

Higher Distance Education in Brazil: Policies, Practices and Staff Development

by

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Dedication

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Certification of Thesis

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that the substance of this thesis has not previously been submitted for any other award.

To the best of my knowledge the ideas, results, analysis, conclusions and recommendations reported in this thesis are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. Any help received in preparing this thesis has also been acknowledged.



Carina M. Bossu

Abstract

Higher education is constantly evolving to meet the needs and changes in society, including Brazilian society, with the main driving forces being student demand, the job market, the adoption of learning technologies, quality assurance frameworks and distance education (DE). To support these changes, academic staff development focused on improvement, is one of the key elements for successful educational change. In Brazil today, DE has been one of the major changes at a higher education level. This dissertation presents an analysis of the relevant international and Brazilian literature with special focus on Brazilian government policies for higher DE. Staff development as well as DE practices, including the responses of the two major higher education sectors in Brazil (the private and federal public) in terms of DE and staff development activities are explored.

Within the constructivist paradigm, this work focuses on the way this researcher and participants constructed their realities and the world they live in, considering their personal experiences and beliefs about what was being researched. Methods of data gathering and analysis, essentially qualitative in nature, as well as the processes to establish trustworthiness were also developed based on this set of beliefs.

Some of the research findings revealed that policies for DE do not provide a solid framework for practices yet. DE and even the staff development practices to support DE, are heavily based on traditional teacher and/or content-centred approaches to teaching. Furthermore, a lack of sound evaluation in both DE and staff development meant that claims concerning the quality and effectiveness of these practices remain uncertain. Also, knowledge regarding educational change theory is almost non-existent amongst Brazilian policy-makers contributing to, amongst others, increased stakeholder resistance to DE. Recommendations are drawn from educational change theory, which could assist the Brazilian government and institutional bodies in establishing strong foundations for the implementation of DE, potentially leading DE from initiation to the continuation phases of the change process. DE retains enormous potential in Brazil, with the huge opportunities requiring challenges and obstacles to be overcome. This research intends to play a role in helping to identify how the opportunities can be realised and the challenges and barriers overcome.

Table of Contents

Certification of Thesis	IV
Abstract	V
Table of Contents	VI
List of Table	X
List of Figure	XI
List of Abbreviation	XII
CHAPTER 1: Overview of the Study	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 The Research	1
1.2.1 The Researcher	2
1.2.2 The Research Question	4
1.3 Aims and Significance of the Study	4
1.4 The Thesis Design	5
1.4.1 Chapter 1: Overview of the Study	6
1.4.2 Chapter 2: Literature Analysis	6
1.4.3 Chapter 3: The Research Context	7
1.4.4 Chapter 4: Methodology	7
1.4.5 Chapter 5: DE Policies - Analysis and Discussion	7
1.4.6 Chapter 6: Staff Development for DE - Analysis and Discussion	8
1.4.7 Chapter 7: Institutional Responses- Analysis and Discussion	8
1.4.8 Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations	8
1.5 Conclusion	8
CHAPTER 2: HE, DE, Staff Development and Educational Change: Literature Analysis	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Contemporary Higher Education	9
2.2.1 Increasing Number of Students	10
2.2.2 Massification and Privatisation of HE	11
2.2.3 Cross-border Higher Education	12
2.2.4 Increasing Use of Technologies	14
2.2.5 Quality Assurance	15
2.2.6 HE Policies	17
2.3 Distance Education	19
2.3.1 The Generations of Distance Education	20
2.3.2 Quality Assurance in DE	22
2.3.3 DE Policies	24

2.4 Managing Change in Higher and Distance Education	25
2.4.1 The Change Process	30
2.5 Academic Professional Development.....	34
2.5.1 Approaches and Strategies for Staff Development	36
2.5.2 Managing Staff Development	39
2.6 Conclusion.....	41
CHAPTER 3: Brazilian HE, DE and Staff Development: Literature and Context Analysis	42
3.1 Introduction	42
3.2 Some Information about Education in Brazil	42
3.3 Brazilian Higher Education System.....	44
3.3.1 Social and Historical Context.....	46
3.3.2 Public and Private Higher Education Sectors.....	48
3.3.3 Higher Education Reform.....	52
3.4 Brazilian Distance Education.....	55
3.4.1 Historical Background	55
3.4.2 Recent Initiatives.....	56
3.4.3 Contemporary Challenges	57
3.4.4 How DE is delivered.....	60
3.5 Academic Staff Development in Brazil.....	66
3.6 Conclusion.....	72
CHAPTER 4: Research Methodology	73
4.1 Introduction	73
4.2 The Research Questions	73
4.3 The Constructivist Paradigm.....	73
4.4 The Role of the Researcher	76
4.5 Research Design: Planning the Investigation.....	76
4.6 The Cross-Sector Study.....	78
4.6.1 Collecting Data.....	79
4.6.1.1 Sampling: Making it doable.....	79
4.6.1.2 Interviewing: collecting participants' constructions	83
4.6.1.3 Online Questionnaire: Gathering data electronically	87
4.6.1.4 Documents	90
4.6.2 Planning the Cross-Sector Study Analysis.....	91
4.6.2.1 Translation Protocols.....	93
4.6.2.2 Interviews.....	94
4.6.2.3 Online questionnaire	95
4.6.2.4 Documents	96

4.6.3 Participants' In-text Identification	97
4.7 The In-Depth Studies.....	97
4.7.1 Collecting Data.....	98
4.7.1.1 Sampling in the In-depth Studies	98
4.7.2 Planning the In-Depth Studies Analysis	99
4.8 Criteria for Judging Quality	100
4.8.1 Establishing Trustworthiness.....	100
4.8.1.1 Credibility	100
4.8.1.2 Transferability.....	101
4.8.1.3 Dependability and Confirmability.....	101
4.8.2 Hermeneutic process.....	102
4.9 Conclusion.....	102
CHAPTER 5: DE Policies - Analysis and Discussion.....	104
5.1 Introduction	104
5.2 Policies and Documents: Analysis and Discussion	104
5.3 Data: Analysis and Discussion.....	111
5.3.1 Current and Political Context of DE.....	111
5.3.1.1 Current Context	111
5.3.1.2 Political Context	117
5.3.2 Quality in DE.....	123
5.3.3 Academic Staff Career.....	131
5.3.4 Future Tendencies in DE	137
5.4 Conclusion.....	141
CHAPTER 6: Staff Development for DE - Analysis and Discussion.....	143
6.1 Introduction	143
6.2 Data: Analysis and Discussion.....	143
6.2.1 Approaches to Staff Development in DE	145
6.2.1.1 Models.....	145
6.2.1.2 Strategies.....	150
6.2.2 Quality of Staff Development	153
6.2.3 Educational Developers in DE	157
6.2.4 Impact of Staff Development	162
6.3 Conclusion.....	165
CHAPTER 7: Institutional Responses- Analysis and Discussion.....	167
7.1 Introduction	167
7.2 Data Presentation	167
7.3 The Federal Public Studies.....	168

7.3.1 Uni A.....	168
7.3.2 Uni B.....	172
7.3.3 The Federal Public Studies: Discussion	175
7.3.3.1 Impact of the UAB initiative for DE.....	176
7.4 The Private Sector Studies	180
7.4.1 Uni C.....	180
7.4.2 Uni D.....	183
7.4.3 Uni E	188
7.4.4 Uni F	192
7.4.5 The Private Sector Studies: Discussion	195
7.5 Conclusion.....	197
CHAPTER 8: Conclusions and Recommendations	199
8.1 Introduction.....	199
8.2 The Research Questions	199
8.3 How are DE policies within HE shaping practices of higher distance education in Brazil? 199	
8.4 To what extent is academic staff development for higher distance education undertaken in Brazil?.....	200
8.5 How have private and federal public higher education institutions responded to current policies for DE?.....	202
8.6 Recommendations.....	203
8.7 Limitations	205
8.8 Future Research	206
8.9 Conclusion.....	207
REFERENCES	208
APPENDIX 1: THE INSTRUMENTS.....	225
APPENDIX 2: ETHICS APPROVAL.....	236
APPENDIX 3: CODING SCHEME	238

List of Tables

Table 4.1: The rationale of sampling criteria for the cross-sector study (adapted from Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 30)	81
Table 4.2: The thematic analysis coding scheme developed for the first research question	96
Table 6.1: Uni A's Profile (2008 Data)	168
Table 6.2: Uni B's Profile (2007 Data)	172
Table 6.3: Uni C's Profile (2006 Data)	180
Table 6.4: Uni D's Profile (2006 Data)	183
Table 6.5: Uni E's Profile	188
Table 6.6: Uni F's Profile	192

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: The thesis design	6
Figure 2.1: The change process (Fullan, 2007, p. 66).	30
Figure 4.1: Structure of the research design.	77
Figure 4.2: The cross-sector study design.	78
Figure 4.3: A map of Brazil with the research sites indicated, as well as states and regions.	82
Figure 4.4: Layout to gather participants' confirmation	85
Figure 4.5: First questions of the Online Questionnaire	88
Figure 4.6: The hermeneutic dialect process adapted from Guba & Lincoln (1989, p. 152).	92
Figure 4.7: Example of layout used by the researcher to analyse data.	95
Figure 4.8: The in-depth studies design.	98

List of Abbreviation

Abbreviation	Explanation
APRs	Age Participation Rates
AQ	Quality Assurance
AUQA	The Australia Universities Quality Agency
CACE	The Canadian Association for Community Education
CanREGs	The Canadian Recommended E-learning Guidelines
CEDERJ	Centre for Distance Learning in the State of Rio de Janeiro
DE	Distance Education
DETC	The Distance Education and Training Council
ENADE	The National Exam of Students' Performance (<i>Exame Nacional de Desempenho dos Estudantes</i>)
FGV	Getúlio Vargas Foundation
FIES	The Higher Education Students Funds (<i>Fundo de Financiamento ao Estudante do Ensino Superior</i>)
GATS	The General Agreement on Trade in Services
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HE	Higher Education
IUB	Brazilian Universal Institute (<i>Instituto Universal Brasileiro</i>)
LMS	Learning Management System
MDGs	The Millennium Development Goals
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OU	Open University
PROUNI	Program University for All (<i>Programa Universidade para Todos</i>)
PUC-RS	Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul
QAA	The British Quality Assurance Agency
RICESU	Network of Catholic Institutions of Higher Education
SINAES	The National Higher Education Evaluation System (<i>Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Superior</i>)
TVE	Educational Television (<i>Televisão Educativa</i>)

UAB	Brazilian Open University (<i>Universidade Aberta do Brasil</i>)
UK	The United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
US	The United States
WTO	The World Trade Organisation

CHAPTER 1: Overview of the Study

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter presents a snapshot of this research study, which investigates policies, practices and staff development for higher distance education in Brazil. It begins by providing the motives behind the researcher's interest in undertaking this study, as well as an overview of the study. In addition, the significance and aims are discussed. Then, this chapter explores the design of the thesis and briefly discusses each chapter.

1.2 The Research

Higher education is constantly evolving to accommodate changes in society, in student demand, job market requirements, the increased adoption of learning technologies, distance education, and so forth. Many universities around the world today, including those in developing countries, have developed distance education with the assistance of learning technologies and the Internet, in an attempt to deliver attractive and modernised education, and to reach students globally. These seem to be the current driving forces for change within higher education and academic staff development, with focus on improvement seeming to be one of the key elements for successful educational change. In Brazil today, distance education at a higher education level is a relatively new way to offer education. Despite some advances in the development of federal policies for distance education in Brazil, their effectiveness and efficiency remain unknown due to the limited resources and lack of sound empirical research in this field. Similarly, investigations at national and institutional levels, concerning staff development practices for distance education, as well as the responses of the two major higher education sectors in Brazil (private and federal public) in terms of distance education and staff development activities, appear yet to be developed.

1.2.1 The Researcher

In order to understand the researcher's motivations in undertaking this research study, it is first necessary to know more about the researcher's educational, professional and personal journey. The researcher, a female Catholic Brazilian, has experienced both the public and private educational sectors in Brazil throughout her life, including primary, secondary, vocational and higher education. She studied her primary and secondary (initial years) of schooling at a local public school in her hometown, Pirassununga, a country town of approximately 70,000 people, in the State of São Paulo. Then, she concluded the last years of high school (year 10, 11 and 12) at a technical and vocational training private school in São Carlos city, a one-hour drive from her hometown. This was a three-year full time evening course in computers and, at that time, it was equivalent to a high school degree. While studying full time she also worked full time in the family's business in her hometown. Without the background of a regular high school degree, opportunities to gain a place and succeed in the competitive entrance exam of public universities were very limited. As predicted by her, she failed to pass the public university entrance exam. After that, the researcher opted to try entrance at a private university, which she succeeded in doing. In 1993 she enrolled in an evening full time Bachelor of Computer Science course at the Methodist University of Piracicaba in Piracicaba city, while also living and working full time in a near by town called Araras, both within several hours drive of her hometown.

Further education continued in the private educational sector through a Graduate Diploma in Computer Networks, but opportunities to work emerged at the Pirassununga campus of the University of São Paulo, a state public university campus, as a research assistant between 1996 and 1997. Despite not having a teaching degree, she received an offer to teach computer classes to primary and secondary students in a private school in Pirassununga, a job that lasted approximately three years from 1998 to 2000. After applying several times to study a Masters degree at several public universities, she finally passed the entry exam, which included a face-to-face interview. She was then able to enrol in a full time Masters research course in Industrial Engineering at the São Carlos campus of the University of São Paulo. There, she researched the application of learning technologies in teaching engineering, thus, opening up new possibilities, interests and areas for researching in her professional career, including in such areas as education. From March 2001 to March 2003, while studying full time during the day she also had the

opportunity to work casually in two different private technical and vocational training schools. Finally, after completing her first Masters degree she was able to lecture at a higher education level, in a small college near her hometown.

In March 2004, she came to Australia with a Rotary Foundation Scholarship to study a Masters in Educational Administration at the University of New England. Even though she was enrolled as a full time internal student, she had the opportunity to study a few units at a distance. Studying at a distance tested her confidence as a learner, and truthfully, she developed some suspicions regarding the credibility of the units. After the completion of these units, the challenges of being a distance learner were overcome and the previous perceptions of distance education changed. In fact, by studying on her own, albeit with support provided by the university, she was able for the first time to reflect on her learning styles and patterns. Her performance as a student, and the levels of understanding achieved in these units, were higher than the ones previously experienced by the researcher throughout her student life. Despite this critical journey as a student in Australia, some questions remained without answers. For example, how does distance education at a higher education level work in Brazil and how is it delivered? How do higher educational institutions in Brazil prepare their academic staff to teach at a distance? This was the experience that triggered the researcher's curiosity in learning more about distance education and its staff development within the higher education system in Brazil and around the world.

Later on, she applied for the Doctor of Philosophy research program with the School of Education at the University of New England. This research thesis is the ultimate document required for the completion of that degree. At the time of this study, the researcher has lived in Australia for approximately five years and has experienced different economic, cultural and educational contexts, which have enhanced and developed her understanding of who she is, and what she stands for as a person, as a researcher and as a student.

1.2.2 The Research Question

The research questions that underpin this study were both contextualised and conceptualised through the analysis of the literature regarding the fields of inquiry investigated here; higher and distance education, academic staff development and educational change theory. The significant gaps in the literature, along with the selection and development of the research questions are explored as the analysis of the literature unfolds (Chapters Two and Three).

1.3 Aims and Significance of the Study

Since distance education is a relatively new way to deliver higher education in Brazil, and the increasing offer of staff development programs within HE institutions seems to be linked to the need for qualified academic staff to teach at a distance, the researcher as an insider/outsider aimed to:

- examine federal and institutional policies for distance education in Brazil in order to identify how these policies are shaping distance education practices, according to academics, experts and educational developers' perceptions;
- investigate how academic staff development is undertaken by the higher distance education institutions participating in this study and its impact on the success of the implementation of distance education;
- understand how the two major higher education sectors in Brazil, private and federal public, have responded to the distance education policies in terms of their distance education and staff development activities; and
- make recommendations based on the research findings, and supported by the body of knowledge in the fields explored in this study, to contribute to a successful implementation and continuation of distance education in Brazil, sustained by continuous staff development for quality teaching and learning.

These aims were effectively accomplished by answering the research questions, which were previously stated.

This study adds significantly to the existing body of knowledge regarding higher distance education and academic staff development in Brazil and worldwide. Based on educational change theories, the findings in this research support recommendations for a successful introduction of distance education and staff development at both a national and an institutional level. The recommendations may assist the former by providing a basis for the further development of policies and quality assurance systems for successful implementation and continuation of distance education in Brazil. As for higher education institutions, the recommendations from this study may contribute to the development of internal policy structures for distance education, including staffing policies. Another implication of this study could be the promotion of the value of quality staff development programs with a focus on teaching and learning improvement for successful DE amongst the institutions studied. This may consequently, promote continuous and effective learning opportunities and reduce staff resistance to DE.

Other implications of this study may be:

- to generate a better understanding of the benefits and practices of quality staff development programs for distance education; and
- to encourage other researchers to investigate distance education and academic development, thus, promoting and considering this area as a growing field of research in Brazil.

1.4 The Thesis Design

This section intends to assist the reader to become familiar with the thesis structure and the researcher's construction of knowledge. Figure 1.1 below illustrates how the thesis is organised, and the contributions of each chapter to the researcher's conceptualisation of the study; from the development of the research questions, through to their answers, and then to the outcomes of the study. Each chapter is briefly discussed next.

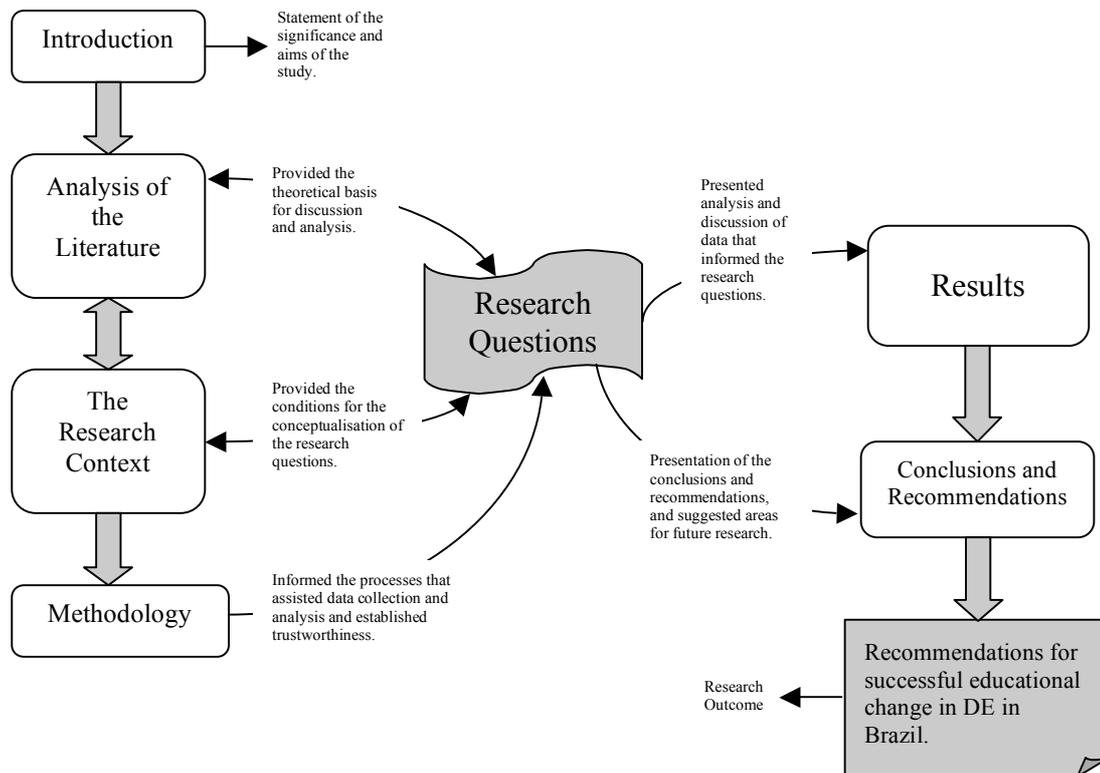


Figure 1.1: The thesis design

1.4.1 Chapter 1: Overview of the Study

This initial chapter outlines the study as a whole by presenting the researcher’s interest in the study, the aims and significance, the research questions and a brief summary of the chapters that comprise the basis for the theory, methodology, analysis and discussion in this thesis.

1.4.2 Chapter 2: Literature Analysis

Chapter Two provides to the reader an analysis of the relevant body of knowledge in areas related to this research such as the driving forces for change in contemporary higher education, higher distance education and staff development for quality teaching and learning in higher and distance education. As higher and distance education are constantly changing to accommodate the current driving forces, successful change is imperative. Thus, Chapter Two also discusses issues regarding the elements and the processes suggested by the literature to implement educational change effectively. Importantly, this chapter forms the conceptual foundation for the debate and analysis that takes place throughout the study.

1.4.3 Chapter 3: The Research Context

As shown in Figure 1.1, the third chapter explores some historical and political aspects surrounding the higher education system in Brazil, relevant to this study. It also provides to the reader with some insights into the issues facing the two major sectors comprising higher education in Brazil today; the private and the federal public sectors. Together with this, Chapter Three also contextualises key issues related to the latest higher education reform in Brazil, its impact on the expansion of distance education and the emerging need for academic staff development in Brazil. As a relative novelty in Brazil, higher distance education and its national policy framework is also explored. Supported by the concepts discussed in Chapter Two, the contextualisation of the study provides appropriate conditions for the researcher's development of the research questions.

1.4.4 Chapter 4: Methodology

Having identified the research questions, this chapter assists the researcher in developing the processes and methods via which data collection and analysis should be undertaken, according to the criteria for establishing quality and trustworthiness adopted in this study. This chapter also justifies the set of beliefs and understandings of reality that underpin this research study. Grounded in the work of Guba and Lincoln (1989, 1998, 2005), the constructivism paradigm was chosen. In fact, since the early stages of this investigation, characteristics of this paradigm were evident in the way the researcher constructed her understandings of the realities emerging in the study. Congruent with the constructivism paradigm, a mixed-method approach to data collection and analysis was adopted. Qualitative data was gathered through face-to-face semi-structured and in-depth interviews, while quantitative data was collected through a web-based online questionnaire. Thematic analysis was the primary technique adopted for data analysis in this study.

1.4.5 Chapter 5: DE Policies - Analysis and Discussion

Chapter Five presents the analysis and discussion of relevant documents, together with qualitative and quantitative data related to the first research question and associated

emerging themes, which combined explored how current distance education policies have shaped practices of distance higher education in Brazil. It also consistently fulfils the first research aim.

1.4.6 Chapter 6: Staff Development for DE - Analysis and Discussion

This chapter explores the analysis and interpretations of the data regarding staff development undertaken in Brazil according to participants' perspectives, thus, also satisfying the second aim of this research study.

1.4.7 Chapter 7: Institutional Responses- Analysis and Discussion

The seventh chapter presents the analysis and discussion of themes related to the third research question. By doing so, this chapter also highlights relevant aspects of individual institutions investigated in this study, as well as their responses to current distance education policies, most of which are associated with distance education and staff development practices and policies.

1.4.8 Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

The concluding chapter draws upon previous findings and discussions and presents the answers to the research questions. Here, recommendations for an effective implementation of distance education in Brazil, supported by staff development, are made. Limitations evident, and possible future research, are also highlighted in this chapter.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided to the reader an explanation regarding the motives behind the researcher's curiosity in conducting this investigation, together with the research aims and significance. Here, a brief explanation of the structure of this thesis was presented in the conceptualisation of research questions, methods and the structure of this thesis. The following chapter discusses and provides the theoretical foundations of this investigation.

CHAPTER 2: HE, DE, Staff Development and Educational Change: Literature Analysis

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by exploring the current driving forces for change in contemporary higher education, including distance education. Then, it continues by further highlighting key current aspects of distance education such as the generations of distance education, quality assurance and the policy framework. In an ever changing higher and distance education scenario, successful educational change is imperative, but difficult to achieve. Thus, this chapter also conceptualises key issues regarding educational change relevant to this study. Following this, the impacts of all the above contemporary matters regarding academic professional development practices are also analysed. Importantly, the theories and concepts explored here inform and provide a foundation for the conceptualisation of the research questions.

2.2 Contemporary Higher Education

The term *higher education* (HE) used throughout this work is defined as formal education that is undertaken in universities and colleges, and that usually leads to “a degree or diploma” (Kember, 2007, p. 5). A number of authors use different terms such as *tertiary education* and *post-secondary education*, and sometimes interchangeably, although there are nuances of meanings. Here, those terms are only used when included as parts of quotes, but evoking the definition of *higher education* established in this work by the researcher. From a more conceptual point of view, higher education, including distance studies, should produce graduates who can be involved in their society through rational decision-making and leadership. This involves providing more opportunities for students to develop an appropriate understanding of the nature and structure of the world in which they live, and to apply this effectively in further development of knowledge, and also in vocational situations (Bowden & Marton, 2004; Laurillard, 2002).

Recently, HE has changed considerably. According to many, the predominant driving forces for change in HE have been:

- Increasing number of students;
- Massification and privatisation of HE;
- Cross-border HE;
- The increased use of learning technologies and distance education, and
- Increasing adoption of quality assurance and the development of policy framework in HE (Ashwin, 2006; Bromage, 2006; Daniel, Kanwar, & Uvalić-Trumbić, 2007; Taylor, 2007).

All the above are explored in detail as this Chapter unfolds.

2.2.1 Increasing Number of Students

One of the driving forces for change in HE confronted by many countries, and higher education institutions around the world, is the increase in demand for higher and lifelong education. Similar to the impact of learning technologies on HE, this has also pushed a number of countries and educational providers to adopt new and diversified policies and strategies (Bowden & Marton, 2003; Dearn, Fraser, & Ryan, 2002). By 2025 there will be approximately 160 million students in the age participation rates (APRs) of 18-24 years old, enrolled in tertiary education worldwide (Klemencic & Fried, 2007). This represents rapid growth considering that there are already over 100 million students currently enrolled in all kinds of post-secondary studies (Daniel et al., 2007). However, the numbers do not include the growing figures of lifelong learners, “who in some countries are already outpacing the growth rate of traditional students” (Klemencic & Fried, 2007, p. 1). This demographic trend is more likely to take place in developing countries due to increasing population and the implementation of new government policies. For example, some government leaders have begun to realise that the development of higher education could be one of the key steps towards a more developed country (Daniel et al., 2007; Klemencic & Fried, 2007; UNESCO, 2005). Currently popular solutions for this problem are to expand the provision of higher education through massification, cross-border and distance

higher education. These are also becoming forces for change in higher education and are discussed next.

2.2.2 Massification and Privatisation of HE

The increasing perceptions of a more politically oriented and better educated society have also influenced changes in higher education and government educational strategies around the world. Education for all, democratisation of education and the provision of education to the masses, are all issues that have been addressed for several years by most developed countries, and have become increasingly popular in the developing world (Daniel et al., 2007). There is still much discussion surrounding these topics. To begin with, massification of higher education enables a greater number of students to have access to further education, brings diversity of courses and students, competition in prices and tends to raise the quality of education amongst educational institutions (Daniel et al., 2007; Guri-Rosenblit, Sebková, & Teichler, 2007). In addition, the concept of educating the masses contributes to a less elitist education, and the notion that this “truly revolutionary idea in the development of human society with substantial implications for how we think, work, and live...is rapidly spreading across the world” (Baker, 2007, p. 1). These are ideals on which this investigation is premised. In contrast, massification of higher education could produce one-size-fits-all institutions with little or no diversified degrees. It would also increase the number of qualified professionals with very high expectations into a job market that might not be prepared for such supply (Daniel et al., 2007; Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007).

In many countries, another driving force for change in HE is the fast growth of the for-profit private sector, which is emerging to meet the rapidly growing demand for more places in HE. For more than 100 years private institutions have been part of some countries' higher educational systems (Kinser, 2006). Recently, the sector has expanded considerably worldwide, and it might be hazardous not to consider the representativeness and potential of the private for-profit sector. For instance, in East Asia, mainly in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines, 80 percent of tertiary students are enrolled in private higher educational institutions (Daniel et al., 2007). Eighty-two percent of the educational institutions in Slovenia, and more than half in Poland, Romania and Hungary

are private (Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007). In a more developed context, the University of Phoenix, by far the largest private university in the US, has alone over 230,000 students (Kinser, 2006).

There are several advantages in the establishment of private higher educational institutions, such as increasing quality and greater access to higher education, promoting competition amongst institutions, including public ones, and so forth (Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007). However, there are also disadvantages. To begin with, profit-making higher educational institutions are often seen as ‘diploma mills’, not only by the public sector but also by society in general, with their primary focus being on making profit and selling degrees (Noble, 2002). This is probably a result of many financial scandals, in which several for-profit institutions have been involved. Drake School in New York (the United States), for instance, was closed down after it was discovered, via a state audit, that the institution “fraudulently collected millions of dollars in student aid” (Kinser, 2006, p. 28). In addition, for-profit higher institutions, in some cases, are still seen as providing lower quality degrees, having under paid and less qualified academic staff and weaker infrastructure than their public counterparts (Durham, 2004; Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007). Together with the above, education is seen, mainly in developing countries, as a “public good” and should be provided by the state government for free to all citizens (Daniel et al., 2007; Durham, 2004). Considering the escalating demand for higher education, and that most governments already subsidise primary and secondary education, and in some cases vocational training, this reality is impracticable. According to Daniel et al. (2007), “a choice must be made between inadequate provision of tertiary education by a public-sector monopoly or meeting the demand by a combination of public and private institutions” (p. 3). Rigid regulations, alongside continuing accreditation through state or private organisations could contain the growth of ‘diploma mill’ higher education institutions (Daniel et al., 2007; Kinser, 2006).

2.2.3 Cross-border Higher Education

Amongst the changing forces surrounding contemporary higher education institutions, globalisation and cross-border higher education has indeed pressured higher institutions to shift from domestic and national education to more international, globalised, competitive, diversified approaches for higher education (Daniel et al., 2007; Taylor & Swannell, 2001;

Teichler, 2006; UNESCO, 2005). Cross-border higher education, which is “clearly a manifestation of globalisation” (Daniel, Kanwar, & Uvalić-Trumbić, 2005, p. 2), has been encouraged by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) embraced by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995, which openly defined higher education as a service whose policies should be opened and established by international trade rules (Daniel et al., 2007; Knight, 2006). In an attempt to support higher education institutions and governments in implementing appropriate strategies and policies to enter the cross-sector enterprise, UNESCO (2005) has developed the Guideline for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education. It is, however, mostly concerned with developing countries, particularly those with relatively weak or non-existent cross-border higher education policies (UNESCO, 2005).

Indeed, cross-border higher education has reached dimensions not previously imagined in the educational landscape, both in developed and developing countries. Evidence of the movement towards cross-border higher education is the Bologna Declaration of 1999. The agreement, which currently involves 46 European countries, aims to develop a standardised higher education curriculum across Europe by 2010, as well as to disseminate the European higher education worldwide as a “convergent model” (European Commission, 2007; Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007; Teichler, 2006, p. 455). Other examples of cross-border education can be seen in the US and Australia, where educational institutions have implemented new marketing strategies to target not only their domestic students, but also international students mostly from emerging developing economies such as China and India (Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007). More and more students can afford to study overseas, with the numbers already reaching three million (Altbach, 2008). Those who prefer to study in their home countries could, if available, attend classes at a highly recognised international university branch campus established through a partnership between the international institution and local government and HE institutions (Altbach, 2008; Daniel et al., 2007; Lanzendorf, 2008).

However, cross-border HE does not seem to be the case in all countries. Apparently, in several South American countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Colombia there are restrictive agreements with international higher institutions (Aupetit & Jokivirta, 2007). The reasons for ‘closed-borders’ in some South American countries are due to concerns related to the increasing commercialisation of higher education and issues regarding

“cultural imperialism and loss of sovereignty” (Daniel et al., 2005, p. 2). However, cross-border HE could also be a chance for developing countries to create opportunities for exchanging knowledge, expand access not only domestically but also internationally, develop quality assurance and improve educational frameworks (Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007; Lanzendorf, 2008).

2.2.4 Increasing Use of Technologies

The introduction of technologies, including the Internet and its applications, into university teaching and learning, here called *learning technologies*, have also changed the way universities offer education (de Freitas & Oliver, 2005; Snyder, Marginson, & Lewis, 2007). The role that learning technologies play in learning activities today has dramatically increased within HE, “from tutorial allocations to multimedia lecture presentations, to online resources and communication with students”, and the list goes on (Dearn et al., 2002, p. 6). Everything seems to be a “mouse-click away” from happening (Biggs, 2003, p. 214). Consequently, they have also impacted academics’ and researchers’ professional careers and aspirations. It is possible now for several academic staff to attend conferences, workshops and seminars, and supervise their international and off-campus students without leaving their office at their university campus (King, 2003). All these activities can occur via Internet-based applications such as videoconferencing, chat rooms, forums, and so forth. Likewise, researchers can explore international online databases and libraries, exchange knowledge, and collaborate with their peers around the world. Together with this, learning technologies, including the Internet, have also affected the way students acquire new knowledge, and obtain their degrees (Ashwin, 2006; Laurillard, 2006). In today’s knowledge society, on and off-campus students have increasing access to a whole range of information and a variety of further educational options than ever before (Bowden & Marton, 2003; Taylor, 2007).

Sceptics, on the other hand, believe that as learning technologies advance and become more available, physical universities are likely to disappear and that the remaining institutions might concentrate their efforts on providing face-to-face higher education to the elite (Abeles, 2006). Universities might become even more focused on commercial and industry-based activities, while the production of scientific knowledge might become

insignificant, “as writings become [increasingly] open to public scrutiny” (Abeles, 2006, p. 41). However, the values that underpin this study regarding learning technologies, are those that can enhance learning if applied appropriately and when in harmony with learners needs, learning outcomes and teaching strategies (Biggs, 2003; Bowden & Marton, 2003; Harasim, Hiltz, Teles, & Turoff, 1998; Laurillard, 2002, 2006; Peters, 2003).

Similar to other forces driving changes in HE, the successful adoption of learning technologies needs to be supported by appropriate institutional and public policies, together with innovative management and pedagogical strategies (Laurillard, 2002, 2006; Vibert & Place, 2006). In fact, research shows that the successful implementation of learning technologies in higher and distance education “occurs when educational and organisational objectives are in harmony” (Snyder et al., 2007, p. 187). Equally important has been the institutional concern with the quality of education offered and how it has impacted on student learning. Educational quality assurance is explored next.

2.2.5 Quality Assurance

Quality assurance (QA) and other measurements of teaching, learning and research productive outcomes have also impacted the way higher education operates today. More commonly in the developed countries, a growing number of government and private accreditation agencies have been established to provide accreditation to higher educational institutions, and most importantly to provide evidence that they offer education of high quality (Dill, 2007). This increasing search for quality, improvement and accountability is probably due to the pressures coming from governments, private entities and the public in general (taxpayers), as they all seek “to get value for money from the institutions [they] fund” (Bowden & Marton, 2003, p. 211). Another reason for this might be to ensure that the forces driving changes in HE today, highlighted in this chapter, can be by some means controlled and impact positively on the development and quality of teaching and learning within HE institutions (Ashwin, 2006; Bowden & Marton, 2003; Dill, 2007). In fact, educational quality assurance is a system that should maintain a desirable level of quality, taking into account every stage and aspect of the educational process. From the point of view of the HE institutions, it should primarily concentrate on quality improvement rather than on accountability. When focusing on improvement “evidence for accountability will

be developed automatically”, the opposite is often not true (Bowden & Marton, 2003, p. 228). A focus on accountability, rather than quality, may lead universities to hide information, or even adjust internal evaluation results, in order to demonstrate to government agents during auditing visits that they are effective universities. There is some concern that this seems to be the case of some universities in Australia and the UK (Bowden & Marton, 2003). Ultimately, quality assurance must be “concerned with quality of student learning” (Bowden & Marton, 2003, p. 227).

In order to identify and establish quality, universities usually continuously assess their programs, policies, staff performance, student learning and so forth. This normally “implies evaluation of some kind...[and] some follow-up which makes use of the outcomes of evaluation in undertaking research and modifying existing practices, with the expectations that this will lead to improvement” (Bowden & Marton, 2003, p. 215). In this study, evaluation is conceptualised as “a process for giving attestations on such matters as reliability, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, efficiency...by providing affirmation of worth, value, improvement, accreditation, accountability, and, when necessary, a basis for terminating bad programs” (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007, pp. 4-5). Additionally, quality assurance can be divided into two distinctive parts; internal and external (Dill, 2007). Internal quality assurance encompasses institutional policies and practices designed and adopted by individual institutions to “monitor and improve the quality of their education provision, while external quality assurance refers to supra-institutional policies and practices” developed by the public government to ensure quality and standards of higher education across the nation (Dill, 2007, p. 1). Further, instruments for measuring quality assurance internally and externally tend to include internal audits, external evaluation, nationwide and internal students’ assessments, accreditation processes and so forth. So the two can be congruent become congruent over time (Bowden & Marton, 2003; Dill, 2007).

HE institutions in several developed countries have adopted both internal and external quality assurance for decades. In Australia and in the UK universities external evaluations are undertaken mostly by government agencies, the Australia Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) and the British Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) respectively (Filippakou & Tapper, 2008; Thair, Garnett, & King, 2006). In the US quality assurance agencies tend to be private and regionally grouped (Dill, 2007). All of them have been designed “to

establish accountability for government spending on higher education” (Thair et al., 2006, p. 52). In fact, government expenditure based on accountability is one of the major issues surrounding quality assurance today. The case is not whether universities should be accountable or not, but whether evaluators are experienced and qualified to do a good job, and whether the process is conducted with rigor enabling an accurate rank classification of universities and a fair and equitable allocation of resources (Bowden & Marton, 2003). Bowden and Marton (2003) suggest that the allocation of money to universities should not be based only on their performance. This form of quality assurance, they argue, would encourage “widening the exiting gap” between the good and the not so good universities (Bowden & Marton, 2003, p. 238). For them, educational quality assurance should bring “beneficial effect by monitoring universities to pay attention to the quality of their functions in ways they would not have done otherwise” (Bowden & Marton, 2003, p. 237).

2.2.6 HE Policies

In order to embrace one or several of the forces driving change in HE today, countries and institutions need not only to develop appropriate policies, but also continuously adapt them to the increasingly changing HE scenario. Many believe that contemporary HE policies should be inclusive and adaptable, promote diversity and “ensure equity of access and services to the knowledge economy” (Bottomley & Calvert, 2003, p. 1; Teichler, 2006). Additionally, policies and legislation for educational change should promote quality teaching, learning and research, but above all policies should be able to capture and reflect the country’s and institutions’ cultural, social and economic realities (Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007; McLendon, 2003; Teichler, 2006). Although there is a diversified range of higher education systems and their policies, they appear to have commonalities and be interconnected. Independent of the nature of systems and policies, policy-makers, government bodies and HE institutions, Evans (2003) argues that institutions should consider developing their higher educational policies based on sound research and comparative studies. Thus, the true needs of both institutions and the society could then be addressed.

Mostly in developed countries, educational policies tend to change regularly in order to accommodate the population’s current needs for education and/or other political issues that

need to be addressed, such as the availability of financial resources and increasingly, “government policies on telecommunications and information technology” (Evans, 2003, p. 33). The latter is due to the increasing impact of these policies on education at all levels today. In addition, these “government[s] have traditionally supported the education system through direct funding and in some instances through research grants” (Pacey & Keough, 2003, p. 404). This has certainly encouraged HE institutions in these countries to further implement their internal policies and frameworks. In developing countries, however, policy development and policy-makers are often driven by the interests of a minority group of people and “glossed by electioneering” (Chapman & Austin, 2002; Daniel et al., 2007; Evans, 2003, p. 32; Plank & Verhine, 2002). Centralised, corporatist, elitist and unethical are frequently common labels and characteristics of educational policies in developing countries (Alves, 2006b; Schwartzman, 2008a).

The population of any vibrant and successful country should be aware of the policies that rule their country. Awareness and participation are cornerstones of any well functioning democracy. In the education context, this seems to be almost mandatory for the actors involved in decision-making and development, such as educational leaders, academics and so forth. This is because these people tend to become more conscious of their role and performance within their organizations. It might also contribute with their personal career development and critical thinking on issues involving educational policies. Likewise, such realities further assist educational policy development and implementation (Perraton, 2003).

Up to this point, some of the current forces driving change in HE worldwide, as well as the development of educational policies for driving changes in HE, have been explored. Although universities are dynamic environments that translate current political, social, cultural, and more recently, technological scenarios into knowledge, changing them is very complex and involves multiple actors, their interests, good will and motivation (Bromage, 2006; Jackson, 2004). Issues and concepts related to educational change, together with processes and strategies for successful change, and the factors that prevent changes, are explored shortly. Next, the final significant driving force for change in HE considered in the context of this study, distance education, is discussed.

2.3 Distance Education

Before starting to explore distance education (DE), it is important first to define what it means in this particular study. There are a range of definitions for DE, with each broadly defining distance education as occurring when teacher and student are physically separated, and learning takes place at different places and times. Interaction happens through communication means such as “printed and electronic technologies” (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. 1). DE is also a complex system, which encompasses other elements such as instructional design, information technology, professional development and so forth. Moore and Kearsley (1996) appropriately define DE as;

planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special techniques of course design, special instructional techniques, special methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organisational and administrative arrangements (p. 2).

Together with these, DE also demands distinctive organisational and policy strategies. The notion that distance education is a “system” and “a complex phenomenon consisting of many interrelated factors” are convergent with the views of DE that underpin this research study (Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Saba, 2003, p. 7). For this system to succeed every part of it needs to function effectively. However, it is not the purpose of this chapter to explore every single element of the DE system, rather to highlight the elements that support this investigation and contribute to answering the research questions. This includes historical and contemporary approaches to DE, the increased adoption of learning technologies and their effects on teaching and learning interaction. Furthermore, this chapter also shows that DE is another influential force for change within higher education organisations, including policies and management. Indeed, “DE in the current educational environment is inevitably about changing existing organisational practices through the development of new structural, pedagogical and technological models” (Hanna, 2007, p. 501; Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Saba, 2003).

2.3.1 The Generations of Distance Education

Historically, the first activities involving distance education occurred in Great Britain in the 1840s, in France and in Germany around 1856 and then in the US in the late 1800s (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Noble, 2002). DE was first recognised as an educational model, with particular approaches and methods, in 1883, through a teaching degree by correspondence at the Chautauqua Institute (US). In 1892 the “world’s first university distance education program” was established at the University of Chicago (US) (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. 22). Soon in its development the political strengths of DE emerged. There were, after all, opportunities for women and for those who could not attend classes, to acquire further education through courses offered by correspondence (Keegan, 1990; Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Printed materials sent via the mail were the main form of communication, teaching and learning. This period is known as the first generation of DE; the “correspondence model” (Taylor, 2001, p. 2).

The second generation of DE, the “multimedia model”, came about with the addition of audiotape, videotape and computer-based learning technologies (Taylor, 2001, p. 2). As DE became more popular through the advancement of learning technologies, the need to develop different approaches to teaching and learning became obvious. At this stage, DE was mainly theorised as having a “teacher (T) interacting asynchronously (A) with a single student (S)”; $(T:A:S|1 \Leftrightarrow 1)$ (Hanna, 2003, p. 71). The above formula represents a Teacher using Asynchronous communication to teach a distance Student with one (teacher) to one (student) interaction. This adapted formula and its variations are used throughout this chapter section to illustrate the development of DE delivery modes as technologies and pedagogies evolved. In addition, early DE theorists began to realise that learners required special needs when engaging in a DE course, and the well-known conceptions of DE emerged; learners’ autonomy, self-directed learning, learner control and independence (Keegan, 1990; Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Peters, 2003; Wedemeyer, 1981). In a similar fashion, the need for instructors to develop appropriate teaching strategies for DE started becoming evident, but little or no help was available to guide them in the early stage of the development of DE (Hanna, 2003; Peters, 1998).

Internationally, it was during the second generation of DE that concepts of mass distribution, division of labour and industrialisation of DE became apparent, and have been

widely used since then (Hanna, 2003, 2007). Full degree programs in a ‘dual-mode university’ format, offering both on-campus and off-campus degrees, were first adopted in Australia and appeared in contrast to the correspondence-mode only institutions (Hanna, 2003, 2007; Moore & Kearsley, 1996).

The third generation of DE, the “telelearning model”, is based on applications of telecommunication technologies (Taylor, 2001, p. 2). Broadcast TV and radio opened up new opportunities for synchronous communication reaching an even greater number of students. Universities’ access centres became available regionally. There, off-campus students could meet other students and watch the tele-classes, based on recorded video or satellite transmission, at scheduled times (Hanna, 2003, 2007). As a result, teachers (T) could then interact synchronously (S) with their students (S^2) in remote sites; $(T:S:S^2|1 \leftrightarrow S^2)$ (Hanna, 2003; Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. 25). Although DE models and technologies advanced, for some, it seems that pedagogic approaches for DE remained similar to the “highly structured and class-pacing” face-to-face instruction found on traditional campuses (Hanna, 2003; Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. 25). For several reasons, DE still tends to maintain a strong traditional face-to-face teaching approach to it (Moran, 2007b).

The next generation of DE, the “flexible learning model”, emerged with the introduction of the Internet and its web-based application to DE. The impact and challenges brought by the Internet and its related technologies to higher education, also applicable to DE, were already explored earlier in this chapter. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the Internet has opened up opportunities for a more collaborative, media integrated, accessible and flexible learning experience for students; for those who have the required access (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2003; Laurillard, 2006; Peters, 2003). Research shows that the use of the Internet for interactive and collaborative learning has the potential to improve student learning, and has been adopted by universities around the world (Biggs, 2003; Hanna, 2007; Laurillard, 2006). As for instructors, the Internet brought about innovative ways of delivering the content, as well as challenging new teaching pedagogies (King, 2003; Peters, 2003).

The fifth and current generation of DE, the “intelligent flexible learning model”, includes the use of the Internet together with new technologies such as “automated response

systems [and] campus portal access to institutional processes and resources” (Taylor, 2001, p. 2). DE is conceptualised here as having “teacher (T) connected asynchronously (A) with students (S^2); (T:A: $S^2|1 \Leftrightarrow S^2$)” (Hanna, 2003, p. 72, 2007).

It is evident that as DE has evolved, the elements needed to support this evolution have also changed. This has been an even stronger driving force for change within dual-mode HE institutions, where new financial, physical and administrative arrangements, policies, quality control and so forth have needed to be reorganised (Hanna, 2007; Laurillard, 2006; Vibert & Place, 2006). It can also be argued that DE and online learning has supported other driving forces in HE discussed here. For example, DE has contributed to the expansion of mass education, cross-border education and thus, promoted further access to education to many worldwide. Following the same line of argument, public educational policy frameworks and quality assurance systems have also been adjusted to accommodate the changes brought by DE. Next, the quality assurance and educational policies for higher DE are discussed further.

2.3.2 Quality Assurance in DE

Quality assurance (QA) in DE is also considered an important element influencing changes in distance and higher education around the world. At first, higher DE institutions battled, using evaluation of all sorts, to prove the quality of their programs and that “students learned as much in them” as they would in face-to-face courses (Thompson & Irele, 2007; Thorpe, 2003, p. 420). Currently, DE in several countries worldwide appears to be seen no longer as a second-class education nor “an alternative primarily for non-traditional students, distance education is now being touted for its potential to transform traditional resident instruction as well” (Thompson & Irele, 2007, p. 420). Forces such as the demand for government and funding agencies accountability, the increased market desire for skilled labour, the need to ensure the “credibility, integrity and achievements of education to students [and] the public”, have become the rationale for the increasing call for QA in DE at a national and an institutional level (Bottomley & Calvert, 2003, p. 2; Dirr, 2003; Kilfoil, 2007; Thompson & Irele, 2007).

