STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING IN PAPUA NEW GUINEAU

REPORT

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[1] This committee is usually referred to, and cited, as the Distance Education and Flexible learning Committee. The Office of Higher Education has confirmed that its proper appellation is the Distance and Flexible Learning Committee, and as such all relevant references in this report use this terminology.

Acronyms

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CHE	Commission for Higher Education
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
CODE	College of Distance Education (renamed FODE in 2004)
DE	Distance Education
DFLC	Distance and Flexible Learning Committee
DFL	Distance and Flexible Learning
DODL	Department of Open and Distance Learning, Papua New Guinea University of Technology
DWU	Divine Word University
ERNet	Education and Research Network
FFL	Faculty of Flexible Learning, Divine Word University
FLE	Full Load Equivalent (of courses)
FODE	Flexible Open and Distance Learning (until 2004 known as CODE)
HE	Higher Education
IDCE	Institute of Distance and Continuing Education, UNPG
IBS	Institute of Business Studies
IHE	Institute of Higher Education
LMS	Learning Management System
NCD	National Capital District
NHEP II	National Higher Education Plan II, 2000-2004
NHEQAAC	National Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee
NOLI	National Open Learning Institute
OC	Open College, University of Papua New Guinea
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
OHE	Office of Higher Education
OUPNG	Open University of Papua New Guinea
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PNGUOT	Papua New Guinea University of Technology, Lae
UPNG	University of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Realizing the critical need to dramatically improve access to higher education in Papua New Guinea, and the impossibility for traditional modes of education to adequately address this situation given major economic and geographic variables in that country, the National Higher Education Plan 11 (2000-2004) assigned a primordial role to the development and delivery of a high quality distance and flexible education model.

The plan, agreed to by government and the country's higher education institutions and coordinating body, and reinforced by a comprehensive consultants' report (Moore et al., 2000), included the following key undertakings:

- the centralizing of resources in order to strengthen and upgrade course design, materials development, and course delivery and the establishment of a National Open Learning Institute

- the end of offerings by public higher education institutions of matriculation and entry-level programs by distance education, areas that had been hitherto been their primary area of focus

- the establishment of a Distance and Flexible Learning Committee to be responsible for distance and flexible education policy development and the coordination of planning and development

- the creation of a national higher education budget policy for courses offered by distance or other flexible learning modes

Some seven years after government and institutional agreement to transform distance and flexible learning through these and other means, the present study (resulting from an in-depth series of on-site interviews, and a review of pertinent documentation) reveals that:

- few of the agreed-to measures have been implemented

- where recommendations have been implemented, for the most part they have been ineffectual as a result of lack of government or institutional buy-in and commitment

- that notwithstanding a significant improvement in the quality of distance education courseware now produced, the individual student's learning experience has barely improved, and this because the institutions (in order to generate profit form university-level distance education) have adopted a pedagogical model that marginalizes course delivery by mixing distance students into existing cohorts of on-campus students with only minimal pedagogical adjustments

- given the very real need for pre-university matriculation programs, and the fact that these can be developed and delivered with minimal or no involvement from traditional faculties, higher education institutions have increased, rather than eliminated, their serving of this market

- whereas university-level course enrolments through distance and flexible learning have increased significantly at the University of Papua New Guinea's Open College (from about 2,500 in 1999 to about 4,500 in 2007), the only other public university that was engaged in distance education in 2000 (University of Papua New Guinea University of Technology) has failed to expand (or even to maintain) its university-level distance courses and program, and none of the other public universities have even started to develop distance education courses or programs

- given the scope of the accessibility to higher education problem in Papua New Guinea (estimated at about 10,000 eligible high school leaving students per year unable to gain admission), dramatic and systemic changes are required if distance and flexible learning is to start addressing this issue

After addressing the current strengths and weakness of distance education in Papua New Guinea, and analyzing the causes thereof, the following (inter alia) key recommendations are made with a view to improving Papua New Guinea's commitment to distance and flexible learning in its higher education system:

- the establishment of a new, autonomous, dedicated single mode open and distance national university, The Open University of Papua New Guinea, either as a wholly independent national university , or as an autonomous university affiliated to the University of Papua New Guinea

- the creation of a new distance and flexible learning committee (with a different name, mandate, and membership than its predecessor's)

- the establishment, by the national government, of a budget policy and dedicated multi-year budget, not only to support the development and short-term delivery requirements of the Open University of Papua New Guinea, but also to promote and facilitate the coordinated development and short-term delivery of complementary university-level courses programs at other public universities

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Present Report

This report is intended to facilitate in-country discussion and decision making concerning the optimal structural framework for the effective organization of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Papua New Guinea's (PNG's) higher educational (HE) sector. Commissioned by The Commonwealth of Learning (COL), this report constitutes the output related to the accomplishment of one of two higher education activities proposed in its Papua New Guinea Country Action Proposal, 2006-2008: "review of existing models of dual mode delivery and recommend how the higher education systems in PNG can be improved" (p.2).[2]

The report takes as its starting point two key previous planning documents:

-The Commission for Higher Education's (CHE's) National Higher Education Plan II, 2000-2004

-The consultancy report (Moore et al, 2000) that resulted from one of the principal recommendations of Component 5 (Distance and Flexible Learning) in the NHEP II.

1.2 Mandate and Objectives

The agreed-to objectives of the consultancy were to:

- Review background documentation on higher education in PNG, especially in relation to Open and Distance Learning

- Undertake an on-site visit to PNG and review the existing organizational structure, at national and institutional levels, for the effective development of ODL[3] in PNG

- Report on findings from the on-site visit and develop an action plan for the implementation of existing policy recommendations, e.g. as contained in PNG's National Higher Education Plan II and any recommendations that may arise

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[2] The other proposed activity is to 'provide training in materials development' (page 2)
[3] As PNG uses the term Distance and Flexible Learning (DFL), this report adopts that terminology

1.3   Methodology

- Review, both prior and during on-site visit, of key documents (see Appendix A)

- Seek to ascertain, through discussions with key Office of Higher Education (OHE) officials and the review of pertinent documentation, progress to date on the NHEP II recommended actions pertaining to the organization of Distance and Flexible Learning

- Undertake visits and interviews with key DFL providers in order to obtain:
    -an up-to-date synopsis of system-wide DFL activities
    -their perspectives on the evolution of DFL at their institution since 2000, particularly the perceived strengths and weaknesses of their organizational model
    -the actual and possible role of inter-institutional collaboration in DFL in PNG
    -their analysis of the optimal organization of DFL both at the institutional and the national levels

- Verify preliminary findings and recommendations by meeting with the national Distance and Flexible Learning Committee at the conclusion of the on-site period

- Develop and propose recommendations (action plan) for Higher Education DFL in PNG

- Prepare and distribute draft report

- Solicit feedback

- Produce final report
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2.0   DEFINITIONS

2.1   Open (Flexible) Learning

UNESCO defines open learning as "instructional systems in which many facets of the learning process are under the control of the learner. It attempts to deliver learning opportunities where, when, and how the learner needs them."[4]

While open learning represents a continuum rather than an absolute state, it generally accommodates several of the following characteristics:

- Delivery models that respect the learner's needs
- Open admission
- Uncapped admission and enrolment
- Learner choice on program curriculum makeup
- Accommodation of different learning styles
- Recognition of prior formal and non-formal learning
- Credit coordination
- Low on-site and institution-specific residency requirements
- Minimal formal course prerequisites
- Continuous enrolment
- Self-pacing

Open learning and flexible learning are often used synonymously

Open (flexible) learning need not be distance learning.

2.2   Distance Education

UNESCO defines distance education as "an educational process and system in which all or a significant proportion of the teaching is carried out by someone or something removed in space and time from the learner. Distance education requires structured planning, well-designed courses[,] special instructional techniques and methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as specific organizational and administrative arrangements."[5]

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[4] http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/lwf/doc/portfolio/definitions.htm
[5] http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/lwf/doc/portfolio/definitions.htm

Distance learning can be situated at either end of the open (flexible) learning continuum.

2.3   Distance and Flexible Learning (DFL)

A learning system that combines open, flexible learning characteristics with distance delivery.

2.4   Single-mode (Open/Flexible) Distance Institution

An institution in which teaching, learning, and administrative systems are designed and dedicated to the provision of (open) distance learning.

2.5   Dual-mode Institution

An institution in which teaching, learning, and administrative systems support both campus-based and distance education either through a single or multiple structures.

2.6   Dual mode Learners

In its purest sense, dual-mode institutions will have the same students engaged in both face-to-face and distance learning. Where transfer policies are effective, dual mode learners may simultaneously enroll in distance and face-to-face courses, not necessarily from the same provider.

2.7   Blended Learning

The integration of classroom learning with technology-supported learning activities conducted independently or by groups of learners, in the classroom or at a distance.

