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Radical or Incremental Curriculum Development in Higher Education:
Going the Distance

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ABSTRACT

The growing and diversifying demand for higher education, increasing competition and globalisation, and the pressures to deliver more for less, are creating challenges for managers of higher education. This thesis reports on the development of a model to demonstrate the areas of conflict in the relationships between the external conditions and influences and the internal decision-making processes during curriculum development in higher education.

A case study approach was adopted to conduct the research using mixed research techniques including participant observation, interviews, surveys, focus groups, document analysis and market research. Two theoretical lenses were used to capture, view and interpret the data. System's thinking was used to frame the context and the relationships between the external influences and the hierarchical structure of higher education. Stake's Antecedent Matrix (1977) provided an evaluation framework to compare the intentions of the institution with the data gathered during the case study. A systemic view of the garbage can (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972) provided a framework to present the internal transactions during decision-making.

The comparative analysis identified the higher education institutions are prone to four dicephalous conditions: lengthy evolutionary curriculum development occurs rather than the radical development needed to meet the dynamic requirements of the external conditions; traditional modes of teaching and learning are maintained at the expense of open, distance and flexible modes of teaching and learning supported by information and communications technologies due to unstable and uncertain financial conditions; individual enthusiasm is suppressed by institutional constraints; the level of bureaucratic procedures is impacting pedagogic development.

The model developed during the research identifies areas where pressures that affect decision-making must be addressed. Further, this work advocates the considered adoption of information and communications technologies to engender prosumption in higher education provision.

Key words: Curriculum development in higher education; decision-making; open, distance and flexible learning; prosumption; case study; radical development; incremental development.

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You cannot find the answer until you have formulated the question well, you often do not know what the question is in organisational problem solving until you know the answer. A solution is somebody's product, and is a general phenomenon of process of choice.
(Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972)

CONTENTS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AP	Academic Programme – Case Study Curriculum Development
CAL	Computer Assisted Learning
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IT	Information Technology
MBA	Masters in Business Administration
MP	Management Professional – Case Study Department
ODFL	Open Distance and Flexible Learning
PP	Professional Programme – Case Study Control Programme
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
SENDA	Special Educational Needs and Disability Act

CHAPTER 1: RADICAL OR INCREMENTAL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: GOING THE DISTANCE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The growing and diversifying demand for higher education, increasing competition and globalisation, are creating challenges for managers of higher education. The external conditions impact on the internal processes, practices, and decision-making. To meet these challenges higher education institutions need to develop strategies to provide a flexible approach to curriculum development. The internal actors have to make timely, considered choices about the design of the academic programmes and their modes of delivery, in response to the changing internal environment in which they operate. Change is inevitable; in a progressive country, change is constant (Tann, 1995).

> From the point of view of teaching and learning, a critical issue for the sector is whether incremental change, coupled with special initiatives of various kinds, will prove sufficient to meet the challenges that face it, or whether institutions need to make radical changes to the ways that they collectively and individually provide learning opportunities. (HEFCE, 1996, p1)

Over a decade ago, Kelly observed that:

> if educational change is to keep pace with and match the changes in society, if it is at the same time to maintain also those standards and values which may be seen as transcending particular times and particular societies, and if it is to respond to that increased understanding of education and curriculum it must be deliberately managed rather than merely left to happen. (Kelly, 1989, p2)

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Whilst higher education institutions are being subjected to more administrative and quality procedures, practices and processes, higher education relies on getting the work done through people (Bush, 1995). In order to be successful, the commitment and enthusiasm of dedicated individuals will not suffice (Collis and van der Wende, 2002); the institution itself must make a commitment.

Issac and Michael (1997) stated that research and evaluation in education is timely and important because:

> In educational assessment and decision-making, it is the only way to make rational choices between alternative practices, to validate educational improvements, and to build a stable foundation of effective practices as a safeguard against faddish but inferior innovations. (p. iii)

This thesis was undertaken to evaluate the relationships between external influences and the internal decision-making processes during curriculum development in higher education.

1.2 RATIONALE

The HEFCE report (1996) questioning the potential need for radical change raised the following points:

1. The incremental adjustments to the practices of teaching and learning were likely to be insufficient to deal with the scale and pace of impending change;

2. A mass higher education system was qualitatively different in character and needs from the elite system;

3. Participation in higher education was evolving from a largely full/part-time dichotomy to a participant-determined flexibility.

The report suggests that a mass higher education system is qualitatively different in character and needs from the elite system. How would institutions respond to non-incremental (radical) change if incremental adjustments to the practices of teaching and learning were likely to be insufficient to deal with the scale and pace of impending change? What is meant by 'mass' and 'elite' systems of education, and what are the differences between the two? How could higher education institutions respond to the changing student demographics, not only the move from full-time to part-time identified in the report, but also the changing age groups, nationalities and backgrounds?

As external commentators talk of incremental or radical change in higher education at a macro level, this thesis examines the micro level relationships between the institution's strategic plans; the management decision-making processes to implement them and the institution's propensity to respond to innovation and radical change. This is achieved through examining the concept of incremental adjustments and the concept of participant-determined flexibility (points 1 and 3 HEFCE report), within the context of the potential transition from an elite system to a mass higher education system (point 2), using the case of the development of a new masters level programme within a single higher education provider. The case examines the decisions taken within the institution in response to the external influences.

The research is relevant and important to the field of higher education management as the pace of change, and the invasive and controlling nature of the external conditions becomes more challenging to higher education managers. As demand for higher education increases, particularly for postgraduate qualifications, institutions need to

review their provision to meet the needs of society, industry and the state, within their operational constraints.

The aim was to generate a fuller picture of the extent of flexibility and innovation of an academic institution to adopt and adapt to changing external conditions.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the thesis are to:

- Develop an understanding of the impact of the external conditions on internal decision-making.

- Gain an understanding of the institutional and departmental, policy-based responses and initiatives with respect to programme development in higher education.

- Compare the propensity of a higher education institution to adopt a radical approach and an evolutionary approach to programme development.

- Identify the changes needed to develop conditions under which a higher education institution may choose to provide an open, distance and flexible learning environment.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION AND STRUCTURE

1.4.1 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The central question for this thesis is:

What is the impact of external and internal factors on the decision of an inner-city university to implement a radical approach to open, distance and flexible learning strategies?

1.4.2 SUB-QUESTIONS

To address the question, it was necessary to consider a wide variety of factors. These included:

- What is the purpose of higher education: to determine the contemporary views of the objectives;

- What are the external and internal conditions, past and present, that have conflated to impact the direction of the strategic decisions: to understand the needs of the consumers of higher education;

- The concept of Strategic Decision-Making: to understand how the decisions are made;

- The risk related issues of such decisions: to understand the implications of the decisions made;

- The concepts of open, distance and flexible learning: to understand the pedagogic implications of the different approaches to teaching and learning;

- The impact of Information Systems to support teaching and learning: to understand the implications of adopting technological platforms in the delivery of teaching and learning.

1.5 APPROACH

Issac and Michael (1997) suggest that research and evaluation are two discrete disciplines; research, having its origin in science, oriented toward the development of theories and evaluation, having its origin in technology, oriented toward product delivery or mission accomplishment: 'its essence is to provide feedback leading to the successful outcome defined in practical concrete terms.' (p 8). They advocate that the evaluation

adopts a systemic approach that sets objectives; designs means to achieve those objectives and constructs a feedback mechanism to determine progress toward, and the attainment of, the objectives (ibid). Shufflebeam (1971) suggested that the purpose of evaluation was to 'improve, not to prove.' (cited Issac and Michael, 1997, p8). They continue to suggest that the term 'evaluation' is associated with

> How effective or ineffective, how adequate or inadequate, how good or
>
> bad, how valuable or invaluable, and how appropriate or inappropriate a
>
> given action, process, or product is in terms of the perceptions of the
>
> individual who makes use of the information provided by an evaluator.
>
> (ibid)

This thesis is directed at an evaluation of the relationships between the external conditions and influences and, the decisions taken by higher education providers at a single inner-city university. The single case study (Yin, 1994) examined the decision-making processes during the development of a post-experience, postgraduate programme. Two cognitive lenses were used to view the phenomenon.

First, a systemic approach provided a context and structure for the qualitative study. The conceptual systems model was developed throughout the thesis to provide a graphical representation of the discussions. In chapter 2, the model first maps the relationships between the external influences and the higher education environment, derived from the literature. The model is expanded at the end of the literature review to incorporate the perceived internal relationships between the institution and the individual decision-making processes. The conceptual model is applied in chapter 4 to map the observed areas of conflict and tension during decision-making in curriculum development. This

model has wider applicability and can be adopted to identify relationships between policy and practice for any given decision-making at any level of the higher education institution.

The second theoretical lens, Stake's Antecedent Matrix (1977), provided the mechanism to determine the level of congruence between the intended antecedents, transactions and outcomes and those observed. Within the transactions analysis stage of the matrix, the systemic representation of the Garbage Can produced by Lockwood and Davies (1985), based on the original work of Cohen et al (1972), was adopted to evaluate the observed decision-making processes. Discussions on each of these three approaches are extended in chapter 3.

1.6 CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE – DICEPHALOUS CONTENTIONS

This thesis is important to the continuing debate on the management of higher education, particularly at a time when top-up fees are under consideration and there are proposals to widen the concept of the university to include establishments with less than 4000 students and narrow portfolios (THES, 19th November 2003, p1). Such a move will impact the niche market of higher education institutions. As political parties are prone to talk in terms of radical change, this research clearly demonstrates an institution's preference for evolutionary or incremental change. There is a clear direct relationship between the external influences and the internal decision-making processes that affect curriculum development.

From a theoretical perspective, the thesis provides further guidance for future researchers of decision-making within higher education by developing a theoretical model and redefining the problem space. Four dicephalous (two-headed) areas were identified

within current higher education provision in the UK: a. Radical vs Evolutionary Change;
b. Traditional vs Open, Distance and Flexible approaches to teaching and learning; c.
Individual Enthusiasm and Innovation vs Managerial Power and Conflict; d. Bureaucracy
vs Pedagogy. These are discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.

The use of case study, and participant observation, adds to the debate on qualitative
research vs quantitative research. Further, the thesis demonstrates how two theoretical
models can be integrated to provide a holistic perspective and, a richer and deeper
understanding of the research data.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This chapter has provided an overview of the research, the aims, the objectives and
findings. The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 provides a critical review of the literature. To address the research question,
the literature review addresses three key areas: 1. the purpose and nature of higher
education; 2. the external influences and 3. the internal processes related to decision-
making during curriculum development. Whilst the work is primarily concerned with
examining the impact of external areas of influence on internal decision-making, the
proposed programme development incorporates the adoption of multi-mode delivery
(open, distance and flexible learning) supported by Information and Communications
Technology (ICT). The literature review was therefore extended to incorporate an
overview of the different teaching modes: traditional campus-based provision and, open,
distance and flexible learning and ICT. The chapter concludes with the conceptual
model, drawn from the literature, reflecting the perceived relationships between higher
education, the internal decision-making processes and the external influences.

Chapter 3 discusses the approach taken to conduct this research; the research techniques used to collect, collate and evaluate the case study data. The rationale for the selection of two theoretical lenses, systems thinking and Stake's Antecedent Matrix (1977) is explained. A model linking the two lenses, within the context of the problem domain, is developed to show 'how one construct impacts upon another construct or interacts with it.' (Issac and Michael, 1997, p4).

Chapter 4 discusses the findings from the experiential case study and the contributions the thesis has made to the body of knowledge. The chapter concludes with reflections on the future of higher education and suggested areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. The first purpose is to place the thesis in its context. The second purpose is to identify, from the literature, the external and internal influences that might impact on decision-making during curriculum development in higher education. The aim is to determine the likely effects of these issues on the practice of those involved and from which it is possible to establish possible strands of enquiry to address the research question.

The focus of the research is to understand the rationale for the decisions taken during a radical approach to curriculum development in higher education with particular attention to adopting open, distance and flexible learning. To define the scope of the literature review, the following key words were extracted from the research question and the sub-questions identified in section 1.3:

higher education; curriculum development; decision-making; government policy; teaching and learning approaches; open, distance and flexible learning; information and communications technology and risk.

Seeking to understand the relationship between the external conditions and influences, and the internal decision-making processes, the literature review was redefined to explore on three key areas. The first was to establish an understanding of the context and perceived purpose of higher education and higher education providers (it should be noted that this research focuses on the post 1992 type of university).

The second was to understand the relationship between external influences and higher education providers. The area draws on the literature relating to four external sets of

conditions and influences that interact with the system of higher education. The four sets of conditions are considered in sections:

2.4.1 Higher Education and The State

2.4.2 Higher Education and Industry

2.4.3 Higher Education and Society

2.4.4 Higher Education and Technology

Each sub-section concludes with a systemic diagram collating the threads drawn from the literature. These are amalgamated at the end of section 2.4.5 to provide a systemic diagram that reflects the relationships of the external influences with higher education.

The third area draws upon literature pertaining to the internal concerns of curriculum development, decision-making and risk. As part of the review of curriculum development an overview of open, distance and flexible learning approaches to teaching and learning are considered in conjunction with the introduction of information and communications technologies. Although not the primary focus of the research, these areas are noteworthy to the problem domain in so far as they offer alternatives to the traditional campus-based delivery and therefore may influence decisions taken during curriculum development.

Excluded from the review explicitly are learning theories (deep and surface); organisation culture; management theories; non-traditional programme design issues.

2.2 THE IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY

Academic commentators have attempted to provide a clear description of a university (see for example Newman, 1826 (in Halsall, 1998); Sutherland, 1994; King, 1995; Barrett, 1998; Teale, 1998; Barnett, 2000a). In 1826, John Henry Newman referred to

the creation of academic institutions as *bazaar* or *pantechnicon*, a marketplace consisting of a range of shops or stalls where every species of workmanship, all kind of merchandise and artistic work are collected and exposed for sale (OED vols I and XI). The removal of grants and the introduction of fees have moved higher education from a free service to the customer, to one of saleable commodities.

As the number of institutions has increased over the centuries, there still appears to be no single criterion of what constitutes a *university*. It is possible, however, to recognize examples of universities despite the absence of a single, clear definition or set of criteria. The status of a university has been defined as an institution with the power to award degrees, granted either by charter or by Act of Parliament (Sutherland, 1994). Sutherland's image of 'intellectual luddites' (ibid, p4) with their background in theoretical research from the traditional universities and 'rude mechanicals' (ibid, p4) from the vocationally driven polytechnics is questionable. Long before the removal of the binary divide in 1992, traditional universities were providing a form of vocational training to lawyers, doctors and clergy. Thus the argument generally offered that vocational programmes are a 'new' invention and not something that traditional universities provided, is somewhat negated. This viewpoint has important implications for the adoption of non-traditional modes of teaching and learning and is expanded later in this thesis.

King (1995) suggested there might never have been a single idea of a university, although we can turn to the dictionary definition of a University stated as:

> The whole body of teachers and scholars engaged, at a particular place, in
>
> giving and receiving instruction in the higher education of learning; such

persons associated together as a society or a corporate body with definite

organisation and acknowledged powers and privileges (especially that of

conferring degrees) and forming an institution for the promotion of

education in the higher or more important branches of learning and the

colleges, buildings etc, belonging to such a body. (Oxford English

Dictionary, vol XIX, p86, 87)

For the purpose of this thesis a university is determined as a place providing traditional

higher scholarly activity, including learning in the form of student/lecturer knowledge

exchange and research, with the power to award degrees granted either by charter or by

Act of Parliament (Sutherland, 1994). Traditional higher education is defined as on-

campus, synchronous face-to-face learning on a one-to-one basis (tutorials) or a one-to-

many (lectures) basis. A radical approach may offer alternative modes and venues of

study: the place may be virtual and/or physical: the learning may occur synchronously or

asynchronously, face-to-face or geographically and temporally dispersed.

Conceptually we might adopt the views of Cohen et al (1972) that universities may be

characterised by problematic preferences, unclear technology and fluid participants;

collections of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision

situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might

be an answer, and decision-makers looking for work.

2.3 THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
The literature reviewed in this section serves to demonstrate the changing perceptions of

higher education. The evidence first validates the notion of higher education institutions

as pantechnicons, purveyors of knowledge, competing in a quasi marketplace. Second,

the evidence demonstrates the need for higher education institutions to be flexible in their

approach to teaching and learning, the design of their programmes, and their delivery

modes.

2.3.1 THE NATURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

'Higher education' is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'All other providers of

education, superior to the common or ordinary sort.' (Oxford English Dictionary, Vol

Vii, pp 224)

Within such institutions existed the notion of academic freedom to test and criticize

existing and new ideas (Sutherland, 1994). For decades, there had long been a view that

academic issues, academic standards, the academic acceptability of programmes and the

quality of research output were best dealt with by academics. It was considered that the

academics could best match resources, ensuring that institutional goals were compatible

with basic academic objectives (ibid). There has been a shift from perceiving higher

education as valued for its intrinsic properties to its being of instrumental good for

economic survival amidst expanding world markets (Barnett, 1992, p5). Higher

education providers have entered global education markets while also forging local and

regional links which are blurring the distinctions between study and employment and

between different sections of educational provision (Ford et al, 1996).

The next section considers the purpose of higher education in the light of these changes.

2.3.2 THE PURPOSE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

It is something of a paradox that while there has been a great deal of debate about higher

education in the UK over the decades, there has been 'little serious consideration of *what*

it is and *what it is for.*' (Tight, 1989, p85, italics my emphasis)

> We all know what universities are for. The traditional purposes of
> universities could be said to be to search for truth, to discover, store and
> disseminate knowledge and to be critics of society. (Lockwood and
> Davies, 1985, p61)

However, they neglect to identify the processes and practices that will meet those
purposes. 'However varied the functions of universities in the modern world, they retain
their central role as providers of post-secondary education.' (OECD, 1986, p39)

This statement still holds true although the provision has broadened, and the nature of the
providers has changed since 1992. Whilst the purpose of universities may be
homogeneous, disparate cultures and internal operating systems provide heterogeneous
teaching and learning environments that require individual attention.

Duke (1992) argued that:

> UK universities are remarkably homogeneous...the system is distinctly
> elite, hard to enter, expensive per full-time student, efficient in terms of
> completion rates. On the other hand, universities vie with one another to
> attract the best prospective students. While they look similar from a
> distance, each stresses uniqueness and special strength to value and sell
> itself. (p 3)

HEFCE (1996) stated that the promotion of teaching and learning in institutions required
the following:

- A clear policy on teaching and learning;

- An appropriate recognition and reward system;

- Recognition that the roles of the academic and support staff would evolve;

* A clear policy for staff development;

* Research into teaching and learning;

* Appraisal of performance.

QCA require that quality assurance procedures provide transparency, accountability and rigor of internal processes. Continual changes to the government funding mechanisms, and levels, have contributed to a dynamic, financially constrained environment for decision-making. More and more, institutions need to identify effective and efficient means of conducting the core business of knowledge acquisition and dissemination.

The state initiated Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997) offered four purposes for higher education:

1. To inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life, so that they grow intellectually, are well equipped for work, can contribute to society and achieve personal fulfillment.

2. To increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and to foster their application to the benefit of the economy and society.

3. To serve the needs of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge-based economy at local, regional and national levels.

4. To play a major part in shaping a democratic, civilized, inclusive society.

These common ideals provide the philosophical framework within which all institutions of higher education operate (Taylor and Miroiu, 2003, p7). The rationale for the research stemmed from the growing pressures and challenges that higher education has faced, and continues to face, as the external environment within which it operates and whom it serves, continues to change. These challenges include: changes that were once

orchestrated internally are now generated by external pressures to reform educational organizations to make them more accountable and efficient (Barnett, 1992); the incentives for change shifted from voluntary improvements to mandatory requirements including admission policies and equal opportunities; changes in response to growth with new programs, expanding clientele, and optimism in the benefits of higher education (Baldridge and Deal, 1982).

2.3.3 THE UNIVERSITY AS A BUSINESS

Baker's work (2001)[1] on the 'Commodification of Higher Education' debates the trend in the management of academic institutions toward the adoption of the tools of management originally developed in the business sector. She compares the organisational downsizing to educational downsizing under pressure to cut costs, manifested in cutbacks, layoffs and outsourcing both service and academic functions. She draws on Blustain's work (2000) to examine alternative ways of organising to explain how higher education differs from business. Blustain suggests that the maximisation of profit is not what higher education institutions are about.

> Instead they are built around a shared moral order based on kinship and community. Whilst money enables universities to function, the values are community, collegiality, inquiry and truth. Outsourcing.... fractures the moral bonds of paternalism.... and violates cherished notions of choice and freedom. (2000, p32)

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[1] Baker's paper is part of a larger qualitative research project. She explores the trade-offs of traditional academic values and the external pressures to change curriculum development and student learning experiences to reduce the costs of performativity.

The next section provides an overview of the external conditions and influences to which the academic providers have first responded to voluntarily, and subsequently compulsorily.

2.4 EXTERNAL INFLUENCES
In 1985, Lockwood and Davies stated that

> The force and direction of external pressures on the universities stem
>
> ultimately from basic national factors.   Thus the universities have to share
>
> in financial hardship arising from overall economic performance just as
>
> they once were able to benefit from national prosperity; they are victims of
>
> as well as beneficiaries of demographic trends; they operate in a world of
>
> changing social, political and technological features, all of which
>
> influence their operation.   The effects of the factors are complicated, since
>
> they interact and may contradict or reinforce each other… The universities
>
> are subject to the influences and controls of a multitude of external bodies
>
> which in varying ways and to varying extents impose, interpret or mitigate
>
> pressures of the external world upon them. (1985, p3)

The model on the next page provides a graphic representation of their perceptions of the relationships with the external influences in the 1980's.

Their model informed this part of the literature review.   Their perceptions were categorised into four discrete categories.   The four individual sets of relationships, 2.4.1 Higher Education and The State; 2.4.2 Higher Education and Industry; 2.4.3 Higher Education and Society; 2.4.4 Higher Education and Technology.   Although the each set.

BASIC NATIONAL FACTORS
Economic Performance   Demographic Trends
Social Structure   Political Stability
Technological Change

Applicant
Demand

Public
Opinion

Parliament

Government

Research
Councils

Professions
Peers

Industry/
Commerce

CVCP

Decision-making during curriculum development
in Higher Education

CLASSES

ACTIVITIES

GOVERNANCE

UNITS

GROUPS

Figure 2.4 External Bodies influencing Universities adapted from Lockwood and Davies (1985, p4)

of relationships is presented herein individually to illuminate specific issues, the four sets of relationships are intrinsically interwoven.

The section concludes with a conceptual model developed from an analysis of the literature to show the complex and diverse influences and interactions with higher education providers

2.4.1 HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE STATE

State influences, events and outcomes in the history of higher education have been widely discussed and debated (see for example: Sutherland, 1994, King, 1995, Barrett, 1998, Barnett, 1999, Webber, 2000). Such commentators reflect the pendulous swings encountered by the management of higher education, as successive governments have required contraction and expansion of student numbers and imposed changes in funding mechanisms to secure value for money: the state has been the dominant purchaser of higher education services, paying fees on behalf of students (Webber, 2000). However, it is perceived that there has been a low educational achievement and lack of skills that have been weaknesses of the British economy for more than a generation (DfES, 2002a).

Observers suggest that most governments since the latter half of the 20th century believe that higher education provision increases labour productivity and leads to long-term economic growth (King, 1995, Barnett, 2000b, Morris, 2001). The results of a study undertaken by Strathclyde University for Universities UK (2002b) support that view. The study shows that for the academic year 1999/2000, higher education institutions contributed in excess of £34.8 billion to the UK economy each year. Nearly 10% of receipts from overseas visitors come from overseas students studying in UK higher education institutions. Additionally, for every £1 million of economic output generated by higher education, a further £1.56 million of output is generated in other sectors as a direct result (Universities UK, 2002). However, this is the first known study to show any correlation between higher education activity and economic growth, and it should be noted that it has been produced as evidence to secure an

increase in government investment. Whilst the results are encouraging, value would be gained from extending the research to previous and future years to determine trends.

To highlight the escalation of state interference three historical events have been selected that reflect the extent of state interference and the change to the status of universities. The outcomes from these events are not the focus of this work, however, they are evaluated here as examples to illuminate the impact of changing state influences over the past 40 years. The first in 1963 when the Robbins Report was commissioned, the second in 1992 when the Further and Higher Education Act removed the binary divide between universities and polytechnics, and the third was in 1997 when the Dearing Report was commissioned.

Comparative analysis of the Robbins Report and the Dearing Report revealed significant changes in the state's attitude to and relationship with, higher education. The first in 1963 appointed Lord Robbins to chair a committee, through the Treasury. The terms of reference for this committee were that it should review the pattern of full-time education in Great Britain in order to advise on what principles its long-term development should be based, and whether there should be any changes to existing patterns.

The second in 1997 appointed Sir Ron Dearing to chair a committee through the Secretaries of State for Education and Employment. The terms of reference for this committee was to make recommendations on how the purposes, shape, structure, size and funding of higher education, including support for students, should develop to meet the needs of the UK over the next twenty years. Higher education was considered to embrace teaching, learning, scholarship and research. Although the two review committees were commissioned 34 years apart, they serve to reflect the changes of the levels of expectation and control.

The change in emphasis, appointing bodies and terms of reference indicate the increasing intervention of government within higher education and the significant shift in the power relationship: in 1963 the Robbins Committee, whose membership of twelve drawn predominantly

from higher education, had a large degree of autonomy, in 1997 the Dearing Committee, whose membership of seventeen was drawn from finance, electronic, pharmaceutical and retail sectors of industry and the different areas of higher education, reflected the diversity of interests to which that committee was directed.

The increasing intervention between the state and higher education has exacerbated over the last five years.   Higher education is no longer an autonomous entity within society, but now integrally bound up with the regeneration and development of the economy (Barnett, 1999).

Higher education has relied in the past primarily on large-scale government funding.   Over the decades, funding has become a contentious issue. One response by government to the crisis of funding in the universities was to encourage greater institutional differentiation. The Further and Higher Education Act (1992) removed the division between universities and polytechnics to create an expanded and unified, but more heterogeneous university sector, comprising institutions with much more varied backgrounds, and organisational aims.   This diversity was seen as a policy instrument as a means of modernizing the university sector in the interests of the economy.   No longer under the funding of local education authorities, universities received income from HEFCE.   The increased autonomy and the requirement to pursue their own financial interest produced dilemmas for the new universities.   Individual institutions could attempt to cover the spectrum of higher education through broadening their portfolio and expanding their research activities.   Alternatively, they could specialise, providing niche subject areas and qualifications, with the higher education sector collectively covering the whole range of activities and subjects.   The reality is that almost all universities have tried to expand their presence in both research and access programmes, while increasing their range of subjects and facilities.   There has been, in effect, and contrary to policy intent, a dynamic of convergence and not divergence (King, 1995).

As a result, a number of contentious issues continue to impact upon curriculum development. Firstly, there is a perceived hierarchy of activities with full-time postgraduate research students generating more prestige or financial reward per unit of effort than access programmes. Secondly, the funding councils, dominant in financing most universities, have regularly shifted their priorities, leading institutions to diversity portfolios in order to 'hedge their bets'. If diversity within universities, rather than between universities, was ultimately accepted as the only realistic way of providing all the services expected of a modern university system, then larger and fewer institutions would be required than currently exist in Britain. The challenge then, has been, and continues to be, to preserve and improve the quality of higher education as education budgets and funding per student head are compressed (World Bank, 1994). The state has further constrained access to public funding for institutions and students through providing public support for defined activities by designated institutions (Webber, 2000).

The systemic model on the next page provides a summary of the state's current level of influence on higher education discussed in this section.

The current Labour government has determined to increase the student population within higher education to 50% of those under thirty, within three years (Morris, 2002). To meet these objectives, there is recognition that there must be support from industry and business. Industry has provided the market for graduate recruitment, placements and research opportunities for higher education students (ibid). However, the relationship has and continues to change. The next section evaluates the relationships between higher education and industry.

THE STATE

SENDA Widening Increased
Participation student
numbers

Policies

50% of the
population <30
Lifelong learning
and continuing
professional
development

Reduced - Funding
funding - Student Numbers
-£££££ - Quality Frameworks
- Control

Undergraduate and
Postgraduate
Frameworks

Self Evaluation
Assessments

HE
CONTEXT

Graduates with skills and
knowledge

The
Economy

Key:

Communications Encounters and Engagements	State Policies, legislation and influences	Historical antecedents, influences and legislation in general terms

Figure 2.4.1 A Systemic View Of Higher Education And The State (Hennell, unpublished)

2.4.2 HIGHER EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY

Whilst industry continues to offer work placement for third year students, and fast track graduate employment schemes, industry has seen value in extending these interests. The first by developing corporate universities to train and educate *home grown* graduates (such as Unipart, British Aerospace and BAA Plc (Davies, 1998)), and the second to forge partnerships with academic institutions through research activities (Valentine and Sanchez, 2002). Outside the scope of this work, their existence as competition to the traditional university is noteworthy and presented in overview here. For example, in the USA,

according to the Corporate University Xchange, more than 62% of the estimated 1600 corporate universities have alliances with colleges, and by 2003, this is expected to increase to 85% (Palmer, 2000, cited Geith and Vignare, 2002).

A. Corporate Universities

The primary value of a corporate university to the organisation is that its graduates have acquired some relevant and appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes with respect to management in general and the employer's business in particular (Wills, 1993). The attention paid to employees during the educational process builds strong bonds between the employee and the institution, thereby reducing undesirable turnover. Resources for and interest in corporate universities is likely to remain high over the next several years (Stumph, 1998). Geith and Vignare (2002) suggest that there are three levels of relationship between corporations and HE.

The first is access to programmes whereby employees receive corporate sponsorship for tuition. The second level of partnership meets the growing demand for matching learning outcomes to business results through customisation of programme content. According to Corporate University Xchange (ibid) 52% of university programmes bought by corporate universities are designed to suit the unique needs of the corporate partner, with the remaining being open enrollment programmes that are part of the general curriculum (Palmer, 2000, cited Geith and Vignare, 2002, p2).

The third level of relationship is a significant move toward learner-centered environments, that is corporations who have succeeded in building strategic e-learning customised to individual needs. Meister (2000, p, 55, cited Geith and Vignare, 2002, p2) suggests that the 'corporate university model is competency-based and links learning to business' strategic

needs'. These approaches focus on the improvement of individual performance and require different kinds of systems than those that support traditional class-based approaches.

Whilst the corporate universities could be viewed as competitors with traditional higher education in the UK, there is much to be said about the benefits of such partnerships for all of the stakeholders. These issues are returned to in chapter 5 and contribute to the discussion of the future developments of higher education curriculum provision. The second perspective of industry partnerships is considered in the next section.

B. University – Industry Partnerships in Research

University–industry partnerships in research have existed for many years, in fact close links between universities and industrialists date back to the nineteenth century (Valentin and Sanchez, 2002). The strength and nature of the relationships have been affected by social, economic and political influences during that timeframe. However, both sectors have experienced dynamic changes during the past decade, as already discussed in this work. Industry continues to work in collaboration with universities in the research sector. Over the past ten years, 469 papers published in this area, in a single journal (Industry and Higher Education), record different aspects of this relationship (ibid). They determined that universities and research centres were more aware of the importance of collaboration. Further, the government is encouraging industry investment in education through Private Finance Initiatives, outsourcing a number of support activities to private enterprise. These include relationships with British Telecom to supply networks for digital learning and contracts with Interserve Plc to build and maintain, and provide services to academic institutions.

Labour market forecasts by the National Skills Taskforce show that between 1999 and 2010 there will be a growth of 1.73 million jobs in those occupations that typically recruit

graduates with the appropriate skills and knowledge (Morris, 2001). Without an increase in student numbers there will be insufficient graduates to meet the demand. Changes in the global economy, dismantling of trade barriers, and globalisation of organisations through mergers and take-overs, and increased international competition have all contributed to the changing needs of industry.

While there appears to be a demand for graduates, a recent industry survey indicates that graduates are poorly prepared for the work environment. The Confederation of British Industry polled 50 of its 200 biggest members and found half complaining of 'poor customer service' from academics. However, 84% had links with universities and said they were valuable, especially their access to researchers. A quarter of major UK companies believe that graduates are ill prepared for the working world, with anti-corporate prejudice a big problem (source: channel 4 teletext – City news page 503, April 11th, 2003, 02:49am).

The model on the below summarises the discussions of the relationship between industry and the higher education system.

INDUSTRY

Potential
employees
Researchers
and
Developers

Partnerships

Needs
Sponsorship
Research

Graduates

HE
CONTEXT

Research
Outcomes

Knowledge
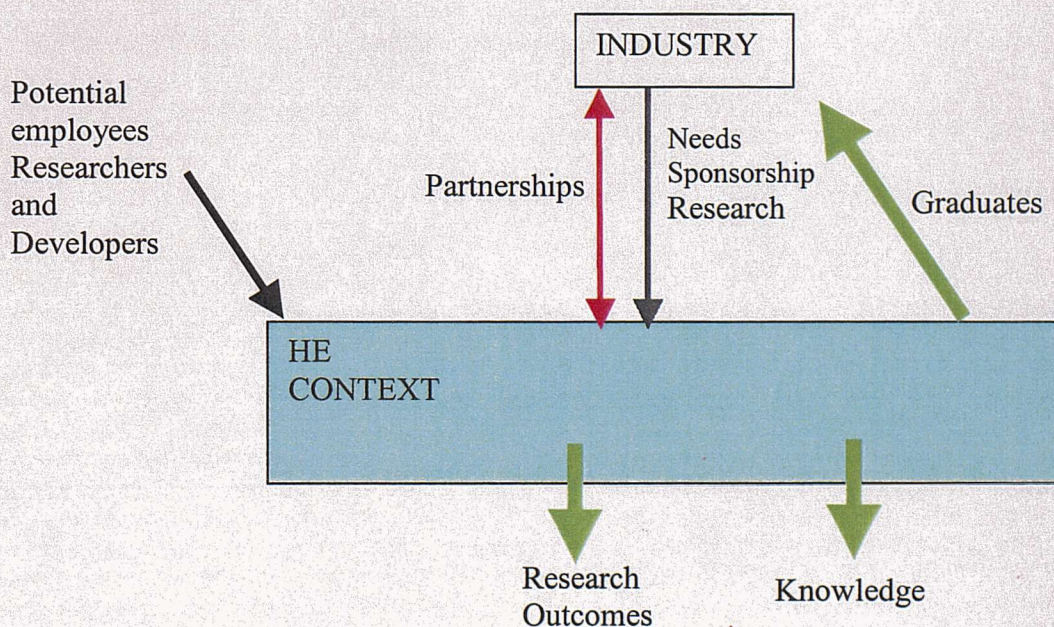
Figure 2.4.2 A Systemic View Of The Relationships Between Higher Education And Industry (Hennell, unpublished)

2.4.3 HIGHER EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

As these changes occur in industry, it follows that individuals need to reflect on personal practice. In this new age of information and of global competition, familiar certainties and old ways of doing things are disappearing: careers and career paths change to meet changing needs of the workplace, Continuing Professional Development has emerged and some of the research previously undertaken in the higher education environment has moved to the workplace (Jarvis, 2000).

The previous two sections support Barnett's view that higher education is no longer an autonomous entity within society, but now integrally bound up with the regeneration and development of the economy (Barnett, 1999). The current government perceives education as the key to economic success, social cohesion and active citizenship (Blunkett, 1998a). The government believes that higher education should provide the widest possible access to opportunity for individuals; generate, extend and transmit knowledge at the highest levels; and contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of local and regional communities.

Whilst there appears to have been a move from an elitist higher education system to one of mass education for all classes, government statistics show that those from a lower socio-economic background were less likely to achieve the basic requirements to attend HE. It is the government's intention to widen participation by 'unlocking the poorer sections of society', a pledge repeated in various government documents (Blunkett, 1998b, Morris, 2001, Morris, 2002). Currently 70% of children from higher socio-economic groups go on to higher education, compared to 13 – 14% from families from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Morris, 2001). By 2000, 12.1% of the student population were domiciled in the European Union or other overseas countries and 30.5% were mature students, 21 years and over (HESA, 2001).

The statistics presented below show the changes in student demographics and a greater percentage of full-time and part-time mature students taking higher education programmes.

Year	No of Universities (awarding bodies)	No of Students	Other HE providers (non-awarding bodies)
1946	16	28000 full-time	0
1996	115	1.1 million full-time .5 million part-time	61
2000	111	>1.8 million .2 million at FE colleges	60 HE colleges 300 colleges providing access courses

Figure 2.4.3a Changes in Student Demographics (Sources: Shattock, 1996, HESA, 2001 and DfES, 2002a)   [HE = Higher Education, FE = Further Education]

The changes in the world economy and in industry reflect on society itself. Morrison (1998) observed that 'Flexibility, responsiveness, consumerism and client satisfaction are the order of the day, with flatter management organization and organic rather than mechanistic views of the organisation' (p2). Recognition by higher education institutions of the need to develop and certificate vocational skills is evidenced by the availability of vocationally based degrees, for example: Masters in Finance, Human Resource Management, Marketing and subject based Doctorates such as the Doctor of Business Administration and Doctor of Education.

The statistics presented earlier show the changes in student demographics and a greater percentage of full-time and part-time mature students taking higher education programmes. A survey conducted in 1998 with students studying a range of part-time postgraduate programmes at two different universities (unpublished, by this author) showed that those between the age of 30 and 40 were doing so to gain promotion or to enhance their employment opportunities. Those over the age of 41 were studying for pleasure.

The government has introduced a number of initiatives to enable mature students to return to education and gain higher-level qualifications, such as Accreditation for Prior Learning, and Accreditation for Prior Experience, a wide range of Access programmes, and Foundation Degrees. Lifelong learning has become a central theme to meet the needs of this new age through continuous education and development of the mind and imagination (DfEE, 1998). Labour's lifelong learning policies are guided by four key principles: Quality, Access, Equity and Accountability (Blunkett, 1998a). Higher education curriculum must demonstrate these principles.

The model on the below presents a summary of the relationships between higher education and societal influences.
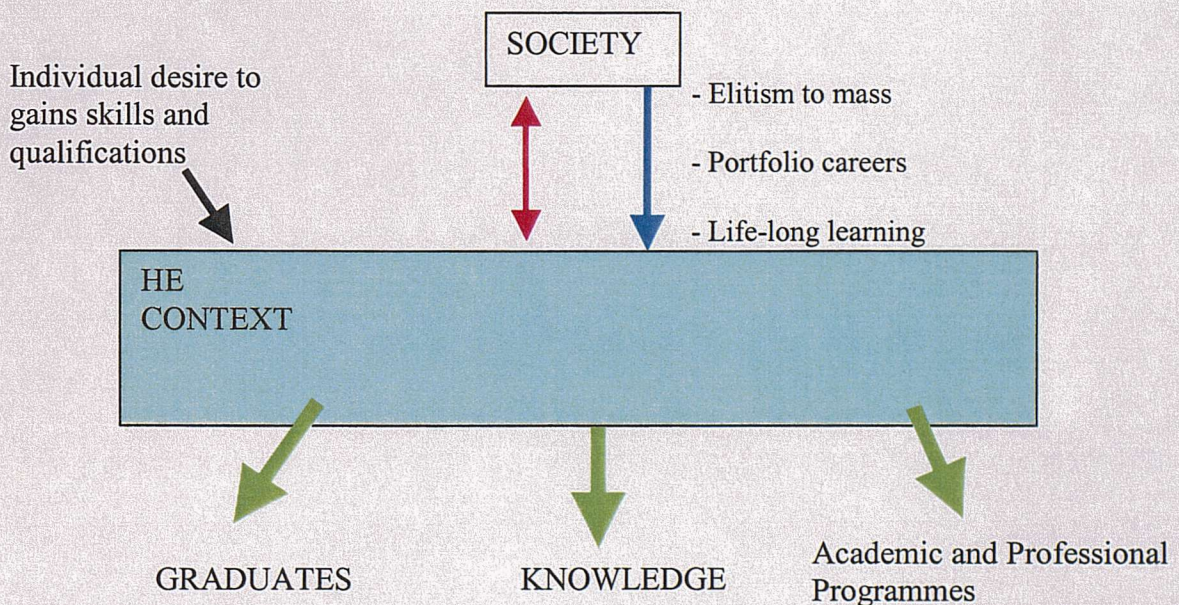
Figure 2.4.3b A Systemic View Of Higher Education And Society (Hennell, unpublished)

To achieve these goals, higher education must be responsive and accountable to the wider community. A potential solution to providing wider access nationally and internationally is the adoption of technology to facilitate teaching and learning.

Whilst the application of information technology is not the key focus of this work, it would be negligent not to consider the relevance of technological advances to the internal decision-making during curriculum development. Accordingly, the next section reviews the impact of information and communication technologies on the provision of teaching and learning in higher education.

2.4.4 HIGHER EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

The rhythm of the production of knowledge and new telecommunication technologies are changing the way humanity lives and works (Harnard, 1992). Familiarisation with the different forms of technologies is producing a more 'IT literate society for whom surfing the net' is becoming a common activity[2]. Hammer (1996, p105, cited Morrison, 1998, p1) suggests that 'new technologies are being used not to render existing practices more efficient, but to revolutionise the way we think about things.' Bennett (1999) takes this suggestion further believing that computers would change the world more than any other invention in history. It is his contention that education will not be spared, and may see the greatest alteration through its implementation. Advances in information and communications technology and their increased use in the wider context have produced a technically empowered population (Michaelson, 2002).

Since Dearing (1997) there has been increased provision of information technologies for students on campus, academic and support staff. For example, the implementation of multi-media technology in lecture theatres facilitate real-time computer assisted delivery, video and audio streaming (evidence for this is presented in chapter 4). Increasingly, it is impacting academic provision and facilitating curriculum change (see for example Lawton and Barnes, 1998, Johnson, 1998, Salmon, 1998, Thompson, 1999, Canning, 2002). The extent of

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[2] In part as a result of Dearing 1997, through Individual Learning Accounts promoting government funded training programmes for every member of the population, through the redeployment of industry's obsolete hardware and supermarket related PC's for Schools initiatives.

adoption of information and communications technologies as a platform to deliver curriculum are defined within institutional teaching and learning strategies. In a financially constrained organisation, opportunity cost and risk are actors that determine the extent to which institutions invest in technology to support curriculum design and development. (These issues are included here by way of introduction and are discussed in depth in the next section.)

The UK government has introduced a number of technology-based initiatives. The first, the University for Industry, was set up to provide information to potential students promoting the full range of academic experiences available. The second was the creation of a holding company E-Universities Worldwide. Initiated in February 2000, the e-university project was designed and co-coordinated by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and funded by the government to the tune of £62 million for the period 2001 – 2004. This joint initiative has an executive team drawn from higher education and industry and supported technically by a leading hardware and software provider (Press release 28/11/01, www.ukuniversitiesworldwide.com).

Information technology is enabling different forms and styles of teaching and learning, empowering higher education providers to reach a wider audience, and students to access previously inaccessible institutions and programmes. Higher education institutions, through the development of teaching and learning strategies, determine the impact of technology on curriculum development. Yetton (1997) identified three major approaches to the introduction of technology in the delivery of higher education in Australia. Yetton's first model describes a 'cottage industry' where individuals, or individual departments develop specialist on-line products. Any staff development is restricted to the individuals concerned with any developments. Specialist products are used, the results may be costly and are often not scalable as specialist online products are developed for particular markets. However,

Yetton suggests that one advantage is retaining control of intellectual property rights by the developer. He suggests that this approach would attract high status academic risk takers and innovators.

