DEVELOPING DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY WITHIN A STATE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION: THE FACULTY PERSPECTIVE

A Thesis in
Adult Education
by
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study used a systems perspective to explore faculty perceptions of the distance education policy development process. The study looked specifically at faculty with online teaching experience at three higher education institutions within a state system of higher education. The conceptual framework of the Multiple Streams model—a public administration policy development model—provided the lens which guided the study. Semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis were used in capturing details about the state system and institution and to obtain faculty perspectives about participation in distance teaching and in developing policy.

The major finding of this study is the interest of faculty in developing distance education policy. Faculty interviewed believed that their expertise, experience, and advocacy for students are just a few examples of why they should be included in the distance education policy development process. Additional findings include: faculty’s level of enthusiasm for online teaching, contextual effects on faculty participation in the policy development process, benefits of utilizing the Multiple Streams model in distance education policy creation, and the expansion of the Multiple Streams model into a Distance Education Policy Development System. Based on these findings, implications for practice and recommendations for future research are discussed in the following fields: distance education, adult education, and public administration.
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Chapter one of this dissertation provides an overview of the research which explores how faculty believe they should participate in the creation of distance education policy at universities within a state system of higher education. A general introduction to the problem offers details regarding important literature within the topic area and the conceptual framework from which the research will be studied. The purpose of the research and research questions are included, as is an overview of the design and methodology and the significance of the study. Finally, assumptions, limitations, and definitions are provided.

Background Information

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2002) reports that distance education is “approaching acceptance within mainstream education and training in such a way that it will make up part of the repertoire of most educational institutions in the future” (p. 10). In a recent report from The Sloan Consortium, higher education institutions reported that almost 3.2 million students took an online course during the fall semester of 2005; this is up from 2.3 million in fall 2004 (Allen & Seaman, 2006). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1999), the number of degree-granting higher education institutions offering distance education courses increased from 33 percent in 1995 to 44 percent in 1997-98. This number grew to 56 percent in 2000-01 (NCES, 2003). With this type of growth, distance education is quickly moving its way into the mainstream of higher education.
This move into the mainstream is facilitating a growth in the amount of research regarding various aspects of distance education. Much of the research within distance education looks at the technical benefits from teaching with technology (Miller & Padgett, 1998; Schitai, 1998; Dringus, 1999), how students learn via the medium (Liu & Ginther, 1999; Woods & Ebersole, 2003), online student services (Aoki & Pogroszewski, 1998; Gubbins, 1998; Buchanan, 2000; LaPadula, 2003), student participation in distance learning (Qureshi & Antosz, 2002), administrators’ perceptions of faculty participation in distance teaching (Betts, 1998; O’Quinn & Corry, 2002; Rockwell, et al. 1999; Schifter, 2000b), faculty participation in distance teaching (Bonk, 2001; Dillon & Walsh, 1992; McKenzie, et al. 2000; Roblyer & Wiencke, 2003), and distance education policy (AAUP, 1999; ACUPA, 2005; Brooks, 1999; Chizmar & Williams, 2001; Dooley & Murphrey, 2000; Hearn, 1998; Mumper, 1993).

While general information about distance education policy exists, literature about the development of that policy along with the faculty perspective is absent. The few studies that exist provide information from the administrative perspective, analysis of distance education policy, and suggestions for policy development. These studies are set within the context of virtual universities, multi-university systems, or within land-grant institutions. Only one study is set within a state system of higher education and the focus of that study is the administrators’ perspective (Moss, 1998). In Moss’s study, the state system comprises of various institution types (two-year and four-year), while in this study—also within the context of a state system of higher education—the focus is on the faculty perspective within the context of public four-year institutions within the state system.
Distance Education Policy

Policy has been defined as “a set of instructions from policy makers to policy implementers that spell out both goals and the means for achieving those goals” (Nakamura & Smallwood, 1980, p. 31). Anderson (1997) defines policy as “a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern” (p. 173). This definition provides a focus on “what is actually done as against what is proposed or intended, and it differentiates a policy from a decision, which is a choice among competing alternatives” (p. 173). This definition is also like the distance education policy definition of King and his colleagues (2000), who also focus on a course of action and define distance education policy as “a written course of action adopted to facilitate program development and delivery in distance education” (¶ 3).

Policy within distance education is important because it facilitates growth in program development, guides development of support and services for those involved with distance education, and limits potential inappropriate infringements.

The literature within higher education and policy development suffers from a lack of studies dealing with the development of distance education policy. The majority of literature within distance education policy is prescriptive (giving ideas about what policy should be in place) or descriptive (providing examples of what is in place) (Moore & Thompson, 1997). Many articles provide guidelines or frameworks for creating plans and policies (AAUP, 1999; ACE, 2000; Dirr, 2003; Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2002; SREB, 2001). A few unpublished dissertations address the development of distance education policy. One dissertation, written by Moss (1998), provides an administrator’s perspective and a state-level perspective in regard to the
development of distance education policy within a state system of higher education. Moss does this through a lens of organizational management. He does not use any of the policy development theory frameworks nor does his study include the faculty perspective.

Another dissertation (Nelson, 1999) reports how chief academic officers in a multi-university system define the most effective components of distance education policy. Using systems thinking and continuous improvement to inform her conceptual framework, Nelson creates a grounded theory which provides an explanation as to how policy is both a product and a process. Like Moss, Nelson does not provide a faculty perspective nor does she use policy development theory frameworks. In her dissertation, Irele (2002) mentions frameworks and faculty but does so broadly by recommending the development of “frameworks that address how faculty members believe they should participate in policy making” (p. 196).

Policymaking, by its very nature, is about systems (interacting or interrelated elements forming a whole). Within distance education policy, there are various policy elements that interact to form a system. In this study, those elements are referred to as strategic management decision zones. Considering all of the elements of the policy development system is essential; this is especially true during the pre-decision making or agenda building stage of the policy process (Rist, 1994). A significant component of the policymaking system is the stakeholders who shape the policy process (Rabin, et al. 1998). This is true for all types of policy including distance education policy.

Stakeholders are various people or groups with “a direct interest in the policies being studied, as well as the future directions that policies will take” (Nelson, 1999, p. 18). All stakeholders within distance education policy – faculty, students, university
staff, institutional leadership, potential employers, legislators, etc. – should be involved at some level in the development of that policy (CETUS, 1997; Haché, 1998; Levy, 2003). The empirical literature noted above does not include the voice of the faculty when discussing distance education policy development. Therefore, when distance education policymaking occurs and does not include a primary stakeholder like faculty, faculty may not want to participate in distance teaching which, in turn, could cause the system to fail, making it unlikely that the policy and associated program(s) will succeed.

Some prescriptive literature confirms Irele’s belief that faculty should be involved in creating distance education policy (ACUPA, 2005; Haché, 1998; Hearn, 1998). Other authors recommend not only faculty involvement but faculty leadership in the development of distance education policies (AAUP, 1999; ACE, 2003; Rockwell, et al., 1999; Schifter, 2000b). Consequences associated with this lack of faculty involvement include resistance to teaching online, refusal to support distance education programs, and opposing colleagues who teach online. These consequences have a broader reach than just the institution for which the faculty member works when the institution is one of many within a state system of higher education. Therefore, while the prescriptive and descriptive literature containing recommendations for creating policy (i.e. areas of policy topics) and including faculty in the creation of that policy is valuable, it is also essential that research focus on the actual relationship of faculty with the process.

Faculty are increasingly seeing the impact of distance education on teaching and learning; therefore, as distance education continues to grow, policies are gaining their attention (Harris & DiPaolo, 1999). Additionally, this growth will compel many institutions to develop, revise, and/or implement distance education policy. Both Irele
(2002) and Nelson (1999) found in their research that policies need to be reviewed and revised or new policies will need to be developed in order to rise above the concerns faculty have for resistance to participating in distance education (i.e. quality, cheating, etc.). Further research is needed on the perspectives of faculty on the actual process of policy creation, who is a part of the process, and the role that faculty see themselves and others having in that process. Looking at these topics through the lens of policy development theory is an important aspect of this research.

Overview of Conceptual Framework

While the distance education literature offers guidelines for and suggestions of important policy areas, there are no theories referring to the development of distance education policy. Within the field of public policy, various theories exist as to how policy should be developed. These theories offer a variety of helpful frameworks in assessing how policy is created. Rational models that are very linear exist as do those which are more inclusive and less rigid. The Multiple Streams model—the lens through which this research is conducted—is a model of policy development which focuses on the pre-decision making, specifically looking at how issues obtain agenda status and become policies (Kingdon, 2003). The model asserts that policies are potentially developed when three independent streams of policy, problems, and politics combine in a window of opportunity. Policy is a solution generated by one or more stakeholders. Problems represent the recognition of a problem for which a solution or policy is needed. Politics refers to the environment (the culture, the context, various events, etc.) of the current situation in which stakeholders are trying to attach a policy to a problem.
Multiple stakeholders (described as policy entrepreneurs in this model) are critical in assisting the combination of the independent streams (policy, problems, and politics) once in the window of opportunity and help the solution reach agenda status. Policy entrepreneurs create solutions in the form of potential policies. Because they have their own agendas, they proactively attempt to attach these policies to a problem at the most opportune time. When the policy matches the problem and the politics of the situation aligns as well, this is considered a window of opportunity and policy entrepreneurs help push the policy through the window, allowing the solution to gain agenda status with the potential of becoming a policy. According to the Multiple Streams model, this is how policies are developed.

In looking at the Multiple Streams model and distance education, various policies, problems, and politics can be identified. Rice and Miller (2001) believe that faculty “will be more inclined to use technologies if they are involved in the decision making about them” (p. 335). If faculty are not included in creating distance education policy, their interest in participating in distance teaching may be minimal. This can be a huge problem for institutions that are attempting to increase not only the bottom line, but also their reach geographically and their responsiveness to their students’ needs. The politics that faculty encounter include various events at the institutional or state level (i.e. the hiring of a new provost or new chancellor and his/her beliefs in distance education), the context of the situation (i.e. the faculty may or may not be unionized; the institution could be private or public; the institution may be a part of a state system), the culture of the institution (i.e. the institution may be slow to change; there may exist layers of
bureaucracy), and/or the attitude of the student body (i.e. the institution’s “customers” may or may not be interested in more online courses).