3.0   ACCESS TO HE IN PNG

Access to HE in PNG today is in a crisis situation. Though previously identified as a major problem in both the NHEP II (2000) and the Moore et al (2000) report, the situation has significantly worsened since that time:

- Government officials estimate that some 4,000 of each year's eligible grade 12 completers are now unable to enter its four public universities. This represents an annual, compounding shortfall equivalent to 25% of the institutions' combined new annual intake
- Accessibility is predicted to worsen and the problem to compound annually in the absence of dramatic action. (Total capacity in PNG's universities totaled 8,379 in 2006)
- Given their much higher tuition fees, private, for-profit, and international HE educational institutions can only contribute to resolving this problem at the margins
- While there has been a modest increase in university level enrolments by DE in one of the two universities that engages in DE, it has primarily been in the National Capital District (NCD)
- The other university with a history of DE, has now in fact frozen admission into its only university level program
- Neither of the other two public universities has shown much interest in launching DE courses or programs
- Once Flexible and Open Distance Education (FODE), the government entity responsible for school-level distance education, offers grades 11 and 12 by distance education, and starts to improve on its overall completion rates, this will add even greater pressure on accessibility to HE institutions
- Increases in public funding for HE are not anticipated (funding has in fact decreased since 2000)
- The national government of PNG considers other areas as requiring greater attention and lists HE as its seventh (7th) strategic priority

In addition to grade 12 graduates, two other significant categories of learners will continue to put increased pressure on PNG's HE capacity:

- Adults who have been able to use matriculation or certificate routes to qualify for university admission
- Lifelong learners in the workplace who are faced with the need to either upgrade in order to meet minimum job qualifications, or to continually expand their higher education

4.0   DFL POLICY FORMULATION IN PNG HIGHER EDUCATION

Since 2000, the national government of PNG has set high expectations for DFL, and considers that in the absence of a significantly improved economic climate this form of delivery represents the principal means by which the ever-worsening HE accessibility problem can be addressed.

Pending the anticipated approval in 2008 of the next National Higher Education Plan (III 2008- 2015), currently in development, and in the absence of any further policy directives concerning DFL by the national government or the Commission for Higher Education (CHE), four complementary documents and authorities are to be considered as responsible for setting official policy direction for DFL in PNG.

- NHEP II represents the national government of PNG's official policy setting directive concerning (inter alia) the enhanced development of DFL in PNG Higher Education.

- Reporting directly to the Minister for Education on policy matters, and through the executive head of the OHE on all operational matters, the CHE is responsible by law for National Higher Education "policy direction, strategic planning and competent resource allocation" (Terms of Reference and Membership of the Commission for Higher Education, p. 103).

- NEHP II called for the establishment of an expert sub-committee of the CHE, named the Distance and Flexible Learning Committee (DFLC).

   Working with the OHE, the DFLC has been mandated by the CHE with the responsibility (inter alia) of developing policies in the area of DFL.

4.1   National Higher Education Plan II, 2000-2004

This educational plan considered that DFL had a primordial role to play in addressing the accessibility-related concerns that a dramatically growing population both of grade 12 graduates and life-long learners faces.

In so doing, however, it recognized that notwithstanding the experience of institutions like the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), the country lacked an orchestrated, systematic approach to the provision of DFL in HE. Consequently, it identified ten (10) specific subcomponents of the plan that need to be addressed:

- A review of all HE courses and programs being offered in PNG in distance or other flexible learning modes by public, private and international education and training organizations, with a view to strengthening quality and vertical and horizontal integration within a unified and comprehensive national system of higher education.

- Establishment of CHE policy and guidelines and Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) regulations for all HE courses and programs being offered in PNG in distance or other flexible delivery modes, including a prospective requirement for accreditation with a public IHE according to policy and procedures approved by the CHE.

- Establishment of a national HE budget policy to provide adequate support and recognition in public IHEs and in provincial study centres for all HE courses being offered by distance or other flexible learning modes.

- Cessation of offering by public IHEs, of matriculation and entry-level programs by distance education, with such programs to be available through CODE (the precursor to FODE), private, and other providers, thus allowing IHE resources to be focused on offering more HE courses and program by distance or other flexible learning modes.

- Encouragement, through incentives, of an approach to HE course design and materials development for both on-campus and distance learning that is modular, articulated, and cumulative in order to promote formal learning in different modes, within a unified and comprehensive national system of higher education.

- Review, under CHE guidelines, by each public IHE, of those programs which could be structure for offering in several modes, including an initial component through on-campus study and subsequent components(s) by distance or other flexible learning modes.

- Focusing, in one location, of resources to strengthen and upgrade course design, materials development, and delivery modalities for all HE courses that are offered by distance or other flexible learning modes in public IHEs in order to achieve improved effectiveness and efficiency at institutional and system levels.

- Strengthening of learning and access resources in provincial study centres, through the use of sustainable technology, by links with employers and enterprises, and by vertical integration with other levels of learning and training involved in providing courses that are offered by distance or other flexible learning modes.

- Establishment of non-salary incentives to actively encourage young professionals to accept rural appointments, and to study higher awards by distance or other learning modes.

- Establishment of a CHE Distance and Flexible Learning Committee to be responsible for policy in this area, and to actively coordinate planning and development.

4.2   Commission for Higher Education

Though it has primarily delegated its responsibility for DFL to its committee of experts (DFLC) as mandated by the NHEP II, the CHE is required to publish an annual review of HE in PNG (thus including DFL), as well as any other HE reports or studies that might be beneficial (Terms of Reference and Membership of the Commission for Higher Education, p. 104). In addition, the CHE must approve (or otherwise) any policy recommendations forwarded by the DFLC.

While earlier annual reports by CHE have been impossible to locate, the 2006 report did include a paragraph (4.5) on DFL:

> The committee of Distance & Flexible Learning was resuscitated during the year and held two meetings. One of the meetings was with the visiting officials of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) discussing the Plan of Action for PNG for Distance and Open Learning in the next 5 years. Plans are for assistance of COL to develop Virtual Learning in Higher education and other sectors in the community. Students enrolled at the DEFL centres numbered 6,254 students. The Committee of D&FL can improve its performance if vacant positions in the relevant division are filled. (sic)   (2006 Commission for Higher Education Report, p.15).

In fact, there was only the one regular meeting of the DFLC in 2006 (June), the meeting with COL officials (September) around the development of COL's country plan for PNG being called a special meeting that focused only on that one issue.

While the 2006 resuscitated DFLC did rework its terms of reference, there is no evidence that the CHE discussed or approved these revisions.

A review of the decisions reached by commissioners of the CHE at their monthly meetings from 2000 – 2007 (July) suggests that only one such meeting resulted in an action item concerning DFL.

Meeting 57/2/03 (2003) saw the Commission resolve to:

-endorse the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Distance Education Committee and its membership
-appoint the committee's chair and vice-chair
-receive and note the Distance Education Workshop Proceedings (see below)
-continue to support the OHE in its attempts to secure funding from government and donor agencies to implement the Distance Education policy (not a formal policy but rather the directions recommended in NHEP II and the recommended action from the Distance Education Workshop)
-request that its DFLC review the TOR and report to the CHE for endorsement

The Distance Education Workshop was sponsored by UNESCO and regrouped all the major stakeholders in DFL in Papua New Guinea. It followed on the heels of two (2) UNESCO sponsored visits by teams of experts to Australia and New Zealand whose terms of reference included:

-studying the institutional and national policy guidelines in place covering HE delivered through DFL

-examining the structure and efficient delivery of distance education within the main institutions and other smaller affiliated institution

-studying how courses are designed for on campus and distance use

The workshop forwarded its proceedings and set of fourteen (14) recommendations to the CHE. Two (2) of the recommendations are directly related to the scope of the present report, namely that:

-the Distance and Flexible Education Committee of CHE convene immediately

-the concept of the National Open learning Institute (NOLI) be reviewed in five (5) years

4.3   Distance and Flexible Learning Committee

Little documentation is available about the workings of the committee prior to June 2006, though its founding chair and vice-chair (public members) were appointed by CHE in 2003.

In 2005, the OHE prepared (under the name of CHE) an information paper for members of the committee. In addition to providing the context for the establishment of the committee, it reported that the first meeting had been held in March 2003. While the briefing document does not report on any action taken by the committee in 2003 (or any discussions), it does refer to a March 2004 meeting where the committee determined that its proposed terms of reference were too broad and delegated their redrafting to a specialist and other committee members. (As the next paragraph suggests, it is probable that the March 2003 and March 2004 meetings were one and the same, and occurred in 2004).

In 2006, the OHE prepared another briefing note for the DFLC (which probably had not met since 2004) and referred to the committee's first meeting as having been held in March 2004. Reference is also made to the 2004 meeting's decision to ask that the NHEP II's component five sub components on DFL be rewritten as it deemed them too general. (Again, this is probably a recording error given that NHEP II was by then a 3-year old national policy document. The reference, as recorded in the previous paragraph, ought to have been to the committee's own terms of reference). Once again, the committee's terms of reference constituted the major part of the briefing note.