Yetton's second model describes a single product approach, however he does suggest that each autonomous division could select a single product for its own on-line delivery based on specific needs. This approach relies on the focused innovation and competencies of each academic division to manage and limit complexities. This approach has low start-up costs but will require ongoing technical support costs.

Yetton's third model applies a mass production approach to online delivery. The institution selects a single product. All members of staff receive staff development to develop and use the product. Yetton's (ibid) theory suggests that this approach, by supporting the institution's strategy in teaching and learning, can assist the institution's competitive position. However, the approach requires high resource commitment and considerable pedagogic input. Any benefits derived from this approach should be measured against the loss of control of intellectual property and a reduction in flexibility. These issues are discussed in greater detail in sections 2.5.4 and 2.5.5. The model on the next page reflects the relationships identified in this section between technology and higher education provision.

2.4.5 SUMMARY OF EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

Over the past fifteen years observers have been prone to talk of a change from an elite to a mass system of education (Trow, 1987; Barnett, 1992; Ford et al, 1996, Morris, 2001). Once funded by the state whilst retaining autonomy, there has been an increased interest and intervention by the state to think strategically about what universities do and how it should be achieved to build diverse institutions that pursue excellence in different ways (Morris, 2001).

- Perceived IT literate population

- Remote access to higher education

TECHNOLOGY

Advances
- Support
- Communications
- Teaching & Learning platforms
- E-Learning

Research

HE CONTEXT

Key:
IS/IT Influences

GRADUATES   Academic and Professional Programmes
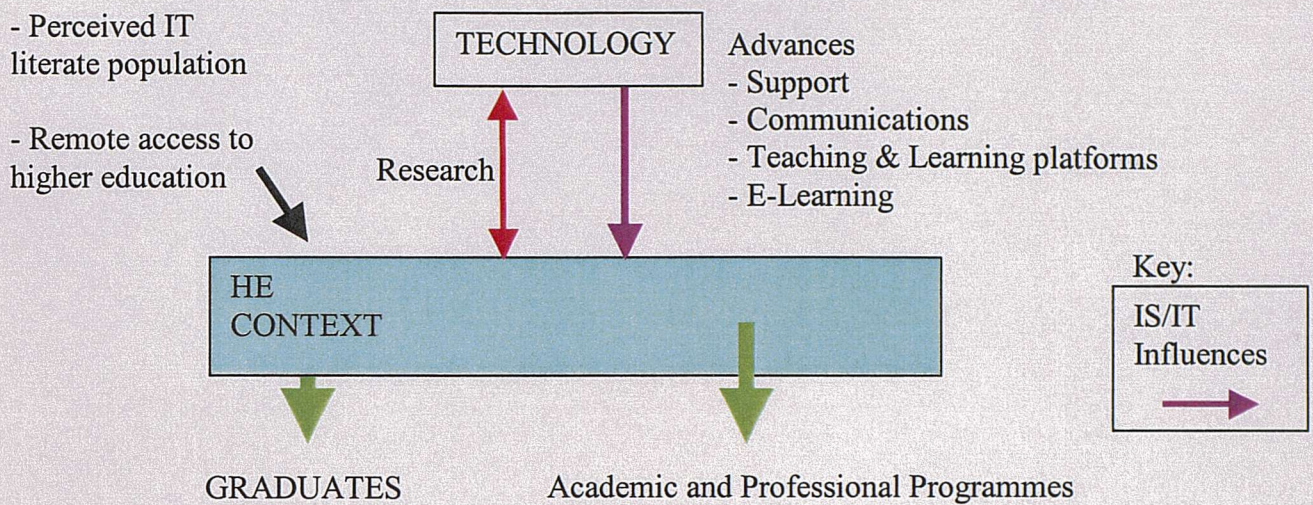
Figure 2.4.4 A Systemic View Of The Relationships Between Higher Education And Technology (Hennell, unpublished)

Dynamic changes in the world economy and, information and knowledge engineering, require continuous development and knowledge acquisition by the individual, industry and society to remain competitive.

To achieve these goals, the world class research, for which UK higher education is perceived by the current government to rank first in the world (Morris, 2001) will continue independently and through linking universities with industry and communities. Developments in widening participation, teaching excellence and, management and leadership will inform the governments' strategic plan for higher education and funding proposals.

Learning throughout life will build human capital by encouraging the acquisition of knowledge and skills and emphasising creativity and imagination. Higher education must take the lead if we are to extend opportunities for personal development as well as equipping the workforce

with skills for a modern economy. None of this can be achieved without

innovation in teaching and learning. (Blunkett, 1998b).

This leads back to the question – what is a university? If contemporary higher education

institutions are called universities, the extension of the original concept of a university

demands that there must be similar points of reference. However, if the departure is so

radical that a new entity is created, can we then call the institution a university? (Sutherland,

1994).

This section has provided a critical review of the state of universities, their relationship with

the state, industry, society and, information and communications technology. It has set the

status of the modern university within the wider context of higher education. The model on

the next page provides a conceptual summary of the literature review of the external

influences on higher education. It was developed by collating the individual models

developed for each of the four external influences developed in the previous four sections of

this chapter.

The perpetual adjustments to strategy, practice and culture within higher education over the

last 5000 years (Teale, 1998) portray a requirement for higher education institutions to be

flexible in their approach to curriculum development if it is to continue to serve community

and the individual. This chapter continues with a review of the literature relating to the

internal aspects that impact decision-making during curriculum development within higher

education. The analysis of current government thinking and policies, requirements from

industry, the changes in society and the advances of technology provide the backdrop to the

next section of the literature review that seeks to understand how higher education

institutions have responded to address the challenges set in recent history, over the past thirty

years. The key focus concentrates on decisions taken during curriculum development

founded upon teaching and learning strategies. Particular attention is paid to the adoption of

information and communications technologies and open, distance and flexible learning to understand how these may support a radical approach to delivering the curriculum.
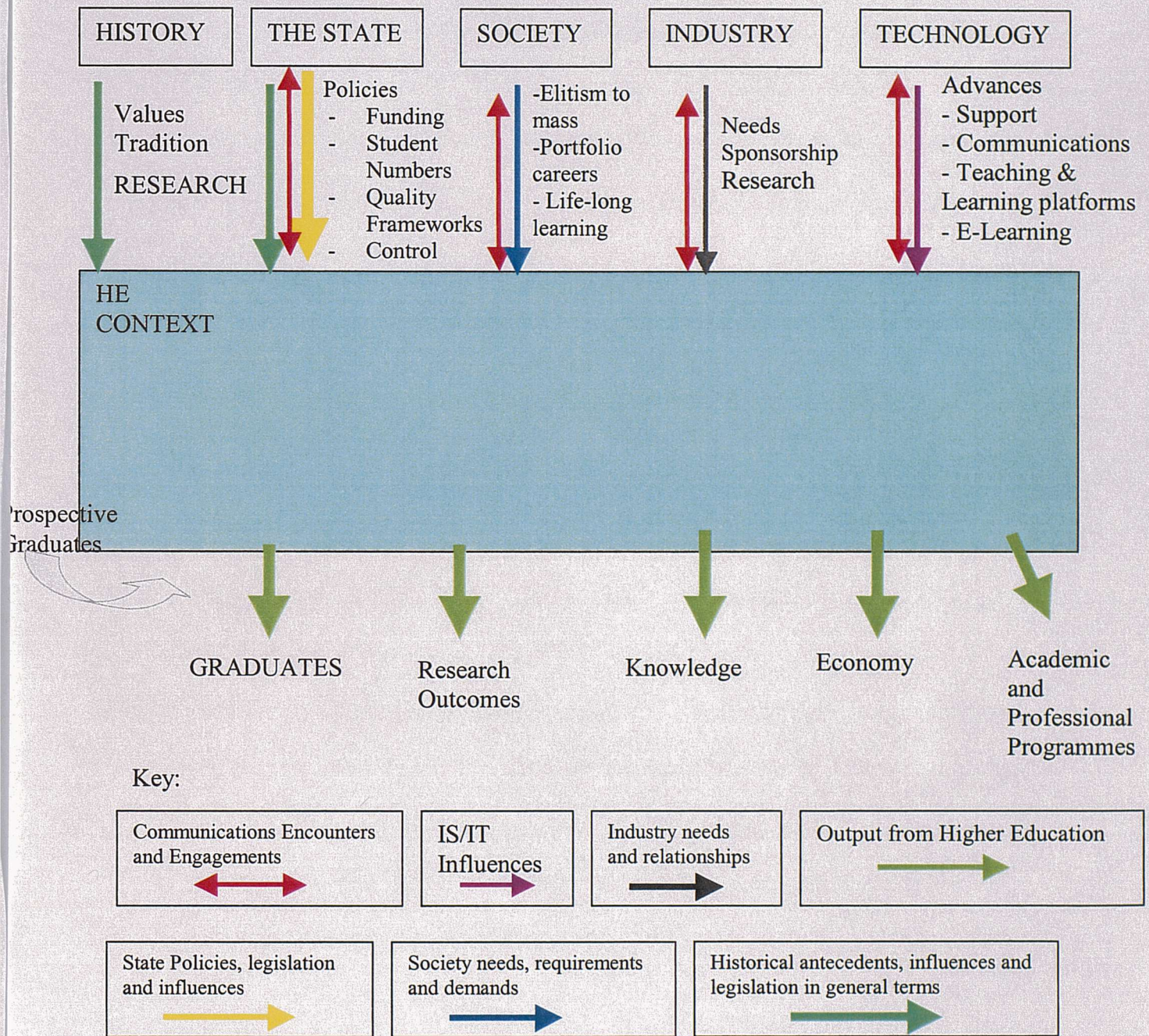
Figure 2.4.5 A Systemic Summary of the External Influences on Higher Education (Hennell, unpublished)

2.5 HIGHER EDUCATION – AN INTERNAL PERSPECTIVE

How institutions have responded to the contemporary world in which it now resides has been the subject of many academic discussions (see for example Webber, 2000, Rausch et al, 2001, Appelbaum and Patton, 2002). HEIs inhabit a more competitive world where resources have become scarcer, the impact of technology unpredictable, are subjected to an unprecedented level of external scrutiny, demands that have expanded and levels of expectations that have changed (Ford et al, 1996). The dominant influences in the shaping of curricula have for centuries been the domain of academics but in the contemporary world, curricula have become subject to contending patterns of change (Barnett, 2000c). It has been suggested that the university can only secure its future by becoming entrepreneurial and by marketing its knowledge in forms of academic capitalism (Barnett, 2000b).

The HEFCE statement (1996) referred to in the rationale for this research (section 1.2) suggests that current incremental or evolutionary practice will be insufficient to meet the changing needs of the external conditions discussed in the previous section (2.5). Implicitly, the statement infers that higher education institutions need to adopt a radical or revolutionary approach to academic provision.

Revolution and evolution imply a change in practice. Change implies choices. Choices imply decisions. Decisions involve taking risks and uncertainty. The risks and uncertainty may be assessed and managed to mitigate loss, based on data drawn from internal and external sources. The mission of the institution is defined in its strategic plan, detailed in its teaching and learning strategies and manifested in its curriculum development.

2.5.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING

Bernstein (1998) suggests that the ability to define what may happen in the future and to choose among alternatives lies at the heart of contemporary societies. Section 2.5 identified four key areas that influence strategic decision-making in higher education. A report commissioned by HEFCE identified the need for strategic planning.

In virtually all universities and colleges, strategic planning is seen as an essential tool for effective institutional management. Unless time is taken to analyse the institution and its environment, and to consider its medium and long-term direction and goals, it is unlikely that action will be focused and achieved. Effective planning helps higher education institutions identify what makes them distinctive and what they have in comparison with other HEIs, and therefore helps to maintain their individuality. (HEFCE, 2000, p2)

Section 2.3 noted the challenges facing the 'new' universities as they seek to determine their distinctive characteristics and where, and how, to apportion their resources to maximise revenue and reputation. Collis and Moonen (2001, p199) proposed four scenarios for the delivery of the curriculum.

	Where local face-to-face transactions are highly valued	Where global and network-mediated transactions are the norm
The institution offers a programme and ensures its content	**Scenario A** Control of cohesive curriculum in a local setting <u>Back to Basics</u>	**Scenario B** Control of a cohesive local curriculum, available globally <u>The Global Campus</u>
The learner chooses what he/she wants, how he/she wants, when he/she wants and takes more responsibility for its content and structure	**Scenario C** Individualisation in the local institution <u>Stretching the mould</u>	**Scenario D** Individualisation and Globalisation <u>The new Economy</u>

Figure 2.5.1 Scenarios for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning (After Collis and Moonen 2001, p199)

In determining which of the four scenarios to adopt to survive in a competitive and expanding market situation institutions need to provide their education in more flexible formats, to create new learning opportunities (Middlehurst,1997, cited in Jackson, 1997). This could be achieved through new subjects and new types of programmes, as traditional regulation is

likely to inhibit the conditions in which a competitive market can thrive (Jackson, 1997).

These decisions have resourcing implications in terms of academic staff, administrative staff,

teaching space and support. The government constraints on student numbers, and the

plethora of initiatives introduced (for example Accreditation for Prior Experiential Learning

and Widening Participation) in which the institutions participate, contribute to the unstable

financial environment in which higher education institutions operate and decisions are taken.

Daniel Bernoulli's work (1738) first recognised how human beings employ both

measurement and gut in making decisions when outcomes are uncertain. Within higher

education, decisions are made during the academic year related to the curriculum provision.

These decisions, including consideration of the programmes to offer and the modes of study,

are based on external influences such as consumer demand (i.e. the number of student

applications for individual programmes, and the demands from industry and the state) and

internal influences such as academic expertise, and successful bids for research funding. The

decisions taken are influenced internally by the need to meet the institutions student target

numbers set by the government for funding purposes[2]. As such, strategic decisions are taken

to sustain popular programmes and suspend, or close, unpopular programmes. Whilst these

decisions are taken on the basis of metrics, the discussions later in this thesis demonstrate that

Bernoulli's findings (op cit) affect the decision-making and risk-taking during programme

development. The next section reviews curriculum development in higher education.

2.5.2 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Stenhouse (1970) said that 'a curriculum may be said to be an attempt to define the common

ground shared by those teachers that follow it.' (in Hamilton et al, 1977, p122) Curriculum

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[2] State funding is based upon student number allocation. Each institution has a maximum number of students that may be recruited. Penalty fines are imposed on institutions recruiting 5% above or below their target. Institutions recruiting over 5% above their allocation receive no additional funding; therefore the cost of academic provision for those students is full cost to the institution. Those institutions recruiting more that 5% less than their target have their student allocation numbers reduced for the next academic year. This reduces their income stream.

and how it is developed and approved are significant factors in enhancing student learning (Horsburgh, 2000). Contemporary curriculum design and the style of delivery of academic programmes within HE has been widely discussed and debated in the literature from multiple perspectives for over a decade. For example: deep and surface learning theories (Ramsden, 1992); content development (Roebuck, 1987); organizational and cultural changes (Bennett, 1999); impact upon academic and administrative staff (Levine, 1997); student centric learning (Race, 1988, Davidson et al, 1998, Gibson et al, 1999); the role of new technologies to deliver and support learning (Salmon, 1998, Boyd et al, 2000) and curriculum development in post-compulsory and adult education (Neary, 2002). Whilst outside the scope of this research individually, these are critical factors that impact on the decision-making for the adoption of, and adapting to, new curriculum development employing non-traditional modes of teaching and learning.

The process of incremental curriculum development can be smoother, quicker and more effective, if not left to chance but implemented according to well thought out strategies that must be deliberately managed (Kelly, 1989). Laurillard (1993) observed that a university operated a 'complex system of departments, curricula, teaching methods, support facilities, timetables and assessment' (p2). She continues to say however that it is 'a tribute to human ingenuity that a student ever learns anything worthwhile in such a system' and suggests that 'the academic system must change' particularly as higher education expands (p 3).

Faced with quasi market environment, higher education providers must rise to the challenge of building a system which will be equipped to meet the needs of society in the next century in order to survive. Institutions must respond positively to change and manage it effectively as a matter of urgency (Ford et al, 1996).

Barnett's (1992) schema (figure 2.3.3 on the next page) presents the complex set of relationships between general purposes set outside that identify the academic community, and

those specific purposes set inside individual institutions that provide for differentiation. The grid reflects the shift from internal control and decision-making to the increasing pressures from external sources. He argues that the purposes of higher education by those external to the academic community have increased, while the purposes set within individual institutions have diminished. The four sections in chapter 2 provide evidence to show that to a greater extent, this has indeed been the case as higher education moves from the 'knowledge for knowledge sake' ideology towards developing knowledge bases for specific purposes to meet external and individual needs.

General across Institutes of Higher Education	**Specific** to each Institute of Higher Education	
General and Internal A	Specific and Internal C	**Internal** to Academic Community
General and External B	**Specific and External** D	**External** to Academic Community

push ← → push
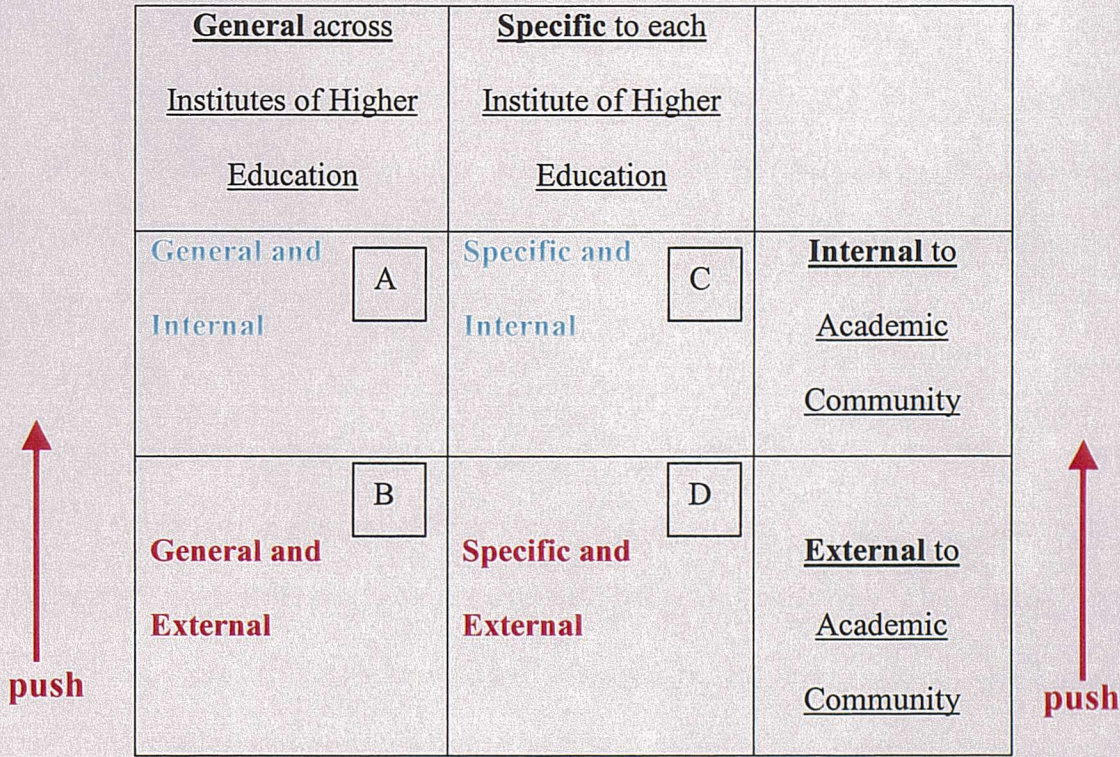
Figure 2.3.3 Purposes Of Institutions Of Higher Education – A Schema (Barnett, 1992, p 85)

What is of interest to this work is the development of the specific and internal (box C above). It is interpreted and defined herein as the *curriculum development and management to provide the uniqueness of a single institution competing in the contemporary quasi market.*

Curricula development in higher education institutions is a manifestation of the culture, values and beliefs that have developed internally from the establishment of the institution. Once an informal, intangible conceptualisation, curricula are now formally represented through the strategy policies of the individual institutions. The culture of the institution and the values and beliefs of the individuals (staff and students) interpret and implement the formally recorded strategies to create the learning environment.

Ross (2000) identifies three types of curricula: content driven, objectives driven and process driven.

1. Content-driven curricula

He suggests that 'this has been the dominant curriculum paradigm for most of English education in the twentieth century' (p97). Curriculum provision is composed of boundaries and frames, with its sharply delimited divisions into high-status subjects, and its emphasis on academic credentials and validation. These subjects and disciplines are dynamic and change in response to external demands and needs.

2. Objectives-driven curricula

An objectives-driven curriculum is concerned with developing the pre-identified skills and competencies to meet the needs of society, the economy and the individual. The advent of the curriculum framework guidelines (HEFCE) requires Learning Outcomes to be stated for every unit for every programme offered by the higher education institution. Programme/Unit handbooks must identify the skills and competencies that the student will gain on completion of the learning. Ross (ibid) argues that academic subjects based on complex conceptual reasoning may be inappropriate to all students. He suggests that a curriculum that makes less intellectual demands and places more emphasis on instrumental and concrete goals may

serve students better. His distinctions align to the development of vocational degree programmes, designed to meet the more pragmatic needs of industry.

3. Process-driven curricula

Ross (2000) determined that students would develop naturally given a suitable environment and that the role of the teacher was to enable learning, not to transmit knowledge. He argued that the learning process should be organized for the individual and not class-sized groups, and promoted the concept of one-to-one relationships between the learner and the teacher. Since then, there has been much debate as to whether this approach is vocational, in that it develops the skills of the individual, or purely academic in that it promotes the acquisition of knowledge for knowledge's sake through the interpretation of the individual.

The contemporary learning environment in the post-1992 universities promotes the development of vocational skills as part of many of the programmes offered. Indeed, the requirements of HEFCE to ensure that skills and competence levels are met at the different levels of all awards ensure that these are delivered. The economic pressures (discussed in earlier sections), the movement towards mass education from the elite, reduce the ability to provide the process style curriculum as suggested in the previous section. However, this is at odds with the drive to move towards student-centered learning and reduced staff-student contact time. In 1999, at a university on the south coast of England, staff-student contact was reduced by 50% for tutorial and laboratory based sessions in order to accommodate the increased student intake on four programmes within a single department. This decision was taken due to the lack of resources available to accommodate the students and the timetable.

Curriculum provision in higher education is being subjected to greater scrutiny as the introduction of quality assurance mechanisms such as subject review and benchmarking encourage transparency and accountability (Barnett et al, 2001). To maintain standards, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

benchmark individual institutions against a national framework, through continuous inspection. Their reviews are concerned with the whole of the student learning experience. Within institutions, the intended student experience is expressed through teaching and learning strategies.

Mechanisms for contemporary curriculum design and the style of delivery of academic programmes within higher education have been widely discussed and debated in the literature from multiple perspectives for over a decade. However, as the size of the student body and demographics change, institutions need to evaluate learning styles and modes, and adjust teaching and learning strategies accordingly. Adult learners behave and learn differently to the traditional student. They are more diverse than younger students in their motivations, needs, expectations and experiences (Richardson and King, 1998).

2.5.3 TEACHING AND LEARNING

Student learning has always been subject to re-evaluation, and higher learning in a dynamic state, the pressures for curricular change, and modifying the character of student learning are more complex than before (Barnett, 1992). The pace of change in society has accelerated. The paradigms within which society operates are also changing (Dalin and Rust, 1996). Middlehurst (1997, cited Jackson, 1997) observed that there were inherent tensions in an HE regulatory-based system that was moving towards a market economy, in that the operation of competitive market principles in a public service, which is concerned for quality and standards, was problematic. She suggested that survival in a competitive and expanding market situation requires institutions to provide their education in more flexible formats, to create new learning opportunities. The move towards a market economy, increased competition and expanding markets requires HEIs to provide more flexible formats and to create new learning opportunities: this could be achieved through new subjects and new types

of programmes, as traditional regulation is likely to inhibit the conditions in which a competitive market can thrive (Jackson, 1997).

This section first discusses the existing formats for the provision of higher education. There follows an exploration of the opportunities available to support non-traditional modes of teaching and learning and the extent to which they have been adopted.

It must be noted that teaching and learning is not the focus of this work however, the discussion regarding meeting the external needs requires an investigation of the mechanisms for providing academic provision. It is therefore necessary to consider modes of teaching and learning, and in particular the use of information and communications technology as a potential means of supporting alternative provision.

2.5.4 OPEN, DISTANCE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING

Students have been undertaking correspondence programmes and open learning for many decades. The first formal recognition in the UK was the creation of the Open University in 1969. Through technological advances, the media has changed, progressed but the underlying principles remain. This topic has been an area of great interest at conferences and in the academic press for the last ten years (see for example Jonassen, 1992; Green and Gilbert, 1995; Law, 1997; Lawton and Barnes, 1998; Reid, 1999; Rosie, 2000).

One of the fundamental issues facing the researcher in the field of new approaches to teaching and learning is the ambiguity and proliferation of terminology. The description and definition for each of the terms varies widely in the literature suggesting that each style is quite different. However, substantive definitions are required to enable the management of curriculum change in order to establish specific teaching and learning strategies. The following explain the definitions adopted for this research:

Open Learning   Students have control over their learning progress

Flexible Leaning   Varied learning to meet needs and circumstances of individual learners (George and Luke, 1995)

Distance Learning   Learner and provider separated by distance (Salmon, 1998)

These modes of learning are not mutually exclusive and may be integrated to provide greater flexibility in the student learning experience.

Learning is a social activity. It involves a raft of experiences, interactions and communications. The model presented in figure 2.5.4 below, demonstrates the communications relationships associated with the different modes of learning.

Time/place independent

Mediated

Online Education

Many to many
One to many
One to one

Interactive

Mediated
One to many
One to one

Distance Education

Time/place independent

Face-to-Face Education

Interactive
One to many
One to one

Time/place dependent
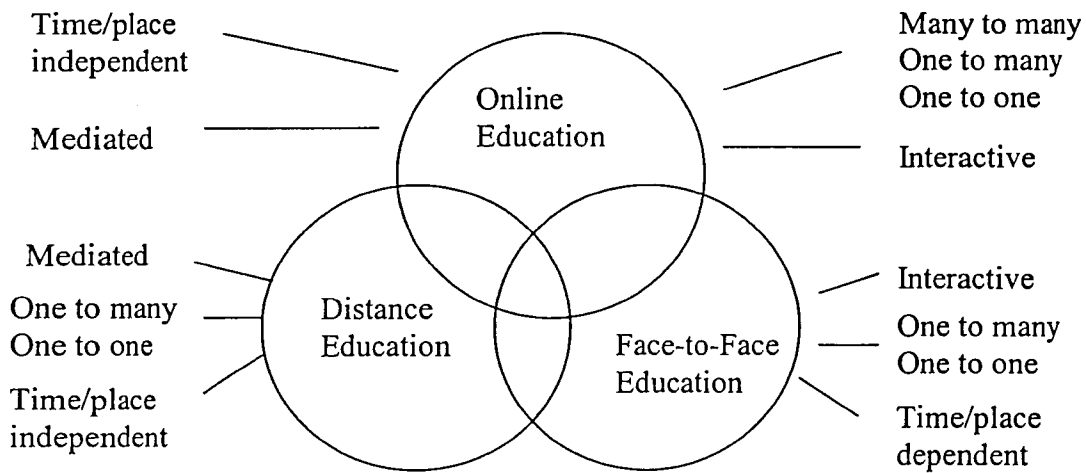
Figure 2.5.4   On-Line Learning as a Distinct Domain   (Source: Land, P. and Rist, R. (undated))

The linkages between information and communications technologies and teaching and learning are complex and mutli-faceted, not least because the term encompasses many forms

54

of technology.   This work is confined to computers, computer-related applications that support teaching and learning, and communications networks that provide a channel to access the Internet, and institution intranets.   These technological applications are as diverse as the nature of the ways in which they can be incorporated into teaching and learning approaches. The use of computer technology in education has received a number of titles over the past fourteen years.   In 1998, a HEFCE report, in referring to 'The Computers in Teaching Initiative' and the 'Teaching and Learning Technology Support Network' concluded that:

> There was evidence of considerable commitment to, and investment in, the use
>
> of computer-assisted learning (CAL), and in the exploitation of ICT such as
>
> the World Wide Web to support teaching and learning. (Report 98/47, p 2,3)

The report established that as an agenda, institutions incorporated computer-assisted learning and information communications technologies into their formal teaching and learning strategies, while as many institutions sought new markets through open, distance, work-based or lifelong learning initiatives.   However, although on the agenda, the review group found that under-utilisation of computer-assisted learning and information communications technologies remained a continuing and major problem for the majority of the higher education institutions participating in the study.

Despite the apparent indicators of massive change in teaching and learning approaches, the real changes experienced in universities are less than expected (Johnston and McCormack, 1998).   They suggest that the link between educational outcomes and information technology is also problematic.   Information technology is a tool and has no intrinsic educational value.   Its use cannot guarantee enhanced teaching and learning.   As with any tool, it is how the tool is used in practice that derives the benefit.   As a facilitator in an academic environment, the use of information and communications technologies must be

driven by educational needs 'rather than a desire to use the technology for its own sake' (ibid, p37).[3]

Johnston and McCormack found that staff development to support computer-assisted learning and information communications technologies was considered to be ineffective. Many of the staff were reluctant to use the off-the-shelf materials but did not have the knowledge, the time or the incentive to develop bespoke systems. Further, the scale of investment in connectivity, hardware, software licences and recurrent charges for continued use, was a matter of concern. One of the respondents of their study commented:

> What is required [here] is not more money or more technology, but more staff development. The momentum is such that one will be using learning technology, but not at the rate people expect: there is a need for education within a culture of resistance. (ibid)

The next section considers more recent trends, and terminology, in the implementation of information and communications technology to support teaching and learning.

2.5.5 E-LEARNING

E-learning is a term widely used to describe the activity of learning using some form of technology. This section offers an introduction to the current debate on e-learning as it applies within the design and development of teaching and learning strategies, and decision-making during curriculum development. Detailed discussion regarding the technical requirements, hardware and software to support an e-learning mode fall outside the scope of this work. However, these issues are discussed in greater detail in chapter 4 of this work where they proved to be critical in the decision-making processes during the programme developments that formed the basis of this research.

---

[3] Johnston and McCormack found that there was a common theme emerging from their studies. The adoption rate of ICT was lower than expected. The barriers to adoption included: insufficient time, inadequate facilities, too low incentives and a lack of support. Additional barriers were identified as the attitudes and knowledge of the academic staff. They found that academics were entrenched in traditional modes of teaching and learning, lacking the confidence to try new approaches.

There has been considerable debate on the relevance and viability of e-learning as a suitable learning environment within human resource management journals, and in academic publications. Academic institutions have adopted this approach through pilot studies and for specific academic programmes. For example: Cranfield offer an MBA using Lotus Notes as a platform for delivering a distance learning programme; the University of East Anglia offer a Masters degree in Call Centre Management through electronic distance learning; Portsmouth University have developed units for undergraduate programmes delivered through e-learning using Web-CT, and via an internally developed platform provided by a company called Purple Train. Web-CT, Blackboard and Firstclass are examples of proprietary packages that have been designed specifically for supporting and delivering learning on-line in an academic environment.

Adoption of e-learning has not been widespread. In fact, there has been reticence in the investment of such an approach in education and in industry. A survey (2001 - 2002, Hennell, unpublished) undertaken across 200 firms in the City of London established that less than half had implemented e-learning to support training needs, and 80% of those were to underpin IT training and skills development.

A criticism levied at the approach was its suitability for providing learning of a qualitative nature. In fact, some of the early e-learning environments were merely electronic books. Commentators have reflected on the learning approaches and concluded that a blended approach, combining a virtual learning environment, using electronic medium, and traditional modes of learning, provided an economically and sociably acceptable forum for learning.

The next section summaries the review of the literature reviewed in this section and concludes with a consideration the future of open, distance and flexible provision in higher education.

2.5.6 SUMMARY

This section has provided an overview of the traditional approaches to teaching and learning supported by lectures, tutorials and seminars, and the approaches facilitated by the advances in information and communications technology.

Given the exponential advances in the technologies over the past three decades, it is difficult to predict the platforms that will be available in the next ten years. However, information and communications technologies are merely a mechanism for facilitating open, distance and flexible learning. As such, it should not be the determining factor in deciding curriculum development. Of greater importance is an institution's propensity to adopt and adapt to changing paradigms.

The Venn diagram in the previous section showed the inter-relationships between the concepts of open, distance and flexible learning. The extent of the adoption of open, distance and flexible learning (ODFL) by institutions can be mapped onto a continuum shown in figure 2.5.6.a below. The model has been developed from the literature to show the relationship between the traditional learning environments and the adoption of alternative modes of teaching and learning.
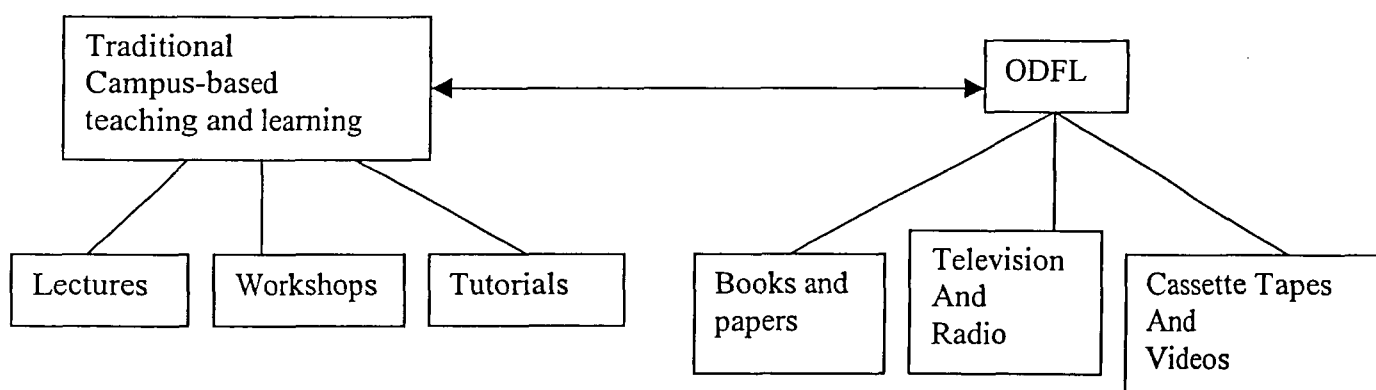
Figure 2.5.6.a Traditional Approaches to ODFL – a Continuum (Hennell, unpublished)

The development of the Internet has provided an infrastructure to support on-line open, distance and flexible learning. There has been extensive research in this area relating to the locus of control, proxemics, human computer interface and the technological implications. Whilst outside the scope of this thesis, they are noteworthy as they indicate the acute level of interest in the wider domain.

Other forms of technology-supported media include floppy disks, CD-ROMS and video technologies. Laptop computers, palmtops, and more recently, the Personal Digital Assistants cannot be ignored, particularly if the devices are wireless and Bluetooth enabled. Voice activated software enables physically disabled students to operate technology. Their developments have made truly portable open, distance and flexible learning a real possibility and the concepts of learning anywhere, any time a distinct possibility.

a. A Blended Approach

Research, during and since the case study took place, has shown that virtual learning alone is not sufficient to provide a full learning experience. Advocates of the use of ICT as a learning platform suggest that a blended learning approach is the preferred solution.

The model on the next page is an extension of the continuum produced earlier. It shows the inclusion of ICT to facilitate ODFL, and the relationship between the polemic views to create the blended approach to teaching and learning.

Generally, the blended approach does not offer full flexibility or open learning. The blended approach uses ICT to support traditional modes of teaching and learning. Academics and administrators use e-mail communications. Academics post lecture notes and slides on an intranet or the Internet. Staff and students set up chat rooms for virtual discussions. Synchronous (at the same time) learning sessions occur, merely transmitting a taught

campus-based lecture to several points at the same time. The locus of control remains with the academic institution.

More advanced systems provide on-line video streaming that facilitates asynchronous (at different times) learning. The video is posted on the intranet or the Internet and may be accessed at any time by the student. The locus of control moves to the student. WebCT is an example of a simplistic software package that facilitates this style of learning environment. Originally developed for further education it has been adopted by a number of higher education institutions.

The model 2.5.6.b on the next page extends the continuum model, previously presented in figure 2.5.6.a, to show the different technologies currently available to support open, distance and flexible learning modes. While the two approaches have been widely discussed and debated in academic literature, they are not the focus of this research but noteworthy for their impact on decision-making during curriculum design and development. The tactical and operational decisions taken during curriculum development for the adoption of open, distance and flexible learning will be determined within the strategic plans of the institution.

The next section explores the concepts of decisions and the process of decision-making during curriculum development to select appropriate teaching and learning approaches to meet the needs of the changing student demographics.

```
                          ┌──────────┐
                          │ Blended  │
                          │ Approach │
                          └──────────┘

┌──────────────────┐                          ┌──────────┐
│ Traditional      │◄────────────────────────►│ ODFL     │
│ Campus-based     │                          └──────────┘
│ teaching and     │
│ learning         │
└──────────────────┘

┌────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐   ┌────────┐
│Lectures│ │Workshops │ │Tutorials │   │ e-mail │
└────────┘ └──────────┘ └──────────┘   └────────┘
```

Traditional ODFL	ICT facilitated ODFL
Books And Papers	Web-casts Data streaming
Radio And Television	On-line tutorials/ materials
Videos And Cassette tapes	Chat room discussions
	Web sites Hyperlinks External databases
CD-ROM Floppy Disks	
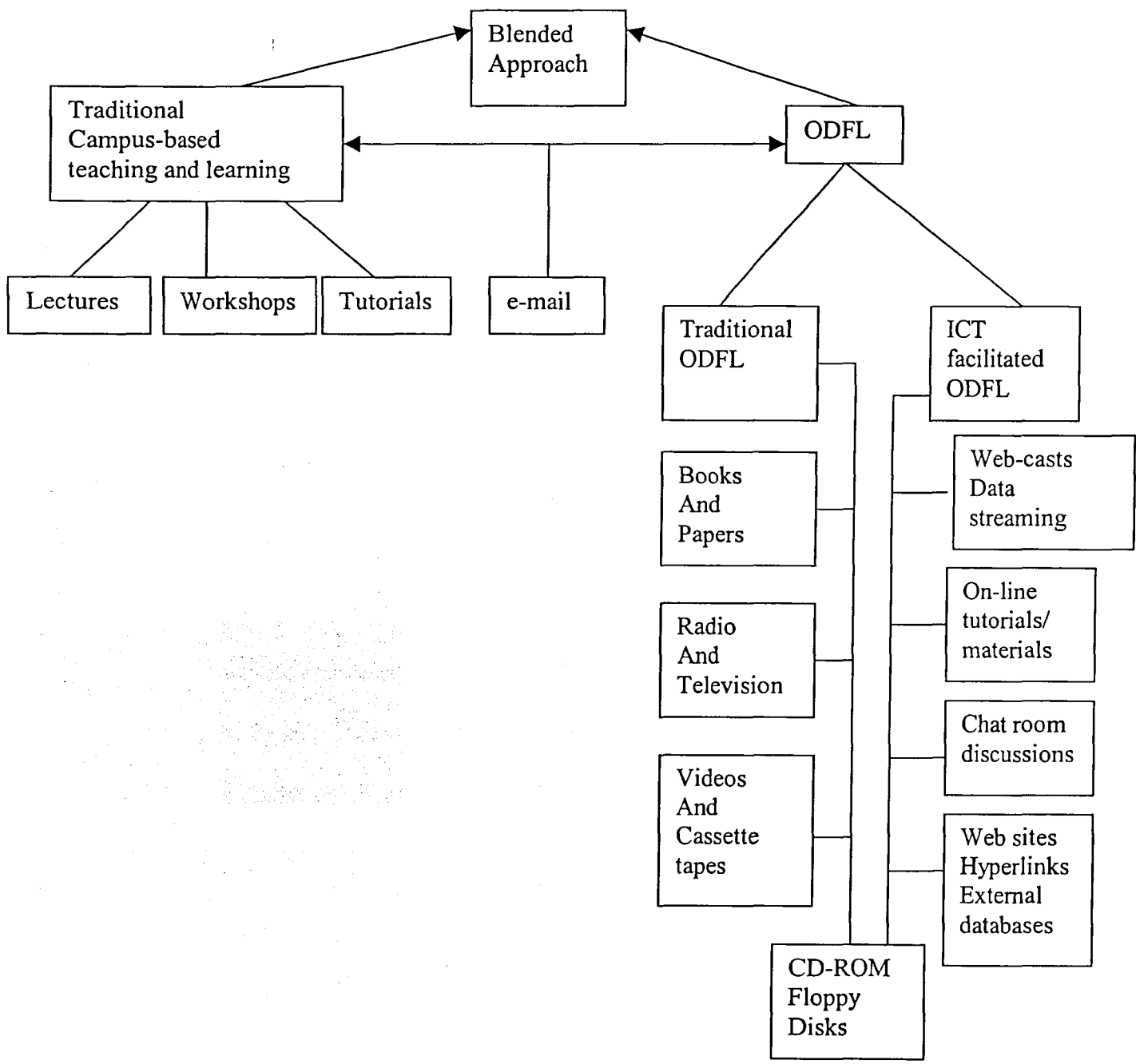
Figure 2.5.6.b A Blended Approach Continuum (Hennell, unpublished)

2.6 DECISION MAKING

Section 2.4 discussed the external influences that impact the development of the curriculum in higher education and section 2.5 identified the teaching and learning opportunities for meeting those needs. This section considers how decisions are taken internally to develop higher education curriculum. The following discussion questions the nature of a decision, its attributes and characteristics, and the context within which decisions are taken.

