

CHAPTER SEVEN
IMPLICATIONS, RAMIFICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

IMPLICATIONS, RAMIFICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

One may not grasp the full significance of Coffey's (1988:351) formula for effective co-operation, which is $1 + 1 = 3$ until one has actually attempted a similar process. Investigating and analysing the factors that influence the successful implementation of cross-institutional co-operation in course development is just such a process and has enabled the researcher to more perceptively interpret Coffey's formula

The most outstanding feature of co-operation *per se* is that it is a very **complex** process. To begin with a semantic point – what is the correct terminology for the concept? Is it "co-operation" or "collaboration"? Can the two be used interchangeably, as is the case in most of the literature pertaining to the concept? The Concise Oxford English Dictionary and some authors such as Elton (1992) and Salter and Hart (1982) suggest there is a difference between the two even if they both embrace an element of "working together". Consequently the term "co-operation" has been used consistently throughout this thesis, but this does not imply that the use of "collaboration" is incorrect or inappropriate.

Next is the concept itself. An understanding or interpretation of a concept will undoubtedly form the basis upon which plans and strategies for implementation are formulated. Yet there are indications that people may not approach the idea of co-operation with uniform understanding. For example, some people may expect co-operation to entail complete surrender of autonomy and undivided trust and loyalty to the co-operative venture as opposed to the parent institutions, while others may maintain that co-operation does not require complete surrender of autonomy, nor does it demand altruistic trust and loyalty at the expense of allegiance to parent institutions/organisations.

The complexity of cross-institutional course development is further compounded by the factors that come into play, some of which can be, in themselves, extremely complex. This study has established not only the effect of motivation, the social element, administrative implications and context, but also the interactions between them. All of these have been dealt with in detail in Chapter 6. Following is a selection of the most salient features of those interactions, as well as their ramifications and implications for any two

or more institutions that are contemplating the prospect of engaging in cross-institutional co-operation in course development.

MOTIVATION

The importance of motivation to initiate and sustain an activity cannot be over-emphasized. The motivation can be in the form of a need or perceived benefit, while in some cases the need to rationalise resources might be the motivational force. In the joint authorship projects studied, perception of **academic benefits** in terms of quality improvement and staff development was the driving force while in the other projects the need to **rationalise resources** (the principal/specialist arrangement) or to **provide a course** (OLA courses and Women's Studies) was the motivating factor.

Interestingly, the two – rationalisation of resources and realisation of academic benefits – are not mutually exclusive. No matter which one is the motivational force, the other is still achieved. Where rationalisation of resources is not seen as necessary, the academic benefits of co-operative course development alone should serve as sufficient intrinsic motivation.

What have emerged as incidental benefits for some of these projects (see Chapter Four) could, for others, serve as a motivational force.

THE SOCIAL FACTOR

Central to this factor is the role of the **individual**. It takes an individual with vision to initiate a programme. It takes a dedicated individual to implement and see a programme through to its successful completion. It takes a motivated individual to convince other people of the value of a project and to find ways and means of carrying the project through, even if this means bypassing institutional policies, cultures and norms to put the project into operation.

The literature pertaining to co-operative ventures in education does not place much emphasis on the role of the *individual* in co-operative ventures – which seems, on the basis of this research, to be a serious oversight/omission. The business/private sector, however, does make a lot of reference to the importance of the role of the *individual*.

Equally important is the issue of **interpersonal relations**. The key word in the joint authorship projects was "friendship". It is not difficult to see why. It makes everything else that much easier. However, where the participants have no prior knowledge of each other, the establishment and maintenance of "rapport" should be a prime concern. This is where trust and group skills should play an important role.

In addition, and certainly not to be taken lightly, is the influence (positive or negative) of the social dimension on such other elements of a co-operative enterprise as administrative and contextual factors. As observed earlier, in any work situation, people can make decisions about any aspect of work; people can manipulate or sabotage technology; but people can also use technology efficiently and effectively. The technological aspect of the work situation, on the other hand, has no "authority", so to speak, over people. Most enterprises depend upon the people's ability and willingness to do them.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

It would help to have policies in place to support co-operative initiatives. For such policies to have effect they should enjoy the support of all parties concerned, which assumes that their establishment should have involved all of those parties.

Institutional administration should actively support the venture by making available the necessary resources and facilities, while at the same time granting the venture a certain degree of administrative flexibility if not actual autonomy.

All the projects studied made use of small course teams. The desirability of small teams has been adequately dealt with by Calvert *et al.*(1993), Paul (1990), Kaufman (1982) and Cummings and Srivasta (1977).

There is no evidence in these projects that selection of course team members was an administrative exercise to ensure suitability for the task. The self-selection of the key participants and the co-opting of other experts in the field, took care of that issue. However, it would not be presumptuous to advise that, where selection of course team members is an administrative exercise, the question of relevant expertise, experience and skills to work in groups should be taken into account.