Discussed earlier in this chapter, the accreditation process can be one of the instruments of QA systems. As in HE, the accreditation of DE assists institutions to regularly maintain

and improve the accountability and quality of their offerings. Accreditation of higher DE varies from country to country and can be performed institutionally, nationally and even by international agencies.

In Australia, “universities are self accrediting bodies”; this means that they can create, maintain and, if necessary, withdraw either their face-to-face or distance degrees (DEST, 2008, p. 1). Although the Australia Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) conducts a comprehensive evaluation of universities’ teaching and learning every five years, the responsibility of constantly improving and guaranteeing “the quality of their own academic standards” to their clientele, independently of the mode of education they deliver, is up to individual institutions (DEST, 2008, p. 1; Kilfoil, 2007). In other words, the process of assuring quality for both distance and higher education are incorporated within a comprehensive national QA framework.

Currently, there is a large quantity of resources available regarding quality assurance frameworks for DE at all levels; institutional, national and international. Common characteristics amongst these frameworks are:

- flexibility in order to quickly absorb the external changes;
- a focus on improvement;
- the involvement of many stakeholders, including students;
- undertaken by specialists and peer reviewers;
- clear and easy to understand, and
- developed with reliable instruments of evaluation and source data (Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007; Braimoh, 2003; Kirkpatrick, 2005; Pacey & Keough, 2003).

At a national level, the Canadian Association for Community Education (CACE), with the *Canadian Recommended E-learning Guidelines* (CanREGs), the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC) in the US, with the *Accreditation Handbook*, and the Brazilian Ministry of Education and its Distance Education Department with their newest version (2007) of the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education*, amongst other national and international accreditation agencies, are examples of quality assurance frameworks for DE (Barker, 2002; Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007; Lezberg, 2007; MEC/SEAD, 2007). In addition, these frameworks tend to look at several aspects of DE development, implementation and delivery, including content material development, policy development,

staff professional development, student assessment and evaluation of all kinds (Kirkpatrick, 2005). As previously mentioned, QA and policy frameworks are normally informed by sound institutional research and follow-up enquiries.

Either in fully dedicated DE providers or in dual-mode institutions, QA tends to be an integrated element of the institutions' policy framework. In some countries, policies for DE, including QA, are developed and controlled mostly by the Ministry of Education (Romiszowski, 2005). The following section further explores issues in policies for DE.

2.3.3 DE Policies

For institutions new at providing DE, or the ones with programs already established, “policies provide a framework for the operation of distance education” (Simonson, 2007, p. 355), setting some guidelines that will guide and structure this complex model of delivering education. As for governments, the development of DE policies assists institutions with the implementation of DE programs, as well as facilitates quality control and accreditation processes (Bottomley & Calvert, 2003; Kilfoil, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2005; Simonson, 2007; Simonson & Bauck, 2003).

Specifically for dual-mode institutions, which are common in countries such as Australia, the US, India and Brazil (Romiszowski, 2005), it is believed that the problem of some dual-mode institutions is that their policies might be primarily focused on “the needs of on-campus students and faculty, as DE is a small, peripheral component or may be a recent addition to the institution's programs” (Bottomley & Calvert, 2003, p. 1). Bottomley and Calvert (2003) propose several guiding principles to assist dual-mode institutions to develop their DE policy framework, which include:

- a revision of the existing institutional policies to ensure the introduction of appropriate DE policies;
 - a revision of the institution's “mission, values and policy principles” to ensure that the institution is fully committed to the development of purposeful DE (p. 3);
- and

- consideration of “values guiding dual-mode provision” in order to align both face-to-face and distance provision, not only legally but also in terms of establishing equal commitment from both staff and students (p. 4).

In order to start the new enterprise of offering DE programs, traditional face-to-face institutions will have to overcome many change management challenges. The adoption of such a distinct educational approach can bring deep organisational divergences because of the differences in planning and management required by both teachers and managers within a DE system (Watkins & Kaufman, 2003, 2007). All policies (and preferences) then need to be changed and adapted, as traditional “wisdom” disappears when there is a paradigm shift and everything and everyone’s experience “goes back to zero” (Watkins & Kaufman, 2003, p. 507). The solution, according to Watkins & Kaufman (2007), is the development of a rigorous strategic planning process for DE, where institutions must constantly change and proactively focus primarily on the ends “required by the institution for long-term success”, rather than on the means for reaching it (Watkins & Kaufman, 2007, p. 364). Policy and organisational changes should be informed by sound evaluation (Brammoh, 2003; Bromage, 2006; Jackson, 2004). Educational change theory can contribute here. It advocates evolutionary planning and collaboration models to achieve lasting deep change (Fullan, 2007; Sergiovanni, 1998).

DE policies and QA frameworks vary from country to country and from institution to institution, according to their missions, management strategies, response to change and results expected. All policy frameworks if well designed and implemented, however, could be powerful instruments for educational change and improvement in education, particularly with DE (Fullan, 2007; Thompson & Irele, 2007; Thorpe, 2003).

2.4 Managing Change in Higher and Distance Education

So far, issues regarding the forces driving change in the current context of HE, including DE and the development of QA and policy frameworks to accommodate its needs and the changes brought by it, have been discussed in this chapter. Higher and distance education institutions, predominantly dual-mode institutions, in their structural, political and human aspects, are complex and very difficult to change. In fact, many suggest that change is all

about motivating people to change their beliefs and values. It has been suggested that for successful change to occur within an educational context all stakeholders need to be involved and have ownership of decision making during the change process. They have the power to determine if the changes desired by organisational leaders will be accomplished or not (Bromage, 2006; Fullan, 2007; Jackson, 2004; Outram, 2005a; Paul, 2003).

In most universities, the “climate [tends to be one] of academic freedom” and academic staff are encouraged to be critical thinkers and work independently (Paul, 2003, p. 78). By involving as many academics as possible in the process of change, leaders may gather fruitful contributions for the development of effective change and encourage commitment from those involved. However, it may also create obstacles for change to occur as problems within the organisation, personal interests and reluctance to change emerge. Many consider that a consensus amongst all stakeholders is almost impossible to achieve (Bromage, 2006; Outram, 2005a; Paul, 2003). That is probably why “not all changes result in improvement or will be interpreted as enhancement by the people involved in and affected by change” (Jackson, 2004, p. 8). This is the situation where having good managers or leaders and capable supporting teams managing the development, implementation, and delivery of DE could make a great difference in whether or not change succeeds. They should be able to constantly motivate stakeholders, as motivation seems to be another key element of great importance in this process.

Further, “managers must understand and take account of stakeholders’ adaptive behaviours during organisational change” (Bromage, 2006, p. 3). As for DE organisations, it is imperative that they adopt “a management structure that is capable of supporting innovation” (Laurillard, 2006, p. 73), together with a combination of top-down and bottom-up management strategies. According to Fullan (2007), a top-down only management of change “does not work because it fails to garner ownership, commitment” and to foster stakeholders understanding of the preconditions of change, while “bottom-up change...does not produce success on any scale” (p.11). The outcome of such a combination of management strategies for educational and organisational change might be “capacity building with a focus on results” (Fullan, 2007, p. 11). This epistemology has been explored and advocated by the significant body of literature regarding educational and organisational change, in order to promote deep and prolonged changes in education in general, and also in higher and distance education (Bromage, 2006; Fullan, 1991, 2007;

Hargreaves, 2008; Jackson, 2004; Laurillard, 2006; Outram, 2005b; Sergiovanni, 1998; Smyth, 2003).

Generally, either imposed by the current trends or voluntarily adopted (to improve, transform, and/or replace existing practices for something better), significant change implies a sense of loss, anxiety and uncertainty. In fact, “there can be few experiences as emotional as change” (Jackson, 2004, p. 4). These emotions can be either negative or positive. Jackson (2004) lists eight positive against 14 negative feelings towards change and concludes that “negative attitudes are probably dominant for most people” (p.4). Resistance to change is one of the top in his list of negative feelings. Indeed, research on educational change has shown that, amongst several barriers preventing change from succeeding, staff resistance is the most common one. As mentioned earlier, if change is all about motivating people to change their beliefs and behaviours, and they, for several reasons, refuse to embrace it, change will not occur (Fullan, 2007; Outram, 2005a; Persson, 2005). Possibly encouraged by the above facts, Outram (2005a, 2005b) developed a Discussion Paper on “*53 interesting ways in which colleagues resist change*” and a subsequent one on “*53 ways of managing resistance to change*” (Outram, 2005a, 2005b). In the former, he identifies the indicators of resistance and reasons why academic staff tend to resist change, with “lack of self-confidence, lack of knowledge...purpose of change not made clear, not involved in planning, lack of trust, fear of failure” chief amongst them (Outram, 2005a, p. 4). Then he argues that the reasons why people resist changing should not be ignored because, as stated earlier, not all changes are positive and lead to improvement (Jackson, 2004; Outram, 2005a).

Particularly within the context of DE, the fast advance of learning technologies, superficial research on the impacts of DE on student learning and on students’ abilities to be responsible for their own learning, are all likely to be the factors increasing staff resistance to change and to adopting DE (Laurillard, 2006; Paul, 2003; Snyder et al., 2007). Like Fullan’s work in school change (Fullan, 2007), Outram’s (2005b) latter paper highlights that fostering informal communication amongst stakeholders, and having good role models, along with influential and trustworthy leaders, are key factors to manage resistance to change (Outram, 2005b). Additionally, it is imperative to engage stakeholders in a process of continuously learning about change, so as to “learn how to change through the process of trying to do it” (Jackson, 2004, p. 2). This could also minimise the negative

mind-set that surrounds change. It is believed that this learning ultimately will result in changing beliefs, values and behaviour, consequently, reducing resistance to change. In addition, strongly recommended by many, change should be focused on improvement and enhancement of teaching and learning (Bromage, 2006; Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 2008; Jackson, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1998; Smyth, 2003).

However, managing staff resistance, and/or finding the right combination of top-down and bottom-up management strategies, do not seem enough to accomplish deep and lasting educational change. Fullan (2007), based on several pieces of research conducted on educational change, developed ten elements for successful change. They are:

1. *Define closing the gap as the overarching goal;*
2. *Attend initially to the three basics (comprehension, reasoning and well-being);*
3. *Be driven by tapping into people's dignity and sense of respect;*
4. *Ensure that the best people are working on the problem;*
5. *Recognize that all successful strategies are socially based, and action oriented – change by doing rather than change by elaborate planning;*
6. *Assume that lack of capacity is the initial problem and then work on it continuously;*
7. *Stay the course through continuity of good direction by leveraging leadership;*
8. *Build internal accountability linked to external accountability;*
9. *Establish conditions for evaluation of positive pressure, and*
10. *Use the previous nine strategies to build public confidence (p. 44).*

Even though the work of Fullan and his colleagues is based on research in educational change at a school level, it is extensively applied in the higher education context (Bromage, 2006; de Freitas & Oliver, 2005; Jackson, 2004; Jones & Lewis, 1991; Smyth, 2003). By and large, it seems clear that educational change is a complex and delicate process that requires time and persistence to be developed and implemented properly. Change does not happen overnight because people need time to get used to new structures, transform old cultures and beliefs into new ones, and then change their behaviour. Indeed, Fullan (2007) advises that educational change in its “early success is fragile; small initial victories do not yet represent a trend” (p. 261).

At a national level, educational change might be even more complex and difficult to successfully implement due to its large scale. Also, government projects promoting educational change tend to have a short life lasting only until the next election cycle. Project discontinuity caused by a possibly better project idea, or even a cut in funding, are also common reasons why educational change at a government level appears not to prosper (Evans, 2003; Fullan, 2007). Government level educational change projects tend also to be focused mostly on adoption rather than implementation. This is because “it is easier to adopt structural changes than it is to engage in the hard work of cultural changes in relationships, capacity, and motivation” (Fullan, 2007, p. 238). Nevertheless, there seems to be three major avenues via which governments can promote educational change:

- by pushing accountability;
- by providing incentives (pressure and support), and/or
- by fostering capacity building (Fullan, 2007, p. 236).

The first two strategies for educational change could bring some positive results “but not particularly deep or lasting” change (Fullan, 2007, p. 237). It is suggested that most governments have devoted all their efforts predominantly to accountability. While a few governments have implemented successfully the combination of pressure and support strategies, no government has yet implemented nation wide educational change focused on capacity building, despite some recent attempts (Smyth, 2002, 2003).

It has been discussed elsewhere in this chapter that accountability-driven only strategies either for quality assurance, policy development, and now educational change do not appear to work. Accountability tends to shift stakeholders and leaders focus on teaching and learning improvement to simply accomplishing what the governments and their agents are looking for. Therefore, accountability does not seem to change deeply, and on a large scale, people’s beliefs and behaviour. Rather, it puts “tremendous pressure on local systems, while providing little help, and actually increases the overload and fragmentation of effort” (Fullan, 2007, p. 237). Lack of learning opportunities for those involved in the process of change, and limited government control over those who are actually responsible to put the change into action, are likely to be the reasons why accountability appears to fail in accomplishing deep educational change. In addition, while incentives with pressure and support can produce “some degree of commitment and achievement”, they are still not

enough to generate the ultimate change in stakeholders beliefs and practices (Fullan, 2007, p. 239).

Furthermore, research has shown that successful and lasting implementation of educational change occurs where capacity building is the main focus. In fact, by investing in capacity building governments then provide opportunities for stakeholders to learn and take ownership of their personal and professional changes. As a result, the ultimate final results of engaging people in capacity building tends to be improvement and eventually accountability (Bowden & Marton, 2003; Fullan, 2007).

2.4.1 The Change Process

Either at a national or at an institutional level, based upon Fullan’s (2007) work, change largely takes place in three phases. *Initiation* is the first phase and “consist of the process that leads up to and includes a decision to adopt or proceed with a change” (Fullan, 2007, p. 65). The second phase, *Implementation*, is related to “the first experiences and attempts to put an idea or reform into practice” (Fullan, 2007, p. 65). *Continuation* is phase number three and “refers to whether the change gets built in as an ongoing part of the system or disappears by way of a decision to discard or through attrition” (Fullan, 2007, p. 65). Figure 2.1 illustrates that the phases are subsequent and depend on each other to succeed. Each phase is a very complex process itself and requires special consideration from decision makers and educational leaders (Fullan, 1991, 2007).

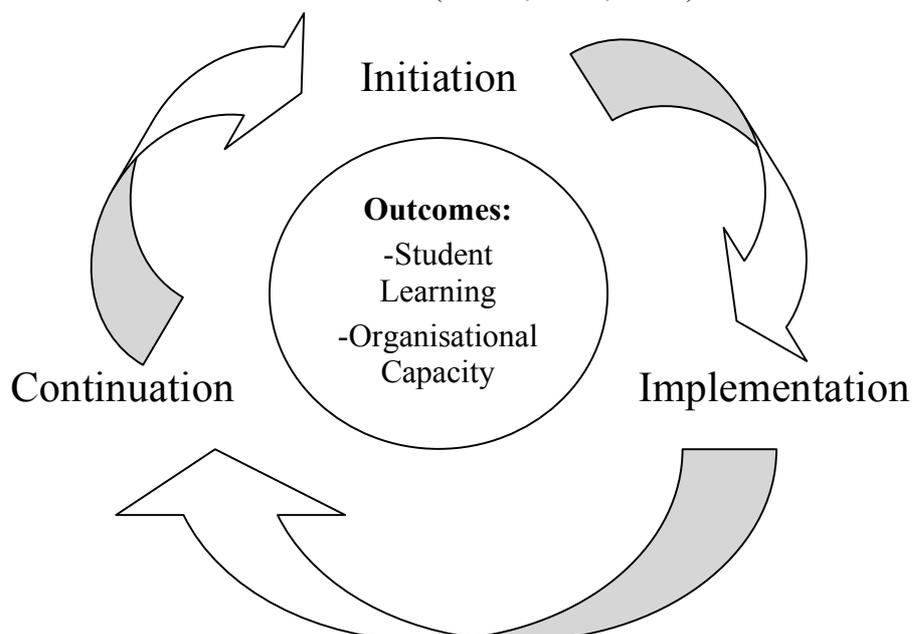


Figure 2.1: The change process (Fullan, 2007, p. 66).

There seems to be several factors prompting the initiation process of educational change. The forces driving for change discussed in this chapter can be considered as factors encouraging initiation of change within HE, including DE. Fullan and colleagues have developed, based on approximately three decades of research into educational change in schools, a list of eight factors that can contribute to the initiation phase of the change process. As mentioned previously, the higher education sector has much to learn from this research. These sectors primarily involve humans' beliefs and behaviours. They are "existence and quality of innovation, access to innovation, advocacy from central administration, teacher advocacy, external change agents, community pressure/support/apathy, new policy – funds (federal/state/local), and problem-solving bureaucratic orientations" (Fullan, 1991, 2007, p. 70). In essence, for successful initiation to occur, it needs to be relevant and practical for those involved and engaged in the change. In addition, educational leaders should ensure that the need for the change is clear and that people involved are learning about the process of change, and thus, are able to implement it. This is possible by providing financial and professional support through continuing staff development, which is discussed later in this chapter. On the other hand, initiations of change could fail when "adopted for symbolic and opportunistic reasons, with little likelihood of follow-through", when they are "large-scale change projects that bite off too much and/or are inherently vague" and/or when they are "imposed change of any kind that teachers find meaningless", amongst others (Fullan, 1991, p. 62, 2007).

As in the initiation process, the implementation is also a complex process in itself. Once again, Fullan's (2007) extensive research on educational change reveals nine essential factors affecting implementation. These factors are divided into three groups. The first group is *characteristics of change*, which is formed by *need*, *clarity*, *complexity* and *quality/practically* factors. It can be noticed that the above implementation factors overlap some of Fullan's (2007) recommendations for a successful initiation process. This confirms previous assertions that the three phases in the process of change illustrated in Figure 2.1 cannot be treated separately. *Local characteristics* is the second group of factors in the implementation process and it is comprised of *district*, *community*, *principal*, and *teacher* factors, while the third group, *external factors*, is formed by *government and other agencies factors* (Fullan, 1991, 2007).

In addition to the key factors affecting implementation, Fullan's (1991) earlier work also emphasised that there are six key themes that are essential for the success of the implementation process. These key themes are still relevant to this research study and worthwhile to discuss here. *Vision-building* is the first one. It contributes with and is influenced by other themes. Developing vision-building assists the development of "values, purpose and integrity for both the what and how of improvement" in the implementation process of change (Fullan, 1991, p. 81). There seems to be two dimensions of vision-building. The first one is the vision developed by foreseeing the benefits that educational change could bring to the universities and their DE programs, while the second is the vision of how to achieve the change, including the processes and strategies (Fullan, 1991). Both dimensions need to be shared and understood amongst stakeholders involved in the change. In fact, the larger the scale of the educational change, the more important the "strategy for building a shared vision" is (Fullan, 1991, p. 82). Similar to some of the ten elements for successful change explored earlier, the strategies for building shared vision are:

- taking into account stakeholders' experiences and opinions;
- making sure capable people are working on the project of change;
- the larger the number of people engaged in process the better; and
- keeping stakeholders committed and in a constant state of learning about the process of change (Fullan, 1991).

The second theme, *evolutionary planning*, is based on the concept of evolving planning processes that move forward according to circumstances and improvements needed "take[ing] advantage of unexpected developments and opportunities" (Fullan, 1991, p. 83). An evolutionary planning approach, together with a combination of "top-down initiatives and bottom-up participation" are likely to be the essential elements needed for successful large scale educational change and reforms (Fullan, 1991, p. 83). Another major theme in the implementation process is initiative-taking and empowerment. This theme particularly relies on educational leaders, their abilities to encourage collaborative work and to share power amongst stakeholders. By doing so, leaders could create a supportive work environment through continuous communication and learning networks (Fullan, 1991).

Additionally, a fourth theme in the implementation process is *staff development and resource assistance*. Definitions and concepts regarding staff development in higher

education are discussed in detail in the next section, but is important to highlight here, however, that staff development, capacity building, is an essential element for successful implementation of educational change. Because of this, it should provide academics with opportunities for “learning new ways of thinking and doing” and developing “new skills, knowledge, attitudes, etc” (Fullan, 1991, p. 84). Also, the professional development of academics should occur before, during and continue after the implementation to ultimately assist them to develop new beliefs and behaviours (Fullan, 1991, 2007; Salmon, 2004; Webb, 2003). Moreover, the fifth theme concerning *monitoring/problem-coping* emphasises the significance of monitoring focused on improvement, and that it should start from the early stages of the implementation process. Thus, monitoring (evaluation) outcomes could provide a basis for carrying out problem-coping and solving (Fullan, 1991). Finally, Fullan’s sixth theme in the implementation process is *restructuring*. It is associated with the organisational modifications necessary to effectively implement educational change such as financial matters, staffing policy development, new working conditions, and so forth. These are some of the elements that might encourage or prevent deep and lasting educational change and improvement.

The third phase of the educational change process is continuation (Figure 2.1). Research on educational change theory reveals that ineffective implementation is one of the major issues affecting continuation. However, even when implementation is successful, educational projects can discontinue due to cuts in funds or policy change. In fact, the larger the financial investments in the process of change, the bigger are the chances for discontinuation. This is because educational institutions may not be able to afford the expenses of the project on their own (Fullan, 1991, 2007). Lack of institutional incentives, resources and staff development, together with a lack of leadership and leaders interested in (at an institutional and national level) continuation of the projects are likely to be other strong reasons why educational change may not continue (Fullan, 1991, 2007). For continuation to occur a new organisational structure needs to be in place, including new policies, financial resources and working conditions. Also, by the continuation phase, institutions should have a considerable number of stakeholders “skilled in and committed to the change”, while also creating a supporting culture and facilities for continuous learning, mostly to new academic staff (Fullan, 2007, p. 102). It is important to emphasise once again that the phases in the change process should not be examined in isolation or as a linear process, but rather as a complex situation with combined phases, factors and

themes. Educational change processes may be condemned to failure when complexities are overlooked (Fullan, 1991, 2007).

This section conceptualised issues regarding educational change and the change process relevant to this study. These were highlighted to show that, in order to implement deep and ongoing educational change, institutional and government leaders need to provide appropriate conditions for learning, reflection and discussion amongst those who are primarily responsible for putting the change into action; that is, the academics and educational leaders. In the specific context of this study, the university teacher is the central figure. They need to be empowered and prepared for the challenges that such change can bring to their personal and professional lives. Continuous learning, capacity building and staff professional development can help university teachers to overcome these challenges, while increasing their commitment and ownership of the change process. Decreasing resistance to change, by changing beliefs and behaviours, is the ultimate intention. The researcher also attempted to explore the phases in the process of change and the importance of these for effective implementation and continuation of change. The following section explores issues regarding staff development for successful educational change.

2.5 Academic Professional Development

When talking about *capacity building*, *staff development*, *academic development*, *professional development*, and *academic professional development*, the researcher is referring to the learning delivered by universities to their employees in order to improve, amongst other things, their teaching and learning practices and skills and the support of these. These terms (illustrated above) are used interchangeably throughout this work to cover the development of educators in universities, although some authors would argue that there are nuances of meaning between these terms (Webb, 1996).

It seems clear from the discussions in this chapter that the type of work, and the work environment, that university teachers experience today within universities, has changed significantly in the last decades. The forces driving change in HE have also impacted on academic careers. Today academics teach a larger and more diverse number of students

than before. They are also expected to explore and adapt learning technologies into their teaching. In addition to teaching, they need to continue conducting research, supervising their research students, keep updated, as well as being part of the university community, including participating in administrative issues. The increasing workload and pressures have left many academic staff with few or no opportunities at all for their professional development. In a contradictory situation, academics have also been pressured by their institutions to engage in continuing professional development, as well as be more efficient and accountable (Barrett & Barrett, 2007; Martin, 1999; Santiago & Carvalho, 2008; Taylor, 1999; Whitchurch, 2008).

Particularly in DE, the common assumption tends to be that academics adopt more pedagogically-oriented (predominantly student-centred approaches) that are viewed as more efficient, effective and flexible in terms of learning strategies than was previously the case. Academic staff should be facilitators, motivators, mentors and tutors, rather than simply teachers (Dearn et al., 2002; Laurillard, 2006; Ryan, 2004; Salmon, 2004; Webb, 2003). With the advent of DE came a new division of labour with its impact on academic careers worldwide, where different people played different roles during the structuring, development, implementation and delivery of degrees at a distance. This factor, together with increasing cost cutting across the higher and DE sectors, triggered a growing number of part-time academic staff within such institutions around the world (Hanna, 2007; Peters, 2007). For some, this increase in part-time staff represents for the institutions, not only a cost reduction because part-time employees earn less than full-time staff, but also a more updated, diverse, flexible, and, according to research undertaken in this subject area, an as efficient and effective teaching workforce as the full-time one (Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Knight, Baume, Tait, & Yorke, 2007; Wallin, 2007). For others, the increase in both the adoption of division of labour approach in DE, and of part-time staff, implies fragmentation of the teaching and learning process, and “de-professionalisation and de-skilling” of academics today (Webb, 2003, p. 88). In addition, part-time staff are less likely to fully commit to an institution’s vision and to engage in staff development (Dearn et al., 2002; Hanna, 2007; Panda & Juwah, 2006; Webb, 2003). Considering the above discussion regarding recent changes in HE, and their impact on academic staff careers, it might be easier to understand why so many academics are resistant to change. Most relevant to this study, they are more likely to resist the adoption of DE (Dearn et al., 2002; King, 2003; Paul, 2003).

2.5.1 Approaches and Strategies for Staff Development

In order to prepare academics to overcome the current and future challenges, and to minimise the negative impacts of change, while helping to decrease levels of resistance to change, academic professional development seems to be one of central ways to achieve such outcomes (Fullan, 2007). Indeed, research has shown that staff development appears to be the key for successful change in higher education, and this also includes the development of DE (Dearn et al., 2002; King, 2003; Smyth, 2003; Tynan & Smyth, 2007a). There is a substantial body of literature exploring methods, approaches, frameworks and techniques for staff development in DE worldwide. Also, there are many resources available on the web to assist academic staff to develop further skills in DE, from government websites and associations to private companies and institutions. Even though there is no one-size-fits-all staff development approach, the strategies available may assist academic developers and academic staff in providing a theoretical basis for program implementation. Webb (2003) suggests ten key points for quality teaching in DE that should be considered when developing academic staff. He believes that these points might assist DE instructors in enhancing students' learning experiences. They are:

1. *building relationships between staff and students;*
2. *modelling scholarly values;*
3. *encouraging cooperation;*
4. *encouraging active learning;*
5. *providing appropriate teaching through different teaching approaches to meet different learning objectives;*
6. *providing appropriate assessment;*
7. *providing prompt and helpful feedback;*
8. *encouraging productive use of time;*
9. *communicating high expectations, and*
10. *respecting diversity in the background and experience of students (p. 90).*

Another conceptualisation of DE staff development is Salmon's (2004) five-step model for developing online instructors. The model is mostly focused on teaching using the Learning Management System (LMS) and has two dimensions to it, with a combination of

interaction and learning. One develops the instructor's teaching skills, while the other dimension provides the appropriate technological skills necessary to match these with the teaching skills and, hence, accomplish each step of the model. The five steps are: "access and motivation, online socialisation, information giving and receiving, knowledge construction, and development" (Salmon, 2004, pp. 63-64).

Further, another staff development practice that has been frequently adopted by universities in Australia and the UK is the professionalisation of teaching through a Graduate Certificate in HE (Dearn et al., 2002; Fletcher, 2004; Jamieson, 2004; Knight, 2006; Webb, 2003). Generally, the Graduate Certificate is offered on a part-time basis, over a two-year period and free of charge for the institution's academic body. In addition, it is intended to expose staff to a whole range of teaching and learning strategies, including those needed in DE, if the institution is also a DE provider. Importantly, participants tend to be granted with a formal qualification after finishing the degree. This seems to be an incentive for staff. They end up with an additional qualification as part of their curriculum vitae and new learning experiences as well. The benefits for the institutions seem to be even greater as the majority of academic staff do not have teaching degrees, a reality for many universities across the globe. This might result in fruitful outcomes because it might assist in enhancing a greater understanding of teaching and learning amongst academics, and hence, improving students educational experiences (Dearn et al., 2002; Jamieson, 2004).

For dual-mode institutions, the Graduate Certificate in HE and other long-term staff development programs appear to provide a crucial opportunity to introduce and engage academic staff in teaching and learning online and at a distance (Webb, 2003). In fact, academics enrolled in the course might feel in the position of students again. In this case, academics could experience in practice what their own students would during studying at a distance (King, 2003; Macpherson, Bennett, & Priest, 1997). This opportunity could help academic and students to engage in reflective practice, which is a recommended action to create fundamental change in practitioners' beliefs (Fullan, 2007; McLoughlin & Al-Mahmood, 2005). Most importantly, by promoting reflection in practice staff development programs can explore the three main elements suggested by Fullan (2007) when implementing new programs, in the case of this study, distance education programs. Educational developers might 1) help academic staff to develop new materials and

techniques, or adapt their current content materials for DE, 2) encourage them to explore teaching and learning approaches for DE, and 3) consequently, change their previous pedagogical views to the ones needed in DE, changing academics beliefs in the process (Fullan, 2007, p. 30).

Moreover, the Graduate Certificate model opens up opportunities for assessing and evaluating staff learning, as well as evaluating the course and the instructors themselves. Therefore, providing feedback for future improvements in the Graduate Certificate, feedback that, perhaps, would not be possible to gather from a non-award staff development program otherwise (Dearn et al., 2002; Jamieson, 2004; Knight, 2006). According to Webb (2003), the Graduate Certificate in HE approach to staff development is a *thick* strategy for staff development. A *thick* strategy occurs when the financial and human resources of an institution are concentrated in “high priority areas”, in the case of the Graduate Certificate, in fostering and improving teaching and learning across the institution (Webb, 2003, p. 91).

Other staff development approaches are: induction programs, workshops and seminars, some of which might be fully at a distance, or face-to-face only, or even a combination of both distance and face-to-face elements, known as mixed-mode approaches. However, “learning to teach online needs to be undertaken online” (Salmon, 2004, p. 69). In other words, staff development programs for educators who would possibly teach students at a distance, and/or with the assistance of learning technologies and the Internet (online), would also have to be at a distance and online. Otherwise, change in educators teaching and learning approaches would not be deep and lasting, as educators tend to bring to teaching their previous professional experiences and beliefs (Salmon, 2004; Webb, 2003).

In addition, there are staff development programs that focus only on pedagogies for DE, others only on the use of new learning technologies, and still others that use a combination of both pedagogies enhanced by the technologies (Dearn et al., 2002; Salmon, 2004). However, many suggest that training staff in the use of learning technologies only, including those adopted in DE, does not assist academics to fully understand how these technologies help to enhance teaching and learning (Dearn et al., 2002; King, 2003; Salmon, 2004; Webb, 2003). On the other hand, “if educators learn technology for educational purposes and build on their professional expertise, we have the possibility of

fundamentally changing education” and providing students with a more authentic learning experience (King, 2003, p. 8). This seems also what Salmon (2004) suggests earlier through her five-step model of staff development. However, Webb (2003) classifies the above approaches for staff development as reflecting a *thin strategy*, the type of support and help most academics would have access to within their institutions. But, only where these approaches do not directly address a need identified by the adult learner, otherwise, they may be *thick* strategies.

It is not just a matter of developing the most appropriate staff development programs using the strategies mentioned and/or other ones, but rather encouraging educators’ personal reflection on learning, thinking critically, engaging in collaborative reflection and learning activities, supporting the creation of communities of learning within universities and promoting transformational change (Biggs, 2003; Brew, 1995; Fullan, 2007; King, 2003; Laurillard, 2006; Panda & Juwah, 2006; Salmon, 2004; Smyth, 2003; Webb, 1996, 2003). To “develop a culture of continuous change for improvement in teaching and learning” (Smyth, 2003, p. 51). Ultimately, the desired outcome of staff development for online and distance education “is to produce an academic workforce with the understanding and skills necessary to produce a good educational experience for students with the wide variety of settings” potentially offered by online and DE (Webb, 2003, p. 87).

2.5.2 Managing Staff Development

Even though the decision to choose one or several approaches for staff development in DE is an important decision to make, more importantly, however, is the alignment of staff development with the institutional mission and policies, specifically those policies directly related to DE, teaching and learning and staffing (King, 2003; Webb, 2003). Traditionally, institutional management tends to be centralised and to employ top-down management strategies. Academics are not always invited to participate deeply in decision-making, policy development nor in planning the educational change undertaken within their institutions as a whole. Even so, they are still frequently the ones responsible for implementing the changes adopted by upper-level decision-makers. As mentioned elsewhere, these are likely to be some of the reasons why successful educational change fails to be implemented within HE as elsewhere in education more generally. As argued by

change theorists, people must be made the priority for organisational and educational change to occur (Bromage, 2006; Fullan, 2007; Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Webb, 2003). In addition, there are a series of recommendations for institutional policies that should be looked at closely by university policy makers and educational developers in order to motivate academics to embrace the culture of continuous professional development, including in DE. The body of knowledge in this field suggests that institutions should:

- avoid hostility. Institutional policies should encourage participation rather than force the academic body to attend staff development;
- provide balance between research and teaching. If institutional policies are entirely focused on and promote only research, there will be neither time nor motivation to attend staff development programs;
- support teaching through awards (e.g. best teacher of the year), grants and allow study leave, while making sure these supports are used to further staff development;
- financial incentives. It does not come as a surprise that teaching at a distance requires more time and dedication from academics not only for designing, developing and implementing content materials, but also to assess and interact synchronously and asynchronously with students. Clearly, this issue should be considered and agreements should be made between academics and institutions because “change in behaviour is greatly encouraged by change in financial rewards” (Moodie, 2006, p. 15); and most importantly
- develop appropriate instruments for evaluating the quality of teaching and teaching performance, especially in DE (Jamieson, 2004; Moodie, 2006; Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Salmon, 2004; Webb, 2003).

Despite the existing approaches and policy implementations for staff development within higher and distance education institutions, many educational developers have still found it too difficult to promote change within institutions (Brew, 1995; Giusti & Monteiro, 2005). This is because academics need to develop a culture of lifelong learning, where education in its many forms (formal or informal) is no longer an activity that happens only once in lifetime. In today’s knowledge economy, they need to be aware of the advantages of ongoing learning (Jamieson, 2004). Another problem confronted by developers is that traditionally “a large majority of academics worldwide continue to hold no formal

qualifications in education” (Jamieson, 2004, p. 21). It is assumed by many academics, therefore, that teaching skills will simply come from many years of experience and practice, based upon a deep knowledge of a particular subject. According to Giusti and Monteiro (2005), “no one ‘is born a teacher’, neither gets ready after receiving a diploma” (p. 19), therefore, continuing staff professional development is imperative for university teachers in today’s knowledge economy. Change theorising points to the hope that professional development of academics might enable them to cope with and decrease resistance to the current driving forces for change in higher and distance education. Most importantly, staff development and permanent evaluation of both staff development programs and academics themselves might also prompt an attitudinal shift towards continuous improvement for teaching and learning across universities, not only in DE but also in traditional face-to-face education (Brack, Samarawickrema, & Benson, 2005; Fullan, 2007; Giusti & Monteiro, 2005; Jamieson, 2004; Smyth, 2003; Teghe & Knight, 2004).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored the major forces driving change in HE today, including DE, globally. It also highlighted how institutional and national policies, and quality assurance systems in higher and distance education, have been developed to address such forces of change. In addition, this chapter highlighted concepts and strategies for successful educational change. The priority of educational change should be “the people”. Hence, educational leaders and educational developers should foster greater understanding through engaging academics in constant learning in DE; the process of change investigated in this study. Therefore, staff development is seen as a key factor for decreasing resistance to change, as well as for the successful implementation of DE programs within HE. This is the reason why academic professional development for distance higher education is one of the key drivers of this inquiry. The following chapter builds upon the discussion provided here to develop the research questions. By contextualising issues concerning higher and distance education and staff development in Brazil today, Chapter Three attempts to link these issues with the theories argued in this chapter, which provided insight from acknowledged literature in aid of the conceptualisation of the research questions.

CHAPTER 3: Brazilian HE, DE and Staff Development: Literature and Context Analysis

3.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on Chapter Two to further inform the development of this inquiry and consequently, the research questions. It begins by exploring some statistics for the educational system in the Federal Republic of Brazil (hereafter Brazil or federal government). Then, issues regarding the Brazilian higher education system, including its social and historical background, the development of relevant policies, and the recent higher education reforms, are examined in detail. In addition, the introduction and evolution of distance education (DE), together with the implementation of policies for DE in Brazil, are explored. Following this, the influences of DE in academic professional development practices within Brazilian universities are also outlined. Essentially, the discussion and debate highlighted here are based on the researcher's critical analysis of the body of available literature concerning the development of higher distance education in Brazil. Most importantly, the analysis of the body of literature in this chapter provides the rationale of this inquiry and informs the development of the research questions.

3.2 Some Information about Education in Brazil

Educational development in Brazil has occurred at different levels and has not been without controversy. Investments in education in Brazil have been lower than other Latin American countries. Only 4.4 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been allocated to education, while in Mexico and Chile investment in education represents over six percent of their GDP (IPEA, 2008; UNDP, 2007). However, some would argue that highly centralised administration and policies, together with a poorly managed higher education budget, are likely to be the biggest problems facing the Brazilian educational system, in addition to funding (IPEA, 2008; Schwartzman, 2004c).

Even so, Brazil has further extended the provision of basic education, mostly primary education, in the last decade (Schwartzman, 2008b; The World Bank, 2008). Basic education is composed of kindergarten, primary and secondary education; it is the compulsory schooling for children from 7 to 17 years old (Soares, 2004). This increased number of enrolments might be underpinned by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The second goal, Achieving Universal Primary Education, has been successfully accomplished in Brazil (The World Bank, 2008). While this is a positive outcome, it says little about the quality of education received. The majority of students (88%) study in free state or municipal public schools, frequently representing a lower quality education (MEC/SEB, 2007; Oliverira, 2004; Schwartzman, 2008b; Soares, 2004). Underpaid, unmotivated and often professionally unqualified teachers, together with poorly equipped schools, are likely to be some of the reasons why lower quality public education seems widespread across Brazil (Oliverira, 2004; Rodriguez, Dahlman, Salmi, Reis, & Revilla, 2007; Schwartzman, 2004c). Private schools tend to provide higher quality education than do public ones. Even so, national and international studies show that the quality of basic schooling in Brazil, including private and public schools, is very low. Compared with other developing countries such as Mexico, Chile and Thailand, Brazilian students have inferior performance in basic language, mathematics and science skills, getting an average score, or even below level one, on a scale of one to five (Alves, 2007; Oliverira, 2004; Schwartzman, 2008b).

In addition to this, high school completion rates among students 15 years or older remain low in Brazil. Only approximately 11 percent (two million) of students from 15 to 19 years old, complete their high school studies (MEC/SEB, 2007). The reasons for such low completion rates at high school might be due to the low quality of instruction, equity issues, accessibility, and perhaps most importantly, the disconnection of high school curriculum from students' and workplace needs (Rodriguez et al., 2007; Schwartzman, 2004c). In today's knowledge economy, developing countries cannot ignore the potential of education at all levels to produce not only a competitive, capable and better-paid workforce, but most importantly, more critical, innovative, empowered and conscious citizens (Escobar, Fernandez, Guevara-Niebla, & Freire, 1994; Gadotti, 1994; Oliverira, 2004; Roberts, 2000). This is especially important in democracies such as Brazil. Over 75 percent of Brazil's adult population lack basic reading, writing and maths skills. This problem could prevent Brazil from taking advantage of its economic growth potential and

the opportunity of finally moving forward towards greater equity through development (Oliverira, 2004; Rodriguez et al., 2007; Schwartzman, 2004c).

The preceding statistical discussion regarding Brazil highlights that the basis for HE in Brazil appears problematic in some ways. The minority Brazilian elite students have access to good quality education, while the majority of the students in basic education study in public schools. For students coming from higher income families (approximately 12 percent of students attending basic education) (Schwartzman, 2008b), the option of studying in private schools often means improved chances of gaining entrance and studying for free at the highly regarded public universities. In terms of higher education, Brazil faces many challenges (Oliverira, 2004). Educational reforms and increasing access are central topics in the current development of higher education in Brazil. These and other aspects of Brazilian higher education are explored in the following sections.

3.3 Brazilian Higher Education System

The definition of higher education (HE) adopted throughout this work was already established in Chapter Two. It is important to reinforce, however, that the term *higher education* is defined as certified formal education that takes place in universities, colleges and faculties (Kember, 2007, p. 5). Traditionally, higher education has played a very important role in the development of societies and knowledge. Historically, it was accessed mostly by the elite and privileged students (Bowden & Marton, 2003; Laurillard, 2002). This still occurs in some countries, and certainly in Brazil, although the government has tried to reverse the elitist connotation of Brazilian higher education through the latest reform, which is addressed in this chapter later on. Access to knowledge and power still have a very strong connection with each other in contemporary societies worldwide (Escobar et al., 1994). The more current views of HE are that it helps individuals to become more aware, and promotes social, political and economic changes in society. Through higher education students can achieve ultimate “empowerment and liberation” (Bowden & Marton, 2003; Escobar et al., 1994; Laurillard, 2002; Merriam & Brockett, 1997, p. 43)

It is essential to understand that the Brazilian higher education system comprises undergraduate and postgraduate education, including degrees, diplomas and sequential courses which require completion of high school education for entrance (MEC, 2005b; Soares, 2004). Private and public institutions, research and teaching universities, teaching only colleges, secular and religious institutions, and more recently face-to-face only and dual mode (combination of face-to-face and distance education) institutions, are all part of a very diversified and complex higher educational system in Brazil (Lezberg, 2003; Schwartzman, 2004b). Currently, Brazil has approximately 2,270 higher educational institutions; 2,022 are private and 248 are public institutions (INEP, 2007). There are approximately 4.7 million students enrolled in face-to-face and distance higher education courses and 302,006 academic staff actively working in the higher educational sector, including full-time, part-time and casual (working by hour - *horistas*) (INEP, 2007). However, the number of students attending higher education in Brazil represents only 12.1 percent of the Age Participation Rates (APRs) of 18-24 year olds (ABED, 2007). This percentage is very low if compared with other South American countries such as Argentina (40%), Venezuela (26%), Bolivia (20.6%) and Chile (20.6%) (Universia, 2006a), and certainly much inferior to the percentage considered by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as satisfactory in developed countries (35% of the APRs) (Daniel et al., 2007).

Analysis of the situation above indicates fundamental problems with accessibility and equity in Brazilian HE. In Brazil today, higher education is yet to permeate the educational landscape in any significant manner, and certainly not to the extent of some developed countries like Australia, Canada and the United States, which have APRs of approximately 50 percent (Daniel et al., 2007; Litto, 2003b). The apparent lack of expansion of higher education in Brazil seems to be not merely due to economic factors, but rather has to do with some aspects that are directly related to Brazilian history and culture. It is also the result of the political realities that exist in contemporary Brazil (Durham, 2004; Litto, 2002b). A complex combination of these factors is likely to be at the heart of understanding why such education has been limited in Brazil to date.

3.3.1 Social and Historical Context

Brazil was colonised by Portugal in 1500, and although gaining its independence in 1889, the consequences of that colonial period are still evident in Brazilian culture today (Durham, 2004; Litto, 2002a). According to the president of the Brazilian Association for Distance Education,

the Portuguese left behind a highly bureaucratic, highly centralised organisation of society, the heritage of an aristocratic tradition, which maintained, and still maintains, power in the hands of the very rich, and tolerates only certain kinds of democratic structures and processes which do not threaten this basic social architecture (Litto, 2002a, p. 3).

All these issues have impeded development in many areas in Brazil, including education, which is currently administrated by a “highly centralised” government body, the Ministry of Education (Litto, 2002a, p. 4). The history of higher education in Brazil is directly linked to social and political developments in the country, and can be divided according to the following periods:

- Post 1808 – The establishment of the first higher education institutions by the Monarch due to pressures from the Portuguese elite who had settled in Brazil. Courses were limited to a few fields such as health, law and military studies, and the few institutions established were maintained by the Crown monopoly;
- 1889 to 1930s – Period called the “First Republic” (Durham, 2004, p. 148) and characterised by a more decentralised educational system composed mostly of public (federal, state and municipal) and private colleges offering single courses;
- 1930’s to 1945 – Period known as the “New State” (Durham, 2004, p. 148), established by the authoritarian president Getúlio Vargas. This period was also marked by the foundation of the first “Multi-faculty universities” (Litto, 2002a, p. 3) and an increased number of state public universities;
- 1946 to 1960s - Period of re-democratisation, the number of students attending HE increased, as did the number of HE establishments, both federal public and private religious (Catholic) universities;
- 1964 to 1985 –Brazil experienced another period of authoritarian government during the Military Dictatorship. The higher education system suffered a major change and the private sector developed rapidly across the country. Research and

postgraduate courses were also introduced at this time;

- 1988 – The new Constitution was established giving full autonomy to universities;
- 1995 to 2002 – During this period Brazil experienced growing economic stability brought about by the introduction of a stronger currency; the Real. It was also characterised by the accelerated growth of the private HE sector motivated by federal incentives and policies. It was also during this time that the first distance HE initiatives started; and
- 2003 up until now - Brazil has experienced a new political orientation by having a left-wing government. It has brought about educational reform, which has promised more autonomy to universities, more financial resources to federal universities and the establishment of the long-awaited Brazilian Open University. These, and other aspects of the current reforms, are discussed in detail later in this chapter (Colossi, Consentino, & Queiroz, 2001; Durham, 2004; Litto, 2002a; MEC, 2005a; Murakami & Blom, 2008; Schwartzman, 2004b, 2004c).

It is evident from the above periods that the Brazilian HE system has experienced many turbulent political and social times, but it has managed to expand. Unfortunately, quality and equitable access to all students wishing to acquire further education is still not widespread. Still today, the majority of students enrolled in either the public or private HE sectors in Brazil are white (75.9%) and come from high income families (41.4%), with only approximately 7.5 percent being from the bottom lower income group (Schwartzman, 2004b). Critics contend that Brazilian politicians, intellectuals and decision-makers have failed to develop an educational framework able to benefit students from all walks of life through the provision of affordable and accessible higher education (Castro, 2004; Murakami & Blom, 2008). Some political movements, reforms and initiatives promoting changes in the HE framework have been started, but frequently find they are overtaken by other interests such as power, control, radical political views and financial interests (Durham, 2004). This, once again, reflects the impact of the colonial period on Brazilian culture and decision-making, where the majority of people are excluded, and a small elite takes advantage from preferential political decisions. However, in the past two governments (from 1995 to 2002, and from 2003 up until now) there have been a few

positive changes and encouraging HE reform, which are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Higher education in Brazil still remains a highly centralised educational system, where public universities, mainly those funded by the federal government, do not have the required autonomy to operate effectively, and where the private system is still driven mostly by profit and lack of quality assurance (Castro, 2004; Durham, 2004; IPEA, 2008). These two main HE sectors in Brazil, federal public and private, are explored next.

3.3.2 Public and Private Higher Education Sectors

In Brazil, as in many countries around the world, the demand for higher education has grown dramatically in the last decade (see Chapter Two, item 2.2.1) (Porto & Berge, 2008). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the reasons for this growth is the expansion of primary and secondary education provision in Brazil (Schwartzman, 2008b). Another reason could be the recognition, by many Brazilian high school leavers, both young and adult, of the importance and opportunities that further education can bring to them, their families and the society as a whole (Rodriguez et al., 2007). The average income of the population with more than 15 years of schooling is significantly higher than those with less than 11 years of schooling (Schwartzman, 2008b). However, the Brazilian HE system has been unable to cope with this demand, with only 12 percent of the population aged from 18 to 24 years of age (APR's) having access to HE. Amongst those with access, approximately 70 percent study at private institutions, and the remaining 30 percent at public ones (INEP, 2007). These two, public and private, are the dominant sectors of HE in Brazil.