2.6.1 DECISIONS – A SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE

Decisions are about 'making up one's mind' (dictionary definition). The process of 'making up one's mind' has outcomes. Decision-making activity implies interactions between, for example, thought, communications, deliberation and goal searching. A 'decision' is the outcome of the transaction of deciding, informed by the antecedents of formal and informal information through communication. The key roles communication plays are providing and obtaining information, creating understanding and building ownership (Kanter et al, 1992). Communication and conversation are often seen as the tools for announcing and explaining change (April, 1999) and decision outcomes. How the decisions are made depend on the reliability and completeness of the input data and, the internal antecedents that constrain the potential options. The results of the decision-making process can lead to the intended outcomes being achieved, but may also lead to unexpected outcomes. Decisions can be viewed from a systemic perspective as:
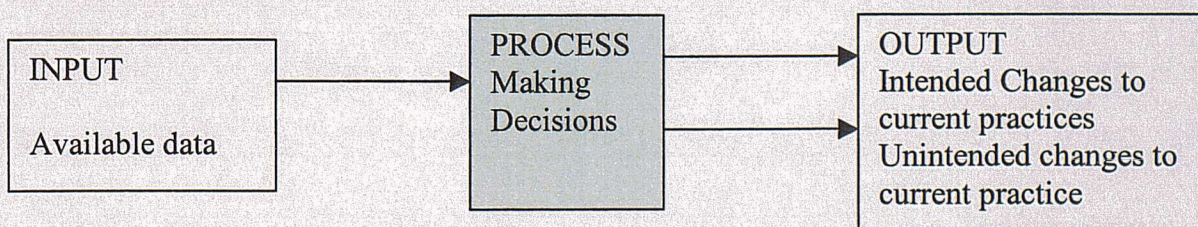
Figure 2.6.1a A systemic perspective of decision-making (Hennell, unpublished)

How the decisions are made depend on the reliability and completeness of the input data and, the existing internal antecedents. Decisions are taken at all levels within an organisation. The diagram below provides a conceptual interpretation of the three levels of decision-making, strategic, tactical and operational, within a generic organisation.
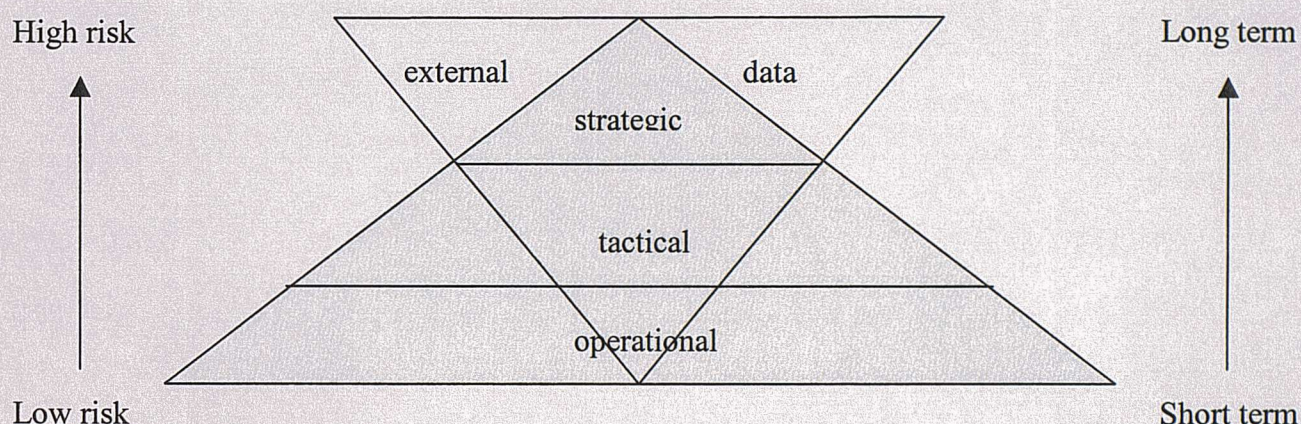
Figure 2.6.1b Decision-making, Duration and Risk (after Mullins, 1999)

The model above shows that decisions taken at the operational level are short term, structured, low risk and usually affect very few resources. Operational issues include document preparation, teaching schemes and scheduling, student application sifting, student support and internal housekeeping issues. Little or no data are drawn from external sources. Decisions taken at the tactical level govern a short timeframe, up to two years; affect a smaller number of resources and are of a lower risk to the institution. Data are drawn equally from internal and external sources. For example, internal data could relate to student applications for specific programmes, staff and space allocation that together provide appropriate learning environments for campus-based students. External data inform managers of current practices and subject area debates and thinking.

Decisions made at the strategic level usually affect a long timeframe; affect large numbers of resources and have a high level of risk or uncertainty. Strategic decisions address

institutional questions such as 'where do we want to be in two years time?' and 'what is our philosophy on open, distance and flexible learning?'. The inputs to the decision-making are drawn predominantly from external sources such as policy, legislation, competitor indicators and internal statistics such as student applications, recruitment and budgetary data.

2.6.2 TYPES OF DECISION

Decisions generally have three characteristics: frequency, content and outcome that combine to define the decision type. These are summarized in the table below.

FREQUENCY	CONTENT	OUTCOME	DECISION TYPE
RECURRING	ROUTINE	PREDICTABLE	DETERMINISTIC
NON-RECURRING	NON-ROUTINE	UNPREDICTABLE	PROBALISTIC

Figure 2.6.2 Types of Decision (after Mullins, 1999)

A systemic approach involves the isolation of those functions most directly concerned with the achievement of objectives and the identification of main decision areas or sub-systems. Viewing the organisation as a system emphasises the need for good information and channels of communication in order to assist effective decision-making in the organisation. Here the focus of attention is on the decisions taken during the programme development processes at the strategic, tactical and operational levels within a single institution (Mullins, 1999).

2.6.3 CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF VARIATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

This section considers the work undertaken by Mohr (1976)[4]. His hypothesis '*the operative mode of choice, or decision-making, is determined by the specific conditions under which the decision is made*' is evaluated using Stake's Antecedent Matrix in chapter 4.

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[4] His work is related to decision-making in a courtroom environment to understand why some courts follow one model and some another. This work has been presented here as parallel research. It was felt appropriate due to the public nature of the legal system, and the public nature of the education system. In law and education, the ultimate objectives of the two types of institutions are the same. Within each discipline however, individual institutions adopt different decisions and processes according to the contexts within which they operate.

Mohr (op cit) defined a choice mechanism as a criterion for selecting the levels at which the various goals relevant to a collective decision will be satisfied. The independent variable *'the conditions under which the decision is made'* was classified as the context of the decision, i.e. the set of conditions that may be used as descriptors of the decision process and may in principle vary from decision to decision within the same organisation. In the context of higher education, the conditions under which decisions are made vary dependent upon the organisational structures and the level of devolved autonomy.

Decision-making has four key stages: determinants of context, decision-making context, decision-making process and consequences of process (op cit). The stages may be represented graphically in the adaptation of Mohr's model to reflect the decision-making determinants during curriculum development as shown in figure 2.6.3.a below. The first two stages of Mohr's model identify the antecedent conditions for the decision-making transactions (stage 3) and the consequences, or outcomes (stage 4).

Contextual
Variables

Submodel

i. Determinants of Context	ii. Decision-making Context	iii. Decision-making Process	iv. Consequences of Process
QCA QAA HEFCE	Resource constraints	Firm Rational	Cost of Programme development
Legislation	Goal compatibility	Garbage Can	Validated Programme
Professional and Academic culture	Consistency of participants	Political	Increased revenue

Figure 2.6.3.a Causes and Effects of Variation in the Decision-making Process (After Mohr, 1976)

i Determinants of Context

The determinants of context (listed on the previous page) were initially identified in the previous sections of this chapter. Collectively, they influence the internal environment, and subsequently the decision-making processes. The entries listed constrain the operating environment of higher education, determining national frameworks and constraints that must be adhered to by every institution. Professional and academic cultures have been included as two distinct type of culture: cultures vary from institution to institution, however there is a general culture that prevails in every learning institution.

ii Decision-making Context

As noted in the section above, whilst governed by national contexts, each institution in higher education adopts internal cultures, strategies, operating procedures and practices. Each of these is developed within specific financial and resource constraints that affect the decision-making process. However, the decision-making process is further affected by the clarity of the definition of the goals and the consistency and commitment of the participants.

iii Decision-making Process

Not every decision is made in the same way. Mohr offers four prominent decision-making sub-models: the Firm, the Rational, the Political and the Garbage Can.

The Firm submodel: the choice mechanism is *satisficing* (original author's emphasis) all goals in the active demand set are satisfied to at least a minimally acceptable levels as opposed to some satisfied and others not at all.

The Rational submodel: the choice mechanism is *maximisation*. Logic and facts are adduced to discover and select the alternative that best attains a particular goal or weighted goal set. It is not necessary that the decisions turn out to be the best, only that the maximisation rule guides the process. Typical instrumental behaviour features analysis and persuasion.

The Political submodel: The choice mechanism is *domination*. It defines contention, struggle and the attempt to overpower with superior force. Complete dominance is not necessarily the outcome. Stalemate is possible and selective losses and gains are common.

The Garbage Can submodel: The choice mechanism is *strategic agglomeration.*[5] This model is typical of organised anarchies such as universities. There is a tendency for the central decision to be made quickly before the peripheral or appended goals are met (either by oversight or flight).

The model on the next page, (Lockwood and Davies, 1985), explains in greater detail the concepts of this submodel for decision-making during curriculum development. The Garbage Can Model of Decision-making, originally developed by Cohen et al (1972) was designed to analyse decision-making from a quantitative perspective. A computer programme was developed to process 22 variables to determine the outcome of decisions in universities. An evaluation of the validity of the model is outside the scope of this research. However, three concepts of the Garbage Can Model (problematic preferences, unclear participants and fluid technology, and collections of choices looking for problems) directed the analysis of the case study data.

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[5] Collected into a mass.

PHASE 1: GARBAGE CAN

People with problems	INPUT	Buffering Processes	PROCESS		OUTPUT
People with solutions		Disclaim jurisdiction on issue		Problem Oversight	
Participants with time and energy		Stalling		Flight from problems	
		Closing Ranks		Coupling of problems with potential	
		Communication prevention		solutions	
		Facilitating processes			
		Directives			
		Allies			

PHASE 2: NEGOTIATION + POLITICAL

Agreement on Terms of	INPUT	Active Influentials	PROCESS	Broad agreement on	OUTPUT
Reference		Interaction of small primary groups		possible compromise + preferred	
Clarity on goals, nature of		Striking of bargains, compromises		solution	
problem of participants		Informality		Hopes for policy agreement	

PHASE 3: PERSUASION + LEGITIMATION

	INPUT	Few activists	PROCESS	Agreed policy of lines of action	OUTPUT
Partial clarity on likely areas of		Superficial collegiality for decision		Commitment of groups to action	
solutions		Testing of solution against criteria of		Guidelines to executive	
		acceptability, feasibility etc		Legitimacy of policy	

PHASE 4: BUREAUCRATIZATION

Legitimate policy	INPUT	Swift implementation	PROCESS		OUTPUT
Clarity on means-ends		Modification of policy in light of			
relationship		admin norms		Administered and operational policy	
Some loose ends		Supplementation of solutions through			
		experience			
		Executive action			

Figure 2.6.3.b A four Phase Political Systems Model of Policy Formation (Lockwood and Davies, 1985, p149)

1. <u>Problematic preferences</u>: It is difficult to impute a set of preferences to the decision situation that satisfies the standard consistency requirements for a theory of choice as the organisation operates on the basis of a variety of inconsistent and ill-defined preferences.

2. <u>Unclear technology and fluid participants</u>: Although the organisation manages to survive and even produce, members do not understand its own processes. It operates on the basis of simple trial-and-error procedures, the residue of learning from past experience and pragmatic inventions of necessity.

3. <u>Collections of choices looking for problems</u>: Participants vary in the amount of time and effort they devote to different domains; involvement varies from one time to another. As a result, the boundaries of the organisation are uncertain and changing; the audiences and decision-makers for any particular kind of choice change capriciously.

iv Consequences of Process

Every decision made will result in a single outcome, or set of outcomes. Noted in section 2.6.1, these may be pre-defined when using deterministic systems, or predicted but uncertain when using probalistic systems. The desired outcomes are designed to evoke desired consequences; such consequences also relate to the type of decisions made.

2.7 DECISION-MAKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION
Sections 2.5 and 2.6 provide the backdrop for the discussion in this section. The Garbage Can Model has been identified to describe the type of decision-making that occurs in higher education institutions (Cohen et al, 1972; Mohr, 1976; Lockwood and Davies, 1985). Theory suggests that deterministic systems for decision-making enable predictable outcomes and probalistic systems for decision-making provide unpredictable outcomes. In higher

education, the process of curriculum development may be considered a deterministic system as shown in the model below.

INPUT
-Market research
-Content
-Curriculum Framework
-Resources
-Knowledge
-Ideas

PROCESS
-Decision Making
-Curriculum Development

OUTPUT
-Validated Programme
-No validated programme
-Knowledge
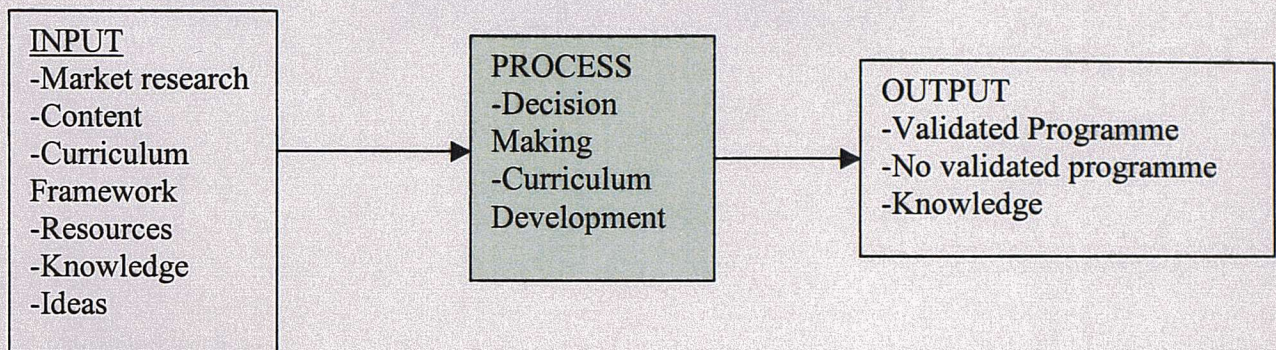
Figure 2.7.1 Curriculum Development – A Systemic Perspective (Hennell, unpublished)

The model, figure 2.7.1 above, may be expanded further to show the chain of events within the process box. The model on the next page shows the stages of the validation process and identifies the decision-making points at which choices are made. It displays the relationship between the internal decisions and the external influences. The outcomes from the programme development activities may be the planned validated programme, a re-designed programme or the programme may be abandoned.

Is there a risk to the institution if inappropriate decisions are taken? The next section considers the risks to the institution based on the possible outcomes of the three levels of decision-making.

Industry

Industry

Society

Ideas/Niche 'product' ?

Evaluate Programme Concept/ Market Research Portfolio fit ?

Programme approval ?

Industry

Society

State

Technology

Programme Design – out-line
Unit Design – outlines
Linkages
Teaching and learning approaches
Assessment methods ?

Academic Council

Academic Council Approval

Unit Out-lines

Programme Team

Programme Development

Programme Documentation Development ?

Validation Documentation

Unit Descriptions

REGISTRY Validation tam Internal and External team

Validation Results Amendments, Recommendations

Validation Event ?

Queries Questions Concerns

New Programme

Industry

Society

State

? denotes decision points

2.8 RISK AND FAILURE

Every decision taken is susceptible to risk and potential failure. Section 2.4 established the continuing demand for higher education from society and industry, and the support of the state as the primary source of funding. It would however, be misleading to assume that there would therefore be no risk involved in the provision of higher education. In the light of growing competition as new providers enter the market, institutions need to ensure that they maintain and grow their reputation and range of products to continue to attract applications whilst minimizing risk and failure.

2.8.1 RISK

Risk can manifest itself in a number of ways.

Risk has formally been defined as:

'the threat that an action or event will adversely effect an organisation's ability

to achieve its objectives.' (HEFCE, 1999, p1)

The discussions in the previous sections have outlined the external influences on, and the internal responses by institutions to the provision of higher education. Clearly the changes over the past decades have changed the perception of higher education from one of intrinsic value for the individual to one of providing value for the state. Higher education has moved from the service sector to the business sector. Activities within higher education may be defined as 'projects' in that they have temporal, financial and quality metrics. The growing state intervention, controlled by financial support, and the pendulous contraction and expansion directives serve to promote a level of uncertainty.

It is important to note however, that whilst risk exists in the higher education environment, the state of uncertainty is not necessarily a negative. Uncertainty actually suggests that the outcomes are less predictable than with deterministic systems, rather than the predominance for failure.

In the entrepreneurial role, strategy making is dominated by the active search for new opportunities where the organisation focuses on opportunities and problems are secondary (Mintzberg et al, 1998). Advances in information and communications technologies offer higher education an alternative mode of delivering teaching and learning. The decision to adopt alternative modes of teaching and learning are not without risk.

Bernstein's (1998) historical account of risk suggests that risk is derived from the concepts of gambling. There are three possible outcomes from gambling – a win, a loss or the status quo. Over the centuries, theories have been developed to calculate potential outcomes and probabilities. These theories are generally applied in areas such as insurance and betting where odds on outcomes are calculated. The calculations, based on collated historical data, provide potential trends and probability of outcomes. Bernstein suggests that even with large volumes of data, the predicted outcomes can never be completely accurate. However, the data analyses enable a more informed decision-making, or choices, to occur.

Neufville and Stafford (1971, p121) describe decision-making under risk as:

> Decision-making under risk in the traditional sense presumes that the probability of occurrence of each possible outcome is known. The knowledge of the probability permits the calculation of the expected values for the alternatives and thus a rational selection between them.

However, it may be difficult to estimate the probability of the acceptance of a new academic programme with any objective precision. There is an accepted notion in many aspects of business that risk is proportional to return (Maylor, 2003). As stated in chapter 1, higher education is in demand by the state, society and industry. If that is indeed the case, then what are the risks to higher education in seeking to change curriculum provision? Kelly, (1989) suggested that managing curriculum development to meet those demands and not merely leaving it to happen could reduce the risk of failure.

2.8.2 FAILURE

What does is mean for a Higher Education Institution to fail?   Does it fail if it does not attract sufficient students to its programmes?   Does it fail if it does not offer a curriculum that meets the needs of the external elements it seeks to serve?   At a macro level, an institution could be considered to have failed if it unable to support itself financially, if it consistently recruits below student target numbers, if it cannot resource it's programmes appropriately.

The development of an academic programme may be defined as a project.   Kerzner (2003) suggests that poor sponsorship, inappropriate project selection, the assignment of the wrong project manager, a lack of upper management support, inadequately defined tasks and misused management techniques are the main reasons why projects fail.   The discussions in chapter 4 of this thesis will show that the introduction of transparency and accountability measures in higher education has served to constrain enthusiasm and innovation, particularly where there is a perceived risk.

2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed the literature relating to the external influences that were perceived to impact the internal decision-making processes during curriculum development within higher education.   The first part of the review established the current views of the nature and purpose of higher education.   The second part of the review considered the external influences, categorised into four key areas: the State, Industry, Society and Technology.   The review of the literature identified the dynamic changes in the environment and challenges that higher education managers need to address if they are to continue to meet contemporary needs and expectations.   These changes and challenges were summarized in a systemic model showing the external influences and the expected outcomes.

The third part of the literature review examined the internal processes and activities during curriculum development. The review focused on the decision-making processes to deliver the curriculum, in particular the decisions taken to adopt particular teaching and learning modes to accommodate open, distance and flexible learning, concluding with an appraisal of what risk and failure mean to an HEI with regards to new course development.

The model on the next page summarises the discussions within this chapter. It has been developed to show the relationships between the external influences and the internal decision-making during curriculum development.

HISTORY   THE STATE   SOCIETY   INDUSTRY   TECHNOLOGY

Values
Tradition

RESEARCH

Policies
- Funding
- Student
  Numbers
- Quality
  Frameworks
- Control

-Elitism to
mass
-Portfolio
careers
- Life-long
learning

Needs
Sponsorship
Research

Advances
- Support
- Communications
- Teaching &
  Learning platforms
- E-Learning

HE
CONTEXT

rospective
raduates

Higher Education
Institution

Strategies

Decisions

Values and
Beliefs

GRADUATES   Research   Knowledge   Economy   Academic
             Outcomes   and
                                                 Professional
                                                 Programmes

Key:

| Communications Encounters and Engagements | IS/IT Influences | Industry needs and relationships | Output from Higher Education |

| State Policies, legislation and influences | Society needs, requirements and demands | Historical antecedents, influences and legislation in general terms |

Figure 2.9 A Systemic Summary of the Relationships between the External Influences and

Decision-making in Higher Education (Hennell, unpublished)

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, APPROACH AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explain, discuss and justify the philosophy, methodology, research approach, research design, and data analysis taken to conduct this research.

'Theory in education management tends to be normative, selective and often based on observation in educational settings' (Bush, 1995, p22). The previous chapters introduced the environment and context within which the perceived relationships between the internal processes for curriculum development and the changing external forces (Janesick, 1998) were explored during this research. Social sciences are founded on the study of experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998). The experiences examined within this social setting cover a period starting January 2000 and ending in September 2002. In adopting a subjective and non-statistical, interpretive approach to reflect my experiences, within the temporally and contextually framed set of circumstances (Cohen and Manion, 1997), I was guided by Kelly's (1989) summation that educational research is best studied from the inside, and Laurillard's (1993) assertion that 'knowledge has a contextualised character, which means that we cannot separate knowledge to be learned from the situations in which it is used.' (p17). However, she identifies that a level of abstraction is required once the contextual knowledge has been acquired so that it may be 'transformed into something more generalisable'.

Research can be classified as interpretive if it is assumed that our knowledge of reality is gained through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meaning documents and other artefacts. Interpretive research can help researchers to understand human thought and action in social and organisational contexts.

Participant observation experiences are reflected through narrative description. The observable facts are validated through interviews, a focus group meeting and document analysis.

The adoption of Stake's Antecedents Matrix provided a mechanism for segmenting and triangulating the data through a congruence of the intended with the observed, and by finding the contingencies between the antecedents and the transactions, and the transactions and the outcomes. In taking this approach, I was able to determine the congruence between the intended and the observed conditions at each stage.

Whilst the overriding approach adopted was qualitative, a form of measurement was required to determine the institutions', and departments', position against the expected state. The pragmatic paradigm adopted provided the flexibility to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods for collecting data (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). Combining pragmatic inductive and deductive reasoning allowed for both objective and subjective points of view to be accommodated.

In an inductive approach you start with a detailed observation of the world and move towards more abstract generalisations and ideas. When you begin, you may have only a topic and a few vague concepts. As you observe, you refine the concepts, develop empirical generalisations and identify preliminary relationships. Theory is built from the ground up (Hyde, 2000).

In a deductive approach you start with an abstract, logical relationship among concepts then move towards concrete empirical evidence. You may have ideas about how the world operated and want to test it against hard data (Hyde, 2000).

Whilst not qualitatively value-bound, this pragmatic paradigm was adopted because it recognised that the interpretation of the results of the research would be based on the values of the researcher. Most noteworthy to this work, based on the complexities identified in

chapter 2 of this work, was their statement that 'There may be causal relationships, but we will never be able to pin them down' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p23), further validating the selection of the interpretive approach to this research. These methods are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Qualitative research is employed when the researcher is seeking an understanding of the identified complex interrelationships that goes beyond mere explanation (Stake, 1995). The answers to educational problems often depend on the prevailing paradigm and that as such paradigms shift, so might the answers as educational questions are determined by external political factors of power and domination (Joshua, 1998). The multimethod focus provided an interpretive, naturalistic approach enabling me to explore the events and issues within their natural settings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). In doing so, I focused less on the individual sources of information and concentrated on the holistic picture, a more appropriate approach for this work (Creswell, 1998).

A key benefit of adopting the multimethod was the flexibility afforded in the design stages and the research process. To adopt a quantitative stance, working with a defined set of variables across many cases, did not offer the richness of data that the qualitative approach, relying on one, or a few cases, and many variables, offered (Ragin, 1987). Additionally, it can be argued that the goal of understanding the phenomenon from the viewpoint of the participants and its particular social and institutional context would have been lost when textual data were quantified (Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994).

The focus of this research was to explore the management decision-making processes, and outcomes, during curriculum development to provide non-traditional modes of teaching and learning adopting the support of information and communications technology. The aim of the research was determined as understanding what values, beliefs and relationships need to exist within HEIs to take decisions of such a nature, in the first instance, and consequently,

the conditions that are required for those actions to be successful. To fulfill this aim required an in-depth examination, exploring the inter-relationships of strategic direction and, internal processes and practices in response to external forces. Opportunity enabled me to research two significant instances within the single timeframe and within the same department. The instances are discussed in detail in appendix A and in chapter 4.

The decision to adopt a qualitative approach presented a number of challenges. These are addressed in greater detail as they relate to the methodology, research design, data collection and evaluation. However, their impact on the research design merits mention at this point. These include: Generalisation and Transferability; Reflexivity; Bias; Internal and External Validity; and Ethics.

3.2 EVALUATION AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1 EVALUATION

One of the problems in developing an analysis of evaluation in contemporary education research is that the term itself has been stretched and stretched to encompass an ever-widening range of activities, undertaken for an ever-increasing range of purposes. (Harland, 1996, p91)

Harland continues with a summary of the work of Finch (1986) concluding that there are two models of evaluation: the 'engineering model' and the 'enlightenment model' (Harland, 1996, p92). The 'enlightenment model emphasises intellectual and conceptual contributions rather than the provision of facts.' (Finch, 1986, p153 cited Harland, 1996). As such, it is suggested that the enlightenment model of evaluation is geared to 'understanding with more diffuse implications for decision-making.' (Harland, 1996, p92). To conduct such an evaluation for this research, the single case study provided an in depth evaluation to describe and understand the real effects of policies; to compare the assumptions on which policies are

based with social experience, and to assist in a considered assessment of their viability and appropriateness (Finch, 1986, cited Harland, 1996, p92).

The two lenses employed provided a holistic view of the qualitative data captured during the case study. Kerzner's (2003) six issues and the Garbage Can (Cohen et al, 1972), discussed in chapter 2, provided a framework to evaluate the outcomes of the case study in chapter 4.

3.2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Stake's Antecedent Matrix proved invaluable, not only as a lens to view the data, but also as a framework for the research design. Defining personal and contextual antecedents provided the backdrop and defined the problem space. Accordingly, the research was designed in five stages. The model below provides an overview of the five stages of the research.

Stage 1 Personal Antecedents	Stage 2 Wider Context Antecedents	Stage 3 Research Transactions	Stage 4 Practical Outcomes	Stage 5 Theoretical Outcomes
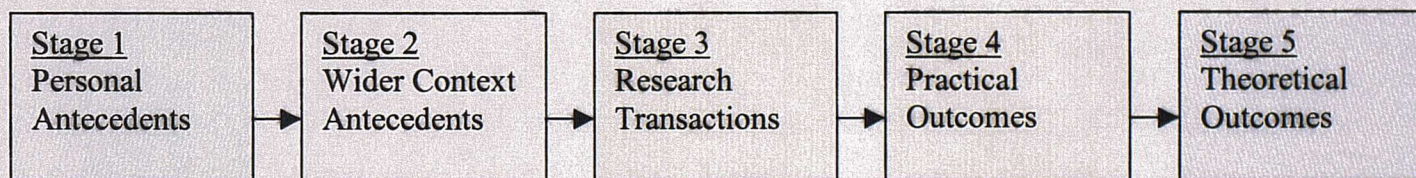
Figure 3.2.2 Stages of the Research

Stage 1: An analysis of my personal beliefs and value systems, based on prior professional and academic experience, influenced the selection of the research domain and threads, and the theories and methodologies to conduct it. The question enabled me to explore the relationship between information and communications technology to support teaching and learning from an educational management perspective, rather than a technical, logistical or tactical perspective.

Stage 2: Literature was drawn on from the research domain using the key words: Curriculum Development; Strategic Decision-making; Risk; Open, Distance and Flexible Learning.

Document analysis of government initiatives and directives, legislation and policies, and national frameworks provided additional material to establish the contextual antecedents that provide the general conditions for specific internal strategic decisions and radical programme development. The justification for the selection of the research philosophy and approach is made in chapter 3.

Stage 3: The practical research was conducted using a case study approach. The experiential exploration and participant observation of the decision-making processes during the development of a radical post-experience, postgraduate programme provided the data for discussion in stage 4. The details of the case and examples of evolutionary development programmes are presented in appendix A. .

Stage 4: The rationale, design implications and outcomes of the decisions made during the case study were compared against formal standard procedures and practices, and the evolutionary programme designs presented in chapter 4. Stake's Antecedent Matrix provided the cognitive lens to view the data. Congruent analysis provided the data for theoretical discussion, set within a cultural context, for the final stage of the research.

Stage 5: Conclusions were drawn from the analysis of the data provided from stage 4. The stage concludes with a discussion on the value of the three theoretical lenses to view and analyse the data.

The model on the next page reflects the detailed information above. The next section discusses the approach taken to conduct the evaluation.

Stage 1 Personal Antecedents	Stage 2 Wider Context Antecedents	Case Study decisions		Stage 5 Theoretical Outcomes
		Stage 3 Research Transactions	**Stage 4** Practical Outcomes	
Values Beliefs Experience - research - technology Bias	Literature Review - theories - methodologies - legislation - policies	Programme Design - market research - programme structure - modes of teaching and learning	Programme Development Validation Institutional and Departmental Outcomes	Theoretical conclusions Decision-making and risk in higher education Incremental or radical approach to curriculum development

decisions

Figure 3.3.2 Stages of the Research (expanded)

3.3 METHODOLOGY

3.3.1 AN EXPERIENTIAL CASE STUDY APPROACH

Case study research in education takes the researcher into a complex set of politically sensitive relationships (MacDonald and Walker, 1974). However, it is clear from the plethora of research that there is no consensus as to where the concept of a case study is positioned within the research process. As a research strategy, the case study approach facilitates and directs the research to concentrate on specific examples within the research domain (Yin, 1994). As a research methodology, the case study provides a framework and a structure within which to conduct the investigation (tech2toc, 2001). As a research method, the case study becomes a technique for capturing data (Davey, 2001; Soy, 1997).

This lack of consensus gives credence and support to Stake's statement that 'Case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of object to be studied' (1998, p86). He suggests that the term 'study' is emphasized by some because it draws attention to the question of what specifically can be learnt from the single case. That epistemological question is the driving force behind this research.

Stake's definition of case has been used in this research to provide the boundary of a single development. The case in this research is bound at one level by the institution, and the development of an academic programme within the existing teaching and learning strategy of a single department of that institution at a second level. The model on the next page represents a systemic view of the case studied.
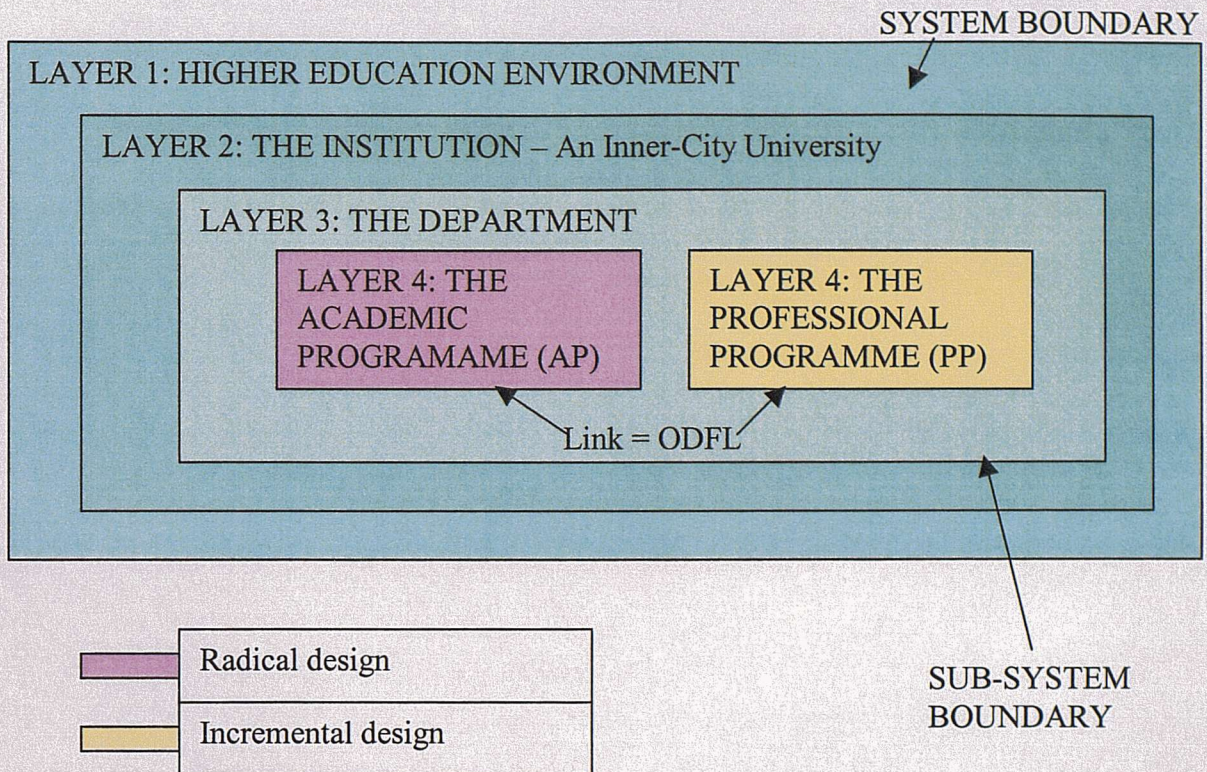
Figure 3.3.1 A Systemic View of the Research Case (Hennell, unpublished)

A second programme developed during the same timeframe within the department was used to compare the outcomes. Both programmes are shown at the same level. Each programme inherits the characteristics of, and is influenced by, the culture of the department and the decision-making of the departmental management. However, each programme has its own boundary, constraining the individual programme curriculum i.e. characteristics, modes of study, duration and content.

The postgraduate academic qualification (AP) offered a completely new subject domain and an opportunity to design an open and flexible curriculum adopting non-traditional approaches. The second development (PP) provided an opportunity to compare the development of the radical programme design with a substantive programme, offered in traditional mode of teaching and learning, developed in a synchronous distance-learning

mode using video conferencing and under development as an asynchronous distance-learning mode using WebCT . Some readers may misconstrue this as a multiple exploratory case study approach (Yin, 1994). This was not the original intention. Neither did the position change during the research. The original research vehicle was determined as the development of the academic programme. However, as the professional programme was under development at the same time, it would have been negligent not to include a study, albeit in less depth, of that development for comparison. The comparison is particularly relevant to this work as the professional programme was an evolutionary development and the academic programme was intended to be revolutionary, radical in nature and by design.

3.3.2 GENERALISATION AND TRANSFERABILITY

Qualitative data can provide a rich insight into human behaviour. Generalisations have no applicability in the individual programme and can help avoid the ambiguities created in quantitative research (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). In selecting to take a qualitative approach to this work, it was accepted that the findings might not be transferable to other HEIs. However, the uniqueness of the individual programme and its context provide a contribution to understanding (Stake, 1995).

Whilst the approach, methodology and research instruments employed in this research could be replicated, the environment, circumstances and culture, and the experiences of the researcher would be different in any given scenario.

3.3.3 REFLEXIVITY

One of the difficulties experienced in conducting this research has been maintaining an objective stance whilst being the primary source of data, thus providing the subjectivity of the qualitative approach. The selection of the research domain was based on personal interest in the use of information technology in teaching and learning and this strongly influenced my design of the academic programme. I became emotionally attached to the project and caught

in what Boucher (1995) calls the subject-object trap. Personal investment in time, energy and enthusiasm contributed to the desire to develop the programme curriculum based upon the eclectic data I had gathered relating to teaching and learning styles, distance learning approaches and the call centre industry, with little regard for the established teaching and learning strategies of the department and the institution. My initial programme design proposal encapsulated all possible modes of delivery and entry and exit points and timings not offered anywhere else within the institution. I perceived them to be radical, yet offering potential students flexibility and an openness not afforded in the past. It was, at times, difficult to accept management decisions that from my perception, seemed to dilute the design.

Selecting to adopt an experiential approach provided an appropriate mechanism for reflecting on my interpretation of the encounters experienced and, observed transactions. The richness of the data was preserved as the personal narrative of perceptions; reflections and interpretation were not filtered through multiple layers of others' interpretations. The opportunity to study the programme from the inside facilitated a level of understanding that could not be achieved by receiving data through external observation and interviews that become an interpretation of an interpretation. Thus data collection and interpretation was conducted at a first level. However, there was a necessity to design robust methods of validating, internally and externally, and triangulating the data to eliminate bias.

To minimize the impact of my personal contribution to my perceived ideology of the observed transactions, additional data was collected through interviews and document analysis. It is accepted that these data were also subjected to my interpretation and therefore subjective in nature. There are those who would argue that qualitative research is subjective, not transferable and as such cannot contribute to the body of knowledge. However, over the

years, this debate has continued in the academic press as social, qualitative research has become more accepted.

Two critical issues are noteworthy of discussion at this point. The first is my own background in information systems and information technology. The concept of using technology, especially information technology and information systems as a mode of delivering teaching and learning seemed like second nature to me, an obvious direction to take. My life experiences of the development of information systems naturally directed my approach within the programme. As a consequence, there was potential for bias in the development of the programme, and in my reaction to the decision-makers.

The second issue related to the programme design, development and validation that form the programme on which I was the key research instrument. I was a new member of staff at the institution but had expected that I could employ my experience of ten years, gained at another institution, in this area. However, it became very apparent that although part of the same higher education system, adhering to the same national frameworks and guidelines, the two institutions had different approaches, standards and operational procedures. Thus while my experience provided background knowledge, there was a steep learning curve with regards to the culture of the department and, the politics and personalities involved, and the practices adopted. These issues contributed to the outcomes of this particular programme.

Recognising that I was researching an area that would draw on my previous personal experiences, raised the question of bias within the research and the subjective nature of the data collection and analysis, particularly of the data collected experientially and through participant observation.

3.3.4 BIAS

Subjective research is naturally prone to subjective interpretation. Conjunctively, it should be considered that 'Programme study methods rely heavily on human instruments about

which only limited knowledge can be obtained and whose private expectations, desires and interests may bias the study in unanticipated and unacknowledged ways' (MacDonald and Walker, 1974, p187). There is then a probability that bias may have been introduced at various levels of the programme study research, intentionally and unintentionally, on the part of the researched and on the part of the researcher, particularly in my role of participant observer. On reflection, I have tried where possible to seek validation of my thoughts and feelings through discussions with other members of the department and the institution. Where their opinions and views differed, they have been incorporated into this work.

Interviews, focus group discussions and statistical analysis provided data that could support or refute my interpretation of experiential and participative observation. Internal formal documentation produced by third parties, and comparisons with external programme studies contributed to the objective perspective.

3.3.5 PERSONAL CONTEXT

As an academic in higher education for thirteen years, I have personally witnessed many changes in higher education curricula development. How these changes have occurred, their impact on the current provision of higher education, and the future of the university within a higher education environment has a direct bearing on my work. My background in information technology development, as a practitioner for many years, and as my core subject for teaching, has guided my interest in open, distance and flexible learning. I have witnessed the growth, turmoil and implications of the development of commercial systems, and the management of systems implementation. Thus, the application of information and communications technology to provide a portal (doorway) for achieving the government's objectives was of great interest not only to the wider audience (evidenced by the plethora of literature), but also to myself personally.

3.3.6 PROXIMITY TO THE DATA

I have very close personal relationships with the programmes described in the previous section. For the academic programme, I was the Programme Director involved in each of the stages from conception and development, through validation to marketing. In this instance, the data presented are a combination of personal experiences and formal processes, and feedback. The professional programme was offered from within my department. Access to information and personnel involved with the development of the programme was restricted due to availability of staff; however, the information was made available on request. I had no personal involvement in the development of the professional programme thus the data presented are interpretations of reality and perception.

3.3.8 ETHICS

This research involved the exploration of institutional processes and practices rather than an examination of individuals and personal behaviour. As such, the research results do not impact upon any individual directly. The research was not conducted covertly as the Head of the Department had sanctioned the study. However, neither was the research formally publicised. Through open, informal conversations with members of the department, and staff throughout the institution, I frequently discussed the nature of my research in developing an open, distance and flexible postgraduate programme. All members of the department were only formally informed that they were 'participating' in the research when they received a request to complete the initial questionnaire. This was anonymous, however, respondents could elect to participate further in the research by submitting their names and ticking the appropriate box.

A self-selected group of members of the department, and invited members of staff from support services were invited to participate in a focus group. This was conducted to elicit a wider opinion on the development of non-traditional approaches to teaching and learning, in general, and within the institution, and is discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH - TWO COGNITIVE LENSES

Issac and Michael (1997, p37) offer 'ten steps in planning good research'. They suggest that the research should 'be fitted into a conceptual framework that gives a structured point-of-view'. Two conceptual frameworks were selected to present 'the logical concepts, relationships and expectations' (ibid). Drawing from the literature review and Laurillard's proposition of education as a system (1993), a systemic approach was adopted to develop 'a conceptual framework into which ideas could be placed, giving definition, orientation and direction to [the] thinking' (Issac and Michael, 1997, p37). However, the systemic approach alone did not provide an appropriate analytical tool to measure the congruence between the observed data captured and the expected state derived from the literature review. Stake's Antecedent Matrix (Stake, 1977), developed for educational research, was adopted as it is systemically based and provided a suitable framework for the analysis and evaluation of the data collected.

3.4.1 COGNITIVE LENS 1 - SYSTEMS THINKING

Systems theories emphasize the unity and integrity of the organization and focus on the interaction between its component parts, and with the external environment (Patching, 1990; Bush, 1995; Checkland, 1996; Checkland and Holwell, 1998; Checkland and Scholes, 1990). A systems approach to development provides a conceptual model to present three key determinants: the desired outcomes from any given activity; the raw materials required to achieve the desired outcomes; and the transaction required to convert the raw materials to the desired outcomes. These sets of determinants are evaluated within their contextual setting. The inner context lies within the system boundary. The environment (the outer context) is defined for each system by the external influences with which the system interacts. Education can be systemically viewed (Laurillard, 1983). Curriculum development in higher

education may be regarded as a sub-system (as discussed in the previous chapter). The desired outputs are clearly defined in figure 2.2.5 as graduates, contributions to the body of knowledge, research and the national economy, and a portfolio of academic and professional programmes. The inputs required to achieve these outcomes were determined as government policies and directives, industry needs and participation, potential graduates and a society with a desire to learn, and information and communications technology. The transactions are determined as the integration and conflation of those activities that enable and facilitate the outcomes to be met. These transactions include the decision-making activities at the different managerial levels of the institution.

The previous chapter discussed the concepts of the decision-making process. As shown, decision-making may also be viewed systemically (page 62, figure 2.6.1a). The activity of decision-making may be regarded as a sub-system within the system of curriculum development in higher education.