Finally, the policy or solution that faculty may propose must be able to be “attached to” or fit well with the problem and it must do so within the political environment in order for the three streams to converge and for the solution to appear on the policymaking agenda. The policy must address the various concerns of the faculty in order to achieve buy-in and participation. Ultimately in order “to move distance education from the margin to the mainstream of higher education, policy and planning must address the unique needs of distance education providers and learners” (Kovel-Jarboe, 1997, p. 23). Thus the MS model and its core streams of policy, problems, and politics serve as the conceptual framework for this research.

Purpose of Research

This research examines the distance education policymaking process and focuses on the faculty stakeholders within the context of three public, four-year institutions that are members of a state system of higher education. This study explores faculty perceptions as to how they and others are involved with the creation of distance education policy (role and process) and the impacts on the field of distance education.

Problem Statement

An area within distance education where little research exists is in the area of distance education policy. While the literature provides ample articles about distance education policy topic areas and recommendations for creating policy, little research
exists as to how distance education policy is created. The research that does exist does not address faculty involvement with the development of that policy nor does it use policy development theory frameworks. In Nelson’s (1999) research, the literature reflected in the areas of higher education or distance education failed to provide “a theory or framework to explain and predict the phenomenon of distance education policy development” (p. 9). This policy study used the Multiple Streams model as the lens in which to explore faculty perceptions as to their inclusion in creating distance education policy. By utilizing the three streams of the model, this research discusses the problems, policies, and politics through the faculty perspective. Due to the growth of distance education, its movement into the mainstream of higher education, and the resulting development of distance education policy, further research on this topic has proven necessary.

Research Questions

The questions that guide this study include a) what are faculty perceptions of how distance education policy is created, who creates it, and who should create it? b) what are faculty perceptions as to the role and impact of policy in distance education? c) what is the nature of faculty involvement in the development of distance education policy? and d) why do faculty think it is important to be involved in the distance education policy making system as a whole? The research conducted answers these questions within the context of three universities that are a part of a state system of higher education.
Overview of the Research Design and Methodology

To ensure that qualitative research is the appropriate methodology for this research, it is important to express the correspondence between the characteristics of qualitative research and the research conducted. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) believe that qualitative researchers “are especially interested in how things occur and particularly in the perspectives of the subjects of a study” (p. 531). This is consistent with the purpose of this study, which looks at how policy is created, particularly through the faculty perspective. According to Merriam (2002), the characteristics of qualitative research include understanding how people make sense of their life experiences; providing thick, rich details; researching in an inductive manner; and collecting and analyzing data on one’s own. This study contains rich descriptions (from various data collection methods) and the data was collected and analyzed only by the researcher.

Qualitative inquiry, according to Patton (2002), can be used “to discover, capture, present, and preserve the stories of organizations, programs, communities, and families” (p. 196). It must also be descriptive, construct knowledge and permit the researcher to analyze data while collecting it (Stake, 1995). Qualitative research, with its inductive manner, is like creating a picture that takes shape as one collects and examines its parts (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). Conversely, quantitative research with its formulation of a hypothesis could be described as putting together a puzzle when one already suspects what the final picture will be. This study is much like creating a picture; as the different parts of data are collected and analyzed something unknown comes from it.

A picture has interrelated pieces that form a whole, much like a case study. While case studies “can be very quantitative and can test theory, in education they are more
likely to be qualitative” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). The reality is that case study can exist in both research worlds, yet it is used more so in the qualitative realm. Hamel, et al. (1993) explain that “the case study has proven to be in complete harmony with the three key words that characterize any qualitative method: describing, understanding, and explaining” (p. 36). While the aspects of a case study—the problem, the context, the issues, and the lessons learned—are common among those who write about case study, the definition of case study is one that varies, lying somewhere in between a case being an object of a study or as a methodology (Creswell, 1998).

The general characteristics of case study include utilizing a bounded system (the case being studied is bounded by time and place and has interrelated parts that form a whole), providing descriptions about the case that are rich in detail and focus on context, and attempting to understand or explain either a case or a phenomenon or issue within the case. This methodology is very appropriate for this study as it looks at the complete policy making system and also focuses on one interrelated part—faculty—in order to explain how distance education policy is created. A bounded system is an essential aspect of case study as it allows a researcher to focus on the context of the situation. The context of the situation is crucial as it “might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). The purpose of case study research is to understand what is happening within a certain context and to make sense of multiple interpretations of reality as reality is not seen as objective (Merriam, 1998; Morgan, 1991). The case study is “an appropriate strategy for answering questions about how or why” (Corcoran, et al. 2004, p. 10). This research studies faculty perspectives of developing distance education policy and does so within a context of a state system of higher education.
The methods of data collection used in this study include document analysis, interview, and observation. While these are typical methods of qualitative data collection, they are also considered as sources of evidence in case study research. Documents analyzed include those related to distance education obtained from the state system, the various institutions, and the faculty collective bargaining agreements. Other documents that refer to distance education (i.e. mission statements, institutional websites, etc.) were also reviewed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with open-ended questions and offer the best avenue for gaining information, provide flexibility in the order of the questions, and encourage in-depth responses. Observations made from attending state system meetings are also included.

This research requires the use of a purposeful sample which is that of institutions within a state system of higher education that offer fully online degree programs. Faculty from the chosen institutions who have experience with online teaching were surveyed. From the list of completed surveys, five faculty from each institution were selected for interviews. In addition to this purposeful, criterion sample, the population interviewed varied not only by job level (assistant, associate, or full professor) but also by experience in the online environment.

In order to analyze findings, categorical aggregation and direct interpretation were used. Stake (1995) believes that “case study relies on both of these methods,” which he calls “two strategic ways that researchers reach new meanings about cases” (Stake, p. 74). Basically these methods call for interpreting individual instances and aggregating repeating instances into various categories. In instrumental case studies, the “need for categorical data and measurements is greater” (p. 77). In order to analyze the data
following these methods, interview transcripts were read and coded with common themes noted. Additionally, each document and website was reviewed for common themes or underlying assumptions among the text. Finally, as typical in case study analysis, consistencies and discrepancies across the cases were examined.

To assure verification, certain strategies were employed to assess credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In case study research, credibility is also known as construct validity. Construct validity looks at whether or not the research does what it says it will do. Techniques used to ensure credibility include triangulation, peer review, and member checks. Transferability, like reliability, can refer to the possibility of replication of a study. Transferability can only be determined by the reader of the research. Dependability (also known as internal validity) refers to the ability to ensure consistency of the study and confirmability (also known as external validity) is verifying the interpretations and conclusions of the research. Examples of dependability and confirmability include pattern matching and audit trails. Specific details and examples of verification strategies are outlined in Chapter Three.

Significance of the Study

The researcher’s role in her previous institution’s distance education program engendered a professional and personal desire to learn more about distance education policy, faculty perspectives about distance education policy, and to research the process of developing the policy. Other than the personal significance of the study, three major areas of significance for this research are discussed in relation to three fields of study: adult education, distance education, and policy studies.
Significance to Adult Education

This study offers insight into faculty’s perceptions about distance education policy and how it is developed. Distance education promotes the “extension and transformation of the field of adult education” by “broadening the role of adult educators…to develop programs for the adult who must, or chooses to, study at a distance” (Garrison, 1989, p. 229). Allen and Seaman (2006) also note that “online students tend to be older, and often hold additional employment and family responsibilities, as compared to the more traditional student” (p. 1). Therefore policies that are developed for distance education programs and services have a direct impact on adult learners. This study, which informs distance education policy makers, also informs faculty as to the perspectives of peers in their participation or lack thereof in distance education policy creation. This in turn may affect faculty participation in distance education, faculty professional development, teaching/learning, and overall program development – all of which are significant to the field of adult education.

Significance to Distance Education

The American Council on Education (2000) posits that the growth in online course offerings is forcing institutions to revisit existing policies and plans to incorporate or make room for distance education. It is essential that institutions develop a sufficient, comprehensive policy to guide quality online programming, as it affects all university constituents. This study not only contributes to the distance education literature as a whole, but most importantly provides recommendations to those who need to revise or create an inclusive distance education policy within their institutions while ensuring
faculty participation, responding to students’ needs, and contributing to the financial success of the institution.

**Significance to Policy Studies**

Although the field of public administration offers a rich literature regarding policy development theories and models, rarely have these theories been used within higher education (McLendon, 2000). Furthermore, the theories have yet to be used in distance education policy research. The context of this study specifically addresses higher education at the state system level with public, four-year institutions and focuses on three institutions and their faculty’s perceptions about the process of policy development in distance education through the lens of the Multiple Streams model, thus adding to the literature within the public administration and distance education fields.

**Definitions of Terms**

The following terms and their definitions are used in this study.

**Case study** is “an exploration of a bounded system or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61).

**Contingent faculty** includes “both part- and full-time non-tenure-track faculty” (AAUP, 2007, ¶ 1).

**Cyber faculty**, for the purpose of this study, are faculty who teach solely online in either a part-time of full-time capacity.

**Distance education**, or distance learning, “is planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special techniques of
course design, special instructional techniques, special methods of communication by
electronic and other technology, as well as special organizational and administrative
arrangements” (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. 2).

**Distance education policy** is “a written course of action adopted to facilitate
program development and delivery in distance education” (King, Nugent, Russell, Eich,
& Lacy, 2000, ¶ 3).

**Distance teaching**, or online teaching for the purpose of this study, is narrowly
defined as teaching conducted in an asynchronous, web-based, online format.

**Governance** refers to the “process of policy making and macro-level decision
making within higher education” (Kezar & Eckel, 2004, p. 375).

**Multiple Streams Model** is a theory of policy development, focusing on the pre-
decision part of policy making, which posits that policies are created when the
independent streams of problems, policies, and politics converge in a window of
opportunity.

**Policy entrepreneurs**, as noted in the Multiple Streams Model, are various
stakeholders who have created solutions in the form of potential policies and are waiting
to attach these policies to a problem at the most opportune time.

**Public policy** is “a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of
actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern” (Anderson, 1997, p. 173).

**Strategic management decision zones** are the various policy areas within
distance education (King, Nugent, Eich, Mlinke, & Russell, 2000).

**Systems perspective** is one that explores how and why a “system as a whole
functions as it does” (Patton, 2002, p. 119).
Assumptions of the Study

The assumptions of this study are outlined below:

1) Distance education and associated policy are important to faculty.

2) The context of the university and the overarching state system of higher education will affect the perceptions of the faculty in this study.

3) The perceptions of this study’s faculty of distance education policy will provide implications for policy makers.

4) This research will have implications for administrators and faculty within this state system of higher education and similar state systems of higher education.

Limitations of the Study

This study’s limitations center on the factors of definitions, participants, context, and data collection.