As the CHE 2006 report (see above) alludes to, however, it is evident that until that year the committee had struggled to operate effectively. As annual reports by CHE for the period 2000-2005 are either unavailable or make no reference to DFL, this further supports the DFLC's stagnant status until 2006 when it reassembled under the chairmanship of Dr. Mannan from the UPNG Open College (OC).

The reconstituted DFLC held one regular meeting in 2006 (June), and two in 2007 (April and November).

The agendas of these three meetings focused on:

-Committee Membership and Terms of Reference (2006/1 & 2007/1)
-COL Support: PNG Country Plan, Consultancies, Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (2006/1 & 2007/1); request for consultants 1) on the effectiveness of current structures in higher education DFL 2) Quality Assurance in DFL
-Discussions and proposed follow-up around:

- Revised Terms of Reference (2006/1; 2007/1)
- Institutional Quality Assurance Guidelines (not specific to Distance Education) (2006/1)
- Quality assurance in DFL (2007/1)
- Teacher Education (2007/1)
- Component 5 NHEP (2007/1)
- An action plan for 2007 (2007/1)
- Requesting government budgets for DFL (2007/1)
- The present report, its author being in attendance at the meeting (2007/2)
- Information sharing (all)

With the exception of the requests for COL assistance, little progress has been made to date on these or other items.

Amended (2006) roles of the committee include the following with strong policy-related implications:

-provide policy advice regarding appropriateness of DFL initiatives and strategies to strengthen the provision of HE in PNG
-develop guidelines and procedures to ensure licensing, accreditation, and quality assurance for DFL in PNG
-ensure matriculation program are scaled down and transferred from HEIs to FODE
-encourage HEIs to direct resources to develop and deliver undergraduate and post-graduate courses
-ensure the growth of DE and FL through developing a coordinated and comprehensive structure
-ensure the development of policy criteria for scholarships, loans, or subsidies for students studying through DE and FL, especially in the government's priority areas
-ensure OHE has systems in place to collect open and flexible learning data from HEIs to form the basis of informed policy and planning

4.4   Moore et al Report (2000)

This report represents the implementation of the NHEPIIs first recommendation concerning DFL: the conducting of a review of the quality and structures of DFL courses and programs in all HE sectors of Papua New Guinea, and appropriate recommendations (which were endorsed by the then Minister for Education, Research, Science and Technology Hon. Dr. John Waiko).

At a major workshop (February 23, 2001) dealing with this report, an Implementation Schedule for its recommendations and relative priorities were developed and were supported by OHE (Moore, 2000) [6].

The most relevant recommendations for the present report refer to the creation of a national structure framework, including:

- Regulation of overseas IHE offering courses/programs in PNG
- Implementation of the DEFL committee structure
- Seeking exemptions to the Telecommunication Act (1996) for the operation of the Education and Research Network (ERNet)
- Beginning to create a single mode DFL institution, based on UPNG's Institute of Continuing and Distance Education (precursor to the Open College) which within ten (10) years would be autonomous and on equal footing with the other six (6) universities. The National Open Learning Institute (NOLI) would:

  -assist IHEs with the design, production and delivery of multi-modal education
  -collaborate with institutions as well as consortia and virtual institutions in
    their provision of DE
  -preserve the autonomy of all national IHEs
  -create a brokering agency for all national and overseas providers of DE in
   PNG

Implications for the OHE that the Moore et al feasibility study highlighted, and of relevance to the present study, included:

- Development of a policy for including scholarships, loans, subsidies for students studying through DE
- Broadening its statistical collecting base to include the areas to be covered by the NOLI
- Requesting dedicated staffing positions specifically related to DE
- Drawing up (with CODE and the National Department of Education Curriculum Unit) an implementation time-table and curriculum development plan to redesign Adult Matriculation course and programs such that they fit the Grade 11 and 12 curriculum

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[6] Though submitted in 2000, the report was reproduced and distributed with a March 2001 foreward from the Minister of Education, Research, Science and Technology, and with the reference to the February 2001 workshop in the main body of the report. It consequently should be dated 2001, but the present report maintains the incorrect citation which is how the document appears to have always been cited.

5.0 DFL TODAY IN PNG HIGHER EDUCATION

5.1 University of Papua New Guinea

The oldest and the most prestigious of PNG's tertiary institutions, UPNG was established in 1966 and has evolved into the country's only comprehensive university offering a large selection of degree program. In 2006, it enrolled 3,625 students in university-level programs.

While DE took some time to prosper following the launching of the Department of Extension Studies in 1974, this mode of learning has benefited from a long tradition at UPNG. By 1990 most of the Department of Extension Studies' (DES) some 4,500 course enrolments were generated by DE, with the vast majority being at the matriculation level. In fact, there were only 361 external students enrolled in tertiary studies in 1990 (Guy, P. 118). By 1999, however, total DE student headcount through the Institute of Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE, as the DES had been renamed in 1994) had reached 14,632 annually, about 2,500 of whom were in university level Foundation Year and Diploma of Commerce programs (Moore et al, p.47).

In the context both of the NHEP II's emphasis on the essential role that DFL would have to play in the future of HE in PNG, and of the severe criticism by Moore et al (2000) of the quality of the DE offerings in the IDCE, the University assigned an extremely high priority in its Strategic Plan 2001-2005 to extending and improving flexible learning options and identified this area as one of just six (6) strategic planning goals:

"Goal 3: To enhance the role of distance education in the University, thus ensuring recognition of the University as the nation's leading distance education provider, employing best international practice in distance education methodology and delivery to combine this with a commitment to mixed mode delivery, enhancing teaching and learning for both external and on-campus students using modern teaching materials and technology."(p.12)

As evidence of the central role assigned to DFL at UPNG, new faculty contracts and re-appointments have been changed to state that academic all staff are expected to contribute to DE, and the University assigns 10% weighting to DE in its promotion and re-appointment processes.

OPEN COLLEGE

The OC is mandated by UPNG to meet the goals established for DE in the Strategic Plan 2001-2005. As such, it has established its own Strategic Business Plan 2002-2006 with specific key performance indicators.

Facilitated by a 4.5 million kina grant from AusAID in 2002, the OC has been able to transform its deficient into quality learning materials. The aid program allowed for the provision of specialized training for more than one hundred (100) academics in preparing and writing course materials for delivery through the distance mode. A group of sixty (60) trained academics actively participated in the development of distance education materials for sixty-six (66) courses, most of which have been completed.

Reallocated program funding from the Incentive Fund Agreement allowed for the establishment of computer laboratories and network services in study centres, several of which have been constructed or improved with funding provided by UPNG.

Organizational Model

The staffing complement of some twenty (20) central positions is rounded out by regional staff responsible for operating a network of 14 study centres (Open Campuses and Provincial University Centres), funded from provincial government contributions in support of their own local facility. Study Centres are the focal point for the learners' interactions with the administrative (e.g. application, fee payment, materials pick-up) and academic (e.g. tutorials, assignment drop-off and pick-up, examination sitting) support functions of the University.

The OC is organized into 3 units

-Program and Production
-Centre and Student Support
-Professional and Continuing Education

Student information (applications, registrations, course completions, credits and marks assigned) are kept on the central institutional data base, but its less than perfect match with the particularities of DFL management needs requires that the OC keep parallel files and data. The University is giving serious consideration to adopting Moodle, an open source LMS, and this would also be adopted by the OC.

OC's official financial systems are the same as those of the University, though because of the idiosyncratic nature of their business the OC is once again obliged to maintain parallel systems and to make them comply with the University's central financial system.

The OC operates with similar management and financial authority as the academic schools, but its budget is supposed to be assigned solely on the basis of tuition fee revenue, and this in accordance with a set formula. Upon the OC's establishment (2001), the negotiated and agreed-to Open College Financial Management Framework determined that sixty (60) per cent of tuition fee revenue generated by university-level enrolment fees would be assigned to the appropriate academic school, and that the remaining forty (40) per cent would be assigned to the OC. Furthermore, all non degree

level tuition revenue was to be assigned exclusively to the OC, thereby enabling it to cover its base operating expenses (including all salaries).

In effect, however, by exercising direct control over key aspects of the OC's financial management (e.g. withholding permission to access the full annual budget, or not assigning an annual budget premised on the aforementioned sharing of tuition revenue) the University has diverted several million kina of the OC's share of tuition revenue to other university priorities and prevented the OC from managing its financial future.

Annual fee revenue in 2007 was just below 5 million kina.

The OC thus considers itself as a profit centre, hampered by too little control over its financial management and long-term security.

Course Enrolments

Latest figures estimate that DFL enrolment will exceed 18,000 in 2007, more than 4,500 of which will be at the undergraduate level. In keeping with the college's flexible learning mandate, the university-level enrolments include 1000 – 1500 face-to-face Lahara (inter-session) course registrations, administered by the OC and delivered at its study centres, and some six hundred (600) franchise generated enrolments.

Full one third (1/3) of the University-level course enrolments are generated in the NCD, the region that regroups the largest number of high school level educated citizens in PNG. Better transportation options also assists the residents of this area in more easily accessing the study centre than elsewhere in the country. These students are served by a study centre, or Open Campus, located a short distance from the main university campus.

