examination scripts);
- moderate assessment;
- award credit; and
- review and evaluate programmes.

In good distance education, well-designed courseware, rather than the educator, provides an appropriate learning environment for the student. Rather than referring to a set of courseware, the programme forms the structure of learning that is designed into the courseware. An essential component in the successful design of distance education courseware is collaboration. This can be achieved by using a team approach in the developing of courseware. After developing the courseware, enrolling the students, and while they are studying, the institution should provide the student with all the help needed to progress successfully.

### 5.3 Student support sub-system

Another important aspect of institutional management is how student support has been organised by the institution. Provision should be made by the distance education institution to advise and help individual students who would otherwise be isolated throughout the learning process, and particularly, to help students to make choices before enrolling for educational programmes. Students require various forms of support, for example, satisfactory access to educators, the opportunity to



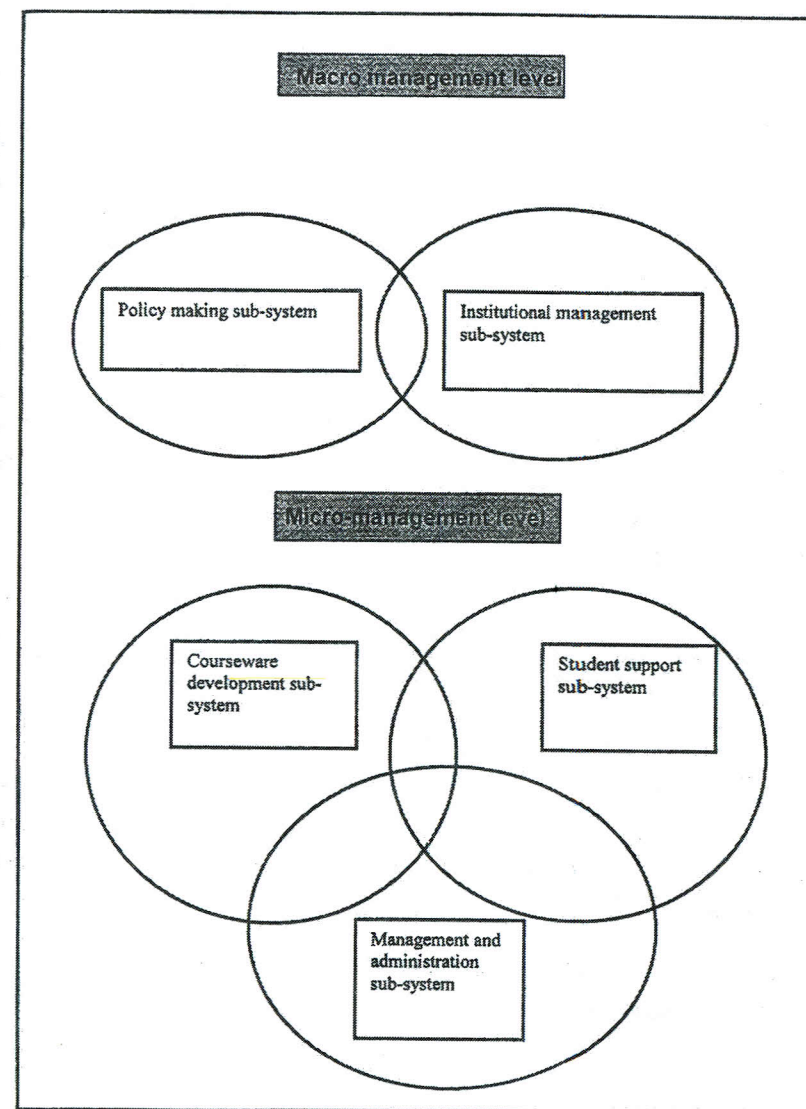
interact with other students, and access to the required facilities. Student support also includes comments on students' assignments, and occasional face-to-face sessions where groups of students receive assistance and help on common problems. Normative criteria applicable to student support services include:

- provide guidance on programme choices;
- provide counselling in relation to studies;
- answer student queries in relation to their studies;
- conduct tutorial sessions;
- organise tutorials and vacation schools;
- provide tutorial support;
- organise and support study groups;
- provide library and study facilities;
- train and support students in the use of new technologies;
- monitor and co-ordinate student support; and
- champion and act as advocate for students.

Students should be supported to a considerable extent by the provision of a range of opportunities for real two-way communication through the use of various forms of technology for tutoring at a distance. Student needs for physical facilities and study resources and their participation in decision-making should be taken into account.

For the purpose of this article the five interrelated sub-systems can be schematically presented as follows:

Figure 2: A normative distance education management model





## 6 CONCLUSION

In developing a normative model for distance education it is important to make a distinction between conventional and distance education institutions. Although the principal function of teaching is the same, the methods, structures and management are quite different. Differing scales of operation and different modes of teaching and learning have resulted in distance education institutions having larger administrative bodies and a greater diversity of functions.

The management functions undertaken in distance education institutions should be about making things happen as effectively and efficiently as possible under any circumstances. The biggest challenge in the management of distance education institutions is that they remain flexible and innovative in their approach to students' needs, and that they encourage and reward those people and activities that exemplify this approach.

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