1) Definitions—While distance education allows for a broader definition including blended programming, video conferencing and in some cases, independent study options, this research is limited only to fully online degree programs. This limitation restricts the participation of the universities in this study as only seven institutions of the fourteen within the state system currently offer fully online degree programs. It also limits participation of institutions that offer a variety of online courses but do not group the courses into a degree program. Furthermore, the terms of distance education, distance learning, distance teaching, and e-learning (to name a few) are often used interchangeably which can cause confusion. This study employs the term distance education throughout
the study to encompass the field of distance education and uses the term distance teaching (or online teaching) to refer to the faculty activity associated with distance education.

2) Participants/Stakeholders–A factor that limits the study is the level of experience of the faculty chosen for interviews. Faculty members who teach online typically have positive experiences in doing so; therefore, the limitation is that the voices in this study are biased in their opinions of distance education as a whole. Another limitation related to those chosen for the study is significant in that the voices of those who do not participate in online teaching are not heard. Furthermore, while faculty perspectives are the main focus of this study, the voices of other key stakeholders within distance education (administrators, staff, students, etc.) are not represented in this study, which is also perceived as a limitation.

3) Context–The context of the study is that of three institutions within a state system of higher education. The political, historical, economic and cultural context of the system and member institutions, which is discussed in detail in subsequent chapters, all vary and may (depending on the reader) also limit the transferability of the findings. Furthermore, this chosen context limits the findings and their transferability to other higher education contexts that may not have unionized faculty, may be two-year institutions, or that may be private and not public.

4) Data Collection–One form of data collection did not take place as planned as the researcher did not anticipate the geographical distribution of the faculty. Some of the faculty interviewed were “cyber” faculty and therefore did not live near or work on-campus. Furthermore, due to the nature of how the faculty teach—in an online medium—they generally preferred to participate in the interview via telephone. The
researcher offered to provide video conferencing technology but that required faculty members to be on-campus at a certain date and time. This limited their flexibility and no one indicated an interest in that modality. The benefits and challenges associated with telephone interviews are outlined in Chapter Three.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research which focuses on how faculty believe they should be included in the creation of distance education policy. A general introduction to the problem offered details regarding important literature within the topic area and the conceptual framework from which the research will be studied. The purpose of the research and research questions were included as were an overview of the design and methodology and the significance of the study. Finally, assumptions, limitations, and definitions were outlined.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This research examines the distance education policymaking process specifically focusing on the faculty stakeholders. Furthermore, this study explores faculty perceptions as to how they and others are involved with the creation of distance education policy, how they should be involved with the process, and how their role in this policymaking impacts distance education.

Chapter two outlines the foundational areas of adult and distance education which are discussed broadly and are then followed by a review of literature focused on distance education policy, faculty participation in distance teaching, and faculty involvement in higher education and distance education policy. Finally, an overview of the policy literature reviewed for this study includes details about policy development theory models like Rational Comprehensive, Incremental, and Multiple Streams and literature related to the chosen conceptual framework – Multiple Streams.

Foundations

This section looks at the primary area of literature that provided a foundation for this study. Definitions and an overview of distance education in higher education are included in this section.

Introduction

The area of distance education fits appropriately within the field of adult education due to the fact that many adults have experienced distance learning as a student
or distance teaching as an instructor. Research supports that distance education students tend to be adult learners or have responsibilities that fall into the “non-traditional” category of learner (Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Thompson, 1998; UCEA, 2002). Whether they are deemed traditional or non-traditional, learners choose distance education “either because they genuinely prefer this mode or because they cannot – for reasons of job, family, geographical distance, finance, etc. – make use of conventional education” (Holmberg, 2002, p. 12). Distance education also affects adults as educators. It promotes the “extension and transformation of the field of adult education” by “broadening the role of adult educators…to develop programs for the adult who must, or chooses to, study at a distance” (Garrison, 1989, p. 229).

The National Center for Education Statistics (2006) reports that enrollments for adult learners will increase approximately 20% by the year 2015; many of these adult learners will enroll in distance education courses and/or programs. In fact the recent report from the Sloan-C Foundation indicates that “sixty-five percent of schools offering graduate face-to face courses also offer graduate courses online and among all schools offering face-to-face Master’s degree programs, 44% also offer Master’s programs online” (Allen & Seaman, p. 1, 2006). While the literature doesn’t provide an exact number of faculty teaching online, Allen and Seaman (2006) report that “seventy-four percent of public colleges report that their online courses are taught by core faculty, as opposed to only 61% for their face-to-face courses” (p. 2). Thompson (2003) indicates that “as online teaching becomes an expectation for increasing numbers of faculty members, institutional policies can ensure that faculty are appropriately supported in, rather than penalized for, their participation in online teaching and learning” (p. 4).
Distance Education

The term distance education has broadly included everything from correspondence courses to video conferencing courses to hybrid courses. With this broad description, the history of distance education is lengthy going back to the start of correspondence courses in the late 1800’s (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). It is a mode of education that has been used worldwide by high school students, undergraduates, and adult learners whether in postsecondary education or the workforce. The definition of distance education has been refined and redefined over the years. This is seen in the evolution of Moore’s distance education definitions. In 1990, Moore described distance education as “all arrangements for providing instruction through print or electronic communications media to persons engaged in planned learning in a place or time different from that of the instructor or instructors” (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. xv).

Later, Moore and Kearsley (1997) refine the definition to specify that the learning is planned and includes “organizational and administrative arrangements” (p. 2). Most definitions specify that distance education is teaching and learning that occurs asynchronously – the learner(s) and instructor separated by time and space – using a variety of technical media to support the teaching and learning (Keegan, 1996; Eastmond, 1998; Locatis & Weisburg, 1997). For the purpose of this review, distance teaching refers only to an asynchronous, web-based, online teaching in a higher education setting. This is different than the more broad definitions of distance education noted above in that it does not include video or print formats. Focusing on the setting of higher education also narrows the discussion by not considering online learning in the workforce or in a secondary setting.
Distance Education Policy

This section offers an overview of distance education policy, including a definition and background information. Common areas of distance education policy—strategic management decision zones—are discussed with special emphasis on the zone of faculty. As student support services and administration are important strategic management decisions zones that intersect with faculty, these are discussed briefly. Finally a review of the literature regarding creation of distance education policy and a discussion of what is missing in that literature completes the section.

Overview of Distance Education Policy

An area within distance education where the amount of research is increasing is in the area of policy. Distance education policy is “a written course of action adopted to facilitate program development and delivery in distance education” (King, et al. 2000, ¶ 3). In 1998, Gellman-Danley and Fetzner argued that distance education policy development and planning “receive(d) little attention” (¶ 1). The steady increase in literature on this topic over the past seven years could be the result of the merging of distance education with the missions of higher education institutions and the recognition of a lack of existing, but necessary policies on the topic (Buachalla, 1989; Kovel-Jarboe, 1997). Hickman (1997) posits that the rapid pace of technological transformation has resulted in institutions not being able to keep up with developing policies necessary to address the changes.

Olcott (2002) states that the “emphasis on technology has overshadowed the focus on academic policies to accommodate distance learning” (p. 487). Hanna (1998) continues by saying that technology is blurring boundaries in regards to student types,
teaching, learning and funding; “this blurring of boundaries is creating both institutional stress and opportunities for reframing and restructuring missions and programs” (p. 73). The American Council on Education (2000) believes that the growth in distance education is forcing institutions to revisit existing policies and plans making changes to incorporate or make room for distance education.

Policies “can provide a framework for operation, an agreed upon set of rules that explain all participants’ roles and responsibilities” (Gellman-Danley & Fetzner, 1998). Irele (2005) believes that “policies have become important lenses through which we can understand organizational goals and intent” in distance education (¶ 2). Pacey and Keough (2003) state that a policy “typically speaks to context, resources, activities, and desired outcomes” (p. 402). King, Nugent, Russell, Eich, and Lacy (2000) define distance education policy as “a written course of action adopted to facilitate program development and delivery in distance education” (¶ 3). For the purpose of this dissertation, distance education policy refers to the guidelines or principles associated with distance education courses and/or programs at higher education institutions.

The topics within distance education policy are comprehensive and include policies basically pertaining to the institution, the faculty, and the student. The literature offers a categorization for areas of policy associated with distance education. King, Nugent, Eich, Mlinke, and Russell (2000) identify these various policy areas as “strategic management decision zones” (¶ 4). The areas of policy topics include academic, fiscal, geographic service area, governance, faculty, administration, legal, and student support services (Gellman-Danley & Fetzner, 1998; King, Nugent, Eich, Mlinke, & Russell, 2000; Simonson, 2002). Other policy topic areas include cultural and technical (Berge,
McCoy and Sorensen (2003) compared the categories in all of the frameworks that outlined these policy areas and added “private industry,” referring to the importance of external partnerships, and “access to education” categories (p. 93). These strategic management decision zones are important parts of the distance education policy making system.

**Strategic Management Decision Zones**

As noted above, strategic management decision (SMD) zones are the various areas of policy within distance education policy (i.e. faculty, student services, external partnerships, etc.). The system of distance education policy making is made up of these SMD zones; therefore, it is essential to discuss some of the most relevant zones in relation to faculty. The literature reviewed in this section focuses on faculty as one of the key SMD zones within the system. Two additional zones that intersect with faculty and for which there is much literature – student support services and administration – are also discussed briefly.

**Strategic Management Decision Zone—Faculty**

The distance education literature as it relates to faculty typically focuses on motivators and deterrents of faculty participation in distance teaching. The primary concerns within the faculty SMD zone have been grouped into the following sub-categories: incentives/barriers, intellectual property, and academic/course issues. The literature within these sub-categories includes findings from research studies and recommendations from prescriptive articles.
Incentives/Barriers. The distance education literature reflects that incentives are one way in which faculty are motivated to participate in distance teaching (Olcott & Wright, 2002). Olcott and Wright’s (2002) research found that barriers to faculty participation in and acceptance of distance teaching could be reduced through incentives including “compensating, rewarding, and training faculty” (p. 290). These incentives include monetary compensation (ACE, 2000; ACE, 2003; Berg, 2000; Berge, 1998; Gellman-Danley & Fetzner, 1998; King, et al., 2000; Kovel-Jarboe, 1997; Meyer, 2002; Simonson, 2002) and other rewards like recognition for promotion and tenure (Berg, 2000; Bower, 2001; Husmann & Miller, 2001; Olcott, 2002; SREB, 2001). Bower (2001) notes that “time spent in developing distance learning courses is time not spent on other professional activities which may be needed to be successful in the tenure process” (¶ 6). It is essential to have faculty on promotion and tenure committees who have a clear understanding of distance teaching in order to appropriately provide feedback and evaluation as well as consistency in incentives and rewards across schools and departments (Willis, 2002).