A central issue where two or more people or institutions have to work together is the matter of agreements, formal or informal, and documentation which details the proposed contributions and responsibilities of each, as well as the benefits which should accrue to each. While the **equal partnership** arrangement in all the joint authorship projects studied is cited as one of the principal factors contributing to their success, other kinds of arrangements might have to be made. Where the co-operating parties are of unequal strengths, these arrangements would depend on the resources at the disposal of the partners.

The self-selection of the key players in the projects studied ensured the **voluntary** nature of participation, which is another significant factor in favour of success.

While some of the literature advocates formal agreements or contracts, indications from some of the projects studied here are that informal agreements could still work. Perhaps it all depends on the degree of trust established between the partners.

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Context in this instance refers to compatibility or lack of it in terms of resources, cultures, time, course and student levels.

Resources may determine the nature of the partnership – whether it be equal or unequal. This, in turn, will affect the finer details of the operation.

The economic climates of participating institutions and countries determine the extent of communications infrastructure as well as competence in their use and maintenance. This affects ease, speed and effectiveness of communication, irrespective of geographic separation as happened in the co-operation between Northern Territory University (Australia) and Middlesex University (United Kingdom). Where communications infrastructure and its use is not extensively developed, the co-operation might have to be limited to those institutions that are geographically close enough for face-to-face meetings that may, perhaps, be supplemented by telephone conversations or teleconferences.

Compatibility of cultures would be an added advantage. Where cultures are incompatible, the partners would need to deliberately develop an understanding of each other's culture as well as cultural empathy for each other. What needs to be emphasised is that differences in culture need not mitigate against co-operation, but an alternative strategy would be to co-operate on the development of the course core and leave the individual institutions to adapt that core to suit their cultures.

Co-operation in course development is time consuming. Participating institutions or individuals need to be aware of this fact and to balance it against the anticipated benefits. Again, where a venture of this nature is additional to an academic's normal duties (this was not the case in the majority of the projects studied) issues of time and workloads should be taken into account.

Where courses are developed for mutual use, the time scheduled for the offer of the course by participating institutions needs to be compatible to ensure maintenance of momentum of the project to meet similar deadlines. Compatibility of goals between institutions will ensure not only success but adherence to deadlines. Compatibility of student and course levels will ensure uniformity of goals and standards.

THE INTERPLAY OF THE FACTORS

The factors affecting the success or failure of cross-institutional co-operation in course development are interrelated. Figure 7 on the following page illustrates that interdependence.