Public universities are funded by federal, state or municipal governments, and provide free education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The private higher education sector, composed of religious, non-profit and for-profit institutions, runs mostly by full fee payment with basically no financial help coming from the Brazilian government. There are a limited number of scholarships and grants being provided by some private institutions, and by the federal government, to low income students. But, so far the grants have not been sufficient to guarantee access at an affordable price to all students wanting a higher

degree. Currently, Brazil has one of the “least accessible tertiary education systems” in Latin America (Murakami & Blom, 2008, p. 26).

There are many differences between the two sectors. With some exceptions, Brazilian public institutions are well known for providing good teaching and promoting quality research. In fact, they conduct most of the research in the country (Castro, 2004). Access to public university education is also very competitive. In order to gain entrance, students need to go through a series of challenging exams, called *vestibular*. Some courses can experience extraordinary numbers of applications (Litto, 2002a; USP, 2008). As a result, they attract the country’s best students, or at least the most prepared ones (Plank & Verhine, 2002). In addition, an academic career in a public university can be very prestigious and promising; academic staff are mostly full-time, have job stability and opportunities for building careers (Durham, 2004).

Considering the above, public universities in Brazil seem the right place to study and work. Unfortunately, not for all. Public universities, in general, appear to have failed to expand access and diversify programs to meet the demand of a growing heterogeneous group of students, including those with inferior educational backgrounds and career aspirations (Durham, 2004). Federal public universities are strong corporatist establishments, operate under federal government rules and policies, and still have little autonomy (Plank & Verhine, 2002). Despite having autonomy granted by the constitution in 1988, the Ministry of Education has not implemented it yet. Academic and general staff bodies are mostly selected by the government through tests advertised nationwide, restricting the choices of federal universities in terms of selecting their own staff members. This limitation extends as far as negotiating salaries, establishing career plans and firing staff when appropriate. Approximately 90 percent of the money allocated to federal universities is used to pay staff salaries, including retirees. There is little or no institutional (including teaching and research) staff performance evaluation (Durham, 2004; Schwartzman, 2004c). As a consequence, federal universities cannot expand, open new campuses or make internal changes without battling against the government bureaucratic system. In addition, protected by their unions and by job stability (public servants cannot be fired in Brazil unless just cause is shown), the majority of academic and general staff are not particularly motivated and do not need to invest greatly in their careers (Schwartzman, 2004a). These attitudes have prevented staff development and several innovative projects such as an

earlier adoption of distance education programs. These programs were forced upon federal universities through the HE reform of 2005 and current policies (Carvalho, 2006; Linhares, R., 2007).

The private higher education sector in Brazil, on the other hand, has expanded considerably in the last decade. Likewise, the private sector across the globe has experienced similar growth (see Chapter Two, item 2.2.2). One of the reasons for the growth of the private sector in Brazil is due to the insufficient places available at public institutions to meet student demand. Most importantly, public policies and initiatives have enabled the private sector to operate with greater autonomy, encouraging investment and further expansion (Colossi et al., 2001; Schwartzman & Castro, 2005). Consequently, the private sector has been able to offer more diversified programs to their clientele, including traditional undergraduate degrees, diplomas and postgraduate programs. They also offer night courses to those students who prefer or need to study at night or already have a career and work full time (Durham, 2004). In addition, it is the private sector that has implemented some of the first distance education programs at the higher educational level in the country, in order to expand access to remote regions and to promote innovation and the use of learning technology (Linhares, R., 2007).

Although some private higher education institutions are highly regarded, offering quality education and promoting research, the private sector has experienced rapid expansion with little control and evaluation, which has raised concerns about standards from the government, students and the community (Durham, 2004). To begin with, in order to deliver affordable and attractive courses private institutions need to decrease expenses. Most private institutions employ few or no full-time academic staff, with the majority of their academic bodies working part-time or on a casual basis (Castro, 2004). In a similar fashion, some of the staff are not sufficiently qualified for the job, do not have previous teaching and/or research experience, and consequently, receive lower salaries (Mezan, 2005). As a result, the overall quality of instruction can be affected. Different from the public sector, academic staff at private institutions work constantly under pressure and at risk of losing their jobs. In most cases, they do not have a say in decision-making unless they occupy a prestigious position within the institution. Additionally, most private institutions tend to offer courses in “applied social sciences”, such as administration, accounting, economics, law and education (Schwartzman, 2004b, p. 175). These courses

require less investment and facilities, fewer specialised staff and fewer skilled students than “more exacting fields” (Schwartzman, 2004b, p. 181). Unfortunately, the majority of private institutions do not conduct or offer research degrees and have a limited understanding of the benefits of research (Durham, 2004).

Yet, similar to many developing countries, higher education in Brazil is still seen as a “public good”, where the federal government is viewed as responsible for delivering free education at all levels (see Chapter Two, item 2.2.2). However, this view of HE as a public good is not realistic, particularly in developing countries, due to increased student demand and reduced funding levels from government (Larreamey-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). In Brazil, although this view of HE as a “public good” is commonly held, it has never been supported by any legislation (Alves, 2006b). Cultural and social context, lack of resources, inappropriate policies and weak educational quality assurance systems seem to be the main reasons for the stagnation of federal public universities in Brazil (Alves, 2006b; Schwartzman, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). Perhaps a reasonable and equitable solution for the public universities would be to charge university fees from students who could pay, reserve the free places and provide student aid for those who could not (Schwartzman, 2004b). Such a situation is common in many countries around the world (Daniel et al., 2007). Interestingly, Plank (2002) explains that politicians and policy-makers tried to introduce some degree of university autonomy to federal universities in Brazil in the past, but gave up after nationwide debates, and even strikes amongst administrative and academic staff and students. Today, it seems that no political leader dares to raise such issues, as it could cause chaos within the public university system (Plank & Verhine, 2002).

On the other hand, one cannot ignore the contributions of the private sector to higher education in Brazil. They have expanded educational access not only in metropolitan areas, but also in remote parts of the country, while also having flexibility to respond faster to job market needs and to innovate with the adoption of distance education being a prime example (Schwartzman, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). However, most of them have been strongly profit-oriented and have failed to provide means of guaranteeing quality instruction (Durham, 2004). The reality is that the higher education system in Brazil, both public and private sectors, has been unable to provide quality and accessible higher education to all segments of society (Castro & Schwartzman, 2006; Schwartzman, 2004b). In fact, research

by Bertolin and Leite (2008) shows that the quality of Brazilian higher education has not shown signs of improvement for decades. In an attempt to address and overcome the problems discussed here, and many others, in 2005 the Ministry of Education proposed a new higher education reform (Alves, 2006b). Since then, there have been some improvements in higher education legislation, but also some backward steps.

3.3.3 Higher Education Reform

After many years of hoping for fundamental changes in the Brazilian higher education system, the current Ministry of Education proposed the “Higher Education Reform” in 2005, possibly in an attempt to build vision for change in HE. The reform aimed to:

- Increase access to higher education through expansion and restructuring of federal universities: this implies more investment, building more campuses (while renovating others), hiring new academic and administrative staff, as well as adopting innovative pedagogical programs. This also involved the establishment of the first Brazilian Open University (Universidade Aberta do Brasil - UAB), which is discussed in detail later in this chapter;
- Promote quality education: the National Higher Education Evaluation System (Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Superior – SINAES) is an evaluation program developed to monitor and evaluate institutions and their degrees in an attempt to identify problems and promote improvement of quality in higher education in Brazil. It is composed of three major instruments: institutional evaluation (internal and external evaluations), degree evaluation (academic body qualification, didactic and pedagogic institutional organisation and infrastructure) and students’ assessment through the National Exam of Students’ Performance (Exame Nacional de Desempenho dos Estudantes - ENADE);
- Promote social inclusion and democratisation of education: this has involved modification of the Higher Education Students Funds (Fundo de Financiamento ao Estudante do Ensino Superior – FIES) together with the creation of the Program University for All (Programa Universidade para Todos – PROUNI), which is also a Ministry of Education initiative and provides scholarships (full and partial) to lower income students who are enrolled in the private sector, with some students also receiving monthly financial support; and

- Develop stricter policies to regulate the private sector and restrict the commercialisation of higher education (Alves, 2006b; MEC/PDE, 2007; Schwartzman, 2004a, 2004b; Schwartzman & Castro, 2005).

As anticipated by educational change theory, the apparent positive aspects of the latest HE reform already have their critics who argue that in reality it changes little of the actual higher education system. According to Schwartzman and Castro (2005c), Brazilian federal universities are still not autonomous and are not able to develop their specific institutional plans, aligned with institutional goals and internal policies. They are not able to appoint their academic and general staff yet, develop career plans and negotiate salaries with appropriate professional incentives, including “recompenses and penalties” (Schwartzman & Castro, 2005, p. 17). It appears that the reform has not succeeded yet in addressing the above problems, and Brazilian public federal universities still continue to be run mostly according to the federal rules.

A positive outcome of the reform is the SINAES. It has the potential to bring a more accurate evaluation system to measure quality and performance of Brazilian higher education institutions than before (Bertolin & Leite, 2008). But, it has not been clearly defined yet how the new evaluation system will contribute to ensuring quality of education and how the outcomes, either positive or negative, will affect or not the distribution of federal funding (Castro & Schwartzman, 2006; Schwartzman & Castro, 2005). Likewise, research measurements have not been mentioned in the evaluation process to date. Another positive outcome of the recent reform was the establishment of the first Brazilian Open University. It is a project developed by the Ministry of Education in an attempt to increase access to public federal universities through distance education programs. Distance education at a university level in Brazil is a new phenomenon and already has many supporters, but also some sceptics. Distance education in Brazil, the Brazilian Open University, and other distance education initiatives, are explored in the following section of this chapter.

Although the decision-makers have proudly announced that the reform promotes social inclusion and democratisation of higher education, how this will occur remains unclear. Democratisation of education is based on the assumption that every individual wishing to

acquire further education would have the same rights, opportunities, resources, and access to the same facilities, professionals and quality education (Escobar et al., 1994). This is not evident in Brazil at present. Even though the PROUNI (Program for University for All - *Programa Universidade para Todos*) scholarships have already benefited some lower income students studying in the private sector, the numbers are still too small to consider it as democratisation and educational inclusion (Schwartzman, 2008c). In a similar way, no concrete action has been put into practice yet to promote educational inclusion in the public federal universities. Ironically, these are the venues where “discourse[s] exalting democracy and commitment to the lower classes” happen, and where at the same time public resources are heavily invested (Durham, 2004, p. 163).

Today, private higher institutions, as well as the public ones, seem to be struggling to provide evidence of improvements in quality (Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007). It is inaccurate, however, to assume that the private sector is the enemy of Brazilian higher education, rather than a partner in education (Castro & Schwartzman, 2006; Daniel et al., 2007). In an ideal arrangement private and public institutions can collaborate with each other, promoting quality education and research, further developing their strengths and overcoming their weaknesses, and in doing so, promote better higher education in Brazil (Alves, 2006b; Durham, 2004). Instead, these two sectors appear to work separately. Perhaps further development of vision-building and evolutionary planning by the Ministry of Education could contribute to a more positive educational change and collaborative work amongst these two sectors (Fullan, 1991, 2007).

It appears from the above discussion that the visions for HE reform have not been achieved yet, nor is it clear how current plans will advance this. Therefore, the hope for fundamental educational changes could be in jeopardy. After many years, Brazilian HE seems still closer to the old-fashioned HE of the 1930s than to a globalised, collaborative, open and quality driven system, looking towards a higher education of the twenty-first century. Brazil is different from many other countries around the world, whether developed or developing, where education is seen as the “knowledge economy”, focused on expansion with quality through cross-border education and distance education (see Chapter Two, item 2.2.3). Instead, Brazil has a closed-border approach, does not recognise degrees issued abroad, and has few international collaboration and exchange programs (Castro & Schwartzman, 2006; Rodriguez et al., 2007).

3.4 Brazilian Distance Education

One important change initiative has been the introduction of DE at higher education level with a vision to expand the provision of HE across Brazil, as well as to promote the innovative use of learning technologies for enhancing teaching and learning (MEC/SEED, 2008).

DE is broadly characterised here by being education that occurs mostly when a teacher and student are physically separated and learning takes place at different places and times. As mentioned in Chapter Two, it is a complex system that involves planned learning, requires qualified teachers, specific course material and communication means such as printed and learning technologies (Keegan, 1990; Moore & Kearsley, 1996). In addition to the above definition of DE, public policies for DE have become another strong element of the complex system involving DE, mostly amongst developing countries (Romiszowski, 2005). In Brazil, public policies have played an increasingly important role in the development of DE.

3.4.1 Historical Background

DE in Brazil has a significant history of implementation at primary, secondary and vocational levels compared with other developing countries. Historically, distance education in Brazil first got underway in about 1904 through correspondence courses. Similarly, distance education in Europe and in the United States also occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century and was delivered by correspondence; and is known as the first generation of distance education (Taylor, 2001). The educational radio came in 1923, and in the 1960s Educational Television (TVE – *Televisão Educativa*) appeared in Brazil. It was a public funded broadcast television channel that dominated DE delivery technology during the 1960s and 1970s (Romiszowski, 2004). A similar trend appeared to happen in many other countries around the world and is known as the second generation of distance education (Taylor, 2001). The TVE provided short adult education courses and training programs to qualify primary and secondary teachers. During this period research was conducted in Brazil to identify the “do(s) and don’t(s)” of using this and other media

in distance education (Romiszowski, 2004). It was also during the 1970s that Brazil was internationally recognised as having one of the best models to deliver DE, together with India, Spain, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom (Romiszowski, 2004).

Another important initiative has been the Brazilian Universal Institute (Instituto Universal Brasileiro - IUB), a Brazilian private educational institution established to deliver only distance education. Since 1941 it has provided vocational and technical courses for specialised training. In the past, the delivery of courses was through printed materials, tapes and videos. More recently, with the increasing adoption of the Internet, it has approximately 200,000 students currently enrolled in its courses (IUB, 2008). Another successful example of ongoing distance education delivery in Brazil is Tele-course 2000 (*Telecurso 2000*), currently called New Tele-course (*Novo Telecurso*), due to some innovative changes and expansion that have taken place since 2006 (Telecurso, 2008). Through partnerships among private and public companies and government bodies, it has provided basic education and vocational courses to adults through TV, printed materials and videos. Since 1978, the Tele-course has benefited 5.5 million people across the country (Telecurso, 2008). Therefore, it seems that Brazil has come along towards successfully implementing distance education at basic educational and vocational levels (Bof, 2004). Similar to many educational programs and initiatives in Brazil, financial support for DE projects, since its early stages, has been based on the periodic funding of “large projects with big investments” under the Brazilian Ministry of Education’s responsibility. Also, it has been characterised by discontinuity due to project funding regimes, and governance and policy changes (Romiszowski, 2004).

3.4.2 Recent Initiatives

At the higher education level, the introduction of DE is a relatively recent change initiative, officially introduced in 1996 through the Government’s National Education Law n° 9.394 (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 1996; Moran, 2007b). In just over a decade, DE has expanded considerably in Brazil. There have been many successful initiatives not only in HE, but also in other programs including adult and vocational education, literacy programs, and in government and corporate training and development (Felicciello, 2006). In 2007, there were approximately 813,550 students enrolled in DE courses at a university

level in Brazil, including diplomas, undergraduate and postgraduate coursework courses. The number of students attending DE courses has increased considerably compared with the previous years (ABRAEAD, 2007; Universia, 2008b).

Currently, there are 257 higher education institutions, including private, public and corporative institutions, accredited to deliver DE programs in Brazil (ABRAEAD, 2007; Universia, 2008b). It is important to highlight here that there is no higher education institution in Brazil entirely dedicated to DE programs yet. They are, in their majority, traditional face-to-face institutions that have implemented some of their degrees at a distance (Porto & Berge, 2008). These are, therefore, dual mode institutions (see Chapter Two, item 2.3). This growth has been generally attributed to the influence of new policies, the Brazilian higher education reform, along with federal government incentives and programs regarding distance education. In a similar way, the establishment of various consortiums and collaborative efforts amongst higher education institutions, have contributed significantly to the expansion of Brazilian distance education in the private and public HE sectors (Moran, 2007b).

3.4.3 Contemporary Challenges

Compared with other developing countries such as China, South Africa, Pakistan and Indonesia, DE still appears not to play an important role within the Brazilian HE system (Reifschneider, 2006; Romiszowski, 2005). One of the barriers slowing down the development of DE in Brazil could have been foreseen from educational change theorising (Fullan, 2007; Sergiovanni, 1998). The impact of existing cultural milieu creates a situation where “there is already a mistrust about the quality and truthfulness of the training and qualifications that can be provided at a distance” (Schwartzman, 2000, p. 2). Other developing countries such as India also seem to be battling to introduce DE due to cultural obstacles (Daniel et al., 2007). In general, and linked with cultural barriers, the fear of the unknown, in this case adopting distance education, can naturally cause resistance to change, not only from institutions, but also from academics and students (Fullan, 1991, 2007; Kember, 2007).

Even though, there has been some successful DE students performance evaluation, which has helped to increase the acceptance of DE certificates in some segments of the job market, resistance to DE still seems to exist within some HE institutions and professional associations in Brazil (Baroni, 2008b; Linhares, E., 2007; Universia, 2008a). This could be stemmed from perceptions of ambiguous quality of some distance courses delivered across the country (Porto & Berge, 2008). Consequently, it appears to be some discrimination by the job market towards those who have acquired a degree by distance (Universia, 2008a). In the worse case, there are some professional associations that do not recognise degrees offered by distance mode at all. An example of this is the Federal Council of Biology (Conselho Federal de Biologia), which has recently refused to recognise the Biology degrees obtained at a distance, due to that body's claim about inadequate curriculum and a lack of laboratory activities essential to the preparation of a fully qualified Biologist. Without the recognition, professionals are only able to teach, but cannot work in laboratories, conduct research or fieldwork, or perform any kind of consulting in Biology. The Council's decision has been challenged as unconstitutional and has been debated by the Ministry of Education and the Federal Council of Biology (ABED, 2008; Baroni, 2008a).

In order to counteract these perceptions related to the quality of DE, institutions and government bodies in Brazil could build vision by encouraging the development and improving quality of DE and by ensuring access to, and production of, good research and knowledge about DE. Even though there has been some knowledge developed in Brazil regarding DE (Litto, Filatro, & André, 2004), it seems that it rarely reaches its potential audience (Rodriguez et al., 2007). In addition, change theory indicates that HE institutions offering DE should consider it as implementing change into a complex system (Bromage, 2006; Fullan, 1991, 2007). Implementing quality DE programs requires staff development, developing appropriate learning resources and institutional policies, and so forth. Particularly in the case of Brazil, these institutions should also be actively encouraged by the government policy and funding to carry on with their DE programs and projects, as far too many stop after the pilot project (Moran, 2007b). Even as the landscape of DE is changing (Taylor, 2001) this could be achieved through evolutionary planning while continually evaluating programs, students' needs and access to emerging technologies. For example, such planning may avoid several future problems such as students' lack of access to the Internet and yet are enrolled in online courses (Moran, 2007b). Finally, policy could

encourage higher institutions in Brazil to invest in their academic body through academic development, which is considered an important, if not the most important tool for successful distance education (Salmon, 2004; Segrave, Holt, & Farmer, 2005).

Finally, there are several reasons why the provision of distance education in Brazil needs to expand and, therefore, why educational change management will be critical. These include the need to:

- meet the demand of students leaving high school;
- increase opportunities for continuing education;
- provide formal qualifications to many school teachers who are currently teaching without adequate qualifications; and
- improve access to those unable to live or move to metropolitan areas where most universities are located in Brazil (Litto, 2002a, 2005; Moran, 2007b; Romiszowski, 2005).

Although DE in Brazil has faced many challenges, the biggest one being quality, which is a problem of the Brazilian educational system as a whole, it appears that the government authorities have started to consider DE more seriously in the past decade as reflected in the development of specific policies and accreditation procedures associated with implementation of the Ministry's DE vision. However, highly centralised and bureaucratic educational policy systems continue to dominate initiatives within the HE sector and are a threat to successful reform.

The impacts of current DE policies on practices are still unidentified. The existing information on DE in Brazil appears to be limited, according to evidence provided by the discussion in this chapter, rather than reliable research. Data collected and analysed involving the main actors: the institutions, the academics and the educational developers can now be used to inform future policy formation, evolutionary planning, monitoring and problem coping and achievement of vision. This is the gap that the present research aims to fill. In addition, the conceptualisation of the issues discussed so far in this chapter is built on the researcher's own experiences, together with the literature analysis previously discussed. Thus, the primary research question that prompted this research study was:

How are policies for distance education shaping practices of higher distance education in Brazil?

3.4.4 How DE is delivered

Despite the difficulties caused by historical circumstances, legislative inconsistency, problems with quality, mistrust and lack of understanding about DE principles, DE has grown towards its intended vision for Brazil. Brazilian higher institutions have diversified not only in terms of their delivery models, but also in terms of technologies adopted. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the large majority of institutions offering DE in Brazil today, including private and public, operate as dual-mode institutions (Porto & Berge, 2008). This means that they offer campus-based traditional degrees, as well as distance education degrees and other programs to students, usually supported by access centres distributed strategically in different locations (Moran, 2007b), as has occurred in many countries worldwide (Hanna, 1998; Moore & Kearsley, 1996). The most prevalent technology used to deliver DE in Brazil is printed materials (86%) (ABRAEAD, 2007). This trend is not a surprise as many institutions in developed and developing countries still consider them as one of the most appropriate forms of technology to support DE (Kember, 2007). The second most used technology for DE is the Internet, with 56 percent of institutions using it; a fairly significant percentage for a developing country such as Brazil due to lack of infrastructure and access problems. However, the Internet and its applications seem to be adopted mainly in postgraduate distance courses across the sector, where frequently students are able to access the Internet from work and/or afford to have the Internet or broadband connection at home (ABRAEAD, 2007). The Annual Statistical Report for Brazilian Open and Distance Education (ABRAEAD) (2007) shows that, in terms of support and communication between students and tutors, electronic mail (e-mail) is the technology most used (88.5%), followed by telephone (79.2%) and on-line tutoring (73.6%). Expectedly, the majority of higher DE providers still adopt face-to-face meetings (69.2%) and tutorials (61.5%) as supporting classes, which “reflects a strong presence of the traditional educational paradigms” (ABRAEAD, 2007, p. 88) enforced also by the DE legislation, as discussed earlier.

Furthermore, in relation to course design and content development, Brazilian institutions seem to have followed DE trends developed and adopted worldwide. Institutions, together with their academic staff, usually develop their own distance content materials (70.40%) (ABRAEAD, 2007). Some institutions prefer to establish an autonomous centre dedicated to only DE activities, development of materials and professional development. Normally, these centres have a multidisciplinary team of experts, who may have expertise in DE, and include educational developers, content experts and experts in learning technologies (Carvalho, 2006).

Brazilian higher DE providers tend to adopt two main approaches in their distance education practices; the industrialised and the post-industrialised (Carvalho, 2006). The former involves concepts of “mass production and mass conception” of learning materials, together with “the division of labour to carry out specialised tasks, centralised control, and a hierarchically structured bureaucracy” (Peters, 2004, p. 111). This is particularly the case of higher institutions with very large number of students, and where the production of materials needs to be on a large scale. The post-industrialised approach to distance education emerged in the course of advances in technology, with its growing application to DE promoting more interaction and collaboration among teachers, students and content (Carvalho, 2006; Peters, 1993, 2004).

DE theorists and experts argue that there is no right or wrong choice of approaches to deliver DE. Decisions should be based on institutional and course design factors. These include, the nature of the degree offered, “audience characteristics, geographic dispersion of the audience, the technologies available to the audience, the goals of learners, the goals and mission of the learning organization” (Shearer, 2003, p. 275) amongst other factors (Garrison, 2003; Hanna, 2003; Moore & Kearsley, 1996). In addition, there is a growing demand for outsourcing such materials and content, or then acquiring them from highly specialised academics, experts in their areas who only prepare content materials, but do not teach them. Recently, this market represented 32 percent of the total content material produced for DE in Brazil (ABRAEAD, 2007).

The majority of DE courses in Brazil tend to be formal teaching qualifications for in-service teachers, including diplomas and higher degrees. In addition, the delivery of

distance degrees in applied social sciences, continuing education, postgraduate research and coursework have also increased in the last couple of years in Brazil (Moran, 2007b).

Even with the tendency for centralised control, there is a diversified range of models used to deliver distance education at higher education levels. The most common ones are:

- *Distance courses for small groups* – These are undergraduate degrees normally offered to small groups of students, who usually start and finish the course together. The courses have flexible content material and are largely based on collaboration through forums, chat rooms and a range of activities using the Internet. Printed materials may also support some of these courses. Students need to be motivated and know how to learn collaboratively online and face-to-face;
- *Partnerships and consortiums* – Consortiums are a fairly common institutional strategy among distance institution providers worldwide. This occur when institutions decide to join efforts (financial, professional, technological, etc.) and work together collaboratively in order to reach their full potential and develop combined distance courses (Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Peters, 2004). As a result of collaboration, a whole range of learning technologies and course designs can be adopted in higher distance courses delivered through consortiums. The diversified types of technologies that can be adopted might classify some of their courses and degrees in just about every generation of DE (see Chapter Two, item 2.3.1). In Brazil today, there are various consortia and collaborative efforts amongst higher education institutions, such as CEDERJ (Centre for Distance Learning in the State of Rio de Janeiro) composed of six federal and state public universities, RICESU (Network of Catholic Institutions of Higher Education) formed by 14 Catholic private universities, and UNIREDE, a consortium of public universities spread across the country. In order to reach students located out of the metropolitan areas, consortia tend to establish access centres in partnership with local councils. A problem with such consortia can be delays and time spent during curriculum integration and course development, as each institution might will likely its preferred design and technologies (Feliciello, 2006; Moran, 2007b);
- *Video and audio-recorded classes and tutorials* – Some university level distance courses are mostly focused on recorded lectures or tutorials (video or CDs) supported by printed materials and face-to-face tutorials. Specialised academics and technicians

generally create the recorded materials. The tutors, who provide on-site assistance at the university campus or learning centres, are more generalists in terms of content learning. This model is based strongly on content transmission;

- *On-line education* – Distance courses delivered predominantly with the assistance of LMS and minimum face-to-face. These courses can be asynchronous or synchronous, focused on students' collaboration, teamwork and content centred. As technologies evolve, LMS are getting more compatible, flexible and now support high-resolution video and audio (Hanna, 2003). LMS also enable teacher-students, students-students and group interactions. In addition, LMS provide tools for instructors to explore students multiple skills and intelligences. There are a range of such technologies available, from the well-known and expensive Blackboard to open source (Moodle), and also the Brazilian made one, Teleduc; and finally,

- *Satellite TV and interaction via the Internet* – This model has expanded the most in Brazil in the last few years. There are several designs for this model, but the predominate ones involve satellite lectures, face-to-face tutorials and activities, and also interaction via the Internet. This model also includes many actors, and reaches a large number of students at the same time. Institutions transmit live “*tele-aulas*” (lectures) via satellite to many (dozens, sometimes hundreds) of access centres simultaneously, distributed across the country. Each centre has up to 50 students watching live classes at the same time. During the classes, local tutors supervise and help students with complementary face-to-face activities. Interactions between students and the instructor (at the other site) take place through questions sent by the Internet, with the assistance of the local tutor, and answered live by the instructor. Frequently, the classes are offered in the evenings, and students need to go to access centres once a week or fortnightly. The rest of the week, students are required to do further activities, including readings and research, which are assisted by another tutor; the online tutor (Moran, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c).

The majority of these common models of delivering DE in Brazil are also used worldwide. They use combinations of different learning technologies to meet students and institutional needs. These combinations of technologies are not always well matched with the classification of the five generations of DE developed by Taylor (2001). The generations of DE are based on the development and adoption of technologies in DE and their

pedagogical applications (see Chapter Two, item 2.3.1). Brazil, as in many other countries where the widespread introduction of DE occurred after the development of several DE technologies such as satellite and even the Internet, has had the benefit of leap frogging or amalgamating aspects of several generations long established elsewhere.

Besides a few attempts to innovate learning through collaborative activities, it appears from the DE models mentioned above, that DE in Brazil remains based on traditional educational approaches (ex. content presentation). One could argue that the traditional face-to-face education in Brazil has been for decades obsolete on its own, and that the attempt to adapt it to DE is a mistake that Brazilian educational leaders and decision-makers cannot afford to make (Porto & Berge, 2008). Course design seems still to be content-centred and focused on face-to-face compulsory meetings. Some courses have a higher percentage of face-to-face meetings than required by the policies. In fact, online interaction between students, teachers, and students-students “is not at the core of the pedagogy for distance education, the overall progress and effectiveness of distance education throughout Brazil lags far behind inroads being made in other developed and developing countries” (Porto & Berge, 2008, p. 7). Such a condition is not unexpected given the long list of educational change failures documented in the literature (Fullan, 1991, 2007; Hargreaves, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1998). The delivery of higher education in DE modes seems like a typical example of surface change occurring when deep change is required.

Institutions adoption of technologies that encourage face-to-face activities might be due to the profile of most Brazilian distance learners. Similar to other distance learners around the world, Brazilians are generally adults, have families, work full-time and see DE as an opportunity to finally pursue higher education. Some of them already have an undergraduate qualification and are seeking further and continuing education (Garrison, 2003; Granger & Bowman, 2003). On the other hand, Brazilian learners in general are not used to being independent learners, they tend to prefer teacher-centred instruction, do not enjoy reading, and some of them have had bad quality educational foundations, as highlighted earlier in this chapter (Moran, 2007b; Pedrosa & Mamede-Neves, 2003). Teacher-centred is a traditional approach to learning in the school and other sectors, and usually occurs when the teacher is responsible for the students’ learning. The teacher retains the knowledge and passes it on to students who receive it passively. In contrast,

student-centred approaches occur when students are responsible for their own learning and practice self and autonomous learning. This approach is often erroneously viewed as erasing the teacher, when in fact it is primarily concerned with encouraging students to be active participants in taking ownership of their educational journey, together with the educator who has a key facilitating role (Bowden & Marton, 2003; Garrison et al., 2003; Gibson, 2003). Within the DE context, research has shown positive learning outcomes with the learner-centred approach, and it has been highly recommended by DE experts and theorists since the very early stages of DE development (Garrison, 2003; Granger & Bowman, 2003; Smyth, 2005).

Another reason for the strong tendency to have further face-to-face activities might be because instructors and tutors are not yet prepared, or are resistant to promote learning at a distance, supported by learning technologies (Arriada, Kist, Lanzarini, & Rizzato, 2005). These are issues related to resistance to change, and academic preparedness to work with DE (staff professional development), which are explored in detail in the next section of this chapter.

Interestingly, as in Brazil, the debate about the rigid curriculum and teacher-centred approaches to learning in DE continues to be an ongoing debate, which extends to many DE higher educational institutions worldwide. This has evidently occurred mostly at the beginning of such institutions DE experiences. The Open University (OU) in the UK had previously “looked to the central production of a somewhat inflexible package” (Sewart 1976, cited in Granger & Bowman, 2003, p. 170) for its distance education programs in the 1970s. One of the current OU learner-centred approaches is based on Paulo Freire’s earliest work. Freire was a famous Brazilian critical theorist and adult educator whose ideas and theories have greatly influenced adult education around the world. In DE, Freire’s ideas were applied to flexible, need focused curriculum and learner-centred education (Granger & Bowman, 2003). He believed that for learning to occur curriculum should take into account students’ context and experiences, and students should be encouraged to think critically, instead of passively through memorisation or rote learning (Escobar et al., 1994; Roberts, 2000). Unfortunately, there is no evidence that Paulo Freire’s theories have been embraced within Brazilian DE.

Furthermore, it can also be noticed that access centres are adopted in many DE models, which is also a strategy used by many DE providers worldwide. Access centres “play many valuable roles, such as providing instructional material and equipment, carrels for individual study, rooms for group meetings or private meetings with tutors or counsellors” (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. 13). In Brazil, with such a high percentage of face-to-face interaction, access centres are seen as an extension of the universities’ campuses. Unfortunately, there is no evidence in the body of literature about DE in Brazil regarding which of the models highlighted here are efficacious or which are adopted more frequently in private or public universities.

So far in this chapter, central issues surrounding the HE system in Brazil have been discussed, including problems related to increased student demand, access, quality change management and matters associated with the public and private sector. The introduction of DE was highlighted as a recent change initiative, as were the implementation of vision and policies, and the different approaches adopted by HE institutions in Brazil. Some aspects of this system, within the Brazilian context, were also highlighted. Next, and very significant for this study and this overall system, academic development is analysed.

3.5 Academic Staff Development in Brazil

It has been argued above that one critical success factor associated with changes such as the introduction of DE is staff development. It was briefly discussed earlier in this chapter that staff development has been neglected until now by higher education institutions in Brazil. Cóssio (2008) points out that staff development was recently introduced to HE due to pressures of changes in HE in Brazil. This was due, according to Cóssio (2008), to the internal institutional evaluations, which are part of the SINAES quality monitoring evaluation program. According to her, these internal evaluations provided opportunities for reflections on staff teaching and career. This has resulted in a move from isolated institutional policies and initiatives for staff development in HE (Cóssio, 2008) to formally adoption of staff development initiatives in institutions encouraged by DE policies and initiatives, and the need for a qualified academic body to work with DE (see item 2.4.1).

This section builds upon previous ones and further informs issues related particularly to

staff development in DE. The definition and conceptualisation of staff development in HE embraced in this study was explored in the previous chapter. In this section, the role and some examples of staff development in higher and distance education in Brazil are highlighted.

Staff development has been increasing in recent decades within higher education context worldwide, firstly and mostly in developed countries. It has a even longer trajectory within school context (in-service teaching training) (Halloway & Maxwell, 2009; Maxwell & Paterson, 1995). Staff development is an expanding area of importance within the higher education context worldwide (King, 2003; Webb, 1996). Firstly, because staff developers (educational experts who work in staff development) have addressed fundamental issues for the improvement of teaching, learning, research and policy developed within institutions (Tynan & Smyth, 2007b). Secondly, in the constantly changing educational arena, developers have supported academic staff to overcome their professional challenges, together with promoting organisational change (Smyth, 2003; Tynan & Smyth, 2007b; Webb, 1996).

In Brazil, and in many countries around the world, the majority of academic staff do not have a formal teaching education and have learned how to teach by doing so. Globally, the reality is that even after many years of teaching some academics still have not acquired appropriate skills to engage their students in an exciting learning experience (Brack et al., 2005; Giusti & Monteiro, 2005; Salmon, 2004; Teghe & Knight, 2004). In Brazil, this comes as no surprise given the history of traditional face-to-face instruction that the majority of academics have experienced throughout their lives from school to university, already highlighted in this chapter. Moreover, staff development is seen by many Brazilian academics as having minor importance in their career compared with other academic activities such as researching, thus, building their subject knowledge (and status). In fact, many “do not believe in the efficiency of pedagogical preparation programs” (Giusti & Monteiro, 2005, p. 10). In addition, opportunities for staff development seem to be “sporadic and isolated”, and academics in Brazil tend to resist implementing such programs (Giusti & Monteiro, 2005, p. 10).

Moreover, universities appear not require from their academic body formal teaching qualification. In many cases, not only in Brazil but also elsewhere, it is already implied

that a good university academics (meaning someone with a subject specific qualification such as in history and chemistry) is automatically a good university teacher (Brack et al., 2005; Giusti & Monteiro, 2005). Another reason for academics' lack of interest in staff development programs is that job promotion and career planning are based on knowledge production, not on quality teaching. In addition, Brazilian postgraduate courses tend to focus mostly on research training rather than on preparing postgraduate students to be university teachers; "preparation for teaching is something superfluous" (Giusti & Monteiro, 2005, p. 11). Further, increasing workloads and additional administrative tasks have left some academics with little or no time available to pursue further development (Ashwin, 2006; Giusti & Monteiro, 2005).

We have seen that staff development is an important factor supporting successful change, here to support the improvement of quality in higher education in Brazil. To begin with, staff development can assist academics to prepare for the growing and diversified groups of students that are currently enrolled in higher education in Brazil (ex. through staff development in curriculum development). These students often come from the digital age, and have good educational backgrounds, but they can also have many difficulties with reading and writing and this implies teaching and learning staff development. Due to the increasing use of learning technologies in higher education, not only in Brazil but also elsewhere, academics need to be constantly supported in the use of these technologies and their appropriate educational applications. The introduction of DE has impacted on academic careers and prompted questions about the way academics teach (King, 2003). "For most instructors, teaching at a distance involves the use of different skills than they use in a conventional classroom", and these skills could be acquired with the assistance of staff developers (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. 132). Trying to be technologically and pedagogically updated is a tremendously time consuming task, and not always performed successfully by individual academics in Brazil and elsewhere (King, 2003; Salmon, 2004).

However, this reality might change due to the introduction of a DE policy, that requires qualified staff within HE institutions to work with DE (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2005: Cap1, Art12 - VIII). The implementation of public and institutional policies regarding staff development in higher education has been a trend worldwide, among developed and developing countries, due to growing concerns about improving the quality of teaching and learning (Biggs, 2003; Bowden & Marton, 2003; Webb, 1996). In distance

education, a lecturer's role can become that of facilitating, encouraging, and guiding students through their learning journey, while using an appropriate distance pedagogical approach (Salmon, 2004).

Importantly, some Brazilian HE providers have already realised the relevance of staff development and there have been some emerging initiatives for staff development in distance education in Brazil. Amongst them can be noticed a strong tendency in the adoption of Learning Management Systems (LMS). This approach is very common in universities worldwide. Moodle and Teleduc seem to be the most popular LMS used by Brazilian educational institutions; the latter being developed by a state public university. These LMS are shareware, that is, free access. LMS require knowledge of how best to use them to assist learning. The University of São Paulo City, a state public university, for example, has developed an "online-instructor training course that takes place at an introductory, beginner level" (Rezende, 2006), and which has Teleduc as its platform. The learning method uses a constructivist approach to knowledge development. They have as their learning objective "the transformation of teachers' practice" from the traditional teacher-centred to a more flexible learning-centred approach (Rezende, 2006). Another example of staff development is the Skills Development Program in DE developed by a private university called the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUC-RS). The program is in its 38th edition and has already trained approximately 855 academic and general staff from different areas within the university. The program enables staff to develop a variety of skills; from basic use of the Internet and LMS applications, to encouraging a deeper reflection on how to promote learning using these tools at a distance. They declare that they use a student-centred approach. This program is delivered by face-to-face sessions, including workshops and computer laboratory activities, along with online tasks (Wagner, Franciosi, & Leite, 2006).

Likewise, the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV), another private university, which started its institutional online program in 2000, has adopted a staff development regime whereby the training program is compulsory for lecturers working with DE at the beginning of their employment – a strategy recently applied by a number of universities in Australia (Fletcher, 2004). The training can last from one to two months. It presents to the participants the institutional vision and aims of its distance education programs, as well as explores the principal elements and concepts of distance education practices, and the

effective use of technologies. The program also includes face-to-face and online sessions, along with group and individual activities. According to the researchers in this institution, university lecturers and their distance education staff at FGV Online, are in constant development as they have opportunities to interact and receive support through the Lecturers' Virtual Room, an online discussion board (Tractenberg & Murashima, 2003).

Interestingly, some Brazilian educational institutions have adopted a more careful and cautious approach in introducing academic staff to learning technologies. One example of this is the private institution, the University of Santa Cruz do Sul. Its academic development consists of face-to-face workshops and discussion groups, where academics can reflect on the impact of technology in their teaching and explore the changes required by distance education within their work (Arriada et al., 2005). Participants join the program as volunteers. The institution runs a small evaluation after every course, and the feedback is used to improve the strategies for new versions of the program. Evaluation is fundamental for the success of staff development programs (Oliver & Harvey, 2002). The institution does not deliver full distance courses; it has offered several units delivered at a distance. By preparing its staff for the future expansion of its DE enterprise (Arriada et al., 2005), this institution, as with many others in Brazil, is cautiously taking advantage of the policy that permits institutions to deliver 20 percent of their face-to-face degrees at a distance.

Furthermore, more important than just training academic staff, the work of academics worldwide generally is also to help them to reflect on the benefits and the need to constantly seek for improvement and change, not only in the way they teach, but also in the way they see their roles within the organisations they are part of (Smyth, 2003; Tynan & Smyth, 2007a). It seems, therefore, that this message is understood in Brazil, at least in the distance education context, where Brazilian academics are slowly recognising that working with DE requires much more than simply knowing the content or knowing the technology (Cavalcanti & Inocencio, 2006). "They need to know how to communicate effectively with students, how to prepare activities, and that quality DE requires planning, organising, communicating and assessing students" (Moran, 2007a, p. 4). There appears to be evidence that when academics go back to their face-to-face classes they tend to bring new strategies learned during their DE experiences. Some academics have started to realise that their students deserve more attention, and that they have devoted much more of their

time planning and organising activities and assessments for their DE units, than they ever did for their face-to-face ones (Arriada et al., 2005; Cavalcanti & Inocencio, 2006; Moran, 2007b). This is encouraging evidence of change in system culture and improvement for stakeholders.

Whether *thin* or *think* strategies for staff development (see Chapter Two, item 2.5.1), the initiatives mentioned here, together with some changes in university teachers' attitudes towards better understanding staff development for successful DE, can be considered as positive progress. However, these few examples seem insufficient to provide a real picture of the reality in this area across the entire country. Although different types of evaluation procedures were undertaken in the majority of staff development programs mentioned here with positive outcomes, the evaluations seem to be unclear in how implementation of recommendations will occur. Many learn to work with distance education by themselves, are normally penalised by not being supported by their institution, and are not being professionally recognised for their additional efforts (Romiszowski, 2005; Romiszowski, 2002).

The above discussion of the existing situation of staff development in Brazil demonstrates the clear need for further and deeper investigation into this area, which built on the researcher's constructions and led to the conceptualisation of another research question:

To what extent is academic staff development for higher distance education undertaken in Brazil?

Another research question provided important impetus for this investigation. It can be seen from the discussion highlighted in this chapter, that the Brazilian education system is divided into two major sectors, private and federal public, and that there are differences between them. In order to further investigate the range of responses and perspectives toward the current policies for DE from the institutions involved in this study, one last research question was conceptualised:

How have private and federal public higher education institutions responded to current policies for DE?

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the fundamental issues related to Brazilian higher education, the influences of Brazil's social and historical backgrounds, and its most recent higher education reform, were all discussed. The introduction of distance education into higher education was also explored, including the development of DE policies and the implications of such policies to both the private and federal public educational sectors. In addition, this chapter highlighted the challenges associated with staff development within Brazilian universities. Most importantly, this chapter linked fundamental theoretical issues which emerged in Chapter Two with the current analysis of the literature regarding higher and distance education with a focus on staff development in Brazil. Therefore, this chapter presented some of the gaps in the existing relevant body of literature, which informed this research study, and the development of the research questions.

The next chapter explores the conceptually appropriate processes and methods used by the researcher to gather and analyse the data that informed this investigation's research questions. It also explores the ethical procedures that are indispensable when working with two languages, Portuguese and English, as well as the criteria for judging the quality of the research.

CHAPTER 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores and justifies the set of beliefs, approaches and understandings of reality that underpin this research study, taking into account the researcher's conceptualisation of the research questions. A discussion of the paradigm chosen is highlighted, together with the design, processes and methods for collecting and analysing the data. Finally, this chapter also presents the quality assurance methods adopted in this study.

4.2 The Research Questions

As was previously identified, the research questions are:

Research Question 1: How are policies for distance education shaping practices of higher distance education in Brazil?

Research Question 2: To what extent is academic staff development for higher distance education undertaken in Brazil?

Research Question 3: How have private and federal public higher education institutions responded to current policies for DE?

To investigate these questions a methodological approach should demonstrate epistemological and ontological coherence.

4.3 The Constructivist Paradigm

In order to orientate this research study, it was important to define the set of beliefs and the nature of knowledge that would guide investigations. An exhaustive analysis of the literature available regarding how to develop and conduct a research enterprise was undertaken in an attempt to find a suitable approach. Thus, a methodological decision was made taking into account this study's characteristics, its research questions and the

researcher's context. To be ontologically coherent, this work will focus on the way this investigator and participants construct their reality and the world they live in, taking into account their background, their personal experiences and beliefs about the situation being researched. The way we know our world, the meanings and interpretations we make of it in our particular ways, are all related to the construction of our reality (Blumer, 1969; Jonassen, Hernandez-Serrano, & Choi, 2000).

Here, reality is defined as "the network of things and relationships that we rely on in our living", and in which others are also based upon (von Glasersfeld, 1995, p. 7). Assuming that there are multiple constructions of reality, and that none is right or wrong, some are simply more "informed and sophisticated constructions" of knowledge than others (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 139; von Glasersfeld, 1995). In addition, constructions of reality can be reconstructed and become more sophisticated as we experience new environments and situations, interact with others, and acquire and exchange knowledge during this research actively (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Jonassen et al., 2000). This underlying constructivist epistemology influences the choice of the methodology in this investigation which gathers qualitative data seeking information about the constructed views of the participants in this study, all of whom are involved with higher distance education in Brazil.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1998, 2005), constructivism is based on an ontological view of "local and specific constructed realities (relativism)", a "transactional/subjectivist" epistemology, and a "hermeneutical/dialectical" methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 203). These characteristics can easily be identified in this research study. Firstly, the investigator recognised that the participants of this study have "multiple, socially constructed realities", and the researcher was one of the constructors of knowledge to be shared amongst other constructors (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 86). This was important for this work as participants make meanings of their world through their specific experiences, constructions and reconstructions of realities (relativist ontology). Secondly, due to a lack of literature available regarding aspects investigated in this study in Brazil, it was mainly through the experiences and constructions of the reality of others that it was possible to create, recreate and articulate a reality about the actual situation of this topic (transactional/subjectivist epistemology). Thirdly, as the researcher constructed and reconstructed her knowledge through the analysis of other peoples' constructions of

reality, the paradigm allowed an even newer construction through the “interaction of the researcher with [new] information, contexts, settings, situations, and constructors, using a process that is rooted in the previous experiences, belief systems, values, fears, prejudices, hopes, disappointments, and achievements” (hermeneutical/dialectical methodology) (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 143, 2005).

Although the paradigm debate is still very much in discussion (Schwandt, 1998), it is not the purpose of this chapter to explore further aspects of this debate. It is important, however, to highlight that the “conventional paradigm”, a term adopted by Guba and Lincoln (1989) and mostly used to define positivism paradigm, was not adequate for this particular investigation. To begin with, the conventional paradigm tends to assume pre-established variables and hypothesis. Instead, this study considered issues and themes that emerged according to the researcher’s constructions and reconstruction of realities of participants as the investigation progressed. This study also took into account each participant’s context, values, meanings, perspectives and subjectivities, in contrast to the hypothesis testing approach of the conventional paradigm. In a similar fashion, this exploratory research attempted to build theories and develop a framework to describe how staff professional development is conducted in Brazil, particularly in distance education. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p. 75), an exploratory study is useful when “there is no guiding framework or theory” to assist the researcher to conduct an investigation, and/or when the researcher needs to “develop and test an instrument because one is not available”. Using the constructivist paradigm allowed participants to learn, criticise and interact with the researcher, thus, establishing a consensus of constructions of their realities, which can inform future work (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, 1998, 2005).

These attributes of the constructivist paradigm enabled this mixed-methods inquiry, which will be outlined in the following sections of this chapter, together with the research design, data collection and analysis. They also complemented the researcher’s conceptual foundations that underpinned this research study developed and discussed in Chapter Two and Three.