Another important factor faculty note when discussing barriers to teaching online or developing online courses is the issue of faculty workload. Moss’s (1998) research findings indicate that many faculty have been expected to teach and be paid via overload or continuing education for online courses, “giving the impression that it was not a central part of the faculty’s work” (p. 98). Berge’s (2000) research notes that “policies regarding faculty work in distance learning still need to be formulated at many institutions” (p. 67). Prescriptive literature also recommends developing policies regarding faculty release time and workload (AAUP, 1999; ACE, 2000; ACE, 2003;

In Husman & Miller’s (2001) study, findings indicate that administrators need to provide faculty with professional development and technical support to increase participation in online teaching. The study by McCoy and Sorensen (2003) found a link between faculty success in distance teaching and faculty development. This issue of faculty training, development and technical support is echoed and most prevalent in the prescriptive literature (AAUP, 1999; Berg, 2000; Berge, 1998; CHEA, 2002; Compora, 2003; Gellman-Danley & Fetzner, 1998; Hickman, 1999; King, et al., 2000; Kovel-Jarboe, 1997; Levy, 2003; Simonson, 2002; SREB, 2001; Willis, 2002). Compora (2003) provides a list of training opportunities that should be used when working with faculty: “group sessions, one-on-one lab sessions, web-based tutorials, printed materials, listservs, mentorships, monthly discussion sessions among peers, and observation of other distance courses” (Faculty Involvement and Training section, ¶ 3). Some of the literature recommends group sessions as typically the most productive for and the most beneficial to faculty; encouraging faculty to work together in learning how to create online courses (AAUP, 1999; WCET, 2004; Willis, 2002).

Intellectual property. The area of intellectual property encompasses topics such as copyright and ownership. With the rapid pace of technological advances and the concerns of plagiarism, the issues of copyright and fair use are common concerns among faculty, librarians, and administrators (AAUP, 1999; ACE, 2000; Berg, 2000; Berge, 1998; Gellman-Danley & Fetzner, 1998; Levy, 2003; NEA, 2002a; Simonson, 2002;
Waterhouse & Rogers, 2004). The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2001) states that “actual institutional policies on intellectual property vary considerably” (p. 13). In her research, Irele (2002) found that although existing copyright policies “were consistently applied to distance education and regular education, faculty apparently, did not always perceive them to be to their benefit” (p. 183). Prescriptive research reflects that as distance teaching grows, the topics of intellectual property and ownership continually are vocalized and could be a matter of contention between faculty and administration unless addressed by guidelines or policies (AAUP, 1999; ACE, 2000; ACE, 2003; Berg, 2000; Berge, 1998; Gellman-Danley & Fetzner, 1998; Irele, 2002; King, et al., 2000; Levy, 2003; Meyer, 2002; NEA, 2002a; Simonson, 2002; Waterhouse & Rogers, 2004). Due to the fact that not all institutions “own” curriculum developed by faculty, the Consortium for Educational Technology for University Systems (CETUS) (1997) encourages institutional policies or faculty contracts that provide clarity on issues of ownership and rights of use.

**Academic/Course Issues.** Despite all the discussions about faculty incentives, research indicates that faculty members are most concerned about the integrity and quality of online courses (Bower, 2001; Dirr, 2003; Husmann & Miller, 2001; McCoy & Sorensen, 2003). This results in their requests for policies related to class size (ACE, 2000; Kovel-Jarboe, 1997; NEA, 2002a), faculty evaluation (King, et al., 2000; Simonson, 2002), and the curriculum approval process (Berge, 1998; Compora, 2003; Gellman-Danley & Fetzner, 1998). Faculty are not only requesting policies related to the various areas as noted above, they are also interested in being involved with the policy development process in general (Meyer, 2002).
Strategic Management Decision Zone—Student Support Services

A common policy area focuses that is probably most often researched is that of student support services. This policy intersects with faculty as many faculty will hear from students regarding support service concerns. Student services—including areas such as test proctoring, advising, library services, financial aid, and accommodations for those with disabilities—are the most prevalent topic in the literature (AAUP, 1999; ACE, 2003; Berge, 1998; Compora, 2003; Gellman-Danley & Fetzner, 1998; Kovel-Jarboe, 1997; Levy, 2003; McCoy & Sorensen, 2003; Meyer, 2002; NEA, 2002a; Simonson, 2002; USGAO, 2002). With increased competition among institutions, students will vote with their feet and will choose an institution that is sure to meet their needs. Therefore, institutions are increasingly focusing on providing and improving services to online learners. Guidelines, like those developed by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WCET) (2002), provide institutions with an overall framework for creating necessary services for distance education students.

Strategic Management Decision Zone—Administrative

This area of policy addresses issues that affect the institution as a whole and are typically directed by higher level administration. Many of the issues found within this area of policy intersect directly with faculty including issues of governance, visioning, leadership, and the values and mission of an institution (Berge, 1998; Compora, 2003; Hickman, 1999; King, et al., 2000; Kovel-Jarboe, 1997; Levy, 2003; McCoy & Sorensen, 2003; Meyer, 2002; NEA, 2002a; Simonson, 2002). Academic issues are also seen in the administrative literature including discussions about the academic calendar, admissions standards, transcripts, transferability (Berge, 1998; Gellman-Danley &
Faculty believe that another academic issue—also seen as a potential deterrent to teaching online—is accreditation regulations. In a time when accountability is on the forefront of the public’s mind, accreditation is a key concern to many faculty and administrators as well (ACE, 2000; ACE, 2003; Berge, 1998; Gellman-Danley & Fetzner, 1998; Hickman, 1999; King, et al., 2000; McCoy & Sorensen, 2003; Simonson, 2002; USGAO, 2002). Various accreditation associations are reviewing distance education activities and provide institutions with guidelines or standards focused on organizational structure or context, curriculum, faculty and student support, and evaluation and assessment (CHEA, 2001; Middle States, 2002; WCET, 2004). These areas of focus are similar to the strategic management decision zones found in the distance education policy literature.

Creation of Policy

The literature within the area of distance education that discusses creating policy is small with a mix of prescriptive articles and some research studies. Hearn (1998) believes that those in higher education “tend to oversimplify policy making itself,” when in reality the policy making process is “arcane, messy, and indeterminate” (p. 7). This is due to the various “social/political values and interests” of those who are involved in policy making (p. 7). This would reflect why distance education policy is many times developed after courses and programs are already in place. Yet creating policy could be considered a proactive measure in protecting an institution (Gellman-Danley & Fetzner,
This is especially true as it relates to federal policies and regulations that can affect what an institution can do in terms of services and policies (Van Dusen, 2002). Meyer (2002) shares a common belief of policy being created to “help clarify the situation, provide a guide for future behavior, or change the behavior of individuals in a manner deemed more appropriate or beneficial” (¶ 3). According to Berge (1998), distance education policy development or changes often occur when “someone trying to implement a course or program at a distance meets a barrier and through persuasion causes it to be changed or alternatively, develops a work-around to the obstacle” (Policy Framework section, ¶ 1).

Meyer (2002) believes that every institutional context or situation is different, allowing for options when considering policy development: 1) “do nothing” if the institution is not committed to distance education; 2) “revise current policies” if the institution wants to clarify guidelines and be more supportive to distance teaching; 3) “study the issue” if distance education is a consideration for the institution; and 4) “avoid policy development for now” if the faculty are just focused on incentives and not on risk taking (Institution’s Policy Alternatives section, ¶ 2-5). Ultimately, Simonson (2002) states that institutions need to integrate distance education policy into mainstreamed higher education policy in order to “indicate that distance education is a routine and regularly occurring component of the educational enterprise” (p. vi). Others argue that policies institutions currently have in place may be inappropriate for distance education situations; therefore, additional policies specific to the online environment are necessary (ACE, 2003; UNESCO, 2002). Simonson and Bauck (2003) express that distance
education policies “should support the provision of equivalent rather than equal learning experiences” (p. 419).

While King, et al. (2000) provide strategic management decision zones as a model of policy development, other models focus on the needs of the institution at large or on the administrative aspect of policy development and cover areas such as needs assessment, budget, coordination, delivery methods, evaluation, mission statement, and approval systems (Compora, 2003). Additional administrative areas of need include financial aid, quality programming, and transferability of credit (SREB, 2001). What the models have in common is a focus on faculty involvement/training and student support systems (Compora, 2003; SREB 2001). A study of distance education administrators, conducted by Husmann and Miller (2001), confirms that faculty issues are extremely important for administrators to consider when planning a distance education program, yet there is no indication that faculty are involved in the actual planning. The administrators surveyed in this study believe that faculty must be relied upon for leadership and “see their job as one of facilitating program quality rather than owning responsibility for program success” (¶ 16).

One study, which reviewed six university systems or multi-campus universities and their distribution of distance education functions, did find faculty were involved in policies related to curriculum and intellectual property but not involved with policy areas like student services, technical support, and marketing (Lozier, 2002). Another study used policy frameworks, made up of various SMDs, to examine policy development within virtual universities (McCoy & Sorenson, 2003). The findings from this study mentioned faculty only as it pertained to the importance of academic policies associated
with faculty training and development and resources for faculty. The findings from this study associated with governance policy did not mention the involvement of faculty.

The literature reflects the variety of policy issues common to distance education as a form of education within higher education. As this research focuses on the perspectives of faculty, it is important to note the areas among the faculty-related issues that have not yet been addressed in the literature as it relates to policy creation. While the literature about faculty participation is more extensive, the noted barriers to participation fall within the strategic management decision zones noted earlier.

Faculty Participation in Distance Teaching

When considering the areas of policy that concern faculty, it is essential to explore another area of literature that attempts to understand faculty’s experiences with distance teaching that may influence the faculty involvement in policy making. Faculty participation in distance teaching refers to a faculty member’s participation in teaching via various forms of distance education. This could include providing instruction via online, video conference (one way or two way), CD-Rom, correspondence, etc. This section reviews the literature regarding participation of faculty in distance education as a whole.