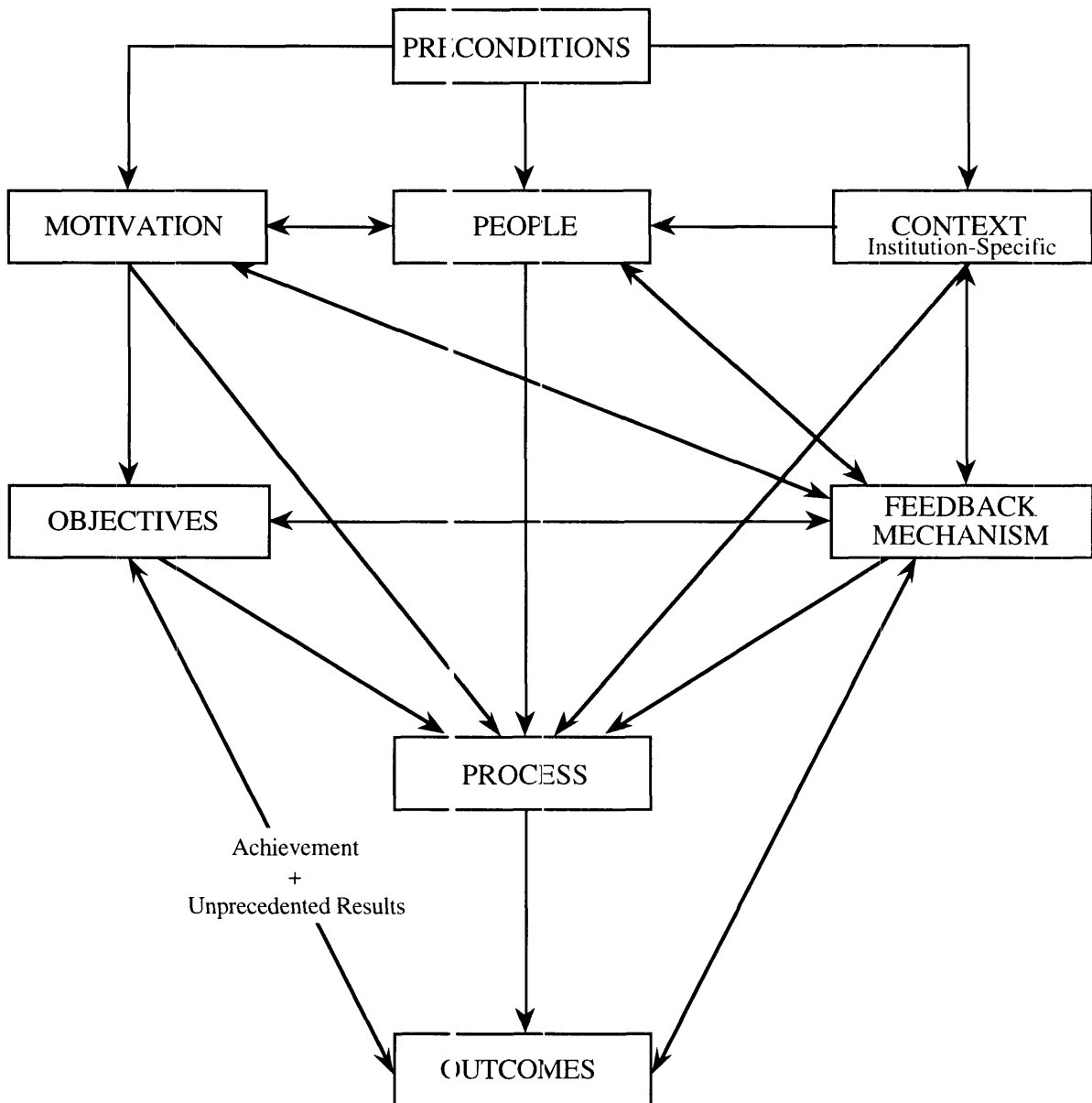


Figure 7: Interrelationship of factors

ANALYTICAL MODEL

It is suggested then, that any analysis of cross-institutional co-operation in course development should take the following into account:

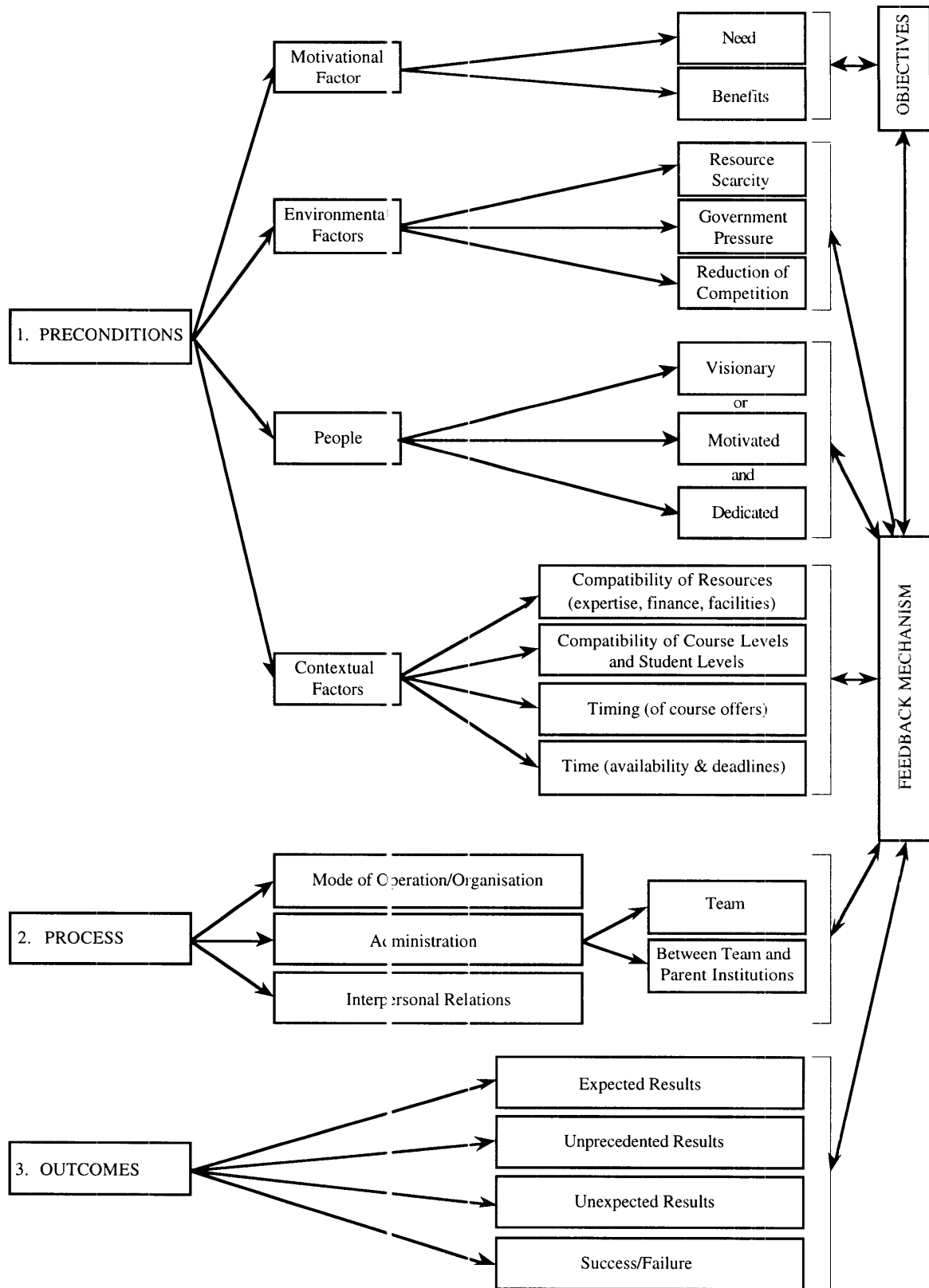


Figure 8: Analytical Model for cross-institutional course development

This is essentially an elaboration of Wood and Gray's (1992) suggestion that co-operative processes involve "preconditions, process and outcomes". The above diagram shows the details of the three factors as they apply to inter-institutional co-operation in course development.

There is, however, a glaring deficiency of a planned feedback mechanism to ensure that the recommended model is operational, and to maintain currency, relevance and development of the complete process, in the projects studied.

PRACTICAL APPLICABILITY

Although this study was conducted among Australian higher education providers, and with the SADC region in mind, cross-institutional co-operation in course development is one kind of co-operation that can be practised by any two or more institutions irrespective of the spatial distances between them. It can be in-country, between/among countries, and between/among continents.

(1) Australian Higher Distance Education Providers

It is the researcher's conviction that a lot more, if not all, Australian higher distance education providers can benefit from the outcomes of this research.

Cross-institutional co-operation in course development does yield results which can be broadly categorised into (1) economic – rationalisation of resources; (2) academic – improvement in the quality of the course content, staff development and establishment and deepening of contacts and (3) personal – the professional self-development inherent in the academic benefits, the job satisfaction resulting from (2) and the establishment and deepening of relationships (friendship or business) as a result of the exercise.

As already indicated, the academic and economic benefits are not mutually exclusive so that, whichever is more attractive to the participating institutions/individuals, the other will also result. The end result will be achievement of both academic and economic benefits from any one cross-institutional course development project. Incidentally, even if rationalisation of resources is not an immediate concern, the resultant savings from the reduction in costs would be advantageous to the institutions. Moreover, as

Paul (1990) advised, it is better to make savings while you can, than wait to be forced into doing so by circumstances.

It must be assumed that there are many more cross-institutional ventures in course development than have been investigated in this research. If so, the literature is singularly and significantly uninformative. Project teams should be encouraged to document and publish details of their projects, whatever their level of success. Only from such published information can more people become aware of the extensive benefits of this kind of venture and hence, more people/institutions might want to take advantage of these benefits.

As a teaching/learning exercise, not only success stories should be published but also the not so successful so that other institutions contemplating the venture may be aware of and avoid the pitfalls. It would have been highly educative and interesting to have learned of projects that operated differently from those studied and to compare the effects of the interaction of those differences. It would have been equally informative to have discovered those factors which resulted in ventures being less than successful.

Though either short-lived (e.g. the principal/specialist provider arrangements) or a once-off experience (e.g. the Women's Studies and Joint Authorship models), all the models of co-operation in course development that have been practised in Australian higher distance education institutions have enjoyed a high degree of success, as measured by timely production of the courses and the smoothness of the operations. This, together with the benefits referred to previously, constitute a basis for the entry of other institutions into a field rich in opportunity and endeavour.

The Joint Authorship model, which is essentially a voluntary model, not initiated institutionally and not supported by institutional policies, but which is practised for academic, psychological and social benefits, has shown a potential for yielding other benefits, among them reduction in costs.

The Women's Studies Course and the Open Learning model are both institutional models. They are both supported by formal institutional policies and are both based on a specific need – the Women's Studies co-operation resulted from a need to offer a major sequence, which neither university could do individually. The Open Learning Agency of Australia requires courses in order to fulfil its mission of widening access to education. Though

the co-operative development of courses for Open Learning came about incidentally, whereby institutions tendering for the development of any one course demonstrated different strengths (academic or instructional design) that complemented each other that co-operation has now been built into OLA's requirements for course development because of the resultant quality of the courses. The Principal/Specialist Arrangement, had it been adopted and implemented successfully, would have also been supported by policy and would have fulfilled the Australian Commonwealth Government's need to rationalise resources.

(2) Lesotho and SADC

Lesotho and other members of the SADC region would, no doubt, benefit from the economic as well as the academic benefits of cross-institutional co-operation in course development as documented in this and other studies.