4.4 The Role of the Researcher

As mentioned earlier, in the constructivism paradigm, the researcher is an active participant whose constructions and experiences were also taken into account in this study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Researchers approach their study with previous knowledge, questions and ideas in mind. Ultimately, these are all reasons by which researchers become interested in researching a particular topic (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 2008). As indicated in Chapter One, this is the case in this research study because the researcher is a native of Brazil and has experienced its education system at all levels, and is now investigating it from an insider/outsider perspective. Her reflections and experiences mentioned previously demonstrate that the researcher is well situated to, and capable of undertaking this study. Most importantly, she is able to interpret and make sense of her own and the respondents' constructions of realities (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Merriam, 1998; Minichiello et al., 2008). Critical to this is also her languages capacities in both Portuguese and English.

4.5 Research Design: Planning the Investigation

Having identified the “basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator” (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 195) throughout this enterprise, the design of the research can now be developed (Creswell, 2007). The design needs to be adaptable and flexible as the conceptualisation of a research study evolves and the research themes emerge (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Most importantly, the research design depends upon the research questions, and it guides the researcher from data collection throughout the process of data analysis (Creswell, 2007; Llewellyn, Sullivan, & Minichiello, 2004; Merriam, 1998).

In order to fully answer the research questions, the design of this study was conceptualised in two parts: *Cross-Sector Study* and *In-depth Studies* (see figure 4.1). The cross-sector study explored the nature and context of a sample of Brazilian higher education institutions participating in this research, including private and public ones from different states of the country. Adding to its robustness, the cross-sector study provided a deeper understanding of Brazilian higher distance education by including the views of several experts with nationally and internationally recognised reputation from a range of associations,

institutions and government bodies in Brazil. An analysis of available literature from across the sector was also undertaken in support of the study, and also as an aspect of data gathering.

Complementing the cross-sector study, the second part of the design, the in-depth studies, examined the two largest higher education sectors in Brazil, the private and the federal public sectors. Issues related to their distance education practices, policies, and academic staff development are discussed in order to tease out the nature of the complex constructions being presented.

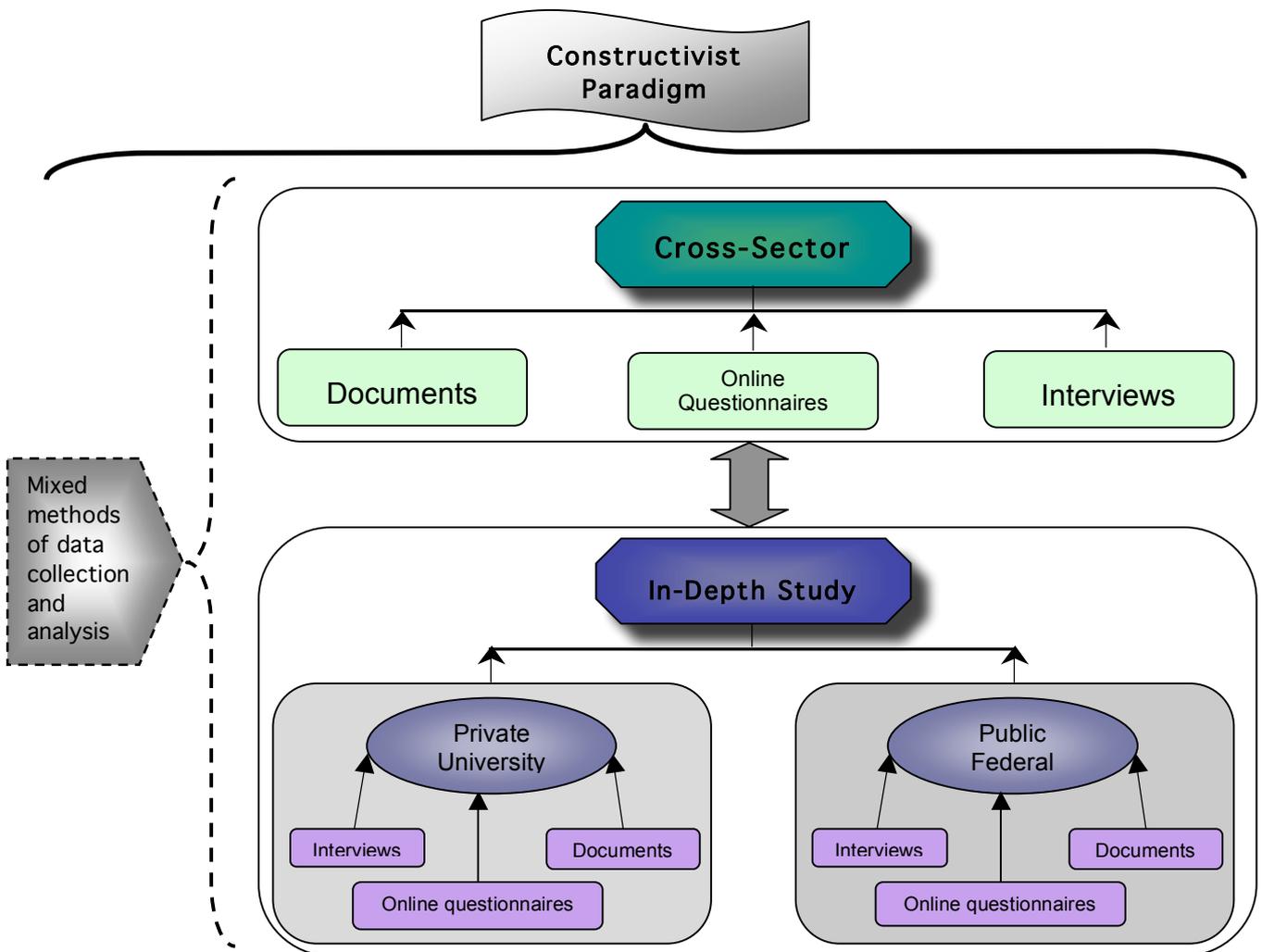


Figure 4.1: Structure of the research design.

Figure 4.1, models the research design. It is divided in the two parts: cross-sector and in-depth studies. It also outlines the sources of data that informed each part of the design, and

the intended methods of data collection and analysis. The figure depicts all these design elements under the umbrella of the constructivist paradigm. The richness of the constructivist paradigm permitted an appropriate research design for this study. Since it was an exploratory study, having several institutions from different sectors, as well as experts involved in this work, the study as a whole provided a better and richer understanding of what has taken place in a broader sense through the cross-sector study, whereas the in-depth studies provided an understanding of institutional practices within the private and public sectors.

4.6 The Cross-Sector Study

The cross-sector study represented the major part of the research work. It assisted the researcher in developing a broader understanding of the Brazilian higher education system, its current context, and the distance education and staff development practices undertaken in Brazil today. In the cross-sector study, the literature was treated as informing both the conceptualisation and data; an approach consistent with a constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Merriam, 1998; Neuman, 2007). The literature was utilised as a primary source of information to assemble initial constructions of the reality of the phenomenon being investigated. Likewise, it contributed to the conceptualisation of the research questions, and assisted with the epistemological foundation for the development of data collection instruments (Merriam, 1998; Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995; Neuman, 2007). Together with the assessment of the literature, face-to-face interview data, responses to the online questionnaire, and documents gathered during data collection were included as data in the cross-sector study, as show in Figure 4.2 below.

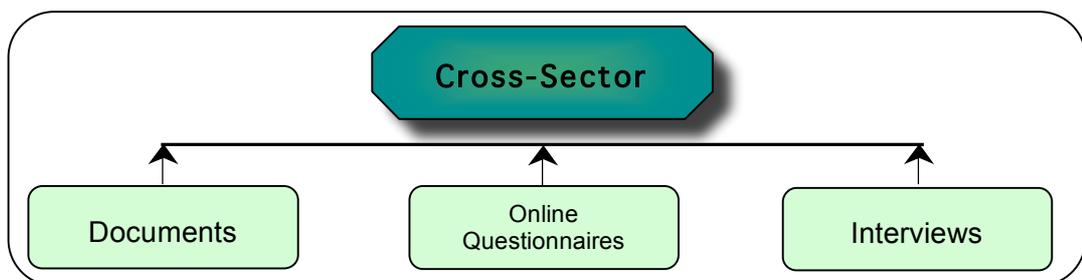


Figure 4.2: The cross-sector study design.

The cross-sector study has already added to the existing body of knowledge in areas in which this study is related, through conference presentations and proceedings and journal article publications (Bossu, 2007; Bossu, Smyth, & Stein, 2007).

4.6.1 Collecting Data

In order to answer the research questions appropriately, a mixed methods data collection strategy was adopted in the cross-sector study. It is also an approach in line with the constructivist paradigm, and represents a practice commonly adopted by researchers across the social sciences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Here, methods are predominantly qualitative while being supported by quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). The qualitative approach assisted the researcher to gain an understanding of participants' perceptions, experiences and constructions of their reality (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995, 2005). Thus, the qualitative approach enabled the researcher to access the constructions of the participants' world, exploring their views regarding distance education and staff development in Brazil, making them visible to others through interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Stake, 1995; Wolcott, 1994). In the mixed methods strategy applied here, quantitative data provided background information and a further understanding of participants' views (Johnson & Turner, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Moreover, mixed methods enriched this work by offering "better opportunities for answering the research questions", and by assisting the researcher "to meet the criteria for evaluating the 'goodness' of their answers better than do single research designs" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003, p. 14).

4.6.1.1 Sampling: Making it doable

Establishing a sampling strategy for data collection assists the investigator to find and understand the units of study that match with the research design, and to assure that it will provide relevant data to answer the research questions (Merriam, 1998). In qualitative studies, the samples are considerably smaller and "tend to be purposive" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27) or non-probabilistic, whereas quantitative studies require the researcher to deal with larger and random or probabilistic samples (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Neuman, 2007). In addition, "sampling is interrelated with data collection, and

ongoing sampling decisions evolve from data analysis and the developing theory” (Llewellyn et al., 2004, p. 215). A combination of *purposeful sampling* and *snowball sampling* was adopted in the design of the cross-sector study. The former is a strategy used to select groups for study and participants that meet “a selected criteria within the wider group” (Llewellyn et al., 2004, p. 215). Purposeful sampling also helps the researcher to choose cases that provide richer insights through critical, typical and in-depth information to the investigation (Minichiello et al., 2008; Neuman, 2007). The latter, snowball sampling, is a very useful strategy in uncovering relational networks, and is further discussed later in this section (Minichiello et al., 2008; Neuman, 2007).

Driven by the investigators conceptual framework and related literature, the research sites and participants were chosen following the purposeful sampling criteria stated below in Table 4.1:

Table 4.1: The rationale of sampling criteria for the cross-sector study (adapted from Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 30).

Parameters	Purposeful Choices	How many	Why
Settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private and federal public universities; - Accredited to deliver DE; - Public federal universities must be part of the Open University of Brazil program; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 private university in the Northeast; - 2 universities in the South, one private and one public; - 3 universities, 2 privates and 1 public, in the Southeast. 	Have a cross-cultural representation across the two educational sectors (private and public).
Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecturers, academics in general, experts, coordinators and/or directors of the distance education centres; - Academic developers, instructor developers, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 experts; - 6 participants of public federal institutions; - 19 participants of private institutions 	Represent the full range of roles within universities and provide relevant data for this study.
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutions must be involved with DE programs (mixed-mode, blended mode, or distance education only); - Participants must be involved or were engaged in DE; - Institutions must offer or had offered staff development activities. 	DE programs within different institutions, associations, and the federal government initiatives.	Make a significant contribution through providing a better construction and understanding of distance education in Brazil.

As can be seen in the Table 4.1, the cross-sector study encompassed six institutions, their participants, and five experts; three of whom were independent from the institutions investigated. The six higher educational institutions selected for sampling met the selection criteria established by the researcher. These required that they were involved with DE programs, accredited by the federal government of Brazil to deliver such programs, offered or had offered staff development activities, amongst other events stated in Table 4.1. In addition, these institutions also showed high interest in engaging in this study and giving access to this investigator. According to many prominent authors in the field, a researcher needs to look for opportunities and situations where they can learn the most about the case being investigated, and gather quality data to answer their research questions (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 2005). The six institutions selected represented a

diverse range of institutions available in Brazil to date and satisfied these criteria. Figure 4.3 below shows a map of Brazil, its regions and states, and the location of the institutions investigated.

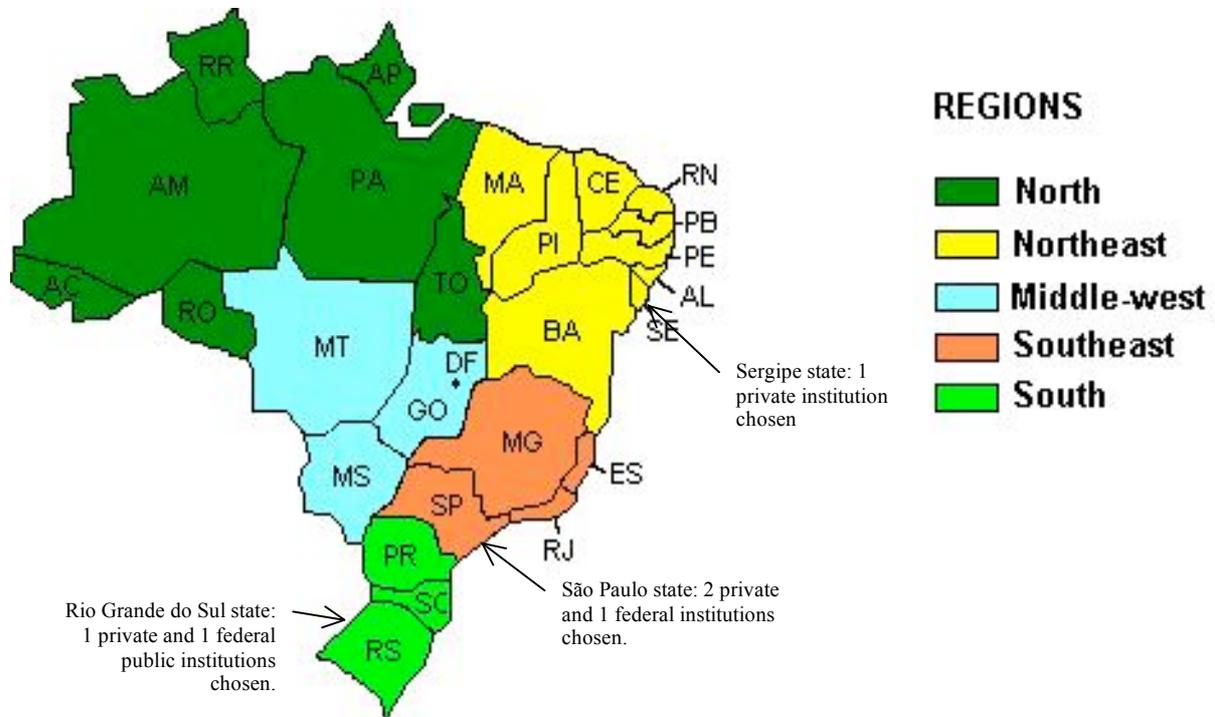


Figure 4.3: A map of Brazil with the research sites indicated, as well as states and regions.

Likewise, the study also required a rationale for selecting the interviewees, as participants with no experience with distance education would most likely not provide significant data. Initial contacts with key participants (institutions' coordinators and directors of distance education centres) and the institutions themselves were made by informal emails. Based on their positive responses, a formal invitation letter was sent to them. In a similar way, the experts were also contacted by informal emails. They were participants who represented different areas of knowledge within higher and distance education. They were members of associations and government bodies, in Brazil and overseas, related to distance education. Thus, they were able to make significant contributions to this work by providing a better understanding of distance education in Brazil, based on to their experiences and constructions as insider/outsider.

It is a common practice amongst researchers to have a combination of sampling strategies (Neuman, 2007). As mentioned earlier, together with purposeful sampling, this researcher

also adopted snowball sampling. Snowball sampling occurs when participants are asked by the researcher to indicate other participants within the same or similar network of people, who might be able to provide rich information to the investigation (Merriam, 1998; Neuman, 2007). In the case of this study, key participants of the selected institutions were asked to refer the invitation to other participants in their institutions, who they thought would be willing to contribute with their experiences and constructions. As a result, a satisfactory number of 30 participants engaged with DE activities across the sector were selected and provided valuable data to this research.

4.6.1.2 Interviewing: collecting participants' constructions

According to Guba and Lincoln (1998), constructions of people's reality only occur "through the interactions of a constructor with information, contexts, settings, situations, and other constructors...using a process that is rooted in previous experience, belief systems, values, fears, prejudices, hopes, disappointments, and achievements of the constructor" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 143). In other words, the only way the investigator could capture a participant's true reality was by meeting them within their own natural settings (their universities) and by interacting and asking them relevant questions, that is, interviewing them. Therefore, face-to-face interview was adopted as the tool for collecting qualitative data in the cross-sector study. The researcher travelled home to Brazil to conduct these interviews in the participants' native language, Portuguese.

Interview is "one of the most common" instruments for collecting rich qualitative data, and in this research they took place mostly as "individual and face-to-face" forms of verbal interactions (Fontana & Frey, 2005, pp. 697 - 698). A combination of *semi-structured* and *in-depth interviews* was conducted to generate the data needed to answer the research questions. The interviews were *semi-structured* to allow the researcher to have a more flexible interview guide with a set of open questions elaborated accordingly to the researcher's conceptual framework, and to the research questions "without fixed wording or fixed ordering of questions" (Johnson & Turner, 2003; Minichiello et al., 1995, p. 65). Structured interviews would not give the flexibility required. They were also *in-depth interviews* since face-to-face interactions enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of participants' social constructions, lived experiences and perceptions through "their own words" and language (Minichiello et al., 2008; Minichiello et al., 1995,

p. 68). In addition, "in-depth interviewing is an appropriate method to gain access to the individual's words and interpretations" (Minichiello et al., 2008; Minichiello et al., 1995, p. 73). Consequently, semi-structured in-depth interviews provided to this study "a highly adaptable instrument" of data collection, enabling a greater understanding of knowledge, interpretations and meanings from a broad range of academics reflecting different states and educational sectors (private and public); data that could not be accessed through any other method of data collection (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 175).

4.6.1.2.1 Preparing the Interviews

In the cross-sector study, the interview schedule was developed taking into account issues that emerged in the literature regarding higher education, distance education and staff development, as well as the educational policy implications in Brazil and worldwide. The interview guideline was developed in English and then in Portuguese, the official spoken language in Brazil. The guideline was composed of ten semi-structured questions (see Appendix 1). Issues discussed during the interviews provided the major qualitative data that assisted the researcher in answering the research questions.

4.6.1.2.2 Ethical Interviewing

Before being conducted, the interview guideline used in this research study received the approval of The University of New England (UNE) Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval No.: HE06/173). The interviews were conducted face-to-face and audio recorded. All participants were provided with an information sheet about the research and a consent letter, both in English and Portuguese. They could choose whether or not they wished to participate and could withdraw at any time during the investigation (Appendix 2). Interviews were conducted and transcribed in Portuguese. Although some participants were fluent in English, using their native language provided opportunities for more authentic constructions to emerge. Transcripts, in their digital format, were sent back to participants by electronic mail in order to confirm the accuracy of the data collected. The researcher selected and highlighted in bold approximately six to seven of the most relevant sections of each transcription in order to facilitate and expedite participants' confirmation of the transcriptions. Participants had approximately 45 days to return the transcriptions, comments and suggestions, if they wished, to the researcher by electronic mail. Changes

suggested by the participants were considered by the researcher as a development or sophistication of their original constructions. However, the researcher kept different document files for the original transcriptions and participants' confirmations, which were analysed separately. The identification of participants and their institutions was kept confidential throughout the data collection and analysis. Figure 4.4 below shows the layout developed to gather participants' confirmation of their constructions. As can be seen, transcriptions contained a heading with information relevant of each individual interview, including an identification of the participant and institution, data, duration of the interview and a legend explaining a few acronyms. The main body of the document was divided in two parts; on the left is the transcription of the interviews in Portuguese with some key paragraphs highlighted in bold and on the right is a blank space for the participant to write comments.

Participante:	PRU2P1 = Participante 1 Entrevista A
Instituição:	PRU2 = Private University 2
Data:	18/05/2007
Duração:	27:37 Minutos
Legenda:	P = Participante I = Investigador EaD = Educação a distância

Transcrição	Feedback do participante
<p>P: ... Em alguns casos por conta da própria estrutura da universidade pública brasileira. Eles se propuseram primeiro a fazer pesquisa, a produzir o software, depois veio toda aquela leva de software livre nos governos. Final do governo Fernando Henrique Cardoso, início do governo Lula, a febre era trabalhar com software livre. Todos os projetos de pesquisa das universidades públicas estão trabalhando com Linux, software livre... Então, você não tinha... a única universidade que tinha desenvolvido um bom projeto na área, foi a universidade de Santa Catarina, Federal de Santa Catarina. Por outro lado, as universidades particulares, todas "caíram de pau" em cima do mercado, na realidade, era um mercado interessante. A gente tem algumas experiências que não deram certo, por exemplo as PUCs gastaram..., aquela do Rio Grande do Sul principalmente, gastou uma fortuna para montar o sistema deles e a idéia era fazer um "pool" de PUCs, Católicas no país, isso em 2001, e não foi feito. Eles conseguiram o ano passado se reunir.</p>	

Figure 4.4: Layout to gather participants' confirmation

4.6.1.2.3 Ethical Transcribing

After being recorded, all interviews were transcribed. The transcribing process of the interviews occurred in two steps:

- a) Firstly, the investigator listened to all interviews and transcribed them exactly according to the participants' statements without paying rigorous attention to punctuation, spelling and grammar. They were stored individually into a word processor document file named

with a code created by the researcher to facilitate the identification of participants and their institutions;

b) Secondly, all the transcriptions were edited in order to check punctuation, spelling, grammar and typographical errors, without changing any information and the meanings of participants' constructions of reality.

Different from the written language, the spoken language is less formal and does not follow a linear logical pathway (Minichiello et al., 2008). The rationale for editing the transcriptions was firstly that the word processor did not detect all grammatical, spelling and other typographical errors even when using the inbuilt Portuguese language tool. Although the Portuguese language uses a similar alphabet to English, it has different grammatical structures and additional letters and accents in its vowels such as ç, á, ê, ì, õ, ü. Secondly, participants were all academic staff, who represented a highly intellectual and qualified class in Brazil and they could feel uncomfortable with the transcription in its raw format. Consequently, when receiving the transcriptions back for confirmation of their constructions, instead of concentrating on the issues and concepts regarding their constructions they could have paid more attention to the grammatical, spelling and typographical problems. Once again, attention was given so that there were no changes in concepts, information or meanings during the editing. The transcribing process generated three digital files; one document with no formatting; one with a layout for gathering participants' confirmation on their initial constructions (see Figure 4.4); and another file with a layout to facilitate and enhance the researcher's analysis and interpretation (see Figure 4.6). These issues are explored in the cross-sector study analysis section (see item 4.6.2).

4.6.1.2.4 Managing data collected from the interviews

All original recorded interviews, together with the transcriptions, observation notes taken by the researcher, signed consent forms, and interview guidelines collected during the interviews were kept in the researcher's university office in her locked filing cabinet. After the completion of the study, these materials, in digital and hard format, were locked in a filing cabinet at the university's research office to be destroyed after five years. Also,

institutions' and participants' identification were removed from the materials, maintaining the previous agreement regarding confidentiality.

4.6.1.3 Online Questionnaire: Gathering data electronically

Questionnaires are also a very common and powerful method of data collection, and are extensively adopted in qualitative and quantitative research (Johnson & Turner, 2003). Not only has technology changed our daily life, it has certainly impacted the way researchers conduct their inquiries (Markham, 2005). In this particular study, an online questionnaire was adopted as a variation of the mail questionnaire. One of the reasons for using the online questionnaire was that it was cost effective and time-efficient. The online questionnaire arrived at its destination much more quickly than would paper-based questionnaires. Considering that the researcher is based in Australia, and the participants in Brazil, the postage and return of the paper-based questionnaires could have taken months. Additionally, she could access the technology available at the university campus without cost. The online questionnaire also permitted anonymous responses by the informants, and provided data in digital form ready to be analysed (Johnson & Turner, 2003). Most importantly, having another form of data gathering enabled the researcher to gain different perspectives and input on participants' information, and thus making stronger sense of their constructions. "Constructions are challenged whenever new information and/or an increase in sophistication to deal with information become available" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 145).

The online questionnaire comprised mostly closed questions with multiple-choice (checklist boxes) responses. One final question, which was opened-ended, enabled participants to give their opinions and include additional information. Furthermore, there were also questions with a mix of open- and closed-ended responses in a single item. Those questions had an "other" option, which allowed "respondents to fill in their answers, in their words, in the cases where the responses provided by the researcher [were] incomplete or inappropriate" (Johnson & Turner, 2003, p. 304). Data collected from the online questionnaire was mostly quantitative in nature, and was used to support the qualitative data generated by the cross-study interviews.

4.6.1.3.1 Preparing the Online Questionnaire

The Human Research Ethics Committee (UNE) had also approved the online questionnaire (Approval No.: HE06/173). The online questionnaire is a web page that can be accessed using any Internet Browser through a web address (<http://www-personal.une.edu.au/~cbossu2/>). The programming language used to develop the online questionnaire was HTML. It had 15 questions that were drawn from the main body of literature about the topics investigated. The opening screen of the web page contained the research title, the researcher's contact details and options for the participants to choose in which language they would like to answer the questions: English or Portuguese. The following screen in the web page depicted the aims of the study, the reasons for conducting the online questionnaire, and the terms and conditions to use the data collected through this method (participant's consent and further information). After accepting the conditions, the participant could start to respond to the items (Appendix 1). Figure 4.5 below shows the first questions of the online questionnaire, which appeared to respondents after they accepted the terms and conditions of the study.

ACADEMIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EFFECTIVE E-LEARNING: A POSSIBLE FRAMEWORK FOR BRAZIL

Questionnaire for Participants

Note: questions marked * are compulsory

Name (optional):

Your Gender:

*Age:

Name of Institution:

Location (name of town):

Please select ONE response for each question

*1. Type of Institution:

Private

State Public

Federal Public

Figure 4.5: First questions of the Online Questionnaire.

4.6.1.3.2 Piloting

Piloting for the online questionnaire was undertaken as an attempt to overcome conceptual, technological, and language problems that participants could face. To begin with, the researcher wanted to make sure that the questions asked were relevant to the research questions. Thus, the online questionnaire was sent to the supervisors to obtain final approval. After that, the online questionnaire was sent to different computers operating with different systems (namely Windows and Macs), to ensure that the data collection instrument was compatible with most popular systems available. Finally, the researcher sent the Portuguese version of the online questionnaire to one of the experts and collaborators in this study, also a Portuguese speaker, to confirm the accuracy of the translation. All suggestions made by the supervisors, the expert, and changes related to technical problems, were considered by the researcher and incorporated into the online questionnaire. Piloting was important to minimise the major occurrence of problems (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Merriam, 1998).

4.6.1.3.3 Ethical practices for the Online Questionnaire

The online questionnaire was sent to all participants by electronic mail, after they were interviewed. This totalled 30 potential respondents from the initial pool of purposeful sampling. Participants were asked by the researcher to send it to other colleagues who they thought would be willing to contribute to the research - snowball sampling strategy (Minichiello et al., 2008; Neuman, 2007). Here, snowball sampling was appropriate to capture responses from another audience, rather than the sample originally defined, and to provide more quantitative data to the research. Participants had the option to maintain anonymity or identify themselves as they wished. The researcher received the responses by electronic email and they were transferred into an Excel spread sheet for data analysis. The response rate was 47% from the initial pool resulting in useable data, with an additional eight out of the 22 responses in the online questionnaire identified as not being from the interviewees. Thus, the online survey included 36% of respondents as a result of snowball sampling.

4.6.1.3.4 Managing data from the Online Questionnaire

A similar careful procedure towards the material collected during the cross-sector study interviews was adopted with the online data. These electronic responses were kept in the researcher's university office in her locked filing cabinet. After the completion of the study, these digital files were stored on CD ROMs and locked in a filing cabinet at the university's research office to be destroyed after five years. Again, institutions' and participants' identification were removed from the artefacts, maintaining the previous agreement regarding confidentiality.

4.6.1.4 Documents

Documents critically selected were also a source of data in the cross-sector study. Data that originated from documents were given the same importance as data gathered from the interviews and from the online questionnaire. The documents collected prior to the fieldwork were mainly higher education policies, higher education statistical reports, internal institutional policies and reports from Brazil and Brazilian and international online newspaper articles. In addition, the documents were gathered, in their majority, through official government web pages, well-known organisational web pages such as The World Bank, UNESCO and the UN, official newspaper web pages and institution web pages, thus, assuring the accuracy and relevancy of data being collected (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). These web pages are constantly being updated, and consequently, the documents were re-collected as they were updated so that they helped to inform the study about the emerging issues taking place in Brazil and around the world regarding distance education and staff development. Documents collected during and after onsite visits included internal institutional policies, institutional information booklets and articles and written materials produced and donated by participants. Electronic mail exchanged between the investigator and participants during the investigation was also considered relevant documentation when it pertained to the research questions.

4.6.1.4.1 Managing data from the Documents

The documents collected in digital and hard format were stored in the researcher's university office in her locked filing cabinet. After the completion of the study, only the digital format of the documents was stored on CD ROMs and locked in a filing cabinet at

the university's research office to be destroyed after five years. Institutions' and participants' identification were removed from the artefacts, maintaining the previous agreement of anonymity.

4.6.2 Planning the Cross-Sector Study Analysis

Mixed methods of data analysis were adopted in the cross-sector study, where quantitative data collected through the online questionnaire was used to enhance the major qualitative data collected during the face-to-face interviews (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The rationale for using two different methods of data collection, qualitative and quantitative, has already been explored in the data collection section of this chapter. This section explores the processes and the instruments developed to assist the researcher in interpreting and making meaning of the data collected, underpinned by the constructivist paradigm.

There is no clear definition on where data collection finishes and analysis starts to take place. Making meaning and construct personal and participants' realities occurred during data collection in most social inquiry studies (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994). It was no different in this study. Here, data analysis was an ongoing process in which the researcher was exposed to participants' knowledge, experiences and views of reality as the data collection progressed. In addition, driven by the conceptualisation of this study, the research questions and the constructivist paradigm, a thematic analysis was adopted to support and confirm themes and concepts identified in the literature, and the ones that emerged during data collection. Thematic analysis assisted the researcher to identify patterns, and to reduce and refine the data into themes in order to facilitate interpretation "as an inductive...inquiry" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 5). Furthermore, the hermeneutic dialectic methodology adapted from Guba and Lincoln was also applied in the data analysis of this study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, 1998, 2005). The hermeneutic dialectic methodology (hermeneutic = interpretive; and dialectic = "comparison and contrast of divergent views with a view to achieving a higher-level synthesis of them all") is also congruent with the paradigm chosen (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 149). It enabled the researcher "to identify and describe various emic constructions and place those constructions in touch – with the intent of evolving a more informed and sophisticated

construction...the outcome is joint, or collaborative constructions” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 138).

Figure 4.6 illustrates the hermeneutic dialectic process developed to guide the researcher during data analysis. As illustrated in the diagram, there were five main steps during analysis. In the first step, the researcher obtained raw qualitative data from the recorded interviews. Then, the interviews were transcribed and sent them back to participants by electronic mail for clarification of their initial constructions. This was all in Portuguese. This enabled stronger rapport and trust, improving the quality of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, 1998, 2005). In the third step, participants returned the confirmation, suggestions and/or feedback of their constructions to the researcher, also by electronic mail. After that, interviews, participants’ feedback, online questionnaire responses, documents, the researcher’s notes, literature analysis and the researcher’s own constructions of reality were included in the analysis. In the fourth step, a preliminary data analysis summary report was sent to participants in Portuguese. Here, not only confirmation of findings was sought, but also reconstructions and/or sophistications of participants’ reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This level of interpretation could not be obtained with a summary reported in English, as the majority of participants did not have or had only basic English skills. Furthermore, the researcher was more likely to receive feedback from participants with a summary report in the participants’ native language.

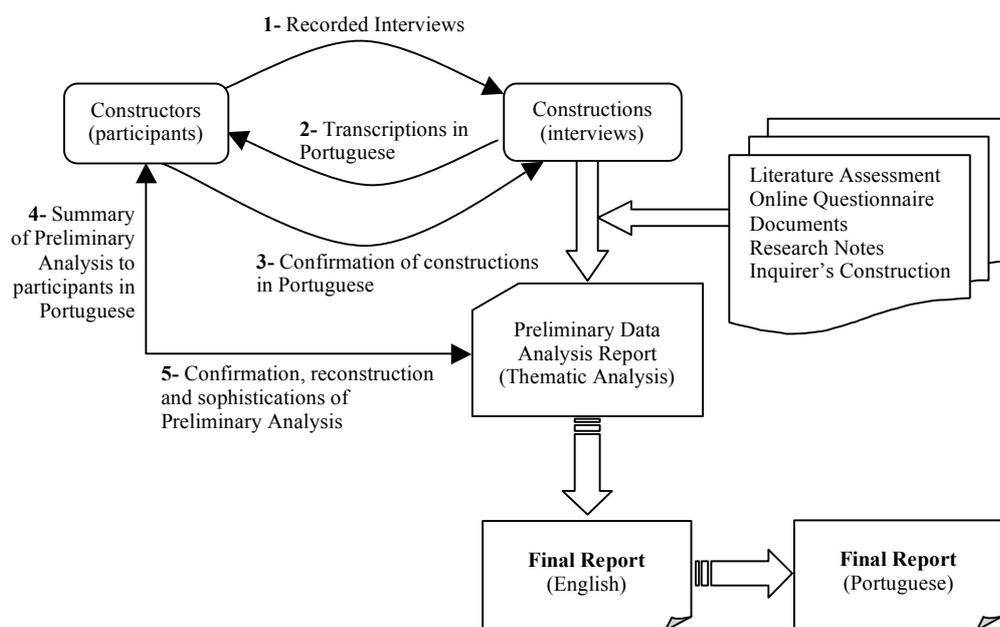


Figure 4.6: The hermeneutic dialectic process adapted from Guba & Lincoln (1989, p. 152).

After being exposed to different views and reflecting on their perceptions regarding their academic professional development, and the distance higher education undertaken in Brazil, participants sent their contributions, reflections and sophistications of constructions back to the researcher (fifth step). Lastly, a final report with all research findings was prepared, translated into English and included in this dissertation. A summary of the final report (in Portuguese) will be sent to participants by electronic mail after this study is completed. This, and specially the translation of analysis, raised an important quality and ethical issues.

4.6.2.1 Translation Protocols

The translation and interpretation of texts has taken place for several hundred years (Smalley, 1995). An appropriate translation of texts needs to reflect the cultural, social and specific knowledge of what is being translated, as well as a comprehensive knowledge of the languages used (Robinson, 2003; Robinson, 1977). In this research study, there was a need to use both Portuguese and English. As the researcher is a native Portuguese speaker from Brazil, and has lived and studied in Australia for approximately five years, there were no major problems during the stages of conducting the research, developing the instruments of data collection and performing preliminary analysis. However, during the translation of the preliminary analysis, together with the participants' confirmation of analysis, from Portuguese into English, the researcher followed several ethical procedures. In order to maintain a high level of accuracy of translation, the researcher kept the data in its original form as long as she could. That is the reason why the researcher translated only the final report into English, conducting most of the analysis in Portuguese. In addition, the researcher also kept notes of her reflections in both languages, which facilitated the process of translation and interpretation of the final report. Most importantly, every language has its particular words and expressions that lose the full meaning if literally translated into another language. In this case, the researcher included the words and expressions in their original form and explained the context and situations in which they were used, in an attempt to make meaning out of participants' constructions.

4.6.2.2 Interviews

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the interviews provided the major data for analysis. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, audio recorded and transcribed. The researcher approached the field as a “learner” and tried to elicit participants’ constructions through interactions carried out in the participants’ own environment. It was an attempt to capture their reality within their own context; in a “normal and natural setting” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 177).

Although the interview guideline was previously developed, the process of interviewing participants was not straightforward (Minichiello et al., 1995). A few times the researcher felt the need to adjust the guideline as more themes and issues emerged during the interviews, reflecting the social and institutional contexts, as well as participants’ experiences of the topics investigated (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The researcher predicted this situation, and the adoption of an adaptable interview guideline enabled these adjustments to be made and richer data to come to light. After identifying those emerging patterns in the conversations, the researcher then concentrated on these, recognising what was relevant to the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Minichiello et al., 2008; Minichiello et al., 1995). In this early stage of analysis, notes were taken by the researcher in order to capture the researcher’s reflections about what was discussed with participants.

Transcribing the interviews was also a process that contributed to the researcher’s construction and reconstruction of knowledge. During transcription the researcher not only confirmed assumptions made previously regarding data collection, but also linked them with her own reflections and themes highlighted in the literature. In addition, the transcribing process also helped the researcher to reflect on her performance as a researcher in a more analytical and critical form (Minichiello et al., 2008; Minichiello et al., 1995). In order to assist the researcher to inductively analyse and interpret the transcriptions more closely, a transcript layout was developed. Figure 4.7 below depicts the layout adopted by the researcher to assist her during data analysis.

Participant:	FPU1P2 – Participant 2
Institution:	FPU1 – Federal Public University 1
Date:	15/05/2007
Time:	Arrived at the institution at 4:50pm, started chatting at 5pm, formal interview started at 5:15.
Duration:	53:52
Other Info.:	
Circumstances:	Firstly, participant and investigator had a informal chat and introduced themselves. Then, they discussed about the PhD research, its methodological approach, and the interview protocols.
Legend:	P = Participant I = Investigator

Emerging Themes	Transcript data	Analytical Notes
DE Department established in the Adm level, above Faculties – more autonomy to develop DE	<p>I: Você está nas duas áreas agora, né? P: É, a gente está inclusive preparando um projeto que é de uma oficina virtual de vídeo, videoconferência pra gente ensinar aos professores a poderem usar o microfone, a câmera...</p> <p>I: Mas, você agora está trabalhando com...? Bom, tem todos esses projetos que você me disse, todas essas coisas acontecendo...</p> <p>P: Sim, mas especificamente eu sou professora do Instituto de Psicologia. Esse é o meu trabalho, eu sou professora do Instituto de Psicologia. Como eu não sou psicóloga de graduação, de formação, eu não leciono para o curso de psicologia. Eu leciono para os outros cursos, então eu dou aula de Psicologia do Trabalho para o curso de engenharia, psicologia social para a arquivologia, psicologia e docência para a licenciatura... Então, eu leciono disciplinas vinculadas ao currículo da psicologia ou de psicologia nos demais currículos. Essa é minha atuação na graduação. Mas obvio que eu já uso ambiente virtual pra apoiar minhas aulas, interagir com os alunos, a publicar os trabalhos... Eu sempre busco integrar a tecnologia. Por causa da minha experiência de formação em educação a distância eu sou bastante convidada pelo pessoal da Secretaria de Educação a Distância, até porque o secretario é meu amigo de infância. Nós somos engenheiros químicos os dois, depois os dois tiraram mestrado em áreas tecnológicas, os dois foram para o mesmo doutorado. Então, a gente tem um percurso muito próximo.</p>	<p>I needed to stop her because she was giving me a lot of information before the recorder was turned on.</p>

Figure 4.7: Example of layout used by the researcher to analyse data.

After identifying the themes and concepts in the data, the researcher continued the analysis through detecting and developing a coding scheme to “reduce text[s] to the fundamental meanings of specific words. These reductions make it easy for researchers to identify general patterns and make comparisons across text[s]” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 272). Interviews were then analysed applying the coding scheme based on the thematic analysis method. Table 4.2 shows the initial part of the coding scheme developed to analyse data concerning the first sub-research question. It was a flexible and powerful instrument of data analyses that assisted the exploration, not only data from the interviews, but also data from the online questionnaire and the documents.

4.6.2.3 Online questionnaire

Data generated by the online questionnaire were received via the researcher’s electronic email and transferred into an Excel spreadsheet to facilitate data analysis. In this study, quantitative data helped the researcher to confirm “the identification of salient [and emerging] themes”, as well as support findings and interpretations of qualitative data analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 33). Open-ended responses originating from the online questionnaire was also analysed using thematic analysis and grouped into the

coding scheme (Appendix 3). Table 4.2 below illustrates how data from the questionnaire were assembled into the coding scheme (see last row).

Table 4.2: The thematic analysis coding scheme developed for the first research question.

Research Questions	Themes	Sub-Themes	Definition	Indicators	Examples	Link with Chapters	Link with Online Quest. and Interview
<i>1- How are DE policies within HE shaping practices of higher distance education in Brazil?</i>	DE-Context	Current Policies	Participants' perceptions on the context of DE in Brazil	When talking about policies of DE in Brazil according to staff personal views and experiences.	"Here in Brazil... DE in this country... Our legislation..."	Context Findings	11 12 18 Documents
	DE-Quality	Evaluation Content Material	Quality online and f2f learning	Evaluation, criticism of educational models, including DE and recommendation for good practices.	"Quality DE should help students to learn... Good DE courses should be..."	Literature Findings	13 Documents
	Career	Roles Challenges	Perceptions on the impact of the introduction of DE	When taking about workload, career change and different roles played by academics in DE.	"Tutor, instructor, ... more about the multiple skills..."	Context PD Literature PD Findings	Probing 15 and 16 Documents
	Tendencies	Positive View Negative View	Perceptions on the future of DE in Brazil.	When talking about perceptions of the future of DE.	"My pessimist view of DE is... I think that there is a tendency for..."	Literature Findings	Q9 Q10 19 Documents

4.6.2.4 Documents

First, documents were, critically examined by the researcher and then, data originating from them were analysed using the thematic analysis method. The themes and concepts that emerged from the documents were used to support and supplement themes previously identified by the researcher during the analysis of interviews and online questionnaire.

It can be seen from the discussion above, that the cross-sector study is a large and important part of this research. Its methods of data collection and analysis, together with the ethical procedures concerning both data collection and analysis, are congruent with the paradigm chosen. The cross-sector study also assisted the researcher to gather appropriate data with which to answer the research questions related to this part of the research design. Next, the second part of this research design, in-depth studies are discussed in detail.

4.6.3 Participants' In-text Identification

It was highlighted that participants' identities were kept confidential throughout the study. However, codes were developed to assist the researcher to analyse and interpret the data. It was important that the researcher was able to identify participants' background, the nature of the institutions participants worked in, and the regions where the institutions were located in Brazil. This way, it was and is easier to recognise similarities, differences, develop arguments and also contextualise the data. Quotes used in the following chapters from individual participants are identified taking into account the individuals' and their institutions' characteristics; Type of Participant, Discipline Background, Type of Institution and Region where it is located in Brazil. Such identification is illustrated as follows:

- Developer,Humanities,FedPub,Southeast = Educational developer in the Humanities from a federal public university in the Southeast region of Brazil;
- DECoord,Science,FedPub,South = Coordinator in Science of the distance education centre at the federal public university in the Southern region of Brazil;
- Lect2,Science,Private,Catholic,Southeast = Science lecturer number two from the private Catholic university in the Southeast region of Brazil; and
- Expert5,Humanities,Private,Northeast = Expert in Humanities from the private university in the Northeast region of Brazil.

It should be noted that, even though the readers may notice that some participants were quoted more often than others, mostly the DE experts, their quotes represent the views of other participants, whose weight in the data are shown with percentages and numbers when appropriate. This is because these experts, due to their experience and knowledge of DE in Brazil, provided more sophisticated and broader insights to this research study.

4.7 The In-Depth Studies

As previously mentioned in Chapter Three, there has been a long history of political debate between private and federal public higher institutions in Brazil; the major sectors within the Brazilian higher education system. In addition, those and other issues are likely to be reflected also in the provision of distance education and staff development practices

between these two sectors. The in-depth studies were conceptualised to investigate these issues and to capture and identify their differences, similarities and particularities through participants' perceptions of realities. The in-depth studies are the second part of this research design. They are smaller than the cross-sector study, but made a substantial contribution to the understanding of the study as a whole. Most importantly, in-depth studies are congruent with the researcher's theoretical framework, with the nature of the paradigm chosen, and also provided critical data to answer the research questions. Figure 4.8 shows the design adopted for in the in-depth studies. Many of the research data collection and analysis strategies and procedures parallel those of the cross-sector study.

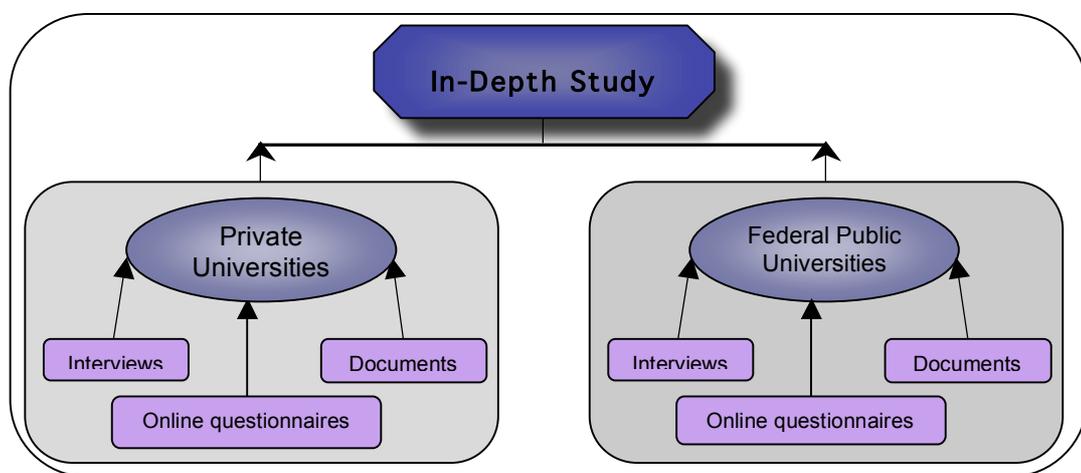


Figure 4.8: The in-depth studies design.

4.7.1 Collecting Data

Again, mixed methods strategies for data collection were also adopted in the in-depth studies and for similar reasons. The instruments of data collection applied in the in-depth studies were identical to the cross-sector study, interviews, online questionnaire and documents, and so will not be repeated here.

4.7.1.1 Sampling in the In-depth Studies

Similar to the cross-sector study, purposeful and snowball sampling strategies were also a strategy applied in the in-depth studies. The in-depth studies divide the sample of six institutions previously selected into two groups: the private universities, formed by four

private institutions, and the federal public universities, formed by two federal public institutions. In a similar way, data collected from both sectors, including interviews, responses from the online questionnaire and documents, were maintained in two separate groups. In other words, only data collected about the private sector encompassed the private universities part of the design, and similarly within the federal public universities part of the design. The only exceptions were the experts' interviews, which were used to inform both sectors.

4.7.2 Planning the In-Depth Studies Analysis

The in-depth studies adopted the same analysis processes and instruments used in the cross-sector study to assist the researcher to interpret and make meaning of the data collected, supported by the paradigm chosen and the researcher's theoretical framework. Here, the researcher also used the hermeneutic dialectic process for data analysis following the five steps (see Figure 4.6). Similar to the cross-sector study, data analysis in the in-depth studies was an ongoing process, where the researcher had the opportunity to be in contact with participants' knowledge, experiences and views of the two major educational sectors in Brazil, the private and the federal public one. Thematic analysis was also adopted in the in-depth studies, not only to support and confirm themes and concepts previously identified in the literature and during data collection, but also to be coherent with the cross-sector study analysis, with the researcher's theoretical framework and the research questions. Interviews and data which originated from the online questionnaire and documents were analysed through a coding scheme developed based on thematic analysis method.

In summary, the in-depth studies were created to capture problematic issues regarding the private and federal public educational sectors in Brazil. These were explored in terms of the differences, similarities and peculiarities of their distance education programs, academic professional development practices and institutional policies, amongst other issues. Similar strategies and instruments for collecting and analysing data were adopted for both the cross-sector study and the in-depth studies. Once again, the coding scheme was an important strategy that assisted the analysis of data collected from all sources, as well as enabling critical thinking and conceptualisation of the study. Again, a researcher who has fluency in both Portuguese and English languages spot-checked the data against

the coding scheme. The results of his check were in agreement with the analysis conducted by the researcher. Other procedures to assure the goodness (quality) of this study are discussed next.