Most students enrolled through OC in university studies are working adults, whereas only about twenty-five (25) per cent of pre-university enrolled students are in this situation.

At the pre-university level, course enrolments are better distributed geographically, with the NCD attracting a much lower proportion of total enrolments, and in fact not even representing the primary recruitment area.

Programming

University-Level
Programs and individual course offerings require the approval of the respective school before the OC is able to arrange for their development and delivery.

Some thirty-five (35) DE courses were offered by the OC in each 2007 semester, with about twelve more flexible courses being offered face-to-face in university or study centres during each Lahara (inter-session) period.

Two university programs are available entirely through DE:

-Diploma in Accounting (formerly the Diploma in Commerce)
-Bachelor of Accounting (formerly the Bachelor of Commerce).

Three undergraduate degree programs were available in 2007 through a combination (50/50) of DE and Lahara courses:

-Bachelor of Business and Management (Professional Studies)
-Bachelor of Arts (Education – School Teacher Training)
-Bachelor of Arts (General)

Partial programming is also available by DE in the following subject:

-Bachelor of Science (first year)

Following an initial increase in programs around 2003/2004, new programming initiatives have stagnated.

Pre-University Level
In (partial) keeping with the direction proposed in the NHEP II, the OC has ceased offering adult matriculation curriculum. However, in order to service the needs of diverse groups of learners (young people requiring life skills to join the labour force; young people wishing to prepare for tertiary education; second chance adult learners with lifelong learning needs or university entrance aspirations), matriculation has been replaced by a new program: the Certificate in Tertiary and Community Studies

Future Programming Plans
The OC has aspirations to develop and facilitate the delivery of the following new university-level programs:

-Diploma in Law
-Bachelor of Nursing (in-service)
-Master of Business Administration

and the following pre-university level studies:

-Certificate in Local Level Government Management
-Certificate in Plantation Management.

The first grouping will be contingent on the support of the appropriate academic schools, whereas new certificate programming is much more within the control of the OC.

Course Development Model

Since the launching of the OC's Strategic Business Plan 2002-2006, new university-level and CTCS courses have been developed under a refined model that recognizes the role of instructional design in the preparation of DE materials intended for learners separated in time and space from their instructor. Professional instructional developers have therefore been assigned to work with course authors (usually faculty members or teachers in the case of the CTCS) in the preparation of course materials. This has resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of new DE courses. The next refinement is expected to involve the inclusion of professional editors in course teams.

Course authors are remunerated by the OC upon the satisfactory development of a course.

In recent years, however, very little new course development has been undertaken in university programming.

Course Delivery Model

University Level
OC facilitated university-level courses are offered by an instructor in the appropriate academic school. The instructor will also be teaching the same subject face-to-face at the same time, so DE offerings are paced in accordance with the face-to-face offering (though some allowances may be made for the submission of assignments).

The instructor is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the DE course materials (which he/she may or may not have developed) are up to date
- Setting and marking the course assignments and examination (which generally are the same as for face-to-face)
- Providing academic support to distant students through phone calls (sometimes filtered by office secretaries), email, or written interaction. For the most part, there is practically no interaction, even between the Fort Moresby located academic staff and the fully one third (1/3) of the students residing in the NCD. In some instances, regional tutorials are conducted in study centres (see below)
- Providing, where implemented, Residential Sessions at Open Campuses

Instructors are remunerated for updating the course prior to a specific DE offering (fixed amount) and are paid piecemeal for assignment and exam marking or DE students.

Pre-University Level (CTCS)
As there is no formal role for staff from the academic schools in the development or delivery of non university-level courses, study centres play a pivotal role in providing

administrative and academic support to local students. From the academic perspective, this generally takes the form of weekly optional face to face tutorials.

Tutors are also responsible for marking course assignments, though exams are marked centrally.

All marking is paid for on a piece-meal basis.

Study Centres
The OC operates 14 regional study centres: five (5) Open Campuses (one of which is in Port Moresby) and nine (9) Provincial University Centres. More remote locations are served by some thirty (30) sub-centres which are assigned to specific Open Campuses or Provincial University Centres. The nomenclature depends on the services provided on site. For example, Open Campuses distinguish themselves by having a computer lab with at least twenty-one (21) computers connected (in principle, but not in practice) through both a local and wide area network (to the UPNG main campus), and with a limited number of study carrels.

Study Centres are the focal point for a student's interaction with the University over administrative matters (admission, registration, assignment submission, exam writing etc). At the CTCS level, on-site tutors are available during restricted times (2 hours a week for literacy and numeracy courses, 1 hour a week for all other CTCS course).

At the university-level, minimal optional tutoring (at the disciplinary level) of two hours a week is available in some courses/programs, for example in the Bachelor of Accounting, a program that also encourages academic staff to provide optional Residential Sessions. These sessions generally occur for three days after week seven (7) of the semester, and again prior to the end of the semester. During these sessions, instructors help student resolve difficulties they may be having with the course and assist them by going over material that past students have experienced difficulty with.

Intensive face-to-face Lahara (intersession) courses are also offered through Study Centres.

Quality

The OC is in the process of introducing an internal policy on quality assurance that was developed in 2007.

While processes are now in place to ensure the development of good quality learning materials[7], the same cannot be said of their delivery.   In contrast to best practices in DFL, course delivery is not seriously treated by UPNG as part of the instructional design. In many ways, it is an afterthought that not only lacks pedagogy, but that competes (and

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[7] As evidenced by the Commonwealth of Learning (2004) Award of Merit for Distance Education Materials awarded to the Bachelor of Management in Public Policy

probably always loses) with the simultaneous face-to-face delivery of the same course, by the same instructor, to a different cohort of students. This lack of quality is intrinsically linked to a delivery model that appends DE delivery responsibilities to a classroom instructor's role, without providing appropriate training or rewards. Responsibility for the ensuing lack of quality lies much outside the OC's line of responsibility and resides primarily with the University administration and the academic schools.

Evidence of the lack of quality delivery includes:

-severely outdated references in Course Outlines to possible delivery-related activities (e.g. on-line forums; compulsory practical activities; possible availability of supplementary materials in study centres)

-a belittling of the importance of student support for DE in many Course Outlines, along the following lines:

"Note that you will not be disadvantaged in this course if you live in a very remote area of Papua New Guinea. Elements of Public Administration has been designed to allow students to pass by simply reading the materials, carrying out the learning activities, and completing the assignment and the exam." (p.1)

-no reference in Course Outlines (or in promotional materials) to the role or even existence of tutorials or residential sessions

-the absence of any policy document summarizing the instructor's role in distance delivery

-directions to students to use email if at all possible when contacting instructors (when in fact the infrastructure does not exist to sufficiently support this means of communication)

-streaming of students with a need to contact instructors through secretarial staff

-the very varying (but generally minimal) use of tutorials and residential schools by different academic staff and programs

-notwithstanding the absence of firm completion rate data, the perception that in the School of Business (for example) that barely fifty (50) per cent of their DE students complete and/or pass courses

-very low program completion rates (e.g. about ten (10) per year in the Bachelor of Accounting

Training

The OC has taken its role to train both UPNG and staff at other institutions very seriously.

In addition to conducting some one hundred (100) training seminars for UPNG staff, the OC has offered training sessions to University of Vudal academic staff and to FODE, and has plans to do likewise at University of Goroka in 2008.

Collaboration

OC's collaboration with other universities has concentrated on training-related initiatives, though it was also the recipient of subject matter expertise from the Vudal University for the development and delivery of its Certificate in Plantation Management.

Insofar as the delivery of university-level programs or courses is concerned, there is in fact less collaboration than in the past, when for some time the Papua New Guinea University of Technology's (PNGUT) DODL used UPNG's distance courses in order to offer its own Diploma in Accounting.

Collaboration, however, is more evident in the OC's dealings with government departments that require new educational opportunities for their staff, and most notably with the Department of Health.

Major Issues Facing OC

- A DE model that depends, in order to be successful (quality assurance; product development; course delivery) on enthusiastic and innovative academic staff in all academic schools

- Academic staff in the academic schools who, for the most part, are not enthusiastic about DE, know insufficient about DE pedagogy (though they may not realize this), feel pushed by the administration into DE activity, do not believe that their efforts are being sufficiently rewarded, and who believe that they are overworked even without DE assignments

- Questioning, both by the OC and the academic schools, of the central administration's motivation in pushing for the expansion of DFL, and a strong belief that it is driven by financial rather than pedagogical goals

- The sentiment by both OC and academic schools that there is insufficient transparency and accountability by the central administration around financial matters relating to DFL (e.g. Where does the 'profit' go? Why do the OC and the schools not receive the agreed-to share of tuition revenue?)

- The inability of the OC to secure its financial future by investing surpluses into new programs, program revision, IT equipment etc.