The list of inputs and outputs are indicative examples drawn from the systemic models developed in chapter 2.
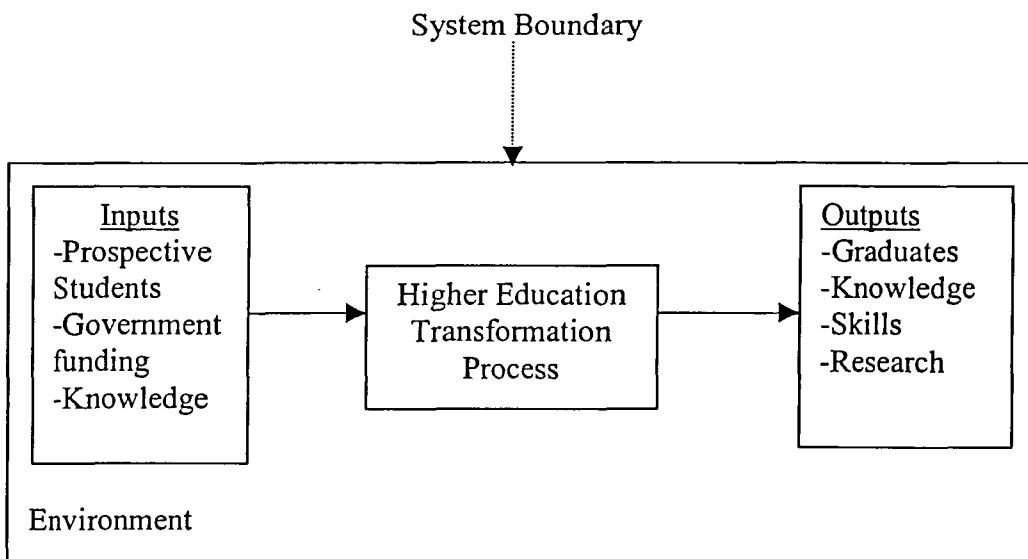
Figure 3.4.1a Education as a System (Hennell, unpublished)

Education is a social activity. As such, the pragmatic processes and practices that comprise the Education Transformation Processes are impacted by people's behavior and decision-making. The review of the literature in section 2.4 suggests that the complex nature of higher education and the variants of higher education institutions mean that no objective and complete account of a problem can be definitively provided (Lockwood and Davies, 1985). The effects and factors that interact, contradicting or reinforcing each other, may not only have direct effects on the higher education institutions, changing the resources available to them, the markets on which they depend and their operating practices, but also create or condition the views of their external bodies about the educational, social and economic factors of the institution (Lockwood and Davies, 1985).

The systems approach was adopted for the following reasons. First, as has already been demonstrated, at an institutional level, the provision of education may be represented systemically. Readily identifiable outputs or goals are achieved through the processing of raw inputs. At a second level, the development and delivery of individual programmes are the result of transforming academic knowledge, national frameworks and, local, national and international input. At a third level, the decisions taken within the previous two levels may also be viewed systemically as they have clearly identifiable outputs developed from processing input data.

The conceptual diagram on the next page presents stage 1 of the model developed during this thesis. It shows the relationship between the previously identified four external conditions, and the systemic processes that occur within higher education. The process box in the center of the model on the previous page conceptually represents any activity that occurs at any level of any institution. Conceptually, the process box represents a set of tasks that transform the input(s) into the required output(s). The process box for this thesis represents the design, development and validation of an academic programme. The inputs, outputs and

processes are explained in chapter 4. Whilst the system should be deterministic, the process activities prescriptive and the outcomes known, the impact of the human activities and decision-making make the outcomes less certain as will be demonstrated in the case study. The conceptual model below reflects the influences that affect decision-making in the wider context of higher education.
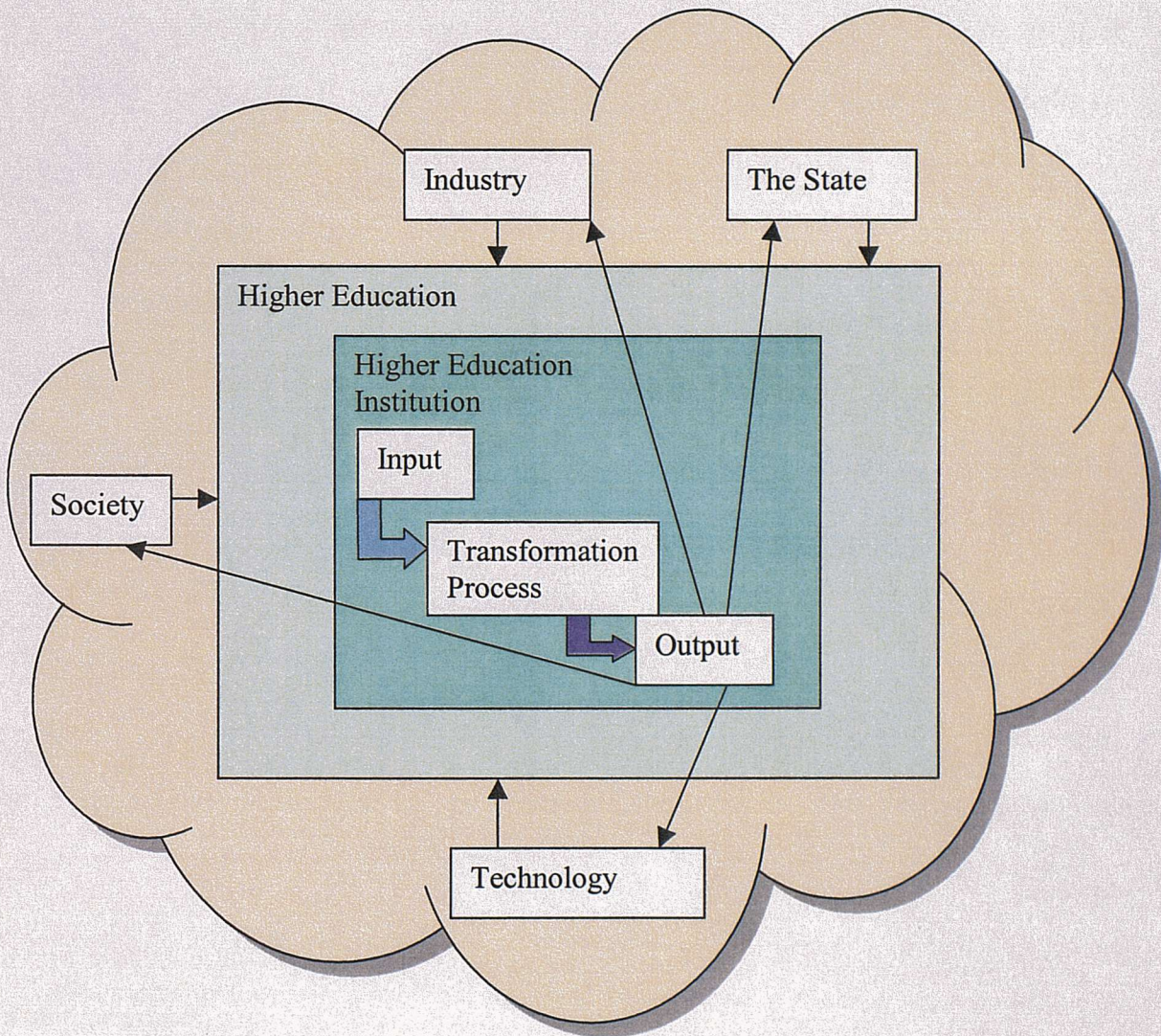
Figure 3.4.1b Higher Education as a System (Hennell, unpublished)

These influences permeate the boundaries of the individual institutions, impacting decisions taken at all levels of the institution. Systems thinking provided a mechanism to define the

contextual issues. It did not provide the required mechanism for measuring the level of congruence between the intended and the observed data. A second cognitive lens was selected.s

3.4.2 COGNITIVE LENS 2 - STAKE'S ANTECEDENT MATRIX

When making decisions, there is a level of expectation regarding the outcome as previously discussed in chapter 2. The outcomes can be determined contingent on the processes being conducted appropriately and the necessary inputs being available. This intended set of conditions provides a benchmark for determining success for any given observed system. It is possible to measure the success of an observed system by the level of congruence with the intended or designed system.

In 1977, Stake presented his Antecedent Matrix during his research to compare pupils' behaviour in a particular setting against his conceptual expectations based on theory. The matrix was developed to provide a mechanism for identifying the prevailing conditions, prescribed transactions and intended outcomes against which the observed prevailing conditions, transactions and outcomes could be compared. A comparative analysis establishes the level of incongruence for each stage of the investigation, providing benchmarking criteria to compare the theoretical position to the findings. The level of incongruence identifies areas of potential risk of not achieving the desired goals. Little evidence was found of this matrix in formal use in education however, the concepts are widely used and reported in marketing research (see for example: Cervera et al, 2001; Jamal and Naser, 2002).

The matrix, presented on the next page, shows the relationships between the stages and the perspectives. Each component has been coloured for emphasis to demonstrate the intended solid state and the variable observed state as a result of 'local' conditions.