4.8 Criteria for Judging Quality

Congruent with the constructivism paradigm that underpins this study, the criteria for judging the quality of this inquiry are establishing trustworthiness and the hermeneutic process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In the following sections, these three criteria are explored taking into account the particularities of this study.

4.8.1 Establishing Trustworthiness

In order to establish trustworthiness the researcher needs to persuade the readers and the respondents that she is representing and interpreting the true “constructed realities of respondents” and of her own (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237). According to Guba and Lincoln (1989, 1985), this is possible through the development of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

4.8.1.1 Credibility

There are several suggested techniques to establish credibility of a research study. Prolonged engagement, peer debriefing and member checks were adopted in this study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Although the researcher spent over three months in Brazil formally collecting data, previously, informal face-to-face conversations, as well as exchanging ideas through electronic mail with participants, continued throughout the data analysis. Thus, prolonged engagement was promoted. In addition, the researcher engaged in peer debriefing with her supervisors from Australia and New Zealand several times during the data collection in Brazil via electronic mail and web conferencing. This continued through data analysis. The peer debriefing meetings contributed to several aspects of the research as it progressed, including teasing out and discussing unexpected and expected issues that emerged in the data.

Member checks occurred frequently during the study. They took place during the interviews as respondents were asked to further discuss and clarify issues that emerged in previous interviews with other respondents. Also, transcriptions of the interviews were sent back to respective participants to confirm the accuracy of information “by [the] original informants” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 279). Preliminary data analysis was also sent to all participants to assure that the researcher accurately interpreted the participants’ constructions (see Figure 4.6 and item 4.6.1.2.3). This procedure of member checks developed by the researcher contributed not only to the confirm participants’ constructions but also to the “fairness process” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 247).

4.8.1.2 Transferability

In the constructivist paradigm, transferability can be achieved through providing to the readers “an extensive and careful description of the time, the place, the context [and] the culture” in which the study took place (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 241). This comprehensive set of information contributes to “transferability of judgments” to others who can then adopt the techniques, methods and findings used here in similar contexts or situations (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 242). A thorough description and analysis of the context and other relevant aspects of this study were presented in Chapter Two. In addition, the aim of the study was not to make generalisations, particularly given the small sample of participants and the qualitative nature of the study. However, it has been possible to show to the readers that there are some parallels between the issues faced by Brazilian academics and the ones faced by academics around the world regarding their perceptions about distance education and professional development.

4.8.1.3 Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability “is concerned with the stability of the data over time” and confirmability “is concerned with assuring that data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons” apart from the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, pp. 242 - 243). The former is related to whether the research process undertaken was logical, coherent and possible to track back step by step by others, whilst the latter is related to the methods adopted by the researcher to interpret and make sense of respondents’ constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Both dependability and confirmability can be

established through an inquiry audit, and in this particular study can be carried out by the readers themselves. Here, readers can follow the development of the researcher's theoretical framework through the conceptualisation of the research questions, together with the methods and approaches for collecting and analysing the data, which were compatible with the paradigm chosen. In addition, readers can also verify the goodness of the study by checking the documentation generated during this study, available in the Appendices, in order to judge the decisions and interpretations made by the researcher. Importantly, an academic who has both Portuguese and English languages skills checked the thematic analysis coding scheme used to analyse the data in Portuguese, with the results showing it to be adequate. The same academic randomly checked the quotes used in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, which were translated by the researcher from Portuguese to English. In fact, translation checking is a fairly common procedure in the field of translation and interpretation to ensure accuracy and integrity of texts translated (Robinson, 2003). Projecting this to the context of the constructivist paradigm, translation checking can also ensure that the texts translated are dependable and confirmable (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

4.8.2 Hermeneutic process

The hermeneutic dialectic process used in this study was an instrument for quality control on its own (see Figure 4.6 in item 4.6.2). The Figure 4.6 shows in detail the process of data collection and analysis through a constant dialogue among the researcher, respondents and their constructions, together with the literature analysis and other elements of this study. In addition, the diagram represents also how feedback from participants played an important role on the researchers interpretation and reconstructions of the reality studied thus, reducing problems with interpretations and “biases or prejudices of the evaluator” [researcher] (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 244).

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter explored in detail the methods and approaches of data collection and analysis of the two parts of this research design, *the cross-sector study* and *the in-depth studies*. In addition, it presented the researcher as one of the constructors of realities in this study,

driven by her previous experiences and views of both the private and public sectors. This chapter also described the ethical procedures undertaken and criteria for judging the quality of this study. Measures to assure that this study was trustworthy and reflected the true realities, constructions and interpretations of the respondents and the researcher were also highlighted. Importantly, all the above issues were situated on the principles that underpin the constructivism paradigm to ensure coherence of epistemology and ontology throughout the study.

CHAPTER 5: DE Policies - Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by presenting an analysis of relevant documents and policies for DE, continuing the discussion of key issues highlighted throughout Chapter Three. Together with these, this chapter also analyses and discusses the data related to the first research question; “how are policies for distance education shaping practices of higher distance education in Brazil?”. In addition, it also connects to earlier chapters to form the basis for further discussion, recommendations and theory building. All of the above are supported by the researcher’s conceptualisation of this work.

5.2 Policies and Documents: Analysis and Discussion

As highlighted in Chapter Three, public policies for DE are playing an increasingly important role in the evolution of DE in Brazil (Romiszowski, 2005). Compared with countries such as Australia, the United States, Canada and the UK, distance education at a university level represents a very new model of educational delivery in Brazil. Higher distance education practices became legal in 1996 in Brazil, when the Government’s National Education Law number 9.394 was established. It was in 1998 that the Ministry of Education started to develop legislation at undergraduate levels and in 2001 at postgraduate levels to provide the institutions with initial basis to deliver distance education. However, it was only in 2005, through the Decree 5.622, that the Ministry of Education regulated DE completely, from accreditation to delivery. Hence, federal permission to do so had to be achieved through official accreditation (MEC, 2007). Since then, many other pieces of legislation have been implemented. The DE policies discussed here are that which are still valid to date. The following aspects of DE policies and regulations demonstrate vision and leadership by the Ministry of Education, which will be discussed in detail as this section unfolds:

- All distance education degrees issued by accredited Brazilian HE institutions are

valid across the country and have the same significance as face-to-face degrees (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2005);

- Development of a policy that suggests all HE institutions wishing to offer DE should have a qualified academic body to do so (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2005: Cap1, Art12 - VIII).
- Development of the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education* by the Ministry of Education and the Distance Education Department. This guideline is a framework for quality in DE, which provides guiding principles for higher DE providers in Brazil. The guideline does not have legal power, but its outcomes have been used as a basis for institutional regulation, accreditation and degree recognition (MEC/SEAD, 2003, 2007). The guideline was first developed in 2003, with its latest version being released in August 2007, one month after the data collection for this research;
- Permission for higher institutions to offer 20 percent of their traditional face-to-face degrees at a distance, so long as the institutions and courses are appropriately accredited and recognised by the Ministry of Education (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2004); and
- Implementation by the Ministry of Education of several projects and programs to promote DE and access for further and continuing education. Amongst them is the Brazilian Open University (UAB), which is a project established in 2005 and mainly designed to deliver university level teaching courses to public school teachers by distance (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2006).

These policies are a positive attempt to promote DE initiatives. However, they still reflect characteristics of the centralised Brazilian political structure and traditional views regarding education, sending mixed messages to stakeholders about the worth of change. DE policies impose a definition of distance education practices as being a mix of face-to-face and distance activities; what Brazilians call *semi-presencial* or literally translated “partially face-to-face” delivery (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2005). The Brazilian *semi-presencial* model is very similar to the *mixed-mode* model of DE known around the world (see Chapter Two, item 2.3). In this work, mixed-mode model of DE is used as a

substitute for the term *semi-presencial*. As DE in Brazil is only mixed-mode, hereafter this concept will be implied when DE in Brazil is mentioned.

Due to the policy context referred to above, DE degrees and formal programs offered completely at a distance are not possible in Brazil, with the exception of informal and diploma programs. These are much shorter degrees than a traditional bachelor or teaching degrees (Porto & Berge, 2008). The policies for DE state that there must be some face-to-face activities, essentially exams and activities related to traineeship and laboratories, being approximately 20 percent of the total degree workload. Only face-to-face assessments are considered valid (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2005). Secondly, similar to face-to-face degrees obtained abroad, DE awards obtained elsewhere are not recognised in Brazil as valid degrees. As a consequence, collaboration between international and Brazilian universities is not encouraged, limiting institutional options to exchange knowledge and to get involved with international educational communities, and thus, reducing the opportunities for students to acquire an international or combined degree. This reflects a basic lack of knowledge on the part of the Brazilian government about internationalisation and DE potentials. It stems from the fear of losing control of education, as well as an attempt to maintain the quality and standards, which often are not being achieved anyway (Dannon, 2008; Linhares, R., 2007).

Importantly, higher education institutions in Brazil are now able to offer postgraduate courses, including coursework and research degrees, by distance (mixed-mode). Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education needs first to accredit these institutions to offer such degrees in the traditional face-to-face model. Then, the institutions can offer these degrees at a distance (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2005, 2007). In other words, one cannot be a DE provider from the beginning. That is probably the reason why “there is currently no dedicated DE higher-education institution in Brazil” (Porto & Berge, 2008, p. 7). Additionally, federal approval to deliver distance education occurs through the evaluation of every single degree proposed by institutions. This makes the accreditation process very bureaucratic and slow. Accreditation to deliver DE courses is valid for five years (Alves, 2006a).

One apparent encouragement of DE, and the use of learning technologies in higher education, has been to allow HE institutions to offer 20 percent of their face-to-face

degrees by distance mode. However, this measure seems to have been created to officially regulate the use of learning technologies, and online distance activities in traditional face-to-face courses already taking place in many institutions across the country rather than being used as an evolutionary planning target (Moran, 2007b). The increasing adoption of learning technologies, including online learning, in teaching and learning in higher education is a widespread phenomenon around the world (see Chapter Two, item 2.2.4). Indeed, the policies have been used to encourage institutions to initiate DE programs, but have also limited them to the 20 percent DE offering only. Some would argue why not 30, 40 or even 50 percent of the face-to-face courses at a distance (Moran, Araujo Filho, & Sidericoudes, 2005). As elsewhere in the world, the percentage of face-to-face or DE activities of a degree could be a decision made by each institution based on its financial resources, course design, learning technologies and other facilities such as student accessibility, and so forth (Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Pacey & Keough, 2003). In Brazil, government policies also control other aspects of DE, including the number of students supervised by individual tutors and the duration of courses. Courses need to have the same duration period as face-to-face ones. Once again, Brazilian DE policies seem to reflect a lack of understanding as to some fundamental concepts of DE, characterised by the flexibility of studying anytime and anywhere (Kember, 2007; Porto & Berge, 2008). These implementation strategies also appear to disempower rather than empower stakeholders.

After approximately thirty previous projects, in 2005 the Ministry of Education established the Brazilian Open University (Universidade Aberta do Brazil - UAB) (Reifschneider, 2006). The UAB is not a university itself, it is an “integrated system” composed of the public sector only, including federal higher and technical institutions, states and local governments (Porto & Berge, 2008; UAB, 2007). It seems to have been established in an attempt to accomplish some of the goals proposed by the current HE reform: to increase access to HE to promote social inclusion and democratisation of education through restructuring the federal universities and to qualified a large percentage of school teachers without formal qualification (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2006). Aiming to provide free quality higher education to students across the country, through partnerships among municipal, state and federal government bodies, the UAB has provided opportunities for students that do not live in, or cannot travel to, the metropolitan regions (UAB, 2007). It is an ambitious project. The UAB has already started operating in some federal universities, and in 2007, 291 access centres were opened, providing 46,000 new places for students.

The Ministry of Education intends, by 2010, to open approximately 300,000 new places within the federal higher education sector (UAB, 2007). Some characteristics of the UAB programs that should be adopted by federal public universities participating in the project are:

- degrees cannot enrol more than 150 places at a time;
- preferably, units should be coordinated and content materials should be developed by the academics and their teams (instructional designers, web designers, multimedia experts, and so on) from within the institution;
- academics coordinating the units are also responsible for supervising their tutors;
- each tutor can assist a maximum of 25 students per unit;
- as UAB is a partnership between municipal, state and federal governments, access centres tend to be public schools with tutorials being held during evenings;
- local governments normally maintain the access centres, providing all the infrastructure needed, including computers and other equipment, Internet connection, library access, cleaning and training and recruitment of staff; and
- face-to-face tutors assist students at the access centres. They are the ones who have the closest contact with the students. They usually have face-to-face meetings once a week or fortnightly.

One of the problems still being grappled with is the UAB's conceptualisation as an open university. The concept of Open University (OU) appeared first in Australia, more specifically at the University of New England, in the 1950s, and in Europe around the 1970s, when the UK Open University was founded. The latter was based mostly on "open-entry" of students and not necessarily distance education (Kember, 2007, p. 61; Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Open-entry education means that students with different knowledge levels and backgrounds are able to enrol. They are assessed to some extent by the institution in order to receive appropriate support to achieve their ultimate goals (Kember, 2007; Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Peters, 2004). Other characteristics of open universities are:

- *study anywhere;*
- *freedom to study at a time chosen by the student within a specific semester;* and

- *a high degree of openness over the choice of courses [units of study] to make up a degree programme* (Kember, 2007, p. 74).

Understandably, not all characteristics of an OU can always be implemented. It might depend on institutional policies and goals, students' profile, and public policies and funds, which are typical issues faced by developing countries. The Brazilian OU, however, does not possess any of the above characteristics (Kember, 2007). On the contrary, the Brazilian version of OU requires high school completion from students. Then, they can apply for the entry exams, and if they succeed, they get a place in the free public federal education system to study as a UAB student. UAB courses also require face-to-face meetings at the access centres, have rigid curricula and are semester-based (UAB, 2008). Although the establishment of the UAB means increasing the number of places at federal public universities, these numbers are still insufficient to represent a major expansion in higher education in Brazil (Alves, 2006a; Romiszowski, 2005). As alluded to earlier, another potential problem with the UAB is that it is a program developed by the current federal government, and similar to many other educational programs initiated in Brazil throughout its history, this could all change with a future government, demonstrating the fragility of vision building, leadership and empowerment of stakeholders (Porto & Berge, 2008).

Government DE policies related to the implementation of the UAB seem not to provide equal regulatory guidelines to both public and private HE institutions. One example of this is the policy that allows federal public universities to deliver DE without previous accreditation for two years. The so-called "experimental accreditation" policy is granted to federal public institutions interested in participating in the UAB (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2008). It is likely that the Ministry of Education's intention is to encourage federal institutions to adopt the UAB program, but such a policy could negatively affect the development of DE in Brazil, for instance, resulting in the delivery of low quality DE instruction by unprepared federal universities. Problem coping strategies will be required to prevent an exacerbation of the existing fragility of UAB if this eventuates.

Additionally, staff development is apparently promoted in the new policies. It appears to be the first time in the history of higher education in Brazil that a policy states that institutions should prepare and continually qualify their academic body. The law says that institutions should "retain an academic body with the qualifications required to place

legislation into force, and preferably, with training for working with distance education” (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2005: Cap1, Art12 - VIII). Equally important is the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education*, mentioned earlier in this section. This provides guiding principles not only for academic professional development, but also for the development of tutors and technical and administrative personnel that work with DE. These professionals working together for the delivery of DE are called the “multidisciplinary team” (MEC/SEAD, 2007, p. 19). It is intended that the policies mentioned above and the guideline help institutions and their academic staff to create a culture of professional development never seen or required at a university level in Brazil before. In fact, higher institutions have rarely offered any development to their staff at all. With the introduction of learning technologies and DE in higher education, together with the above laws and the guideline, this situation has the potential to have impact, to some extent, on the current disquiet about quality (Carvalho, 2006; Moran, 2007a). Even so, the impact of such a policy on academic staff development is still unknown.

The above discussion shows that there has been some progress towards evolutionary planning, developing and implementing regulations, policies, projects and programs for DE in Brazil. Nevertheless, this discussion also shows that DE has not yet reached its intended vision as an important and flexible way to deliver education, but rather, it is more often seen as a strategy for particular situations only. For some, it still seems to represent an “inferior education for those economically disadvantaged, and/or an option to achieve political strategies rapidly and with substantial impact” (Moran, 2007b, p. 5). Policies for DE seem also to endorse bureaucracy, rigidity, control and lack efficient quality control measures. The policies seem to be evolving in a contradictory manner, whereby “the State moves forwards and backwards, in an unarticulated and amateur movement... [while] very carefully... swinging between incentive and control” (Linhares, R., 2007, p. 4). In fact, instead of encouraging progress, DE policies could actually slow down the improvement and development of distance education in Brazil and could limit the Ministry’s ability to achieve its vision for DE. The above discussion concerning the development of DE policies supports participants’ perceptions on these issues as shown by the data analysis and interpretations explored next.

5.3 Data: Analysis and Discussion

Four main themes and several sub-themes were identified in the data regarding the first research question: context, quality, career and tendencies.

5.3.1 Current and Political Context of DE

The participants frequently raised two main aspects of the context of DE in Brazil: *current context* and *political context*. Participants' perceptions regarding the *context* theme and its sub-themes emerged in several parts of the recorded interviews as conversations unfolded.

5.3.1.1 Current Context

From the literature analysed in this study we know that in Brazil and in many countries worldwide, university teachers are very busy professionals. Some have little time to reflect on their academic practices (teaching, service, research), including in their DE activities. In order to provoke such reflection, the researcher initiated the interviews by asking participants about their area of knowledge, their experiences and their understanding of DE. The interviews frequently started with the question *What is distance education for you?* (see Appendix 1). By starting with this question the researcher intended to capture participants' broad understanding and opinions about the current context of DE in Brazil. Approximately 30 percent of participants believed that Brazil does not have well developed DE in higher education yet. Below are typical statements from these participants:

Today, I cannot see Brazil having DE yet. I think we have a mixed-mode education (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast)¹.

The Ministry of Education imposes by law that students' assessments take place via face-to-face meetings. All courses in Brazil are mixed-mode in this sense. They are at a distance, but all must to have a face-to-face component (Expert1, Humanities, Public&Private, Southeast).

¹ See Chapter Four, item 4.6.3, for the format of participants' in-text identification.

Similar numbers of participants (35%) argued that mixed-mode DE is a better strategy, at least at this stage, while students and lecturers are getting accustomed to DE. Face-to-face interactions in DE courses tend to motivate and provide incentives for students according to some participants. For example:

Mixed-mode [in Portuguese “semi-presencial”] is better than totally at a distance. I think that even a completely distance course should have at least a introductory face-to-face class, perhaps by teleconference, to give to students what is, in education called the “first-phase”, which is the rapport development phase... In DE we lose this rapport development (Lect6, Humanities, Private, Catholic, Southeast).

According to some participants, the reasons why they believed that there is no establishment of fully developed DE in Brazil yet, was because of their perceptions about the DE public policy requirements which demand a compulsory percentage of face-to-face meetings, including student assessment and laboratory activities, of every degree delivered at a distance (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2005). As discussed earlier, DE programs worldwide have been supported mostly by correspondence materials, where students learn by themselves, develop self-learning and learning autonomy. As new technologies are developed and introduced to DE, together with research conducted in the field, approaches to learning and levels of interaction have evolved and improved (Taylor, 2001). Some dual-mode institutions still include a residential school component in their course (see Chapter Two, item 2.3). These face-to-face components are included mostly in degrees requiring laboratory practice, and to also make distance students feel that they are part of a learning community. The introduction of access centres amongst DE providers was also one of the strategies adopted to continue interactivity between learners and teachers, both face-to-face and online. Boundaries between the generations of DE are increasingly becoming blurred as models are blended.

In Chapter Two, the discussion regarding the development of learning technologies, their introduction and pedagogical impact on DE (fifth generation of DE), emphasised changes in synchronous and asynchronous interaction between students, content and teachers, as very pertinent in this analysis. It can be clearly noticed that as technologies evolve the levels of interaction increase. In fact, one can argue that because of the late introduction of

DE in higher education in Brazil, where many learning technologies were already available, it is difficult to classify Brazilian institutions according to the generations of DE developed by Taylor (2001). Brazilian institutions, and perhaps other institutions in developing countries, are more likely to adopt a mix of generations in their DE programs because they have several generations to choose from.

Thus, it seems that participants' views that Brazil does not have DE yet, may be ill informed. Brazilian higher institutions do offer DE programs and have adopted similar models and approaches applied by many higher institutions around the world. However, the amount of face-to-face activities allocated for DE courses is regulated by government rather than being a choice made by individual institutions, according to the nature of courses, student profiles and internal policies.

Although participants had differing views on the current context of DE in Brazil today, many of them, approximately 65 percent, agreed that there is still a level of discrimination and resistance from some students, professional associations and the job market towards degrees obtained at a distance (see Chapter Three, item 3.4). The following quote, from an expert in DE, is typical:

There is still some discrimination by the students, for example, if they can, they prefer to study face-to-face. They are afraid to have identified in their degree certificates that they have studied in a distance course. This identification does not happen. As for the employers, many still ask how and where the course had been done. And, depending on the situation, this brings barriers. There is also prejudice towards DE courses in specific areas. The São Paulo city council does not admit teachers who have studied pedagogy by distance (Expert1, Humanities, Public&Private, Southeast).

He continued, saying that the Ministry of Education is partly to blame for this mistrust:

The Ministry of Education itself, when requiring face-to-face assessments, is indicating that DE is not totally trustful and serious. At least, during students' assessment, they want to see everybody there. They want to look at the students and make sure they are not cheating (Expert1, Humanities, Public&Private, Southeast).

Unanimous, though, are participants' perceptions regarding academic staff resistance to DE in Brazil. They believed that *we have, we, the university teachers, we still have a very, very high level of resistance to change [to DE], really (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast).*

Despite the increase in numbers of students enrolled in DE in Brazil in the last couple of years, the findings clearly depict that some students, some of their potential employers (like the São Paulo city council) and professional associations (like the Federal Council of Biology – see Chapter Three, item 3.4), still have some resistance and even some discrimination against DE. Similar to most processes for educational change, the introduction of DE as a new model to deliver education is likely to cause these reactions amongst some stakeholders, mainly those who do not fully understand the changes, or are not involved in the process of change. However, as explored by the body of knowledge, there are some strategies to minimise resistance and possibly increase the chances for successful change (see Chapter Two, item 2.4). Chief amongst them is a need for strong commitment from the leaders to involve all stakeholders in the process of change, and in the learning process required for conceptual, cultural and behavioural change (Bromage, 2006; Fullan, 2007; Paul, 2003). Unfortunately, there is no evidence provided by the participants that the Ministry of Education has adopted any of the strategies mentioned. In fact, the expert statement quoted above suggested that current DE policies evoke a low status image of DE. One could argue, therefore, that the centralised top-down policies for DE in Brazil have not contributed to increased trust and acceptance of DE. On the contrary, the introduction of DE in Brazil has possibly persuaded some stakeholders to become reluctant and suspicious of the quality of degrees at a distance rather than to embrace them.

Even though DE policies in Brazil dictate many aspects of DE delivery, they do not state the type of delivery technology and pedagogical approaches that should be adopted. As a result, there are many combinations of delivery methods and educational approaches being adopted by DE providers across the country. The majority of the participants argued that there is not a single way to deliver quality DE. According to them, Brazilian institutions are experimenting with a whole range of different models, from a more traditional to a more sophisticated technology-based model to deliver DE, or a combination of these both.

However, most of the participants also agreed that there are two main pedagogical approaches used in DE in Brazil. One approach is heavily focused on the teacher and the content, and the other one is a more flexible, learning and collaborative-based approach. Not surprisingly, a small, but experienced number of participants (four), assumed that the former is a predominant educational model for DE in Brazil because it is familiar to Brazilian academics, easier and cheaper to develop, and above all, it facilitates the control of students' learning and assessment. The following comment reflects a typical opinion:

I do not believe that the collaborative models will predominate. The content-based models are economically more efficient. Also, the content is already in people's mind because we need to ask [assess] students if they know it or do not know it [the content]. Otherwise, we [academic staff] do not know if they learnt it, or if they experienced it (Expert 1, Humanities, Public & Private, Southeast).

Even though DE theorists from Brazil and elsewhere emphasised self-learning, independent study, and later on student-centred approaches for DE, education at a distance has, until very recently, been heavily based on traditional models of content transmission. Currently, some DE has moved towards more flexible and collaborative-based learning, where students learn together with teachers and other students (Hanna, 2003, 2007; Taylor, 2001). Based on the research findings (highlighted by the quote above) and analysis of the related literature, this is not the case in many places in Brazil. Even though DE providers have used different technologies, models and strategies for DE, the pedagogy of it still remains focused on the traditional teacher-centred and content-based instruction. This is unfortunate for three main reasons. Firstly, socially constructed learning is highly effective (Bowden & Marton, 2003). Thus, Brazil might keep lagging behind in many aspects of DE compared with countries such as Australia, the UK and the US that have already embraced flexible and collaborative learning with positive student learning outcomes. Secondly, it is contrary to previous National Exam of Students' Performance (*Exame Nacional de Desempenho dos Estudantes - ENADE*) results which have already shown that students studying at a distance have superior performance than face-to-face students, and that this performance could be further improved if innovative learning approaches were adopted (Linhares, E., 2007). Finally and most importantly, additional enhancement in distance students' performance could hopefully encourage improvement and changes in the quality of teaching and learning in all modes across the country.

It was expected that characteristics of traditional teaching approaches would be embraced in DE practices and this would follow the evolving process of adopting DE itself. However, the strength of the statement from an expert in DE came as a surprise. He is a well-known and influential expert who has published several articles and books about DE in Brazil, including collaborating in the development of the two versions of the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education*. He is also one of the Ministry of Education's evaluators of DE programs and has visited and evaluated many DE providers and their programs across the country. Hence, one could assume that he has experienced and learned a great deal about Brazilian DE. The continuing dominance of content-centredness in DE supported by other data sources, might suggest that there is a lack of understanding of the potential and current concepts of DE, including student learning autonomy and assessment, available and adopted around the world. In addition, it might also suggest, once again, reluctance to change. In some cases, opting for the cheaper, more traditional and content-based model of DE might not be an option at all for some academics, but rather a strong imperative or even an imposition made by the upper levels of an institution's management. On the other hand, academics intentionally opting for the model they are more familiar with might indicate that the process of change and transition from one model of education to another was not envisioned appropriately. Considering the already increasing workload, the internal and external pressures for constantly improving and increasing knowledge production, adopting DE activities is not voluntarily welcomed by many academics. The educational change literature shows that in order to embrace the change to DE, institutions need to invest in staff development and capacity building, while also providing academics with opportunities to reflect on the impacts of the changes on their teaching practices and professions, in this case teaching at a distance. Similarly, there should be rewards, financial or other kinds of incentives, to motivate academics to change. From the international literature, many believe similar strategies would assist academics in at least starting to think about trying the new rather than simply maintaining the traditional (King, 2003; Webb, 2003).

In the discussion of the findings related to how DE policies are shaping practices of higher DE in the current context of DE in Brazil, it can be seen that significant effort needs to be made in order to change stakeholders' behaviour and beliefs concerning DE. Many academics, stakeholders and even the Ministry of Education itself do not seem to fully

understand, nor are well informed of, the concepts of DE. Those who have started experimenting with DE still prefer the traditional ways of teaching rather trying something innovative. One reason for this general alienation could be that the key people involved with the implementation of DE in Brazil, and this could include also policy makers and other authorities, may not have been given the opportunity to learn about the changes taking place and use this knowledge to build an effective vision for the change with stakeholders. Change is not a straightforward process. It is a process with twists and turns where people are constant learning and adapting. Next, how DE policies are shaping participants' perceptions about the political context of DE in Brazil is explored.

5.3.1.2 Political Context

The development of policies for distance education (DE) is a recent phenomenon in the history of Brazilian education. Similar to many countries around the world, the regulatory processes of DE in Brazil can occur at two levels: at the national level and at the institutional level. The question, *What role does the federal government and its policies and practices play in the success of distance education in Brazil?*, identified participants' understandings of the political issues involving DE in Brazil today. In general, participants agreed that, at a national level, the development of DE policies has brought benefits for students' access to DE. Because of his expertise, this participant provided a stronger expression of this position:

In the last couple of years, there has been finally a public policy to increase access to higher education. The question is not only DE, but also democratisation of access. There are two ways to do this: one is to open more public universities and the other is through DE (Expert1, Humanities, Public & Private, Southeast).

Interestingly, the same group of participants (around 60 percent) also believed that DE policies can still be improved, and that the improvements will happen as Brazilians learn how to implement DE, and the need for policy to change emerges. Concerns regarding the actual DE regulations and educational policies in general are about the over controlling, slow and highly centralised educational system. DE experts (five) argued that the Ministry

of Education has strongly regulated many aspects of DE practices in Brazil leaving limited options for institutions. The following is a common view:

I always say the Ministry of Education should stop regulating everything [DE] in such a detailed way. They need to understand that we are in a phase [expansion phase of DE] that they cannot close all the doors [for DE providers] (Expert1, Humanities, Public&Private, Southeast).

Additional questions and probes about DE policies and programs at a national level indicated participants' deepest concerns. One of the concerns, highlighted by approximately 40 percent of participants, was that these policies and initiatives are encouraging the development of cheap mass distance education of suspicious quality, in both the private and public sectors. For example:

The federal government has developed programs in DE following the model of mass education to offer education to lots of people at very low cost and leaving quality to be desired (Expert4, Sciences, Private, Catholic, Southeast).

For me, these are the myths of DE: that it is cheaper, easier and for the masses. Our government wants to advocate DE, but to transform it to mass education they need to invest more (DECoord, Sciences, Private, Catholic, South).

An additional concern, pointed out by approximately 30 percent of the participants, was that the Brazilian Ministry of Education had wrongly announced that the development of DE at a higher education level would contribute to *educational inclusion* and *democratisation of education*. This participant disagreed with such a concept and argued:

DE is not inclusive. Using DE with technologies is extremely elitist, more than the traditional face-to-face education because you have to have a computer with access to the Internet or broadband. In a country with the average income such as ours...? This is elitism (DECoord, Humanities, Private, Catholic, South)!

In a similar fashion, another participant explained that the Ministry of Education has conceptualised, mistakenly, the foundation of educational inclusion. According to him,

the majority of the population associate educational inclusion with financially disadvantage people, poor people [only]. And, it is not! An executive, a

businessman, a stay at home mother and a person with disabilities... these are all people excluded from mainstream education (Expert4,Sciences,Private,Catholic,Southeast).

Mass and inclusive education are concepts that have been linked with DE. Due to the introduction of learning technologies into DE, many countries and HE institutions see the opportunity to expand access to education to the masses and to those who, for several reasons (including financial), find themselves excluded from education. Although, mass DE could be cheaper for providers because the larger the scale of provision, the more economically effective is the delivery (Hanna, 2007; Moore & Kearsley, 1996), and it may not necessarily be of low quality. There are examples of well-recognised mass DE providers around the world, the Open University UK being one of them. As for the matter of quality of DE, according to the body of knowledge explored in this work (Chapters Two and Three), and further analysed in the next section of this chapter, it seems that not only in DE, but also at all levels, quality of education in Brazil has been desired for a long time. In terms of the use of learning technologies in DE, it has already been highlighted elsewhere that public and private DE providers have adopted this model of DE, knowing that some of their students do not have access to computers (Moran, 2007b). Therefore, it is reasonable to say that these participants' concerns are legitimate. Considering that higher education in Brazil has not improved significantly in the last decades (Porto & Berge, 2008), introducing such an innovative and large educational program could cause an even longer delay in educational improvement. However, these findings may also suggest that such participants may have been thrown into DE practices without the appropriate conditions that support deeper learning, reflection and understanding. These are all required within the processes of change, and in the political context of DE in Brazil and worldwide.

Another concern was that, according to a small number of participants (four), the federal government is misusing DE as a political instrument for self-promotion. They believed that the federal government has taken precipitated actions to expand higher education through DE. One particular participant claimed that the government had left important decisions regarding DE in the hands of inexperienced people. The following comment illustrates this view:

There is a political vision to show off to the population that they are attending to a large number of students, that they are offering 10,000 new places. But, I think that these government actions are precipitated in the sense that the people who are there [developing DE policies and implementing federal initiatives] do not have enough experience in DE. There is this need to show off, to show big actions in education, and the true reality is that all those people [in the government] are not prepared yet to work with DE. It is a very complicated moment (Developer, Science, FedPub, South)!

Unfortunately, the quick adoption of initiatives and the development of emergency policies to impress the electorate for coming elections are very common strategies used by many governments around the world. This is no different in Brazil, according to this participant. In trying to impress the people, and perhaps also some international authorities by increasing the number of enrolments in HE through DE, the current federal government has rapidly adopted measures to expand DE without preparing its supporting team, according to this participant. In addition, it seems that the government may have forgotten, or is not aware of, some of the strategies to guarantee the success of change developed by Fullan (2001, 2007). In this case the most applicable are “ensure that the best people are working on the problem”, and “assume that lack of capacity is the initial problem and then work on it continuously” (Fullan, 2007, p. 44). Government leaders do not need to know a great deal about DE, but they must make sure that competent policy makers and DE experts are developing suitable policies and carrying out the project implementation. Leaders also need to make sure these people work together, know the project they are working on and speak the same language through capacity building. By doing so at earlier stages, government leaders will not only involve their supporting teams in the continuous learning required to change, but also provide a firm basis for behaviour and beliefs to change. Consequently, as new behaviours and beliefs tend to spread, others involved in the change, such as the participant above, could feel more confident in embracing DE. Also, they would then have a more positive perspective towards DE and the people in charge of decision-making.

Further conversations with participants showed that the majority of them were aware of public policies for DE. Surprisingly, the same could not be said about participants’ understanding of their own institutions’ internal policies for DE, and the importance of

these policies for the successful development of DE to individual institutions. Additional explanations regarding institutional DE policies, followed by questions and probes, were necessary in order to capture some of the participants' views on this issue. Often these attempts resulted in failure. Participants' most common response about DE institutional policies were that their institutions follow the Ministry of Education's regulations for DE, or that it is not the institution's priority to develop such policies at this stage. In searching for more sophisticated constructions about this specific issue, the researcher intentionally followed it up during conversations with DE experts. According to three of them, public policies and the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education (Referenciais de Qualidade para Educação Superior a Distância - 2007)* are the major pieces of regulation to guide institutions offering DE. They added that every institution anticipating offering DE in Brazil must have stated in its Institutional Development Plan (*Plano de Desenvolvimento Institucional – PDI*) the intentions to offer DE and explain how it is going to be offered. Participants said that the PDI superficially covers minimum parameters of the DE provision such as the percentage of face-to-face and distance activities and maximum number of students in each class. In addition, some believed that although DE is highly regulated at a national level in Brazil, the DE policies still leave some room for the implementation of institutional internal policies. One of the experts explained that the lack of institutional policy development for DE might be due to the *poor national accreditation system and changes in the academics' union regulations (Expert4, Sciences, Private, Catholic, Southeast)*.

For this expert, some DE higher educational providers have been very careful in terms of what is stated in their internal DE policies, thus avoiding getting into trouble with the work unions. As DE evolves in Brazil, institutions have started dealing with new challenges, such as additional cost of DE content material development and copyright, differences in online versus face-to-face prices of classes, increasing staff workload, and so forth. Both the association of higher education institutions and university federation of teachers' unions are concerned about these issues and their impact on academic careers and salaries. These and other matters affecting staff careers are discussed in detail later in this chapter (item 5.4.2). One expert's stance on this issue was:

What I feel is that many institutions are very cautious to put things into too much detail on paper [develop policies]. At this moment, the higher institutions' unions, particularly of São Paulo State, are discussing issues

regarding DE with university teachers' unions. The university teachers' unions are very concerned with DE being misused, heading towards a strong profit-oriented educational market and soon, university teachers will be teaching, attending to students after hours and not getting paid for that (Expert4,Sciences,Private,Catholic,Southeast).

Perhaps, policies for DE at an institutional level seem almost non-existent. Despite all of the above appearing to be reasonable reasons, they ultimately sound more like excuses than reasons. DE has been legally implemented in Brazil more than a decade ago, and since then higher education institutions wishing to deliver it, including private and public institutions, should have prepared themselves in legal terms to do so.

In fact, a quick search on the Internet would easily confirm that several DE providers do not have or do not make available for the general public their internal policies dedicated exclusively to DE. Pertinent with the statement made by the above DE expert, when they are available these institutional policies superficially cover minimum parameters of DE provision to prove to the Ministry of Education evaluators, during accreditation procedures, that they have what is required; a statement of the institution's intention to deliver DE in their Institutional Development Plan (*Plano de Desenvolvimento Institucional – PDI*). Ironically, these parameters (number of students, duration of courses and percentage of face-to-face activities in each course) are requirements of DE provision and are already stated at a national policy level. This reflects institutions' lack of broad understanding of policy development and its importance. In addition, it also shows that some policies and institutions responses to them are strongly focused on accountability.

Furthermore, perhaps it is convenient for some DE providers, especially profit-driven ones, to keep avoiding further development of such internal policies, thus, being more flexible and fast in making decisions based on the current educational market in Brazil. Another possible reason might be simply to avoid transparency not only for the unions, but also for the Ministry of Education. Several higher institutions have apparently *hired less qualified professionals to work with DE, paying them lower salaries, thus, making more profit (Expert4,Sciences,Private,Catholic,Southeast)*. This problem will be further discussed in the next section of this chapter.

In summary, DE policies shape practices and participants' perceptions of the political context of DE in Brazil. The research findings show that having some form of public policy and regulations for DE in Brazil represent a milestone for the development of DE in Brazil, according to some participants. DE has been legitimated. However, further policy development at institutional level is needed if the Ministry of Education in Brazil wants DE to become a driving force for change in HE. Participants complained that DE has been misused and introduced prematurely by the current government in order to gain popularity and public credibility. By synthesising participants' views of the political nature of DE, the problems of DE policies today are that they seem to be:

- quick solutions for increasing enrolment in HE through expansion of DE provision to please the national and international audiences;
- government DE initiatives seem to be managed by ill-prepared supporting teams and policy makers; and
- lack of involvement and capacity building of key stakeholders involved in the process of change.

In addition, at a national level, public policies seem to over regulate DE, leaving institutions with limited options for being creative, competitive, and for expanding and diversifying their DE offers. As for the institutional level, DE policy development appears almost non-existent. The following section further discusses the impact of the actual DE policies and how they have shaped the quality of DE practices and programs.

5.3.2 Quality in DE

The theme *quality* emerged during conversations with participants regarding their perceptions about the influences of DE policies on the quality of DE practices in Brazil.

Chapters Two and Three highlighted that Brazilian institutions offering DE are predominantly dual-mode institutions, which means that they are mostly face-to-face institutions delivering some distance education degrees and programs. Hence, this predominance seems to be reflected in the superficiality of institutional policy development, discussed earlier in this chapter. However, the document *Guideline for*

Quality in Distance Higher Education produced by the Ministry of Education, and the Distance Education Department, provides a framework of guiding principles for DE provision to Brazilian institutions. Despite the lack of resources (articles and publications) available regarding the guideline, it is apparently an important document for DE providers to address. The Ministry of Education has used its outcomes as the basis for institutional regulation, accreditation and degree recognition (see Chapter Three, item 3.3.3). It is important to note that, when the interviews were conducted, the second version of the guideline (2007) was not yet available. Here, as pertinent research findings regarding the theme *quality* are discussed, related elements of the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education* are introduced and analysed.

Surprisingly, during conversations with participants, only one respondent (one of the experts in DE) mentioned the guideline as a supporting document for achieving quality in DE programs. One apparent reason for this is because he contributed to the development of the first document, and was invited again to provide further contributions to the next version of the guideline. He believed that the document provides a foundation for institutions to help them develop quality DE programs:

I participated in the group that elaborated these norms at an institutional level, for those institutions planning to start delivering DE and, thus, they would know what to do. And, just today the Distance Education Department sent me these norms for revision. So, I am currently revising the set of rules that guide higher institutions to offer DE (Expert1, Humanities, Public&Private, Southeast).

This issue was investigated further by questioning other experts in DE. This was because the researcher was interested in learning more about the guideline and other instruments that might contribute to the improvement of quality in DE in Brazil. Fortunately, another expert was able to help with the knowledge construction regarding this issue. Even though he did not specifically use the term *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education*, he did talk about criteria for quality. In the following quote, the expert argued that the criteria for quality in DE are loose. He continued by explaining how institutions develop their internal institutional policies taking into account the criteria for quality in DE. He then went on to describe how the Ministry of Education's evaluators actually evaluate an institution's DE program. He declared:

The Ministry of Education has the criteria for quality in DE and you will find around ten items that they nominated as being the minimum requirement for offering quality DE. Then, the institutions describe these criteria in their internal policies, and that's it! The Ministry of Education's evaluators visit these institutions and check if they have the minimum requirement to offer DE, and they do, it is described there [in the policies]. We believe that these standards are very superficial (Expert4, Sciences, Private, Catholic, Southeast).

At the time of this investigation, this expert was one of the Ministry of Education's evaluators of higher and distance education programs. Together with this, he was also considered the main expert in DE at his institution. Being involved with both DE programs' evaluation, and his own institution policy development, he was an expert with sophisticated knowledge in both processes. For this research investigation, there are two relevant aspects of his explanation. Firstly, it suggested that Brazilian HE institutions tend to use the Ministry of Education's criteria for quality DE (and possibly other policies, instruments of evaluation and the guideline) for accountability rather than quality improvement. As argued earlier, quality improvement should be the primary concern of any institutional quality assurance system, and student learning improvement is the ultimate outcome, according to Bowden & Marton (2003). The concepts of quality assurance developed by Bowden & Marton (2003), Dill (2007) and others appear not to be adopted in Brazil. Another revealing aspect of the above quote is that, not only do the regulations for quality in DE encourage superficial accountability rather than embed quality, but also that some of the Ministry of Education's evaluators, and supposedly the Ministry itself, are aware of this fact.

Furthermore, the quality of content materials produced in Brazil for DE is a common concern among all participants. The general discourse is that DE materials should not simply be a transposition of the face-to-face materials. Materials should be adapted for distance students, promote quality education, enable different forms of interaction and consider student access and learning patterns. However, in order to develop adequate materials, academics and/or their supporting team need to be trained and prepared to do so, which does not seem to be the case in Brazil, according to the findings. As mentioned in previous chapters (Two and Three), the majority of academic staff currently working at

universities in Brazil and worldwide, in particular in DE programs, have no teaching background, and little or no pedagogical foundation for developing DE materials. They rely heavily on their face-to-face materials and their teaching experience. The research findings confirm the above. For example:

The preparation of the material was intuitive. It was a learning process, a self-learning, learning by mistaking (Lect6, Humanities, Private, Catholic, Southeast.)

What I did in reality was, I got the material I already had, made a few and quick adaptations and made it available at a distance [online]. Basically, it was the same material that I had before. But, I do not know, I do not have the condition, I do not have the background, the knowledge to tell you if these adaptations were educationally appropriate. It is hard to say. We try to see the results, and through the results we try to get to a conclusion (Lect4, Science, Private, Catholic, Southeast).

But, [in the material] there was nothing, lets say, based on theoretical or pedagogical learning strategies, nor on a famous author, nothing like that. It is a case of winging it ... and apparently, at the end it worked (Lect5, Science, Private, Catholic, Southeast)!

Critics of this practice believed that

the lecturer who thinks that it is only a matter of putting the material there, the material that he/she used to use during his/her face-to-face classes and throw it in the Learning System... he/she is killing his/her course, his/her unit. He/she needs to create a different way to teach that content (DECoord, Science, Private, Southeast).

The importance of considering quality when developing content materials is also highlighted in the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education*. In fact, the guideline suggests that content material should be constantly evaluated, through criteria defined by institutions. In addition, the latest version of the guideline suggests that content materials should be “rigorously pre-tested” and evaluated before sending them to students (MEC/SEAD, 2003, 2007, p. 13). There was no evidence that the institutions participating in this study had conducted such content material evaluation before initiating their DE

units or degrees. Despite the content material evaluation suggested by the guideline appearing to be a rigorous strategy to ensure the quality of content material for DE, it also appears impractical as it is likely to be very time consuming and costly. Another reason for its impracticality could be that institutions and academics do not have sufficient skills to undertake such evaluation, noted by the participant reflections above.

There was, however, documentary evidence that four out of the six universities investigated in this study conducted some sort of unit evaluation after the completion of some DE units. All four evaluated students' satisfaction through questionnaires sent to a sample of students. Two institutions included students' reports on learning experiences (self-assessment) in their unit's evaluation. However, only one participant informed the researcher that his institution conducted content material evaluation. Importantly, statements provided by participants regarding these evaluations indicated that students are, in their majority, satisfied with their experiences with DE. General remarks regarding these evaluations included:

Some students, after finishing the unit, wrote a report telling of their experiences, what they liked, what they did not like and there were several very positive reports. So, these [reports] made me believe that these things [strategies] I've created have provided positive outcomes (Lect5, Science, Private, Catholic, Southeast).

We used to have a questionnaire, where students evaluated five items: system, student support, the content available online, the assessment process and the tutoring [teacher]. Also, a student self-assessment. All the evaluations we had so far the results on average are between good and excellent (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast).

Although it appears implicit in the conversations with participants that one of the purposes of such evaluations is to improve the quality of their units, content materials and student learning, there is no evidence on how the results of such evaluations are used to do so. Only one of the participants, an expert in DE, provided an explicit indication that student's evaluation of subjects is important to improve teaching and learning in DE. He believed that student assessment should be used as a basis for enhancing student learning, and improving and changing academic staff teaching and learning strategies. He declared:

In relation to students' assessment, it is fundamental that you do it, but it must be students' learning assessment not teaching assessment. In DE you need to use these assessments to enhance learning. Teachers need to know in which phase of learning their students are, in order to be able to go to the next step. You can do that through assessment, [which is] a mechanism to figure this out, otherwise you discourage students to learn (Expert3, Science, Public&Private, Southeast).

Moreover, in terms of DE program proposals submitted to the Ministry of Education by institutions waiting to offer DE, one expert showed concerns about the lack of appropriate DE pedagogical approaches in these proposals. He believed that student learning styles and learning theories should play an important role when developing DE programs. He used to be one of the Ministry of Education's evaluators of DE programs. After visiting several higher institutions, and evaluating many DE programs across the country, he concluded

that the majority of them [DE program proposals] do not have the theoretical foundations needed in today's learning yet. They [the institutions] ignored the philosophical and pedagogical aspects [of DE] and the concepts of student learning, considering cultural or any other aspects, we do not have yet [in the project proposals]. And, if we have, it is still very little (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast)!

The above statements regarding the importance of student evaluation for learning improvement, and the adoption of innovative learning pedagogies in DE programs, might suggest that these participants had higher levels of understanding of DE principles than those advocated in previous Chapters (Two and Three). These seem to be positive outcomes of this research study, and might indicate that a better understanding of quality for improvement in DE is emerging amongst experts and professionals. Nevertheless, how these participants put into practice what they talked about remains unclear. On the other hand, having only two out of 30 participants providing evidence and knowledge, regarding the importance of student assessment in DE programs, is of concern. This situation concerning the importance of student evaluation has been developed and researched worldwide for several years. One cannot say that Brazilian academics do not have access to such information, because there are publications in Portuguese addressing these issues

(possibly not as many as there are in English), including some DE policies and the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education*.

In relation to research being conducted by the universities participating in this study concerning their DE programs, only one university researched and compared learning outcomes between face-to-face and distance students of a similar unit. They found that distance students on the whole displayed better performance than face-to-face ones. The following quote illustrates this finding:

We used to have studies demonstrating that in a unit offered simultaneously in traditional and distance mode, distance students had better performance than face-to-face ones (Expert4, Sciences, Private, Catholic, Southeast).