There is an extensive list of factors that encourage or deter faculty participation in distance teaching. In her literature review of the factors affecting faculty participation in distance teaching, Maguire (2005) categorized these factors as intrinsic, extrinsic, and institutional, with two sub-categories within the institutional category: 1) technology and teaching and 2) technical and administrative support.
Intrinsic Motivators and Inhibitors

Personal motivation to use technology (Betts, 1998; Bonk, 2001; Lee, 2001; Rockwell, et al. 1999; Schifter, 2000a) or perceiving distance teaching as an intellectual challenge (Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2000a) are a few of the intrinsic motivators for faculty to participate in teaching online. In surveys regarding reasons for teaching online, faculty noted that distance teaching added to their overall job satisfaction (Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2000a) and that teaching online provided the most favorable working conditions (Betts, 1998), as they were able to teach at any time and from any place. Faculty members also stated a feeling of satisfaction and self-gratification from teaching online (Rockwell, et al. 1999).

There are also intrinsic reasons for deciding not to teach online which include resistance to change (Berge, 1998; Parisot, 1997) and being intimidated by technology (Parisot, 1997). In a National Education Association (2000) survey 50 percent of faculty conveyed negative or uncertain feelings towards distance teaching. Berge (1998) also found that twenty-two percent of faculty “indicated reluctance or inability to deal with the…changes often engendered by online teaching” (Survey Results and Discussion section, ¶ 8). In these cases, faculty had not used technology in their face-to-face classrooms and felt uncomfortable utilizing email for communication; therefore, teaching online seems intimidating. Some faculty are concerned that distance teaching will threaten the on-campus learning experience and will affect their career by “capturing their intellectual property through multimedia” (Dooley & Murphrey, 2000, Discussion Section, ¶ 4). Furthermore, faculty members are concerned about whether or not certain academic subjects should be taught online (Berge, 1998; Betts, 1998).
Extrinsic Motivators and Inhibitors

One that can be either an extrinsic motivator or inhibitor is fellow faculty. Working with peers from other institutions in online collaboration opportunities or encouraging student-to-student collaborations may be stimulating and motivating (Dooley & Murphrey, 2000). Positive recognition from peers in the form of support or in the form of tenure and promotion increases motivation for participation; likewise, negative recognition from peers who do not support the medium can have the opposite affect (Bonk, 2001; Parisot, 1997; Rockwell, et al. 1999). The positive support for which faculty look to their peers comes in the form of role modeling distance education technologies, sharing their online experiences, and providing online peer “observations.” The majority of faculty “would like more showcases in instructional technology that demonstrates real-world applications in the classroom” (Chizmar & Williams, 2001, p. 22). In Parisot’s (1997) study, “role modeling was a primary motivational factor in the adoption and diffusion of technology” (p. 6).

Institutional Motivators and Inhibitors

Other factors are considered institutional due to the perceived ability of the institution to alter distance education policies or procedures to meet the needs of the faculty. Maguire (2005) categorized the institutional needs into two sub-topic areas of 1) technology and teaching and 2) administrative and technical support. Technology can be seen as a motivator as it provides faculty with the opportunity to enhance course quality and diversify academic programming (Maguire, 2005). The technology can also increase access to those who cannot attend class on-campus (Betts, 1998; Dooley & Murphrey, 2000; Jones & Moller, 2002; McKenzie, et al. 2000; Rockwell, et al. 1999; Schifter,
2000b). But faculty still have concerns about the technology that deter them from teaching online. They are concerned about the increase of students assuming that information easily obtained via the Internet is legitimate and that teaching online will sacrifice quality (Dooley & Murphrey, 2000). Many times those that have these concerns have yet to participate in online teaching (Betts; 1998; Dooley & Murphrey, 2000; Jones & Moller, 2002; O’Quinn & Corry, 2002; Schifter, 2000a).

Barriers to teaching online are most common in the administrative area with faculty workload being the most mentioned (Berge, 1998; Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2000a; O’Quinn & Corry, 2002). Time is an administrative factor due to the institution’s ability to provide release time for development and maintenance of online courses. Other deterrents reflect the opposite of the motivating factors faculty list: lack of financial incentives and lack of technical support, including concerns about systems reliability, access to the online courseware, and inadequate infrastructure, hardware, and software. Finally faculty believe that they lack clear policies about copyright and intellectual property rights (Berge, 1998; Dooley & Murphrey, 2000; O’Quinn & Corry, 2002).

The literature offers an extensive catalog of factors and while no specific factors seem to be omitted from the list, the literature does lack the issues of cultural and contextual influences. For example, institutional motivators and barriers can differ depending on the culture and the mission of the institution (Berge, 1998). Although intrinsic factors are typically the primary determiner of faculty participation (Betts, 1998; Dillon & Walsh, 1992; Lee, 2001; Rockwell, 1999), one could argue that if the necessary extrinsic and institutional factors were in place, intrinsic deterrents may be less influential. Intrinsic factors may also be outweighed by pressures (institutional, peer,
student and community) faculty experience, which either support or deter participation in distance teaching.

Many of the issues brought to light in the faculty participation literature have provided an impetus for policies related to distance education. The faculty participation literature does not provide much insight about faculty involvement in distance education policy development. The next section examines faculty involvement in higher education policy in general and then focuses on distance education policy.

Faculty Involvement in Policy

Teaching, service and research scholarship tend to be the three primary responsibilities of faculty within higher education. Service can include service to the institution through participation in various committees or groups. It is typical for faculty to be involved in curriculum related polices but the literature varies in perceptions regarding involvement in other institutional policies. In this section, faculty involvement in higher education policy is reviewed at a broad level and then specifically focuses on faculty involvement in distance education policy.

Faculty Involvement in Higher Education Policy

There are few research studies that look at faculty involvement in higher education policy. Mumper's (1983) study on faculty involvement in policy reflects the decline of faculty participation in higher education policy making. “What shall be taught, who shall teach it, and what shall be required of students are all policy decisions dominated by the faculty through formal structures” yet, “as the policy-making arenas change…traditional avenues of faculty involvement have begun to decline in relevance”
A study by the Association of College and University Policy Administrators (ACUPA) (2005) noted that a review of higher education policy research reflected a lack of information about how higher education policy is created. This study asserted that policy developers primarily resided in the administrative levels of institutions, specifically in areas like finance, legal, and technology. None of the respondents of the study came from an academic area, reflecting the lack of involvement in policy development by faculty.

**Shared Governance**

In discussing faculty involvement in higher education, the term “shared governance” usually comes to mind. Governance—also known as college governance or shared governance—has been defined in various ways. Alfred (1998) defines shared governance as “the process for distributing authority, power, and influence for academic decisions among campus constituencies” (p. 1). Although governance in higher education has typically been split between three campus constituencies of trustees, administration, and faculty, governance in the last decade has provided “weak mechanisms for faculty participation” (Kezar & Eckel, 2004, p. 371).

Rice and Miller’s (2001) study focused on faculty perceptions about their involvement in decision making in regards to technology within higher education. These researchers note that faculty tend to be included in many areas of “college governance” but are not typically involved in discussions about technology. Their findings indicate that “in the past, when technology was used administratively, the fact that faculty did not have input or decision-making power was not as important as it is currently, when faculty are using more technology in instruction and are more affected by technology planning
and implementation decisions” (p. 332). Indeed, literature related to shared governance reflects a lack of faculty involvement in recent years (Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Lapworth, 2004).

In her research, Lapworth (2004) reviews various models of shared governance and notes that “governance is done to, rather than by” faculty (p. 301). She argues that although faculty tends to be consumed with their academic workload, their participation in governance should not be disregarded. This participation in governance could take place through the actions of the academic department. The academic department can “provide the building blocks for academic participation in governance” and is a place where the faculty’s voice is heard (Lapworth, 2004, p. 310). Fish (2007) believes that context affects the model of governance an institution uses noting that there is “no general model of governance, shared or otherwise, that can be replicated from place to place” (p. 9). This sentiment is echoed by Kezar (2005) who adds that governance models must be re-examined over time especially due to institutional changes in climate and in culture. Kezar and Eckel (2004) also reviewed many models of governance including those that were more structurally based or more based on interpersonal relationships. They found that Cohen and March’s Garbage Can Model encompassed the structural and human dynamics of governance. This model is a policy model and is discussed later in this chapter.

Some faculty members believe that they are not “welcome” in policy discussions and are expected to participate primarily in curricular discussions when it comes to shared governance (Hearn, 1998; Rice & Miller, 2001). Feenberg (1999) adds that “faculty and students are not allies but obstacles to be swept along by the inevitable
momentum of progress” (¶ 34). Yet Hearn (1998) argues that faculty involvement in policy could benefit institutions resulting in “improved constancy in attention to policy issues” (p. 5). The feeling faculty have of not being welcome causes reluctant in their participation in policy development as well as results in a tension between faculty and administration. Mumper (1983) reports that due to this “cynicism and suspicion” some “faculty members may be hesitant to spend time and effort on an activity that seems dubious, time-consuming, and ultimately futile” (p. 305). Kezar and Eckel (2004) also note faculty indifference to or disinterest in governance participation due to other issues such as academic workload, lack of rewards for participation, and loyalty to and focus on academic disciplines rather than institutions.

Participation—Politics and Power

Faculty involvement or lack of involvement in governance or policy development can be a factor of politics and power. Although the adult education literature and the public administration policy literature are both rich with political and power perspectives, the distance education participation literature does not contain such perspectives. Therefore, this section briefly discusses the issues of politics and power as parts of a larger context that must be considered. The writings of Cervero and Wilson discuss power and participation through the context of program planning, also noting the importance of stakeholder involvement. Cervero and Wilson (2006) discuss the importance of recognizing the social and organizational contexts of participation stating that those involved in planning do so by “negotiating personal, organizational, and social interests in contexts marked by socially structured relations of power” (p. 24). They define the three characteristics of power as a) “power is a social and relational
characteristic, not simply something that people ‘possess’ and use on one another”; b) “it is necessary to distinguish between power relations as a structural characteristic and people’s exercise of power, which is an individual activity”; and c) “although power relations are relatively stable, they are continuously negotiated at planning tables” (p. 85).

**Recommendations from Literature**

The literature does offer recommendations for faculty and their involvement in policy development. Kezar and Eckel (2004) support the beliefs of Birnbaum (1991) who states that “dual systems of authority that accommodate the differing perspectives of faculty and administrators are the key to effective governance in that they retain both educational values (faculty) and responsiveness (administration)” (p. 380). Mumper (1983) believes that if “faculty are willing to take the time to become knowledgeable about the issues and develop the political expertise to use that knowledge, they will be unable to play a significant policy role” (p. 300). One recommendation for faculty involvement is at the research level. Hearn (1998) notes that “there are too few instances of clear research-to-policy paths” and that faculty research could assist in influencing higher education policy in various areas including the area of finance (p. 6).