However, they could not hope to adopt things such as the nature of the partnership and other aspects of the operation as pertains in Australia without modifications to suit their situations. For example, the institutions might be unequally resourced, which means they could not enjoy the kind of equal partnership exhibited in the joint authorship projects. This implies a clear stipulation of the inputs and benefits of each member, depending on what they have to offer. The venture would also be undertaken in different education systems and economic climates, both of which would dictate a different set of arrangements to those pertaining to the projects studied in this research.

If the aim, as in the joint authorship model, is to develop a course or courses for mutual use, this means that the course has to be produced for the same level of provision. Therefore for some of them which have one university, Lesotho inclusive, co-operating with a university in a neighbouring country/countries becomes the only option so that they need to take into consideration the issue of the compatibility of course levels. Co-operating in course development across national borders implies not only differences in institutional cultures but also differences in national cultures, both of which have to be taken into consideration.

Co-operating across two or more countries in the SADC region with their individual and sometimes unique economic situations and their degree of

development of communications infrastructure, implies paying particular attention to communication channels, geographic distances and degrees of isolation between the prospective co-operators. In such instances, it might be more practical for the staff involved to consider the option of an intensive period of working together from one location. This would eliminate any problems that would arise from having to communicate across not just geographic distances but also national administrative systems. This option is, however, not devoid of problems. It necessitates time release for the participating staff. Time release, in turn, may imply the provision of relief staff, which has financial implications for the institutions.

The joint authorship model of co-operation in course development has two strong indicators for its success - its voluntary nature, the equality of partners in terms of contribution to resources and sharing of responsibilities and benefits. This model does have some potential for application in the SADC region, but particular attention would have to be paid to the success/failure variables:

1. Most of these countries have very poor economic resources. Consequently, so are their universities.
2. Equality of partnership with regard to contribution of resources cannot, therefore, be assumed.
3. The contributions and benefits of each participating institution would have to be very clearly laid out in order to avoid problems that might arise as a result of equity/in equity in contributions and benefits.
4. Because most SADC countries have one university, staff engaging in this kind of co-operation would be doing it across country borders and therefore across not only institutional but also country cultures. It would therefore be advisable for institutions co-operating across SADC countries to concentrate on the development of the core of a proposed course and leave the finer details and the production of the course to individual institutions.

The complementary course model (as with Women's Studies) can work between institutions in one country, or it can work between countries, **only if the education systems are similar**. This may not be the case in the SADC

region, members of which are independent, each wanting to retain its individuality and educational independence.

The kind of cross-institutional co-operation in which one institution commissions a service and the other provides the service for a fee, will work across any two or more institutions regardless of national borders, provided that one institution is prepared and has the financial resources to pay for the services that the other institution/s can provide. Be that as it may, it still yields academic benefits in the form of staff development. For example, academics are likely to acquire instructional design skills from working closely with instructional designers; and the establishment of significant educational contacts.

The Open Learning Association of Australia (OLA) is an agency that commissions and pays institutions for the development of the courses it needs. This is similar to the role of central agency that would be played by IDESA in SADC. However there would be major differences between OLA and IDESA. OLA is funded by one government – the Australian Commonwealth Government. IDESA would be controlled and perhaps funded by the governments of the SADC member states. This implies potential for conflicts relating to equity issues, irrespective of whether it is funded by the participating governments or the funding source is external to SADC.

OLA has existing Australian distance education providers and other institutions as potential suppliers of courses. In SADC, only very few institutions have higher level distance education programmes and these offer a very limited scope of courses. Thus, until such time as there are institutions in member states that are capable of producing required courses (of an acceptable standard), IDESA would have to look outside the borders of SADC for courses. This can be done in two ways – through the use of consultants from other parts of the world, or through purchase and adaptation of courses produced elsewhere. In either case IDESA would require funds to purchase those services.

Even if IDESA opted for the purchase and adaptation of courses, there would still be need, either in IDESA itself or in institutions in member countries, for adaptation of the courses to suit local requirements, as well as the need for maintenance of those courses – which implies appropriate staffing and facilities.

Adaptation to suit individual universities can be done in individual universities in their respective countries. If, however, the adaptation needs to be uniform for institutions in all member states, then there would be a need for an international/inter-institutional course team, composed of members from participating institutions, to ensure that cultural and institutional differences are taken into account. Needless to say, this would exhibit the usual problems associated with team work, financial underpinning and communications.

Positive aspects of the purchase and adaptation of courses are that it obviates "re-invention of the wheel" by making use of existing materials. It requires less time than the development of original courses. It would, therefore, be a quick way of building an initial course base/bank, allowing time for the training of local course developers. On the other hand, a major negative aspect is that the purchase of courses and clearing of copyright might be expensive. It would be necessary, therefore, to compare these costs with those of developing an original course.

Even without a central agency like IDESA, co-operation in course development is possible between any two or more members of SADC among themselves, or between any of the members of SADC with more highly resourced institutions in other countries of the world. Co-operating with the Western World in course development has the potential for both acquisition of skills and financial assistance to facilitate the programmes, whereas SADC members co-operating among themselves would be more like what Neemia (1986) refers to as the "association of the weak".