This theoretical framework provides the mechanism for determining the intended outcomes during the process of curriculum development based on the theory and discussions in chapter 2. The observed antecedents, processes and outcomes are drawn from the case study. An analysis of the level of congruence provides the basis of the discussion in chapter 4.

```
┌──────────────┐    ┌─────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐
│ Intended     │◄───│ CONGRUENCE  │───►│ Observed     │
│ Antecedents  │    └─────────────┘    │ Antecedents  │
└──────────────┘                       └──────────────┘
       ▲                                      ▲
┌──────────────┐                       ┌──────────────┐
│ LOGICAL      │                       │ EMPIRICAL    │
│ CONTINGENCY  │                       │ CONTINGENCY  │
└──────────────┘                       └──────────────┘
       │                                      │
       ▼                                      ▼
┌──────────────┐    ┌─────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐
│ Intended     │◄───│ CONGRUENCE  │───►│ Observed     │
│ Transactions │    └─────────────┘    │ Transactions │
└──────────────┘                       └──────────────┘
       ▲                                      ▲
┌──────────────┐                       ┌──────────────┐
│ LOGICAL      │                       │ EMPIRICAL    │
│ CONTINGENCY  │                       │ CONTINGENCY  │
└──────────────┘                       └──────────────┘
       │                                      │
       ▼                                      ▼
┌──────────────┐    ┌─────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐
│ Intended     │◄───│ CONGRUENCE  │───►│ Observed     │
│ Outcomes     │    └─────────────┘    │ Outcomes     │
└──────────────┘                       └──────────────┘
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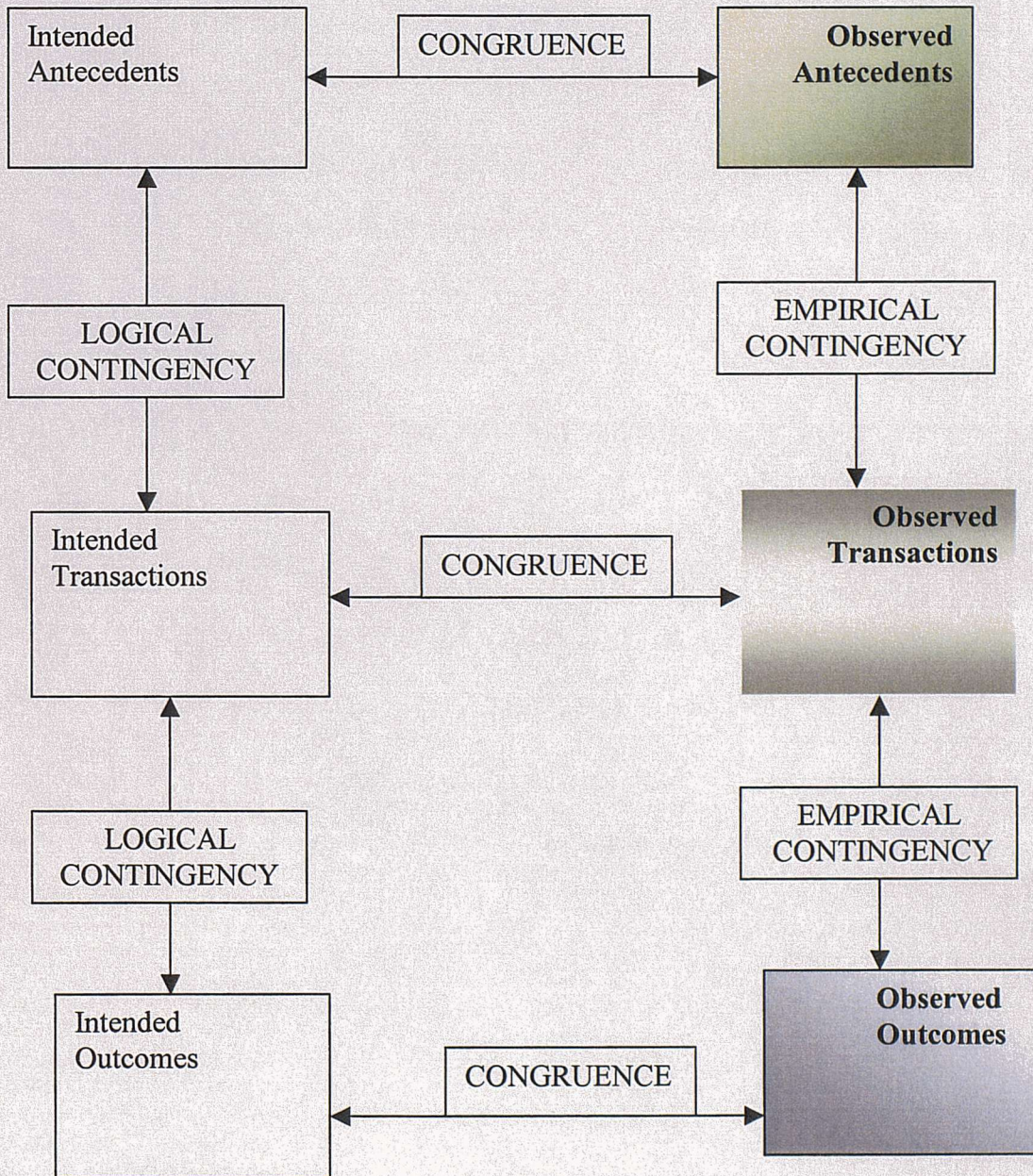
Figure 3.4.2 Stake's Antecedent Matrix

3.4.3 INTEGRATING THE LENSES

To fully understand the rationale for the decisions taken during the case study, it was considered necessary to understand the context within and conditions under which they were taken. The previous two sections introduced the two cognitive lenses used to view the data during the research. However, the lenses were not used independently, or at different times. The lenses were linked through common thinking and their construction based on systems for the following reasons.

Systems thinking provided a theoretical lens to understand the objectives of higher education, the transformation processes required to achieve those objectives, and the inputs needed to enable successful transactions to occur. However, the systems thinking lens provided a single view of the processes and practices. Stake's Antecedent Matrix provided a second view of the operations within higher education and facilitated a comparison of the two sets of data.

The model on the next page shows how the two cognitive lenses were integrated to provide a multi-dimensional view of the data collected and processed during the research.
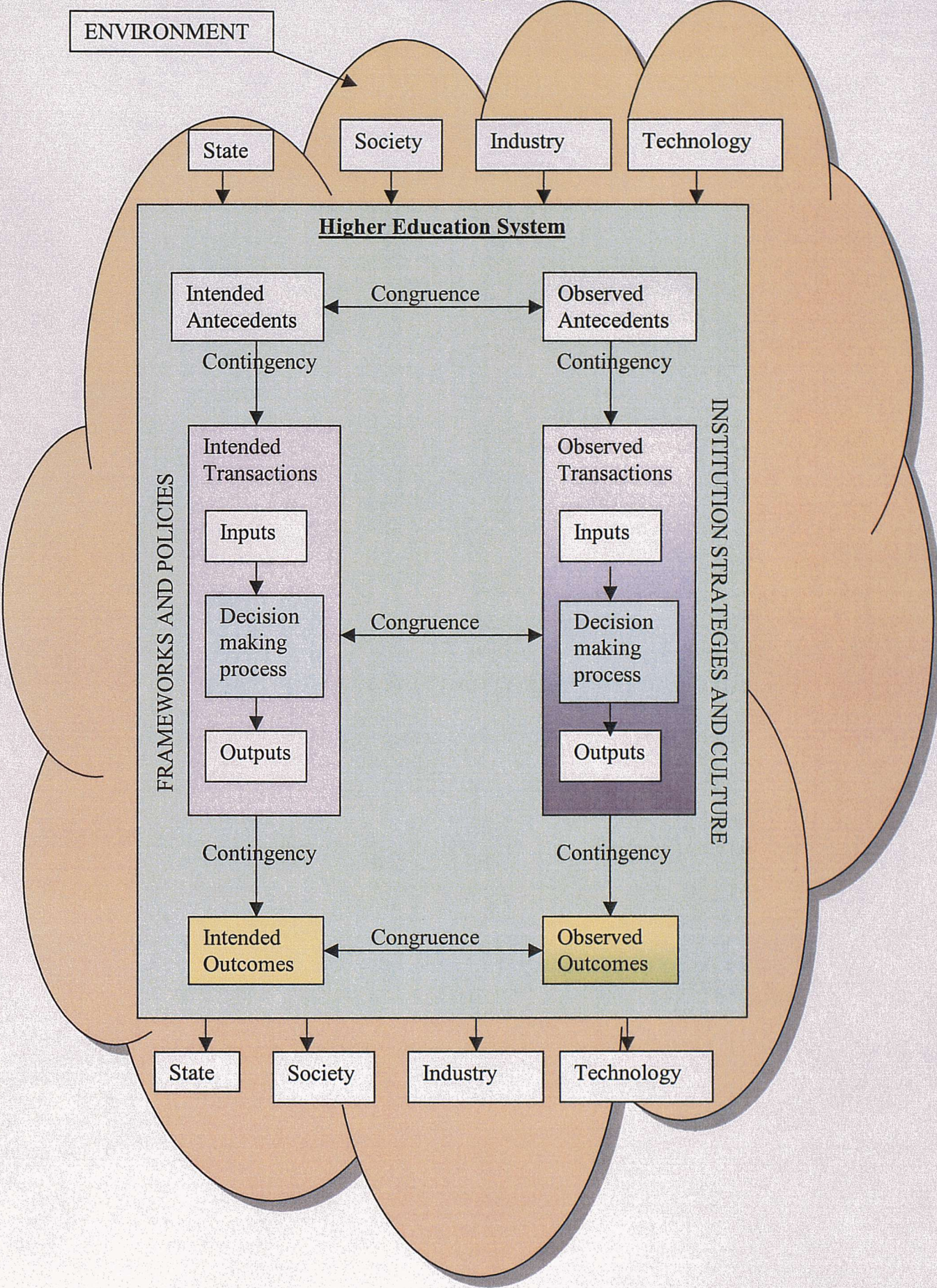
Figure 3.4.3 A Systemic View Through Two Lenses (Hennell, unpublished)

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

A common criticism directed towards qualitative research is the validity of the data collected.

Wilson, (1996) advises the following caution

'Validity is a matter of trade-offs between procedural and personal reactivity,

and between reliable and less reliable methods. Whichever method of data

collection is chosen, attention must be paid to the objectives of the research

and the methods adopted must be evaluated in this light.' (p119).

To substantiate the personal experiences and observations recorded during the experiential

case study, data were collected from three additional sources. These were the strategic

documents prepared by the institution; interviews and minutes from meetings with the

Provost and the Head of Department; notes from meetings with the programme administrator

and the programme team; validation documentation; notes from meetings with members of

the industry. A survey provided data to determine the level of information and

communications technology experience and skills within the department. A field diary

provided a record of personal experiences. The next six sections discuss the research

instruments used to collect the data.

The model on the next page reflects the relationships between the research instruments

utilised during data collection. This is followed by a detailed critical evaluation of each of

the individual instruments.
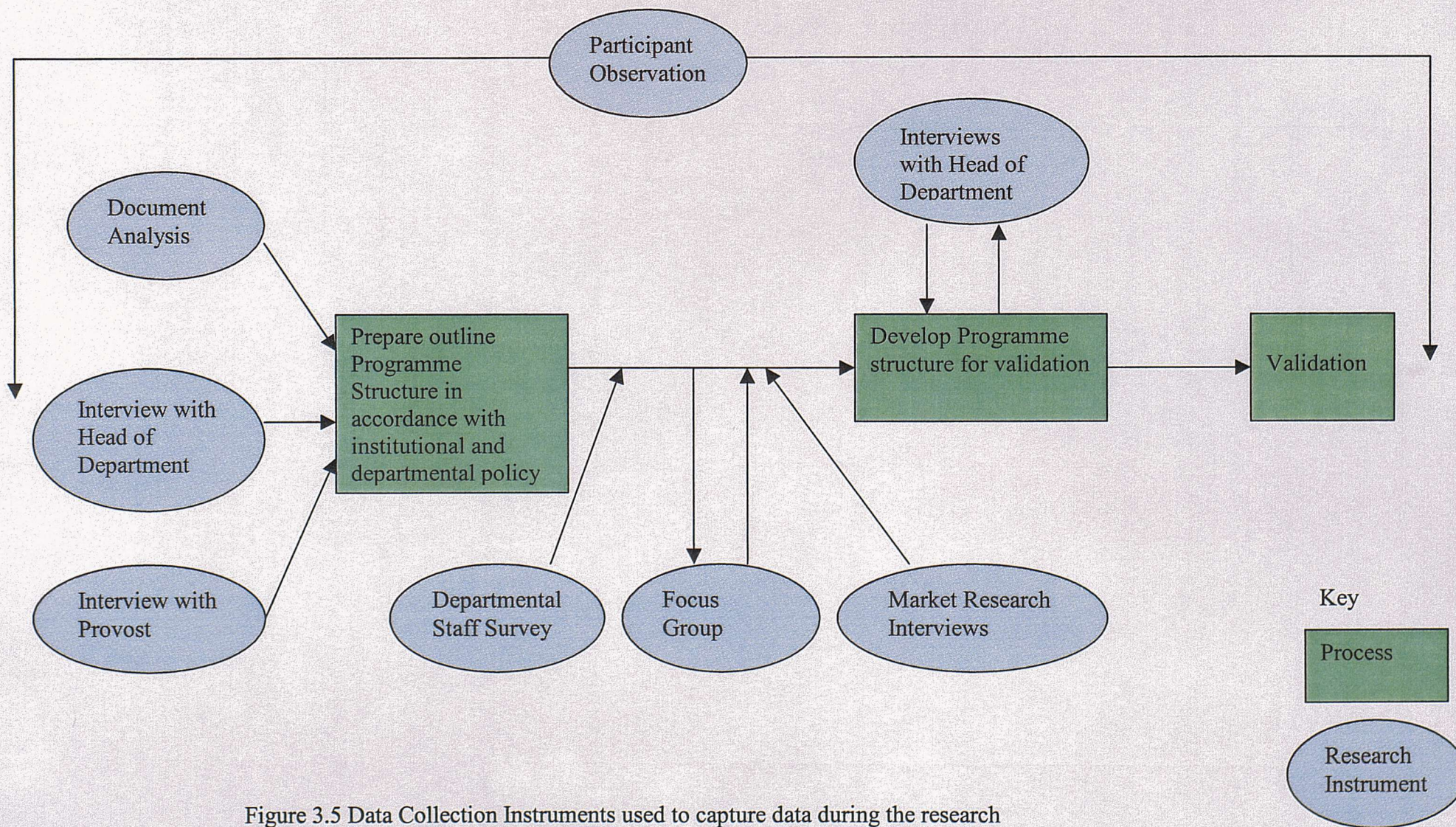
Figure 3.5 Data Collection Instruments used to capture data during the research

3.5.1 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Foster (1996) states that

> Observation informs and enables the testing of common theories about the social world. Its aim is the production of public knowledge (empirical and theoretical) about specific issues, which can be used by others in a variety of ways. This knowledge may influence the behaviour of those who access it (p57).

However, external observation was considered an insufficient approach as the primary source of data for this research, based on the supposition of Kelly (1989) (as discussed on page 77 of this work) and due to the layers of interpretation that would weaken the data collected.

The aim of participant observation as the primary research instrument employed during this study was to build theories. Robson's (2002) reasons for using participant observation include:

- Seeing interactions, actions and behaviors, and the way people interpret these, act on them etc as central;

- Believing that knowledge of the social world can be best gained by observing real life settings;

- A consideration that generating data on social interaction in specific contexts, as it occurs, is superior to retrospective accounts or their ability to verbalize and reconstruct a version of what happened. (p189)

The approach offered 'a way of getting close to the reality of social phenomena in a way which is not feasible with the experimental and survey strategies' (ibid, p188).

The data were recorded in a field diary and are presented in chapter 4 as a personal narrative account of the processes and decisions taken during the AP development.

This was the most complex and difficult mode of data collection due to the proximity of the researcher and the research domain. It was also necessary to find an appropriate mechanism for removing subjectivity and establishing a method of triangulation to ensure that valid data was recorded. Keeping a field diary is a recognised approach to recording data when using any form of observation as a research instrument. A record was kept of activities, formal and informal, and of observations made by the research relating to the processes and the management of those processes. 'Soft data' such as comments and innuendoes were also recorded to gain a holistic view of the programme development.

3.5.2 INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSIONS
A. Semi-Structured Interviews

Structured interviews have predetermined questions with fixed wording, usually in a pre-determined order (Robson, 2002) and are generally considered verbal versions of a structured survey. While open style questions may be asked, they did not permit the flexibility offered by semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews have predetermined questions that guide the interviewer, but allow flexibility to add and change questions based on the respondent's responses. Inappropriate questions were omitted during the interview. Access to respondents was limited by time, therefore to maximise the data gathered, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Provost, the Head of the Business School and the consultant employed by the institution to analyse the institution's distance learning provision. The interview with the Provost was designed to gain an understanding of the rationale for the institutions position on distance learning. The interviews with the Head of Department established the initial position of the department and the rationale for the teaching and learning strategies. The interview with the consultant (appointed by the institution towards the end of this research) was conducted to draw on his findings of the analysis of the institution's position with regard to the provision of open, distance and flexible learning.

The timing of his appointment was significant for this thesis as it symbolized the institution's potential interest to adopt open, distance and flexible provision of higher education. Unfortunately, the timing of his appointment also meant that his study had not been concluded. As a work in progress, his analyses were incomplete and therefore not useful to this thesis.

B. Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews are based on a general area of interest and concern, permitting conversation to develop. The unstructured interviews with the Head of the Business School represented a series of progress meetings from the conception of the programme, during the development of the programme structure, content and delivery platforms, to the validation event. The meetings were held in the Head of Department's office. The timing and frequency of the meetings were difficult to arrange for two reasons. The first was due to the lack of availability of the Head of Department due to the number of roles and responsibilities, meetings and activities the Head of Department (also Head of School) had to undertake. Her lack of time also meant that any documentation reviews took considerable time, turn around often taking months rather than days or weeks. This considerably slowed the development process and delayed the validation. The second was due to my lack of availability due to teaching commitments and other academic activities.

C. Informal Discussions

Informal discussions took place with the Programme Administrator at least once a week. Three formal meetings were held with the programme development team. The first was to introduce the concepts of the programme and the curriculum development. This included the vision of the open, distance and flexible implementation of the programme. The second was

held to quality assure the programme documentation. The third meeting was held to practice the answers to potential questions expected at the validation event. All other communications with the programme team occurred on a one-to-one basis or via email.

3.5.3 MARKET RESEARCH

As part of the programme design, formal interviews were conducted with employees at three commercial institutions: one in the telecommunications sector, a second in the finance sector and the third within local government. Each of the organisations is a major employer of call centre employees and subsequently a target market for the academic programme. It was considered important that their views were solicited to capture the prospective students' opinions of the design of the academic programme, its content and structure, and the proposed teaching and learning approaches. The interview data provided supporting evidence for the programme design, incorporating open, distance and flexible learning, presented to the Head of Department and to Registry.

3.5.4 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Analysing documents that have been developed for some other purpose (Robson, 2002) has two implications. The first is the unobtrusive measure of extracting data, as the document is unaffected in the process (unlike the research instruments discussed in the previous sections). Second, the documents may be examined for a purpose other than its original intention, without consultation with the authors. The analysis becomes interpretive and therefore open to a level of bias. However, during this research, the data were triangulated with data collected by other research instruments to ensure validity.

The strategy documents developed by the institution and by the department for the years 1998 – 2002 were analyzed. The contents of the documents over that specific timeframe provided the antecedents and the intended outcomes for the General strategy, the Teaching and

Learning strategy, and the Information Strategy before, during and after the timeframe of the research.

3.5.5 SURVEY

There have been many debates concerning the use of surveys to collect data (Robson, 2002).

In general terms surveys are useful instruments to collect data from a large number of respondents. They are time consuming, and the response rate can be low.

The survey conducted during this research was undertaken to identify the existing levels of information technology skills within the department. The questionnaire was distributed on February 22nd 2000 to all members of the department, academic and administrative staff. The questions were closed offering a range of answers for each of the questions. However, each section provided the respondent with an opportunity to make comments regarding existing provision and skills of information and communications technology and, potential provision and training needs of the individual.

The data gathering served two purposes. The first was to establish the skills levels of individual departmental members as part of this work. The second was to audit the members' skills and potential personal development requirements for the impending Quality Assurance Assessment Review due Spring 2001.

The survey was conducted to establish four issues:

- Current skills and competences;

- Level of current usage of information technology in delivering and supporting teaching and learning;

- Identified and perceived individual needs and requirements in terms of products and training;

- Potential use of open, distance or flexible learning environments.

The results of the questionnaire provided the Head of Department with an audit of training needs for individual staff members in preparation for the Quality Review exercise. The data collected provided a valuable insight into the current experiences, future identified needs and future aspirations of each individual.

The design of the questionnaire was very simple. Respondents were asked to identify teaching and/or support commitments, and associated technology and software used during the process. This included the use of email for communications, and the Internet for teaching and research activities. Academics were asked to identify any potential technology and/or software they would use in the forthcoming academic year, and any training requirements. The last question sought a qualitative statement of opinion relating to the potential for employing any form of open, distance or flexible learning environment.

3.5.6 FOCUS GROUP

The purpose of holding a focus group was two-fold. The first was to determine the level of understanding of non-traditional teaching and learning modes from as many perspectives as the type of staff member and their roles within the institution. The second was to identify the level of interest and commitment to the use of non-traditional modes of teaching and learning by those role players. This would enable me, as the implementer, to identify the potential areas of resistance to change, and those whom I could call upon for support.

The group comprised invited academic and administrative members of the department, researchers within the department and IT support staff from the institution. It was felt that the membership provided a sample representation of staff that would be involved in the development of open, distance and flexible learning programmes. The basis of the discussion considered the issues of staff experience; a general lack of understanding of the environment; the stability of the IT infrastructure; the consequences of delivering programmes in non-traditional modes.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The framework provided an outline and systemic reflection of the model that theoretically

linked the concepts of systems thinking with Stake's Antecedent Matrix (1977), establishing

a holistic comparison of the intended positions and the observed positions.   For each of the

issues identified in the model, the intended perspective was matched against the observed

perspective to determine the levels of incongruence as previously discussed.

To address the research question, the following issues were identified as critical for congruent

analysis:

- The management supports the development of new programmes in alignment with the

    institution's, and department's, teaching and learning strategies;

- The procedures are in place to facilitate the design and development of new

    programmes;

- The communications systems support the design and development of new

    programmes;

- The design and development of the curriculum meets the needs of the external

    stakeholders;

- That recommendation 42 of the Dearing Report that all higher education institutions

    should develop managers who combine a deep understanding of Communications and

    Information Technology with senior management experience had been achieved in

    accordance with the institution's strategic plan.

The Garbage Can Model of Organisational Choice (Cohen, et al, 1972) was selected to model

the qualitative data collected during the case study.   The original model facilitates

quantitative research and requires the values for 22 variables to be entered into a computer

programme to compute deterministic outcomes of the decision-making processes in higher

education.   The model was adopted to frame the processes involved in decision-making for

two reasons. First, the principles grounding the approach provided an invaluable insight into the behaviour patterns of individuals during decision-making at the four stages of the new programme development. Second, the model aligns with the systemic approach offered in the two cognitive lenses.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

As consistent with an interpretative philosophy, a complete picture of the influences affecting decision-making and uncertainty in curriculum development in higher education would require a broader and more extensive study than permitted within the scope of this research due to the complexities of higher education provision. The research approach and methods described in this chapter aim to bring out the key aspects of decision-making within the specific aspect of innovative curriculum development. The application of the two cognitive lenses has been instrumental in providing mechanisms for understanding these key aspects. The research approach and methods described in this thesis will inform understanding of how the case institution responded to radical and incremental curriculum development, as well as the applicability of the two cognitive lenses used to examine the management decisions taken during the process. The diagram on the next page was developed to provide the reader of this work with a graphical summary of the details of the research conducted to support this thesis: it expands the overview diagrams introduced earlier in this chapter (pages 97 and 99). It shows the antecedents, personal (stage 1) and contextual drawn from the literature review and the primary research (stage 2); the transactions including the data collection and decision-making (Stage 3) and the outcomes, pragmatic and theoretical (stages 4 and 5).

Stage 1 shows the personal issues that affected my choice of problem domain. These antecedents influenced my choice of literature reviewed for the problem domain and for the research approach and methods shown in stage 2.

The details shown in stages 3 and 4 reflect the developmental and implementation phases of the case study. The pink shaded boxes reflect the intangible, cultural aspects that were

perceived to impact the case study. Finally, stage 5 identifies the outcomes for the institution, for the programme and for the work.

Stage 1

Stage 2

Stage 3

Stage 4

Stage 5

Personal Values; Beliefs; Pre-research Experience; Bias Experience

External Influences: Government; Business; Society; Technology Advances

Research Methodologies Literature Review

Case Study

Research approaches, instruments and analysis techniques

Trends, Constraints, Legislation

Departmental IT Skills Survey

Ability Understanding Commitment

Risk and decision-making Literature review

Case Study Institution Internal Documentation Review

Strategy/Policy

Institution Culture and Policy

Individual Attitudes, Communication and Decision Making

Research Context

Open, Distance and Flexible Learning Literature Review

ODFL literature

Policy Curriculum Framework

Departmental Culture

Call Centre Industry Interviews And Sector Analysis

input

Higher Education Curriculum Development Literature Review

Past, present and future Curriculum development issues

Programme content

Programme Structure

Programme Design

Programme Development

Institutional Context

contingency

congruence

Theoretical Underpinning Intended Antecedents

Intended Outcomes

Institutional Outcomes

Personal Antecedent

Wider Context Antecedents

Transactions

Outcomes

Outcomes

Local Context Observed Antecedents

Actual Outcomes

Theoretical Outcomes

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

To address the research question:

What is the impact of external and internal factors on the decision of an inner-city university to implement a radical approach to open, distance and flexible learning strategies?

a case study approach was adopted to follow the development of a post-experience, postgraduate, part-time programme. The details of the case study are located in appendix A. The objectives of the thesis were to:

- Develop an understanding of the impact of the external influences on internal decision-making;

- Gain an understanding of the institutional and departmental, policy-based responses and initiatives with respect to the use of ICT in higher education;

- Test the propensity of a higher education institution to adopt a radical programme design;

- Identify the changes needed to develop conditions under which a higher education institution may choose to provide an open, distance and flexible learning environment, supported by ICT.

The discussions in this chapter are framed using Stake's Antecedent Matrix (refer chapter 3).

Section 4.2 provides a congruent analysis of the intended and observed antecedents.

Section 4.3 provides a congruent analysis of the transactions adopting the Garbage Can Model developed by Lockwood and Davies (1985), presented in chapter 2.

Section 4.4 provides a congruent analysis of the intended and the observed outcomes.

Section 4.5 discusses the observations from sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.

Section 4.6 draws conclusions from the discussions.

Section 4.7 discusses the contributions made by this work to the body of knowledge.

Section 4.8 reflects on the future of higher education

Section 4.9 provides a summary of the research.

Section 4.10 provides a reflective discussion of the approach adopted and the research experience.

Section 4.11 suggests areas for further study.

4.2 THE ANTECEDENTS

This section considers the intended and the observed antecedents first from an external perspective and subsequently from the internal perspective of the inner-city institution discussed in the case study in appendix A.

4.2.1 THE EXTERNAL INFLUENCES
A Higher Education and The State

The increasing interest shown by the state in HE, identified during the literature review, is to a greater extent reducing its effectiveness to respond to the needs of the economy and industry and harming the society it seeks to serve. The pressure on higher education institutions to accommodate an increase in student numbers whilst receiving reduced funding is restricting the practice of innovation. Continual changes by successive governments to funding directives, used almost as 'blackmail', provides an unstable operating and planning environment. For example, the government initiative (2003-2004) to widen access to higher education prevents institutions from charging top-up fees until they can demonstrate that they have enrolled a percentage of students from under-privileged backgrounds. The system models developed throughout chapter 2 of this work show the potential fault lines, the areas of conflict and tensions between the internal decision-making processes and the external conditions.

In such a climate, it is understandable that executives may be reluctant to support any innovation from central funding, encouraging only those developments that receive external financial support. The external financial support enables the institution to 'buy in' academic time to support the normal activities of those undertaking the projects. Thus the normal core business of the institution can be maintained, and any innovations must be low risk.

The government has now removed MASN (Maximum Allocation of Student Numbers), however, institutions are still limited to the number of government-funded students they can enroll. Penalties continue to be applied for not reaching, or over-reaching targets. There is still no limit on self-funded, non-European community students that an institution can enroll. However, institutions will be constrained by physical resources.

B. Higher Education and Industry

Chapter 2 of this work identified close relationships with industry through partnership agreements, sandwich year placements and joint research projects. However, the needs of industry are changing with the decline of manufacturing and engineering, a reduction in the financial services and information technology sectors, and the movement of organisations call centres to Asia.

C. Higher Education and Society

Since the start of this research society itself has changed. The preceding levels of education, and its assessment, have changed. With the introduction of tuition fees, the expectations of the students have changed. More and more full-time students now have to work to support themselves through their studies, often missing lectures and support sessions. Consequently, there is concern that student's will either not achieve the required grades to progress from one level to the next, or will drop out because of the pressures placed upon them. These statistics

are collected, analysed and reported upon by HESA. League tables present the results from institutions and members of society judge the institutions by their position.

The number of applications for university places has grown in general terms from home and overseas students, yet those places for home students are still limited for each institution by the government. Should institutions reflect more seriously on the adoption of e-learning as a solution to the numbers crisis? The higher education market is increasingly volatile. The trends in post-compulsory education are unpredictable and subject to economic conditions within the UK, and internationally, as institutions look to overseas markets to generate additional income. Although the government aims to see 50% of under thirty year olds undertaking higher education, there are no guarantees that such levels of this section of the population will apply. Anecdotal evidence (collected at Herts University, 20th October 2003) suggests that overall, undergraduate applications for higher education from 'home' students increased by 4.5% for the academic year 2003/2004. The discussion on admissions revealed a clear pattern nationally as applications for computer science and language programmes decreased, and applications for law and psychology increased. In the competing market, institutions need to provide the curricula the prospective students want, and that industry seeks, in order to attract students and generate sufficient income to meet costs.

D. Higher Education and Technology

Chapter 2 provided evidence to show that the adoption of IT to support the teaching and learning environment is growing. As the price of technology has decreased, the ownership by individual students has increased. Additionally, considerable funding has been used to equip open access area within HEIs for general use. However, the use of technology to support e-learning is still very limited. Entries in the case institution's strategic plans,

discussed in appendix A, note the institution's proposals to increase the use of ICT to support teaching and learning. However, whilst indicating intention, the implementation of such proposals has been devolved to the individual schools and departments. The decisions taken at this level of the organisation are impacted by the overall financial position of the institution in conjunction with the vision of the individual tactical managers.

With regard to student grant mechanisms and the demands placed upon higher education to provide an appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of society, the challenges facing HEIs require their executives to 'juggle balls' (interview with the chief executive of the case institution, September 2002), investing scant financial resources in the most appropriate manner. Further, he suggested that the investment cost of developing distance learning (e-learning) materials, with no guarantee of return from recurrent budgets would seem to be too great for the institution to risk.

This evidence, the changes to student demographics and stakeholder needs in chapter 2, and the continuous changes to funding mechanisms increase the financial instability and environmental uncertainty within which higher education institutions operate and strategic decisions are taken.

4.2.2 THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The institution's strategic plans and the department's strategic plans state clearly an intention to provide mechanisms to deliver the curriculum in a flexible approach, supported by ICT. Both sets of plans establish the need to meet the requirements of the changing external environment.

> The strategy will address the expected shifts to a more resource-based learning and the need to make greater use of non-standard methods of delivery and assessment (Teaching and Learning Strategy, 1998).

However, in formulating the strategy, the institution recognised that constraints imposed through its financial recovery plan would impact on the support resources and its ability to develop institution-wide innovation in teaching and learning.

> Whilst the university will be constrained in its provision by the availability of
> resources and the need for financial prudence, it will seek to get the best value
> in terms of supporting students' learning for the expenditure it incurs.
> (Teaching and Learning Strategy, 25/5/98)

At departmental level, the Head of Department stated that the drivers identified for moving towards new formats of teaching and learning within the department were:

- To retain student numbers;

- To meet changing student needs;

- External funding available to support development;

- The fragmentation of the finance industry;

- To attract overseas students.

(Interview with Head of Department, February 2000)

The experience within the department to deliver through non-traditional modes up to this point in time was the flexible delivery of the Chartered Institute of Banking (CIB) professional programme and the pilot of the distance learning video-conferencing Chartered Institute of Insurance programme. The latter programme was developed through external funding.

In response to the question:

What is the departmental position to designing and delivering further academic programmes adopting non-traditional modes of teaching and learning?

The Head of Department responded that 'there was a clear commitment to considering alternative modes for teaching and learning.'

She continued:

> The decision to explore further the use of different teaching and learning
> approaches has come from within the department. There is support from the
> Directorate to trial different approaches but the initiative is from the bottom
> up, as the university has made no formal decision on its viewpoint to date.
> MP is the only academic department to offer pedagogic support and provide
> the professional programmes. As the pressures increase on the professional in
> their workplace and their time becomes limited, they are less able to attend
> academic institutions to gain their qualifications. Although Chartered
> Institutions offer their programmes on a distance-learning basis, MP believes
> that by offering the programmes through alternative academic approaches they
> can add value to the learning experience.

Individual Experience

The administrators stated that they could use the basic Microsoft products, however, their skills were limited. Although training was available, the programmes delivered more skills than were actually required and often, as the skills were not used immediately, when required, they were forgotten.

The academic responses identified that whilst they prepared their lectures using Powerpoint, only two used Internet access during contact sessions as a means of conveying information and content. There was a growing interest in the use of email to support student contact. The knowledge of IT within the department was limited but sufficient to meet current needs. Respondents were invited to identify any perceived training needs to meet future requirements and for personal development. Only two members of the department, apart from myself had in-depth knowledge and/or experience of distance learning modes.

Focus Group

The group members were enthusiastic in their participation and interested in exploring the non-traditional approaches to teaching and learning further. Many expressed surprise that their opinions, thoughts and input had been sought. This was exemplified by a statement from the IT support member who stated that:

> This is the first time ever that we have been invited to discuss any such developments before they occur. Generally we only find out after the programme has been developed and the department finds they are unable to deliver though lack of IT experience. We are then expected to support a platform that we have no experience in. With different departments experimenting with different platforms, this places pressure on our department.

The group decided to call themselves AMOTAL, Alternative Modes of Teaching and Learning. However, due to pressures of work and other commitments, the group did not meet again. None of those present at the meeting were allocated to the new AP programme development team, and none were involved in the new PP development.

4.2.3 LEVEL OF CONGRUENCE

There was a clear recognition of the need to develop the curriculum to meet the needs of the external environment albeit within the context of the constrained resources of the institution.

> Universities are being pressured from a range of forces to move into delivery of courses via online methods; while the literature is replete with promises for the use of IT in the teaching and learning environment of Higher Education Institutions, it is difficult for those institutions to take a strategic and informed approach to its implementation (Reid 1999, p1).

The model on the next page showing the relationships between the external influences and the internal decision-making processes highlights the areas of conflict and perceived tensions between the intended antecedents and the observed antecedents. The external stakeholders 'demand' an appropriate provision of higher education whilst restricting performance through financial and operational constraints.
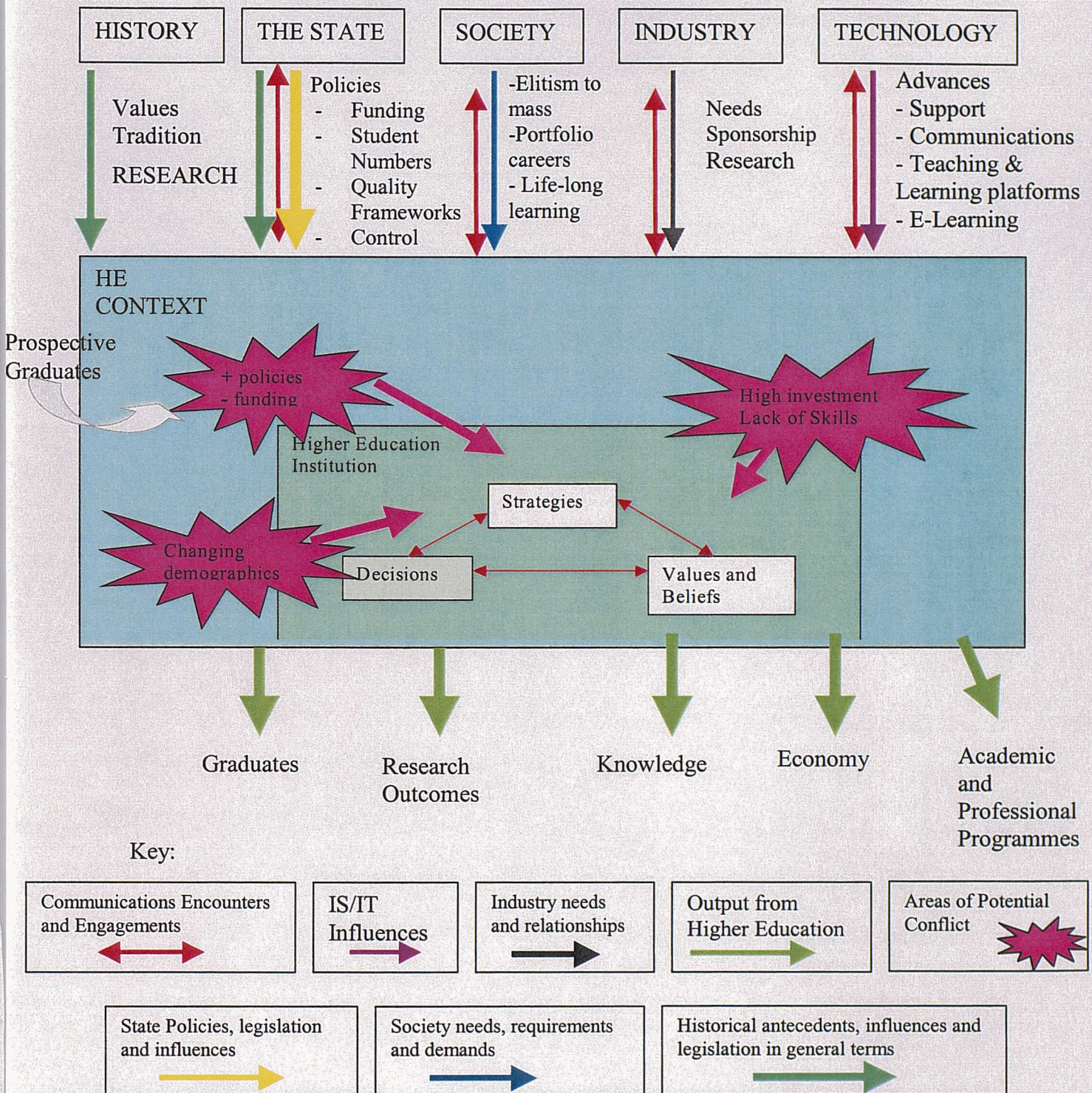
Figure 4.2.3 A Systemic Summary of the Congruent Analysis of the Antecedent Relationships between the External Influences and Higher Education (Hennell, unpublished)

4.3 THE TRANSACTIONS

The transactions considered here are the decisions taken within the context of the curriculum development. Strategic decisions taken at every level of the institution make explicit and implicit impacts on the design and development of the curriculum (Kelly, 1989), and consequently, the student experience. The model on the next page is based on the model first presented in chapter 2. It has been expanded to reflect the expected flow of information between the strategic, tactical and operational levels of the institution and the impact of external influences on the decision-making activities.

The model provides a conceptual view of the internal flows of data that influence the decisions taken at each level of the organisation during curriculum development and the relationships with the external influences at each of the levels of decision-making. It reflects the proposed influence of the institution's strategies on the decisions taken during the development of individual programmes at the tactical (departmental) and operational level [the downward arrows] and the impact on the institution's portfolio [the upward arrows].

Strategic approval by Academic Council is required for the development of individual programmes to ensure fit with the institution's portfolio and to determine the impact on student numbers. Once approved however, the content and teaching and learning strategies are determined at the tactical level. .

The strategic decisions are considered to be in the 'high risk' category; the inclusion of any new programme influences the portfolio and reflects the future direction of the institution.

New programmes demand resources for development and delivery. It was a validation requirement that sufficient resources can be guaranteed by the Head of Department. The tactical decision by the Heads of Departments to proceed with the programme proposal is also considered here to be 'high risk' due to the resources required. The decisions taken at operational level during the development and delivery are considered here to be low risk as they are short term and can be rectified in a short space of time.
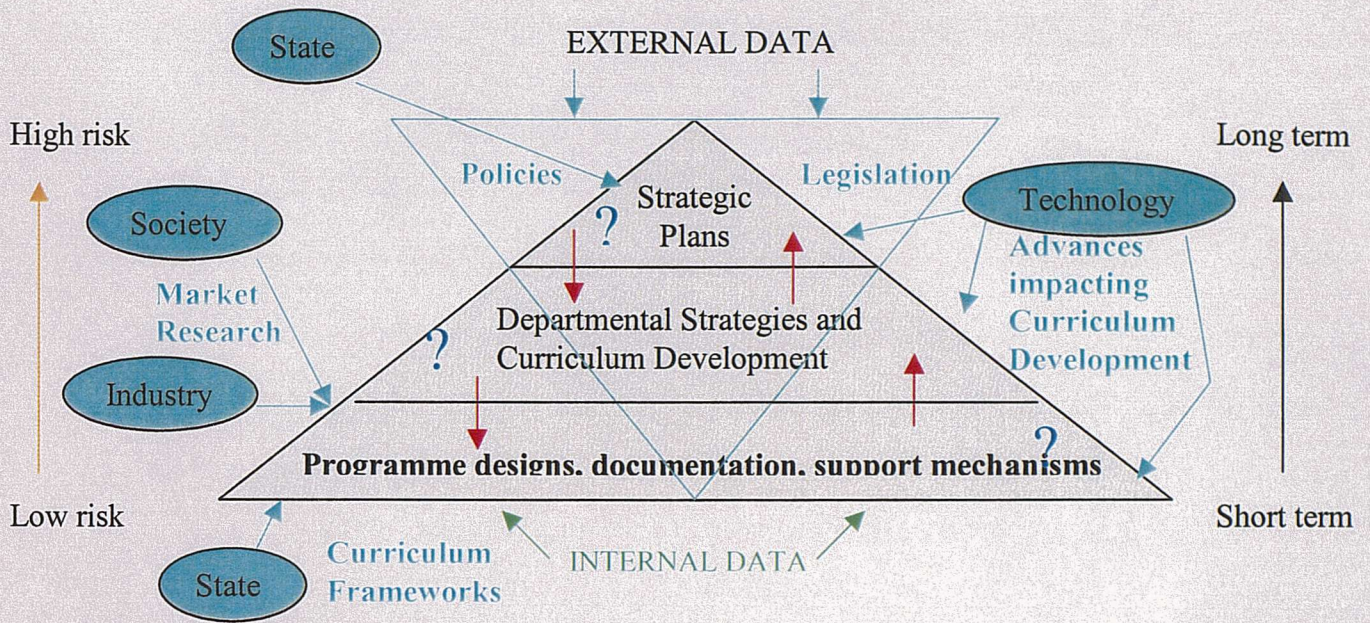
Figure 4.3.1.a The Influences of External and Internal Data on the Decision-making Processes at Different Levels within an Organisation (Hennell, unpublished)

→	Level of risk associated with decision-making
⬭	External Condition
→	Data from eternal conditions
▽	Level of External Data to support decisions
△	Level of Internal Data to support decisions
?	Internal Decision
→	Internal communications between Strategic, Tactical and Operational levels
→	Duration of decisions
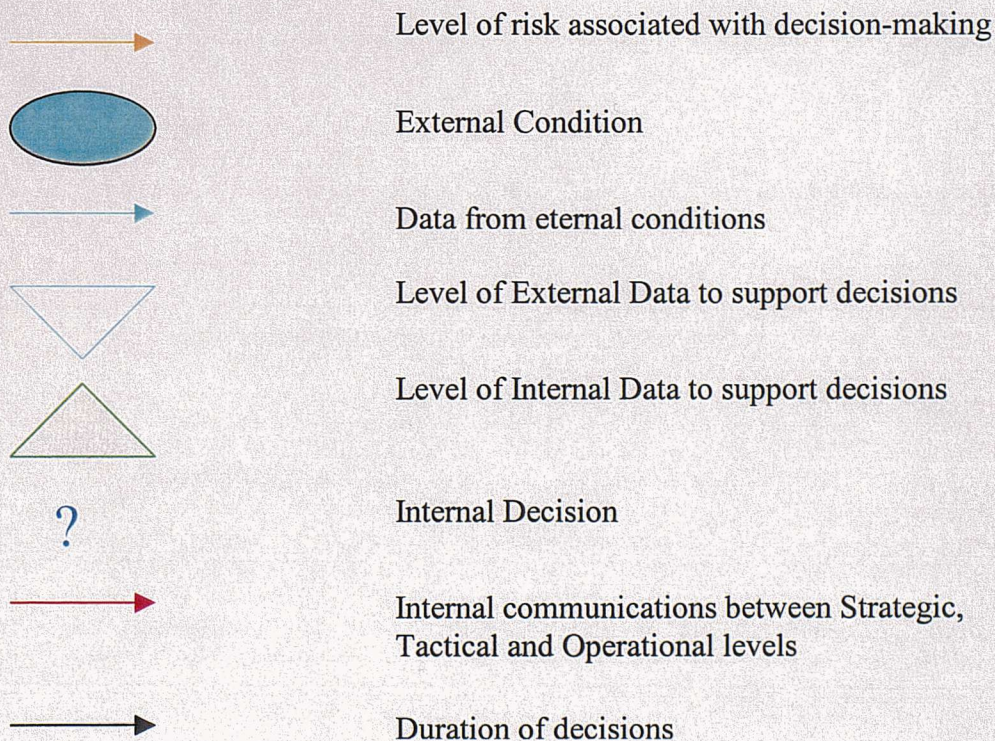
The discussions that follow explore the level of congruence between perceived intentions for curriculum development and the observed decisions taken during the case study.

4.3.1 DECISIONS DURING PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

New programme developments are required to follow a formal approval and validation process. There are a number of stages: conception, development and validation. The conceptual systemic model on the next page shows the formal processes involved in the development of a degree programme at the inner-city institution. The decision points are identified by a question mark.

A. Programme Design Decisions

Contingent with an analysis of the internal strategic plans and market research interviews, and drawing upon research of teaching and learning theories and open, distance and flexible learning the following list summarises the characteristics of the proposed programme.

- The programme had three exits points: Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma and Masters.

- Each level comprised four modules and a dissertation appropriate to the level.

- Each module, at each level, was discrete, had no pre-requisites and may be delivered as a commercial training session.

- Students may join the programme at the start of any of the modules. They did not have to wait for the start of the academic year.

- Each module was designed for delivery on-campus, supported by workbooks. These workbooks would be available in hard copy, on CD-ROM and on-line. Such provision would enable students to study by distance learning if they were unable to attend the institution.

Department Executive (MP)

| PG Certificate Customer Contact Centre Management | Evaluate Programme Concept/ Market Research Portfolio fit **?** | Programme approval form – A1 **?** |

Academic Council

Programme Director

Head of Department **?**

| Programme Design – outline Unit Design – outlines Linkages **?** Teaching and learning approaches Assessment methods | Academic Council Approval **?** |

Unit Outlines

Programme Team **?**

Unit Description

| Programme Development **?** Programme Documentation Development | Pre-validation meeting to define agenda and outline programme description **?** |

Validation Documentation

Quality Assurance **?**

REGISTRY Validation Team Internal and External team

Amendments
- Learning Outcomes
- Insert more specific contact related material into the units

Recommendations
- Develop Diploma and Masters levels

Validation Event **?**

Queries Questions Concerns

Figure 4.3.1b The Validation Model Applied (Hennell, unpublished)

- Students do not have to register in advance for any particular mode of study and may change from taught, on-campus mode, to distance learning mode as their needs change.

- Students may complete their dissertation simultaneously with their study modules, enabling them to complete any level within six months.

- Delegates taking any of the units as commercial training may register for the academic programme. They would be required to take the academic assessment and on successful completion will be awarded the CATS[6] points.

B. Management Decisions

The support enjoyed from the head of department during the initial stages of the development of the radical design was withdrawn a year after the project commenced, and after the first set of validation documentation had been completed. The head of department gave the following reasons for the cautious approach, during a formal meeting to discuss the progress of the programme development.

1. Call centres will be phased out

'I have seen a report that says call centres will be closing down,' (unsubstantiated) 'so we may not have a need for the programme.'

There is evidence in the public domain detailing the closure of call centres in the UK and the transfer of operations to India. The validated programme will prohibit access from that potential market. The original proposed structure would have enabled overseas students to participate through the distance-learning format.

2. The structure is too complicated

'The administrative system will not cope with more than the traditional number of intakes per academic year.'

---

[6] CATS: Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme

Telephone interviews with registry identified that funding could be secured for students entering the programme at any time during the academic year. The proposed software e-learning product's student management system could have administered student registration, progress and assessment.

As a learning environment, the department was not open to change either in practice or procedure. This was quite evident by the lack of support offered by individuals, especially those Principal Lecturers who were in a position to influence decisions. A lack of commitment to participate in new initiatives was apparent by a lack of attendance at two e-learning product presentations. Only three academic members of the department attended the first presentation (for the AP development), and only one academic and six administrators attended the second (that for the PP development), however, the Head of Department supported this presentation.

C. Problematic Preferences, Unclear Participants, Fluid Technology – The Garbage Can

The Garbage Can Model, presented on the next page, has been adopted and adapted from Lockwood and Davies (1985) model to provide a detailed systemic perspective of the decision-making during the programme conception, development and validation (Please refer to the case study for the full details).

Political behaviour by individuals in organisations has been described as an attempt to influence the behaviour of others and the course of events in the organisation to protect their self-interests and meet their own needs (Hellriegel et al, 1992). A number of factors that increase the probability of political behaviour have been identified from the literature. These include disagreements over goals, unclear goals, different ideas about the organisation and its problems, different information about the situation and the need to allocate scare resources (Kotter, 1985, Hellriegel et al, 1992, Buchanan and Huczynski, 1997).

PHASE 1:GARBAGE CAN – PROGRAMME INITIATION

INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
People with problems	Departmental Programme Approval	Problem Oversight
People with solutions	Academic Council Programme	Flight from problems
Participants with time and energy	Approval	Coupling of problems with potential solutions

PHASE 2: NEGOTIATION + POLITICAL – TEAM BUILDING AND PROGRAMME DESIGN

INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
Agreement on terms of Reference	Programme Design decisions	Broad agreement on
Clarity on goals	Management decision-making	Possible compromise + preferred solution
Availability of participants	Striking of bargains, compromises	Incentives to make progress
	Develop Programme team decisions	Drop out of some participants

PHASE 3: PERSUASION + LEGITIMATION – PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
Reviewed programme structure	Management decision-making	Agreed policy of lines of action
Reviewed delivery mode	Programme Design decisions	Commitment of groups to action
	Reaffirmation of bargains	Guidelines for Programme Development team

PHASE 4: BUREAUCRATIZATION - PROGRAMME VALIDATION

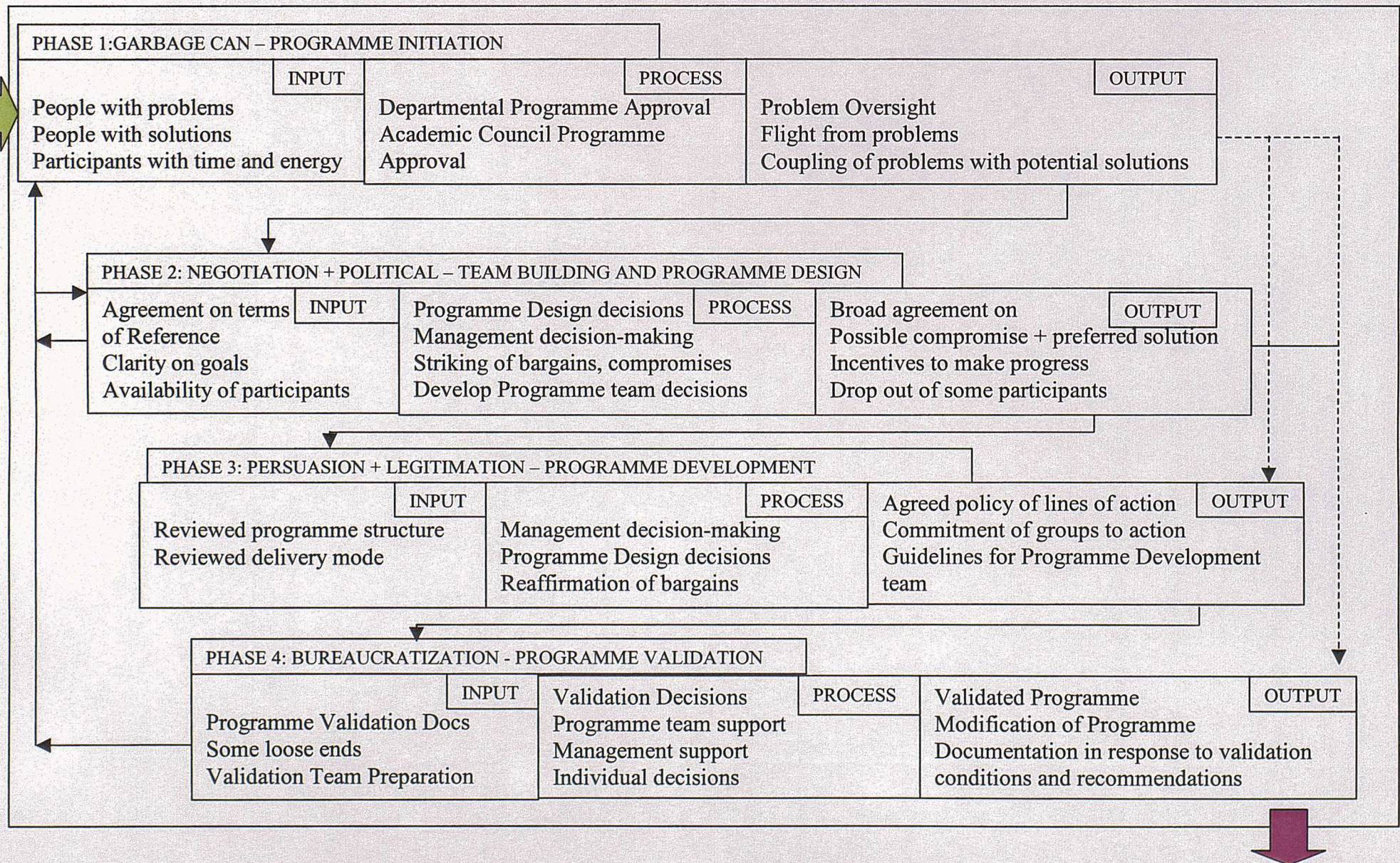| INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
Programme Validation Docs	Validation Decisions	Validated Programme
Some loose ends	Programme team support	Modification of Programme
Validation Team Preparation	Management support	Documentation in response to validation
	Individual decisions	conditions and recommendations

Figure 4.3.2 A Four Phase Systems Model of Programme Development (adapted from Lockwood and Davies, (1985, p149)

THE GARBAGE CAN EXPRESSED

Due to the nature of the role of the academic, and the levels of commitment of the development team, participation and engagement varied considerably. Participants varied in the amount of time and effort they devoted to different domains; involvement varied from one time to another. Academics are multi-tasking and multi-functioning, their time is spent on various tasks including teaching, administration and communicating with students. As participants in the programme development, membership of the team was fluid, as other activities required their attention. This resulted in a loss of continuity and engagement. As a result, the boundaries of the programme development were uncertain and changing; the audiences and decision-makers for any particular kind of the choices changed capriciously. Additionally, the support of the Head of Department was guided by temporal and anecdotal conditions. At the outset, the programme development received full support. However, as the development progressed and the national press reported a potential decline in the targeted industry sector the support from the decision-maker declined considerably to a level of disinterest.

Situations of decision-making under goal ambiguity are common in complex organisations. These research data collected during this study identified an institution in which choices were made without consistent shared goals. The environment existed as a result of a strategic decision to operate devolved responsibility.

Member activation entails the question of how occasional members become active and how attention is directed toward, or away from, a decision. It is important to understand the attention patterns within an organisation, since not everyone is attending all of the time. During the programme development, individuals were also participating in other activities that commanded their attention. The programme development was a secondary activity and a lower priority on their task list. Apart from myself, the remainder of the development

team, and the key decision-maker, were actively involved in teaching, programme administration, consultancy and private activities that detracted their attention for long periods of time.

4.3.2 LEVEL OF CONGRUENCE

It has been shown that the nature, quality and substance of the communications (mode, content and participants), and of the strategic decision-making within the institution and the department, in the context of this research, had a significant influence on the observed transactions.

Where goals and technology are hazy and participation is fluid, many of the axioms and standard procedures of management collapse (Cohen et al, 1972). Participants come and go. Since every entrance is an exit somewhere else, the distribution of 'entrances' depends on the attribute of the choice being left as much as it does on the attributes of the new choice. Substantial variation in participation stems from other demands on the participants' time.

The key decision-maker in the programme development had multiple strategic roles within the institution. Access was restricted and time availability severely limited. A visible outcome manifested itself in the response time for arranging meetings and the turn-around of development documentation.

4.4 THE OUTCOMES

4.4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section considers the congruence of the observed outcomes of the case study against the intended outcomes identified here. The introduction of non-traditional approaches to teaching and learning in a traditional environment is not a new paradigm in general terms. However, given the scope of the investment required to undertake the development of adopting non-traditional modes of teaching and learning and the magnitude of the resources required, the economic effectiveness of these educational reforms must be considered against

the traditional delivery of the institution's core business. The following sections examine the decisions that were taken by management, and the communication mechanisms that underpinned the transactions   The guidelines for taking a radical approach to the programme design were founded in the institution's strategic plans referenced in appendix A. The plans at institutional and departmental levels identified a commitment to facilitating teaching and learning using information and communications technologies.   Whilst no formal commitment was made to offer open, distance and flexible learning, the plans stated that the decisions should be taken at the point of delivery.   This statement indicated appropriate flexibility for the provision of individual programmes.   There was precedent within the institution, and the department, to implement non-traditional modes of teaching and learning (evidenced within the department and in the teaching and learning strategy documents, see appendix A).   Finally, the department was created specifically to deliver post-experience, postgraduate management programmes.

The following five statements were identified in chapter 3 as the intended outcomes from the curriculum development.

1. The management supports the development of new programme in alignment with the institution's, and department's, teaching and learning strategies;

2. The procedures are in place to facilitate the design and development of new programmes;

3. The communications systems support the design and development of new programmes;

4. That recommendation 42 of the Dearing Report that all higher education institutions should develop managers who combine a deep understanding of Communications and Information Technology with senior management experience had been achieved in accordance with the institution's strategic plan;

5. The design and development of the curriculum meets the needs of the external stakeholders.

The strategic vision of the case institution has been to serve its local population. Therefore to serve a global population through the adoption of non-traditional modes of teaching and learning supported by information and communications technologies would require a paradigm shift. In summary, to support such a change in attitude would require:

- Strong leadership, commitment and support;

- Consolidated decision-making to determine appropriate systems of teaching and learning thus deriving economies of scale;

- Stability in financial planning to enable appropriate allocation of resources;

- Development of robust infrastructures (technical and human);

- Staff training and development;

It has been shown that the nature, quality and substance of the communications (mode, content and participants), and of the strategic decision-making within the institution and the department, in the context of this research, had a significant influence on the observed transactions. Strategic decisions taken at every level of the institution make explicit and implicit impacts on the design and development of the curriculum (Kelly, 1989), and consequently, the student experience. Cohen et al (1972) state that

'Where goals and technology are hazy and participation is fluid, many of the axioms and standard procedures of management collapse.'

Kerzner (2003) suggested that poor sponsorship, inappropriate project selection, the assignment of the wrong project manager, a lack of upper management support, inadequately defined tasks and misused management techniques are the main reasons why projects fail. What is required are:

- Strong leadership, commitment and support;

- Consolidated decision-making to determine appropriate systems of teaching and learning thus deriving economies of scale;

- Stability in financial planning to enable appropriate allocation of resources;

- Development of robust infrastructures (technical and human);

- Staff training and development;

It is a paradox that the successful validation of the Postgraduate Certificate failed to meet the needs of the external customers. This is evidenced by the lack of applications from potential students in spite of a marketing campaign in appropriate publications. The decision taken to dilute the initial programme proposal was based on caution, and the risk of commitment to additional finance and human resources.

The outcomes observed during the case study demonstrated that decisions were based on an individual's value judgment weighted by the risk factors associated with the level of investment and uncertainty. The decision was taken by the Head of Department to restrict further development of the Postgraduate Diploma and Masters qualifications, without external funding, until sufficient numbers were recruited to the Postgraduate Certificate. However, as has already been recorded, there was a very limited local potential customer base due to the subject domain of the programme and the limited number of local call centres [at the time of writing: 39 in the immediate vicinity]. The institution's strategic plan was to serve the city: accordingly it was unrealistic to expect that potential students, geographically dispersed throughout the country would be able to attend an institution in London due to temporal and physical constraints, and work commitments. Further, without guaranteed progression to the higher levels of study, potential students would pursue generic management programmes. Bernstein's statement (above) is proven.

The model, figure 4.4, below summarises the observed outcomes of the management decisions and the relationships between power, conflict and politics that contributed to the final programme design.

Differentiation
The tasks of the department and responsibility for each programme rest with individuals within the department.
Failure of individuals to engage and commit weakens and lengthens the development.

Differing Goals
Management, academics and administrators have different personal and professional perspectives and agenda.
Bureaucracy restricts innovation when the institution is inflexible in its approaches.

Members' Assumptions
Members with appropriate knowledge, but differing beliefs and values, contribute different .perspectives to the development. Homogeneous views provide synergy, heterogeneous views create tension.

Interdependence
Where the actions of an individual or group affect the other.

Scarcity
Scarce resources produce vigorous action by individuals, dissatisfaction with its unavailability and increase stress.

Distribution Of Power
Political activity, bargaining power and coalition formation only occur when power is widely dispersed. The power of a single manager is greater than the enthusiasm of the individual.

Conflict

Differing Implementation Beliefs

Disagreement on decisions and outcomes and means to achieve ends.

Radical vs Incremental development

Importance
How critical is the programme to the institution (income generation, reputation) and to the external market?
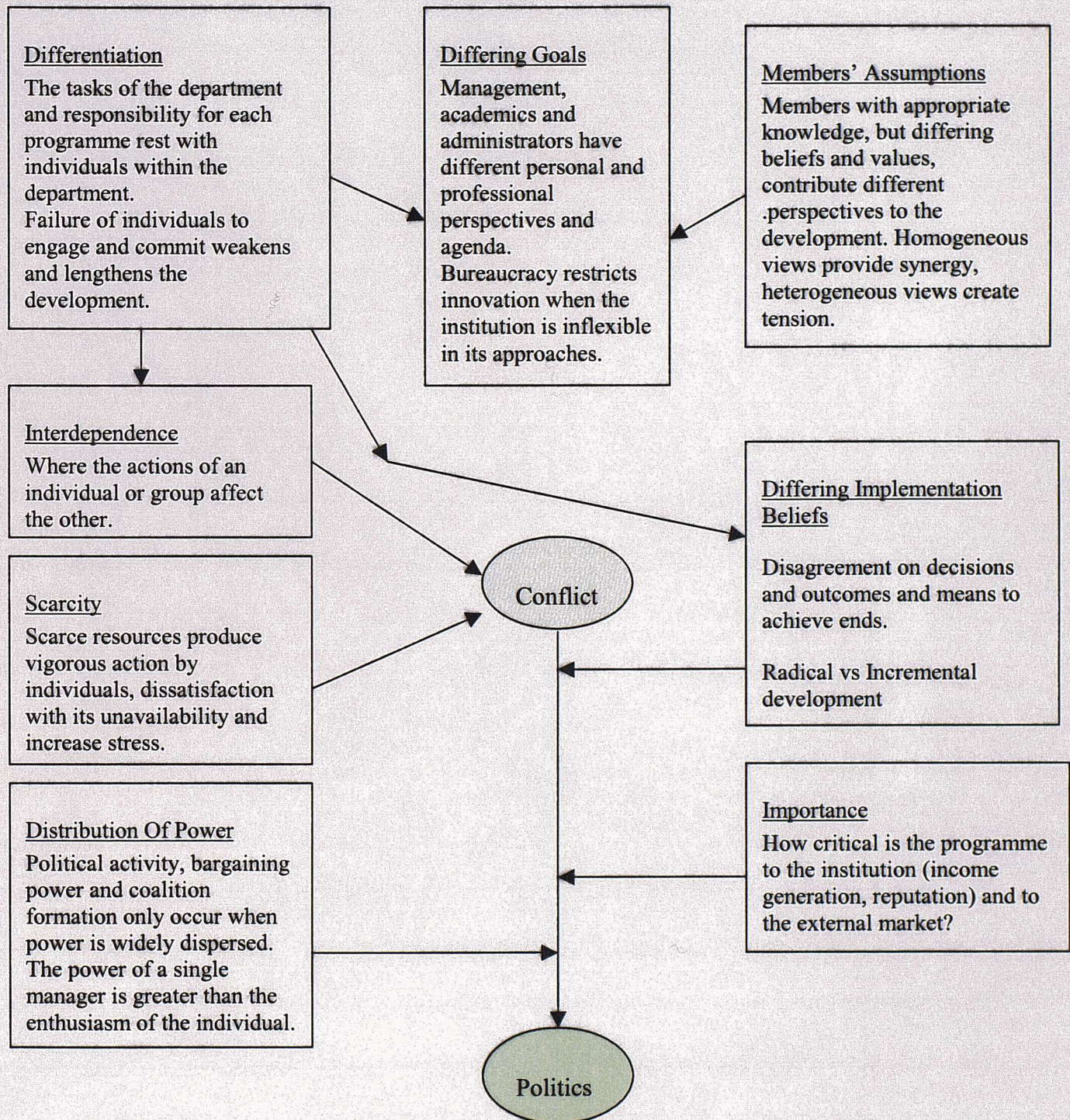
Politics

Figure 4.4 Conditions Producing The Use of Power and Politics in Organisational Behaviour (After Pfeffer, 1981, p69, cited Buchanan and Huczynski 1997, p 675)

4.4.2 A RADICAL PROGRAMME DESIGN (AP)

The characteristics of the validated programme are listed below.

- Only the Postgraduate Certificate will be offered.

- Students may only study on-campus.

- Students may only join the programme at the start of the academic year.

The programme was conceived to offer an academic qualification to the growing sector of the call centre industry. In line with the department's existing portfolio of programmes, the programme would contain management subjects delivered at Masters level.

An overview of the case study is presented here to show the relationships between academic provision and the external conditions.