The majority of the literature on faculty involvement in higher education policy seems to be descriptive, providing information on the topics of governance in which faculty are typically involved like areas of curriculum/instruction and evaluation and assessment. When looking at actual studies based on faculty involvement in the creation of policy, the findings reflected a lack of information on how policy is created and a concern about the decline of faculty involvement in policy discussions, planning, and development.
**Faculty Involvement in Distance Education Policy**

A sub-set of higher education policy is within the area of distance education. As in the higher education literature, little is written about faculty involvement in distance education policy. Rather, the literature provides ample information about faculty views on the topic of distance education policy. This research indicates that faculty believe administrators do not provide adequate institutional support—financial, technological, and administrative—(Betts, 1998; Bonk, 2001; Jones & Moller, 2002; Lee, 2001; Parisot, 1997; Rockwell, et al. 1999; Schifter, 2000a) nor did they have clear policies regarding distance education (Chizmar & Williams, 2001; Dooley & Murphrey, 2000). Brooks’ (1999) findings illuminated faculty’s need for standard and consistent distance education policies.

In addition, research is beginning to address the importance of faculty understanding and acceptance of distance education when it comes to participation not only in teaching, but also in planning and decision-making (Berge, 1998; King, et al., 2000; Simonson, 2002). For example, Moss (1998) indicates in his research that many faculty have not had interest in or accepted distance teaching as an institutional priority, which in turn has given policy development and planning control to others—typically the administration—and left implementation to the faculty. Irele (2005) posits that “the problem of policy implementation seems to center on faculty acceptance of policy decisions because faculty members are often the implementers of distance education policy as it relates to teaching” (Discussion section, ¶ 2). When discussing the reservations of faculty in regard to distance teaching, Moore and Thompson (1997) indicate that “increased experience leads to increased acceptance” (p. 25).
Prescriptive literature regarding who should be involved in the creation or development of distance education policy provides various perspectives. In their distance education accreditation guidelines, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2002) recommends that faculty be involved in policies related to “issues of workload, compensation, ownership of intellectual property resulting from the program, and the implications of program participation for the faculty member’s professional evaluation processes” (p. 24). The Western Association of Schools and Colleges use this exact terminology in their recommended best practices document for higher education institutions (2007). Other accrediting agencies discuss faculty involvement in distance education in relation to issues around curriculum and instruction but do not specifically recommend policy involvement (NWCCU, 1998; SACS, 2007). Feenberg (1999) laments that rather than faculty, “politicians, university administrations and computer and telecommunications companies” are navigating where distance education is moving (¶ 1). Haché (1998) believes that it is essential to include those that have varying perspectives, expectations and values. Levy (2003) suggests that by being inclusive in planning, administrators “can determine the priorities and constraints…that will lead to strategies to minimize the resistance to the changes being made” (¶ 8). Yet some argue for faculty leadership in the development of policies (ACE, 2003; Feenberg, 1999; Rockwell, et al., 1999; Schifter, 2000b).

Regardless of the role of leadership, Compora (2003) believes that faculty should be involved in every part of the distance education process. This is true for faculty who choose not teach online, as their expertise in the content area and in institutional programming are very relevant. In many institutions it is the technical personnel, not the
faculty, who are typically involved with distance education policy, yet Zeller (1995) notes that “academic personnel need to play an increasingly greater role in programming decisions and planning for distance education” (p. 143). Furthermore, faculty are best positioned to provide input on behalf of their students (Pacey & Keough, 2003). At Stanford, Harris and DiPaolo (1999) decided that both faculty and administrators should discuss distance education policy issues; this keeps faculty “involved with and supportive of the program” (p. 6). The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) (1999) expresses a stronger feeling toward faculty involvement, stating that “faculty should have primary responsibility for determining the policies and practices of the institution in regard to distance education” (¶ 7). This is echoed by Pacey and Keough (2003), who assert that “distance educators must play a role in the formulation of [distance education] programs through research and participation in the policy process” (p. 414).

The problem may not be about the amount of involvement of faculty in the arena of policy development, but rather whether they are included at all. Not including faculty in the development of distance education policies has the potential to limit the amount of growth that an institution can realize within the distance education arena. Hearn (1998) and Irele (2005), referencing Palloff and Pratt, discuss the lack of faculty involvement in creating policy as a factor in the estrangement between faculty and administrators. Indeed, it seems plausible that faculty involvement through the entire policy making process could increase interest and participation and would facilitate a sense of ownership, understanding, and acceptance. This is reflected in the distance teaching faculty participation literature, which highlights faculty desire for increased
communication and knowledge about various distance education policies (Brooks, 1999; Chizmar & Williams, 2001; Dooley & Murphrey, 2000).

Conceptual Framework

As discussed earlier, the little research available about distance education policy focuses on organizational theory and does not use policy making theory frameworks or models. This section reviews the conceptual framework chosen for this study – the Multiple Streams Model – a pre-decision model of policy development from the field of public administration. The literature associated with the model is reviewed, noting the strengths and challenges of the model. Finally, the literature in which the Multiple Streams model has been used within the field of higher education is examined, noting any gaps that are relevant to the topic of distance education policy.

Policy Development Models

There are various definitions of policy or public policy. Birkland (2001) defines public policy as a “statement by government of what it intends to do or not to do, such as a law, regulation, ruling, decision, or order or a combination of these” (p. 269). Guba (1984) defines policy as the collected decisions of a body used to standardize and otherwise exert authority within its realm. Anderson (1997) defines policy as “a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern” (p. 173). Anderson’s definition is like that of King, Nugent, Russell, Eich, & Lacy (2000), who also focus on a course of action. While the distance education literature provides descriptive articles about various areas of distance education
policy and outlines suggestions for how the policy should be created, it does not provide a framework or model for creating policy.

As there are various frameworks for policy development found in the public administration and policy fields, the utilization of these frameworks seems appropriate for this research. The Stages model of policy development provided the first theoretical framework in the policy arena and offered a sequential process or stages for practitioners to follow. These stages include initiation, estimation, selection, implementation, evaluation, and termination (DeLeon, 1999). This model offers a simple way to make understanding the policy process more manageable. Critics argue that Stages is not a framework or theory, but rather a “typology” that focuses on description only (Sabatier, 1999). Although Stages is criticized for its linearity and its lack of explanatory purpose, it remains a framework from which other theories and models have stemmed and still provides the basic steps or stages of policy making which can benefit practitioners or those new to the field. There are three main models of policy development which stem from the Stages framework – rational comprehensive, incremental, and multiple streams.

Rational Comprehensive Model

One of the main theories of policy development is that of the rational comprehensive theory. The rational comprehensive model stems from the logic of scientific theory and is influenced by economics. The purpose of this model, according to Frederickson and Smith (2003) is to “determine the most efficient, or rational, decisions to achieve preferred objectives” and the objectives are those that promote “organizational survival” (p. 161). Organizations that follow the rational comprehensive decision making process are those that share common goals and values. Dye (2002)
notes that a “policy is rational when the difference between the values it achieves and the values it sacrifices is positive and greater than any other policy alternative” (p. 17).

In this model, decision makers are confronted with a problem or issue and then take into consideration a comprehensive list of all the various choices or alternatives before making a decision about the problem or issue. The possible alternatives are considered and the best one – based on cost/benefit analysis, values, preferences, and potential outcomes – is selected. Each alternative and its corresponding consequences are compared (Anderson, 1997). The rational comprehensive model promotes providing “maximum social gain” (Dye, 2002, p. 17) and offers an explanatory theory (rather than descriptive) which is empirical and linear. It posits that people look at all of the information about a problem prior to making a decision as to how to handle it. Their decision will be one that maximizes benefits and minimizes costs.

Yet there are barriers associated with this model including the possibility that “decision makers are not faced with concrete, clearly defined problems” (Anderson, 1997, p. 178). Furthermore decision makers may not be able, due to time constraints, to compare conflicting costs and benefits or may not be able to know all of the possible alternatives needed to make the most rational choice. Dye (2002) adds that “policymakers do not have sufficient intelligence to calculate accurately costs and benefits when a large number of diverse political, social, economic, and cultural values are at stake” (p. 19). The rational comprehensive model also tends to “ignore the role of the [policy] entrepreneur” (Henry, 2000, p. 310). It does not allow for agendas and biases on the part of those involved with the process. Finally, it is unlikely that all members of an organization will share the same values and goals, which makes it
difficult to in making decisions based on values. Anderson (1997) adds to this concern stating that the “decision maker might confuse his personal values with those of the public” (p. 178).

**Incremental Model**

Another policy development theory is incrementalism or bounded rationality, which is a safe and steady method of creating policy. This descriptive model recognizes the constraints of time, cost, and data gathering in trying to identify all possible alternatives as suggested by the rational comprehensive model. It is a politically safer model that allows for incremental changes over time. Elaborated by Lindblom, who also termed this type of policy making as “muddling through,” incrementalism works within the boundaries of an institution to conservatively create policy via slow change (Birkland, 2002; Dye, 2002).

Incrementalism argues that not all of the people within an institution may share the same goals and values, thus decision making is not as easy or as linear as described in the rational comprehensive theory. Yet the model is typically more expedient as “agreement comes easier in policymaking when the items in dispute are only increases or decreases in budgets or modifications to existing programs” (Dye, 2002, p. 20). Incrementalism is a “real sociological model of policy making that replaced the much more econological way of thinking that lies behind the rational comprehensive model of policy making” (Rabin, Hildreth, & Miller, 1998, p. 387). This model has remained dominant in the area of policy especially pertaining to budgetary decisions (Snellen & van de Donk, 1998).
The incremental model also faces criticisms, including Henry’s (2000) claim that incrementalism is a bargaining concept. This is a criticism because the “real objectives of participants often are deliberately hidden by the participants themselves” and there is no clarity of the objective (Henry, 2000, p. 311). Therefore, those following the incremental model are viewed as non-visionaries. Another concern about incrementalism is the lack of action in times when there is not a clear path to take. “Under conditions of uncertainty, policymakers continue past policies or programs whether or not they have proven effective” (Dye, 2002, p. 20). This attitude of contentment with the status quo makes radical change something almost impossible to obtain; therefore, incremental change is the only option in this model. Anderson (1997) notes that incrementalism may be a safer method but can be like settling – not striving to make significant changes and choosing incremental steps instead – as it “yields limited, practicable, and acceptable decisions” (p. 179).