- The absence of a dependable IT communication infrastructure that would allow students to interact efficiently with academic staff via their study centre

- The need to expand the study centre network and to secure the continued support of all provincial governments for the financing of existing and new centres

- The ineligibility of DE students for scholarships

5.2   Papua New Guinea University of Technology

Established in 1974, PNGUOT provides HE programs in applied science, engineering, architecture and related areas at three (3) main Morobe campuses. In 2006, it enrolled some 2,249 students.

With the establishment of the DODL (1993), DE matriculation courses were offered from that year onwards, with a university-level Diploma in Commerce (Accounting) being subsequently added to the DE offerings in 1996.

By 2005 the University had given serious consideration to the NHEP II recommendations around DFL. Its corporate plan for 2005-2010 commits to considerably increased DFL involvement and to the need to complement its current delivery mode with appropriate ICT strategies (i-College) throughout its study centre network.

Key senior staff undertook a visit to IGNOU in 2005 and concluded that policy development represented the next step in achieving NHEP II-related goals.   The Academic Board, followed by the University Council, formalized this commitment with the passing (December 2006) of its "Externalization Policy Framework". This policy provides the following (inter alia) strategic direction to the University's DFL activities:

- A commitment to making its HE program accessible through dual mode throughout the country
- Recognition that DFL is more complex than face-to-face delivery and requires integration of a number of separate activities which are the responsibility of various academic and administrative units
- Recognition of the importance of staff development
- A commitment to high standards of quality in content and pedagogy, and of learning and administrative support
- Establishing a common framework for quality assurance for external modes of study

- Making available current and future programs externally through mixed mode delivery
- Commitment to policy development in all related areas
- Review of contractual implications for staff

In recent years, however, labour relations have deteriorated significantly at PNGUT, in part (though not principally) because of the administration's insistence that all academic staff be committed to, and accountable for, DFL activity (e.g. workload decisions, promotion criteria, re-appointment criteria). The first semester in 2007 was delayed by three weeks because of a strike by academic and professional staff (later ruled illegal by the court), while the students went on strike for four (4) weeks two (2) months into the second semester of that year.

Negative labour relations, together with disagreement between the Administration and the academic schools as to when and how DE activity should be remunerated, has resulted in a delay in the implementation of the Externalization Policy Framework by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs). Current thinking by the administration is that 2008 should see the start of its implementation.

DODL

Established and operational since 1993, DODL now generates in excess of 12,000 course enrolments per year, almost exclusively at the pre-university level.

Since its inception, two programs have been offered: Adult Matriculation (redeveloped as a High School Certificate Program) and a Diploma in Commerce (originally in partnership with UPNG).

In recent years, admissions into the Diploma in Commerce have been frozen pending a complete revision to all courses. Previously admitted students, however, are able to complete the program (though very few are still active).

Organizational Model

DODL has departmental status within PNGUT and its executive director (head of department) reports through the Vice Chancellor (whereas academic departments report through the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic Matters.)

Student information (admissions, registration, credits and marks awarded etc.) are managed through its own data base which is separate from the central University's. DODL also manages its own financial data base.

These parallel data systems are merged with central systems for cumulative and external reporting.

The University allows DODL little financial flexibility or strategic financial authority. Annual revenue turn-over exceeds 3 million kina per year. The University assigns DODL an annual budget, though it accepts that this is generally overspent.

The University contributes three (3) regular positions to DODL's staffing complement, including that of the Executive Director. Once all other direct expenses (including Study Centre-related) are paid, an internal agreement calls for the unspent tuition fee revenue to be split fifty/fifty (50/50) between the University and the DODL. This is the equivalent of about forty (40) per cent of total fee revenue. The terms of this revenue sharing, however, are not implemented in practice, and DODL estimates that it receives twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) per cent rather than the forty (40) per cent.

With the share of tuition revenue that it does receive, DODL recruits the staff required to complement the three (3) centrally provided positions and other expenditures it deems necessary (e.g. purchase of vehicles).

With recruitment to five (5) senior positions in 2004, DODL's head office staffing complement now totals twelve (12), with some twenty (20) additional staff regionally located in its study centre network. Difficulty with the recruitment and retaining of instructional development staff (two positions), however, has resulted in there being nobody in these functions at present.

The DODL is organized into the following units:

-Curriculum Implementation (responsibility for Study Centres)
-Curriculum Development
-Registrarial
-Financial Accounting
-IT

DODL believes that it operates as a profit centre for the University, the latter's fully-costed contributions being more than offset by a positive contribution to the University's bottom line. Because of budgeting processes and lack of transparency, however, the profit margin figure is unavailable

Course Enrolments
In 2007, DODL generated some twelve thousand (12,000) course registrations in its adult Matriculation/High School Certificate program, with only some twenty-five (25) course enrolments in the Diploma in Accounting.

Students tend to be in their early twenty's, with the majority being male. About one third (1/3) are in the workforce.

Of the eight thousand (8,000) or so students who generate the twelve thousand (12,000) course enrolments, the largest regional grouping is in and around Lae (about 1,500). The NCD attracts about four to six hundred (400- 600) students annually, as do the Madang, East New Britain, Eastern Highlands and western Highlands areas. The vast majority of learners are located in small villages distant from urban centres.

Programming

University-level
Diploma in Commerce (Accounting)

First opened in 1996, this 2-year program, graduated its first eight (8) students in 2005. Since then, only a handful have completed the program.

Unlike adult matriculation, the Diploma in Commerce (Accounting) has only been offered in the Lae region.

Concern with the dated nature of the printed course materials has led to a freezing of entrants into the program, and it is not clear when it will re-open.

Pre-University Level
In (partial) keeping with the NHEP II goal that universities should cease offering adult matriculation, DODL is in the process of replacing its matriculation program with a High School Certificate Program. Problems in course development resulting primarily from absence of instructional development support have resulted in the initiative being seriously delayed. DODL expects to offer adult matriculation though its High School Certificate Program until FODE is either capable of taking it (and the Study Centres) over, or until FODE is able to offer Grades 11 and 12. Neither of these eventualities is foreseeable in the immediate future.

Course Development Model

Since 2004, two (2) new university-level courses and about thirty-five (35) new High School Certificate Program courses have been developed under a refined model that recognizes the role of instructional design in the preparation of DE materials intended for learners separated in time and space from the instructor. Professional instructional developers have therefore been assigned to work with course authors (usually faculty members) in the preparation of course materials. This has resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of new DE courses.

Course authors are remunerated by the DODL for the satisfactory development of a course. When PNGUT academic staff are used, they may or may not be paid depending on the central administration's view as to whether it should be incorporated into their workload.

Course Delivery Model

University Level
DODL university-level courses are offered by an instructor in the appropriate academic school. DE offerings are paced to coincide with the face-to-face offering, which the same instructor also teaches.

The instructor is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the DE course materials (which he/she may or may not have developed) are up to date
- Setting and marking the course assignments and examination (which should be the same as for face-to-face)
- Providing face-to-face academic support to distant students (since they all reside in the general Lae region)

Instructors are remunerated for updating the course prior to a specific offering (fixed amount) and are paid piecemeal for assignment and exam marking or DE students.

Pre-University Level
As there is no formal role for staff from the academic schools in the development or delivery of non university-level courses, regional Study Centres play a pivotal role in providing administrative and academic support to local students. From the academic perspective, this generally means weekly, compulsory face to face tutorials, two hours in duration. These tutorials take the form of lectures and problem-solving,

Tutors are also responsible for marking course assignments and exams.

Study Centres

In additional to its central staff located at PNGUT's main campus in Taraka (outside Lae), DODL owns/operates/ or franchises twenty-eight (28) Study Centres throughout the country. Each of these study centres is financed by a supplementary 'facility fee' paid by regional students, and is managed by a coordinator who recruits appropriate levels of support staff and tutors. Study Centres are the focal point for the learners' interactions with the administrative (e.g. application, fee payment, materials pick-up) and academic (e.g. tutorials, assignment drop-off and pick-up, examination sitting) support functions of the University.

Quality Assurance

Internal quality assurance processes have been developed to monitor and maintain both the quality of printing (e.g. properly collated, quality of paper used) and the delivery of materials to study centres and their subsequent dissemination.

Training

As the need arises, DODL runs appropriate short course and workshops for internal staff, focusing on the instructional development of course materials.

Major Issues for DODL

- The need to dramatically improve labour relations between the central administration and the academic departments. While not a guarantee of assuring the optimal cooperation of academic staff, this does represent a pre-condition for successful DFL activity in university-level courses and programs

- The subsequent challenge of developing new university-level programs and courses within a model that is so dependent on contributions from regular academic staff

- Developing and implementing a complete quality assurance program

- Difficulty in hiring and retaining professional instructional design staff

- Gaining increased financial flexibility and independence from the central administration

- Gaining the ability to negotiate directly with academic staff concerning the terms under which they would contribute to DFL

- Mounting an effective IT communication link between study centres and the main campus

5.2   Divine Word University

A national Christian university established as an institute in 1980 and as a university in 1996, DWU operates primarily from its principal campus in Madang. The University has recently affiliated with one school of nursing, one Teachers College, a College of Allied

Health, and two seminaries. In addition to its own campus-based undergraduate and post-graduate programs, DWU offers on campus programs through two associated institutions and two associated seminaries. Its FLE of over 1,000 in campus-based programs is complemented by some 600 FLE in associated institutions, and over 1,000 headcount in the Faculty of Flexible Learning (FFL).