A. The Programme and the State

The development of the new programme offered a new professional sector the opportunity to gain higher education qualifications. Such provision would contribute to the government's aim of 50% of the population studying at university. External recognition of its professional status would benefit the call centre industry directly, and indirectly contribute to the nation's economy.

B. The Programme and Industry

The workforce within the call centre industry has previously been treated generally as casual labour. However, as the concept of the 'one stop shop' enters different industry sectors and public arenas such as local and central government, the high level of staff turnover (colloquially referred to as *churn*) needs to be reduced due to the costs incurred of replacing staff. In accordance with strategic moves towards commitment to staff, training and personal development has become a high priority in the call centre sector. Ensuring investment in staff reduces turnover and promotes customer relationship management whilst reducing

internal costs.   In has been widely reported that within ten years one in five of the working population will work in a call centre environment.   Lower level qualifications, such as (National Vocational Qualifications) NVQs, have been developed for the call centre industry; however, higher level qualifications have not been addressed.

Therefore, the development of the postgraduate programme was recognition of a need to provide credibility for a new *profession*.   As previously mentioned, the traditional management programmes, such as the MBA, do not reflect the issues that managers and team leaders within the call centre industry face.   Therefore the development of a specific postgraduate qualification for call/contact centre[7] was welcomed by members of the industry, as evidenced later in this chapter.

The nature of the industry, and the location of the call/contact centres required special consideration in the design and delivery of the content of the programme material.   It was therefore necessary to develop a curriculum that offered flexibility and modes of delivery that matched the working patterns of the sector.

C. The Programme and Society

Society in general will be served by a growing number of call centres from all market sectors. For example: Airtours call centre for booking holidays; Herts Connect, a one stop shop for the local authority; banks; mobile phone service providers; BAA (British Airports Authorities) who are responsible for the Heathrow Express, airport parking, and duty free enquiries.   In order to maintain a level of customer satisfaction, organisations seek to maintain, and increase, their levels of customer satisfaction.   To provide such a service to

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[7] The difference between call centres and contact centre varies in definition even within the industry. This work recognizes *call centres* as those *centres* of operation that communicate on a large scale with its customers or the public via the telephone. *Contact centres* are recognized as those who additionally communicate with customers and the public using the Internet for email transactions or 'voice over internet provision' (*VOIP*).

society, organisations have recognised that they need to provide a sufficient level of training and education for their staff.

D. The Programme and Technology

The programme is related to technology from two perspectives: the technology used with the call/contact centre operations, and the technology proposed to support the teaching and learning.

Call and contact centres utilised progressive technology in their operations. Understanding how the technology works, and how it could be used to greater effect would enable managers to manage their centres more efficiently.

The nature of the operations of the call centre/contact centre industry are different to those of other organisations in that they generally operate on a 24 hour, 7 day basis. The shift patterns and the working environments do not easily facilitate the release of staff to attend academic study. In response to the nature of their working patterns, the initial programme design offered a teaching and learning mode utilising a modular, distance learning approach using information technology or traditional hard copy materials.

4.4.3 AN INCREMENTAL PROGRAMME DESIGN (PP)

The professional body provided the original content and structure of the programme. The programme had been delivered in taught mode, on campus, for two years. In 1999, the programme director bid for funding to pilot delivery of the programme through video-conferencing. The bid was successful. Video-conferencing equipment was installed in a teaching room at the institution and at a corporate office some distance from the institution. The employees registered for the programme. They received their lectures synchronously with the lectures delivered to a cohort at the institution. The two-way link facilitated

discussion between the two sites. Although there were the inevitable teething problems of proxemics, and modifications were made with regard to visibility, the pilot was considered to be successful. Encouraged by the success of the video-conferencing project, the Programme Director sought to bid for further funding to develop the programme to be delivered in distance learning mode, supported by information and communications technologies. Such provision would enable potential students nationwide to study the professional qualification whilst receiving support from the institution. The bid for funding was successful.

4.5 DISCUSSION - INCREMENTAL OR RADICAL DEVELOPMENT?

4.5.1 INTRODUCTION

The research question asked

What is the impact of external and internal factors on the decision of an inner-city university to implement a radical approach to open, distance and flexible learning strategies?

in response to the following statement from HEFCE:

> From the point of view of teaching and learning, a critical issue for the sector
>
> is whether incremental change, coupled with special initiatives of various
>
> kinds, will prove sufficient to meet the challenges that face it, or whether
>
> institutions need to make radical changes to the ways that they - collectively
>
> and individually - provide learning opportunities. (HEFCE, 1996, p1)

An academic programme was developed to meet the specific needs of the external customers. The design incorporated different modes of academic delivery, supported by the advances in information and communications technology. The most radical aspects of the programme design were the multiple admissions to the programme, and the multiple modes of delivery providing flexibility for the student. However, while the key influences that determined the final design of the programme were internal, the perceived cost of administrative support for

multiple admissions and non-traditional modes of teaching and learning, they can be traced back to the external state influences that govern the financial stability of the institution, creating uncertainty.

The model below applies the outcome of the case programme development to the model introduced in chapter 2 (Collis and Moonen, 2001, p199). The proposed curriculum for the MSc in Customer Contact Centre Management would have enabled the institution to commence transition from Scenario A to Scenario D.

	Where local face-to-face transactions are highly valued	Where global and network-mediated transactions are the norm
The institution offers a programme and ensures its content	**Scenario A** Control of cohesive curriculum in a local setting (current situation) Back to Basics	**Scenario B** Control of a cohesive local curriculum, available globally The Global Campus
The learner chooses what he/she wants, how he/she wants, when he/she wants and takes more responsibility for its content and structure	**Scenario C** Individualisation in the local institution Stretching the mould	**Scenario D** Individualisation and Globalisation The new Economy

→ If the institution had opted to adopt the academic programme proposed that offered open, distance and flexible learning

→ The introduction of the distance learning professional programme has commenced the transition to Scenario B. While the programme currently has students registered in the UK, the programme can register international students.
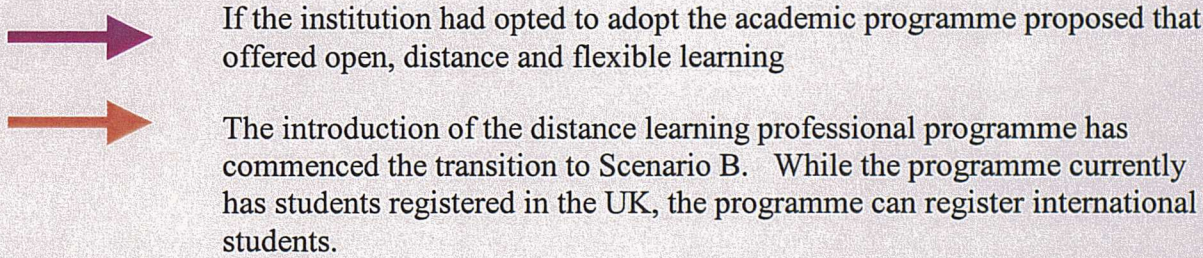
Figure 4.4.3 The Inner-City University (After Collis and Moonen, 2001, p199)

However, the validated version of the programme constrains provision to the Back-to-Basics Scenario A. The findings show that the higher education institution is more comfortable with evolutionary development of programmes where there is no strategic direction.

The remainder of this section discusses the issues identified during the congruent analyses and is structured as follows:

Section 4.5.2 questions whether or not programme development is a strategic decision in a devolved organisation structure.

Section 4.5.3 evaluates the decisions taken to adopt incremental or radical approaches to academic provision.

Section 4.5.4 considers the issues of risk and loss in an academic environment.

Section 4.5.5 questions the institution's propensity to adopt open, distance and flexible approaches to curriculum provision.

Section 4.5.6 examines the impact of increased bureaucratic procedures and policies, and the perceived restriction on academic innovation.

Section 4.5.7 questions whether the validation of the final programme design was a failure or a success.

Section 4.5.8 questions whether the institution is a learning organisation.

Section 4.5.9 reflects on the transition of academic institutions from a service sector to the business sector and the implications for future programme development.

Section 4.5.10 considers the move from the traditional university to a virtual environment.

4.5.2 PROGRAMME APPROVAL – A STRATEGIC DECISION?

The development of a programme requires each of the aforementioned communication roles, from conception to delivery through the process of validation.   At the inner-city institution, as shown, the decision to provide a new programme, or an existing programme through a different learning mode is taken firstly at the departmental level during the departmental executive meetings.   All agreed programme proposals are then forwarded for consideration and approval by the institution.   In that respect, the outcome may be determined as a strategic decision.   The case institution operates a devolved structure enabling 'local strategic' decisions to be taken at school or department level, within the institution's strategy

policies: designing local teaching and learning modes appropriate to individual programmes.

The systemic model below reflects this hierarchical perspective (refer chapter 3).
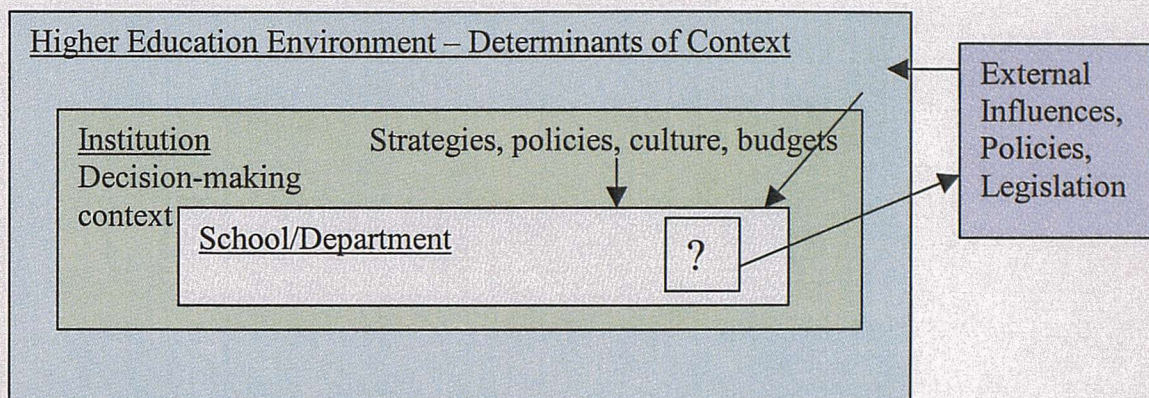

Figure 4.5.2. A systemic view of the relationship between the external conditions and the internal decisions (Hennell, unpublished)

Shirley (1982, cited Harrison and Pelletier, 2001) offers a detailed profile of significance for a given strategic decision as follows:

-   The decision is directed toward defining the organisation's relationship to its external environment;

-   In terms of its basic effect, the decision encompasses the entire organization;

-   The decision depends on input from all the primary functional areas in the organization;

-   The decision has a direct influence on all of the administrative and operational activities throughout the organization;

-   The decision is vitally important to the long-term well being of the total organization.

Clearly, based on the evidence provided in the case study and in previous sections, the decision to provide any programme, regardless of mode of delivery, will encompass each of

the points above. Giving such commitment to already extended resources in an uncertain fiscal environment requires a risk analysis.

'Two forms of uncertainty press upon the post-modern university: epistemological uncertainty and ontological uncertainty' (Barnett, 2000d, p99). His proposition that 'epistemologically, anything goes provided it can find backers' underpins the very essence of this work. The success of the development of the PP (professional programme) was underpinned by two critical success factors:

  a. The precedents of an already successful programme;

  b. That it was funded externally.

The diluted development of the AP (academic programme) resulted from a lack of management confidence and resources, and the fact that the development was internally funded. The recommendation of the validation panel that the Diploma and Masters levels should be developed were accepted by the Head of Department, but would occur only if external funding could be determined

Barnetts' second consideration on ontological uncertainty might be answered 'that a university is anything the government and funding bodies want it to be'. Chapter 2 provided an account of the evolution of HE, moving from seats of knowledge for knowledge sake to institutions for the development of skills for economic growth, or as Clark (1998, cited Barnett, 2000d, p99) describes them – 'sites of entrepreneurialism', or as John Newman said in 1826 'pantechnicons'.

In the entrepreneurial role, strategy making is dominated by the active search for new opportunities where the organisation focuses on opportunities and problems are secondary (Mintzberg et al, 1998). As discussed in chapter 2, faced with the need to increase student numbers in line with government policy, whilst constrained by physical resources and changes in funding mechanisms, the institution should seek to generate revenues and funding

from alternative sources. The focus of this research concentrated on the potential opportunity to provide HE through non-traditional modes, to reach a wider audience whilst generating additional revenues without impacting on existing resources. However, in an entrepreneurial organisation, one person holds power capable of committing an organisation to bold programmes of action (ibid). The managerial decision to dilute the original design of the AP from a full Masters degree with multi-mode delivery and 8 intakes per academic year to a traditionally taught postgraduate certificate with 1 intake per academic year demonstrates the caution of the decision-making within the department. The primary concern in allowing 8 intakes per year was identified as the administrative ability to 'cope with the number of intakes and the tracking of students' progress given the flexible nature of the programme' (Head of Department during a development meeting).

A. Incremental Approach To Developing ODFL Programmes Within MP

The observed antecedents provided a level of management confidence for the development of the distance learning professional programme. The traditionally offered programme had a well-defined market and a substantial student population. A professional body supplied the programme contents. Potential demand for the programme was assured through market research prior to the validation even as the need to belong to that professional body suggested a continual supply of prospective students. The lead-time was shortened as the validation documentation was created from the existing programme material as only the mode of study was revalidated.

The programme was an incremental development of an existing programme, developed first in traditional modes of teaching and learning and secondly in distance learning mode funded through an external source. The programme developer was an 'expert' in the subject domain

having delivered to several cohorts, and had developed the video-conferencing mode of delivery. The developer's other commitments were undertaken by peers within the department to allow the developer to concentrate solely on the design and development of the validation proposals and the programme content. Based on the success of the previous two modes of study, the programme development received full support from the head of department. Accordingly, a full-time, dedicated administrator was appointed to support the programme.

The subject domain was predominantly quantitative and therefore by nature suitable for delivery in distance learning mode using information technology. Finally, the professional programme was designed and implemented, supported by external funding and built using a recognised distance-learning platform that has a student population of over 500 (2002 – 2003).

B. Examples Of Incremental Programme Development At Other Institutions

Incremental, or evolutionary change is a continuous process that evolves from, and demonstrates continuity with, the past and present situations (Morrison, 1998). There are many examples of successful incremental developments in higher education relating to the adoption of ICT and distance learning.

Ferrin et al (2001) have applied supply matrix management and a total quality management approach to curriculum development. Their study was collaborative in nature, and incremental in approach using Delphi techniques. The development of the curriculum occurred over a period of eight years.[8]

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[8] Their study empirically demonstrated the efficacy of applying TQM concepts to curriculum development. They established the benefits of using the Delphi techniques to develop curricula as it 'stimulates interaction between faculty and expert' and creates 'a sense of involvement and ownership of the curriculum among the key constituent groups. The curriculum developed focused on 'processing customer requests' and 'defining specifications and requirements to meet customer requests'.

The Henley Management Centre offers an e-learning Project Management programme. The programme was delivered via traditional means for two years before the e-learning approach was developed.

Portsmouth University offers a computing degree on-line. The degree has been offered for many years full-time and part-time, on campus in the UK and overseas. The programme is now delivered to students in India, China, Malaysia, Singapore, Pakistan, and any other location in which students reside, totally on-line. Students enroll and pay for their courses on-line. The only physical activity is attendance at the examination centre.

C. Radical Approach To Developing ODFL Programmes

The characteristics of the development of the radical approach are diametrically opposed to those defined in the previous section. The subject domain was innovative and new to the institution and HE. No persons within the department had subject knowledge, nor experience of the subject domain. My own knowledge to develop the programme was limited to interviews conducted with employees in the industry, observations and documentary research.

The design of the programme encapsulated the concepts of HE reform in providing for widening participation, improved access, the adoption of information technology to support teaching and learning and to generate income with diminishing unit costs.

The programme proposal did not fit the traditional academic programme structure, comprising eight intakes a year and providing full flexibility allowing students to take modules as their working and private lives permitted (still within academic constraints dictated by national frameworks). The traditional admission to an HE programme occurs once in September/October at the start of the academic year, although some institutions offer an additional entry in January, providing an element of flexibility.

The level of management support was symbolized by the appointment of a part-time (part-time, term-time only) administrator who supported other programmes within the department. Further, although the programme required a team of four academics to cover the different module contents, they were appointed just weeks before the validation event occurred.

The intention was to adopt a proprietary package that had not been used in HE previously but had a successful reputation in industry as an e-learning environment.

The documentation was developed from a combination of a model supplied by the Academic Registrar's office as an example of good practice and an example taken from an existing programme from within the department suggested by the head of department as good practice

The programme did not receive full support form the head of department.

It is my interpretation, however this is supported by the subsequent actions taken, that the head of department could not understand or accept the complex nature of the delivery mechanisms designed to promote total openness, flexibility and distance learning within the same programme. Neither was she convinced, despite the original market research undertaken with practitioners in the sector, of the need to provide multiple learning formats or a full masters programme.

As a consequence, the full masters programme was reduced to a postgraduate certificate in customer contact centre management, delivered in traditional mode of teaching and learning only. The programme had been designed in a modular style and still had the potential for eight intakes a year. However, it had been decided that it would only be offered as two intakes a year initially. It was this structure that was presented for validation. The rationale for the decision was given as 'I do not have the resources to commit to the development of the diploma and masters level of the qualification.' If external funding can be obtained then the last two stages can be developed.

This was evidenced in the validation event and witnessed by all of the participants. The chair of the validation event commented on the lack of support during an informal discussion after the meeting. This was further exacerbated following the validation of the programmes. Following the validation of the evolutionary professional programme, the head of department sent an email to all members of the department stating congratulations of the event. Following the validation of the radical academic programme, no email was forthcoming except the one sent by myself to congratulate the team on their contribution to the successful event.

The lack of support provided by the management and the team, delayed the validation event and the marketing of the programme. As a result, the programme, instead of being the market leader, was second to enter the market. The first was a programme offered in the same market sector but as a distance-learning programme only. This programme had a different structure and programme content and recruited in its first year.

The case institution's Provost's decision not to promote the development of non-traditional modes of teaching and learning on an institution-wide basis may have created inefficiencies internally, but it supported individual innovation at low risk. Cautionary decision-making displayed by the middle management towards radical developments restricted progress, dismissing them as unachievable and, in turn, demoralising the development team. Whether the programme would have been successful will never be known. The programme, as validated, has received minimal interest, and to date (2003) is not active. The initial market research had identified that potential students would be interested in a full masters programme and not just a postgraduate certificate. Hence their strong interest in an open, distance and flexible learning environment, matching life styles and working practices. However, the head of department would not approve the development of the diploma and the masters levels until success of the certificate could be demonstrated, and external funding for

development could be secured. This created a chicken-egg situation. Further, the demographics of the potential students would preclude them from attending the physical campus due to the nature of their employment.

The validation of both programmes was successful, and both are now offered as part of the institution's portfolio. However, the radical approach was clearly not successful in meeting the wider objectives of the institution and the department as expressed in the strategic plans.

The success or failure of the development and introduction of any new (programme) product requires a sponsor within the organisation. The development of both programmes was sponsored by the then Head of Department. Both had received authorisation from Academic Council to proceed to the design and development stage. Both of the developments were undertaken by academics that were enthusiastic, skilled and knowledgeable in non-traditional modes of teaching and learning.

The results of that evaluation identified a number of key factors that suggested that the impact permeated all levels of the hierarchy. The following sections provide a summary of those findings and draw conclusions relating to the decision-making processes. The chapter concludes with projected thoughts regarding the future developments, and the potential future of HE within the UK. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

D. Development Platforms and Economies of Scale

The decision to allow departments to develop non-traditional modes of teaching and learning without any sense of direction and central management has created what was known in the IT world in the 1980s as 'Islands of Automation'. Each system may work effectively, however, there is little cohesion between the systems and a reduction in the economies of scale.

Hence, such initiatives create a new set of problems as each development project uses a different teaching and learning environment. Within the institution, this has led to issues of support. The IT support department has been required to support an eclectic myriad of software that has been introduced without consultation. This has caused issues relating to areas such as staff training, incompatibility of software and systems and operational issues for student support. Based on this premise, developing non-traditional modes of teaching and learning in a decentralised manner without central direction increases the costs of development beyond the direct costs that can be calculated.

4.5.4 DECISION-MAKING AND RISK

> The capacity to manage risk, and with it the appetite to take risk and make forward-looking choices, are the key elements of the energy that drives the economic system forward. (Bernstein, 1998, p3)

Chapter 2, section 2.5 reviewed the concepts of risk, particularly issues related to higher education. This section discusses the risks associated with the decisions taken during the development of the two programmes discussed during the case study.

The outcomes observed during the case study demonstrated that decisions were based on an individual's value judgment weighted by the risk factors associated with the level of investment and uncertainty. The decision taken to restrict further development of the Postgraduate Diploma and Masters qualifications, without external funding, until sufficient numbers were recruited to the Postgraduate Certificate increased the potential risk to the success of the programme through a lack of applications. However, the risk of committing the required level of resources to the programme within a constrained budget was also high. Bernstein's statement (above) is proven.

One result of risk aversion is that decision-makers prefer a certain outcome as opposed to a gamble with potential greater numerical utility leading to a bias towards the status quo

(Bernstein, 1998). In respect of programme development in higher education, the formal procedures guide developers to follow a 'safe course of action'. These procedures were followed during the programme developments described in the case study. However, there are several decision points within those procedures. Given the unstable environment within which higher education operates, and the financial constraints imposed through government funding, there is a tendency to be conservative in making decisions by always opting for the 'safe' option. This may result in stifling innovation and less than optimal decision-making. The observed data presented for the AP programme development indicates that this indeed occurred (refer appendix A).

In a financially constrained environment, organisations are risk averse. The case institution, undergoing a financial recovery plan, was not in a financially stable state to undertake investment in any projects other than core activities. This was clearly evidenced by the outcomes of the case study programme, and the listed projects in the strategic plans.

While the target market for the case study programme was the postgraduate student population, the principles could be applied to the development of programmes for the traditional student body, and be applied throughout all institutions providing higher education.

4.5.5 OPEN, DISTANCE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING

Since the start of this research, the domain of open, distance, flexible and now e-learning has become more widely and publicly discussed. The concept is widely promoted by proprietary suppliers of e-learning environments, and organisations within industry. However, although more people are now IT literate, and most organisations have installed technology to support business functions, there has been a low adoption of e-learning to support staff development.

A survey was conducted with over 100 part-time, postgraduate Human Resource Management students studying in the institution between 1999 and 2002 to determine the

level of implementation of e-learning within industry. The results of the analysis showed that less than 40% of the city organisations surveyed had implemented any form of e-learning.

An opportunity arose during the analysis stage of this research to collect further evidence of the current levels of adoption of e-learning from a wider audience. During a meeting with representatives from eight geographically dispersed higher education institutions (informal discussions held Monday, 20th October 2003), I asked the question:

'To what extent do you use any form of distance learning to deliver your academic programmes?'

Their responses were varied but reflect the findings of this work. In summary, there has been a low level of adoption of e-learning for general higher education provision. The mode of delivery, where introduced, has been implemented as a support mechanism for traditional delivery. Exceptionally, a few institutions have introduced e-learning programmes to meet specific vocational markets. The individual responses are identified below.

Institution A saw distance learning as 'a priority development', but as yet the programmes had not recruited.

Institution B was using ICT to provide a blended learning approach to on-campus students.

Institution C targeted distance learning to specific programmes such as their provision of Health Care Studies.

Institution D offered their professional programmes entirely through distance learning modes. They noted a difficulty in updating material once the programme had been designed due to time and cost. They adopted what they termed a 'burst and splatter' approach to design and implementation (a short sharp burst of effort to develop the programme before it was disseminated). Their programmes were developed in partnership with the private sector.

Institution E stated that 'a couple of people put a programme together but it didn't work properly'.

Institution F offered an academic programme to a specific industry to meet the needs of operatives' worldwide. The programme currently enjoys a cohort of over one hundred students. They also use ICT to support their Foundation Degrees in Engineering and Computing.

Institution G is 'obsessed with getting materials on the web for students to download'. They offer distance learning for students living abroad and currently have '10 students registered'. The distance learning materials are also 'available for on-campus students to use locally.'

Institution H is 'being pushed into using distance learning because of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act (SENDA}.

Their comments suggest that the decision to adopt distance learning supported by ICT is not always a proactive 'choice' decision, but one made in response to external conditions. General comments included concern over the cost, time and level of resources required to develop the distance learning modes.

Faced with contending with external pressures of meeting stakeholder needs and continual changes in government funding, the pressures to manage core funding reduces the opportunity for innovation.

4.5.6 BUREAUCRACY VS ACADEMIC INNOVATION
During the development of the Academic Programme, when reviewing the proposed structure and frequency of the modules and the intake policy, the decision-maker's primary concern was the administrative system's ability to 'cope with the non-traditional approach'.[9] Atkinson-Grosjean and Grosjean (2000) provide a comparative international review on the

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[9] Refer to chapter 4 for the full description. Overview – 8 intakes per calendar year, students could join the programme at the start of any module providing the flexibility to commence study at any time, rather than waiting for the traditional start of the academic year.

use of performance models in higher education. Within the UK, they found that institutions tended to follow a strategy of accommodation that focused on technical rather than normative aspects. The consequences of this strategy include the imposition of performance accounting systems for rating faculty productivity; favouring research that attracts funding; a competitive transfer market of high performing researchers; heavier and lighter teaching loads for 'less productive' and 'more productive' researchers respectively; an associated deterioration of teaching conditions; and a re-ordered system of state-appointed buffer bodies to allocate funding on the basis of externally determined criteria (p12). Their work raises a number of points that support the findings of this work. These are considered first from an internal perspective and second, from an external perspective.

A. An Internal Perspective

To ensure high standards of quality, there has been increased surveillance, both internal and external. Surveillance is manifested through quality assurance procedures and league tables. The requirement to implement internal and external policy procedures at student, programme, department and institutional level have increased the administrative workload, as academics become managers bound by bureaucracy. The impact on faculties, academic departments and individuals, is evidenced by a number of intangible characteristics.

The demands placed on academics to undertake managerial, administrative and income generation roles reduce the capacity for research and academic activity. Cumulatively, it decreases faculty time for students and community service. The growth of non-academic management support activities and administration intervene in academic and pedagogic decisions. A reduction of academic autonomy over individual work increases stress, anxiety, uncertainty and resentment.

B. An External Perspective

Whilst there has always been competition between higher education providers, changes since 1992 have increased competition, both within and between institutions. Post-1992 universities are in competition to attract potential students from pre-1992 universities. The blurring of the boundaries, franchising and partnership agreements have extended the provision of higher education to colleges of further education and the workplace.

As the competition increases and the funding mechanisms serve to reduce the levels of income, there has been a move towards centralised, corporate decision-making, supported by budgetary and performance-based criteria. Individual programme provision decisions are based on financial rather than a pedagogic reasoning. This is evidence that universities are becoming more market-like, their strategic behaviour designed to maximise market gains. Curriculum analysis provides evidence to show that universities are abandoning traditional societal and moral imperatives in favour of becoming pantechnicons, changing and selling the products that the external conditions demand. However, the lead-time for developing new products can be extensive as the case study has demonstrated. Institutions must become more responsive to the needs of public, political and other stakeholders. They must become more flexible in their internal systems.

4.5.7 FAILURE

The previous section considered the risks to the university associated with the development of the radically designed programme and compared those risks to the incremental development. This section considers the failure of the development of the radical design within the context of the institutional antecedents.

The programme director considered the risk of developing the radical design to be low. Once designed and developed, the programme incurred zero costs if it did not run. The programme would only be offered if there were sufficient student numbers in any given

cohort. Once the programme had been offered, its reputation would permeate the profession and become popular (based upon the market research discussed in chapters 2 and 4).

Limited human resources precluded the development of such programmes without prior evidence of successful outcomes. As with any programme offered by a higher education institution, the return-on-investment is determined by the number of students enrolled on the programme. Anecdotal evidence collected during informal discussions with under-graduate and postgraduate students suggested that despite the continued success of the Open University, students were less inclined to enroll for distance learning programmes, within a traditional higher education provider, if the same programme was offered in a traditional mode of delivery. However, the professional programme designed by the department and currently delivered using the Internet has proved to be extremely successful with the 600+ registered students.

The decision to validate the academic programme in traditional delivery mode only, and at Postgraduate Certificate level in the first instance is indicative of the management's lack of confidence in the subject domain and its adversity to risk-taking. The rationale offered for reducing the complexity of the delivery modes, the multiple intakes and the three levels of postgraduate qualifications was based on several factors. These have been extrapolated from the evidence provided in the earlier discussions.

However, the same strategic plan recognises, amongst others, recommendation 42 of the Dearing Report, that all higher education institutions should develop managers who combine a deep understanding of Communications and Information Technology with senior management experience.

At the same time, the plan claims that:

> This and the teaching and learning strategy are intimately connected but build on many
>
> years of curriculum development and capital expenditure. It will be important for the

whole university to understand the opportunity costs of implementing this strategy rather than spending money elsewhere. The specification of teaching and learning strategies and learning objectives forms part of the process by which programmes, and units within programmes, are generated and validated. (The Case Institution, 1998)

4.5.8 THE UNIVERSITY: A LEARNING ORGANISATION?

The role of the organisation is to facilitate this learning by supporting and stimulating the individual learning, amplifying it, and crystallising and synthesising it at the group level through dialogue, discussion, experience sharing and observation (Mintzberg et al, 1998, p212). The teaching and learning strategy to adopt non-traditional modes of teaching and learning within the case institution has been to allow individual departments to develop such programmes and modes of study on an ad hoc basis, unsupported financially, and with little evidence of shared experiences throughout the institution to identify best practice. The adoption of this strategy, evidenced in appendix A, has led to an eclectic offering of programmes employing different learning platforms and software.

An analysis of the teaching and learning strategies over the two-year timeframe identified that although various departments indicated numerous developments in the domain of non-traditional modes of study, there was little evidence of completion, and no account of the outcomes of any of the planned activities. (Teaching and Learning Strategic Plans, 1999, 2000, 2001).

Easterby-Smith (1989) identified attributes of a learning organisation. They include:

- The institution can learn from its mistakes.

- It creates an innovative climate that supports change.

- It creates an atmosphere of encouragement.

- It provides support to allow managers to experiment and try new things.

- It does not punish failure, but rewards it. It should only punish failure if the same mistake is repeated as this is an indication that the organisation is incapable of learning and wastes valuable resources.

- It achieves economies of scale.

- It shares best practice throughout.

Clearly based on the evidence collected during the case study, ironically, the case institution is not yet a learning organisation. Whilst the department MP supports innovation, it only does so when externally funded, or the innovation is not in conflict with traditional operating procedures and administrative processes. The atmosphere of encouragement exists where risk is low and there is absolute confidence in a successful outcome.

The institution fails to achieve economies of scale in the development of a distance-learning environment on two counts. The first is the lack of internal communications and publicity of successful distance-learning and blended learning programmes. Accordingly, effort is expended at a cost, to generate systems that already exist. The second is the lack of strategic direction to adopt a specific distance-learning platform, thus reducing the overhead costs of the hardware, software, staff development and maintenance costs.

The next section considers the university as a business in response to the findings of this research, as institutions operate in a quasi market.

4.5.9 THE UNIVERSITY AS A BUSINESS

This work has discussed and evidenced the many mutually reinforcing factors within and without the contemporary higher education institution, which place severe limits on the extent to which it can be managed with any degree of certainty. Internally, the degree of hostility, the degree of control and competitiveness, the time available for making decisions and the financial stability of the institution contributed to the environment and posed

problems for the decision makers. Firm guidelines clearly and timely communicated to allay concerns would reduce uncertainty, and alleviate problems. However, it has been demonstrated that the ambiguity within the institution itself does not lend itself to such precise convictions.

Document analysis of the strategic plans revealed that initiatives have been introduced, implemented, with the support of additional funding, and dissolved once the funding period is completed. Best practice has been rarely recognised and infrequently communicated. The autonomous practice, stated in the strategic plans, that the teaching and learning methods should remain primarily the responsibility of the programme team and the individual teacher within it does not promote sharing and dissemination of information and documentation. The application of academic standards and the interpretation of national guidelines and frameworks vary widely, even within the same department.

The core business of a university is to 'sell' its academic programmes and to attract research contracts. Changes to legislation have created a competitive quasi market. The introduction of overt, external quality assurance procedures, bureaucracy and league tables have impacted on the internal processes of academic provision. The next section examines the impact these have had on the provision of teaching and learning.

4.5.10 FROM BRICKS AND MORTAR TO CLICKS AND MORTAR?
If institutions adopt non-traditional modes of teaching and learning as their core business, 'bricks and mortar' institutions could be replaced by 'clicks and mortar' institutions. These institutions could attract national and international students from around the globe. The nature of higher education would change. The concept of Credit Accumulation and Transfer points would enable students to take advantage of centres of expertise and excellence by studying modules at different institutions and collecting sufficient points overall to gain their qualification, offering truly open, distance and flexible learning across the sector.

This will have a number of effects. Firstly, the question 'what is a university?' will be raised once more and will be less easy to answer. Secondly, only those institutions with a reputation for excellence in specific subject domains will remain in existence and the number of higher education institutions around the globe will diminish. Thirdly, the reputation the UK higher education sector currently enjoys will reduce. A smaller number of academics will become responsible for the development of a greater number of units. The role of the academic will change radically. The nature of higher education will also change. The locus of control will change with an even greater move towards student centred learning.

What will the university of the future look like? Advances in technology may change the shape of the traditional higher education sector. However, government legislation may change the nature of the higher education provider. The next two sections reflect the impact of each scenario.

A. Traditional Higher Education Providers

The physical appearance of higher education may change as institutions move from 'bricks and mortar' establishments to reflect the e-commerce corporations through the adoption of on-line learning and become 'clicks and mortar' institutions: a mass of computers linked together providing text, videos, graphics and voice-over Internet provision. It could be argued that this will meet the UK government's objective to widen participation and to create the centres of specialism that was intended through the Dearing report. However, in principle, this move would create a two-tier education system providing access to prospective students who have access to and the knowledge and ability to use information technology, and denying access to those who do not. Further, as the number of higher education providers decline over time, those who prefer to study in traditional modes will find the competition for places even greater. This has many implications for providers, the state,

industry and society. As the number of places contract, one of the government's objectives (to facilitate 50% of those aged under thirty to have a higher education) will fail due to a lack of places. There is potential that stronger links will be forged with industry through partnerships, foundation degrees and modern apprenticeships, and with colleges of further education through franchises with universities.

B. New Higher Education Providers

Private Businesses may soon be able to call themselves universities as the government moves to scrap the requirement that institutions must have a minimum of 4,000 students. (THES, 21/11/2003, p1)

The report, although journalistic, draws upon unpublished material from the Higher Education Policy Unit. However radical this move may appear to traditional higher educationalists, the thinking is an extension of the research presented in chapters 1 and 2 of this work. The debate is outside the scope of this particular research and yet it impacts the future position of higher education. The introduction of such considerations serves to support the findings of this research that higher education providers need to be more proactive and flexible in the teaching and learning provision.

Foundation Degrees, incorporating recognition of vocational skills and work-based learning, readily lend themselves to being delivered in Corporate Universities. Purist academics might see this as an inappropriate movement. However, the funding lost to the 'traditionalists'\and awarded to the new providers might further constrain resources in exiting higher education institutions.

4.6 CONCLUSIONS

A priori the student demographics are changing. This research has identified a growth in demand by mature students for full-time and part-time programmes as part of Continuing

Professional Development. It is something of a paradox that at a time when the government is committed to expanding entry to higher education to meet its target of 50% of under thirty year olds receiving higher education, fees are being introduced to charge students at the point of delivery. Full-time students are leaving higher education with excessive debts that are predicted to rise further through top-up charges and therefore many find it necessary to seek employment whilst studying. As a consequence of these changes, higher education institutions need to reflect on their curriculum provision. The case study revealed a number of critical issues that require attention.

Firstly, they need to develop processes that reduce lead-time in the development of academic programmes whilst conducting a transparent quality assurance process to ensure standards are maintained. The involvement of industry in these processes will ensure that the needs of industry will be met, and that graduates will find employment.

Secondly, higher education institutions need to develop appropriate delivery modes and schedules to enable widening participation, and to accommodate 'working students'. The adoption of non-traditional delivery to support traditional approaches offers a blended approach to higher education that can take account of most learning styles, and potential student needs.

Thirdly, higher education institutions need to develop more open modes of internal communication to become learning organisations. This will encourage the dissemination of best practice, improve efficiency and reduce overhead costs.

Fourthly, higher education institutions need to offer flexibility to students but in a structured, simple framework.

The complexities of supporting open learning in a traditional environment are greater than the sum of the individual parts creating a negative synergy for the institution and for the individual student. While academic programmes designed with limited options and electives

enable institutions to schedule the constrained resources of academics and space earlier, the flexibility afforded the learner is diminished.

Higher education is one of the most important activities organised in modern society: it creates a demanding but rewarding environment in which individuals may realise their creative and intellectual potential (DoESA, 1996). The challenge for higher education institutions of the 21st century is to maintain the quality learning experience whilst meeting the external constraints imposed and social requirements. This case study has identified that individual enthusiasm and motivation is insufficient to generate innovation without the support of management where executive directives are vague and unsupportive. The outcomes show that even where there is support for innovation from external stakeholders, and potential financial income generated for moderate investment, radical, or revolutionary change is extremely unlikely to occur. However, where there is evidence of past success, evolutionary, or incremental, change will be supported, particularly where external funding is available. This observation is supported by the validation of the incremental development of the professional programme.

The government has suggested that students will 'vote with their feet' if institutions do not provide appropriate programmes in appropriate formats to meet the changing dynamic environment. Chapter 2 identified the stakeholders whose interest in higher education is more that cursory. Many commentators have questioned the nature of higher education and called to question the efficacy and purpose of a university. As other institutions offer non-traditional modes of teaching and learning, even though the student population is changing to include more mature students, as employment needs change, institutions need to consider how they might meet those needs whilst maintaining quality and standards. Middlehurst and

Barnett (1994) suggested that the impact of changes[10] on academic life in general, and individuals in particular, was widespread and potentially revolutionary. The growth in use of Information Technology in post-Dearing higher education, and in general terms, has and is continuing to change the way in which information is collected, stored, orchestrated and disseminated within and across higher education. However, progress nearly ten years on from Middlehurst and Barnett (1994), as this thesis has demonstrated, is restricted by a cautious approach to the implementation of information and communications technology to support open, distance and flexible learning, particularly when funded internally.

The challenges presented by the external conditions, the uncertainty created by the pendulous political swings, a history of contraction and expansion, of changing funding mechanisms have given rise to caution. This is particularly so for the post-1992 universities whose main source of income is from student funding (HEFCE), and whose research funding is very limited. Within the case institution however, the paradigm shift may have been more readily adopted if successful applications of e-learning and pilot studies had been more widely communicated. The communications systems were found to be unsupportive and unsound.

In an unstable financial environment, where funding mechanisms and society's needs are ever changing, long-term planning is more difficult to sustain. Education policy development needs to include economic considerations such as meeting the short and long-term demands of society; identifying, procuring and allocating appropriate resources for developing appropriate academic products; providing appropriate support systems to enable more flexible access to the new type of student; and enhancing the efficiency of the internal processes. The lead-time for development of academic programmes is too lengthy to meet the needs of the dynamic external forces and industry needs. Once the need has been

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[10] P49,50 ibid suggest that global economic and information technology will invoke change to organizational structures and decrease the traditional power and status attached to the holders of knowledge and information and increase the power of those information managers who are able to help individuals gain access to the knowledge they seek.

identified and the market research conducted to provide substantive evidence to provide support for the development, the appropriate forms completed. Approval is then sought from academic council, the programme designed and developed and the validation event occurs. Once validated in principle, the programme must be developed fully and marketed. The lead-time can vary from twelve months upwards. The new programme will take time to 'bed in'. Industry will take time to recognise the qualification and build confidence that the graduates have acquired the type and level of knowledge required to meet their needs.

The findings of this work are that the institution will only invest in radical development if the process is externally funded: incremental or evolutionary process, practice and development platforms that have a history of success will continue to prevail. Whilst operating in a financially and bureaucratically constrained environment, the propensity to take a radical approach to curriculum development is unlikely.

The model on the next page provides a summary the issues raised during the discussions in this chapter. It portrays the fault lines between the external influences and higher education decision-making and the fault lines that exist within institutions as a consequence of the environment created by the external pressures. Additional complexities transpire with the interaction of personal beliefs and values of the actors involved in the decision-making process.

HISTORY

Values
Tradition

RESEARCH

THE STATE

Policies
- Funding
- Student
  Numbers
- Quality
  Frameworks
  Control

SOCIETY

-Elitism to
mass
-Portfolio
careers
- Life-long
learning

INDUSTRY

- Needs
- Sponsorship
- Research

TECHNOLOGY

Advances
- Support
- Communications
- Teaching & learning
platforms
- E-Learning

HE
CONTEXT

Higher Education Providers

Strategies

Values and
Beliefs

Strategic
Decisions

School/Department/
Faculty

Strategies

Values and
Beliefs

Management
Decisions

Programme Developments

Teams

Individuals

Graduates **Research Outcomes** **Knowledge** **Economy** **Academic and
Professional
Programmes**

Communications Encounters
and Engagements

IS/IT
Influences

Industry needs
and relationships

Areas of conflict

State Policies, legislation
and influences

Society needs, requirements
and demands

Historical antecedents, influences and
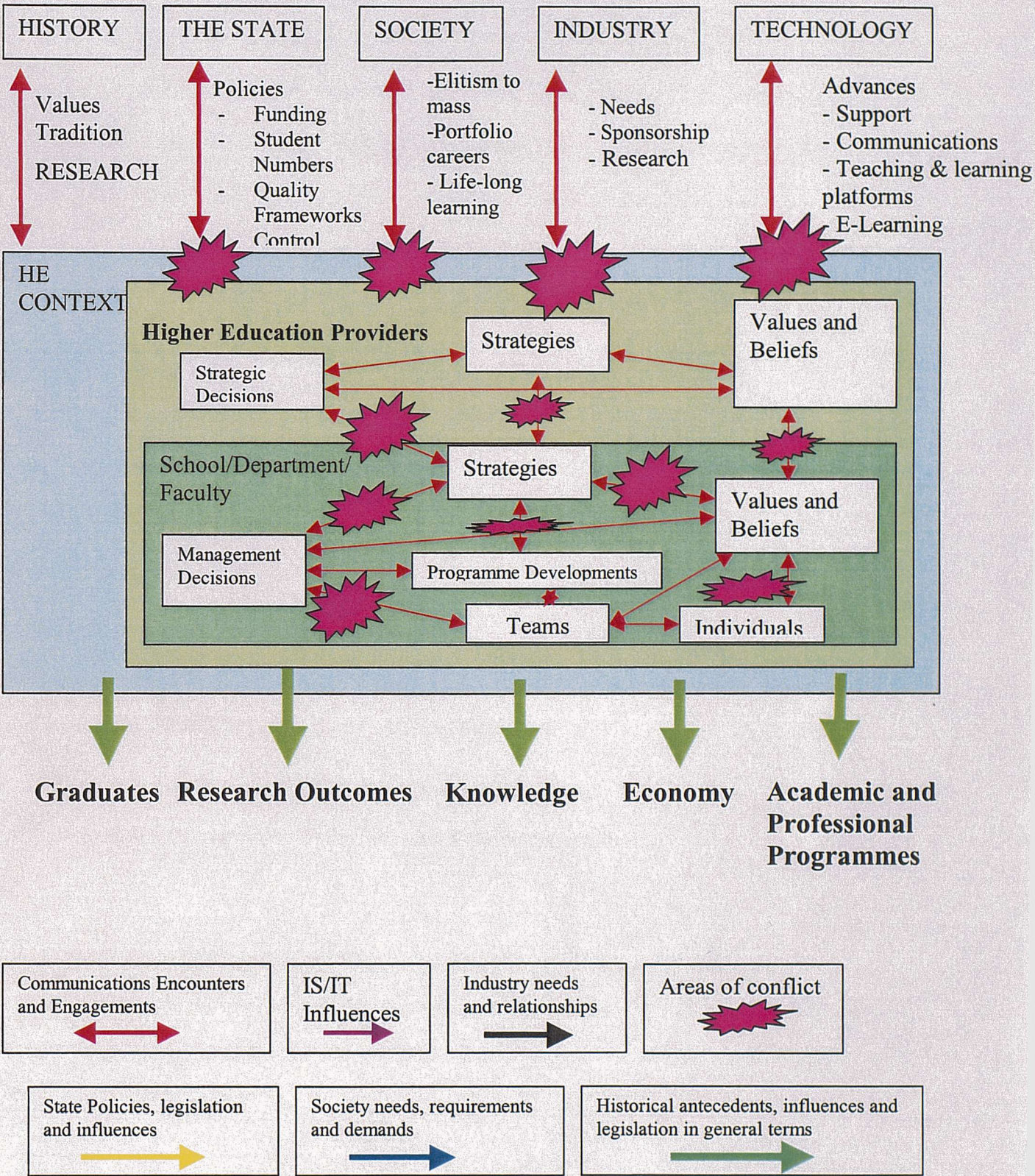legislation in general terms

Figure 4.6 A Systemic View of the Fault Lines Between the External Influences and the
Internal Decision-making Processes During Curriculum Development (Hennell, unpublished)

4.7 CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

4.7.1 RADICAL VS EVOLUTIONARY CHANGE