**Multiple Streams Model**

Another category of policy making that doesn’t fit comfortably into the rational paradigm is the Multiple Streams model. Instead, it shares components of the incremental paradigm and is “firmly grounded in …the garbage can model of choice” (Schlager, 1999). McLendon (2002) states that “whereas the uniqueness of the Rational-Comprehensive model is reflected in its linearity, and that of the Incremental model in its serial nature, the singularity of Kingdon’s…model is embodied in the concurrent character of its separate streams, whose unpredictable and dynamic coupling makes possible the rise of ideas” on an agenda (p. 53). Kingdon’s descriptive model is also different in that it benefits practitioners in providing a solid basis for the policy process.
focusing on the pre-decision part of policy making, which is unlikely to be an incremental process.

Unlike the rational comprehensive theory, MS recognizes the limits of resources/information as well as a person’s inability to process all of the information gathered. Kingdon (2003), the developer of MS, argues that choosing alternatives must be done gradually as policy proposals cannot be created instantaneously. He cautions that while this type of change can be incremental, change at the agenda building level is typically non-incremental and that “continual change, not equilibrium, is the hallmark of agenda-setting” (p. 227). The MS model promotes continual change and posits that policy can be created when three streams converge in a window of opportunity. What is chosen from the mix of the streams depends on who the participants in the policy making process are.

Unlike rational theories of policy making which consider alternative solutions once a problem emerges, MS contends that its three streams—problems, policies, and politics—are independent of one another with policies floating “around … searching for problems for which to become attached or political events that increase their likelihood of adoption” (Kingdon, 2003, p. 172). These streams can randomly converge within a “window of opportunity” or a possibility for policy change. The convergence of the three increases the likelihood of a policy change, as the streams independently cannot affect change. One of the major assumptions of the Multiple Streams model is that it is a non-linear model. Its non-linear process disagrees with the rational comprehensive policy making theories of the field.
Furthermore, instead of focusing on each piece or step of the process as most rational theories do, the Multiple Streams model focuses on the policy development process as a whole. This focus on the entire policy development system, which helps to determine the parts, is indicative of the culturalist paradigm. While there are many parts of the system, the core that the Multiple Streams model considers are the three streams of policy, problems, and politics. These three streams and the process of getting a policy on the agenda is what makes this model different from the others.

**Background**

The Multiple Streams model is rooted in the Garbage Can theory. This theory, developed by Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972), stems from organizational theory and provides a non-linear system of decision-making. It posits that policy outcomes result from a mix of independent streams referred to as problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities. A problem is something that requires attention from those internal and external to the organization and a solution is a potential answer, a product or policy (Cohen, March, and Olsen, 1972). Participants differ and can be anyone and choice opportunities are times when a decision must be made. The policy process thus becomes a garbage can in which participants develop and dump a variety of problems and solutions. While this process of developing policy is considered non-linear, it is not considered random; there is a method to the madness.

This theory focuses on the entirety of a situation (the entire garbage can) and not solely on the individuals within the policy process. The Garbage Can theory was initially based on policy development within universities, which Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) refer to as organized anarchies. They define an organized anarchy as an organization
with three independent properties – problematic preferences (inconsistent and nonspecific preferences), unclear technology (vague processes), and fluid participation (varying levels of involvement). Problematic preferences could refer to differences between administration and faculty while unclear technology could refer to lack of knowledge or clarity when it comes to campus procedures. Fluid participation could refer to turnover among faculty and staff or to random participation or attendance in meetings. Basically an organized anarchy is a university that, as a whole, still functions rather well as an organization despite the variety of people on campus (faculty, staff, students) with varying opinions for how things should happen and unclear levels of bureaucracy.

Development of Multiple Streams

In 1984, Kingdon revised the Garbage Can theory and developed the Multiple Streams (MS) model. This model, also known as the Revised Garbage Can Model, adapted many aspects of the Garbage Can theory. Like Cohen, March and Olsen (1972), Kingdon posits the convergence of properties (called streams by Kingdon) to create policy. Kingdon (2003) does somewhat change the names of the streams moving from four properties (in the Garbage Can theory) to three streams which he calls problems, policies, and politics. Kingdon (2003) asserts that policy issues gain agenda status, and alternative solutions are selected, when the elements of three streams—problem recognition, generation of policy proposals, and political events—converge. The process of the model includes the recognition of a problem by a policy community which offers a proposal or solution to the problem. This solution must be accepted or approved by those in the political realm. If that happens, the streams have converged in the window of opportunity allowing for policy reform. (Sabatier, 1996). The convergence in the
window of opportunity leads to agenda status which LaBrie (2004) calls the “beginning of the political decision-making process” also noting that “a possible solution can never become policy unless it first rises to the level of an agenda item” (p. 39).

Problem recognition, similar to the “problem” property in the Garbage Can theory, is noticing a problem that has emerged. Of course, this problem recognition is subjective and interpretive – what may be considered a problem for one, may not be a problem for another. Generation of policy proposals, similar to the “solutions” property in the Garbage Can theory, is a way in which those in the policy community react to the problem; they generate policy proposals for the decision agenda. Not all policy proposals receive consideration. Proposals “that do not conform to the values of policymakers are less likely to be considered” for agenda status (Zahariadis, 1999, p. 77). The “decision agenda is the list of alternatives from which a public policy may be selected by policymakers to resolve a problem” (Henry, 2000, p. 303). The policy stream contains a policy community which is “composed of researchers, advocates, and other specialists who analyze problems and formulate possible alternatives” (Sabatier, 1996, p. 107).

Political events represent the political environment (results of an election, national mood, or turnover in representation within legislative bodies). Also called the “governmental agenda,” this is where “the list of issues or problems to be resolved is formed” (Henry, 2000, p. 302).

These streams converge in what Kingdon calls a window of opportunity (called choice opportunity by Cohen, March and Olsen) and can result in the creation of policy. Windows of opportunity are sometimes scarce and sometimes expected. For instance, if a university hires a new provost and if the political climate is just right, the faculty (in
this example acting as policy entrepreneurs) has a window of opportunity to push through some initiatives they are promoting. They are expecting this window of opportunity with this new hire, but as noted with windows of opportunity, nothing is guaranteed. These windows are typically quick to close and if policy is to be a result of the open window, policy entrepreneurs must act fast (Zahariadis, 1996).

Another difference that Kingdon highlights in the MS model is the importance of policy entrepreneurs. While the Garbage Can theory looks more at the situation of the policy process as a whole and does not focus on the individual, the MS model does both, giving attention to the dynamic system as a whole and to individual entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs are the ones creating the policies (developing policy proposals or championing proposals already developed), attempting to attach their policy idea to the other two streams (the problem or issue to appear on the agenda and for the political environment to be conducive for that to happen) and doing what they can to see that the three streams converge and lead to an item attaining agenda status. There are certain qualities that policy entrepreneurs must have in order to be successful in what they do. According to Kingdon (2003), the policy entrepreneur must have three qualities: 1) expertise on the issue, ability to represent others, or hold a decision-making position; 2) political connections or negotiation skills; and 3) persistence. LaBrie (2004) notes that “unlike the rational comprehensive or incremental models (of policy making), this model depends heavily on choices and individual’s creativity in regard to how issues become agenda items” (p. 42).

Kingdon also chooses to focus on government as an organized anarchy rather than the university as was the focus in Cohen, March and Olsen’s research. Furthermore, like
the Garbage Can theory, the MS model is somewhat structured and somewhat random, balancing in between the two, which is a part of reality and reflected in the process (Kingdon, 2003). This fluidity is reflective of the ambiguity of the policy process. As noted by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972), the Garbage Can theory reflects important aspects of policy development including fluidity, context, and ambiguity. This is also true for the Multiple Streams model. It is important to note that a proposed solution that makes it onto the agenda is an essential step as that is where decision making starts. Thus another key difference between the Garbage Can theory and MS is that MS focuses on the pre-decision process of policy making – agenda setting and decision making. Before Kingdon, the pre-decision process of agenda setting was not paid much attention (Thurber, 1995). MS has since “become the dominant framework by which agenda setting has been examined” (LaBrie, 2004, p. 39).

Critique of Multiple Streams Model

The public administration field is where most of the multiple streams literature is focused. Much of the literature found includes general critiques about the model. Some positive reviews note that the model views systems as dynamic and complex and realizes the importance of fluidity, context, and ambiguity in the policy process. Mucciaroni (1992) notes the model’s ability in recognizing the importance of “chance, innovation, and human agency” (p. 482). Although Kingdon (2003) credits his model with an ability to reflect the fluidity and randomness of reality, Sabatier (1999) and Weir (1992) both argue that the framework is almost too fluid. Other negative aspects of the model noted by critics include the fact that chance and timing are key factors in this theory. MS
highlights the potential for policy change through the convergence of the streams in the “window of opportunity,” yet Birkland (2002) cautions that “the opening of the window does not guarantee that policy change will occur” (p. 224).

Sabatier (1996) adds that MS “gets beyond the rigid institutionalism … and acknowledges the role of serendipity in the policy process” (p. 108). Schlager (1999) believes that this “serendipity revolves around the ability of political entrepreneurs to identify windows of opportunity that would permit them to successfully couple the streams” (p. 252). But Mucciaroni (1992) argues that the streams are not as difficult to couple because there are links among the three streams reflecting an interdependence among them. This belief about the interdependence of streams is also seen in critiques of MS (Weir, 1992) and in the original Garbage Can theory from which MS stems (Bendor, Moe, & Shotts, 2001).

There has also been a concern about the lack of focus on historical and structural issues. For instance, various authors agree that while Kingdon addresses the important structural issue of politics, he fails to discuss economic, historical or social structures (Mucciaroni, 1992; Sabatier, 1996; Schlager, 1999; Weir, 1992). Ignoring structural factors such as political and social structures ignores important factors that may determine how an item gets on the policy agenda and focuses on “situational or temporal level of analysis” (Mucciaroni, 1992, p. 482). Critics believe that addressing the concerns about structural factors would diminish an additional concern regarding the lack of comparability of the model (Blakeneau, 2001; Zahariadis & Allen, 1995). Despite the “limitations” of MS, Henry (2000) believes that MS offers the “single most satisfactory
explanation of the policymaking process” and “is comprehensive, systemic, and empirical” (p. 303).

Although there appears to be a number of concerns from critics of MS, other writers offer examples of research to strengthen the model’s potential. Blankenau (2001) agreed with the concern about the model’s lack of institutional focus and still seeing the potential of the model, recommended the addition of a focus on the political structure and how it affects the window of opportunity. His article, which focuses on national health insurance policies in the US and Canada, implemented this additional focus which allowed for comparisons between similar policies.