Unfortunately, participants in this university did not provide any further indication of how these comparisons were followed up, either by using the outcomes to continue advancing DE programs, or by improving the quality of face-to-face instruction. Additionally, there was no evidence that these outcomes were made available for academic and/or public scrutiny. However, the above students' evaluation outcomes appear congruent with discussions in Chapter Three (see item 3.4.3). Despite research about student learning in DE seeming to be limited in Brazil, the outcomes of these studies indicate that distance students performed better than face-to-face ones. Once again, how these studies have contributed to the advance of both distance and face-to-face education in Brazil is still unknown. Additionally, the fact that there was research being conducted concerning learning outcomes in DE represents another milestone in the development of DE in Brazil. Hopefully, it might encourage further investigation on this topic, and contribute to providing evidence that DE programs in Brazil are of good quality.

To some extent, DE policies, mostly the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education*, have shaped participants' perceptions of quality in DE. This is because some participants' reflections on quality in DE correspond with several articles of the guideline. Controversially, most participants were unaware of such a document and its importance and impact on DE in Brazil today. If compared with other guidelines and frameworks for DE worldwide, the Brazilian guideline (mainly the latest version of 2007) represents guiding principles that cover important aspects of the delivery of DE, having the potential

to guide HE institutions to offer quality DE. Other aspects of the guideline are explored as this chapter continues unfolding. There has been no research conducted in Brazil to demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of the guideline. Also, there is no publicly available evidence in documents as provided by participants demonstrating that the guideline contributes to promoting quality in DE programs until this study.

As the Ministry of Education has recently implemented a higher education quality assurance system in Brazil (see Chapter Three, item 3.3.3), the researcher was expecting that issues surrounding this system would be mentioned during the interviews. None of the participants provided any data about the new quality assurance system, nor any of its instruments (accreditation, audit, internal and external evaluation), as a means to encourage and/or identify quality of DE programs. Besides one of the experts, no participant claimed that positive outcomes resulted from quality measures, including student learning improvement, a concept emphasised by many elsewhere (Bowden & Marton, 2003; Dill, 2007; Thair et al., 2006).

Furthermore, according to most participants' perceptions, quality in DE is mostly reflected in the quality of the content materials. Ironically, only one participant presented evidence that there was a content material evaluation in place in his institution. The most common aspect of DE evaluated by the institutions appeared to be student satisfaction of unit. But, how all these evaluations impacted on DE programs and learning improvements remains unclear to date.

The findings and discussions in this section clearly show that there are policies, guidelines and internal and external instruments available to evaluate the quality of DE in Brazil, but most of the participants do not know of their existence. *Quality* seems to be a fashionable buzz word amongst participants, but few seem to discern the real significance of it within an educational context. Some institutions have evaluated some aspects of their DE programs. Unfortunately, these evaluations seem to fulfil the Ministry of Education's requirements, rather than addressing localised and specific institutional concerns surrounding improving the quality of student learning and DE programs. Therefore, quality assurance mechanisms tend to encourage accountability instead of an embedding quality improvement. For all these reasons, it seems to conclude that the Ministry of Education's quality assurance policies for quality in DE do not significantly contribute to the

development of quality in DE programs in Brazil beyond creating an institutional policy framework if this exists at all. The impact of the 2007 guideline is beyond the scope of this study, so it is hoped that this measure will contribute more effectively, an issue that is worthy of follow-up study.

5.3.3 Academic Staff Career

By taking advantage of the limited and valuable time the respondents had available to contribute to this study, the researcher tried to nurture further reflections about the participants' views on their professional careers and possible changes influenced by DE policies. Responses to the question *What is your understanding of the benefits and limitations/problems associated with distance education worldwide and mainly in Brazil?*, followed by questions and probes directed at participants, provided rich data to the theme *career* discussed here.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, current DE policies, including the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education*, legalise and establish parameters of division of labour in DE within providers. As already discussed earlier in Chapters Two and Three, mostly in the industrialised model of DE, division of labour is a concept where several professionals with different sets of skills perform distinct tasks throughout the development, implementation and delivery of DE. Before, there was only one teacher who prepared the teaching materials, the lessons, taught and applied the exams. Today, it is more common to have one specialised professional, or even teams of experts, working on individual tasks. This is due to the large scale of DE delivery, complexity of the systems and the diversity of technologies adopted in DE currently (Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Peters, 2003, 2004). This seems to be true in Brazil as evidenced by the discussions in previous chapters and evidence provided by these research findings.

The differences in structure and the division of labour depend on the characteristics of individual courses and DE providers. One particular expert explained:

- *there is an expert* [in Portuguese *conteudista* – as the name suggests, those who develop content materials] *who are normally well-known professionals in their particular subject matter. They prepare the content materials, some activities, topics*

for discussion and tests. In some cases, the conteudistas do not teach or have any contact with students, or do not even work for the institution. They just develop the material for them;

- then, there is the transmitter lecturers. They can teach live from the university's studio, broadcasting via satellite to students in several access centres across the country. These lectures can be sometimes previously recorded onto CDs and/or DVDs and watched by students at the access centres or posted to students. It depends on the DE model adopted by the institutions; and*
- then, you have the virtual and face-to-face tutors. Virtual, online or distance tutors will interact with students online [synchronous and/or asynchronous] while the face-to-face tutors interact with student in person, normally in the access centres (Expert1, Humanities, Public&Private, Southeast).*

Besides the few variations that exist with this model, they tend to be very similar in broad terms. In some universities there may be

an expert who is responsible for the content material, a lecturer who is also specialised in that particular content who guides the students [at a distance through the Internet, telephone or correspondence], and the tutor who supervises the students face-to-face (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast).

As the scale of the DE offering in Brazil has increased, some of the benefits of the industrialised model seemed to have become clearer for some participants. Institutions might get the job done more efficiently and professionally. In addition, several participants, approximately ten,

believed that this division, predominantly in Brazil, is necessary because of the large number of lecturers without the skills needed to perform all the roles within a DE system...Some lecturers are good public-speakers, but do not know how to put their ideas on paper and may not write in a way that produces good material for DE. It is very hard to get lecturers to acquire the multiple skills needed in DE over night (Expert3, Science, Public&Private, Southeast).

However, not all agreed that this model is appropriate for Brazilian DE. Five participants suggested that *from a financial point of view, it is cheaper for institutions because you can attribute different costs [salaries] for each of these roles*. On the other hand, these institutions seem to be

creating fragmented courses loosening the organic and systemic nature of the process it could work, but it will require a lot of synergy amongst all actors involved. This structure does not facilitate this synergy. For these participants, the ideal would be that the lecturers had support to perform all the roles but they need to be prepared for this, because it is not easy. Sometimes you see yourself as tutor, then as a lecturer (Lect2, Science, Private, Catholic, Southeast).

The debate about adopting a division of labour model or not goes beyond simply choosing the model. The industrialised model might be cheaper, more efficient and standardised, but it might also fragment the development, delivery and learning in DE. Thus, this approach does not always involve all the actors in the development processes, particularly those responsible directly for student learning. Engaging the DE development team, including the *conteudistas*, lecturers and tutors, in a comprehensive staff development program and performance evaluation could contribute to solving this problem. All could then speak the same “language” with students.

According to participants, another problem emerging with the division of labour model of DE in Brazil is the attribution of different salaries to the different roles academics perform. Four participants said that this has already impacted on academic careers as many academics seem to see the role of tutor as *an inferior role within DE, and it is not!* (Lect2, Science, Private, Catholic, Southeast). In fact, the body of knowledge suggests that tutors carry out one of the most important roles in DE. This is because they are more likely to be responsible for student learning as they have direct contact with students, either through online or face-to-face learning activities. In addition, tutors need to be aware of many aspects of the DE system they work with, such as pedagogical, technical, social, emotional and organisational (Moran, 2007c; Panda & Juwah, 2006; Salmon, 2004). Staff development activities are, therefore, essential for the tutors’ development of these and other much needed skills in DE. So DE institutions need to be aware of the importance of staff development for the appropriate preparation of their staff in DE.

Furthermore, it seems that the vast majority of academics participating in this study (90%) have realised what many have already experienced around the world; it does not matter if academics perform single or multiple roles within the DE system, their already heavy workload is still certain to increase, but not necessarily with an increase in salary (Biggs, 2003; King, 2003). In Brazil, the differences in staff workload and salaries are not only related to the kind of DE models adopted by the institutions, but also to the type of institutions involved. In terms of salaries, as private institutions are focused mostly on teaching and have a large number of academics working on a part time and casual basis, *the additional hours worked normally come as a financial help from the university (Lect6, Humanities, Private, Catholic, Southeast)*. However, it does not appear a fair financial contribution yet, as many from this sector *think that this topic needs to be further reviewed by all HE institutions across the country (Lect6, Humanities, Private, Catholic, Southeast)*. For federal public universities, the financial incentives tend to come as a small grant. With such grants, these academics should be able *to manage a team of 3 to 4 tutors and 150 extra students (50 per tutor) per unit, to develop the content material, to attend staff development, and so forth. All of the above, on top of their normal workload (Developer, Science, FedPub, South)*. Despite the differences in terms of remuneration between the two sectors, all these participants agreed that *they spend four times more with activities and interaction in their distance courses than they used to spend in their traditional face-to-face class (Lect6, Humanities, Private, Catholic, Southeast)*. They also claimed that *there must be another calculation that takes into account the effective time spent with DE activities (Lect6, Humanities, Private, Catholic, Southeast)*.

DE and its policies have changed academic careers by increasing workloads, and by generating a division of labour, where the tutor's role is seen to be less important and is consequently under-valued. In order to gather more sophisticated data on these issues, the researcher consulted the DE experts participating in this study. Three of them explained that the

tutor is a new professional in Brazil. It is not well regulated yet. In most cases, they are part-time casual teachers, working on a temporary contract, [and] earning less than a lecturer including in the public sector, where tutors' payments tend to come from grant money credited to principal lecturers or those responsible for the units. Normally, tutors are not part of the permanent

academic body of the institution they work with (Expert1, Humanities, Public & Private, Southeast).

Additionally, these experts also declared that the academics' unions across the country are debating with institutions and government bodies to regulate academics' new career situations. The predominant argument is that:

If those who perform the tutorship are also lecturers, why this division? Why are tutors receiving lower salaries than lecturers if to be a tutor you have to be teacher (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast)?

It appears, therefore, that Brazilian academics want to regulate the role of the tutor in DE, including tutors' remuneration. This problem has come about because most DE providers require that these professionals have at least a teaching degree, even though their payment is lower than the principal lecturers of the DE units. In fact, this is congruent with the lecturer versus tutor system in other universities around the world, where lecturers are more highly qualified than tutors, thus, they earn higher salaries.

In Brazil, this situation also varies from region to region because of the availability and qualifications of tutors. For instance, in the Southeast region of Brazil the numbers of qualified university teachers is higher than in the Northeast. Hence, DE providers in the Southeast tend to pay their tutors more than DE providers in the Northeast. Notwithstanding this, *the majority of tutors across the country have only a teaching degree or are postgraduate research students at public universities (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast)*. One could suggest, therefore, that Brazilian DE tutors might not yet be well qualified enough for teaching at higher education levels. This problem seems to be affecting also those highly qualified academics who are now performing the roles of tutors. Because, institutions appear to assume that the job performed by the DE tutors requires less qualification and skills, academics performing these roles appear to be earning less as a result, according to some participants.

The above discussion shows that the forces driving change in HE in Brazil, specifically DE policies, have impacted on Brazilian academics' careers. It was explored in Chapters Two and Three that academics around the world have also experienced increases in workload,

together with increases in part-time and casual basis employment, as well as cutbacks in salaries and working conditions. In consequence, HE is fast moving towards a model that is primarily business driven based on the free market and competition. On top of all these, academics are also experiencing larger and more diversified groups of students in face-to-face and more recently in online units. As a consequence in some parts of the world, some have changed their portfolios from teaching and researching to a more administrative career within their institutions, amongst other career changes (Barrett & Barrett, 2007; Santiago & Carvalho, 2008; Taylor, 1999; Whitchurch, 2008).

Some of these issues also appear to be the reality faced by many academics in higher and distance education in Brazil, according to participants' views. Considering this constantly changing environment of HE institutions in Brazil and elsewhere today, academics' roles cannot remain stagnant. Their roles would appear to need to adapt and evolve as new trends in HE emerge. However, it was also suggested that all these elements affecting academics today might contribute to increasing resistance to change (Santiago & Carvalho, 2008). "Uncertainty and sense of loss" (Taylor, 1999, p. 1) are likely to be the feelings experienced by Brazilian and other academics due to recent career changes. In order to minimise these impacts and the negative feelings concerning change brought by DE, all actors involved; government, institutions and the academics themselves, need to take some responsibility and work together towards achieving successful change. Government and institutions need to:

- develop appropriate DE policies;
- provide support for their staff through continued staff development and capacity building, and
- make sure key stakeholders are involved and know well the change process in DE in Brazil.

As for academics, because their career development and change interest them the most, they should be more aware of the purposes of the implementation and development of DE in Brazil and understand the process of change. By understanding better what is affecting their career in Brazil and elsewhere, the negative impacts on academics' careers could be reduced and their beliefs and behaviour towards change could be advanced. Finally, evaluation might inform whether or not changes in careers have been successful, and if

not, what needs to be improved and how. Therefore, assuring that staff are performing well their roles and guaranteeing the quality of student learning are both vital.

5.3.4 Future Tendencies in DE

The theme *tendencies* emerged in response to the question *What is your opinion about the future of distance education in Brazil?*, and also when participants expressed their expectations and predictions for the future of DE in Brazil throughout the conversations.

One prediction shared among all participants is that DE will continue to be a model of education best suited to mature students, including professionals and those seeking formal qualifications or further education, those living in remote areas of Brazil and/or who have never had the chance to access higher education before, for various reasons. The above also tends to be the case of DE in many countries worldwide (see Chapter Two, item 2.3). Some participants (60%) suggested that the predominance of mature students enrolled in distance degrees in Brazil is likely to continue because *DE requires a more autonomous, organised and independent student, which is not the case of high school leavers in Brazil. They are very young to assume the responsibility of their own learning (DECoord, Humanities, Private, Catholic, South).*

Lifelong learning and continuing education is likely to lead the offer of degrees at a distance in Brazil. According to four participants represented by this opinion,

DE is going to be eventually, the major form of learning, not just at the university level [but also] for continuing education. Because, it's convenient, you can study and participate in the course online, Saturday night, Sunday morning whenever you want. It's convenient! After they get their degrees, they practice their profession, and they update their learning through distance education. So, and that is a much larger, that group of people [lifelong learners] is much, much larger than people who are in the universities (Expert2, Sciences, Southeast).

This is due to the growing numbers of people wanting formal and lifelong education, and the encouragement of DE policies and programs in Brazil (see Chapter Three, items 3.3.3

and 3.4). Indeed, this is also congruent with the discussion in previous chapters where the number of lifelong learners is becoming superior to traditional HE students in some countries (see Chapter Two, item 2.2.1).

Another prediction made by approximately 35 percent of the participants is that

there is a tendency for face-to-face only courses to disappear, or then be integrated [with DE]. This is because they believed that DE is a more efficient way to do education and in a short period of time we are not going to talk about DE and face-to-face anymore, we will talk about education (Expert3, Science, Public&Private, Southeast).

This perception also corresponds with the discussion in Chapter Two (item 2.2.4) regarding the blurriness and advancement in learning technologies and their increasing use in both face-to-face and distance instruction. Although it is a positive research outcome that participants were optimistic about the future of DE in Brazil, the above view does not seem realistic. The fact is that face-to-face education is unlikely to disappear in Brazil. One obvious reason is that the DE policies themselves require compulsory face-to-face meetings and assessments, but this can change. DE has been in place in several countries for decades and face-to-face instruction has not disappeared nor replaced the teachers. In addition, according to the discussion regarding quality in DE above, one could argue that there is no reliable evidence that *DE is a more efficient way to do education* in Brazil today. In fact, it would be another milestone in the advancement of DE in Brazil if there was no separate discourse between DE and face-to-face degrees, but a common concern to improve quality and student learning of both models of education. From the researcher's point of view, it felt, on several occasions, that participants did not have a sophisticated knowledge about the differences of DE and the use of learning technologies in face-to-face instruction (online learning, blended learning and so forth) (see Chapter Two, item 2.2.4).

Positively, approximately 64 percent of participants remained confident about the future of DE. They predicted that DE will play an important role in the improvement at all levels of education in Brazil and increase access to higher education. The following comment represented a general opinion:

I think this [growth of DE] means an improvement in the quality of education in terms of material and in terms of teacher and student changing attitudes [towards DE]. Everybody will win in this process. I see that DE is only a transition to an education of better quality at all levels, including access to knowledge. It is a total paradigm change (DECoord,Science,FedPub,South).

However, we have seen that little has been done in terms of establishing and guaranteeing the quality of DE in Brazil, including content materials. Although the above is a very optimistic statement, again, how DE will be the driving force for educational improvement *at all levels* in Brazil is still unclear. It is also highlighted throughout this chapter that issues regarding *teacher and student changing attitudes* and beliefs towards DE could also sometimes be contradictory to what this participant stated.

In terms of policy development, some participants suggested that the Ministry of Education would eventually start giving more freedom to higher institutions wishing to offer DE or mixed degrees through more flexible policies. One of the changes suggested by one of the experts is that the percentage of distance activities allowed in traditional face-to-face degrees will be extended from 20 to 50 percent. He said:

They [the Ministry of Education] will begin to authorise up to 40 percent. Anyway, half of the whole face-to-face workload will [eventually] be able to be at a distance, that means that we are moving forward towards a more flexible face-to-face model (Expert1,Humanities,Public&Private,Southeast).

This also emerged previous discussions in this chapter. So far, the DE policy allowing 20 percent of traditional face-to-face degrees to be delivered at a distance has opened up opportunities for HE institutions to experiment with DE.

Unfortunately, considering the history of education in Brazil, the HE system and its policies are likely to remain centralised and bureaucratic. This is the view of approximately 40 percent of participants who suggested that DE policies need improvement. Their concerns were that a lack of appropriate policies and frequent changes in educational policies and governance would act to block needed reforms, an all too common occurrence in the history of education in Brazil (see Chapter Three, items 3.3 and

3.4). They are also likely to slowdown or even prevent the advance of DE in Brazil. Certainly, these issues have shaped these participants' perceptions on the future of DE. For example:

There is a lack of policy that determinates how these [DE] degrees will be introduced to the university, how they are going to become regular? The government changes and we do not know what is going to happen with the projects. Otherwise, it is going to occur what has occurred with other innovative projects. They start, and in a little while there is no more funding, there is no structure, the government changes and the people who enter [in the new government] think that this [DE] is not a priority (Lec, Humanities, FedPub, South).

Change takes time, sometimes years, to prosper, and that certainly is the case of introducing DE in HE in Brazil. Throughout the process of planning and undertaking change, as stakeholders learn and experience the changing process, they tend to move from being sceptics to being supporters. In Brazil, as pointed out by the participant's view above, stakeholders seem to stay in the mode of sceptic due to the constant change in government leaders and programs. Consequently, stakeholders may never fully embrace any major change for fear of having their time and effort wasted as another government comes and withdraws funds and incentives. This problem is likely to affect more strongly the federal universities because they are totally controlled and funded by the federal government. Changes in DE policies, including accreditation and degree evaluation, however, may also affect the private sector. For DE to be fully embraced by HE institutions, their academics and students, the educational change theory literature shows that there must be a continuity of policies and programs followed by continuous capacity building and learning for stakeholders.

Even though the future tendencies for DE policy development do not look very promising, one participant highlighted that the creation of the Brazilian Open University (UAB) could be considered an important achievement for the advancement of DE in Brazil. He believed that the UAB is the most viable alternative to increased access to higher education:

It must work! I don't see any other way for Brazil to go from 9 to 10 percent of its young people attending higher education to up to 30 percent, where

Argentina and Chile are. Bolivia has 35 percent! Bolivia has more young people studying at higher education than Brazil. This is crazy!! It is a poor country and we are not that poor!! But, they got themselves organised (Expert2,Sciences,Southeast).

In this discussion, some of the participants' predictions about the future of DE in Brazil seem to also be the tendencies of DE worldwide; that DE will continue to target adult and lifelong learners. There seemed to be a general optimistic view from participants that DE could increase access and improve the quality not only of higher education, but also all levels of education. In addition, some participants suggested that trust in DE program practices, together with an increasing in DE offer might depend on the Ministry of Education improving and carrying DE policies into the future. In a similar fashion, these policies need to define and control quality of DE programs as they expand. That is, the government should focus on increasing and improving the quality assurance systems in higher and distance education in Brazil.

It is evident from participants' views that even with uncertainty generated by political change and bureaucratic obstacles (and Brazil has more than its fair share of both), DE is well on the way to cementing itself into the HE educational landscape of the country. Just how significant a role it will play in the growth and expansion of HE in Brazil is far from clear at present. Perceptions, stereotypes and concerns all need to be addressed, and stakeholders need to be better informed, so that DE is not relegated to a position of ineffectiveness and unrealised potential. Distance education needs to be viewed as a valuable addition to HE, whether in terms of academic career development, or as a means to open HE up to a broader array of potential students, in this manner placing it onto a footing of equality rather than inferiority. Distance education does appear to have a future within HE in Brazil; how that future is managed will in a large part determine the future scope and direction of HE itself.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter reported findings and interpretations concerning the first research question. Document analysis and analysis of participants' perceptions on how policies have shaped

DE practices in Brazil revealed that these policies have encouraged traditional teacher/content-centred practices to DE rather than innovation. This is probably because DE policies required a face-to-face meetings, that is mainly examinations and laboratory activities. According to some participants, the implementation of this regulation has also shown that the Ministry of Education itself has its doubts about the efficiency and potential of DE. Thus, distance students across the country need to sit for examinations in order to ensure institutions that they are able to perform a traditional test satisfactorily as they exit .

In addition, some participants argued that DE policies over regulate DE practices and wrongly promote educational inclusion. DE policies control many aspects of institutions' DE delivery, which has not expanded to the extent to include the promotion of educational inclusion. DE policies also appear not to contribute to the development of quality in DE in Brazil significantly. Besides the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education* provides some guiding principles for quality DE, this document appears to be unknown by the majority of participants. There is a lack of evaluation regarding several aspects of DE delivered by the institutions examined. These include, students learning and content material evaluation, which could suggest that these aspects of quality delivery cannot be guaranteed.

Findings also showed that stakeholders' involvement in the process of change in DE is almost non-existent. This is combined with a lack of continuous capacity building and inadequate staff development. These factors could contribute to increase stakeholders' resistance to change, thus causing lack of adoption of DE. It can be seen that significant effort needs to be made in order to change stakeholders' behaviour and beliefs concerning DE. Many academics, stakeholders and even the Ministry of Education itself do not seem to fully understand, nor are well informed of, the concepts of DE. Those who have started experimenting with DE still prefer the traditional ways of teaching rather trying something innovative. One reason for this general alienation could be that the key people involved with the implementation of DE in Brazil, and this could include also policy makers and other authorities, may not have been given the opportunity to learn about the changes taking place and use this knowledge to build an effective vision for the change with stakeholders. Change is not a straightforward process. It is a process with twists and turns where people are constant learning and adapting

CHAPTER 6: Staff Development for DE

- Analysis and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, issues that emerged in the data concerning staff development in Brazil are analysed and discussed according to four themes (approaches, quality, role of educational developers, and impact of staff development) and their sub-themes. Combined, they support the answering of the second research question concerning the extent of staff development for higher distance education being undertaken in Brazil.

6.2 Data: Analysis and Discussion

As discussed previously, a few public policies do currently promote staff development in higher DE in Brazil. It seems that they have been triggered by the internal institutional evaluations undertaken as part of the SINAES. Predominantly in DE, staff development has been formally adopted in some institutions, encouraged by DE policies and initiatives, specifically by the *Decree n° 5.622, Cap1, Art12 – VIII* and by the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education*. The Decree n° 5.622 establishes that Brazilian institutions offering, or intending to offer, DE programs are encouraged to develop an academic body qualified to appropriately work with DE (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2005). The *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education* promotes continuous staff development and provides a set of guiding principles regarding the skills required from academics, tutors, technicians and administrative staff to be able to work with DE. Importantly, it also encourages staff performance and self-evaluation (MEC/SEAD, 2007). Hence, DE institutions in Brazil should articulate and provide some form of staff development and evaluate their academic body continuously.

Interestingly, although a small number of participants (three) seemed to be aware of some sort of policy requiring staff development, as occurred previously in the discussion about quality in DE, none of them commented about any of the above policies as a supporting basis for professional development. One expert in DE, however, mentioned that

institutions do not have choice but provide some development to their staff, at least academic staff (Expert3, Science, Public&Private, Southeast). This comment may imply that this participant had some knowledge regarding policy requirements for staff development. Another reason for the statement might simply be that there are not enough qualified academics to teach at a distance. Further, DE is new and requires new knowledge, skills and attitudes. Institutions do not have much choice but to offer staff development to their staff.

Considering that both DE and staff development are relatively new phenomena within higher education in Brazil, and the apparent lack of awareness of DE policies and requirements for staff development, it came as a surprise that the majority of participants (90%) admitted that staff development could be a key element for the success of DE in Brazil. Evidence of a common view amongst these participants is provided by the following quote:

This is a success factor, there is no other alternative. Some things are very important, but this one [staff development] is indispensable! If you do not have an outstanding staff development program, it [DE] will not work (Expert3, Science, Public&Private, Southeast)

Nevertheless, one participant disagreed with the majority and believed that academic staff could learn how to teach at a distance by themselves

without formal training. It will happen through observation, coping with the software that the institutions distribute. People will not sacrifice the time to do it, but if you put tools into their hands, which lead them in the right direction, they will use it (Expert2, Sciences, Southeast).

There is no doubt that some academics could develop the skills needed to appropriately enhance teaching and learning online and at a distance on their own. It is also clear, however, that to develop these skills, academics need time and support from their universities, which are not always available. DE has already increased the workload of some academics in Brazil, increasing resistance to adopting DE, together with other affects. Staff development programs could help to minimise these effects by assisting academics to support teaching and learning adequately, as well as work more effectively

with DE. Learning by themselves, *through observation* [and] *copying* might be an alternative, but might take longer to produce positive outcomes, if at all. Academics might lose motivation and give up along the way. Most importantly, the quality of this self-professional development cannot be guaranteed if no evaluative mechanisms and/or feedback from their peers and staff developers are provided.

6.2.1 Approaches to Staff Development in DE

In response to the questions and probes concerning the appropriateness of staff development models and strategies to help academics to acquire the skills needed for DE, two sub-themes emerged under the theme *approaches* to professional development. They are *model* and *strategy*.

6.2.1.1 Models

Amongst the models adopted by Brazilian higher education institutions for staff development, mostly by the institutions contributing to this study, a mixed-mode model seemed the most popular amongst developers, experts and also according to the quantitative data collected (45%). This format is based mostly on initial face-to-face meetings, where participants and educational developers discuss DE concepts, course design, planning, methodology, and copyright, amongst other things. Then, participants are required to undertake online activities at a distance using the Learning Management Systems (LMS) and other software adopted by the institution. The primary reason why mixed-mode is one of the most popular models for staff development is because the *face-to-face stage for them [academics] and for us [developers] are very important because it is when they get to know other members of the group. They exchange experiences and learn how to collaborate with each other (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast)*. Here, the expert indicated another dimension to this model, that is, collaborative learning. Another factor contributing to this preference could be simply easy, indeed required, access to LMS as all the institutions investigated, and that 100 percent of the online questionnaire respondents also had access to LMS. Most likely, this preference might be because this model still possesses some characteristics of traditional face-to-face education married to the ease of online learning at own time and pace.

The findings showed that a mixed-mode approach for staff development in DE was used by three of the institutions investigated. Time wise, these tended to be more extensive programs compared with the other ones; approximately 20 hours or more duration, lasting up to four weeks. The purpose of this approach was, according to participants, to provide a deeper understanding of teaching and learning in DE to academics wanting to work in the field. Further, this approach varied slightly from institution to institution. Some developers preferred to work with small groups of academics at a time, approximately 20 to 30 participants. Thus, they could promote learning by building trust and a closer relationship with academics, and by assisting their specific needs. Some mixed-mode programs tended to incorporate academics with different areas of knowledge across the institution in an attempt to promote collaborative learning and develop communities of practice. In addition, developers highlighted that it was important to be able to identify the technological skills of academics before they started the staff development programs, thus taking into account their previous experiences in preparing academics for DE. The reason given for this was that academics might feel embarrassed if they do not have the minimal skills necessary to use the Internet or the software adopted by the institution on which developers tend to build their development programs. Consequently, *academics tend to go quiet, do not engage in learning, do not do the exercises and eventually give up not providing the reasons for their decisions (Developer, Science, FedPub, South).*

Furthermore, the findings also show that developers avoid assessing their fellow academics' learning progress. They *think that this role of evaluator would set [them] as a supervisory body, which would not be positive. [They] want be seen as partners. Evaluation is a complex business! (DECoord, Sciences, Private, Catholic, South).* Nevertheless, the strategy two developers adopted to prompt and measure their participants' learning and understanding of DE was by asking academics to develop the content material that they were intending to eventually use with their distance students. These two developers believed that it was an effective way to motivate and further engage participants in learning about DE during and after the staff development program. This was because *they can visualise the results of their efforts, as well as share with their colleagues their successful and sometimes not so successful experiences (DECoord, Sciences, Private, Catholic, South).* At the time of this research, two institutions were offering mixed-mode programs to their academics, while one was offering a similar program to tutors. It appeared clear that the mixed-mode approach for staff development discussed here can be

classified as a *thick* strategy (Webb, 2003). This is because mixed-mode programs require from institutions financial and qualified human resources for a significant period of time, possibly a few times per year. These programs might have been also designed with the priority to prepare staff to promote quality teaching and learning at a distance. It was also a felt need by participants.

Other models for staff development adopted by the institutions investigated in this study were:

- Workshops, seminars and induction lectures offered to all academic staff across the institution. These programs tend to be short, one or two hours, and face-to-face. The main purpose of these staff development programs is to capture in academics an interest in DE. All institutions investigated offered these programs; and
- Semester-based development programs. These are normally offered twice a year, at the beginning of each semester. Generally, they are offered to the whole institution's academic body and are intended to keep academics updated with issues related to policy implementation, curriculum implementation, changes within the institution, DE, and so forth. DE does not seem to be the primary focus of such programs. These staff development programs normally take a full day, or two half days, and include lectures and debates amongst academics and are all face-to-face. Three institutions investigated offered the semester-based type of professional development.

Webb (2003) classifies these two approaches as *thin strategies* because they are shorter, use less institutional resources and are considered to be the basic support for academics within institutions. Indeed, the majority of institutions participating in this study had some kind of *thin* staff development in place. Another common model adopted by all institutions was that they offered regular ad-hoc professional help in DE. Staff developers, and some of the experts, tended to be available to academics when there were problems to solve or questions to ask.

Unfortunately, two institutions seemed to offer programs mostly based on training academics in how to use the Internet, software and LMS, instead of exploring the

technologies and their pedagogical basis for enhancing teaching and learning at a distance as recommended by the body of knowledge in the topic (see Chapter Three, item 3.5.1). Indeed, that seemed to be the real picture across the country. Thirty percent of participants declared that staff development, or any other support for academic staff in Brazilian DE institutions, was *predominantly seminar series, workshops and mini-courses focused mostly on the use of technologies (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast)*.

Additionally, six participants mentioned that academic development programs should consider putting academic staff in students' places. In other words, the programs should be developed as close to the reality of students as possible. Thus, academics would be treated as the students of a distance course, with deadlines for activities, face-to-face meetings and even a project as the conclusion of the course. Academics would then experience students' barriers, difficulties and possibly predict students' attitudes towards certain activities:

First, academics need to have some experience as DE students. There are many [academics] who have never experienced anything [related to DE] and cannot feel how the students are experiencing the course. So, first they [academics] should be DE students, at least in a mixed-mode course (Expert1, Humanities, Public&Private, Southeast).

This staff development model seemed to have been adopted by several institutions worldwide. Placing academics as learners, educational developers might encourage reflective practice in DE. Also, they can prompt academics to reflect on their content materials, as well as on the teaching and learning techniques most appropriate to use with their distance students. Most importantly, many in this field believe that this reflection can lead to change in the behaviour of academics. This then would promote deep and lasting change in higher and distance education (Fullan, 2007). By being closer to the realities of students, academics might enhance their understanding of the issues faced by students when first studying at a distance, and in doing so, predict future pitfalls. The Graduate Certificate in HE, the mixed-mode model discussed earlier (see Chapter Two, 2.5.1), and other longer-term staff development programs, might provide educational developers adequate condition for working with academics such as time and institutional resources, as well as providing the incentive of a qualification. However, educational developers also

need their academic colleagues' cooperation and desire for lifelong learning (see Chapter Two, item 2.5.1).

So far, all that has been done regarding staff development in higher and distance education in Brazil seems still inadequate and on a relatively small scale, according to 30 percent of the participants. For them, the programs do not appear to appeal to most academics, and might not contribute to the overall improvement of quality in DE yet. These participants claimed that academics do not *know how to go beyond the system*. Staff development could help academics *to realise their importance as educators in DE, in line with the same importance they have in their face-to-face classes* (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast). The above is also a recommendation of the body of knowledge. By showing respect and taking into account the previous professional and personal experiences of academics, as well as involving them in continuous learning about DE, educational developers and institutional leaders might help academics realise that their role in DE could be at least as important as traditional face-to-face education (Fullan, 2007; King, 2003; Webb, 2003).

The discussion in this section has shown that staff development models adopted by the institutions in this study seemed to be similar to models of staff development adopted around the world (see Chapter Two, item 2.5). In addition, the models discussed here appeared also congruent with the ones adopted in Brazil and highlighted in Chapter Three (see item 3.5). Mixed-mode approach for staff development seemed to be one of the most popular amongst developers, experts and respondents. This is probably because it encourages interaction, collaborative learning and it is accessible. The same could not be said of the *thin* strategies that are the predominant approaches amongst the institutions. These findings are congruent with discussions in Chapter Three, where teacher/content-centred approaches and face-to-face meetings are extensively used in DE in Brazil. The findings also show that, unfortunately, many staff development programs were still heavily focused on the use of learning technologies alone, instead of exploring these technologies to enhance teaching and learning. As capacity building exercises in support of the changes required to implement DE, they seem to be falling short, so far.

Interviews showed no evidence of fully online staff development programs delivered by the institutions. This might indicate that they are not aware that “learning to teach online needs to be undertaken online” (Salmon, 2004, p. 69). Thus, academics interviewed have

not had opportunities to experience online DE, reflect on their learning and possibly change their pedagogies. Also, the institutions and their leaders might not be aware that several academics consider that staff development programs for online DE should be completely online (36 percent of the online questionnaire respondents).

Furthermore, it can be seen from this discussion that some of the institutions and their educational developers tried hard to be innovative and build trust and a closer relationship with academics. Examples of this included attempts by developers to classify groups of academics by their technological skills to avoid generating any embarrassment in front of other more experienced colleagues, offering ad-hoc assistance in DE, and by encouraging them to adjust their face-to-face content material to better suit DE. Nevertheless, by avoiding any kind of evaluation of programs, content materials and academics' understanding, developers and institutions are being neglectful, or are not well informed, of the benefits of such evaluation. Sound evaluation could bring about many issues and answer some of the questions developers have in their mind today. For example, it could help developers to find out the reasons why there is resistance to DE in Brazil, or why academics may not know the importance of their role in DE. Finally, evaluation could foster and encourage greater involvement between academics, developers and institutions, and ultimately a deeper understanding and improvement of DE. In order to embrace DE and create staff development programs, both academics and developers, need institutional support. Next, the strategies for staff development adopted by the institutions participating in this study are analysed and discussed.

6.2.1.2 Strategies

For the most part, simply defining models for professional development is not enough. In order to persuade academics to join development programs in DE, institutional leaders and educational developers need to develop strategies, for example, work on aligning staff development with an institution's policies, mission and strategic plans within DE.

The findings show that there were a few common strategies used by the institutions investigated in this study to attract academics to staff development programs. However, all institutions offered staff development programs during staff working hours. In addition, all institutions claimed that their staff tend to join staff development programs on a voluntary

basis. Contradictorily, staff development is compulsory for academics wishing to start teaching at a distance for all universities participating in this study. This is mostly a institutional requirement supported by suggestions made by national DE policies in Brazil. Further investigation into this issue revealed that institutions might pressure academics to attend staff development programs *when the voluntary strategy did not bring the number of professionals they need in the DE programs*. So, they send invitation letters to targeted staff to meet the demand (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast). One can conclude that although these institutions claim that staff development is voluntary, findings show that academics, more likely those working with DE in private institutions, tend to be pressured to join staff development programs to be qualified to teach online, as outlined by DE national policies.

Another common strategy used by all institutions to attract academics to staff development programs is to offer a certification of conclusion for academics completing the programs. In fact, 32 percent of the online questionnaire respondents mentioned that it is an appropriate strategy to attract academics to staff development. Expectedly, all development programs were free of charge for academics and general staff.

One expert in DE suggested a different strategy that was applied in his institution. During the early stages of the institution's DE programs implementation, even before starting to offer staff development, key academics were invited to join the design and development stages of the DE project. These invitees were chosen not because of the subject area they taught, but because of their natural responses to innovation in their institution. The implementation team, in this particular institution, was searching for academics that had already adopted learning technologies in the classroom, and consequently, were more familiar with them. These key people assisted the implementation team by giving suggestions about content material development, both in the adoption of learning technologies and in staff development. As a result, these academics engaged in process of continuous learning about changing from traditional face-to-face classes to DE. Then, they all seemed to join the staff development program offered by the institution. These academics were some of the pioneers to teach at a distance in this institution, and the results were positive, according to the expert so this approach to capacity building has promise. The hope was that other academics, more resistant to change, would eventually

follow these academics in attending staff development and teaching at a distance at some stage. The main reason behind this strategy was *because it was the institution's first contact with DE, [and] if you do not have an academic who embraces DE and its technologies, it will not succeed!* (Expert3, Science, Public&Private, Southeast).

Although strategies mentioned in this section to attract academics to attend staff development, and possibly teach at a distance afterwards, sound encouraging they still appear not be enough to convince a number of academic staff. When volunteering to attend staff development programs, and to participate in a new and innovative project such as DE, academics expect more from their institutions. Many participants (70%) believed that *there should be an internal policy to encourage staff to seek professional development... it should be considered and used to accumulate points during job promotion within their institution, for example* (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast).

Furthermore, the research findings surprisingly showed that at least one institution seemed to understand some of the problematic aspects that can surface when implementing change from traditional modes to DE by adopting some of Fullan's (2007) suggested tactics for successful educational change. Through involving academics with some knowledge in learning technologies, and who have a natural interest in innovation, this institution seemed to ensure that they were working with motivated people and, through them, they could motivate others. This institution also involved these academics in continuous learning about DE, and thus, possibly avoided resistance to DE. This is another reason why these academics were the pioneers in teaching at distance in their institution.

In corroboration, the findings from document analysis revealed that most institutions investigated did not have their staff development program strategies and outcomes aligned with the institution's policies, mission and goals. Additionally, there was evidence that they had no reward strategy, whether based on financial incentives or on support teaching through awards, as suggested by the body of knowledge and previous research on staff development (see Chapter Two, item 2.5).

Similarly, there was no staff performance evaluation undertaken by the institutions. This comes as no surprise since evaluation of any kind amongst the institutions investigated has evidently been neglected and under-valued, for a considerable period of time. Worst of all,

there was no indication the institutions were intending to consider or implement any of the above. One could conclude that staff development for DE is not an institutional priority for these institutions. This clearly contradicts what is suggested by the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education*, that DE providers should have permanent staff development, which clearly reveals the importance placed on staff development for DE. If staff development is one of the keys for quality and successful DE, the data indicated that this has not yet been fully appreciated in Brazil, at least not at these institutions. The issue of quality in staff development is further discussed next.

6.2.2 Quality of Staff Development

The theme *quality staff development* emerged from the analysis. Here, the researcher was interested in participants' perceptions and views about quality of staff development programs and practices within their institutions. According to respondents, quality professional development programs should:

- *Promote reflection within the university (DECoord, Sciences, Private, Catholic, South);*
- *Explore theories and the specificities of DE (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast);*
- *Present examples of success stories and encourage discussions of practical applications, thus, impacting on resistance and motivation (Lect, Sciences, Private, Catholic, South);*
- *Have highly qualified multidisciplinary teams to support academic staff during their development and during all stages of their DE program implementation (Lect, Sciences, Private, Catholic, South); and*
- *Take into account aspects of learning styles, techniques of learning supported by the technologies adopted (Expert3, Science, Public&Private, Southeast).*

The above seems to align well with discussions in Chapter Two (item 2.5.1), including some of the ten key points for quality teaching in DE suggested by Webb (2003): building relationships between staff and students; modelling scholarly values; encouraging cooperation; encouraging active learning; providing appropriate teaching through different

teaching approaches to meet different learning objectives, and so forth. It also correlates well with the two dimensional model for staff development developed by Salmon (2004); enhanced teaching skills in DE, together with the appropriate technological skills. In addition, some of the principles of the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education*; developing the course curriculum and content materials, identifying students learning skills, promoting teaching and learning and so forth, are also applicable here.

Eight participants, mostly the DE experts and educational developers, believed that quality staff development programs should encourage critical thinking and collaborative learning amongst academics in teaching and learning in DE. They also argued that formation or development of staff is the appropriate approach instead of training;

training is not development. Training you do only with tools [technologies], development should explore ways to appropriately use these tools with emphasis on learning. These tools are the means! This should be very clear during staff development. This is fundamental (Expert3,Science,Public&Private,Southeast).

Similarly, educational developers and DE experts were unanimous in relation to what should not be seen as sound professional development practice. They agreed that staff development programs should never be reproductions of the traditional face-to-face model, which focuses on the content and on teaching rather than on learning. According to participants, staff development should enhance teaching and learning at a distance and with the use of technologies. Unfortunately, most staff development seemed to be

based on teaching, nothing is based on the learning. [Institutions and academics] do not assess if students have acquired certain competencies, knowledge or have developed certain skills. So, if you do not prepare the university teachers for this [new ways of improving students' learning], I believe everything will continue in the same way: scanning the traditional face-to-face materials and believing we are doing DE! We must change this (Expert3,Science,Public&Private,Southeast).

It is interesting to notice from the above discussion that, on the one hand, DE experts and educational developers seem to know the benefits and the characteristics of quality staff

development, while on the other, they all admit that staff development programs offered by Brazilian universities to their academics to date are based solely on traditional teaching approaches. They also acknowledge that they are not up to the standards required to qualify academics to appropriately work at a distance. Many factors are likely to contribute to the above contradictions, many of which are related to previous discussion. Firstly, developers and experts who possess the basic concepts of sound staff development, are not yet experienced enough or have not had the opportunity, to reflect on previous practice. Hence, they maintain their previously established traditional teaching beliefs and practices. Secondly, such developers and experts lack sufficient time and have limited institutional resources to implement quality staff development, or for their own professional development. Thirdly, since staff development for DE is new in Brazil, it then follows that having access to resources is likely to be problematic.

Lack of sound evaluation is a common theme that emerges in the discussions across this chapter. This is also the case when discussing quality in staff development. All educational developers, DE program coordinators and experts confirmed that there is no formal assessment or evaluation applied before, during or after professional development programs in their universities. In fact, two participants were clearly against any form of evaluation of these programs, including the program itself, the developers' performance and/or staff learning. As previously said, educational developers do not want to be seen by their fellow academics as *evaluators* but rather as *partners* (*DECoord,Sciences,Private,Catholic,South*). In addition, this participant also mentioned that one positive outcome of staff development would be *the university teachers demonstrating* [to the institution and to the developer] *what they have developed in their distance units* (*DECoord,Sciences,Private,Catholic,South*). This statement is somehow contradictory with the statement about developers wanting to be seen as partners. By asking academics to demonstrate what they have developed in DE could suggest that institutions and developers are acting as supervisory bodies, instead of promoting collaboration and closing the gap between academics and developers (Fullan, 2007). Also, it seems unreasonable to think that institutions and developers can guarantee the quality of staff development only by having academics develop their content materials for online DE. There should still be some comparison, or some form of professional guidance, from experts to academics about the pedagogy. Otherwise, academics are likely to continue reproducing in DE the same

traditional teaching approaches they have always used, which is absolutely what many of the participants declared earlier to be against.

Continuing questions and probes revealed, however, that evaluation of staff development programs tended to happen informally, *in a verbal form (Developer1, Humanities, Private, Northeast)* said one developer. Even though informal communication is often accurate, and developers can receive feedback from academics, they cannot rely heavily on this kind of feedback. Firstly, this is because negative feedback is unlikely to be given during informal face-to-face conversations. For several reasons, academics would probably prefer to maintain their anonymity when giving this kind of feedback. Secondly, academics are very busy professionals and there are likely to be few opportunities for informal conversations, even positive feedback would probably not reach developers in its full. On site confidential evaluation could provide the outcomes needed for improving staff development programs.

Further, another challenge faced by developers can occur when academics believe they do not need any assistance in order to start developing and implementing their content material for a distance unit. The following is a comment that reflects this reality. In response to the question; “have you attended your institution’s staff development course?”, the participant answered:

No, I did not do it! I did not do it because I checked the program of the staff development course and talked with some colleagues and then I decided that in my case it would not be necessary (Lect7, Sciences, Private, Catholic, Southeast).

There are two central dimensions within this answer. One dimension is resistance to change. It could simply be easier for this participant to say that the staff development was not good enough and then decide not to attend. If this is the case, this attitude of avoidance towards staff development programs, from certain academics, helps to explain why there is a tendency in DE to reproduce traditional education, and a lack of knowledge in assuring quality of DE content materials. The second dimension of the above statement is that the participant investigated the staff development program and realised that the time that would be spent on it would probably not be worth it.

The discussion about the quality of staff development programs revealed that participants seemed to know how a quality staff development program ought to be. According to them, it should be about professional development rather than merely training, be focused on student learning and promote DE teaching and learning theories that are not completely based on traditional educational approaches. Also, it should encourage collaborative learning and reflection in practice amongst academics and developers. Neither the national policies for DE, nor the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education*, are mentioned as a basis for their assumptions. Also, the discussion here showed that some participants seemed to contradict themselves during conversations with the researcher.

Developers often avoid evaluation in every way that they can. This suggests a lack of knowledge on the part of developers regarding the benefits of educational evaluation. Evaluation can help academics and educational developers to learn together about DE, identifying the aspects that need to be improved and suggest alternatives to work towards such desired improvements. Importantly, staff development program evaluations help to inform institutional policies, specifically staffing policies in order to align staff development with an institution's mission and goals, as well as provide a basis for other staff reward strategies. In consequence, more academics might be attracted to DE-based staff development programs, possibly resulting in a better qualified and less resistant academic body.

The reluctance to adopt evaluation also suggests a lack of confidence about the quality of staff development programs offered by developers as a whole. Therefore, they resisted it and claimed that it could bring negative outcomes for DE. As theorised by many, uncertainty and fear of the unknown are feelings normally brought about by the process of change (Bromage, 2006; Fullan, 2007; Outram, 2005a). Developers face significant pressure to overcome such feelings because they need to be the role models; trustworthy and influential in order to adequately lead their fellow academics.

6.2.3 Educational Developers in DE

Staff developers, educational developers or simply developers, represent a new profession in Brazil, as elsewhere in HE. Specifically in the case of Brazil, this profession seemed to

be a result of the growth of DE and the need for qualified staff. At least at the time of this research, the closest words used by the institutions investigated to describe this new profession are best translated as Pedagogical or Educational Coordinator, Tutoring Advisor and Training Manager.