While governments are prone to talk of radical change and the commercial institutions respond at pace to change, the instability and uncertainty generated by changing governments and external climates create continuous challenges for higher education providers. This research shows that these changes and challenges that have faced higher education over the past decade are set to continue at an ever-increasing pace. As a consequence, the instability and uncertainty creates an internal operating, and financially constrained, climate that restricts innovative practices and radical developments in favour of evolutionary developments. In environments where resources are scarce (human and financial) institutions become risk adverse. The two programme developments evaluated during the case study provide the evidence to show that higher education institutions embrace evolutionary change and reject radical change, unless external funding is available to support the development. This is no more pronounced than in the examples provided in this thesis of traditional modes of teaching and learning vs open, distance and flexible modes of teaching and learning. This is likely to be a continuing issue.

This is an important contribution in understanding the limitations and challenges within higher education to meet the needs of the external conditions.

4.7.2 TRADITIONAL VS OPEN, DISTANCE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING

This thesis contributes to the understanding of the position of higher education and the current developments of adopting information and communications technologies to support and facilitate teaching and learning. The potential adoption of information and communications technology to support and provide higher education has generated diametrically opposed views. While there is a perception that information and communications technology can support and facilitate traditional higher education identified

in government policies and internal teaching and learning strategies, there is a reluctance at the operational level of institutions to adopt the technology to provide open, distance and flexible learning as general practice. This research has identified the financial constraints and human fear as the critical factors prohibiting successful adoption. The financial constraints have been overcome in part, through the external funding of projects. However, the human factors are more complex and difficult to overcome. Information technology, whilst more prolific in society today, is not fully employed within higher education by all academics who are not specialists in the field. This research suggests that information and communications technology will only become fully utilised to support teaching and learning, and the benefits realised, when successful projects are communicated institution wide and staff development is delivered to promote understanding and management confidence.

This thesis contributes to the debate on open, distance and flexible learning introducing a continuum model against which institutions can measure their existing and desired levels of adoption.

4.7.3 INDIVIDUAL ENTHUSIASM VS INSTITUTION CONSTRAINTS

This thesis provides guidance to other researchers by identifying that the enthusiasm of single individuals within an institution is insufficient to promote radical innovation in a higher academic environment as bureaucracy and financial uncertainty restrict progressive change to academic practice, promoting slow evolutionary change. This finding is important to the cultural development of learning institutions. Institutions need to foster an appropriate environment for 'bottom-up' changes by gifted and motivated individuals to develop their visionary activities in order for progress to develop. This is in direct contrast with 'top down' initiatives that are driven by external conditions. These attributes are mapped onto the theoretical model developed through out the thesis.

These findings provide guidelines and a focus for other researchers considering radical developments and innovation in higher education.

4.7.4 BUREAUCRACY VS PEDAGOGY

The increased level of bureaucratic procedures imposed on higher education institutions are changing the role of the academic and stifling innovation. It is accepted that quality assurance procedures are required to sustain the level of quality of programmes and international reputation of British higher education. However, the increase in administrative processes is distracting academics from the core business of knowledge acquisition and dissemination. Further, the levels of bureaucracy restrict practice and delay procedures. Systems have been developed and implemented to conduct administrative procedures, however, they fail due to communication weaknesses and a lack of information sharing.

4.7.5 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS
A. A View Through Two Lenses

This thesis has combined two existing theoretical lenses; systems thinking and Stake's Antecedent Matrix to develop a model identifying the relationships between the external conditions and influences, and a single decision taken during curriculum development. This approach has not been considered previously in higher education. The approach provides a model that may be used to determine the impact of external conditions and influences on any given decision-making process within an institution. The two lenses may be used in isolation. However, the interaction of two lenses produced a synergistic view, adding richness and depth, and creating a holistic view of the issues and the conflicts. The application of these lenses provides guidance for other researchers in their exploration of academic issues.

Systems thinking provided the first theoretical lens. Looking through this lens we could see the relationship between the external conditions and the impact of these on the internal processes, practices and procedures. However, this lens did not facilitate a complete understanding of the contending issues and the conflicts.

To resolve this, a second theoretical lens, Stake's Antecedent Matrix, developed to evaluate academic issues, was used to view the congruence between the intended formal internal practices and procedures, and the observations of their implementation. The congruent analysis found that while the practices and procedures were operated, the operations were inefficient, time consuming and frequently incomplete. This state of affairs is a significant contributor to reducing an institution's ability to respond flexibly to the changing external conditions.

B. A Theoretical Model

A set of models has been developed throughout this thesis. A simplistic systemic model, developed throughout chapter 2, illuminated the potential tensions and conflicts in the relationships between the changing external conditions and, the internal decision-making processes and entrepreneurial activity. The model was applied to the findings of the case study. The final version of the model confirms the perceived areas of potential conflict during the decision-making processes that restrict effectiveness, efficiency and innovation.

4.8 REFLECTIONS – BACK TO THE FUTURE OF HIIGHER EDUCATION

Bennett (1999) perceived that the traditional university was at an end. He suggested that the post-modern university has no center and no boundaries (Bennett, 1999). 'The knowledge society has need of knowledge and so the university now has new opportunities opened to it to harness and make available its knowledge capacities to potential knowledge users' (ibid, p17). This thesis offers a perspective on the university of the future. The view offered

combines the work of this thesis and builds on the work of Collis and Moonen (2001). It is suggested that as moves to introduce top-up fees are introduced, higher education institutions should become less inward looking through the development of internal operating controls, and become more outward looking to embrace customer relationship management. This thesis has shown the increasing changes in society and renewed demands for education from changing student demographics. The traditional teaching and learning modes do not provide the flexibility to meet these changing needs. It has shown that learning can be supported through the advances in information and communications technology. It is suggested that if higher education offers prosumption[11], in addition to traditional modes of teaching and learning, the future needs of the external conditions will be met. Adoption of this modus operandi will reintroduce the intrinsic values of higher education for the individual, whilst maintaining the extrinsic values desired to meet the needs of the state, the economy, society and industry, embedding an elite system in a mass system of higher education.

There is currently (2003) a strong debate in political circles on the relevance of higher education programmes and the contribution they make to society and the economy of the country (UK). The potential introduction of top-up fees, the introduction of mass education, and the value of the degree programmes currently offered fuel those debates. Higher education is operating in a climate of uncertainty. Imposed levels of bureaucracy and policies make current internal processes inflexible, inefficient and unable to respond appropriately to the dynamic needs of the external conditions. The factors affecting the choice mechanisms of potential students will impact greatly on the potential survival of those institutions and programmes that do not offer flexibility and appropriate provision. To facilitate innovation, institutions require a financially stable environment and a vision to experiment with radical change.

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[11] Consumer designed products from a selection of component parts.

This thesis has identified that the changes to and influences of the external conditions, identified during the conference in 1985, continue to impact the internal decisions taken for curriculum provision. It has also been suggested, specifically related to the commercial use of ICT, that higher education is trailing industry by approximately ten years. If this 'time lag' is reflected in the operations of higher education institutions, there will be a move from re-engineering the internal processes, restructuring of organisations and a focus on quality assurance procedures and bureaucracy, towards recognizing that, as students become paying customers, their individual needs must be managed. The term currently used in industry is 'Customer Relationship Management'. This trend recognises each customer as an individual. Prosumption is a new term used to describe bespoke products and services, designed by the client from the component parts offered by the organisation.

It is the contention of this thesis that incremental change will be insufficient to meet the dynamics of the external conditions. The model on the next page shows four different approaches to curriculum provision (Collis and Moonen, 2001, p199). Scenario A reflects the general current position of higher education institutions at the time of the case study, although many institutions are moving towards internally adopting information and communications technology to support traditional teaching and learning modes. The proposed radical design of the postgraduate programme was intended as a pilot study to move the institution's postgraduate provision from Scenario A to Scenario B. However, to meet the changing needs of the external conditions, and to offer a totally flexible learning experience, the commercial concept of prosumption (where the purchaser defines the product) could be introduced into the higher education environment. This concept is not new. It is a return to the original concepts of higher education to meet the intrinsic needs of the individual.

	Where local face-to-face transactions are highly valued	Where global and network-mediated transactions are the norm
The institution offers a programme and ensures its content	**Scenario A** Control of cohesive curriculum in a local setting (current situation) <u>Back to Basics</u>	**Scenario B** Control of a cohesive local curriculum, available globally <u>The Global Campus</u>
The learner chooses what he/she wants, how he/she wants, when he/she wants and takes more responsibility for its content and structure	**Scenario C** Individualisation in the local institution <u>Stretching the mould</u>	**Scenario D** Individualisation and Globalisation <u>The new Economy</u>

Prosumption approach to curriculum provision

Figure 4.8.5 Prosumption in Higher Education (After Collis and Moonen, 2001, 199)

4.9 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

This thesis addressed the research question

What is the impact of external and internal factors on the decision of an inner-city university to implement a radical approach to open, distance and flexible learning strategies?

The study considered the external factors from four perspectives: The State, Industry, Society and Technology. A case study of the development of a single post-experience, postgraduate, part-time programme providing open, distance and flexible learning opportunities at an inner-city university provided the primary data source to examine the relationships between the external factors and the internal decision-making. Two theoretical lenses were used to organize, view and evaluate the qualitative data.

A conceptual model of the relationships was developed from the observations and data evaluation. This model identified the fault lines and conflict relationships between the higher education provider and the external factors, and the fault lines and the conflict relationships within the higher education environment.

Below is a summary of the key findings that contributed to the internal areas of conflict.

- Individual enthusiasm for innovative development is suppressed in financially constrained environments.

- Incremental development, rather than radical development, is the preferred management option in curriculum development.

- Increasing levels of government controls are restricting creativity.

- Poor communication systems are restricting a move towards becoming a learning organisation.

- Duplication of effort and a non-sharing environment generates wasted resources.

The potential to facilitate prosumption, flexible customer choice to design their own individual learning programmes, is not unachievable if information and communications technology are employed as a support mechanism. Such an approach would also provide the flexibility for institutions to respond more rapidly to the four external conditions, classified in this work.

4.10 THE REFLECTIVE RESEARCHER

This section provides the reader with a critical reflection of the research approach and the research instruments used to conduct the research that resulted in this thesis. As the primary research instrument used was participant observation it is appropriate to write this section in a narrative style to recount the personal experiences.

4.10.1 THE RESEARCH DOMAIN

An interest in open, distance and flexible learning and the use of information technology conceived this research. Early versions of the research were directed towards the development of an e-learning programme from a learning perspective. However, the focus of my research shifted towards the rationale for the management decisions during curriculum development as the opportunity for a case study arose to develop a new programme. It soon became clear however, that the problem domain was complex, affected by a wide variety of aspects each worthy of it's own independent research. The multiple perspectives clouded the proposed focus of the research and potential causes of the outcomes of the decisions made.

The final selection of the problem domain was informed by the HEFCE report that challenged the mode of operation of Higher Education. Lockwood and Davies' (1985) work and their model identifying the relationships between higher education and entities in the external environment refined the research question. The next decision to address was which approach would be most suitable to conduct the research.

4.10.2 THE RESEARCH APPROACH AND INSTRUMENTS

Given the problem domain to investigate the relationship between two entities (the external influences and the internal decisions), it could be argued that to adopt a cause/effect approach to the research should have been the preferred option. However, during the literature review it became clear that there were multiple causes that could have multiple effects. Consideration was given to adopting a grounded theory approach to the research. However, I did not want to look for themes across multiple sites. That approach would have required interviews with developers and decision-makers at other higher education institutions. The data gathered would have been interpreted at the second or third levels and evaluated using software to identify themes. This approach was discounted because of the variance of the multiple variables. The culture of selected institutions would be different, the antecedents

and the characteristics of the individual developers and decision-makers would also be different. I felt that the combination of these factors would not provide sufficient substantive data from which to draw conclusions.

The selection of adopting a case approach to the qualitative study was based on two critical factors. The first was a personal desire to enquire in depth into the management of a single aspect of higher education, that of the rationale of decision-making. The second was Kelly's (1989) guidance that educational research is best done from within. Yin and Stake provided clear direction on the application of case. After careful consideration of the type of research I wanted to undertake, I opted for Stake's interpretation that the term case merely represented the object to be investigated.

Initially defining the case was initially problematic. The question I needed to address was whether I should define the boundary of the case at institutional level, or as was decided, at departmental level. The rationale for this decision was to reduce the number of influencing variables involved in the transactions during curriculum development. The case institution's devolved budget and local autonomy, and the decision to adopt a systemic perspective alleviated this problem as the systems view provides for hierarchical representation. Thus I could show the influences of the strategic decisions on the departmental decision-making.

The next level of choice was to select appropriate research instruments. In choosing to explore a single institution's decision-making from an internal perspective and to keep the data collected at first level interpretation, I decided to use participant observation as the primary research tool.

One of the most difficult experiences was detaching oneself from the object under evaluation. Participating in the programme development under review would have been less difficult to record had I not been the Programme Director and thus reporting on my own decisions. The proximity to the development created a sense of ownership and a passion to produce a

postgraduate qualification accessible to all and at any time of the year. At times the adversarial atmosphere led to a conflict between managerial decisions and individual enthusiasm. Such emotion was removed from the evaluation of the data reported from the institution's strategic plans and factual evidence drawn from the programme and validation documentation. As explained in chapter 3, every effort was made to validate and triangulate the data presented through the use of a range of research instruments. As shown in the discussion of the outcomes, a managerial preference for evolutionary development prevailed.

4.10.3 THE COGNITIVE LENSES

The two cognitive lenses selected to view the data were complimentary: each of the lenses was systemic in nature. The benefit derived from adopting both lenses allowed me to view the intended and the observed data within the environment in which the system of higher education operates. Understanding the context provided meaning to the rationale for the decisions taken.

The use of Stake's Antecedent Matrix was more challenging. Stake initially developed the matrix to evaluate personal traits and behaviour of individual pupils or classes of pupils to determine the congruence of observed behaviour against expected metrics. (The rationale for adopting this theoretical lens has been discussed in chapter 3.) Using the matrix to determine the level of congruence during decision-making was more complex due to the number of variables involved.

4.10.4 PERSONAL POSITION AND PERSPECTIVE

The question of bias and proximity to data were introduced in chapter 3 and in part discussed in section 4.10.2 above. The selection of the research approach and of the cognitive lenses used to view the data was based upon my background in systems development. The selection of the case material was also taken against my background interest in the use of

information technology to support teaching and learning. The opportunity to compare the development of the two programmes, one an evolutionary development and the second what I have termed as a radical programme development because its structure and composition did not fit the traditional academic year, the number of intakes and offered, in my opinion, true flexibility for the student.

The decisions taken within the case study to dilute the programme structure provided substantive evidence of personal experiences throughout fourteen years of teaching in higher education. The rationale is evidenced on a daily basis in many higher education institutions (anecdotal evidence from colleagues at different higher education institutions). Academics find the limitations and restrictions placed upon their academic and pedagogic creativity by the administrative systems very frustrating at times. The role of the academics in the post-1992 universities has changed over the past decade as more bureaucratic procedures and management processes are introduced, reducing time available for research and innovation (personal experience and anecdotal evidence).

Undertaking this research has illuminated the rationale for the institution's decision-making. However, understanding the rationale does not make the outcomes of the decisions any less palatable for those who seek to practice innovation.

4.11 FURTHER STUDY
The key findings of the research were discussed in section 4.7.4 of this chapter. However, it would be obtuse to ignore the unexpected findings. Outside the scope of this research they provide areas that require further research to contribute to the field of higher education management. The following provides a summary of the areas identified:

1. Communications and information sharing in higher education

How can effective and efficient communications systems be implemented within higher education institutions to facilitate sharing of information?

2. Staff development

How important is staff development for academics and administrators to meet the changing dynamics of contemporary higher education?

3. Contemporary differences between training and education in higher education

How are the growing external pressures and the changing student demographics affecting the structure, content and delivery of higher education programmes?

4. The impact of the introduction of top-up fees on curriculum development

How will the impact of the introduction of top-up fees affect the provision of teaching and learning in higher education?

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APPENDIX A: THE CASE STUDY – RADICAL VS EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO PROGRAMME DESIGN AT AN INNER-CITY UNIVERSITY

A.1 INTRODUCTION

HEFCE (1996) questioned whether incremental (evolutionary) change in curriculum development would be sufficient to meet the challenges of the dynamically changing environment within which higher education operates and whom it seeks to serve. They suggest that institutions would need to make radical changes to the ways that institutions provide learning opportunities. This case study explores the development of a programme adopting a radical approach to deliver learning opportunities. The outcomes of the development are compared to the events of an evolutionary development within the same department over the same time frame.

The case study, started in January 2000 and completed in September 2002, follows the design, development and validation of a post-experience, part-time postgraduate programme within a post-graduate department in the Business School of an inner-city university (post 1992). With over 180 full-time academic staff, 100 visiting lecturers, 4,000 full-time and 4,300 part-time students, it is one of Europe's largest Business Schools. The programme was to provide an academic qualification for middle and senior managers in the call centre industry. The radical design incorporated open, distance and flexible learning (ODFL) approaches supported by information and communications technologies (ICT).

The Case Study

During the case study, a range of techniques was used to gather the data. Background data were extrapolated from internal and external documentation. The primary instrument was participant observation, recorded in a field diary. Meetings were held periodically with the Head of Department. The meetings were used to collect data and as part of the progress reporting mechanism. Semi-structured interviews were held with the Vice-Chancellor, the IT Consultant and the Head of IT Design. A focus group meeting was held with representatives from the academic, research, technical and the administrative staff. Market research, in the form of unstructured interviews, was conducted with prospective employers, potential students and market sector executives.

The case study is structured as follows:

Section A.2: The Antecedents

This section describes the contextual setting for the radical development and defines the antecedents for the development drawn from the institution's strategies and data gathered during interviews.

Section A.3: The Transactions

This section provides a discussion of the observed development of the radical programme structure and the rationale that underpinned the decisions taken to design a programme offering ODFL supported by ICT.

Section A.4: The

This section provides a discussion on development of the internal programme team, and the external and internal responses to the programme design.

Section A.3.3: The Technology.

This section discusses the implications and the technical support required for the radical programme design.

Section A.3.4: The Decisions.

This section discusses the activities that occurred during the programme design, development, and the validation event.

Section A.4: The Outcomes

This section examines the outcomes of the design, development and validation activities by the various stakeholders.

Section A.5 The Conclusions

This section draws conclusions from the previous discussions.

A.2 THE ANTECEDENTS

The institution is an inner-city university comprising multiple sites.   The institution's strategic plan identifies that the particular characteristics of its students are:

- That all students either live in the parental home or in non-university accommodation;

- That half of them study part-time;

- That many come from socially and economically deprived groups;

- The majority of students are studying business, the arts, humanities or social sciences.

These statements are based upon the HESA returns made by the institution on an annual basis and in the public domain.

In 1998, the institution was in a financially unstable position and developed a recovery plan. This point is particularly relevant as a contextual antecedent to curriculum development within the institution.

Bocock and Watson, (1994, p 3) suggest that 'argument about the curriculum and its organization is not just about designing the core 'product' of the university, but touches upon deeply-rooted educational values.' This section explores the 'deeply-rooted educational values' within the case institution, and more specifically within the department, MP, and their impact on the decision-making processes during the development of new programmes as part of the curriculum provision.

A2.1: THE CURRICULUM

Teale's (1998) definition of curriculum 'The **planned experiences** of a **programme of study, communicated** to meet **defined educational objectives** that are **feasible** and **measurable.**' (Emphasised words original author's.) (p 2) was adopted to define the development of the radical programme.

The **planned experiences** were interpreted as the Teaching and Learning Strategies that determine the approaches designed by the HEI, in accordance with HEFCE guidelines, to provide the learning environment within which the students will undertake the programme of study. The **programme of study** was interpreted to be the award for which the student was undertaking the learning. **Communicated** was interpreted to encapsulate the content, mode of attendance and, style and mode of delivery, of the learning material for the programme of

study. The **defined learning objectives** were interpreted to be the learning outcomes of the programme, and the individual units that contribute to the programme, and the aims of the programme. The **feasibility** of the aforementioned was interpreted as the constraints, the available facilities, and, the availability of skills, knowledge and resources of the institution to meet the teaching and learning needs. **Measurable** outcomes were interpreted to be at two levels: a. the desired and achieved student population for each cohort, and b. the formative and summative assessments conducted for each part of the programme of study.

The next section explores the means by which the curriculum is managed at the strategic level of the institution. The evidence is drawn from interviews with the Provost, and data gathered from analysis of the strategic documents.

A2.2: MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM
Hoyle, (1981), stated that

> 'Management is a continuous process through which members of an organization seek to co-ordinate their activities and utilize their resources in order to fulfill the various tasks of the organization as efficiently as possible'
>
> (p, 8).

An analysis of the institutions' strategic policies is presented using the key words of the definition of curriculum provided in the previous section. It should be noted that the data analysed was a subset of the full documentation, considering only that related to teaching and learning issues, with specific attention to non-traditional modes. Further evidence was elicited through an interview with the Vice-Chancellor and through participant observation via membership of the Virtuality Group and subsequently, the Teaching and Learning Committee.

A review of the case institution's strategic plans for the years 1998 – 1999, 1999 – 2000 and 2000 – 2001 (Information Strategy, Teaching and Learning Strategy and Strategic Plans)

provided a positioning statement and the antecedents for the development of the radical approach to curriculum delivery. Analysis of the statements revealed that the institution was intending to develop a comprehensive teaching and learning strategy that would promote student centered learning and explore the adoption of non-traditional modes of delivery. The university is committed to

'Develop and implement a comprehensive Teaching and Learning Strategy. Such a strategy will address the expected shifts to a more resource-based learning and the need to make greater use of non-standard methods of delivery and assessment.'

(Extract from the Teaching and Learning Strategy, 1998)

The institution recognised that constraints imposed through its financial recovery plan would impact on the support resources and its ability to develop institution-wide innovation in teaching and learning.

Whilst the university will be constrained in its provision by the availability of resources and the need for financial prudence, it will seek to get the best value in terms of supporting students learning for the expenditure it incurs.

(Teaching and Learning Strategy, 1998)

The quality of the student experience is a function of complex interactions between the student's past experience and present skills and abilities, the curriculum, the learning management involved in its delivery, the methods of assessment employed and the facilities provided in the university and by the student.

A2.3: LOCUS OF CONTROL

The strategic decision to devolve authority for decision-making during curriculum development to local levels (departments) was determined for two key reasons. The first is

that the student experience will be most powerfully influenced by the decisions made at programme and unit level. Thus, the teaching and learning methods should remain primarily the responsibility of the programme team and the individual teacher within it.

Second, it was perceived that the heavy responsibility was one greatly prized by academics and accounted for much of the job satisfaction that they feel. The directorate felt that there would be very strong resistance to the imposition of particular methods of teaching and learning, including methods for the dissemination of information that did not accord with the team's views (Teaching and Learning Strategy, 1998).

In adopting this strategy, the institution positioned the locus of control at the point of delivery, thus assuring that the most appropriate teaching and learning environments were adopted to meet students' needs. The consequences of adopting such a strategy for curriculum development, with specific reference to ODFL, are discussed in Sections A2.4 and A.8

A2.4:THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment within the department reflects the part-time academic provision. Due to their nature, part-time, postgraduate professional and academic programmes, academics facilitate learning predominantly in the evenings and at weekends. As a consequence, many academics work from home during the days when they have no classes or other duties. Although email and voice mail are used to record messages, communications are sometimes difficult and often delayed.

The key management tool is the weekly diary, completed by each member of staff to inform of their whereabouts for the coming week. Department meetings are held once a term. These provide a forum, not for discussion, but for disseminating decisions already taken. The Programme Area Co-ordinators and the Head of Department form the departmental executive committee. They meet every two weeks and form the policies for the department,

including the approval to forward a programme proposal to the institution's academic registry.

A2.5: DEPARTMENTAL CULTURE

Academics within MP perform different roles. As academics, they delivered postgraduate and professional programmes to city professionals. Symbolically, they had the power to shape careers and influence the progression of individuals. This perceived power of the individual created a competitive and protectionist culture, and power struggles. These issues are discussed in greater detail later in the work as they impact on the internal operations and contribute to the barriers of success.

As managers, they designed and defined the structure and delivery modes of their programmes. They were also responsible for inviting other academics to deliver units. As a consequence, they could also alienate members of the department through exclusion from their programmes. The consequence of this action was that some academics would have a reduced workload which would be 'topped up' with teaching hours on undergraduate programmes outside the department but within the Business School. This was perceived to be degrading and often used as a form of informal punishment or, a form of coercion to conform.

As members of committees, they had the opportunity to network with senior members of the institution, representing the department, capturing and conveying information. However, their absence at the meetings was all too evident as shown in the apologies section of the minutes. Therefore, the department was often not represented at the institutional level.

The culture of the department was one of visibility rather than productivity. This manifested itself in two ways. The first was the weekly diary. All members of staff were required to complete a weekly diary that identified their location for each of the sessions (morning,

afternoon and evening) from Monday to Saturday. A reminder email was sent every week to all members of staff. Members of staff who failed to send their diaries were sent reminders, and those who continually failed to submit were invited to the Head of Department's office to explain their actions.

However, failure to complete projects, or to meet project deadlines, and failure to present marks for examination boards were all but ignored.

A2.6: THE EXISTING PORTFOLIO ·

Although the case institution offers a broad range of degree programmes, the portfolio of the department MP, comprises only post-experience, part-time postgraduate programmes, and professional programmes, designed to meet the vocational needs of prospective students in industry, typically within the City of London. The academic programmes include: an MBA; an MSc in Financial Regulation; an MBA in Banking; a Postgraduate and MA in Human Resource Management (three routes); an MA in Marketing; A Diploma of Management Studies, and an MA in Management Services. The professional programmes include: Chartered Institute of Insurance; Chartered Institute of Banking; Chartered Institute of Marketing; Institute of Personnel Development; ACCA; CIMA; Company Secretary, and Communication, Media and Advertising.

A2.7: DRIVERS FOR NEW FORMATS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

During an interview (11/11/99), the Head of Department stated that the drivers identified for moving towards new formats of teaching and learning within the department were:

- − To retain student numbers;

- − To meet changing student needs;

- − External funding available to support development;

- − The fragmentation of the finance industry;

- − To attract overseas students.

The experience within the department to deliver through non-traditional modes up to this point in time was the flexible delivery of the Chartered Institute of Banking (CIB) professional programme and the pilot of the distance learning video-conferencing Chartered Institute of Insurance programme. The latter programme was developed through external funding.

In response to the question:

What is the departmental position to designing and delivering further academic programmes adopting non-traditional modes of teaching and learning?

The Head of Department responded that 'there was a clear commitment to considering alternative modes for teaching and learning.'

She continued:

> The decision to explore further the use of different teaching and learning
> approaches has come from within the department. There is support from the
> Provost to trial different approaches but the initiative is from the bottom up, as
> the university has made no formal decision on its viewpoint to date. MP is
> the only academic department to offer pedagogic support and provide the
> professional programmes. As the pressures increase on the professional in
> their workplace and their time becomes limited, they are less able to attend
> academic institutions to gain their qualifications. Although Chartered
> Institutions offer their programmes on a distance learning basis, MP believes
> that by offering the programmes through alternative academic approaches they
> can add value to the learning experience.

The strategy for MP was recorded in an internal departmental strategy document and not included as part of the institution's published papers referred to in the previous sections of this work. In meeting the needs of its students and the industries within which they work,

the department recognises the changing patterns in work demographics and the impact of economic conditions on the organisations that supply their potential students. The section from the MP Teaching and Learning Strategy (MPTLS) (2000) Communications and Information Technology (CIT) Programme Delivery states:

The development of alternative delivery strategies is of considerable importance to MP and a number of professional institutes. Although location continues to play an important part in the delivery of education to the city there is an increasing demand for alternative forms of delivery. This is true both in the areas where groups are no longer city based or where normal modes of attendance are restricted by the demanding nature of occupation.

The use of video-conferencing had been introduced on programme for the Chartered Institute of Insurance (CII) and a full evaluation of this activity was under development. In addition it was intended to introduce flexible learning modes supported by IT delivery for MSc Financial Regulation and to investigate the use of web based facilities for the extension of professional programmes (beginning with the CII by building on the experience of video-conferencing).

Over the next five years it is anticipated that there will be changes to our teaching and learning strategies in that there would be a greater use of remote/flexible learning strategies to accommodate changing attendance patterns of existing students and expansion into new markets. There was also an expectation that there would be a reduced contact time between student and lecturer resulting from increased class sizes. Thus there was a need for a greater use of study/learning guides and more student-centred learning. To prepare for such changes, the staff development policies would focus on training selected full and part-time staff in remote learning processes and technological support.

In order to achieve these strategic goals, the members of the department must have the skills and knowledge to design, develop, deliver and support non-traditional modes of teaching and learning.

A2.8: INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

The institution is committed to developing and implementing a comprehensive Teaching and Learning Strategy. Such a strategy will address the expected shifts to a more resource-based learning and the need to make greater use of non-standard methods of delivery and assessment (Teaching and Learning Strategy, 1998)

The institution recognised that constraints imposed through its financial recovery plan would impact on the support resources and its ability to develop institution-wide innovation in teaching and learning.

> Whilst the university will be constrained in its provision by the availability of resources and the need for financial prudence, it will seek to get the best value in terms of supporting students' learning for the expenditure it incurs' (Teaching and Learning Strategy, 25/5/98)

A2.9: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY FOR OPEN, DISTANCE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING

Evidence for identifying the strategic position of the institution regarding non-traditional modes of teaching and learning was drawn from three key sources: documentation analysis of the strategic plans; personal interviews and membership of the virtuality group. Triangulation of the data derived from these sources illuminated the levels of decision and certainty with regard to the adoption of ODFL as an institution strategy. During an interview with the Vice-Chancellor in January 2000 to discuss the institutions intention to provide distance learning programmes as part of the teaching and learning strategy he clearly stated that

'We have no formal strategy to adopt distance learning as a mode of teaching

and learning. Each school and department has the flexibility to pilot this

mode of study but funds will not be available from the central funding'.

He added

'The cost of designing and developing distance learning programmes is too

great for the uncertain benefits to be derived'.

The antecedents for this strategic decision were founded upon the institutions financial

recovery plan, and the tight budgetary controls and the uncertainty of the demand for open,

distance and flexible learning modes that the new paradigm would offer. Such a level of

investment as would be required to develop the non-traditional mode of learning would not

be without risk.

The Vice-Chancellor stated during the interview

'we may decide to remain a niche institution maintaining traditional modes of

delivery whilst others adopt distance learning'.

However, documentation produced in the same year raises prime concerns relating to the use

of technology as a platform for delivering academic programmes.

Proposals for increasing use of information technology in teaching and

learning raise further contentious issues. Alarm has been caused by

apocalyptic visions of the potential of IT and the Internet wholly to replace

face-to-face teaching, doing away with conventional academic staff and

replacing them with guides to information sources largely generated elsewhere

(Teaching and Learning Strategy, 1998).

Initial experience of the high cost of developing multi-media teaching materials might have

been expected to offer comfort to those wedded to traditional teaching methods. It has

instead led to the fear that large resources would be devoted to new software, to the detriment

of staff employment or the student experience. Yet it has already been demonstrated that the institution recognises that there is no doubt of the creative potential of the use of computers in teaching, learning and assessment.

Almost at odds with these statements, however, was the creation of the virtuality group established to explore the nature of distance learning and its potential adoption within the institution. This group met once a term to discuss external developments in ODFL, and the potential for adopting such approaches as institutional policy. After three meetings, and with the departure of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the group dissipated during the summer of 2000.

A2.10: OPEN, DISTANCE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING

The advent of mass higher education, combined with rigorous attention to quality assurance has affected learning group sizes and the time taken to complete assessment. The case institution's strategic plans identified that:

> Information management and information technology should be able to assist
>
> with the transmission of a common body of knowledge to large groups, and in
>
> the assessment of learning of such knowledge by large numbers of students.
>
> If lecture programmes were provided either in printed format or digital form
>
> and available to students at a time of their own choosing, then staff would be
>
> able to concentrate on individual problems and on small-group tuition.

It was however recognised that given the social nature and interaction of education, the students value lectures as part of their learning experience. No formal evidence was collected to support or refute this statement from the student population. However, anecdotal evidence was collected through informal discussions with part-time postgraduate students on four programmes at the institution. The students were quite clear that they

valued lectures as part of their learning experience. They enjoyed the social interaction with, and support of, peers during their acquisition of knowledge.

It therefore appeared essential that the institution sought a balanced solution of providing teaching and learning solutions for the increasing numbers of students, whilst maintaining the student learning experience.

Traditional approaches to the solution may be complex and costly due to the inflexibility of books, and to the expenditure incurred providing them for large numbers of students. The modern availability of video, floppy disk and CD-ROM is transforming the unit cost and mode of delivery of programmes. However, modification of information sources and software, with hardware costs and copyright issues remain the principle barrier to their wider use. Yet, these costs are falling and students are increasingly well versed in the necessary skills to utilise ICT.

It is possible, however, that there are less tangible barriers to the adoption of such approaches such as confidence, control, suspicion, understanding. The institutions strategic plans suggest that academic staff like the sense of performance inherent in lecturing large groups as they are perceived to feel more in control of the student's learning than if they are making use of books, video or audio material compiled by someone else.

Additionally, the strategic plan recorded further concerns from the staff perspective, it would only be natural if academic staff were suspicious that advocacy of the use of information technology by management, or by HEFCE, had arisen because it was seen as a means of cost-cutting or reducing academic jobs.

For these reasons it was considered essential that information technology should be used only where it would demonstrably improve life for both staff and for students, and where it is appropriate to the learning objectives of the particular programme or unit.

The target for 2000 was to have achieved, by the use of information technology, a measurable improvement in teaching and learning in a range of programmes chosen to provide exemplars.

The strategic plan proposed that 5 departments facing the greatest pressure of student numbers should each select 4 programmes or units where such improvements might be achieved and that resources, both of personnel and of equipment, should be devoted to investigation and to production of new learning materials or the adoption of those that already exist, for example through the TLTP project (funded by the government). Each project of this kind will be directed by a project team drawn from members of the department concerned, assisted by representatives of Academic Services and the Educational Development Service. The changes would then be monitored to provide a guide to good and bad practice and experience. This would determine a range of programmes for investment. The institution committed to allocating £200,000 to achieve this objective. The allocation was expended partially in the purchase of materials but, most significantly in the provision of part-time teaching to enable full-time staff to carry out the project. The funding was spread over 2 years, £100,000 98/99 and £100,000 99/00.

A2.10: Summary Of The Antecedents

The institution operates a policy of devolved responsibility enabling specific curriculum decisions to be made at the point of delivery. There is no mandate advocating the adoption of distance learning as such a policy may be seen as contentious, and based on the financial climate, a means of cost cutting leading to job losses. However, 'local' decisions to deliver teaching and learning through distance learning would not be opposed provided the developments could be funded.

The issues discussed in this section have provided the antecedents for the radical programme development discussed in the next section.

A3: THE TRANSACTIONS

A3.1: PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Curriculum and how it is developed and approved are significant factors in enhancing student learning (Horsburgh, 2000). All programme developments follow a formal systemic set of practices and procedures aligned to the institutions' teaching and leaning strategies. At every stage there are formally required documents. Although the process appears linear, in practice, many of the stages are iterative.

The timescales to complete the formal chain of activities will depend upon a number of factors including: the complexity of the programme; the extent of the use of existing units; the timing of the approval meetings; Registry's schedule of validations; the availability of external panel members. The model on the next page has been developed from data drawn from internal documents. It shows the complex chain of events and communication channels required to take the concept of a new programme through to a validated programme offered as part of the institution's portfolio.

The model introduced in figure A3.1 provided an overview of the activity stages of a programme development and validation. The areas shaded pink represent the central registry function responsible for arranging and facilitating the validation. The validation, shaded pale orange, is attended by internal and external personnel and chaired by an internal senior academic under the guidance of Registry. Areas shaded green represent the activities undertaken during the development, within the department. White boxes represent the inputs and outputs.

Department Executive (MP)

Proposed programme development

Evaluate Programme Concept/
Market Research
Portfolio fit

Programme approval form – A1

Programme Director

Head of Department

Programme Design – outline
Unit Design – outlines
Linkages
Teaching and learning approaches
Assessment methods

Academic Council

Academic Council Approval

Unit Outlines

Pre-validation meeting to define agenda and outline programme description

Programme Team

Programme Development

Programme Documentation Development

Validation Documentation

Unit Description

Quality Assurance

REGISTRY
Validation Team
Internal and External team

Outcomes

Validation Event

Queries
Questions
Concerns

New Programme

Modified Programme

Figure A3.1: From Conception to Validation

The design, development and validation of any programme logically divides into two sets of processes. The first is the research to design and develop the programme material. The second is the public validation process to approve the programme.

The development and content of the programme documentation will vary from institution, and department to department, although all will fit within the national curriculum frameworks as determined by QAA and QCA.

A3.2: THE RADICAL PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

The initial programme proposal submitted for approval outlined a perceived need for a 'Postgraduate Certificate in Call Centre Management'. However, data collected during the market research conducted with individuals from the target market identified a need for a full Masters programme. The initial proposal for the programme design and content was amended to incorporate their views and requirements.

The programme design was amended to provide three exit points: Postgraduate certificate, Postgraduate Diploma, and MSc Customer Contact Centre Management. Each level comprised four discrete modules that collectively provided a holistic view of the management of customer contact centres. An individual research project completed the requirements for the award.

Two units at each of the levels required the development of interpersonal skills. Accordingly, a third study day was introduced. The third day enabled group work and group assessment. The two remaining units did not require group work and could be studied in isolation. The grid on the next page shows the complexity of the programme, the units and the proposed schedule.

A3.3 OPEN, DISTANCE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING

The design of the programme provided flexibility for the students. The discrete modules facilitated entry to the programme at any time of the academic year. The rolling nature of the modules facilitated continuous study and enabled students who missed any module for any reason, to wait a maximum of three modules before the module was offered again.

The flexibility of the design also enabled each module to be delivered in isolation as a training module for industry. Any delegates who decided they would like to gain the full academic award could register with the institution, complete the assessment and gain the appropriate CATS points. The programme was designed to be delivered on-campus and through distance learning modes. It was proposed that each of the modules should be developed with a hard copy workbook that incorporated all of the teaching materials. The material would also be copied to CD-ROM. This format would enable students working away from home, with computing facilities to study on-line without the need to take heavy learning materials. The third proposed format was to develop the materials for on-line transmission. This format would enable students with Internet connections to access the programme modules remotely. These three formats would enable students unable to attend traditionally delivered sessions to continue to follow the programme without a break.

Programme grid

A3.4: THE ROLE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

The proposal to invest in a proprietary product to facilitate distance learning supported by on-line information and communications technology removed the need for the institution to invest further in information technology and staff development to support and maintain the software. Further, the decision reduced the risk of failure of the academic provision by the institution as the external provider adopted the risk. Further benefits of the proprietary product included a student management system and a content management system. The student management system tracks all students registered on the system, monitoring an individual's frequency of access to the learning content, progress made in assessments and additional learning material accessed. Reports can be produced for individuals, groups, units, completion rates and assessment grades.