The University's second strategic university plan (Strategic Plan: The Second Decade, 2006), while not assigning any strategic importance to FL, emphasizes the institution's commitment to quality (qualified full-time staff, with appointment and promotion driven by merit, and exercising academic freedom; adequate physical, electronic and administrative systems (with a key role for IT). Additional areas of emphasis with particular relevance to FL (but presented as being of general strategic importance) include:

-student email and intranet facility
-e-Learning technology
-facilitation of off-campus access
-similar IT systems in all DWU campuses as on the main campus

In response to the Strategic Plan, the FFL has developed an operating plan which, while it does couple key tasks with success indicators, focuses on general inputs (most of which would be applicable to any DWU faculty) rather than educational outputs. This reflects the emphasis in all its FL programs of obligatory intensive one week on-campus sessions at the commencement of each course offering.

Organizational model

In 2006, DWU's Tertiary Distance Education Centre was renamed the Faculty of Flexible Learning (FFL) with corresponding changes in its role and authority to make these comparable to that of the five other academic faculties. It now attracts some 1,000 part-time students per year, all of whom must be in the workforce.

The FFL regroups seven (7) full-time academics (including the dean), five office support staff, and two cleaners (responsible for the dormitories). The support staff are grouped into one unit, with the dedicated finance staff member being physically located in the bursar's office but reporting through the FFL.

There is no professional course development staff.

The FFL operates as a cost centre and is expected to become a profit centre, gradually reducing its current reliance on institutional financial support for about ten (10) per cent of its full operating costs. In contrast, institutional support for face-to-face teaching amounts to about sixty (60) per cent of full operating costs.

Finance and budget control is centrally administered, with the FLL having little flexibility (or knowledge) about its costing structure.

DWU has developed its own student information and financial systems, both of which are used by the FFL. While some on-campus courses make use of an LMS (Moodle), this is not the case within the FFL.

Course Enrolments

In 2007, FFL enrolled some 1,000 students. While participants (as the FFL refers to its students) are expected to take two (courses) each of 2 (two) semesters, many are not able to maintain this heavy schedule given work and personal responsibilities.

Just under one hundred (100) FFL participants are enrolled trough the Port Moresby centre, with plans are afoot to develop two (2) additional regional presences.

Programming

Since DDL insists that its students be in the workplace, it has developed special programs to meet these learners' specific needs. Furthermore, because the programs build on workplace experiences, they are shorter in duration than would otherwise be the case. For example, bachelor programs are normally completed in two (2) years, with two (2) courses being taken in each of two (2) semesters annually. Diploma programs are half this length, while certificates are considerably shorter.

The following programs of study are available through the FFL:

Postgraduate University level
-Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching and Learning
-Postgraduate Diploma in Education
-Master of Educational Leadership
-Master of Education (Curriculum)
-Master of Social Studies
-Master of Leadership in Business Administration
-Doctor of Philosophy

Undergraduate level
-Diploma in School Management and Leadership
-Diploma in Emergency Medicine
-Diploma in Teaching
-Bachelor of Education
-Bachelor of Special Education
-Bachelor of Disability Studies
-Bachelor of Management

Training and Development
-Certificate in Counselling
-Certificate in Conflict Resolution and Management
-Diploma in Management
-Diploma in Human Resource Management
-Diploma in Women and Men in the Public Sector
-Diploma/Certificate in Workplace Training and Development
-Diploma in Justice Administration
-Diploma in Management and Supervisory Practices
-Diploma in Human Resource Management Practices

Course Delivery/Development Model

During the one week intensive residency session that each course starts with, lecturers introduce all the course units and prepare the participants to complete the learning and assignments (with course materials that may or may not have been prepared specifically for independent study) once they have returned to their workplace. This preparation is called 'scaffolding'.

Instructors not in the FFL may have their work in the FFL included in their workload (depending on how heavy it is), or may be paid additionally. By means of incentive all instructors are paid fifty (50) kina per course completion.

This idiosyncratic DFL model allows lecturers to more than double the number of students whom they would be assigned to in single mode face-to-face teaching.

As participants can submit late assignments in subsequent semesters, and there is no cut-off period for this, FFL is unable to calculate course completion rates.

Quality Assurance

At the end of each residential week, participants are asked to complete a standardized evaluation of the course and instructor. There is no evaluation of the distance component at the end of the course.

Major Challenges Facing the FFL

These include:

- Increasing completion rates

- Assessing and improving instructional design

- Updating course materials

- Printing course materials

- Collecting tuition fees

- Communication with participants once off site, particularly those without email

- Making times for faculty to conduct research

5.4   Others

University of Goroka

Formed in 1997 from two (2) faculties of UPNG , Goroka Teachers College and the Faculty of Education, UOG is at this time not actively involved in developing and delivering DFL.

Vudal University

To date, the Vudal University has not engaged in DFL delivery, though it has assisted the UPNG OC to develop and deliver three (3) certificate programs in agricultural related fields.

As a result of this activity, it does now have some academic staff with experience in developing and delivering DFL.

Pacific Adventist University

Originally the Pacific Adventist College (1984), the Pacific Adventist University (1997) provides tertiary studies in the fields of business, education, health science, theology and industrial arts.

This institution is not engaged in DFL.

Professional Staff Training Centre

Since 2004, this private institution has changed its core business to distance learning. It offers a full slate of Cambridge International College programs, though most students are enrolled in business and tourism related diplomas.

PSTC generates some 1,000 course registrations per year.
Quality course materials are prepared by the Cambridge International College and students are assigned to a consultant for academic support.

Students enroll in 3 semesters, with one special intersession, and are encouraged to complete within the semester, though they are allowed to complete a course started in one semester in a subsequent semester.

Flexible payment options are available for the payment of student fees.

PSTC is currently focusing on improving its student information and management system databases and sees its future as:

-being accredited by NHEQAAC within ten (10) years
-increasingly favoring eLearning over correspondence
-delivering distance education internationally

International Training Institute

ITI is a private training provider specializing in business and IT programs at the diploma level. It operates out of facilities in Port Moresby with a sub centre in Lae and enrolls some 1,400 face to face and 150 distance education students (mostly engaged in the workplace) per year.

DE courses have been available for five (5) years. DE course materials use face to face templates and are fairly rudimentary. Students are supported by email (if possible), otherwise by mail.

With a similar curriculum as at the Institute of Business Studies (see below), PSTC is currently accredited by the National Training centre, though it also has aspirations for NHEQAAC accreditation.

ITI's DE model is flexible, in that learners can start any day and write exams any time (ITI pays proctors). Students are encouraged to complete in 17 weeks, but assignment submission thereafter is also accepted. As there are no deadlines, no data on completion rates is available.

Very few students have graduated with diplomas to date through DE.

ITI considers the following to be its key challenges:

-exam invigilation security
-quality control of material
-move to electronic delivery

-adding sub centres in other provinces
-gaining accreditation from NHEQAAC

Institute of Business Studies

Though not engaged in OFL, and with no strategic intention to enter that market, IBS has a franchise agreement with UPNG OC to offer their (2 year) Diploma in Accounting on site using OC materials and OC assessment tools (assignments and exams) which are marked by UPNG OC. Annual course registrations amount to about 120 per year.

Similar arrangements exist with out of country providers (Southern Cross University and Deakin University), but international providers allow for greater local control of assignment and exam marking than the OC, ensuring quality control through regular audits.

Department of Health

The National Department of Health is active in facilitating the provision of in-house training and degree completion programs for its staff. Currently it is working collaboratively with UPNG, DWU, and the University of Goroka for provision of on campus courses for health workers.

Given the difficulty that staff face in leaving work and families in order to further their education, the Department of Health is very interested in the use of DFL and very much believes that blended learning best represents their staff's needs.

In the past, they have used project funding to access Monash University's nursing program in blended delivery, with the face-to-face occurring in PNG. One hundred and twenty (120) students completed the upgrading program from certificate to diploma.

Leadership for Change is also being offered by the International Council of Nursing in blended DFL delivery to staff from four (4) provinces, with face-to-face components in the NCD.

The National Department of Health also has a new training facility in Port Moresby, which is very much underused, and which it hopes to exploit for more blended DFL for its employees.