The roles of staff developers have already been mentioned in Chapter Two and Three (items 2.5 and 3.5). Although the roles of staff developers can vary from institution to institution, or even from country to country, in Brazil, they are highly involved with DE activities, including teaching, coordinating units and sometimes whole degrees. They also coordinate learning centres, the production of content materials, as well as hire and train academic staff. For the most part, Brazilian staff developers tend to be well-qualified young professionals. The majority of them have Doctoral degrees, or are on the way to acquiring one, and are aged between 35 and 45 years old.

Conversations with Brazilian staff developers resulted in very rich data, informative and essential to this research study. Here, developers expressed their constructions about their experiences in training other academics. Most importantly, they had the opportunity to reflect on their own practices within a new and complex system that they have helped to implement in their own institutions, DE. These conversations generated the theme *developers*.

Most staff developers claimed that one of the biggest challenges they faced was shifting educational concepts from teacher/content-centred to a more flexible and learning-centred approach. Considering that many Brazilian academics do not have all the technological skills needed to work with online systems and software, *the biggest difficulty is not so much the technical part, but rather changing their [academics] pedagogy (Developer1, Humanities, FedPub, Southeast)*. That was probably why many academics still persisted in adopting the same face-to-face materials to their DE units, argued the developers. They felt that

some university teachers do not want to change their way of teaching. They want to make available on the Internet the same materials they used in their face-to-face classes... These are aspects that we [developers] need to change, make them [academics] see (Developer1, Humanities, FedPub, Southeast).

This problem seemed to be closely related to resistance in adopting DE. In fact, developers themselves realised that the persistence in avoiding new teaching techniques in DE was likely because

people are afraid of learning new things and then start creating barriers to avoid learning. Perhaps they do not have the same confidence and performance they have in their face-to-face classes (DECoord, Sciences, Private, Southeast).

Hence, it was easier to keep doing what they already know than to try something new. Interestingly, this issue was also raised when discussing the opinions of developers towards educational evaluation. It seemed that not only academics, but also their developers had uncertainties and fears. These and other feelings are commonly shared amongst those involved in the process of change from traditional to DE (Jackson, 2004; Outram, 2005a).

The persistence of traditional teaching approaches amongst Brazilian academics working with DE does not come as a surprise given the history of the Brazilian education system. In fact, five participants declared that the *educational model in higher education in Brazil today stopped being adopted in America and in Europe decades ago (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast).*

Another challenge confronted by the staff developers participating in this study was related to their own professional profile: young, highly qualified and expert in an area still unfamiliar to many academics, that of DE. According to all the developers who contributed to this research, such a situation has certainly intimidated the more traditional and generally older academics. However, the issue seemed to occur more frequently in the federal public universities. This may be due to the nature of the federal public institutions, where academics have job security and do not need to get involved in and embrace additional activities for job and career promotion. This intimidation could also be used as an excuse for not joining staff development programs and for resisting DE. Developers in the federal public universities revealed that

it is a little worse for [them], for being an 'Olympus' [the public universities], where there are only "gods" [how academics consider themselves within the

university] *and we [the developers] are newly arrived (Developer2, Humanities, FedPub, Southeast).*

Even though there seems to be intimidation and resistance to DE also within the private sector, centralised and top-down decision-making, together with the focus on the market do not leave academics with much choice other than to adhere to DE (see Chapter Three, item 3.3.2).

Other common challenges faced by staff developers presented in the data were:

- Lack of trust from the academic body. Developers are seen by some of their fellow academics as enemies. They appear to believe that developers are hired to watch over their shoulders, criticise and evaluate them;
- Academics' lack of technological skills and knowledge in DE, which seems to limit the scope of what could be explored during the staff development;
- Lack of access to qualified professionals and financial resources within their institutions; and
- Not enough time to keep up with the fast advances in technology.

Moreover, Brazilian developers seem to face similar problems to those faced by their contemporaries around the world, including that the majority of university teachers do not have a teaching degree. *Everyone can be a university teacher in Brazil (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast).* This is because higher education institutions do not require formal teaching qualifications when hiring their academic staff. It seems enough to be a specialist in the field (see Chapter Two and Three, item 2.5 and 3.5). In a similar fashion, many higher education institutions in Brazil, including some of the ones investigated, seemed to see teaching as a less important activity, and preferred to concentrate the majority of their funding and efforts into research. This then does not contribute to attracting academics to staff development in teaching and learning. As highlighted earlier, it is important that institutions align their staff development programs with their mission, goals and policies in order to attract academics and to have positive outcomes.

Two developers observed that there seemed to be a lack of understanding about the role developers actually play within HE institutions. Some declared that academics did not seem to

understand that [they] do not want to teach their unit content, [they] want to make them realise that the same face-to-face strategies cannot be applied to DE and that there is the need to review concepts, strategies and methodologies (Developer1, Humanities, Private, Northeast).

This challenge could be the result of academics' lack of involvement in the institutional process of adopting DE. If academics were involved and engaged in continuous learning about DE, they could experience the increased benefits of staff development and better appreciate the role that developers play in achieving successful DE.

Conversations with Brazilian educational developers revealed that they have faced many challenges. Some of the challenges seem to have been envisaged in the body of knowledge in this field, while others seem to be particularly related to the current context of DE and staff development in Brazil. For example, because DE is a relatively new educational approach in Brazil, and staff development is even newer within HE institutions, staff developers did not seem to be fully supported by the institutions. There is evidently a lack of human and financial resources, according to some participants. Also, there is a lack of trust and a poor understanding of the roles educational developers perform within the institutions investigated. Young and high qualified educational developers have found high levels of resistance in implementing DE in their institutions. The developers themselves have a fairly good idea of the reasons why academics are resisting DE. Their profile, together with the limited technological skills and knowledge amongst academics involved with DE, and likewise a lack of teaching degrees, and limited knowledge in teaching and learning, are some of the reasons discovered as to why academics persistently use their traditional pedagogical practices when confronted with DE. This indicates that educational developers have struggled to enhance academics' understanding of the benefits of staff development, and to demonstrate how it can assist them to make the transition from traditional face-to-face teaching to DE more smoothly.

The research findings reveal the reasons for this struggle. To begin with, the majority of educational developers are not particularly involved with their institutions' policy development process, nor with research into DE, or teaching and learning. This highlights a misalignment between staff development programs and the institutions' policies, mission and goals. Key literature here maintains that for successful staff development to occur this alignment must be clearly defined, otherwise developers are left with no target outcomes to work on (Webb, 2003). In addition, some developers concentrate on too many activities at the same time, including such things as the process of development, design, implementation of content materials and staff development programs. In some cases (two), they were even responsible for looking after academics' and tutors' worksheets. As a result, they often did not have enough time to attend to their own professional development. Even though the majority of them had worked with DE for several years, and undertaken some form of staff development previously, the majority of them (eight developers) did not have teaching degrees themselves. The problem here appeared to be a "catch twenty-two" - how could they assist their fellow academics to overcome their fears and resistance to change, and make a smooth transition from face-to-face to DE, while at the same time endure similar uncertainties and not be fully qualified for the task? Many say that in order to reduce resistance to DE, educational leaders (including educational developers) should be good role models, and be influential and trustworthy. Unfortunately, the discussion above demonstrates that this was not the case for several educational developers participating in this study. This could be the reason why some developers were not aware of the importance of academics being involved in a process of continuous learning about DE, and any other step recommended for successful educational change and for managing resistance.

6.2.4 Impact of Staff Development

In response to the question; *Would you value professional development in teaching and learning and in distance education instruction?*; the theme *impact of staff development* emerged.

Unanimously, participants believed that staff development programs are beneficial not only to academics and their institutions, but also for higher education as a whole because

of the improvements in teaching and learning that it could bring. For them, even traditional *face-to-face education will never be the same after this professional development (Developer, Science, FedPub, South)*. This is possibly because the majority of academics in Brazil who have never had access to, or desired to attend, staff development before, have for the first time, the chance to develop an understanding of learning theories and pedagogies in DE.

Further questions and probes about this issue confirmed previous claims made by some developers that *some of them [academics] can show some resistance [to DE and to staff development]*. Even so, 60 percent of the participants believed that with the assistance of staff development, academics could become more confident in teaching at a distance and increasing the use of learning technologies and online practices in their face-to-face instruction. Indeed, staff development *could change face-to-face instruction, because [academics] reflect much more [about teaching and learning practices]*. Thus, this reflection might prompt academics to change their educational practices, indeed their beliefs about pedagogy. These developers did not seem to *have any doubt that staff development for DE will bring educational improvements in the classrooms (Expert3, Science, Public&Private, Southeast)*.

According to developers and DE experts, another benefit of staff development practices, and possibly the reflections prompted by it, is the improvement of DE units' content material and in face-to-face education. For them, academics will ultimately end up preparing *a product of higher quality than before (Expert3, Science, Public&Private, Southeast)*. In many cases these new content materials are used not only in DE programs, but have also become complementary materials in some face-to-face courses. Some participants (40 %) argued that face-to-face courses have become more interesting and attractive to students where DE materials were introduced. Remarkably, all educational developers believed that staff development for DE, if well delivered, could indeed *rescue face-to-face education in Brazil (Developer1, Humanities, Private, Northeast)*.

Importantly, congruent with the analysis of the literature and the discussions in this chapter, eight participants (developers and experts) strongly believed that staff development could be used as a powerful tool in the battle against academic resistance to DE. This is because these participants have already noticed changes in some of their fellow

academics' attitudes towards DE; from initially being against it, to becoming a supporter of DE. One of these participants recounted the following story:

We already had an experience, where the teacher was radically against DE. Then, after being a professional development course he suddenly became a supporter of DE. Now, he gets enthusiastic all the time! I saw this happening! It can be sometimes just a matter of knowing (Expert3, Science, Public&Private, Southeast).

Discussions in this section reveal that even though previous findings indicated that some of the educational developers may not be qualified enough for the job, some said that they did manage to generate positive outcomes in their staff development programs. This is a positive finding. According to participants' perceptions, this reflected the collaborative effort of academics, educational developers and institutions. This also shows that some academics and educational developers may be aware that there is a need for staff professional development and educational change.

According to four participants, without professional development some academics would have no choice but to adopt the teaching strategies introduced to them by their own teachers when they were still students. Thus, the decision is made that *he is my good teacher, so I will be like him (Lect6, Humanities, Private, Catholic, Southeast)*. This attitude has limited currency in today's knowledge society. *Despite the increasing amount of information students have access to, some of them are not able to transform this information into knowledge by themselves (Expert4, Sciences, Private, Catholic, Southeast)*. Brazilian students, like all others, still need guidance in order to be able to identify their own needs and their own learning styles. Brazilian university teachers, including educational developers, can adapt teaching styles to incorporate a conception of students learning; that is, lifelong learning for academics and students alike. Given the fast advance of learning technologies supporting DE today, the above conceptualisation is even more relevant.

Staff development could certainly help academics to overcome the challenges of today. As shown by the findings in this section, it may already be decreasing levels of resistance in DE, improving the quality of content materials and encouraging reflective practice by

academics and educational developers. This is true for not only DE, by also higher education. By reflecting about practice in DE academics and developers learn together, further consider and respect each other's previous experiences and encourage each other to go further and overcome new challenges.

Unfortunately, as highlighted in several sections of this chapter, there is no evidence provided by the participants that the policies for DE, including the Brazilian guideline for quality in DE, have contributed to the impacts of staff development discussed here. Once again, the findings reveal that there is no formal evaluation undertaken by any of the universities investigated to confirm that academic professional development has in fact improved the quality of content materials and teaching and learning in both higher and distance education. Therefore, despite the positive claims, it may not yet be possible to demonstrate yet the impact of staff development for DE in Brazil.

6.3 Conclusion

It can be noticed from the findings concerning the second research question on the extent in which staff development is undertaken in Brazil, that several approaches for staff development have been adopted that are also practiced around the world. However, staff development undertaken in Brazil appeared to be still heavily focused on traditional approaches to teaching, including teacher/content-centred approaches and face-to-face meetings. According to participants, this is because academics, and perhaps educational developers, appear to be more familiar with these approaches, which provide them with opportunities for exchanging experiences. That could be also the reasons why educational developers believed that mixed-mode approach for staff development is one of the most appropriate ones. It has a large percentage of face-to-face meetings and then, some online distance activities. In addition, the findings also show that, several staff development programs were still focused only on the use of learning technologies alone, instead of exploring these technologies to enhance teaching and learning, which supports successful education change. Participants claimed the technological training only is a reality within HE institutions across Brazil.

It was found that, despite some incentives to attract academics to attend staff development programs, such as proving certification after the conclusion of a program and inviting academics to join the programs voluntary with some possible institutional pressure afterwards, participants believed that these strategies do not seem enough to fully embrace staff development yet. Staffing policies that encourage teaching and learning improvement through awards and promote continuous staff development through career promotion would be the ideal according to some participants.

The findings also revealed that quality of staff development programs offered by the institutions investigated could not be assured. This is because the institutions did not conduct staff development programs' evaluation. In fact, educational developers strongly believed that it is a practice that would not attract academics to the programs. Even though one educational developer revealed that informal evaluation of programs were considered in her institution, how the outcomes of such evaluation were used to further promote programs' improvement remained unclear. One could conclude that staff development evaluation appeared to have been neglected and under-valued amongst these institutions.

As in many higher distance education institutions around the world, educational developers undertook staff development programs in the institutions examined. Established mostly by the introduction of DE, educational developer is a new career in Brazil and already facing several challenges. Mistrusted by some colleagues, overloaded with DE activities across their institutions, not engaged in internal policy development and research in DE and teaching and learning appeared to be some of the challenges faced by the educational developers interviewed in this study. It is interesting to notice, however, that some developers did not seem to be fully prepared yet to promote educational change through staff development for DE with a focus on improving teaching and learning and on change behaviours and beliefs. The majority of developers participating in this study delivered their staff development programs mostly based on traditional approaches to teaching.

Despite the above, there have been some positive claims concerning the impact of staff development on the improvement of teaching and learning not only at a distance, but also in face-to-face instruction. In addition, according to some participants, staff development has provided academics with opportunities to reflect on their educational practices, as well as on the development of a better content material.

CHAPTER 7: Institutional Responses- Analysis and Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents interpretations and discussion of the data analysis related to the third research question by examining in detail the six institutions participating in this study; two from the federal public sector and four from the private sector. By investigating each institution individually, the researcher was able to contextualise the institution's distance education (DE) practices, staff development for DE and some policy issues; the focus areas of this research. Supported by the conceptualisation of this investigation, this chapter assists to form a further basis for discussion, and to promote a better understanding of the issues in DE faced by the two major higher educational sectors in Brazil to date.

7.2 Data Presentation

Participants' identification remains as in Chapters Five and Six. The identification of the six institutions is:

- Uni A = Federal Public University of South
- Uni B = Federal Public University of Southeast
- Uni C = Private Catholic University of South
- Uni D = Private University of Northeast
- Uni E = Private Catholic University of Southeast
- Uni F = Private University of Southeast

Qualitative and quantitative data gathered from participants concerning both private and federal public institutions were explored here. Each individual in-depth study was constructed and analysed according to three main themes that emerged during conversations with participants from both sectors. They are an institution's distance education (DE) practices, staff development for DE and the policy framework for DE. Each is discussed below. Insights from documents, policies and institutional websites

analysis also inform this discussion. Federal public universities are discussed first, followed by the private ones.

7.3 The Federal Public Studies

7.3.1 Uni A

Table 6.1: Uni A's Profile (2008 Data).

Institution pseudonym:	Federal Public University of South
Campuses:	Four
Abbreviation:	Uni A
Participants Interviewed:	Three participants (one developer, one DE coordinator and one lecturer)
Total Academic Body:	2,114 (78 % full-time)
Undergraduate Students:	24,567
Postgraduate Students:	12,862 (Masters, Doctorate and Coursework)
DE Degrees:	Four undergraduate and two postgraduate coursework degrees
DE Students:	2,353
Staff Development:	Yes
Hours spent at the site:	Three hours

Uni A is a federal university located in the capital of Rio Grande do Sul State, in the southern part of Brazil, the second most developed region in Brazil. The researcher had previously contacted the DE coordinator from Australia, and on site she contacted the other two participants, one an educational developer and the other a lecturer who had previous experience with developing and managing a DE program.

Uni A is a well-known and large university, as can be seen by the data provided in Table 6.1 above. It is ranked amongst the top ten universities in the country (O Globo Online, 2008). Established in 1895, it offers degrees in most disciplinary areas and at several levels, including vocational, undergraduate, postgraduate coursework and research. According to the participants, *the history of DE in Uni A goes back to the 1970s, when this institution in partnership with other institutions in Costa Rica developed a professional development course at a distance for school teachers using radio technologies (DECoord, Science, FedPub, South)*. Currently, the Uni A's Distance Education Secretariat (in Portuguese: Secretaria de Educação a Distância (SEAD)), *established around about*

2002, is responsible for DE offerings across the institution (DECoord, Science, FedPub, South). SEAD, together with other centres for technological and pedagogical support of Uni A, encourage the development of DE courses and the development of single units to be offered at a distance as part of the 20 percent of traditional face-to-face degree recommended by national DE policies. With SEAD, Uni A can concentrate financial and human resources to support academic staff, tutors and students interested in DE. Uni A has adopted three Learning Management Systems (LMS) to maintain its DE activities; Moodle, which is freeware, and NAVI and ROODA, which were developed by the institution's research teams.

Uni A has offered two postgraduate coursework degrees and four DE undergraduate degrees. The postgraduate courses are offered to a small number of students (70 and 150) and seem to have been developed for the specific needs of the job market. As for the undergraduate courses, they are all tied to the Ministry of Education's programs and incentives to expand access to higher education in the country, including the Brazilian Open University (Universidade Aberta do Brasil – UAB). The first editions of these undergraduate degrees were offered in 2006 and in 2007. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that further editions were or will be realised, according to data collected from the university's website retrieved on ninth of March 2009. In fact, the Business School at Uni A explicitly states on its website that the business degree at a distance, initiated in October 2006, was a pilot project and, therefore, will not be offered again. This does not come as a surprise, as problems with discontinuity in educational programs and policies are commonplace and have already been discussed. Indeed, the fact that this federal university is not planning to continue offering some of its DE degrees, at least those initiated by the Ministry of Education campaign to increase access to higher distance education, provides additional evidence that policies for DE did not support implementation of DE adequately in terms of planning for long-term educational change, but rather resulted in short-term solutions for the very complex problem of increasing access to higher education in Brazil. This finding also reveals that participants' concerns were accurate: *a lack of policy that determinates how these [DE] degrees will be introduced to the university, how they are going to become regular (Lec, Humanities, FedPub, South)*. This could result, as predicted earlier, in increasing frustration, scepticism and resistance to future changes from academics at the federal public universities.

In terms of units offered at a distance, as part of a face-to-face degree, only one unit at the undergraduate level and one at the postgraduate level are being offered at a distance in Uni A at the moment. This is a paltry offering considering that Uni A offers 69 traditional undergraduate degrees and over 100 postgraduate courses, including research and coursework. Curiously, the eleventh edition of SEAD's annual press release specifically encourages academics to:

- increase the use of learning technologies in face-to-face education;
- expand the offering of DE degrees;
- expand the offering of units offered at a distance;
- develop learning objects; and
- develop research in DE (SEAD, 2009).

Uni A and SEAD try to attract academics to join DE by offering them financial incentives in the form of small grants. The annual press release tends to direct academics towards the university's DE strategy for the year to come, and inform them about the resources available for DE in that particular year. The recommended themes for 2009 applications are those listed above. So, academics wishing to develop their units at a distance, or engage in one or several DE activities need to apply for a grant, which may provide them with a computer, software needed if required, and a research assistant, also known as a tutor. There is no evidence that these grants provide any financial support directly to academics themselves. The research assistant is, as a rule, an undergraduate or postgraduate student of the university, receiving a monthly payment of R\$300 (Real – Brazilian currency), which is equivalent to approximately A\$200 or R\$600 (A\$400), respectively, for 20 hours of work per week. The duration of all projects approved tends to be from April to December of each year (SEAD, 2009). According to the participants, the focus of many projects tends to be the development of content materials and the development of learning objects (software applications). Financial incentives of the right kind need to be considered as they are central to promoting change. The literature in the field clearly states that if there is no money, there will not be changes (Bromage, 2006). Motivated by such grants, academics and their tutors can start exploring and learning about DE. Even though the period when the grants are available is short, what is learned could serve as basis for the future implementation of DE.

Furthermore, Uni A appeared to be aware of the importance of staff development for the success of its DE programs. Often academics joined DE voluntarily but, *they are still strongly encouraged to attend staff development programs (Developer, Science, FedPub, South)*, according to the developer responsible for staff development of the UAB project in Uni A. SEAD aims to play an important role in the development of Uni A's academic staff and tutors for DE. It makes available to all academics at the university the opportunity to meet monthly and engage in debates and discussion about DE practices. These are face-to-face workshops of approximately two hours each and are referred to by SEAD as DE Forums (*Fórum EaD*). SEAD is also responsible for the technological training of academic staff and tutors mostly regarding the use of software and LMS.

In addition, SEAD also annually promotes a three-day seminar named Hall of Distance Education (*Salão da Educação a Distância*). One of the objectives of the seminar is to support and further promote DE within the institutions. Further, the seminar provides opportunities for those academics granted funds for DE (mentioned above), to demonstrate the outcome of their projects in DE; in their majority content development, including innovative ideas for the future. According to the participants, *the seminar is a very important moment within the institution. It is a chance to learn what colleagues have developed, their successes and difficulties. It is a moment of reflection and an opportunity for exchanging knowledge in DE (DECoord, Science, FedPub, South)*. During the seminar academics also have the chance to learn from DE experts who are often invited as keynote-speakers. The three-day seminar appears to be a good chance for DE coordinators and educational developers to evaluate the development of content material, learning objects and research undertaken across the institution during the year. This exposes their work to peer review, which is also another form of evaluation, while also providing feedback from colleagues. By involving academics from several disciplinary areas, together with DE experts within and outside the institution, the seminar is likely to promote collective learning about DE. As already mentioned in several chapters of this work, if the people responsible for implementing DE on the ground, here the university teachers, are being encouraged to get involved and learn about the process of implementing DE, then some changes are likely to occur despite these *thin* strategies (Webb, 2003).

The findings revealed that Uni A may not continue to offer DE through the Ministry of Education's current incentives. These seemed to be due to a weak institutional

commitment to the promotion of change and improvement of its own DE projects. Despite, those directly involved in DE in Uni A were strongly committed. Academics access to financial resources, staff development and a team of experts in DE are reasons for this statement. There is no evidence that Uni A has or intends to develop a policy framework for DE. As it is a federal public university, it seems to rely heavily on the national DE policies for guidance. Similarly, the role of DE institutionally was not mentioned in the institution's vision or mission. This could be evidence that DE may not be in the long-term strategy plan of Uni A. Ironically, participants talked to at Uni A argued that the institution, together with SEAD, want to *create a DE culture (DECoord, Science, FedPub, South)*. In fact, the body of knowledge in the field suggests that an institutional DE framework for dual-mode institutions, which is the case of Uni A, could be a powerful instrument to assist the institutions' leaders and academics to overcome challenges during the development of DE, therefore, creating a culture for distance education. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of research undertaken by Uni A on any aspect of its DE programs, including content material, staff development programs, student learning outcomes and so forth.

7.3.2 Uni B

Table 6.2: Uni B's Profile (2007 Data).

Institution pseudonym:	Federal Public University of Southeast
Campuses:	Three
Abbreviation:	Uni B
Participants Interviewed:	Three participants (two developers and one lecturer)
Total Academic Body:	687 (98.25 % full-time)
Undergraduate Students:	5,259
Postgraduate Students:	2,018 (Masters, Doctorate and Coursework)
DE Degrees:	Five undergraduate degrees
DE Students:	978
Staff Development:	Yes (formally, only for tutors)
Hours spent at the site:	Three hours

Uni B is a regional federal university located in São Paulo State, Southeast Brazil, the foremost-developed region in the country. From Australia, the researcher contacted one of

the educational developers and while on site she contacted the other two participants; another educational developer and a lecturer with previous experience in DE.

Uni B is also a well-known federal university. It is also amongst the ten best universities in Brazil (O Globo Online, 2008). It was established in 1968 and today offers approximately 33 undergraduate and 34 postgraduate courses, including research and coursework (see Table 6.2 for additional details). DE came late in the history of this institution. In 2002 the Department for Computer Support in Distance Education was established. Even though there were not DE courses being delivered at that time, this department assisted, and still does assist, academics with a whole range of technological issues, including the use of learning technologies for face-to-face and distance instruction. According to the lecturer interviewed in Uni B, *in 2003 the School of Education developed an in-service teacher professional development program at a distance that she was involved with (Lecturer, Humanities, FedPub, Southeast)*. Additionally, encouraged by the Ministry of Education's incentives, in 2007 Uni B started offering degrees at a distance, adhering to the UAB project. Currently, Uni B offers five undergraduate courses in pedagogy, musical education, environmental engineering, information systems, and diploma in ethanol technology. Different from Uni A, Uni B has kept the offer of its DE degrees with a new group of students starting in early March 2009. With 20 access centres distributed in 19 different municipalities, and the capacity to enrol 1,850 new students at a distance per year, UAB-Uni B (also called Uni B Virtual, the name given to the centre responsible for DE), has a large team of experts to implement, deliver and coordinate the processes required in DE.

When the researcher visited Uni B in 2007, the implementation of degrees was in progress. The LMS chosen, and still in use today, was Moodle. The access centres were already established, but content materials were still being developed. The UAB-Uni team were also getting prepared for the development their first group of tutors. The tutorship in Uni B was not restricted to only internal undergraduate and postgraduate students as in Uni A, but it was also available to qualified professionals outside of the institution. Tutors at Uni B were also working 20 hours per week on a casual/contract basis.

All tutors were required to attend staff development. The approach for staff development of tutors was a mixed-mode approach, already explored in the previous chapter (see

Chapter Five item 5.4.3). The development programs started with face-to-face meetings. After that, tutors undertook several activities online and at a distance (using LMS) to encourage collaborative learning, discussion and interactions. In the final stage of the development program, tutors met once again to discuss their experiences and challenges faced during the development programs, as well to provide feedback for future programs. The above describe *thick* strategies for professional development, according to Webb (2003).

Particularly for academics joining the UAB, the Ministry of Education, together with several higher educational institutions across the country, established a staff development program completely at a distance. However, one developer declared that further face-to-face discussions to enhance academics' understanding of DE were needed after the staff development delivered by the government. This was because *this pre-packaged staff development was not enough to develop the skills we think are necessary for teaching and learning at a distance in Uni B (Developer2, Humanities, FedPub, Southeast)*. Unfortunately, the above situation seemed to be a single case because there is no evidence of ongoing formal staff development activities being undertaken in Uni B currently apart from that with DE tutors. Nevertheless, developers revealed that they and the instructional designers *receive frequent visits from academics asking for assistance or just checking on their content material development (Developer1, Humanities, FedPub, Southeast)*. This may suggest that a substantial amount of staff development could be taking place mostly on an informal ad-hoc basis.

Similar to Uni A, the offer of DE in Uni B is guided heavily by the national policies for DE. Surprisingly, one of the developers in Uni B recognised that *the actual national policies for DE leave opportunities for internal policy development*. She also revealed that they *hired a lawyer expert in copyright to deliver a speech for academics and tutors, as well as develop a manual with some copyright laws for DE and the Internet*. The fact that Uni B was concerned enough to produce a manual, and to develop a better understanding of copyright amongst academics, could be considered a indication of a strong commitment from this university to DE.

Although the developer mentioned that as problems with the implementation of DE emerge, they try to solve them as efficiently as possible, she also revealed that they *have*

not structured a single policy document for DE yet. Sadly, for DE coordinators and developers at Uni B this is not an appropriate moment to talk about this [development of DE policies], we need to focus on what academics require now to develop their DE units (Developer1, Humanities, FedPub, Southeast). This statement confirms the lack of other evidence that Uni B has a policy framework for DE. This is unfortunate. A policy framework could operate as a set of guidelines for practices, as well as ensure a level of commitment from academics and institutional leaders to DE, like that evident with traditional education.

7.3.3 The Federal Public Studies: Discussion

It can be noticed from the discussion above that Uni A and Uni B are well-established traditional face-to-face federal public universities and are operating now as dual-mode institutions. Furthermore, they both run mostly under federal educational policies. However, they are dissimilar in several aspects of their DE delivery. To begin with, while Uni A demonstrates evidence that it may not continue offering degrees at a distance, at least through the UAB, Uni B has started 2009 with a new group of students in each of its distance degrees again through the UAB.

Additionally, in terms of DE management, Uni A has SEAD, a department that provides centralised financial, technological and staff development assistance to academics and tutors working with DE across the institution. Uni B has UAB-Uni B, which is also a department that centralises the management, development and implementation of DE degrees, but only those included in the UAB. UAB-Uni B also provides formal development for tutors and perhaps informal staff development for academics. Other departments within the institution provide a measure of technological and financial support for academics.

Besides the similarities in the structure of their DE degrees, due to the UAB, staff development in Uni A and Uni B are distinctly different. Uni A encourages monthly face-to-face forums for academics or anyone interested in learning about DE within the institution to discuss issues related to DE across the institution. Together with this, Uni A holds a three-day seminar annually to promote DE and the activities developed during that

year. Training in the LMS and other software are also available in Uni A. The above are classified as *thin* strategies for staff development. By offering continuous staff development, Uni A provides academics with several opportunities for learning about DE. However, there is no evidence that the above programs have impacted on teaching and learning across the institutions. In contrast, Uni B did not seem to offer formal staff development for its academics on a regular basis. Instead, the developers tended to provide ad-hoc assistance to academics. As for tutors, they had access to a mixed-mode staff development program, reflecting a *thick* strategy for professional development (see Chapter Two, item 2.5.1) (Webb, 2003). Unfortunately, there is no evidence of any other type of staff development being undertaken in these universities rather than for DE. In a similar fashion, staff development at federal universities appeared not to be linked with any other additional institutional responsibility, such as SINAES (National Higher Education Evaluation System).

7.3.3.1 Impact of the UAB initiative for DE

As mentioned elsewhere, the UAB is a government project in which only federal public universities can participate. One of the aims of the project was to encourage federal public universities to deliver DE in order to increase access to higher education, mostly in remote areas. According to participants in Uni A and Uni B, the federal institutions tend to encourage their own academic staff to join the UAB, only hiring academics and tutors if necessary, as seen in the case of Uni B. According to UAB policies, academics working as DE coordinators, researchers and lecturers in DE courses receive an addition to their monthly salaries of R\$1,200 (approximately A\$788). Distance tutors, those attending to the students online and at a distance, receive a monthly salary of R\$600 (A\$400). The access centre managers, who are responsible for the maintenance and control of access centres and face-to-face tutors, receive a monthly payment of R\$900 (A\$600). As for the face-to-face tutors, those who assist students' learning face-to-face at the access centres, they receive monthly payments amounting to R\$500 (A\$330) (MEC/FNDE, 2006). In addition, distance and face-to-face tutors and access centres managers need to have a teaching degree, and a few years of experience in teaching, at least in primary and secondary education. This policy does not state how many hours people performing each of the above roles should work per week, but it was learned from the discussion that tutors worked an average of 20 hours per week. Even though the above salaries can be

considered low, taking into account the number of hours worked and the qualification required for the job, even for Brazil, it is encouraging for DE that the Ministry of Education has made these resources available to expand access to higher education through DE. By working with, and learning about DE, many educators across the country could start realising the potential of DE for increased access and quality of higher education in Brazil. Therefore, UAB could be a catalyst for collective change in educators' beliefs and behaviour to start taking place in Brazil as a result.

One concern is that the UAB regulation on payments, mentioned as scholarships with all professionals employed by the UAB project, requires a two-year scholarship contract. The contract can be finished at any time and extended if the institutions wish to do so. This is congruent with previous findings and discussion, and provides further evidence that the UAB may result in a temporary project for a quick fix, rather than a long-term strategic plan to incorporate DE within Brazilian higher education system.

Besides the scholarships offered to those participating in the UAB project, Uni A offers a number of annual grants for those academics interested in experimenting with DE, while Uni B does not have any other incentive to encourage academics to employ DE. The reality is that, despite of all the financial incentives, *it still does not seem enough to attract many academics (Developer, Science, FedPub, South)* to DE. Academics in Brazil and around the world are very busy professionals and the idea of including further activities, such as distance education, into their already heavy workload may not sound very attractive at all to most of them. In terms of DE structure, Uni A and Uni B are very similar. The main reason for this is simply because they both follow the UAB orientations for DE. In fact, the same DE structure can be found in most federal universities.

Also, federal universities are required to give priority to offering teaching degrees due to the large number of school teachers currently working without formal qualifications in Brazil. These universities could develop DE programs that can benefit disadvantaged and isolated regions in the country, in an attempt to bring higher education and development to these regions and their populace (UAB, 2008).

The structure for DE designed by the Ministry of Education and its partners seems to have some commonalities with the division-of-labour and industrialisation approaches to DE

(see Chapter Two and Three, items 2.3.1 and 3.4.2). It remains very complex, expensive and inflexible, in fact, reflecting the education system in Brazil; bureaucratic, controlling and rigid (see Chapter Three, item 3.3). UAB is complex because its programs involve many staff involved in the development process, and also in student support locally run access centres in schools with tutorials support and a multi level of government agreement. It is expensive firstly, because it is delivered to a small number of students at a time and place (maximum of 150). To be cost effective, the above approach for DE should be offered to a larger number of students than face-to-face instruction (Hanna, 2007; Moore & Kearsley, 1996). This limitation in numbers could suggest that the government has been cautious in introducing DE in Brazil, allowing academics and students to build their confidence, adapt to new teaching and learning approaches and eventually decrease resistance to DE. In this manner, the government can then take advantage of the current infrastructure, financial and human resources invested in DE, to expand further and faster its offer in Brazil, congruent with the current government strategy of providing “university for all” by increasing access to higher education through DE (see Chapter Three, item 3.3.3 and 3.4.2).

Unfortunately, the above theory should be discarded as it is not reflected in reality. It has already been mentioned earlier that the continuation of the UAB does not seem to be considered by the federal government and the Ministry of Education as a long-term educational strategy. Current policies and findings in this study are evidence of this, especially the short-term nature of project funding models (Fullan, 1991, 2007). Furthermore, the design of UAB degrees is also inflexible. Federal universities cannot and should not be limited by a stipulated number of students they can enrol, by the nature of courses they can offer, nor by the range and number of professionals they can hire. A “one-size-fits-all” approach does not address an institution’s particularities, and does not provide institutions with opportunities to be creative, diversify and experiment with different DE approaches. Moreover, there is no evidence that research and/or evaluation have been undertaken to verify the efficiency and effectiveness of the UAB model and its impact on student learning.

It has been argued several times in this work that staff development is a key element for achieving quality and successful DE (King, 2003; Salmon, 2004; Webb, 2003). This does

not seem to be the case within Uni A and Uni B. As a new form of education, and by using their own academic staff the majority of whom have no experience with DE, these institutions do not seem to make available to their academics enough opportunities for continuous learning for a deep and lasting adoption of DE. A policy framework for DE, and staffing policies that address staff development issues, could help educational leaders and educational developers to further encourage academics to attend staff development programs. Unfortunately, Uni A and Uni B did not present indications that they had or were planning to develop a policy framework for DE. In fact, the developer in Uni B recognised that there are possibilities for further development of the actual policies for DE, but it is still not the appropriate time yet to do so. Perhaps, they believe that developing such an internal framework is a waste of time given that UAB can discontinue at any time. They certainly believed that it is not the priority in the process of implementing DE in their institution, implying that the development of a policy framework for DE can wait to be considered. Another possibility already highlighted in the cross-sector study is that professionals working with DE may not feel totally confident to develop such policies due to limited knowledge in the field.

It can be noticed by the discussion above the Brazilian Ministry of Education seemed to ignore some of the pre-conditions for successful education change for DE and therefore, reflecting its desire to temporarily adopt DE instead of implement it definitively. As mentioned before, “it is easier to adopt structural changes than it is to engage in the hard work of cultural changes in relationships, capacity, and motivation” (Fullan, 2007, p. 238). That appears to be the case in Brazil, where the Ministry of Education has promoted change by pushing for accountability and providing some, but provisional, incentives, with no capacity building for deep and lasting change. The following sections are devoted to four universities from the private sector. Similar themes are explored and compared.

7.4 The Private Sector Studies

7.4.1 Uni C

Table 6.3: Uni C's Profile (2006 Data).

Institution pseudonym:	Private Catholic University of South
Campuses:	Three
Abbreviation:	Uni C
Participants Interviewed:	Two participants (one DE coordinator and one lecturer)
Total Academic Body:	1,693
Undergraduate Students:	26,011
Postgraduate Students:	4,916
DE Degrees:	Two postgraduate coursework degrees
DE Students:	Numbers not available
Staff Development:	Yes
Hours spent at the site:	One hour and 20 minutes

Uni C is a large private Catholic university. It was established by a Catholic congregation called *Maristas* Brotherhood in 1931. Similar to Uni A, Uni C is located in a metropolitan area, the capital city of Rio Grande do Sul State. The two participants, one DE coordinator and one lecturer and DE professional, interviewed in Uni C were contacted from Australia. Unfortunately, it was a short visit of one hour and 17 minutes (see Table 6.3), but the researcher still learned a great deal from them. According to data available, Uni C offers 69 undergraduate, 23 Masters (research and coursework) and 16 Doctorate degrees. DE started in Uni C with the foundation of Uni C-Virtual in 1998. Uni C-Virtual is an independent department that centralises the support of most DE activities across the institution, including the professional development of academics and DE technologists, and anyone adopting learning technologies in teaching (*Lect, Sciences, Private, Catholic, South*). Since 2007, Uni C-Virtual has offered 40 postgraduate coursework degrees, one undergraduate and several short courses and graduated 4500 students at a distance. Currently, it offers two postgraduate coursework degrees at a distance each with a duration of 18 months (360 hours). These are distance courses designed for small groups of targeted professionals with some compulsory face-to-face activities, for example, student's assessment. Further, students' learning occurred mostly at a distance with the assistance of printed materials, the Internet and LMS. At the time of this investigation, Uni C did not

offer undergraduate degrees completely at a distance, but it does encourage the use of learning technologies in the classroom, as well as the adoption of 20 percent of traditional face-to-face degrees at a distance. For academics interested in joining the above activities, Uni C-Virtual offers staff development programs. Moodle is the LMS adopted.

Uni C is an institution that appears to be concerned with the professional development of its academic staff. Traditionally,

it has offered every semester a staff development activity to academics across the institution where they can debate general issues such as evaluation and assessment, teaching and learning methodologies, competencies, and so forth (Lec2, Sciences, Private, Catholic, South).

There are also more specific staff development activities being offered by individual departments to their academics. These are likely to be encouraged by the current National Higher Education Evaluation System (SINAES), which requires an internal evaluation as one of the instruments of the system, together with national students' assessment and evaluation of degrees (SINAES, 2006). In addition, an internal evaluation intends to identify the institution's purpose for operating, along with its profile, including courses, programs, projects and departments, taking into account its nature and diversity (SINAES, 2006). Also, one aspect of such internal evaluations is that institutions need to make available to their academic and general staff professional development programs. This could finally provide academics with opportunities for professional development to enhance their teaching and learning in HE in Brazil. However, there is no evidence yet as to whether the outcomes of these development programs have acted to promote educational improvements, or whether these have simply made institutions accountable to the Ministry of Education's accreditation processes.

At Uni C-Virtual, staff development has been undertaken since its establishment in the late 1990s. It has offered 42 staff development programs in DE, developing over 1,000 academics from Uni C and its partners in that time. The staff development programs at Uni C-Virtual are offered regularly. The 2009 calendar anticipates programs for March, April, May and June. They are normally programs that consist of a total of 20-hours duration, with 12 hours of face-to-face meetings in a series, discussions and practical activities using the LMS, and eight hours of activities at a distance and online. Clearly, this is a mixed-

mode approach for staff development, the favoured approach of educational developers interviewed in this study. The objectives of these programs are to assist academics in adapting and developing their own content materials for DE and in learning how to use the LMS and its tools to enhance teaching and learning. Also, these programs *attempt not only to theorise, but also to put into practice concepts of DE (DECoord,Sciences,Private,Catholic,South)*. The participants in Uni C called this strategy *development in action* (or in Portuguese “*formação em ação*”). They believed that *in this way they could decrease academics’ resistance to DE and encourage innovation (DECoord,Sciences,Private,Catholic,South)*. In addition, another staff development strategy applied by Uni C-Virtual is placing academics into the position of students. During the programs, academics are asked to have 75 percent frequency and interact via online chats and forums. These activities form the basis for the students-academics program assessment. In other words, if the students-academics do not interact online, do not attend the classes and do not do the tasks they are expected to perform, they do not receive the certification at the conclusion of the development program.

It is interesting to note that during the interview, the researcher asked Uni C participants for their views regarding staff development program evaluation; they were clearly against *this role of evaluator setting [them up] as a supervisory body, which would not be positive. [They] want to be seen as partners. Evaluation is a complex business! (DECoord,Sciences,Private,Catholic,South)*. Now, approximately one and half years later, the staff development programs’ assessment criteria for certification are available at the Uni C-Virtual online portal. What has changed their views about evaluation is unknown, however, one can speculate that further understanding and reflection on current issues surrounding DE could be a prime reason. If so, this would evidence of some of Fullan’s preconditions for successful educational change; continuous learning about the process of change (Fullan, 1991, 2007). Thus, the participants eventually felt less resistant to evaluation. Consequently, their behaviours and beliefs were altered. Unfortunately, there is no indication that evaluation of the staff development programs has been undertaken. Document analysis showed that in terms of a policy framework for DE, Uni C has developed its institutional policies for DE in ways that also anticipate staff development for academics and others working with DE. Importantly, Uni C-Virtual has its own mission and vision, which are both aligned with those of the institution.

7.4.2 Uni D

Table 6.4: Uni D's Profile (2006 Data).

Institution pseudonym:	Private Catholic University of Southeast
Campuses:	Three
Abbreviation:	Uni D
Participants Interviewed:	Seven participants (One DE expert and six lecturers)
Total Academic Body:	960
Undergraduate Students:	19,689
Postgraduate Students:	998
DE Degrees:	None offered
DE Students:	Numbers not available
Staff Development:	No
Hours spent at the site:	Seven hours and 17 minutes

Uni D is also a private Catholic university, in this case established in 1941 by the Bishop of the regional Diocese at that time. It is located in the second biggest technological, economical and scientific region in São Paulo State, coming just after São Paulo city. Uni D currently offers 39 undergraduate degrees, six research (five Masters and one Doctorate) degrees, 18 postgraduate coursework degrees and several diplomas and other types of short courses and training.

During the first stages of this study (December 2005), the researcher informally visited Uni D to make some initial contacts and learn about the institution and its DE programs with the hope of returning in the future for data collection. During that time, there was a Centre for Distance Education (created in 2001), which was coordinated by an expert in the field, who later became one of the DE experts who contributed to this investigation. Contacts via electronic mail with the expert continued from Australia. A couple of months before data gathering in Brazil (early 2007), the expert informed the researcher that Uni D was no longer offering DE and staff development to its academic body due to the formation of new administrative committee bodies and new strategic plans. *The Centre for Distance Education was extinct and only the incomplete DE programs continued to be offered, but just until their conclusion (Expert4, Sciences, Private, Catholic, Southeast).* Even though DE ended at Uni D, the researcher decided to go ahead and investigate it, in an attempt to find

out additional reasons behind the termination of DE there. Uni D was then considered as an atypical study.

During the period spent at the site, the researcher, with the assistance of the expert, contacted six other lecturers, all of whom had previous experience in DE. According to the participants, Uni D was an early adopter, starting DE about 1997 with the establishment of a Masters research degree in Information Systems Management and later with a Masters in Computers Systems. These courses were offered from 1997 until 2003, then, motivated by external forces, Uni D decided to end their provision. Further questions and probes revealed the reasons why Uni D needed to stop offering these degrees. Participants declared that the main reason was because the National Council for the Improvement of Higher Education (CAPES) and the Ministry of Education did not provide accreditation for these courses. When Uni D began, DE at a higher education level was almost non-existent and the CAPES and the Ministry of Education were not prepared to legally accredit these courses. In other words, there was no legislation that could support Uni D and the accreditation. The first piece of legislation regulating DE at a higher education level did not come about until 1998 for undergraduate, but for postgraduate degrees not until 2005 approximately two years after allowed Uni D courses to discontinue (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2005).

In addition, besides being at a distance, the degrees had a different structure. They were professional Masters research degrees, a style of degree focused more on professional development, rather than on the academic career pathways, which used to be the only style. Currently, this is a degree offered across the country by several higher education institutions. But, during that period, the professional Masters had also a degree structure unfamiliar to the government bodies above. This discussion shows, once again, that what is unknown and uncertain generates resistance. That was exactly what happened in this situation, argued Uni D's participants (*Expert4, Sciences, Private, Catholic, Southeast; Lec3, Sciences, Private, Catholic, Southeast; Lec4, Sciences, Private, Catholic, Southeast*). Therefore, Uni D could not continue offering these degrees. After that, the institution, with the assistance of the Centre for Distance Education, continued promoting DE through the option of offering 20 percent of some of its face-to-face courses at a distance, and encouraging the use of learning technologies to enhance teaching and learning across the

institution. This went on until 2007, when the centre was closed and the remaining DE activities terminated.

The researcher was then interested to learn about participants' experiences during the period they were involved in DE, as well as their views on the failure of their institution's DE programs and the possible impacts caused by it. The majority of the participants in Uni D mentioned that they did have an enriched professional experience teaching at a distance. All of them enjoyed the learning process, which involved learning with each other, and also with students, most of whom were adult learners employed in the broader workforce. A large number of participants (five) declared that they learned new teaching and learning strategies and that this learning contributed to an improvement of performance with instructing face-to-face students. In response to further probes, lecturers pointed out that they would instruct at a distance again, but under better working and salaries conditions than before. According to them, because DE was such a new educational mode, not many professionals were qualified to teach at a distance, and the institution could not provide enough support to them. During the implementation of the Masters degrees mentioned earlier, they worked longer hours and learned how to develop teaching materials and how to work with distance students by themselves in a short period of time. In addition, these participants also argued that institutions should have created policies to attract academics to DE, which could include job promotion and financial incentives. Sadly, many of them lost interest in DE and did not keep learning about it. In fact, they kept referring to the past and reminding the researcher that they were not aware of the current DE policies and practices in Brazil.

It is interesting to notice that the implementation of DE in Uni D demonstrates what the body of knowledge in educational change in higher education has affirmed for decades. To begin with, Uni D started developing and offering DE without verifying whether the CAPES and the Ministry of Education were capable of accrediting the degrees in question. Educational leaders and decision-makers evidently had not done their research and negotiated with government bodies concerning the possibility of offering such innovative degrees. Thus, Uni D appeared to have adopted a top-down management strategy, questioned by many (Bromage, 2006; Fullan, 2007). In addition, it ignored that not all academics were ready intellectually and emotionally for such changes, and furthermore, that change takes time. As a consequence, what they did *in reality was*, [they] got the

material [they] already had, made a few quick adaptations and made it available at a distance. Basically, it was the same material that [they] had before (Lect4,Science,Private,Catholic,Southeast).