The content management system contains a log of all learning materials. The system uses key words to associate learning materials to units of study. Students registered on the system are automatically informed of any new learning materials that are mandatory to their study, relevant to their study, peripheral to their study, or of interest as indicated on their individual personal profile.

The level of commitment by the programme development team and the management of the departmental resources can affect the proposed calendar of activities.

A3.5: THE PEOPLE

This section presents the responses from the stakeholders. The people fall into two categories: external - the potential students and internal – the academic staff and the decision-makers.

Section A3.4.1 identifies, and recounts the input from, the external people. The external views were collected during the market research interviews.

Section A4.2 identifies and recounts the input from the internal staff. The internal views reflect the contributions made during the development of the programme. The data were collected during the meetings with the Head of Department, the programme team and the programme administrator, and through participant observation as the role of the developer.

A3.5.1: External Contributions

Anecdotally, the call centre industry has had a reputation of being the 'sweatshops of the future' based upon poor levels of pay, untrained staff, high turnover of staff and, boring and repetitive work. Part of the problem stems from organisations adopting a call centre approach to conducting their business to reduce overhead costs and maximise profit (this is outside the scope of this thesis but noteworthy for this discussion). Managers and operatives generally work shifts to provide a twenty-four seven coverage (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). Such shift patterns maximise physical resources to lower the unit cost. However, such patterns of work and limited levels of human resource restrict the ability of the individuals to take external training and development.

The customer contact centre industry is fast growing and pervades all market sectors. The work is demanding and pressurised (observations made during visits to contact centres). Traditional management skills form the basis of the skills required, however the nature of call centre management is more specialised and requires additional skills and knowledge. The content of the modules of the programme were designed to reflect this.

The following are extracts from the interviews held with contact centre managers conducted during 2000.

> 'It is great to see an academic institution developing a qualification that meets the needs of our industry'.

'The programme will contribute very well to recognising this as a profession. We have not had a good reputation in the past. We have been labelled *The Sweatshops of the Future*'.

'We take training courses when we have the time but this qualification will give us something we can take with us if we want to move'.

'I like the idea that I can take up my studying at any time. There is nothing worse than getting excited about starting a qualification in December and finding that I can't enrol until September at the earliest'.

'I can't always get away from work for periods of time so I like the idea of being able to study from home if I have to'.

Overall, the design, structure and content of the proposed programme design were well received. Additional interest from professional bodies also supported the proposed open, distance and flexible learning modes.

A3.5.2: Internal Contributions

The Garbage Can Model of decision-making (Cohen et al, 1972; Mohr, 1976) states that 'participants will be fluid', engaging in decision-making activities as their schedules permit. Although requested by the developer at the start of the project, the Head of Department did not identify the development team until October 2000, nine months after the programme design and development had commenced. The individual academics were identified for their expertise in the unit domains. However, only one part-time academic had prior knowledge of contact centre operations. Their level of engagement and participation in the development activities was severely restricted due to their allocated workload. Meetings were also difficult to convene due to teaching and management commitments.

An administrator was also appointed nine months after the development had commenced. The administrator worked part-time, term-time only and administered four other programmes, hence her availability was also restricted.

A3.6: DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

The physical design and development of the programme were presented in Sections A3.1 and A3.2. The diagram in section A3.1 suggests that the programme development is a linear process, however, the development of the radical programme involved many iterative processes. Continuous meetings with the Head of Department and the decisions to change the format and the modes of delivery occurred throughout the programme development.

A3.7: DECISION POINTS

This section discusses the decisions taken by the Head of Department during the design and development of the proposed programme and the validated programme. This is addressed at two levels: the programme content, structure and modes of teaching and learning, and the resourcing issues.

A3.7.1: Innovative Programme Structure

The first decision taken was to amend the original agreed development from a taught Postgraduate Certificate to an open, distance and flexible mode of delivery, and to extend the qualification to a full Masters programme. This decision was fully supported by the Head of Department. However, a lack of resources prevented allocation of academic and administrative support to develop the programme and validation materials. As a consequence, all of the decisions to design each of the modules were taken by the programme developer.

A3.7.2: Pre-Validation Meeting

The decision to present the radical programme in three phases (Phase 1: on-campus, Phase 2: distance learning via CD-ROM/Workbook, Phase 3: multi-mode delivery) was taken at the pre-validation meeting with the Chair of the validation panel, the Head of Department, the Registry Representative and the Programme Developer.

A3.7.3: Documentation

Documentation for validation consists of three volume of information. The first is a general document relating to the department, it's environment; culture and location. The second is a resource document, usually produced by the Head of Department, that presents evidence of suitable and available resources to meet the needs of the proposed programme. The third document outlines the programme, it's teaching and learning and assessment strategies; the learning outcomes; exit points and awards; programme structures and indicative unit content. The first two documents listed here are generally used for all validations and updated periodically to maintain currency. The programme director usually develops the third document. In the case of this programme development, the first two documents were not available. To promote the probability of a successful validation, an example set of successful validation documents were sent from Registry as a template. The Head of Department rescinded this decision after the documents had been developed and replaced it by the decision to use a set of departmental validation documents for a similar type of management programme. Despite requests from the administrator to the other programme administrators, and the associated programme directors, digitized copies of the documents were not made available. As a consequence, considerable time was taken to type new documents.

A3.7.4: Staff Development

The decision to invest in staff development enabled the Programme Developer to attend a conference and afforded the opportunity to meet members of the industry and gain extensive knowledge to develop the module content. The same opportunity was not afforded to the other academics involved in the programme development.

A3.7.5: Changes To Teaching And Learning Modes

Following a number of iterations of the document developments, the Head of Department took the decision to revert to the original programme proposal to develop a taught Postgraduate Certificate. This decision was based on an article (unsubstantiated) that stated the decline of the contact centre. As a consequence of this decision, the programme and validation documents were rewritten.

A3.7.6: Changes From The Traditional Programme Structure

The decision to simplify the number of intakes from 8 per calendar year to the traditional intake at the start of the academic year was taken by the Head of Department on the grounds of administration. It was felt that the existing administrative system could not cope with multiple intakes and that tracking student progress would be a complicated process

A3.7.7: Validation Decisions

The external members of the validation panel were concerned that the Diploma and Masters level of the programme had not been developed and recommended that they were. The Postgraduate Certificate was validated with three conditions. The programme documentation was required to reflect the national postgraduate framework. The learning

outcomes should be explicitly linked to the aims and objectives of each of the modules. Finally, the module content should overtly reflect contact centre activities.

A3.7.8: The Validation Event

The validation event is the formal acceptance of a programme. The purpose of the event is to ensure that the programme meets national quality standards. The outcomes and the decisions taken by the panel of internal and external members shape the final programme structure and content.

Observations noted during the process to validate the radical programme design reflected the lack of management support and team commitment. The validation event lasted considerably longer than most validation events as the panel raised many questions. The Head of Department was seen to be clock watching, an indication of discomfort with the proceedings. Although the Diploma level and the Masters level of the programme had already been designed, the management felt that there was insufficient human resource capacity to support the validation of the modules.

The lack of team commitment was evidenced by their responses to the panel. These were very limited and in one case the respondent ended the answer with:

'Is that what you wanted me to say?' directed at the programme director.

The Chair of the validation panel passed comment at the end of the event that:

'The programme director had conducted herself well under hostile conditions.

Clearly there was a lack of support from management and the team.'

The following section reflects the decision points and the decision outcomes during the design, development and validation processes.

A3.7.9: The Observed Decision Points

The model on the next page shows the decision-making points during the design, development and validation activities, based on the model presented in section A3.1. The decision-making points (indicated by '?') and the iterative activities that occurred (indicated by the green arrows).

A4: THE OUTCOME OF THE RADICAL APPROACH
The validation of the revised programme structure and teaching and learning modes was successful in that the panel, with recommendations, validated the content and structure. However, The nature of the programme is profession specific and therefore appropriate for a small number of local students. Call and Contact Centres are geographically dispersed throughout the country and operatives are unable to leave their work for extended periods of time. As a consequence, the target market was considerably reduced by the decision to offer campus-based delivery. This is evidenced by the lack of applications for the programme.

Department Executive (MP)
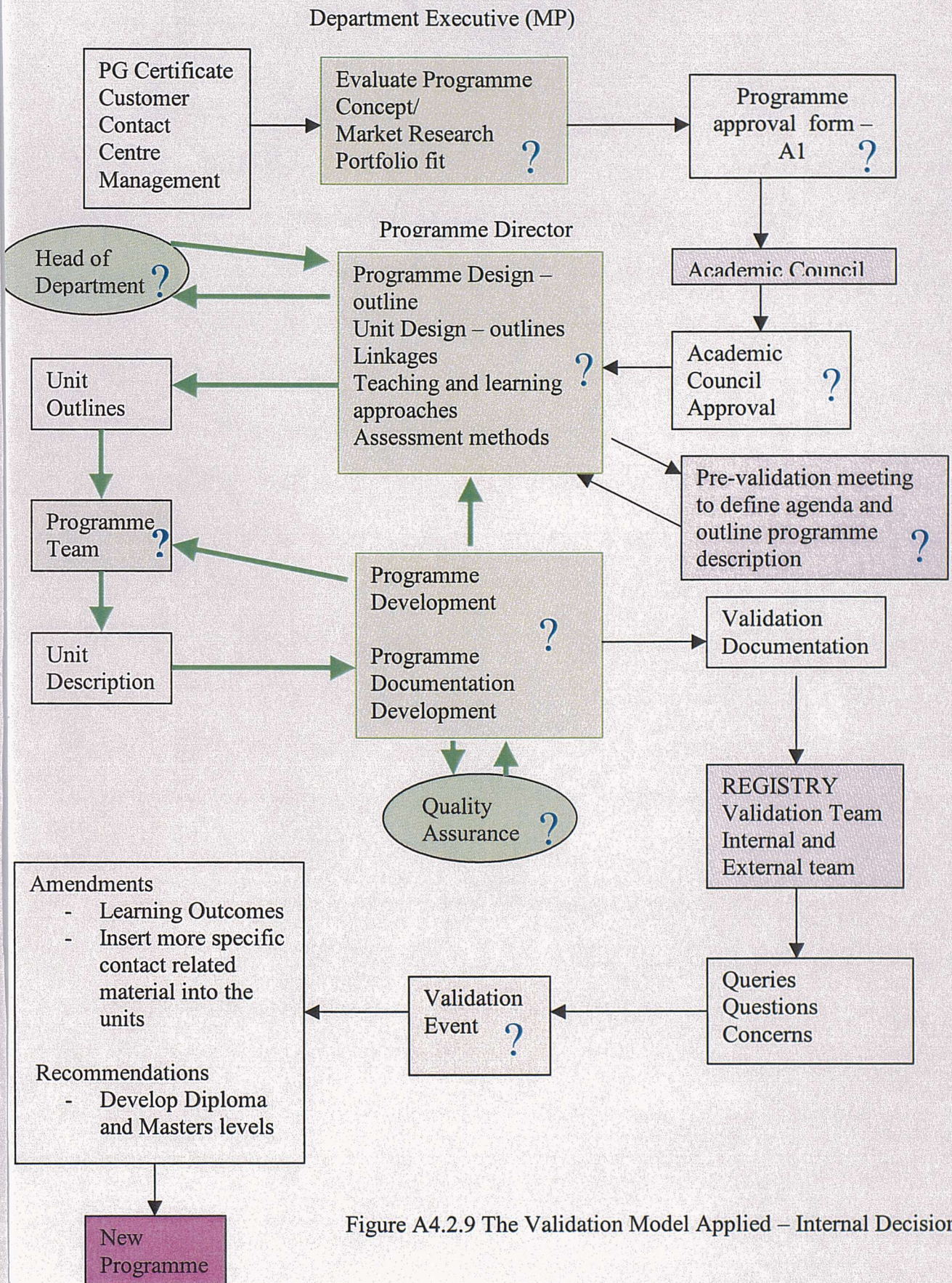
Figure A4.2.9 The Validation Model Applied – Internal Decisions

A4.1: SUMMARY– A GARBAGE CAN APPROACH

Phase 1: GARBAGE CAN – PROGRAMME INITIATION

Due to the nature of the role of the academic, and the levels of commitment of the development team, participation and engagement varied considerably. Participants varied in the amount of time and effort they devoted to different domains; involvement varied from one time to another. Academics are multi-tasking and multi-functioning, their time is spent on various tasks including teaching, administration and communicating with students. As participants in the programme development, membership of the team was fluid, as other activities required their attention. This resulted in a loss of continuity and engagement. As a result, the boundaries of the programme development were uncertain and changing; the audiences and decision-makers for any particular kind of the choices changed capriciously. Additionally, the support of the Head of Department was guided by temporal and anecdotal conditions. At the outset, the programme development received full support. However, as the development progressed and the national press reported a potential decline in the targeted industry sector the support from the decision-maker declined considerably to a level of disinterest.

Situations of decision-making under goal ambiguity are common in complex organisations. These research data collected during this study identified an institution in which choices were made without consistent shared goals. The environment existed as a result of a strategic decision to operate devolved responsibility.

Member activation entails the question of how occasional members become active and how attention is directed toward, or away from, a decision. It is important to understand the attention patterns within an organisation, since not everyone is attending all of the time. During the programme development, individuals were also participating in other activities

that commanded their attention. The programme development was a secondary activity and a lower priority on their task list. Apart from myself, the remainder of the development team, and the key decision-maker, were actively involved in teaching, programme administration, consultancy and private activities that detracted their attention for long periods of time.

Phase 2: GARBAGE CAN – NEGOTIATION + POLITICAL – TEAM BUILDING AND PROGRAMME DESIGN

The initial terms of reference defined in the previous stage were renegotiated to reflect the changes in the call center industry, further clarifying the goals of the qualification. The request for additional team members and an administrator was refused on the ground that resources had been allocated for the academic year and none were available. However, it was agreed with the Head of Department that an administrator would be appointed at the end of the academic year.

Cohen et al (1972) refer to 'fluid participants'; team members leaving and joining at intermittent times throughout the project. Although three academics were nominated to develop the human resource unit, the marketing unit and the operations management unit, due to existing commitments they were unable to attend the scheduled meetings as a group. As a consequence, the holistic view and the team development were lost as the individuals met briefly on a one-to-one basis with the programme director.

No incentives could be offered for the individuals to make progress on the development of their unit. There was little evidence of team cohesiveness or a desire to see a successful outcome of the validation of the programme.

Phase 3: GARBAGE CAN – PERSUASION + LEGITIMATION – PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Following the market research, the data gathered during interviews with potential students, industry consultants and employment agencies, the content of the various units was amended to reflect their views and requirements. At this point in time, the development of the full Masters programme, for the different teaching and learning modes was underway. Sets of documentation were produced by the Programme Director . The administrator appointed worked only part-time, term-time and was therefore not available to undertake the tasks to meet the deadlines.

During this phase of the development, and after the documentation had been produced, the Head of Department took the decision to review the programme structure. Following an article in the press regarding the transfer of call centers to India, the decision was taken to reduce the programme to a postgraduate certificate, to be delivered on a taught basis only. The lack of available resources to deliver the programme supported this decision. However, it was agreed at a meeting with a pre-validation panel that the future plans to provide a postgraduate diploma and the master's qualification could be considered in order to meet the needs of potential students.

Phase 4: GARBAGE CAN – BUREAUCRATIZATION – PROGRAMME VALIDATION

The final set of validation documents were produced and issued to all members of the team. A pre-validation meeting was held with the teaching team to ensure their cognizance of the content, structure and assessment for the final design of the programme. Questions were practiced and model answers recorded. However, during the validation meeting, the lack of support from the teaching team and the Head of Department was noticeably absent.

Despite the lack of member support, the programme received approval with conditions and was incorporated into the institution's prospectus.

The model on the next page summarises the four stages presented above.

A5: AN EVOLUTIONARY PROGRAMME DESIGN

Another programme development was undertaken during the same time frame of the development of the radical approach to programme design, within the same department. As previously discussed, the department offered a number of professional programmes. Amongst theses was the Chartered Institute of Insurers qualification. The course material and the assessments are all designed and developed by the professional body. The academics facilitate the learning of the material during the sessions.

This programme was initially offered on a campus-based taught basis, adding academic value to the professional material offered by the Institute of Insurers, and available for those students who did not want to adopt the distance learning approach offered by the Institute of Insurers. However, insurance operatives exist nationally and a perceived need for academic support was identified in Norwich.

To facilitate academic support, the academic teaching team bid for external funding to develop a project that would enable participation by students in Norwich through synchronous video-conferencing. The team was successful in their bid and the system was installed and supported by British Telecom. Whilst there were difficulties in delivering sessions through this medium, these were overcome and the project was successful.

PHASE 1:GARBAGE CAN – PROGRAMME INITIATION

INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
People with problems People with solutions Participants with time and energy	Departmental Programme Approval Academic Council Programme Approval	Problem Oversight Flight from problems Coupling of problems with potential solutions

PHASE 2: NEGOTIATION + POLITICAL – TEAM BUILDING AND PROGRAMME DESIGN

INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
Agreement on terms of Reference Clarity on goals Availability of participants	Programme Design decisions Management decision-making Striking of bargains, compromises Develop Programme team decisions	Broad agreement on Possible compromise + preferred solution Incentives to make progress Drop out of some participants

PHASE 3: PERSUASION + LEGITIMATION – PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
Reviewed programme structure Reviewed delivery mode	Management decision-making Programme Design decisions Reaffirmation of bargains	Agreed policy of lines of action Commitment of groups to action Guidelines for Programme Development team

PHASE 4: BUREAUCRATIZATION - PROGRAMME VALIDATION

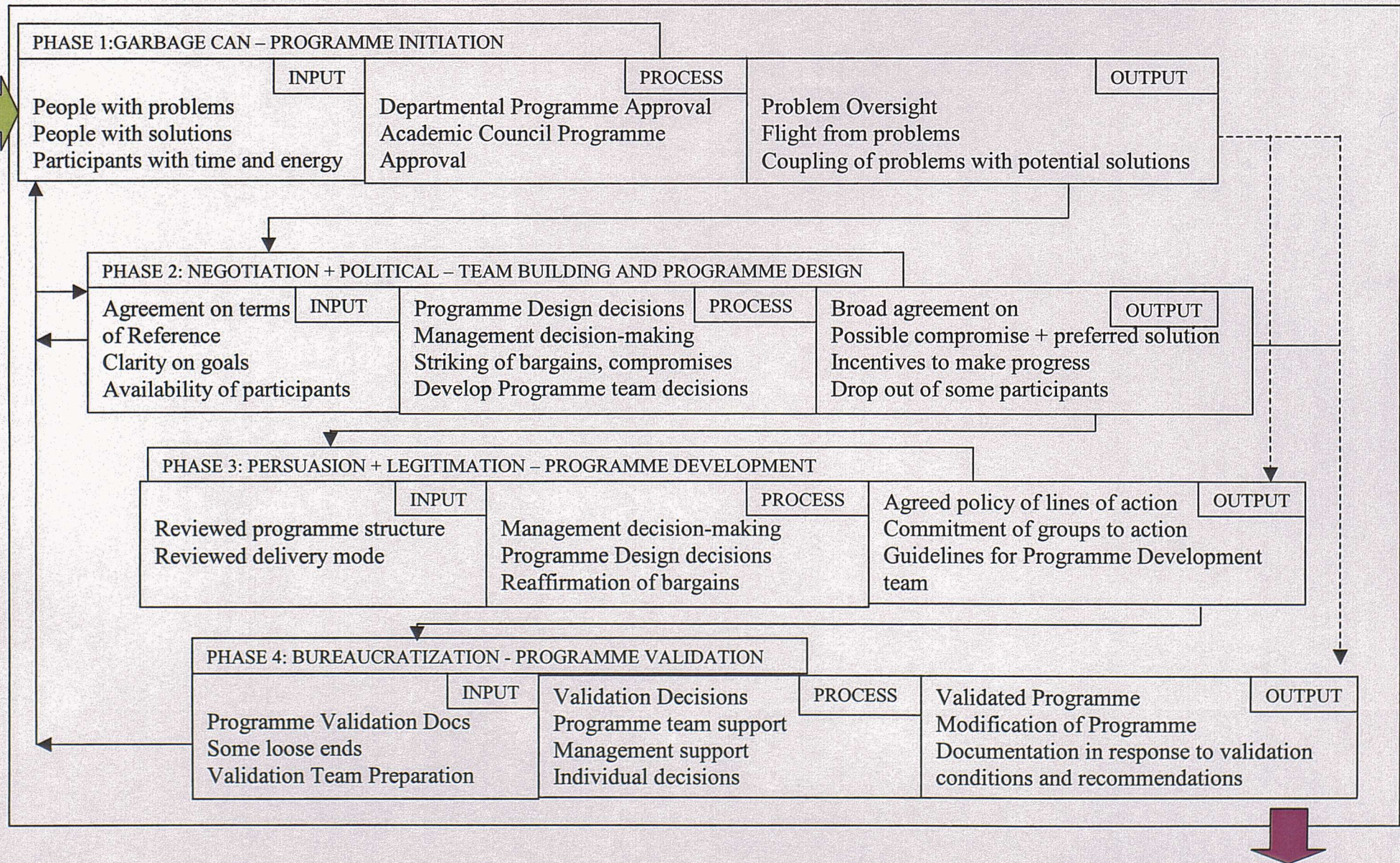| INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
Programme Validation Docs Some loose ends Validation Team Preparation	Validation Decisions Programme team support Management support Individual decisions	Validated Programme Modification of Programme Documentation in response to validation conditions and recommendations

Figure 4.3.2 A Four Phase Systems Model of Programme Development (adapted from Lockwood and Davies, (1985, p149)

On the basis of this success, the team applied for further external funding to develop a web-based, asynchronous programme that would extend its reach nationally and provide flexibility for prospective students. Once again the team was successful in securing the funding.

The programme was developed using WebCT as a platform. The programme director's other responsibilities were taken over by other members of the team to allow appropriate time for the new programme development.

The validation documentation evolved from the iterations of documentation used in previous validations, modified to describe the new teaching and learning mode. The validation of the new mode was successful.

At the end of the time frame for this case study, the web-based programme has 500 students enrolled.

A6: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The case study followed the development of a radical approach to facilitate knowledge acquisition and dissemination through open, distance and flexible learning for potential students geographically dispersed, in a pressured profession. The account has shown that the outcome of the redesigned programme development and validation was successfully achieved. However, the validated programme does not meet the needs of the potential students in that it does not provide a full Masters level qualification and is inaccessible by the majority of the target market. Further evidence was presented from the outcome of the validation event to show that additional development of the programme could only be undertaken with external financial support. This is further

evidenced by successful incremental development of the professional programme, supported by external funding.

In spite of the institution's commitment, the department's desire to offer open, distance and flexible learning to meet the changing needs of potential students, the outcomes of this case study have shown that where institutions operate in financial instability and uncertainty, they are risk averse. This manifests itself in its propensity to adopt an evolutionary approach to curriculum development rather than a radical approach, even if the outcomes do not meet the needs of the intended target market.

PROPOSED PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

	jan	feb	mar	apr	may	jun	jul	aug	sep	oct	nov	dec	
certificate	a	a*	b	b*	c	d	a	a*	b	b*	c	d	
S	* = one day assessment		c = individual case study assessment				d = exam based assessment (could be cba)						
	e starts when the student enrolls and is assessed during their 4th module (8000 word project report)												
diploma	A	B	B*	C	C*	D	A	B	B*	C	C*	D	
	E starts when the student enrolls and is assessed during their 4th module (10000 word project report)												
	* = one day assessment												
masters	A		B		C		A		B		C		
	D starts when the student enrolls and is assessed during their 3rd module (15-20000 word dissertation)												

certificate

MODE		duration	module			CATS		indicative content				
OC	a	3 days	the effective manager			10		personal/management skills, ccc regulations				
OC	b	3 days	customer relations			10		communication skills/service level agreements, contract law				
F/R/OC	c	2 days	managing information			5		information life cycle/assessing info needs and uses, DPA				
F/R/OC	d	2 days	operations management			5		logistics/project management/statistics				
WB	e	14 weeks	work-based field study			10		action learning work-based project				

Diploma

MODE		duration	module			CATS		indicative content				
	A	2 days	Managing Finance			5		fiancial accounting				
	B	3 days	Managing Opportunities			10		systems theory, problem solving				
	C	3 days	Managing People			10		recruitment, appraisals, legislation (including H&S)				
	D	2 days	Managing Technology			5		different technologies, and back-up, security and control				
	E	14 weeks	management project			10		theory applied to a practical situation				

Masters

MODE		duration	module			CATS		indicative content				
	A	3 days	Strategic Planning			10		Strategic thinking				
	B	3 days	Risk Analysis			10		Risk Assessment, Game theory				
	C	3 days	Managing Change			10		Organisation culture, change management				
	D	14 weeks	dissertation			20		applied research				

	10 CATS units											
	Day 1	9.30 - 12.30	1.30 - 5.00		6.00 - 8.00		(8 hours)					
	Day 2	9.30 - 12.30	1.30 - 5.00		6.00 - 8.00		(8 hours)					
	Day 3	9.30 - 12.30	1.30 - 5.00		6.00 - 8.00		(8 hours)					
							total	24				
	5 Cats units											
	Day 1	9.30 - 12.30	1.30 - 5.00		6.00 - 9.00		(9.5 hours)					
	Day 2	9.30 - 12.30	1.30 - 5.00		6.00 - 9.00		(9.5 hours)					

PG Cert Customer Contact Centre Management

Volume 1

Course Rationale

November 2002

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1. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

1.1 Introduction

This course has been developed to provide a post-graduate academic qualification for Customer Contact Centre Managers. It is expected that the course will be of interest to Supervisors, Team Leaders, first line Managers and Senior Managers of a range of customer information centres ranging from Call Centres, Help Desks and Customer Information Centres using both telephone and web-based platforms.

1.2 The Industry

The growth rate of these centres has been exponential over the past five years (Source: Call Centre Focus vol 8) and is expected to continue to grow as organisations review their operations. The centralisation of customer services, the advances of technology and financial considerations have given rise to this growth. The technology platforms employed may be reviewed in the light of technological advances, and the shape of the centres may change to reflect future business practices, however, the concepts of the centres will remain valid for a number of years to come.

More and more organisations, both public and private sector, are developing centralised contact systems using telephone or technology-based operators to deal with customer-facing issues. These centres have been attributed a label of 'the sweatshops/factories of the future'. Although the style and size of contact centres varies, there is a basic perception of large rooms containing teams of operators repeating the same phrases roughly every two minutes responding to the customer who has pressed '1' for billing enquiries.

1.3 The Role of the Customer Contact Centre Manager

The role of the Customer Contact Centre Manager is multi-faceted and requires many skills. Although the level and content varies between public and private sector, the generic issues include people management (first and foremost), logistics and planning of tasks, statistical analysis of call and operator data, and the production of production of reports. Managing the complexities of people and technology in a fluctuating and rapidly developing environment, prone to high churn rate (staff turnover) and low rates of pay.

1.4 Existing Qualifications

Research shows that there are a number of training courses available for employees to develop single skills such as answering the telephone, recording information, team management etc. leading to BTEC NVQ qualifications. Whilst generic management courses such as the Certificate and Diploma of Management Studies and the Master of Business Administration provide post-graduate education in general management theories and philosophies, they do not cover key issues relating to the targeted market. Customer Relationship Management and Marketing courses also fail to offer the necessary detail

required by the intended audience. (Sources: Call Centre Focus; training organisation's marketing material, interviews at Natwest Bank [Southampton]; BT Cellnet [Runcorn]; Herts County Council, Kelly Recruitment Agency, Hayes Consulting and 7 C, interviews with London First Call Centre Project Group).

1.5 The Post-Graduate Certificate

Managers from large call centres in the financial services, telecommunications and local authority were interviewed to determine the need for a post-graduate qualification directly associated with the profession. Interviews were also conducted with recruitment consultants and management consultants for the industry. All of the respondents commented positively on the proposed content of the qualification and applauded London Guildhall University for the insight and development of the course. Their comments helped to shape the final proposed modules for the Certificate, the Diploma and the Masters levels.

The content of the course has been designed after consultation with senior members of the industry. It has been structured to follow two main themes, a) the softer people issues and b) the harder logistical and practical issues. These have been identified as the critical success factors essential to the role of the Customer Contact Centre Manager.

1.6 The Market

With over 49 'Call Centres' within London (source: London First Call Centre Conference, Bloombergs, May 2000), and thousands throughout the UK, (source: Call Centre Exhibition, Olympia, October 2000), the potential market for this course is extremely large. The national market may be tapped through offering the course by open, distance and flexible learning modes. The course, the documentation and the variety of support mechanisms that will be required for the different learning modes have been designed with this level of understanding from the beginning. However, it is proposed to offer the course in 'attendance' mode only for the first delivery. The additional modes of delivery will be offered in the second and third phases.

1.7 Positioning in the Department's Portfolio

The Post Graduate Certificate in Customer Contact Centre Management is a logical development in the department's portfolio of postgraduate programmes. It forms part of the department's strategy to develop its management programmes, to increase numbers on general management programmes by 12% over the period in the strategic plan, and is in line with the University's strategy to develop taught post graduate programmes providing a ladder of opportunity to serve the needs of the City of London.

1.8 Departmental Experience

The Department has a proven track record in the successful design and delivery of programmes through a variety of teaching and learning modes. Part-time post-graduate and professional programmes are currently delivered using taught and remote learning approaches. The department has also successfully delivered programmes using video conferencing techniques. (Chartered Institute of Banking, Chartered Insurance Institute, Chartered Institute of Marketing, MSc Financial Regulation & Compliance Management, Diploma of Management Studies).

The modules for this qualification have been derived from units validated on existing programmes, but modified to meet the unique requirements of the Customer Contact Centre sector specifically and the alternative modes of teaching and learning.

It is the intention to offer the Certificate in a taught mode for the first delivery in 2001.

Projected numbers are 20 per cohort, with a target of 20 for the first two intakes.

2. AIMS AND OUTCOMES

2.1 Aims

The Postgraduate Certificate aims to:

- provide a thorough grounding in the management theories and practices of developing people, processes and teams within a Customer Contact Centre environment;

- provide integrated knowledge of operational Customer Contact Centre practices in customer relationships, information management, operations and project management and developing and maintaining effective relationships with an organisation's workforce;

- develop skills in managerial issues including data and statistical analysis, and human resource management;

- provide appropriate learning opportunities to support management development in the Customer Contact Centre industry;

- simulate and provide opportunities for the evaluation of the key concepts and techniques required for effective and efficient management within a Customer Contact Centre environment;

- provide a collaborative learning environment for the debate and discussion of management concepts and philosophies;

- develop critically reflective practitioners who can determine and recommend effective courses of action in the management of a Customer Contact Centre .

2.2 Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the Postgraduate Certificate participants will be able to:

- critically evaluate the effectiveness of teams and their formation in the light of theoretical perspectives;

- critically evaluate their own behaviour and recommend future action in the light of models of management development;

- make effective use of statistical data to plan resources within the Customer Contact Centre;

- demonstrate an understanding of the key relationships between the internal supplier and the internal and external 'unseen' customers using multi-media communications;

- understand and identify the data and information requirements necessary for an effective and efficient Customer Contact Centre;

- make effective use of critical interpersonal skills to achieve management requirements.

3. THE COURSE STRUCTURE

3.1 Introduction

The course has been designed in a modular fashion. Each module is discrete. There are no pre-requisites for any of the modules, therefore the modules may be taken in any order. This offers flexibility for the student in four ways:
1. students can take the modules in any order, and start or leave the programme at any time;
2. students do not have to wait until the beginning of the academic year to enrol on the course;
3. students can opt to study for individual modules over a period of time;
4. students do not have to be successful in a module to progress to the next module.

3.2 The Modules

The course comprises the following taught modules:

1. The Effective Customer Contact Centre Manager
2. Customer Relationship Management
3. Operations and Project Management
4. Managing Information

The first two modules address the key issues related to the people and their relationships in the Customer Contact Sector. Whilst these issues may seem to be generic management issues, the nature of the work undertaken in the Customer Contact Centres, their special working environments and the processes involved, generate particular issues that require specific attention. The Effective Customer Contact Centre Manager module will consider personal skills development and team development issues from this perspective.

The Customer Relationship Management module examines the theories related to both internal and external customer relationships, in general terms and the specifics of dealing with the 'unseen' customer.

The remaining two modules consider the logistical issues that concern the Customer Contact Centre manager in the execution of their role. Understanding what data are required to perform the management role effectively, to schedule resources, to ensure call flow targets and call quality are met, the manager needs to understand the theories of information and data; the concepts of statistics and statistical analysis and vagaries of managing projects of all types.

The students will develop reflective practitioner skills through the formative and summative assessments in each of the modules of study.

The Research Project

The final element of the post-graduate certificate is the work-based Customer Contact Centre Research Project. Practically based, it has been designed to encourage the student to select an issue related to his or her own working environment. It achieves post-graduate status through a demonstration of the integration of the knowledge and skills acquired from the taught modules. The solution should be derived from, and supported by theory and models of management. Students will be required to submit a reflective account as part of the formal report describing the content and management of the project.

The Effective Customer Contact Centre Manager	Customer Relationship Management	Managing Information	Operations and Project Management
10 CATS	10 CATS	5 CATS	5 CATS

14 week work-based research project

10 CATS
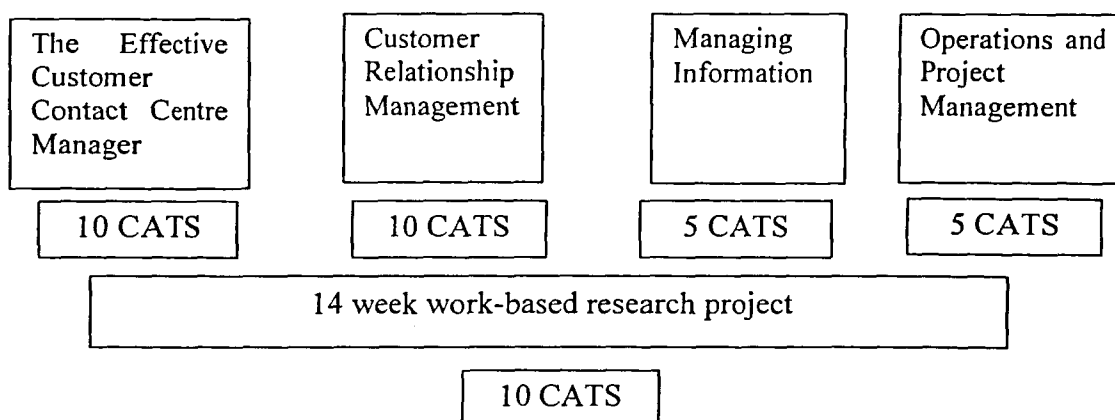
Allocation of CATS points

The allocation of CATS points is deliberately not equal. The Effective Customer Contact Centre Manager and the Customer Relationship Management modules underpin the primary focus of the course and therefore attract more CATS points than the other two taught modules. The Managing Information and Operations and Project Management modules provide practical and theoretical underpinning for the 'harder' facets of the profession.

3.3 Module Duration

Face-to-face block sessions will have 2 days contact for 10 CATS points modules, plus one additional assessment day, and 2 days contact for 5 CATS points modules. For students using remote study modes, the duration will be four weeks elapse time, plus one day attendance at an assessment centre, for 10 CATS points modules and four weeks elapse time for 5 CATS points modules.
In addition to the contact hours, students will be expected to undertake a corresponding duration of student centred learning through directed study.

(Students taking the modules using remote study will be assessed at the same time as those studying face-to-face.)

Future Developments

It is envisaged that further qualifications will be developed to provide an opportunity for students to study for a Masters qualification as follows:

1. The Post Graduate Diploma builds on the modules of the Certificate and comprises the following modules:

- Managing People
- Managing Finances
- Managing Opportunities
- Managing Technology
- Work-based Research Management Project

These modules form the key areas of interest and concern to the Middles and Senior Customer Contact Centre Managers (earlier stated sources of research). Each module is designed to address relevant practices from a theoretical perspective. The philosophies, structure and culture of the PG Certificate will be continued through this qualification.

2. The Masters Degree award builds on the modules of the Diploma and comprises the following modules:

- Strategic Analysis
- Strategic Planning
- Risk Analysis
- Dissertation

This qualification will be developed for those students who demonstrate an appropriate level of academic ability to study at this level. The content of the modules has also been well researched in industry.

3.4 Proposed Teaching and Learning Schedule

MONTH	MODULE	ACTIVITY
February	The Effective Manager	Learning
March	The Effective Manager	Learning and Assessment
April	Customer Relationship Management	Learning
May	Customer Relationship Management	Learning and Assessment
June	Managing Information	Learning and Assessment
July	Operations and Project Management	Learning and Assessment
August	The Effective Manager	Learning
September	The Effective Manager	Learning and Assessment
October	Customer Relationship Management	Learning
November	Customer Relationship Management	Learning and Assessment
December	Managing Information	Learning and Assessment
January	Operations and Project Management	Learning and Assessment

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

4.1 Introduction

The strategy adopted promotes the co-operative learning expected at post-graduate level. The course has been designed to encourage the student to take responsibility for his/her own learning. As a part-time course, it is expected that a very high percentage of the cohort will be currently employed in a managerial capacity within the sector. Their personal contributions to the academic discussions will provide a significant resource for the programme. The contents of the modules and their associated assessments have been designed to reflect this strategy.

The modules are designed to develop specific skills and knowledge in each of the topic areas covered. These range from collaborative learning on the Effective Customer Contact Centre Manager and the Customer Relationship Management modules, and directed student-centred learning on the Operations and Project Management and Managing Information modules that do not require team work, but encourage the student to take full responsibility for their own learning and development.

The individual work-based research project draws together the concepts, theories and learning styles promoted through the individual taught modules. Further, it requires the student to reflect upon the processes undertaken, the student experiences and the learning experience and respond accordingly in the management report.

4.2 The Student Learning Experience

Following enrolment onto the course, the student will receive the Course Handbook, the Module Workbooks, the Course Case Study, the Flexible Learner Guide, the Research Study Guide and the set textbooks for each of the modules. Students will also be provided with an IT account so that they can access the University's computer system through which they will be able to access academic materials such as the library databases.

Each <u>Module Workbook</u> will contain:
- a teaching plan for the module, providing the structure and content of the material to be addressed;
- copies of all of the slides and commentary to be presented during the module;
- a copy of the case study that will be used throughout each of the modules as the basis of in course discussions and practical formative assessments;
- additional exercises as appropriate;
- vignettes as appropriate;
- references to the module text and other materials as appropriate.

The <u>Course Case Study</u> will:
- facilitate a commonality through all of the units;
- provide a scenario relating to a Customer Contact Centre;
- incorporate information to provide sufficient detail for each of the modules.

The Research Guide will contain:
- the rationale for the work-based research project;
- the aims and learning outcomes of the work-based research project;
- a list of suggested projects;
- examples of appropriate research texts;
- an introduction to the concepts of academic research;
- an example of the structure of the report required for submission;
- an introduction to the different research philosophies;
- an overview of the different research methodologies;
- an overview of the data collection methods;
- directions for referencing;
- the format for the structure of the submission, including a pro-forma for the proposal;
- instructions for the submission.

In phase three of the roll out of this course, it is intended that these materials will also be available on CD-ROM (and eventually available on the Web).

Before attending the modules, students will be required to complete the pre-module reading in preparation for the formal sessions. This preparation will ensure a prior level of knowledge and student participation in meaningful discussions.
The formal sessions held during the module will facilitate consolidation and discussion of the issues and provide opportunity for critical reflection. Each module is designed to promote student centred learning, individually and through group work conditions, through a variety of tasks and learning activities. This modus operandi will encourage collaborative learning.
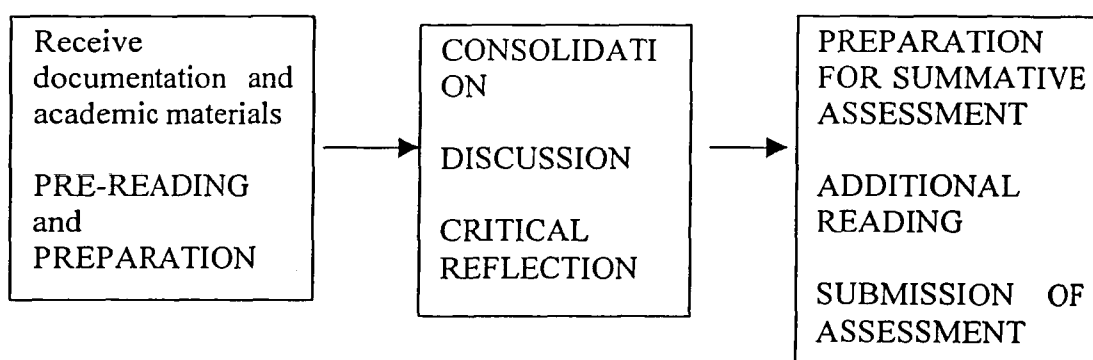
Following the conclusion of the formal module, students will have time to reflect on the knowledge and skills acquisition, and an opportunity to extend his/her reading. They will also have access to the module tutor for clarification and support. This time will also be required to complete the summative assessment for the module.

Block Diagram representation of a 5 CATS module:

Pre-module attendance   **MODULE**   Post-module attendance

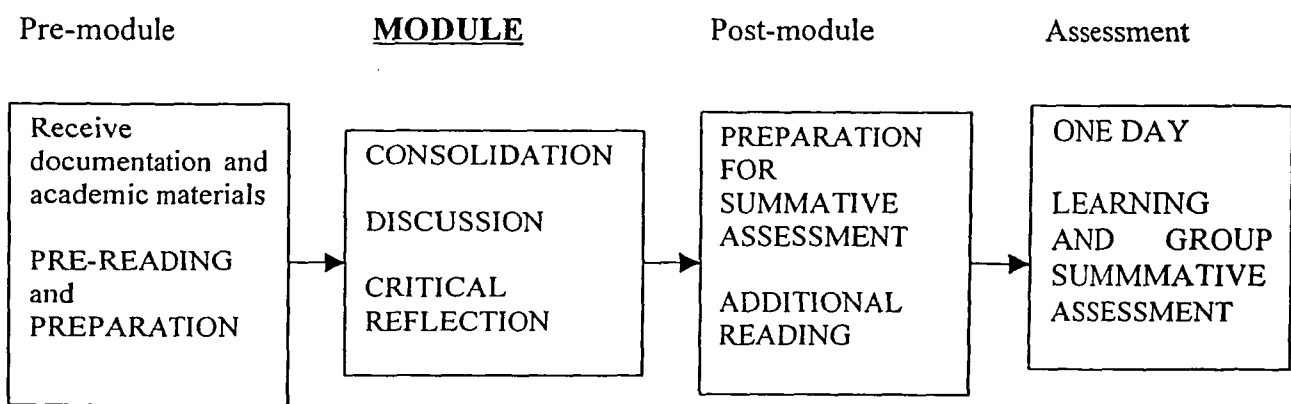| Receive documentation and academic materials

PRE-READING and PREPARATION | → | CONSOLIDATION

DISCUSSION

CRITICAL REFLECTION | → | PREPARATION FOR SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

ADDITIONAL READING

SUBMISSION OF ASSESSMENT |

The model for the people issue based modules is necessarily different post-module attendance.

Block Diagram representation of a 10 CATS module

| Pre-module | **MODULE** | Post-module | Assessment |

| Receive documentation and academic materials

PRE-READING and PREPARATION | CONSOLIDATION

DISCUSSION

CRITICAL REFLECTION | PREPARATION FOR SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

ADDITIONAL READING | ONE DAY

LEARNING AND GROUP SUMMMATIVE ASSESSMENT |

4.3 Student Experience of Block Learning

The block approach to delivery has been taken for the following reasons:
1. attract 'earner learners' who want to study for a Post-Graduate qualification part-time;

   The nature of the work, and the work patterns in the Customer Contact Centre sector require employees to work shift patterns.

2. consolidating the formal sessions into two days provides an opportunity to explore issues in depth without short time restrictions;

3. it provides a mechanism for students to focus on their study for an appropriate time duration without distraction;

   Discussions with students who have studied at Masters level in the block mode expressed that they felt it concentrated their focus and less time was wasted in switching the brain back on between sessions.

4. it allows non-local students to attend the course with minimal disruption to the other areas of their lives;

   Whilst the initial student body may be drawn mediate locality, it is not unreasonable to expect that there will be demand for the programme on a national basis.

One of the key disadvantages of this delivery mode is that there appears to be little time for consolidation and reflection for the content of the material. However, this has been addressed by providing:

- the materials in advance of the module to allow the students to pre-read and prepare;
- a minimum of 4 weeks elapse time between the issuing and submission of the assignments;
- peer support opportunities(e-mail and telephone);
  For each of the modules, regardless of the mode of study, the student will be placed in a learning support group. The composition of the group may change during the course as students join or leave the programme. Each learning support group will comprise of members with potentially different learning styles.
- tutor support (e-mail and telephone).

4.4 Summary

This programme has been designed to provide maximum learning flexibility for the student. Thus there are a number of learning options available to meet the student's life-style.

1. The student may enrol for the complete Postgraduate Certificate and take the diet of modules consecutively, and the work based Customer Contact Centre Management Project concurrent with the modules.
2. The student may enrol for individual modules in an order to suit his/her work or other commitments. As long as the student successfully completes the academic assessment for that module, the student will receive the appropriate CATS points[2] for that module. Over a period of time, the student may collect CATS points from each of the modules. On achieving a successful pass in all of the modules and completion of the Customer Contact Centre Management Research Programme, the student will be eligible for conferment of a Postgraduate Certificate.
3. If the student is unsuccessful in any module, he/she may, at the discretion of the Examination Board, retake the module when it is next available. A student may only take any given module a maximum of two times.

    Future developments (Phase two)
4. The student may elect to take any of the modules in any of the learning modes offered to suit his/her circumstances, i.e. the student may take any combination of taught or remote learning styles for any module as his/her needs dictate.

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[2]Under the Credit Accumulation Transfer System students are awarded points for each degree unit/module under taken. Students are required to have achieved a total of 40 CATS points at Masters level to be eligible for the award of Post-Graduate Certificate.
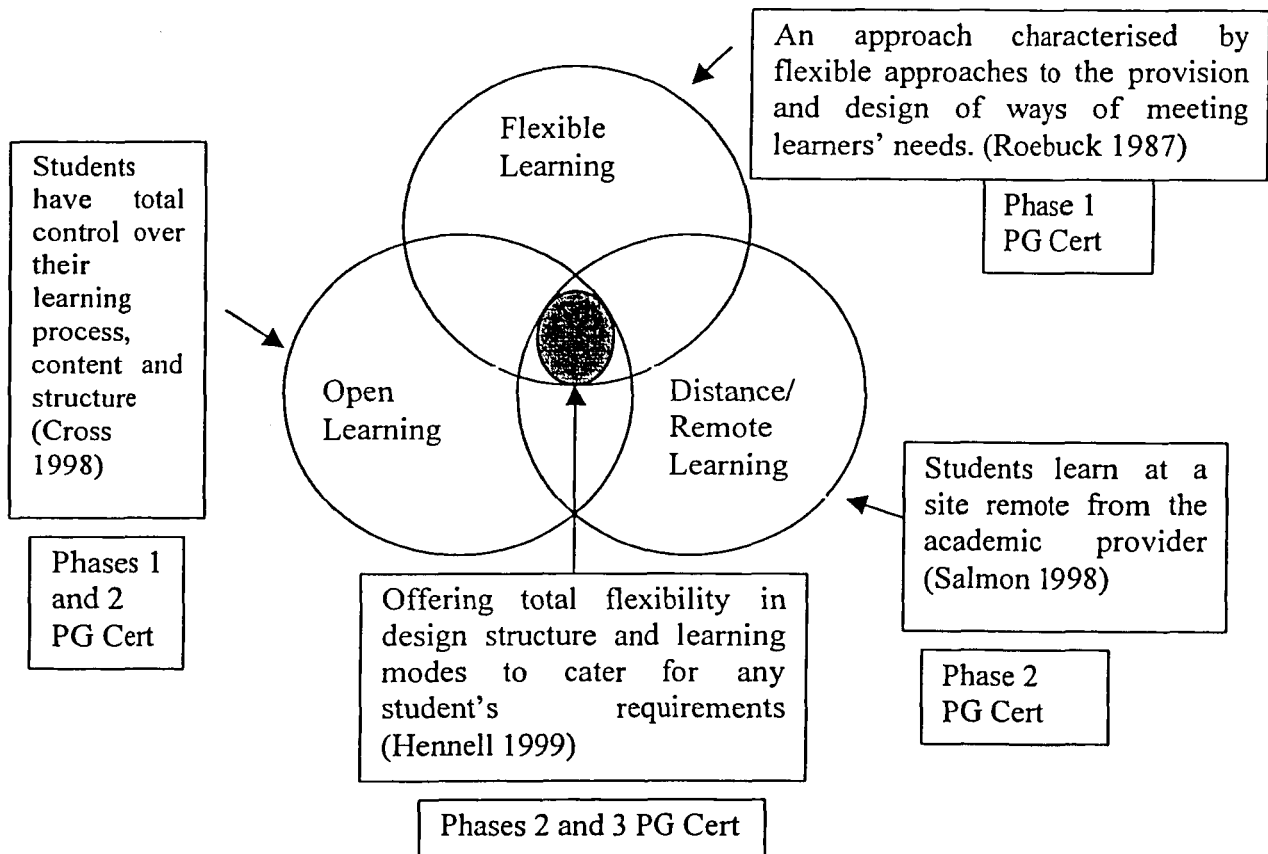
5. MODES OF DELIVERY

5.1 Introduction

This course has been designed, from conception, to provide the opportunity to offer alternative modes of delivery in order to provide flexibility for the student, to offer the opportunity for students to study regardless of the hours they work (many employees work shifts in Customer Contact Centres), or where they work geographically. Initially, the aim is to attract 'local' students. However, the long term plan is to offer the programme nationally and internationally, especially to Ireland and Europe where there are many Customer Contact Centres.

This will not necessarily be achievable through the traditional forms of higher education delivery. As a consequence, the concepts of open, remote/distance and flexible learning modes have been researched to determine which, if any, would be appropriate for the content of this course.

There is much discussion in academic and other literature about these three approaches to learning, but there appears to be little consensus with regard to the meaning of each of the labels. However, for the purpose of definition of the labels for this particular programme, the following descriptions will apply:

Flexible Learning

An approach characterised by flexible approaches to the provision and design of ways of meeting learners' needs. (Roebuck 1987)

Phase 1 PG Cert

Students have total control over their learning process, content and structure (Cross 1998)

Phases 1 and 2 PG Cert

Open Learning

Distance/ Remote Learning

Students learn at a site remote from the academic provider (Salmon 1998)

Phase 2 PG Cert

Offering total flexibility in design structure and learning modes to cater for any student's requirements (Hennell 1999)

Phases 2 and 3 PG Cert

This course has been strategically designed to meet the needs of the intersection of the three learning modes. Eventually, the course will be offered in three modes: open, distance/remote and flexible (all synchronous and asynchronous[3]). The domain is suitable. The market is geographically dispersed to take advantage of the modes offered. The academic and administrative staff within the department have experience in the different modes of delivery on current courses.

5.2 Phase 1 Open and Flexible Modes

Initially the course will only be offered as a taught part-time programme. This will consist of formal face-to-face delivery, on-campus (or potentially at a client site if requested). Delivery will be on a block basis, scheduled on a monthly basis.

The 'openness' and 'flexibility' are achieved by allowing the students to commence the course at the beginning of any of the modules, and by allowing the student to take the modules in any sequence to suit their needs (within the time scale defined in the University Regulations). Providing the course in a part-time, block release mode further reinforces the flexibility.

5.3 Phase 2 Open, Flexible and Distant/Remote

It is envisaged that students will be able to study any module using remote learning, initially using hard copy materials and electronic support.

This second phase will offer truly open, distance/remote and flexible learning opportunities to students. They can select any mode of study for any module to meet their needs at the time.

Students who choose to study through the remote approach will have a different learning experience to those who study on campus. They will however follow the same syllabus, have access to the same learning materials and be subject to the same assessment procedures and criteria.

Employing these modes of delivery supports the strategic objectives of providing a flexible student-centred learning environment.

5.4 Phase 2 Open, Flexible and Distant/Remote using Multi-media

Students will be able to study using multi-media technology (web-based and CD-ROM materials. These will be developed form the 'hard copy' materials used in Phases 1 and 2 of the course development.

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[3] Synchronous mode –Students participate in 'real time' study e.g. in the classroom, through video Vconferencing or through interactive computer based study.
Asynchronous mode – Students study 'off line' using workbooks, videos, CD-ROMS, or Web access to stored course materials.

6. ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

6.1 Introduction

The assessment for each of the modules has a number of different formats. Each module has a range of formative assessment activities, designed to crystalise knowledge gained during the formal sessions. These are appropriate to the content of the individual modules and range from short self-assessment multiple choice questions, to group activities and reflective discussion. These assessments do not contribute to the final assessment grade for any of the modules.

The style of the summative assessments has been designed to reflect the aims and outcomes for the individual modules. Due to the nature of the content of the modules, individual examinations are not appropriate modes of assessment. They are designed to test memory and do not reflect the reality of the Customer Contact Centre environment in which the students will operate. The assessments are designed to encourage the student to further develop the concepts and theories through critical reflection based on 'live' experiences..

6.2 Forms of Assessment

The summative assessments take two forms:
- a. Practical group assignments
- b. Individual written assignments.

The 'soft' people issue modules (The Effective Customer Contact Centre Manager and the Customer Relationship Management) there have two forms of assessment.
- - The first takes place during the assessment day. The students will undertake a learning group activity to analyse, evaluate and propose resolutions for a real problem/opportunity, applying the concepts and theories developed during the formal session. This is designed to promote collaborative learning.
- - The second is an individual written report based upon the activites of the group assignment. Each student will be required to produce a reflective report on their participation within the group, and an analysis of the process and its outcomes.

The other two modules are autonomous and have only one summative assessment. This is a written report based upon the theories and concepts learnt during the module and applied within a real context (centred on a work-based issue).

Each module assessment has been designed not only to measure attainment of specific goals, but also to provide an extension of the learning process. Therefore, the student may need to conduct additional research in order to complete an assignment. The role of the tutor is to direct and facilitate the student's learning and not to *teach*. Each assessment

has a set of criteria indicating submission requirements to achieve a pass, but the additional contributions made by the individual can enhance the grade awarded.

The Research Project

In order to be awarded an academic qualification of Post-Graduate Certificate, in addition to the successful completion of the four taught modules, students are required to successfully complete a work-based research project. The submission will be a management report of 5,000 to 8,000 words. This will demonstrate the student's ability to carry out an effective investigation into a key Customer Contact Centre management issue within the student's own organisation (or one that they are familiar with). The topic investigated should be of sufficient depth to enable the student to draw upon and integrate the different elements from the programme.

Project Selection

Each student will be required to produce a one page outline of the project they are intending to undertake. This will be assessed by the Project Co-ordinator for its suitability as a post graduate certificate project. The outline must contain evidence from the student to reflect this. Students will be guided, in advance through the Research Guidelines Handbook as to the type of project they should be selecting. They will receive further guidance from their project tutor.

6.3 Overall Summary of Assessment Requirements

In order to be awarded the Postgraduate Certificate in Customer Contact Centre Management the student must pass each of the modules and the Project.

Module & Assessment Elements	Assessment Weighting
The Effective Manager	
Group Project	50%
Individual Reflective Report	50%
Customer Relationship Management	
Group Project	50%
Individual Report	50%
Managing Information	
Individual Report	100%
Operations and Project Management	
Data Analysis	50%
Project Management Report	50%
Work-based Research Project	
Outline Proposal	20%
Individual Management Report (5,000 words)	80%

have to pass both Elements

NB Students must achieve a pass mark of 50% or above on the project and all of the above modules to be eligible for the award of a Post Graduate Certificate in Customer Contact Centre Management.

6.4 Assessment Procedures

The two 10 CATS points modules are subject to one day assessments. These assessments will take place on-campus and students of all modes of study will be expected to attend for the process. Students who do not meet the required standard will be subject to the normal university regulations.

Where students are considered suitable for reassessment, they may continue with the following modules and be reassessed when the failed module is delivered again. Students who fail an assessment will be required to pay for the reassessment on a pro-rata basis. No student will be eligible for conference until they have satisfied the board of examiners that they have successfully acquired 40 CATS points.