However, co-operation between members of the developing world with those from the developed world has been known to foster dependence of the developing on the developed. This comes about in two ways: (1) the terms and conditions of the foreign aid may be such that they encourage perpetual dependence of the Third on the First World or (2) people in the Third World may get into the habit of not doing things for themselves, and expecting the First World to come to their assistance whenever the need arose. Whatever the cause, this situation is undesirable and detrimental to the development of Third World countries and institutions, so that a mechanism needs to be built into co-operative enterprises to enable each developing country to eventually become independent and self-sufficient in its educational policies and strategies.

(3) Global Application

Co-operation in course development, in any form, can be practised between any two or more institutions anywhere in the world provided that adequate and appropriate facilities, together with efficient communication infrastructure are in place and the roles of the participants are clearly stated and documented. This study has established that it has academic as well as economic benefits.

Advances in technology, which facilitate effective communication across the world, together with the increasing popularity of distance and open learning have led to forecasts for a global open university (Utsumi and Urbanowicz, 1990). Such a university could serve distance or open learning students anywhere in the world, outside the confines of a conventional or traditional university education.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study has achieved the objectives stipulated in Chapter One and this section demonstrates the relationship between the findings and the objectives, together with the factors suggested as critical in developing a model for cross-institutional co-operation in course development.

Objectives:

1. **To determine the benefits of cross-institutional co-operation in course development:** The study shows that the venture yields academic as well as economic benefits. The academic benefits are in the form of improvement in the quality of the course content and staff development. Economic benefits are in the form of cost-cutting for individual institutions.
2. **To determine the kind of person (personality traits or personal characteristics or leadership skills) it takes to effect a successful co-operative venture of this kind** i.e. see the need for it, plan and carry it out and see it through to completion: Here the study reveals the need for an individual with vision, motivation, dedication and commitment.

3. **To identify the characteristics and especially the capacity for desirable interpersonal relations of an effective cross-institutional course development team:** The people involved must be able to work with other people, as a team. Friendship among participants played a very important part in the success of some projects. There is need for rapport even where the parties involved have no prior knowledge of each other. Mutual trust and respect go a long way towards achievement of rapport.
4. **To analyse the administrative implications of cross-institutional co-operation in course development:** The following factors are indicated – institutional support, institutional agreements, whether formal or informal, small teams and course team autonomy. The literature suggests paying attention to the calibre of team members. This study could not establish or disprove this as the people involved were already incumbents in the relevant positions because of their qualifications and expertise. In a way, though this does point to the need for right calibre of staff. Another factor that requires attention is availability and efficiency of communications infrastructure and channels.
5. **To determine those contexts within which cross- institutional co-operation in course development is most likely to succeed or fail:** Here the factors indicated are compatibility of cultures or at least an ability to accommodate each other's cultures, compatibility of course and student levels, compatibility in timing. Compatibility of resources facilitates equal partnership of partners. Where the partners are not equal, there is need for clarification of contributions and benefits.
6. **To compare the prospect of cross-institutional co- operation in course development with that of establishing and operating a regional university:** The following is a brief comparison of cross-institutional co-operation in course development with regional institutions as revealed in this study:
 - 6.1 Where establishing a regional university would require heavy capital expenditure (buildings and equipment) and heavy investments in staffing, cross-institutional co-operation in course development makes use of existing facilities.

- 6.2 Decentralising the services of a regional university in order to achieve equitable distribution of resources and give each participating country a university presence, would entail more of the capital investment mentioned above.
- 6.3 While equity in contributions and sharing are a major point of contention in regional universities, this does not affect cross-institutional co-operation in course development, as the latter makes use of existing facilities in the participating institutions. Conflicts can, therefore, be resolved through negotiations that clarify the responsibilities with respect to expected benefits.
- 6.4 Cultural differences are likely to be a more serious issue in respect of a regional university where national/ethnic rivalries compound differences in institutional cultures, as well as the issue of equity. With cross-institutional co-operation in course development, cultural difference will be institutional – differences in ideological perspectives – and will be easily resolved through participants accommodating to each other's cultures. Differences in institutional cultures could also be resolved through agreements to collectively develop the core of the course only and leave individual institutions to adapt the core to suit their respective perspectives. Regional universities are usually meant to be a long-term arrangement, whereas this is not so with course development. It can, therefore, be expected that any problems inherent in regional universities will also be long-term, while those that go with cross-institutional co-operation in course development will be of a short-term nature.
- 6.5 Because cross-institutional course development makes use of facilities already in existence in individual national universities, it will not be affected, at least not to the same extent, by national politics and interests that interfere in the operations of trans-national universities.