6.0   ANALYSIS OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES FOR DFL

6.1 Institutional level[8]

Strengths

- A strategic commitment, at the highest institutional planning levels, to dramatically increasing DFL at two institutions (UPNG and PNGUT)

- Two dedicated DFL units with considerable experience in the management and administration of DFL

- Networks of regional study centres throughout PNG, with local and centralized experience in their management and administration

- Dedicated, engaged staff (professional and support) in the DFL units and their study centres

- Outstanding, proven leadership in at least one DFL unit (OC)[9]

- Considerable experience in both DFL units with the development and production of quality DE materials

- DFL units that have proven their ability to discover, develop and deliver pre-university level programs that:
    - -fill an important need in the marketplace
    - -can be developed and delivered without regular academic staff
    - -generate sufficient net revenue with which to more than subsidize their other operations

- Awareness in both DFL units of the obstacles that limit their potential contribution to dramatically increasing access to HE through DFL

- A strong, innovative and very focused private university (DWU) which though it engages in blended rather than distance education, not only complements the public IHEs distance education activity, but provides leadership in its use of technology for teaching (on-campus) and administration

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[8] This section deals primarily with the OC and DODL, as the other IHEs are either currently very much on the sidelines, or utilize a model (DWU) which is blended and only somewhat scalable given its dependence on a campus infrastructure with classrooms and residences.

[9] DODL having undergone a recent change in its leadership and the incumbent not having had enough time to prove himself in the new role

<u>Weaknesses</u>

- A course delivery model for university level studies that treats DFL as an appendage to classroom teaching, thereby failing to properly recognize the true academic support needs of distant learners

- University-level programs that are too dependent for their approval and development on traditional academic staff in the regular schools/departments

- University-level delivery models that rely on academic staff in regular academic schools/departments who (generally) are:

  - preoccupied with face-to-face teaching and students not champions of DFL
  - less than optimally supportive of their DE students
  - forced to engage in DFL
  - (in their judgment) already overworked
  - insufficiently rewarded (in their judgment) for DFL work
  - inconsistent and uncontrolled in their selection of academic support services (e.g. residencies, tutoring, responding to student queries)
  - insufficiently trained in DFL (in some cases by their own choosing)
  - suspicious of the central administration's motives for seeking to expand DFL
  - unhappy with the central administration's failure to honor fee sharing agreements with academic schools
  - (in some case) hampered by lack of resources to coordinate OFL in their academic school

- Central university administrations that are:

  - not generally perceived as anchoring increased DFL activity primarily on educational values
  - seen as considering DFL as a cash cow with which to subsidize other areas of their institution
  - less than transparent in their financial dealings with DFL centres and academic schools
  - failing to allow the DFL units the requisite financial authority to manage their current affairs and future as effectively as should be the case

- Communication networks (e.g. IT, phone) between students and academics, or between study centres and central campuses, that are:

  - ineffective and unreliable
  - oversold to students (who cannot rely either on the technology working, or on there being any assistance at the other end of the phone or computer when the technology does work)

- The quasi-absence of policies dealing with OFL for instructors and /or students (e.g. role of instructor; role of tutor; role of residency; course development process; course delivery management)

- The unavailability of DE courses that have been promised and which in some cases prevent students from advancing in their program

- Duplication across institutions in the provision of programming, thereby significantly reducing economies of scale

- Duplication by institutions in the provision of study centre networks, thereby significantly increasing system-wide costs and minimizing efficiencies

6.2   National level

Strengths

- Strong public policy enunciated in the NHEP II about the critical role being assigned to DFL

- Evident support at the senior levels of OHE for DFL

- Good access to external funding sources for DFL development (e.g. Unesco, COL, AusAID)

- Strong financial assistance from the provinces in support of regional study centres

- The development of ERNet which will soon link PNG's six (6) universities, the OHE, and a few other IHEs

- DWU's commitment to making its student information system available throughout the HE system, thereby allowing for much improved and more timely collection of system-wide data

- UPNG OC's commitment to providing instructional development training (training the trainers) to all IHEs

<u>Weaknesses</u>

- The continued low priority assigned by the national government to HE in general, and DFL higher education in particular

- Insufficient attention and commitment by the CHE to the directions for DFL outlined in the NHEP II

- Insufficient commitment by the OHE to the implementation of the policy directions contained in NHEP II

- Frequent personnel changes and the absence of dedicated OHE staffing in support of DFL

- A DFLC which to date has been ineffective and stagnant, thereby leading to a questioning of its mandate, its membership, or both

- Delays by the NHEQAAC and the DFLC in addressing the policy area of quality assurance in DFL

- Delays by NHEQAAC and DFLC in addressing the policy area around international provision of DFL in Papua New Guinea

- The absence of an institution that is mandated and supported by the national government with the primary responsibility for providing DFL throughout PNG

- Notwithstanding ERNet, a national telecommunication network that is insufficiently developed to provide suitable, reliable, and cost effective electronic communications between students and instructors, or even between their study centres and their main campuses

7.0   SYNOPSIS

While notable progress had been made in the quality of course materials, the present institutional and national organization of DFL in Papua New Guinea is based on a series of factors that will prevent its adequate exploitation in order to meet the primordial role that DFL has been assigned in addressing the country's higher education accessibility challenges. Without significant changes at both the institutional and the national levels, DFL will continue to have very little impact on the HE sector in Papua New Guinea.

The following major institutional and national factors have not only contributed significantly to what has been only a very marginal increase in the overall quality (course design and delivery) and growth of university-level DFL programs and courses in PNG since 2000, but also need to be addressed if significant progress is to be made in future:

Institutional

- Pedagogical models that separate course development from course delivery (whereas good instructional design considers them to be intrinsically linked, course delivery being addressed in the course development process)

- Pedagogical models that require instructors to deliver the same course in two different modes (face-to-face and via DE) to a combined cohort of students

- Organizational models, at institutional levels, that are overly dependent on traditional, full-time academic staff whose first teaching allegiance is to their face-to-face students, and who often consider developing and delivering DFL as an insufficiently rewarded, inadequately supported, even annoying responsibility

- Organizational models that do not encourage or facilitate the development of labour-market driven programming

- DFL models that are driven by an institution's financial needs rather than those of off-campus learners

- Financial arrangements between central administrations and DFL units that allow for insufficient predictability, flexibility and responsibility in the DE units if they are to provide:
  - -optimal course materials and learning opportunities for their students
  - -varied and expanded traditional programming
  - -innovative new programs that are responsive to the labour market
  - -sound, long term financial planning

- Program duplication by the only two public providers of DFL

National

- Assignment of core policy responsibilities for DFL to a committee whose membership and mandate have not proven conducive to the challenges at hand

- Insufficient direction and consideration of DFL by both the OHE and CHE

- Absence of dedicated manpower and staffing in the OHE

- Governmental and institutional budgeting and reporting that do not draw attention to the special role of DFL in the HE system

- Inaction, or very slow progress, on key policy areas related to DFL: out of country providers; quality assurance for accredited institutions; transfer credit; program and course credit structures

- Regulations that prevent DFL students from accessing equitable scholarship and other financial support schemes available to on-campus students

- An underdeveloped ICT infrastructure to enable effective electronic communications between distance learners and instructors[10], and learning centres and main campuses

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[10] Though this infrastructure is crucial, since eLearning raises expectations around service standards and interaction, it would ironically worsen the quality of learning unless most instructors' attitudes to distant learners had been dramatically improved (or the model changed)

8.0   RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1   THAT PNG establish a dedicated single mode open and distance national university, The Open University of Papua New Guinea (OUPNG), with primary national responsibility for:

- Developing and delivering undergraduate programs for:

    -grade 12 school leavers unable or unwilling to access campus-based
     institutions
    -adults who have not had the opportunity to access university-level studies
    -adults in the workplace with a need to upgrade their qualifications
    -students currently at residential universities and who should be
     encouraged (both for their own educational development and with a view
     to increasing the capacity of residential universities) to take part of their
     program through DFL[11]

- Developing and delivering pre-university certificate programs for adult learners unable to complete grade 12 through traditional means, such programs upon completion to:

    -allow entry into university-level programs
    -prepare learners for a more effective contribution (through paid or
     volunteer work) to their community

- Developing and delivering courses and programs, laddering into diplomas and degrees, that are based on the lifelong learning needs of PNG's various key workforces (e.g. health, education, natural resources, agriculture, and community development)

- Becoming a Centre of Excellence in DFL which:

    -facilitates and helps train other public DFL providers
    -develops and shares institutional DFL policy templates
    -collects and shares information about best practices in DFL
    -conducts and disseminates the results of applied DFL research

- Serving as an ambassador for DFL amongst PNG institutions, students, adult learners, corporations and the general public

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[11] Though a critical market for improving accessibility to campus-based universities, this would be a medium term market given the need for PNG to first implement transfer credit agreements across its HEIs

8.2 **THAT two different but proven models for a single mode open university be considered in order to determine which one best matches the political, institutional, and economic characteristics impacting PNG higher education**

8.2.1 **A wholly autonomous and independent national open university** (e.g. Indira Gandi National Open University)

Under this model, the internal and external governance models of the OUPNG would be similar to those of the other public universities in PNG, but administrative processes and systems would be particular to the idiosyncratic needs of a single mode DFL institution.

The UPNG OC, together with a new cohort of academic and administrative staff, would form the nucleus of the OUPNG, which would under the legislation that established it be authorized to initially offer the complete undergraduate and certificate programs currently offered by the UPNG OC.