Also, there were no opportunities for professional development then as the Centre for Distance Education was only established a few years later. In spite of the challenges above, Uni D's academics ran the degrees for several years. Perhaps, they were still motivated by the chance to discover new teaching and learning approaches, as mentioned earlier. This probably lasted until they learned about the discontinuation of the degrees due to a lack of accreditation. Without the accreditation, these degrees could not be recognised anywhere in the country. All the above possibly reflect the actual scenario that occurred with DE in Uni D. A lack of institutional planning, poor incentives and policies, inadequate staff development, and inexperienced educational leaders at that time were likely to be the reasons why the Centre for Distance Education was closed and DE at Uni D no longer exists. Without a motivated academic body to embrace DE and the changes brought by it, there is no reason why DE would continue in this institution. One can conclude that the failure to continue DE programs at Uni D is due to poor initiation strategies, followed by a flawed implementation process with little or no vision-building, evolutionary planning and problem coping (Fullan, 1991, 2007)

Staff development in Uni D seemed to be driven by the same rationale as Uni C, the SINAES institutional internal evaluation. Thus, general staff development tended to take place at Uni D twice a year. When it operated, the Centre for Distance Education was responsible for managing several aspects of DE within the institution, including providing professional development to academics and technologists working with DE, as well as those instructing with the support of learning technologies. The staff development program for academics, in particular,

lasted approximately 60 hours and adopted the mixed-mode approach, with initial face-to-face meetings and then distance and online activities. Academics adhered to the programs voluntarily and received a certificate at the conclusion of the programs (Expert4,Sciences,Private,Catholic,Southeast).

Similar to Uni C, Uni D also placed academics in the simulated role of students. Generally, there was an assessment task that happened throughout the program, where *academics developed their own units at a distance and with the adoption of learning technologies*. At the end of the program, *this task represented a little graduation project for them*. The LMS used was Teleduc, freeware developed by a Brazilian state public university. During the period that the centre was active, it developed approximately ten percent (100 academics) of Uni D's academic body, said the expert (*Expert4,Sciences,Private,Catholic,Southeast*).

Despite all the challenges and frustrations that these participants have faced, surprisingly Uni D was the only institution that undertook research into DE, in comparison with other universities explored in this investigation. There was a research group, the Research Group for Learning Technologies, and the DE expert coordinated them. One of their research findings was *that distance students were performing better than face-to-face in a particular unit* (*Expert4,Sciences,Private,Catholic,Southeast*). Furthermore, participants in Uni D believed that positive outcomes of staff development were apparent based on the attitudes and conversations with former attendees. According to their staff, the use of learning technologies did increase after the staff development programs for DE. One can conclude, therefore, that if academics were engaged in the continuous adoption of learning technologies, they were in fact offering quality staff development for students' learning improvement. Analysis of Uni D's documents revealed that in terms of policies, some lines of direction for DE delivery still remain in Uni D institutional policies. This may suggest that the institution's educational leaders have not disregarded DE entirely. Next, an university in the Northeast region of Brazil is explored.

7.4.3 Uni E

Table 6.5: Uni E's Profile.

Institution pseudonym:	Private University of Northeast
Campuses:	Five
Abbreviation:	Uni E
Participants Interviewed:	Five participants (one DE expert, two DE developers and two lecturers)
Total Academic Body:	Numbers not available
Undergraduate Students:	Numbers not available
Postgraduate Students:	Numbers not available
DE Degrees:	Nine undergraduate, two diplomas and five postgraduate coursework degrees
DE Students:	Numbers not available
Staff Development:	Yes
Hours spent at the site:	Six hours and 40 minutes

Uni E started in 1969, and in 1972 it began to offer its first higher education degrees. In 1994, it was recognised by the Ministry of Education in Brazil as a university. Uni E is the youngest HE institution participating in this study. It is located in the Northeast region of Brazil, the second poorest region in the country. Even so, the economic problems in this region have not stopped the growth of Uni E. Today, it offers approximately 25 undergraduate degrees, eight diplomas, two Masters research and several postgraduate coursework degrees. Accredited to offer undergraduate courses at a distance in 1997, and postgraduate coursework degrees in 2004, Uni E currently has the capacity to offer nine undergraduate, two diplomas and five postgraduate coursework degrees at a distance. All the above are distributed throughout five campuses and 31 access centres located in four different states. In fact, in 2007 Uni E was the only private institution in its state accredited by the Brazilian Ministry of Education to offer DE at higher education level.

The researcher contacted the institution's expert in DE from Australia and with his help she then contacted two educational developers and two lecturers with experience in DE at the site. DE at Uni E is delivered with a similar structure to the UAB.

Content materials are developed by Uni E's academics. There are also distance and face-to-face tutors. While distance tutors are based at the main university campus, the face-to-face ones work with students at the access centres and are normally locals (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast).

The former assisted students slightly differently compared with distance tutors at other institutions in this study. While others assisted students online via the LMS and emails, Uni E's distance tutors attended to some of the students through a 1800 free telephone service, in addition to online and LMS assistance. This is because there were no Internet service providers in several parts of the countryside of that state. The latter were in charge of *supervising students' learning, assessments tasks and other activities undertaken at the access centres, as well as controlling students' frequency*. Face-to-face tutors had special roles in Uni E because *they were the connection between students and the university (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast)*. Additionally, Uni E did require a sample of students in each distance unit to evaluate the unit, instructors, materials, student support and so forth. Unfortunately, the problem remains the same as in the cross-sector study: how these evaluations are used to improve the DE units, degrees, and materials and ultimately enhance students' learning is unclear.

Furthermore, similar to other private universities investigated here, Uni E has undertaken staff development for some time, and not only focused on DE. Similar to Uni C and Uni D, this appeared to be encouraged by the internal evaluation processes required by the current National Higher Education Evaluation System (SINAES). As for DE, Uni E's academics working with it must attend staff development. *It is compulsory for them (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast)*. So there is a strict interpretation of government policies for DE in Uni E.

According to educational developers, Uni E provides two major types of staff development in DE. One program is specially designed for those academics and tutors working with students at a distance. It is delivered totally face-to-face with a *duration of approximately 16 hours. The last four hours are dedicated exclusively to the learning of the LMS and take place at the university's computer labs (Developer1, Humanities, Private, Northeast)*. The LMS adopted by Uni E is also Moodle. The second staff development program is designed to assist face-to-face tutors and academics working with DE delivered by correspondence. *It was necessary to divide the groups because of the differences in teaching and learning methods in the two models [online and correspondence] that needed to be approached during the staff development program (Developer1, Humanities, Private, Northeast)*. In some cases, *educational developers and unit coordinators together trained face-to-face*

tutors in specific content materials (Developer1, Humanities, Private, Northeast). On top of these programs, the developers used to organise meetings with academics and online tutors, a total of 63 professionals at that time (Developer1, Humanities, Private, Northeast). These meetings took place every second month, where they discussed several issues in DE, including problems, challenges and things that were going well and not so well (Developer1, Humanities, Private, Northeast).

Despite opportunities for staff development at Uni E, all strategies used were based on traditional face-to-face instruction such as seminars and teacher/content-centred methods. Further questions and probes revealed the reason why they insisted on these approaches was simply that it was convenient, not only for the academics attending the programs, but also for those developing them. The developers explained that their biggest challenge in offering staff development at a distance and online to academics *is that they were never instructed at a distance, and thus, do not have the skills needed to perform at a distance (Developer1, Humanities, Private, Northeast).* Additional inquiries were made to Uni E's DE expert who confirmed this finding. He went on to explain that the *face-to-face contacts were still very important and that these contacts built academics' confidence to learn the system later on (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast).*

Importantly, data from the online questionnaire collected from Uni E participants was very revealing:

[My] experience with staff development has been very disappointing. The instructors talk, talk, talk and press the buttons, many buttons and many commands, as the staff development was just a quick demonstration of how to use the systems. Other colleagues think like me. Perhaps, the institution should think in new ways so we could be developed (Lec4, Humanities, Private, Northeast).

If this academic is correct, the Uni E approach towards staff development seems to be out of step with the body of literature on staff development. The main rationale for developing staff should be to engage them in innovative learning, expose them to different teaching and learning strategies and to encourage cooperation and active and reflective learning, amongst other strategies (King, 2003; Salmon, 2004; Smyth, 2003; Webb, 2003). The above did not seem to occur in Uni E. Educational developers were not aware of or simply

ignored, the fact that for instructors to teach at a distance, they need to learn at a distance (Salmon, 2004).

As in every other institution investigated here, the research findings revealed that there was no staff development program evaluation being conducted at Uni E. In fact, one of the developers recognised that it could be an area of consideration and improvement. But, it was then highlighted that this evaluation happened sometimes informally through conversation with academics. This might produce enough valuable outcomes for staff development program improvement and help to inform staffing policies. However, methodologically sound evaluations are more likely to produce accurate outcomes for both staff development and staffing policy improvement (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007).

Moreover, document analysis showed that the Assistant Pro Vice-Chancellor for Distance Education department (Pró-Reitoria Adjunta de Ensino a Distância - PROEAD) managed DE at Uni E. It is a subdivision department under the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Academic. PROEAD is responsible for the conceptualisation, production and management of DE programs across the institution. In addition, it was also responsible for developing policies and frameworks for DE and staff development. However, the findings in this section suggested that these policies and frameworks are not sufficient to decrease resistance and encourage all academics to join DE at Uni E. Conversations with academic participants confirmed that *some of them still had resistance to DE (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast)*. One could assume that the above is a consequence of the inadequate and inappropriate staff development offered by Uni E. Also, participants at Uni E mentioned that the institution could encourage them to seek staff development by developing better staffing policies by providing professional or financial benefits. For example, *accumulating points towards job promotion within the institution (Expert5, Humanities, Private, Northeast)*

7.4.4 Uni F

Table 6.6: Uni F's Profile.

Institution pseudonym:	Private University of Southeast
Campuses:	Two
Abbreviation:	Uni F
Participants Interviewed:	Four participants (one DE coordinator and three lecturers)
Total Academic Body:	Numbers not available
Undergraduate Students:	Numbers not available
Postgraduate Students:	Numbers not available
DE Degrees:	One undergraduate and four diploma degrees
DE Students:	Numbers not available
Staff Development:	Yes
Hours spent at the site:	One hour and 20 minutes

Uni F was established in 1928. It is a regional private university located in the northeast of São Paulo State, in the southeast region of Brazil. This region is well known because of its large economical and agricultural capacities. Currently, Uni F offers 37 undergraduate degrees and diplomas, as well as four Masters, one Doctorate and approximately 50 postgraduate coursework degrees. Since 1990 Uni F has supported and explored the use of learning technologies to enhance teaching and learning across the institution. In 2007 it was accredited by the Ministry of Education to offer DE at a higher education level. Despite the recent accreditation, Uni F, together with its DE centre (DE-Uni F), currently offers five courses at a distance, one undergraduate degree and four diplomas. These are mixed-mode courses supported by printed materials and online interactions via the LMS (Moodle). Face-to-face meetings with tutors occur monthly, essentially on Saturdays. These meetings can vary from six to eight hours at a time, depending on the instructors, the content materials and the activities required by specific units.

Uni F was the only institution not contacted by the researcher from Australia. The contacts with this institution and some of its academic members occurred with the assistance of one of the experts contributing in this study. It was a short visit (one hour and 20 minutes), but the researcher learned valuable information nonetheless. One DE coordinator and three lecturers working on the development of DE, and on the development of their fellow academic staff at Uni F, were interviewed. In 2007, Uni F did not offer degrees completely

at a distance. According to participants, the institution first started by implementing two specific units (economics and methodology) using a mixed-mode approach, where parts of the units were in the classroom while some activities were conducted online. These units were typically offered in several face-to-face courses at Uni F. Participants mentioned that the mixed-mode version of these units was specially designed for students who had failed them previously. In the following semester, the institution initiated the offer of 20 percent of some face-to-face degrees at a distance, as did all private universities in this study.

At the time of this investigation, staff development programs were available every semester to academics at Uni F. *They were predominantly face-to-face expositions and focused mostly on the use of the LMS (Moodle) (Lec1, Science, Private, Southeast).* This approach to staff development was very similar to the one adopted by Uni E. In addition, *academics from within the institution developed the content materials and then sold the copyright to the institution (Lec1, Science, Private, Southeast).* According to the interviewees, with control over the materials, the institution could avoid possible problems in the future.

Further questions and probes with participants at Uni F showed that some of their conceptualisations of staff development were contradictory. When explaining his views of DE in Brazil, the DE coordinator mentioned that *there was a need to change educational paradigms from the traditional to a more flexible and student oriented one (DECoord, Science, Private, Southeast).* He added by declaring that *academics need to realise that the world has changed and that they need to follow this trend (DECoord, Science, Private, Southeast).* In response to questions related to DE-Uni F's approach to staff development, and how they were planning to help academics to change their current perspectives and follow such trends, he paradoxically revealed that at first *the strategy was to show a video to all academics attending the development program.* According to him, *it was a fantastic video that would motivate them to change their views (DECoord, Science, Private, Southeast).* This may very well have been an excellent video, but it could also represent the last strategy academics would expect to encounter in a staff development program for DE. Considering that the developers were young, and probably an innovative group of professionals, trying to attract them to join such a new way of delivering teaching and learning in Brazil (DE) with such a strategy would not seem very appealing. Many believe that staff development, using either a *thick* or a *thin* strategy,

should contribute to the learning of something new for academics, for example, new approaches to teaching and learning (Fullan, 2007). This does not appear to be the case yet at Uni F.

Unfortunately, the above were not the only problems facing Uni F at that time. Participants revealed that academics and students involved with DE were still resistant to it, and also to staff development. Ironically, they knew the reasons behind this resistance - some academics and students had DE imposed on them. At the first stages of Uni F's DE implementation mentioned earlier (the two mixed-mode units and the 20 percent of face-to-face courses), academics were not consulted as to whether they wanted to participate in DE or not. *They were just notified: "look, your unit will be at a distance from now on. So, you will need to attend a staff development program and the days it is taking place are". Those in the above situation were the most resistant ones and developers had difficulties (Lec3, Science, Private, Southeast).* As for students, they had enrolled in, and paid for a face-to-face degree, and then suddenly, they were studying at a distance. *The fact that these students had opted for a face-to-face course, meant they did not accept studying at a distance (Lec3, Science, Private, Southeast).* The above reveals that Uni F, its leaders and decision-makers, did not have a great understanding regarding the elements for success educational change and implementation of DE. By adopting a top-down management strategy they created a hostile environment, disrespected and ignored other people's choices, did not engage them in the process of implementing DE, nor in continuous learning about the change. The results are evident; resistance, uncertainty and negative attitude towards DE (Fullan, 2007; Jackson, 2004; Outram, 2005a).

Another problem with Uni F's management strategy for implementing DE was its choice of units. The reasons why the two units were chosen and designed specially for students repeating them remain unknown. Perhaps, it was a trial. However, there could be several reasons why students failed these units: they may have experienced significant difficulties; they may have been poorly designed; academics may have not been qualified to teach them; and/or students may not have been interested in attending them in the first instance. Such reasons should have been investigated before deciding whether the offer of these units, using a mixed-mode approach, would be appropriate or not in this case. Instead, Uni F appears to have started its DE delivery by imposing it on a group of challenging students, facilitated by unmotivated and angry academics. It appears clear here, once again, that Uni

F had a limited understanding of managing educational change for successful DE, treating it as an inferior method, and as a quick solution for solving institutional problems.

7.4.5 The Private Sector Studies: Discussion

The private sector showed that, despite being located in metropolitan or in regional areas or even in more disadvantaged regions of Brazil, these higher educational institutions were well-established face-to-face universities with a recent history of functioning as dual-mode institutions, with the exception to this being Uni D.

The private institutions here appear to have initiated their DE offer by first adopting the 20 percent of face-to-face courses at a distance, as authorised by the Ministry of Education and the policies for DE. This initiation, with Uni C and Uni F having more success than Uni E, was used to introduce DE slowly within these institutions and provide opportunities for learning about DE before starting to embrace full courses at a distance. In addition, according to each institution's strategies for DE, and the needs of their clientele, they offered a diversified range of courses, from undergraduate and postgraduate coursework degrees to diplomas. Even so, the approaches to DE were very similar. Learning was mostly based on printed materials with face-to-face meetings at the access centres and distance interactions via a LMS. With the exception of Uni D, which used Teleduc, all the other private institutions adopted Moodle. Due to the cancellation of DE offered in Uni D, it no longer had a centre for DE, while the other institutions did.

In relation to staff development, they all appeared to have introduced staff development programs before DE, with the exception of Uni F on which no information was made available. This was promoted mostly by the introduction of the HE institutions internal evaluation required by the Ministry of Education as part of its most recent National Higher Education Evaluation System (SINAES), as discussed earlier in this chapter and elsewhere. This could suggest that some academics were already used to attending some kind of staff development programs. Even so, Uni E and Uni F were still struggling to win the battle against resistance to DE and staff development programs. The main reasons for this struggle were mostly related to failure in implementing DE, including lack of vision-building, institutional planning and problem-coping. While Uni C and Uni D used a mixed-

mode approach for staff development (face-to-face meetings and online interactions), Uni E and Uni F provided only face-to-face development programs with some practical activities using computers for LMS skills development. In addition, Uni C and Uni D were the only institutions that applied strategies to assess academics attending staff development. Uni C used academics' attendance to face-to-face meetings and frequency of online interaction to assess and hopefully engage them in learning about DE, whereas Uni D requested academics to develop their units' content materials for distance instruction. Unfortunately, private universities did not seem to offer any financial and/or professional incentives to academics attending staff development nor to those engaged in DE. This is probably due to the nature of the private sector, where staff autonomy is more restrictive. In fact, one participant in Uni E revealed that some academics were pressured to adhere to their institution's DE programs, while the other declared that academics' attendance was mostly voluntary.

As for DE policies, all private universities showed some evidence of policy development in DE. Only Uni C-Virtual had an alignment between its own mission and vision with those of the institution. In contrast, Uni F provided almost no indication of policy framework for DE. This could be due to the early stages of its DE implementation. Perhaps later on, a framework would be developed.

The private universities revealed that Uni C seemed to be more advanced in terms of programs, staff development and policy framework for DE than Uni E and Uni F. The rationale for this could be that Uni E and Uni F were less experienced due to their recent implementation of DE. Uni D failed to continue offering DE at the time of this investigation due to poor initiation and implementation strategies (Fullan, 1991, 2007). But, studying them closely provided rich data and important insights for this research. It was learned from them that if the actions necessary for successful change are not carried out adequately, the implementation of DE might fail. Furthermore, the discussion here also indicated that so far the implementation of DE seemed to be an incredible learning experience for all institutions, and that they were trying their best to achieve good outcomes and improve the quality of education. Unfortunately, innovative intentions alone cannot overcome the challenges and complexities of a educational change process.

7.5 Conclusion

By examining the universities individually, this chapter was able to identify key issues regarding their responses to current DE policies, including practices, policies and staff development for DE. It can be seen that the federal universities responded by having a standardised DE offering. This is because they joined the UAB, a project developed by the Brazilian Ministry of Education to exclusively encourage public institutions to offer DE. The private sector was excluded from the UAB project. In a similar fashion, in terms of financial support for institutions and academics, only the federal universities were entitled to receive grants and scholarships from the Ministry of Education. Thus, private universities, although less directly controlled, were compelled to develop their DE programs with their own resources and means, more specifically, through using tuition fees.

In terms of institutions' responses regarding staff development, the findings revealed that the private institutions have started carrying out staff development programs before the introduction of DE. This is probably encouraged by the internal evaluations undertaken by institutions required by SINAES. On the other hand, in the federal public universities, the staff development is entirely dedicated to preparing academics to teach at a distance because of the UAB requirements and incentives. Curiously, there is no evidence of the impact of SINEAS' internal evaluations on staff development within these federal public universities. One could suggest that the provision of staff development for the improvement of internal evaluation outcomes has already been foreseen by the private sector, but not yet by the federal public one. Similarly, some private institutions investigated here seemed to have attempted to develop their internal policy framework for DE, while the public ones do not seem ready yet to put in the effort regarding policy development required. The private institutions' desire to continue offering DE, and the public institutions' uncertainty as to whether they are going to continue with it or not, are likely to be the reasons for these different approaches towards implementing a policy framework for DE. Here the strict government policies, limited approaches to vision-building, continuity of DE projects and security of funding models, all contributed to an underlying uncertainty. Finally, congruent with the research findings discussed in the Chapters Five and Six, at least at the time of this research, both the private and public sectors have not conducted thorough evaluation regarding their DE programs in any

critical aspects identified previously in the literature analysis. Therefore, these studies did not shed light upon the quality of DE in the institutions studied, including outcomes of student learning and quality of staff development for DE. No indicators for the quality of DE in these institutions, more generally, were therefore made apparent, supporting the previous findings in regard to the lack of quality assurance measures.

The next and final chapter summarises previous chapters in an attempt to conclude discussions of the research findings under the research questions. It also explores the implications and limitations of this study, together with methods, reflections, and recommendations for higher distance education in Brazil and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

The final conclusions and suggestions for the advance of distance education and staff development in Brazil are addressed in this chapter in this, the final chapter. It begins by focusing on the research questions. Then, methods, reflections, recommendations and implications for this study are also discussed, together with the limitations evident and proposals for future research.

8.2 The Research Questions

The research questions underpinning this study are:

Research Question 1: How are policies for distance education shaping practices of higher distance education in Brazil?

Research Question 2: To what extent is academic staff development for higher distance education undertaken in Brazil?

Research Question 3: How have private and federal public higher education institutions responded to current policies for DE?

8.3 How are DE policies within HE shaping practices of higher distance education in Brazil?

Evidence from document analysis and interpretations of findings surrounding the emerging themes of this research question revealed that public policies are shaping practices of DE by establishing a set of guidelines for the provision of DE across the higher education sector in Brazil. However, according to the findings, policies for DE in Brazil need to be further developed. By over regulating DE practices across the country, the current policies have strongly encouraged traditional face-to-face practices, rather than exploring the

flexibility and advantages of studying at any time and place, such as those provided by the distance education mode and already adopted worldwide. These were clearly indications of the centralised HE system in Brazil throughout the data. Analysis of data also revealed that knowledge regarding educational change theory is almost non-existent amongst policy-makers. This was evident in the silence of the data and policies regarding planning for the initiation of DE, while the practice of implementation appeared faulty, whether from the analysis of documents and policies to data analysis and interpretations. Fragile vision-building, lack of evolutionary planning and problem-coping, with little involvement and capacity building of key stakeholders in the process of change, are all likely to be limiting successful implementation of DE in Brazil. According to the body of literature, the above also contributes to increasing stakeholder resistance to DE (see Chapter Two, item 2.4).

As for quality, the data showed that policies for DE do not provide a solid quality assurance framework for the practices of DE yet. Despite the development of the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education*, which offers some important guiding principles for the assurance of quality in DE programs, this guideline is practically unknown by the participants interviewed in this study. Without any attention to the issues identified in the guideline, the quality of student learning, content materials and programs in DE in the institutions studied cannot be guaranteed. Policies have not yet shaped DE to achieve its full potential, and, that Brazilian decision-makers and their supporting teams seem poorly prepared to continue policy development towards implementation and preparation for the continuation of DE.

8.4 To what extent is academic staff development for higher distance education undertaken in Brazil?

The findings related to this second research question revealed that participants, including educational developers and DE experts, appeared to know the scale in which staff development has been undertaken in Brazil and in the institutions investigated here. They also appeared to recognise the models and strategies that ought to be adopted and how a quality staff development program ought to be developed in order to enhance teaching and learning in DE. However, the findings also uncovered that in practice the reality is complex. To begin with, staff development conducted by the institutions studied used

predominately traditional teacher/content-centred approaches rather than DE based on innovative ideas. Also, some of the programs seemed to be heavily based on instructing academics in the use of learning technologies alone, rather than taking advantage of these technologies to enhance teaching and learning, as suggested by in the body of knowledge on staff development (King, 2003; Salmon, 2004). Furthermore, despite some institutional strategies to attract academics to join staff development for DE, for example, providing certificates of staff development programs, these strategies do not seem enough to encourage academics effectively across the institutions to attend staff development. The institutions still lacked appropriate staffing policies such as supporting quality teaching and learning through awards and other incentives.

Educational developers showed goodwill by trying to do their best to achieve change within their institutions and enhance academics' understanding of staff development. However, their abilities seemed limited by the challenges they faced, including a lack of clarity about the roles that educational developers play within institutions and their lack of involvement in policy development. The findings also suggested that some educational developers' limitations go beyond the institution and fall into the professional scope. The latter developers showed a poor understanding of how to conduct staff development programs that had a focus on effective educational change and improvement. Furthermore, most developers also did not seem to recognise the benefits of carrying out an evaluation of staff development programs. Thus, educational developers participating in this study were not receiving formal feedback on their staff development programs.

The lack of sound evaluation practices in DE and staff development in Brazil, appear to be confirmed by data gathered across this study. Consequently, there is an absence of knowledge production and data from evaluations to inform improvement and identify successful staff development models in Brazilian higher distance education. Even so, there already appears to be some progress concerning the positive impact of staff development on decreasing levels of academics' resistance and improving the quality of content materials for DE. This progress reaffirms that advocated by the body of knowledge: that staff development is one of the key elements for quality and successful educational change, and should be the primarily focused in this case on improving teaching and learning within the move to expand HE by adopting DE. Hence, based on participants' views and on the body of knowledge available.

Staff development for DE in Brazil could be voluntarily based but with incentives, adopt a student-centred approach to learning, promote collaborative learning and reflective practice, and be associated with institutional and staffing policies and incentives. However, it will be up to policy makers and educational leaders to further investigate and develop staff development approaches from the broader international literature for use in the Brazilian context in general and in institutions in particular.

8.5 How have private and federal public higher education institutions responded to current policies for DE?

Data related to this research question revealed that educational sectors, private and federal public, have responded differently to current DE policies. In terms of DE practices, federal public universities functioned heavily based on the UAB program and other Ministry of Education policies, while the private sector tended to have the flexibility to develop and adopt other models for DE, despite the need to follow some public policies for accreditation purposes. The similarities are that all institutions investigated here, whether federal public or private, offered DE mostly based on traditional approaches to teaching and content-based instruction, as well as relying on the access centres for face-to-face meetings.

Individual institutions varied in their responses. Even so, the Uni B's response to DE policies appeared to be to move from initiation towards an implementation phase of DE, while a termination of UAB seemed evident in Uni A prior to full implementation. Uni A, however, had internal financial support to encourage DE and the use of learning technologies, as well as continuous staff development programs, which are likely to continue being offered into the foreseeable future. Likewise, Uni C might be expected to take its DE offer on to a fuller implementation phase. This is because of its apparent success with DE and the constant offering of staff development programs in Uni C, together with the alignment of DE and institutional policies and mission. Although Uni E has shown evidence of poorly designed staff development programs, its DE programs are also likely to continue being offered due to its current institutional policy framework for supporting DE. Finally, it is difficult to visualise the future of DE in Uni F. As the most

recent accredited DE provider in this study, it appears to have already started its implementation phase without considering the preconditions for successful change for DE. Uni F is positioned between the phases of poor initiation and faulty implementation.

The sectors' responses to staff development varied. Staff development has occurred with more consistency and frequency in the private sector than in the federal public one. This is because staff development at private universities appeared to be influenced by the internal evaluation element of the National Higher Education Evaluation System (SINAES). At federal public universities, staff development emerged with the introduction of DE, with no evidence of it being linked with any other additional institutional responsibility. A similarity shared between these sectors was that none of the institutions investigated showed evidence of sound formal staff development evaluation of any kind. Also, *thin* strategies and teacher-centred methods to staff development remain the core approaches in these programs.

To conclude, participants from the federal public universities studied revealed that the UAB could be simply a temporary government response to the need of increasing access to higher education, rather than being a long-term strategic plan to incorporate DE within the Brazilian higher education system. In possible support of this contention, the Ministry of Education seemed to ignore some of the pre-conditions for successful educational change for DE. Unfortunately, none of the institutions appear to have achieved the outcomes desired for a fruitful change process.

8.6 Recommendations

After drawing upon these research findings and the related literature, some recommendations for the improvement and continuation of DE in Brazil can now be offered. Educational change theory suggests that change is a complex and lengthy process, which requires high levels of commitment from those involved. In order to enhance commitment and stakeholder engagement, the introduction of DE might better be negotiated rather than imposed by the Ministry of Education in Brazil. Despite the complexities of such negotiations, this could be achieved by shifting the alignment of management strategies through combining top-down and bottom-up management

strategies, with a focus on the people by involving them in continuous learning about the process of change and fostering capacity building for improvement. Further policy development appears also to be necessary for DE to prosper in Brazil. The ten elements for successful change developed by Fullan (2007) could assist the Brazilian government and institutions in establishing strong foundations for the implementation of DE. Hopefully, this would then lead DE to the implementation and continuation phases of the change process and create an ongoing and permanent form of such education in Brazil (see Chapter Two, item 2.4).

Another recommendation to assist government bodies and higher distance education institutions to accomplish deep and lasting implementation of DE is the adoption of the conditions for success outlined in the three phases of the change process (initiation, implementation and continuation) developed by Fullan (2001, 2007). Together with these, the contextual and cultural factors and themes affecting each phase should also carefully be considered. This would foster a better understanding amongst policy and decision-makers and educational leaders, concerning the educational change process and the factors that can influence the success or failure of change (see Chapter Two, item 2.4). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and HE institutions in Brazil might work together towards developing a quality assurance system for DE in which outcomes enable improvement and further inform policy development in DE. Quality assurance for DE in Brazil should be clear and flexible in order to absorb the contemporary driving force for change quickly, a focus on improvement of education, involve stakeholders and be undertaken by specialists and peer reviewers (see Chapter Two, 2.3.2).

The recommendations for academic staff development programs and practices are also correlated to educational change theories, as continuous staff development is a key element for increasing staff commitment and involvement in the process of change, and consequently, also in decreasing resistance to change. Once again, based on the findings and on the literature and perceptions of participants, staff development should promote collaborative learning and reflective practices with a focus on teaching and learning improvement. Also, staff development programs should prepare Brazilian academics to overcome current and future challenges, minimising the negative impacts of adopting DE, together with encouraging them to be more critical and innovative. Importantly, strategies for successful staff development should take into account academics' previous professional

and personal experiences, as well as promote evaluation based on improvement. At management levels, in order to develop and maintain an institutional culture of change through staff development and continuous learning about teaching via DE, Brazilian higher distance institutions need to implement appropriate staffing policies and provide teaching rewards. These are strategies recommended by the core body of literature and are also consistent with the findings. These all need to be in harmony with an institution's internal policies and framework for DE, as well as its mission and goals.

The recommendations above provide a strong foundation for a nationwide and/or institutional framework for implementing successful educational change based on staff development and DE in Brazil. It is hoped that through this framework, policy and decision-makers, as well as educational leaders and educational developers, can envisage new directions for national and institutional policy development for DE. This study contributes to increasing and encouraging the practices of staff development for the improvement of teaching and learning across the higher distance education sector in Brazil. After the completion of this thesis, the findings, discussions and recommendations presented here will be appropriately disseminated through publications and reports both in English and Portuguese accessible to relevant Brazilian government bodies and higher educational institutions.

8.7 Limitations

There is a gap in the Brazilian higher distance education literature, but this gap also presented limitations for this study. Even though this further highlights the relevance and contributions of this study to higher distance education and staff development in Brazil, and to the related body of knowledge, it also provided restricted bases for comparisons and analysis. The same could be said regarding the lack of evaluation of any kind in DE and staff development in Brazil.

While being a strength of the methodology, researching in two languages (English and Portuguese), it represented presented difficulties. Principally, this was due to the amount of time, effort and paperwork required to work in both languages. A second reason was the need to establish additional trustworthiness and quality assurance procedures of data

collection and analysis. However, this has also proved to have been a strength because clear research quality procedures were formulated and maintained. Further, making preliminary contacts with Brazilian academics from Australia based on electronic mail only, was also time consuming, and in several cases these contacts did not reply. Similar problems occurred after the face-to-face data gathering. The online questionnaire and preliminary data analysis sent to participants via electronic mail had lower rates of response from participants than expected. These limited the value of these data but care was taken not to go beyond the data.

8.8 Future Research

The areas for future research are extensive. DE and staff development in higher education in Brazil is a new area of research. However, based on findings revealed in this research, some are more imperative than others in order to improve the foundation for quality and further inform policy development of DE and staff development in Brazil. In particular, research is required into the:

- Brazilian models and approaches to DE, including the UAB, in the improvement of student learning;
- impact of the *Guideline for Quality in Distance Higher Education* on the improvement of DE in Brazil;
- impact of staff development for DE offered by institutions; and
- impact of staff development offered by institutions on the improvement of student learning in DE.

8.9 Conclusion

Change is a constant occurrence in the educational landscape. How change is planned, initiated and implemented dictates the success or failure of an educational change enterprise. As a flexible and innovative approach to higher education in Brazil, DE has the potential to increase access to education in remote areas of this vast country and to those who, for several reasons, are excluded from higher education. The recommendations developed as outcomes of this research study can assist in helping to improve the prospects for DE in Brazil. Although the future prospects for DE within HE in Brazil remain unknown, its potential is clear; managed appropriately and effectively it could dramatically alter the educational landscape across the country.

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APPENDIX 1: THE INSTRUMENTS

Information Sheet for Participants Interview

Title of the Project:

HIGHER DISTANCE EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: POLICIES, PRACTICES AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Contact details of the researchers:

<p>Dr Robyn Smyth Teaching and Learning Centre Lecturer in Higher Education University of New England Armidale NSW Australia 2351 Phone: +61 (02) 6773 3720 Fax: +61 (02) 6773 3269 Video IP: 129.180.10.105 Email: rsmyth@une.edu.au Web: www.une.edu.au/tlc</p>	<p>Dr Sarah Stein Higher Education Development Centre Senior Lecturer University of Otago P. O. Box 56 Dunedin New Zealand Phone: +64 (03) 479 5360 Fax: +64 (03) 479 8362 Email: sarah.stein@stonebow.otago.ac.nz</p>	<p>Carina Bossu PhD Student School of Professional Development and Leadership Faculty of Education, Health and Professional Studies University of New England Armidale NSW Australia 2350 Phone +61 (02) 6773.2346 Fax +61 (02) 6773.3997 Email: cbossu2@une.edu.au</p>
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Research shows that effective academic professional development is one of the keys to successfully delivering quality online distance education. This study aims to identify the main issues regarding academic professional development for online teaching in Brazil, as well as recommending a model for this specific and important training. This project, and the data gathered from the online questionnaires and interviews, will form a substantial part of my Doctoral thesis at the University of New England. In addition, the project will involve:

- Four case studies, that will be selected from four different kinds of Brazilian higher educational providers (private, state public, federal public and open university), and also from their positive responses
- An online questionnaire that will be used to give a broader understanding of the participant and institution being investigated, as well as guide the researcher student for the in-depth interviews
- Volunteers being interviewed about their experiences, perceptions and expectations about online distance education, and more specifically academic development
- A recommendation of an appropriate model for university staff professional development in Brazil, based on the data gathered and analysed

Participants will be selected from volunteers who indicate through their email answers that they would be willing to participate in this research. The online questionnaire, which can be accessed at <http://www-personal.une.edu.au/~cbossu2/>, will be sent to participants prior the interviews and it might take around 10-15 minutes to be completed. Interviews will be approximately 60-90 minutes in duration. In addition, during the face-to-face interviews or videoconferencing and/or teleconferencing (if necessary), field notes will be taken by the researcher student and an audio recorder will be used to record interactions for analysis. Data from questionnaires, transcriptions of interviews and discussions may be used in this research project but participants' identities will not be revealed. A pseudonym for each participant will be agreed between the researcher and the participants at the time of the interviews.

You have the researchers' assurance that at any time during the entire project you will be free to withdraw, and in that event, that you will be put under no pressure to continue participation.

Information gathered during the research will be used only for the purpose of the study, and your identity will be kept confidential in any reporting. When reporting on the project, pseudonyms will always be used. After the interviews, data will be transcribed and you will be presented with drafts to gain your assurance that what has been written is an appropriate and true representation.

Raw data, such as audio recordings of interviews, field notes, computer files, etc. will be kept locked in a filing cabinet in the researcher's office until the completion of the researcher's PhD candidature (in the short term), and then locked in a filing cabinet also in the associate researcher's office (in the longer term, more than 5 years). No one except the researchers mentioned above will have access to those documents/files, and then only for the purposes of transcription and analysis for this project.

If you have any questions about this project, or about your involvement in the project, you can contact the researchers at any time. At the end of the research student's candidature a summary with the results of this study will be produced, and if you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be able to receive a copy of the summary by email. This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No. HE06/173 Valid to .01/03/2008)

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at the following address:

*Research Services
University of New England
Armidale, NSW 2351.
Telephone: (02) 6773 3449 Facsimile (02) 6773 3543
Email: Ethics@pobox.une.edu.au*

Please retain a copy of this Information Sheet for Participants for future reference.



The Teaching and Learning Centre
 Armidale, NSW 2351 Australia
 Telephone (02) 6773 2999 Facsimile (02) 6773 3269
 email: tlc@une.edu.au
 website: <http://www.une.edu.au/tlc>

Consent Form

For the participants in the project:
HIGHER DISTANCE EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: POLICIES, PRACTICES AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Contact details of the researchers:

Dr Robyn Smyth Teaching and Learning Centre Lecturer in Higher Education University of New England Armidale NSW Australia 2351 Phone: +61 (02) 6773 3720 Fax: +61 (02) 6773 3269 Video IP: 129.180.10.105 Email: rsmyth@une.edu.au Web: www.une.edu.au/tlc	Dr Sarah Stein Higher Education Development Centre Senior Lecturer University of Otago P. O. Box 56 Dunedin New Zealand Phone: +64 (03) 479 5360 Fax: +64 (03) 479 8362 Email: sarah.stein@stonebow.otago.ac.nz	Carina Bossu PhD Student School of Professional Development and Leadership Faculty of Education, Health and Professional Studies University of New England Armidale NSW Australia 2350 Phone +61 (02) 6773.2346 Fax +61 (02) 6773.3997 Email: cbossu2@une.edu.au
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I (the participant) have read the information contained in the Information Sheet for Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time.

I understand that comments I make in interviews and discussions will be audio taped and transcribed.

I understand that transcriptions of comments I make in interviews and discussions may be used in this research project, but that my identity will not be revealed.
 I agree that research data gathered for this study may be published, provided my name is not used.

.....
 Participant or Authorised Representative

.....
 Date

.....
 Investigator

.....
 Date

FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW

Interviewee

Name (optional): _____

Your Gender: () F () M Age: _____

Name of Institution: _____

Semi-structured Interview Questions: Following up on questionnaire responses with volunteer and case study participants

- 1) What is Distance Education for you? And Online Distance Education?
- 2) What is your understanding of the benefits and limitations/problems associated with distance education worldwide and mainly in Brazil?
- 3) Please comment about your understanding of learning and teaching strategies for online and traditional distance education.
- 4) In your opinion, what are the characteristics and skills of a good distance education instructor? Why? How should they acquire these skills?
- 5) Would you value professional development in teaching and learning and in distance education instruction? Why / why not?
- 6) In your opinion, what are the key-factors required for successful development of academic staff?
- 7) In your opinion, what role do higher educational institutions and their policies and practices play in the success of their distance education courses?
- 8) What role does the federal government and do policies and practices play in the success of distance education in Brazil?
- 9) What is your opinion about the future of distance education in Brazil?
- 10) Anything you would like to add?

THE ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

**Research Title:
Higher Distance Education in Brazil: Policies, Practices and Staff
Development**

Please choose / Por favor escolha:

English or/ou **Português**

If you have any questions about this project or problems with this webpage, please contact the researchers of this project:

Se tiver dúvidas ou sobre este projeto ou problemas com esta webpage, por favor contate as pesquisadoras responsáveis:

Principal Supervisor / Orientadora Principal: Dr Robyn Smyth - rsmyth@une.edu.au

Co-supervisor / Co-orientadora: Dr Sarah Stein - sarah.stein@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

PhD Candidate / Doutoranda: Carina Bossu - cbossu2@une.edu.au

Research Title: Higher Distance Education in Brazil: Policies, Practices and Staff Development

Aims of the Study:

This study aims to identify the main issues regarding academic professional development for online teaching in Brazil, as well as recommending a model for this specific and important training. This project, and the data gathered from the questionnaires and interviews, will form a substantial part of my Doctoral thesis at the University of New England.

About this Online Questionnaire:

Information gathered through this questionnaire will be used only for the purpose of the study, and your identity will be kept confidential in any reporting. When reporting on the research, pseudonyms will always be used.

If you wish to access the Ethics Approval regarding this project, please [click here](#).

For further information about this study and your participation with this online questionnaire, please [click here](#).

Terms and Conditions:

By clicking the "Continue" button, you will be agreeing with the terms and conditions of this research, these are:

"I understand that completing and submitting this questionnaire means that I give my consent for the information I provide to be used in Carina Bossu's research project "Academic Professional Development for Effective E-learning: A Possible Framework for Brazil" as long as no details are revealed that would allow me (or my institution) to be identified/associated with any comments I might make".

[Continue](#) 
 [Back](#)

Research Title: Higher Distance Education in Brazil: Policies, Practices and Staff Development

Questionnaire for Participants

Note: questions marked * are compulsory

Name (optional):

Your Gender:

*Age:

Name of Institution:

Location (name of town):

Please select ONE response for each question

*1. Type of Institution:

- Private
- State Public
- Federal Public

2. Undergraduate core area:

- Science
- Humanities
- Equal mix of Science/Humanities (eg. double degree)

3. Your highest Academic Qualification:

- Bachelor Degree
- Graduate Diploma
- Masters Degree (coursework)
- Masters Degree (research)
- Doctorate
- Post Doctorate
- Other (please specify)

4. Your actual position in this institution:

- Researcher
- Tutor
- Lecturer
- Senior Lecturer
- Associate Professor
- Professor

Other (please specify)

5. How many years have you been teaching in the tertiary sector?

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- more than 20 years

6. How many years have you been working with Distance Education?

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- more than 20 years

7. How many years have you been working in your current institution?

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- more than 20 years

8. Please, classify your Internet skills:

- Very bad
- Bad
- Regular
- Good
- Excellent

9. Do you have access to an online/virtual environment and/or Learning Management System (LMS) (e.g. WebCT, Blackboard, etc.)?

- No
- Yes (please specify)

Please select ONE or MORE responses, if necessary:

10. Your favorite method(s) for teaching:

- Lectures
- Tutorials
- Practices
- Online (email, chat, virtual environment, etc.)

11. Which technologies have you implemented during your distance courses?

- Printed material
- Tapes and videos
- CD/DVD
- Email
- LMS
- Videoconference

- Educational TV
- Others (please specify)

12. Have you ever undertaken an academic professional development activity about distance education or online teaching in your institution?

- Yes
- No

13. In another higher educational institution?

- Yes
- No

a) If you answered **Yes** for any of the above questions (12, 13), please select the type(s) of course(s) you have attended:

- Workshops
- Seminars
- Group of team based activities
- Debates, panel discussions
- Individual consultation
- Totally Online
- Blended model (face-to-face and online activities)
- Others (please specify)

b) Please, provide the total duration of the course(s):

- 0 - 20 hours
- 20 - 40 hours
- 40 - 60 hours
- more than 60 hours
- One session only
- Ongoing development

14. If you have never experienced academic professional development of any formal kind, please provide the reason(s):

- The institution(s) does(do) not offer any academic training
- I do not need any academic training
- I do not have time for training
- I do not know if the institution(s) offer(s) academic training
- Others (please specify):

15. Would you like to have access to, or continue to have access to, academic professional development for online teaching?

- Yes
- No

a) If your answer is **Yes**, please indicate how would be the most appropriate way(s) to deliver it in your opinion:

- Totally online

- Blended Model (face-to-face and online activities)
- During work hours
- Evening classes
- Optional
- Compulsory for all online instructors
- Compulsory only for new academic staff
- Offer a Certificate after completion
- Others (please specify):

Please use the box below for additional information and comments, including issues or suggestions you may have regarding your readiness to teach online:

Please, tick the box below if you wish to receive the results of the initial data analysis of this research electronically:

- Please, provide your email address for the submission of the results:

If you have any problems submitting this form or any questions, please contact me at: cbossu2@une.edu.au.

Thank you for your time and assistance.
Carina Bossu

 [Back](#)

APPENDIX 2: ETHICS APPROVAL

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM TO: Ms C Bossu/Dr R Smyth/Dr S Stein
School of Professional Development and Leadership

This is to advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved the following:

PROJECT TITLE: E-learning distance education: A comparative study between
Australia and Brazil

COMMENCEMENT DATE: 01/03/07

COMMITTEE APPROVAL No.: HE06/173

APPROVAL VALID TO: 01/03/08

COMMENTS: Nil. Conditions met in full.

The Human Research Ethics Committee may grant approval for up to a maximum of three years. For approval periods greater than 12 months, researchers are required to submit an application for renewal at each twelve-month period. All researchers are required to submit a Final Report at the completion of their project. The Progress/Final Report Form is available at the following web address: http://www.une.edu.au/research-services/ethics/hrec_pages/final.report.doc

The *NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* requires that researchers must report immediately to the Human Research Ethics Committee anything that might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol. This includes adverse reactions of participants, proposed changes in the protocol, and any other unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

In issuing this approval number, it is required that all data and consent forms are stored in a secure location for a minimum period of five years. These documents may be required for compliance audit processes during that time. If the location at which data and documentation are retained is changed within that five year period, the Research Ethics Officer should be advised of the new location.



Fiona Pearson
Secretary

22/11/06

APPENDIX 3: CODING SCHEME

Research Questions	Themes	Sub-Themes	Definition	Indicators	Examples	Link with other Chapters	Link with Questionnaire and Interview
<i>1- How are policies for distance education shaping higher distance education in Brazil?</i>	DE-Context	Current Policies	The current political context of DE in Brazil	Participants' constructions of the current political context of DE in Brazil.	"Here in Brazil... DE in this country... Our legislation..."	Literature Context Findings 1	I1 I2 I8 Documents
	DE-Quality	Conceptualisation Evaluation Content Material	Measures of the quality in DE	Participants' perceptions of quality and instruments to evaluation quality for improvement in DE.	"Quality DE should help students to learn... Good DE courses should be..."	Literature Context Findings 1	I3 Documents
	Career	Roles Challenges	The impact of the introduction of DE on academics	Participants' views of the impacts of the introduction of DE on their careers, ex.: workload, career change and their roles in DE.	"Tutor, instructor, ... more about the multiple skills..."	Literature Context Findings 1	Probing I5 and I6 Documents
	Tendencies	Positive View Negative View	The future of DE	Participants' perceptions of the future of DE in Brazil.	"My pessimist view of DE is... I think that there is a tendency for..."	Literature Findings 1	Q9 Q10 I9 Documents

<p>2- To what extent is academic staff development for higher education undertaken in Brazil?</p>	Approach	Strategy Models	PD models and practices in Brazil	Participants' experiences with PD models, strategies and practices in Brazil and in their institutions.	"Here, development programs are predominantly..."	Literature Context Findings 2	Q12 Q13 Q14 Q15 I4
	Quality-PD	Bad-practice Good-practice	The measures in staff development	Participants' perceptions and measures of staff development practices.	"Promote reflection within the university..."	Literature Findings 2	Q15 I6
	Developer	Challenges Concerns	Developers' concerns and challenges	Developers' constructions of the challenges and concerns they have faced.	"The biggest difficulty is..."	Literature Findings 2	Probing I4, I5, I6 and I7
	Impact-PD	Practices Attitude	Impacts of PD in attitudes and practices	Reflections, perceptions and examples of how PD has improved educational practices and academics' attitude towards DE.	"Lecturers are now adopting learning technologies to their face-to-face classes..."	Literature Findings 2	Q 8 Q 9 Q 10 Q 11 I 5

<p>3- How have private and federal public higher education institutions responded to current policies for DE?</p>	Public	Pub-DE-practice Pub-PD-practice Pub-DE-policy	Staff views and experiences in their own institution.	Participants' views and experiences of their own institution in terms of DE, staff development and policy framework for DE in the federal public sector.	"The problem in public universities is..."	Context Findings 3	Q1 Probing I7 Documents
	Private	Pri-DE-practice Pri-PD-practice Pri-DE-policy	Staff views and experiences in their own institution.	Participants' views and experiences of their own institution in terms of DE, staff development and policy framework for DE in the private sector.	"In private institutions DE tend to occur..."	Context Findings 3	Q1 Probing I7 Documents