It would appear that cross-institutional co-operation in course development entails fewer and less complicated problems than regional universities. However, the universities examined were not purely distance education institutions, though some of them do have a distance education component grafted onto the conventional mode. Perhaps they would have performed differently if they had been distance teaching universities considering the

potential that distance education has for co-operation. But then perhaps also things could still have been the same as most of the problems of the regional universities do not arise from within the institutions themselves but are mostly imposed by the co-operating nations on the universities.

Other Critical Factors

With regard to the other factors suggested as perhaps critical for successful cross-institutional co-operation in course development, the following are findings from this study:

- Cross-institutional course teams comprise members from each co-operating institution; an efficient, sensitive and properly managed communications system is indeed imperative when people are working together, but from different locations. Availability of reliable electronic means of communication enabled participants in almost all projects to work on their co-operative projects, separated by vast distances. In the absence of efficient communication media, course team members may have to work from one location at least for part of the project.
- Course team members need to be able and willing to work as a team. As indicated earlier, the question of selection of team members on merit could not be addressed by this study, as team members were people who were already holding relevant positions on account of their qualifications and expertise.
- Administrative effectiveness within the team is indicated. There was however little opportunity to assess administrative effectiveness between the course team and co-ordinating body. In the one case where the opportunity presented itself, DS Project¹, there were indications of the co-ordinating body's intervention and efficiency in resolving problems arising within the course team.
- Motivation is a very strong success factor. In the joint authorship projects, self-motivation of the key participants is one factor that is cited as having contributed to the success of the projects. In the other projects the motivation of the participants compelled them to put in longer working hours so that they could meet the deadlines.

- There is need for sufficient human, fiscal and physical resources in order to ensure success. Some responses do indicate that the job could have been done better or more easily if there had been sufficient financial resources.

TENTATIVE MODELS FROM THE STUDY

In summary, two models emerge from Australian experiences of inter-institutional co-operation in course development. One is the **exchange model** characterised by voluntary participation resulting from a recognition of benefits. The other is the **political economy model**, based on need and supported by policy. The following diagram illustrates the potential application of the two in the different circumstances referred to above:

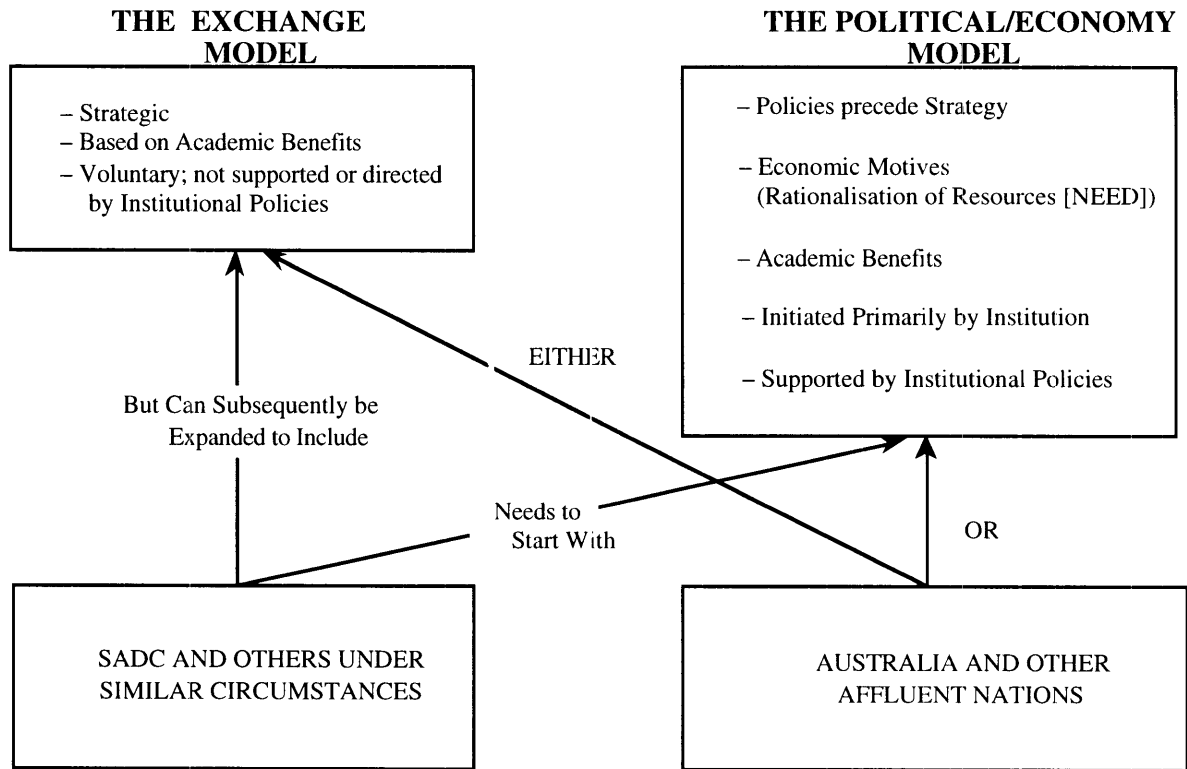


Figure 9: Models Emerging From the Study

It must be emphasised, though, that the proposed application of the models for SADC and other regions with similar situations, will need to be trialed through a pilot scheme before they can be prescribed with any degree of certainty. Moreover, the models provide no definitive answers, but should be viewed as starting points for future research.