New program approval would require the same process, internally and externally, as at other public universities.

A core of academics would be hired with the responsibility of coordinating the development and delivery of OUPNG courses and programs. Unlike the case with traditional universities, however, only one regular academic need be hired for each discipline being offered, the balance being provided by part-time, contracted academic staff and tutors.

Funding for the OUPNG would initially come from:

> -profit generated by its courses and programs (particularly pre-university certificates)
> -lower costs than at present because of economies of scale
> -a government start-up grant

Within five (5) years) it would be reasonable to expect the OUPNG to be self-funded, with the exception of the regional study centre network that would remain dependant upon provincial funding and/or a special tuition levee.

8.2.2 An autonomous open university affiliated to UPNG
(e.g. La Télé-université of the University of Québec, Canada)

This model already practically exists in the traditional PNG higher education sector, where colleges are encouraged to associate with universities. It would, however, have to be adapted to the present needs.

In this case, OUPNG (as the institution might still be called) would maintain the same level of autonomy and independence as in 8.7.1, with one exception: its academic programs and regulations would be approved not by the OUPNG proper, but by UPNG's University Council. Unlike the situation in the existing affiliation agreement model, however, new OUPNG academic programs and regulations should be approved by an Academic Board for DFL, the majority of whose members would be from within the OUPNG.

Anticipated advantages of this model should include:

> -automatically having access to all existing courses and programs offered by UPNG
> -not having to expend nearly as much time and energy on program approval related activities
> -instantaneous credibility, as the awards (degrees, diplomas, certificates) would be those of the UPNG.
> -institutional quality control equal to that of UPNG
> -the ability to immediately allow UPNG campus-based students to take as part of their program OUPNG courses, thereby incrementally increasing the capacity at UPNG, while also ensuring that its graduates have developed another critical core competency (the ability to learn more independently and through DE) upon graduation.

8.3 That in addition to serving on the Council of University Presidents, the CEO of the OUPNG also serve as an ex officio member of the CHE, thereby ensuring that:

> -the university presidents are regularly and well informed about DFL developments in the HE system
> -the CHE is well informed about DFL developments in the system
> -there is a proper line of responsibility and accountability for DFL direction setting established by elected officials and the OHE

8.4 **THAT existing OC and DODL programs and curriculum be taken over by the OUPNG such that:**

-duplication in the Diploma of Accounting be eliminated
-duplication in the two pre-university certificates be eliminated
-the OUPNG benefit from increased economies of scale[12]

8.5 **THAT the OC and DODL study centres be rationalized such that:**

-a single, coordinated network of study centres is established, at the
  service of the OUPNG and other IHEs
-duplication is eliminated
-investments in facilities and staff are maximized

8.6 **THAT public universities, other than the OUPNG, only be authorized to offer DFL programs that complement those offered by the OUPNG and which result from their special mandate (e.g. technology, agriculture, teacher education) or geographic location, thereby:**

-avoiding potential duplication
-allowing greater economies of scale for the OUPNG
-enhancing the special mission of all universities

8.7 **THAT public universities, other than OUPNG, complement their on-campus face-to-face educational model with blended learning, either on campus or in combination with DE[13], thereby:**

-exploiting their primary teaching strength (face-to-face)
-maximizing the appropriate use of educational technology
-serving more students without a proportional increase in
  staffing

8.8 **THAT the CHE reconstitute the DFLC (preferably under a new name) and:**

- Appoint as its chair the CEO of the new OUPNG
- Ensure appropriate representation from all universities and other HEI and public stakeholders

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[12] Consideration should be given to compensating DODL/PNGUOT for the loss of financial gain and for the staffing and administrative implications resulting from the implementation of this and the next recommendation.

[13] Much as DWU has done

- Appoint the OUPNG CEO as a member of the CHE
- Assign to the reconstituted DFLC the responsibility for coordinating DFL across all the public universities in order to maximize penetration and minimize duplication. In particular:

  -overseeing the coordination of the institutions' distance education activities

  -promoting joint course and program development and delivery, and monitoring the clientele served

  -annually reviewing the institutional plans for developing distance education with a view to promoting joint projects and gaining system support

  -annually reviewing the contribution of DFL in meeting the nation's HE goals

  -advising the CHE on system-wide issues (e.g. IT networks, quality control, prior learning assessment, credit transferability, scholarship eligibility) which particularly impact the development of DFL

- Promote and foster national and institutional (OUPNG) membership in the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth initiative, thereby leveraging and contributing to DE courses and programs developed primarily for nations with similar DFL objectives as those of Papua New Guinea

8.9   THAT the CHE, with the strong support of the OHE, fast-track policy development in the following areas:

-international providers operating through DFL in Papua New Guinea
-quality assurance (for all modes of delivery) in existing public universities
-common credit structures across undergraduate programs and courses
-course credit transferability
-scholarship eligibility for courses taken through DFL

8.10   THAT the national government establish a distance and flexible learning budget policy and dedicate multi-year budgets in order to:

-support the development and short-term delivery requirements of the Open University of Papua New Guinea
-promote and facilitate the coordinated development and short-term delivery of complementary university-level courses programs at other public universities

9.0   APPENDICES

Appendix A: Documents Consulted

<u>**General relevance**</u>

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Appendix B: Interviewees

1. <u>**Office of Higher Education**</u>

- Dr. William Tagis (Director General , Office of Higher Education Research Science & Technology)
- Dr. Pongi Kichawen (Director Higher Education Development Division)
- Prisca Mauve (Acting Director Higher Education Support Division and Institutional Development Branch)
- John Iso (Assistant Director, Policy Planning and Monitoring Branch)
- Dorcas Horis (Acting Assistant Director, Finance & Administration Branch)
- Joseph Morimai (Acting Assistant Director, Student Support & Scholarships Branch)
- Charles Mabia (Coordinator Quality Assurance, Institutional Development Branch)
- Francis Hualupmomi (Accreditation Officer, Institutional Development Branch)

2. <u>**Distance and Flexible Learning Committee**</u>
   (expert sub-committee of the Commission for Higher Education)

- Dr. Abdul Mannan (Chairman, University of Papua New Guinea, Open College)
- Paul Nongur (University of Technology, DODL)
- David Avei-Hosea (A/Dean Humanities, University of Goroka))
- Ouka Lavaki (Assistant Secretary)
- Demas Tongo (Principal, FODL)
- Mary Roroi (Acting Director, Human Resources, National Department of Health)
- Kea Ravu (NTC)
- Prisca Mauve (Acting Director, Higher Education Support Division and Institutional Development Branch)

3. <u>**University of Papua New Guinea**</u>

- Professor Ross Hynes (Vice Chancellor)
- Dr. Abdul Manna (Executive Director)
- Professor Betty Lovai (Executive Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences)
- Lauraka Roleas (Associate Director, Professional Continuing Education)
- Herman Moshi (Deputy Executive Dean, School of Business Administration)
- Gordon Montoru (Executive Officer, School of Business Administration)
- Dr. Ken Ngangan (MBA Convenor, School of Business Administration)
- Dr. Lekshmi Pillai (Strand Leader & Senior Lecturer (School of Business Administration)
- Henry Kiumo (School of Business Administration)

- P. Manohar (Strand Leader and Lecturer, School of Business Administration)

4. Open College, University of Papua New Guinea

- Dr. MB Abdul Mannan (Executive Director)
- Aria Hailaeavila (Associate Director Programs & Production)
- Dr. Greg Ol (Director, Open Campus Madang)
- Mr. Kensol Rui (Director, Open College Lae)

5. Papua New Guinea University of Technology

- Professor M.A. Satter (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic Affairs)
- Robert Songan, Teaching and Learning Management Unit & Member of the National Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee

6. Department of Open and Distance Learning, PNGUT

- George Bopi, Executive Director (past) Department of Open and Distance Learning
- Paul Nongur, Executive Director, DODL

7. University of Goroka

- David Avei-Hosea (A/Dean Humanities)

8. Divine Word University

- Father Jan Czuba, President
- Dr. Cecilia Nembou (Vice President)
- Dr. Pam Norman (Dean of Flexible Learning)
- Joseph Lingawa (Lecturer, FFL)
- Chardana Silva (IT)

9. Institute of Business Studies
- Sadiq Ali (Deputy Director)
- Vani Nades (Manager Innovation and Development)
- 4 lecturers

10. International Training Institute
- John Vada (Marketing Manager)

- Thomas Igo (Correspondence Coordinator)

11. **Professional Staff Training Centre**
- Hicks Laeka (Executive Director)
- Sally LAeka (Registrar)
- 5 other staff

12. **Department of Education**
- Ouka Lavaki (Assistant Secretary)
- Demas Tongogo (Principal, Flexible and Open Distance Learning)

13. **National Department of Health, Human Resources**
- Mary Roroi (Acting Director)
- Nola Marhor (Acting Technical Advisor)
- Sulpain Passingan (Education Officer)
- Simon Lugabai (Acting Principal Advisor, Training and Curriculum Development)