Cross-institutional course development, of course, implies the prior existence of distance education provision in participating institutions. Currently, this is not the case with some higher education institutions in SADC. The implication is that higher education institutions in SADC must introduce distance education provision into their current on-campus programmes if they are to increase access to higher education. Once they have done this, they should then be in a position to co-operate, among themselves or with any other institution, anywhere in the world, in the development of distance education courses.

The same arguments which led to the suggestion for either a Regional Open University or IDESA, militate against the prospect of each country establishing a national, single mode distance teaching university.

CONCLUSION

The study set out to explore cross-institutional co-operation in the development of distance education courses as an alternative to the establishment of a regional distance teaching university.

Because regional universities have been extensively researched and documented, a review of this documentation formed the introduction and background to the study of cross-institutional co-operation in course development which is not as extensively researched or documented.

The study of cross-institutional co-operation in course development addressed questions such as: (1) "Are there any benefits to cross-institutional co-operation in course development? In other words, why would individuals/institutions engage in this kind of venture? (2) Has this kind of venture been practised among Australian higher education institutions? (3) Where it has been practised, have such ventures been a success or a failure? (4) What factors have led to the success or failure of those ventures?" Answers to these questions would enable the researcher to respond to the fifth question – (5) "How does cross-institutional co-operation in course development compare with the establishment and operation of a regional university?"

Though cross-institutional co-operation in course development is neither extensively researched nor documented, it has been sparingly practised among Australian higher education institutions in the four different ways/models

described in the text *viz* **joint authorship, Women's Studies** (a complementary course model) and the contractual arrangements as in **OLA** and **principal/specialist providers**. (Since OLA makes use of courses already offered by other institutions and only commissions the development of new ones for a fee as and when necessary, some of the courses offered through OLA were developed by and for institutions using the other models mentioned).

An examination of these models, as revealed in the literature pertaining to them (where such literature exists) and also through interviews and responses to questionnaires by the people who have been involved in the cross-institutional course development projects shows that:

1. There are academic and economic benefits accrue to such projects, though not all participants agree;
2. It takes individuals with a particular set of personal characteristics to initiate co-operative ventures and see them through to successful completion;
3. Because cross-institutional course development is a group activity, interpersonal relations among team members also become very important;
4. There are administrative and contextual factors that are necessary for the success of cross-institutional course development;
5. A comparison of the factors implied in 1-4 above suggests that cross-institutional course development, while neither very popular (as shown by the small number of instances) nor the easiest thing to put into practice, would be a less complex enterprise than establishing a trans-national university. This observation agrees with the Commonwealth of Learning's (1988) classification of risks and benefits, which lists consortia such as regional universities as the highest risk-highest benefit forms of co-operation, while cross-institutional course development is classified as less risky.

The study also suggests two broad models along which cross-institutional course development ventures can be fashioned. One is the Exchange Model

which is voluntary in nature and based on a recognition of the benefits. The other is the Political/Economy Model in which the motives are economic (e.g. rationalisation of resources) but which still yields academic benefits.

This study was carried out in Australia and whereas the findings can be applied directly to the Australian situation, they will need to be tried on a broader basis before they can be applied elsewhere.

Where cross-institutional co-operation in course development is implemented or contemplated across national borders (and therefore affected/influenced by national cultures) it would be worthwhile studying the impact of national cultures on the venture.

It would also be interesting to investigate the possibilities and implications of cross-institutional course development between unequal partners as in the case of institutions from the Developed World co-operating with those from the Third World but such that the Third World institutions do not remain dependent on their more affluent partners for ever.

This study has not delved into the significance of copyright implications for instructional materials developed co-operatively or those purchased from other institutions. This is another potential area of research.

The effect of modern technology on cross-institutional co-operation in course development could be investigated as a separate issue.

Another area calling for specific research is the effect of cross-institutional co-operation in course development on the clients (i.e. the distance education learners).

The Impact of Formal versus Informal Agreements on cross-institutional course development is another promising area of research.

While there is an obvious need for more research into cross-institutional course development, the actual and potential benefits of the approach well justify such efforts. Such co-operative ventures seem to have clear benefits for higher education in developed countries, such as Australia. But even more important, cross-institutional course development may be a partial solution to

the massive problems faced by higher education systems in developing countries, such as those in Southern Africa.

References

1. The Deakin/South Australia Joint Authorship Project