Another way to strengthen the model is to answer the concern of lack of predictability. Mucciaroni (1992) offers a strategy in predicting the types of problems to be coupled with policies and politics. His article, which examines the policy issues of tax reform and deregulation, posits that the model needs “a classification scheme of problems and solutions that are logically related to political and institutional variables so that middle-level propositions or hypotheses can be derived” (p. 464). Basically Mucciaroni calls for increased prediction capacity of how items attain agenda status and believes that by paying attention to various historical and institutional factors, greater predictability can be achieved.

Finally, Snare (1995) believes it is essential to look at the connection between the policy analyst, policy maker and the process itself. He posits that policy analysts play different roles during various stages of the process. These stages include the implementation, formulation, and agenda setting stages; the various roles are that of the advocate, the troubleshooter, and the expert. Depending on the role they play, the policy
analyst can affect change during the level that is most appropriate for their role. For example, it is unlikely that the policy expert will be involved at the agenda setting stage; rather he or she will “be called in after the problem is defined” (p. 422). Snare provides insights into the various roles or personalities of policy analysts, how these analysts influence policy makers and subsequently impact the policy process.

Research Studies

Kingdon’s original MS model has been used in a variety of research studies in the areas of K-12 education (Holderness, 1990), tax reform (Mucciaroni, 1992), health (Blankenau, 2001), privatization (Zahariadis & Allen, 1995), and transportation (Zahariadis, 1996). Of these researchers, Zahariadis has been the most vocal proponent of the MS model and has offered recommendations for making the model stronger.

Zahariadis completed various policy studies utilizing the MS model, many of which focus on other countries than the United States and how the MS model must be tweaked for that purpose. For example, other country’s governments are not designed in the same way as the US; therefore the idea of an organized anarchy may not fit as a context for other countries. Zahariadis (1996) looks at this difference in his study about the British Rail and concludes that although problems, policy and politics can be coupled in a policy window (as MS contends), the type of policy window (also known as an opportunity in which a policy can make it to the agenda) also affects the search for a rationale. For instance, in Zahariadis’ study, the rationale for the policy changed over time due to political issues (this affects the type of policy window) and made “the process of defining the problem to which the solution could be attached an exercise in invention rather than a problem-solving activity” (p. 418).
Another study (Zahariadis & Allen, 1995) focuses on privatization within Great Britain and Germany and specifically looks at the importance of policy networks and how various ideas for policies “evolve over time and across networks” (p. 72). In this research, Zahariadis and Allen (1995) use the MS model in comparing two countries and offer a change in the way that Kingdon identifies his streams recommending more of a soup and stew analogy. This analogy “better reflects the structural dynamics of the policy stream” (p. 92). The policy stream, originally seen as a “soup of ideas” does not work for all types of policy networks especially those from different countries. Rather, the context of the policy networks (e.g. size, capacity, mode, etc.) affect whether or not the ideas in the stream will “over time slowly softening…up into soup-like form” or “swiftly solidifying…into a stew” (Zahariadis & Allen, 1995, p. 92).

Furthermore, Zahariadis and Allen point out the link between the pre-decision process of policymaking and the decision making process. Zahariadis (1996) believes that MS can be “extended” to the full policy process “by combining the three elements in the politics stream under the rubric of party ideology and by using coupling to refer to policy choice not just setting the agenda” (p. 403). Therefore, by using the same method of coupling streams, policy choices can be made. Other authors have also stated that MS, although a model focusing on agenda setting, can be applied to the policy development process as a whole (Blankenau, 2001; Sabatier, 1996). Sabatier (1996) cautions that if the model is to be applied to the entire process, “more attention needs to be given to bureaucracies…in implementing those reforms and more recognition needs to be accorded to the intergovernmental dimension in both formulation and implementation” (p. 108).
In summary, the literature that discusses the Multiple Streams model reflects that the model is dynamic and recognizes the importance of ambiguity and fluidity. The literature also echoes Kingdon’s focus on the importance of policy entrepreneurs—also known as stakeholders. The critiques found in the MS literature note the importance of focusing on structural aspects such as political, cultural, and historical issues when considering how streams converge. Furthermore, the literature reflects a few factors that are considered to be weaknesses of the model including the factors of chance and timing and the confusion as to the independence or interdependence of the streams. Other concerns critics note include a lack of focus on the entire policy development process (instead of the pre-agenda building) along with the connections between policy, stakeholders, and the policy development process. Suggestions from Blankenau, Sabatier, and Snare include examining the various roles and stages of the policy process specifically focusing on how this relates to the various types of policy entrepreneurs and the entire policy development system.

Policy Development Models and Higher Education Literature

In his unpublished dissertation, McLendon (2000) laments that while the “political and policy sciences have provided higher education researchers with a rich variety of conceptual and theoretical lenses for use in better understanding the multifaceted complex of state higher education policy phenomena…higher education researchers in general have chosen to ignore these various tools” (p. 333). In fact, very few studies were found among the higher education literature that pertained to the Multiple Streams model. While some higher education studies used the Garbage Can
model (Bell & Cronin-Kardon, 1998; Levitt & Nass, 1989), only two dissertations used MS as a theoretical framework.

One study uses MS in determining state system effectiveness and the evolution of educational policy (LaBrie, 2004). LaBrie employs a qualitative case study to examine a state’s technical college system and a large public institution and their interest in creating a community college structure for the state. This included a focus on how educational policy could be developed independent of a state system. One of LaBrie’s major findings was that the idea of a community college structure had been an idea of the state’s higher education community for many years. The higher education community waited for the right time in which to implement the community college structure; in the MS model, this is similar to policy entrepreneurs who have a solution and are waiting to attach it to a problem at just the right time. LaBrie (2004) also discussed the importance of the politics stream noting that “effective campus leadership can largely minimize the negative effects of an economically and politically stressed system” (p. 157).

McLendon took a broader approach and employed three policy development theories—MS, Rational-Comprehensive, and Incrementalism—in his study to understand “how the issue of higher education decentralization moves onto the decision agenda of state governments” (McLendon, 2000, p. 7). McLendon uses a comparative case study to focus on three cases that reflect decentralization of higher education looking at the connection to each state’s government. Although McLendon provides a “within-site” analysis of each case, he provides a cross-case analysis through the lens of the Multiple Streams model. His primary finding is that the Multiple Streams model is most appropriate for explaining how the decentralization issue gets onto the decision agenda of
state governments. McLendon (2000) states that “while some elements of rationality and incrementalism were found to attend the process of agenda formation in higher education decentralization, such properties were few in number and of relatively marginal value in explaining the overall agenda phenomenon” (p. 318). This primary finding, along with some secondary findings, resulted in the creation of a revised conceptual model (“A Policy Streams Model of State Agenda Formation for Higher Education Decentralization”), which accounts for the contextual issues associated with the topic of McLendon’s research.

The higher education literature has little to offer in regard to connections with policy development models. While LaBrie’s (2004) dissertation successfully discusses the issue of institutional structure and the importance of policy entrepreneurs, he does not include faculty as one of the major stakeholders. In his dissertation, McLendon (2000) provides a comprehensive overview of the three policy development models and has strong cross-case analysis, yet his focus is the agenda of government and less so on higher education. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the distance education policy literature for associations to policy making theory.

Connections to Distance Education Policy Making

In the distance education literature, Berge (1998) provides an introduction to how he thinks distance education policy is developed. He basically notes that policies are developed or changed when someone is attempting to get around a problem that has become a hindrance. This may provide a hint to reasoning for developing policy but does not offer details as to how policy is really created and who creates it. In the policy
development literature, Snare’s (1995) critiques of the MS model recommend areas necessary for examination including the political and cultural aspects of the policy development system. This requires looking at the structural aspects, various roles of policy entrepreneurs, and stages of the distance education policy development system. Looking at the policy development system and its various SMD zones through the eyes of the faculty is also necessary. As discussed earlier, there is no research utilizing the MS model in distance education policy, thus a gap in the research allows for the adoption of the model as the conceptual framework used to understand how distance education policy is created.

Based on the discussion of policy making theory and in considering distance education policy topics, it appears that the most appropriate approach to developing distance education policy is to assess where the institution is currently in regard to their distance education policy. Many times, distance education policy is developed after courses and programs are already in place. Therefore, when creating policy one must consider the context, the purpose of the policy, and those involved in the policy development. The Multiple Streams model asserts that policy creation occurs when policy, problems, and politics converge at just the right time to meet the needs of a situation. It also allows for ambiguity and flexibility necessary in the creation of policy. The MS model is appropriate for distance education policy development because it first focuses on agenda building. LaBrie (2004) states that “agendas are generally seen as precursors to the decision making process; therefore, the understanding of where agendas evolve from is a powerful notion” (p. 32).
MS also recognizes that the three streams of policy, problems, and politics can run independently of one another. Problems associated with distance education can exist independently of the political environment at the institution and independent of policies that various factions on-campus (administrators, faculty, etc.) may have proposed. An example of this is the problem of not ensuring that all online courses are ADA compliant. This is a problem that is considered on many campuses to fall somewhere in between student services and technology services. Therefore, this problem can exist independently of the various politics between the faculty and administration and can exist independently of student services or technical policies.

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the literature in the areas of distance education policy, faculty participation in distance education, and faculty involvement in higher education and distance education policy. Literature related to the conceptual framework of this study was also provided including critiques of the model and related research.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter three of this dissertation delves deeper into the research’s purpose and problem, providing an overview of the research paradigm and research methodology. This section includes a discussion of the questions that guide the study and addresses the background of the researcher. Details about the participant selection process along with data collection methods are included in this chapter followed by procedures for data analysis and for verification.

Research Purpose and Problem

This research examined the distance education policymaking process and focused on the faculty stakeholders. This study explored faculty perceptions of how they and others are involved with the creation of distance education policy, how they should be involved with the process, and how their role in this policymaking impacts the field of distance education. Although the literature provides prescriptive and descriptive information about distance education policy, there is little empirical research as to how distance education policy is created. The research on this topic that does exist focuses on the view of the administration; there is no research that addresses faculty involvement with the development of that policy nor was there distance education research that used policy development theory frameworks. This policy study used the Multiple Streams model as the lens in which to explore faculty perceptions as to their inclusion in the distance education policy system. By utilizing the three streams of the model, this
research discussed the problems, policies, and politics through the faculty perspective. Due to the growth of distance education, the need for faculty acceptance, participation in distance teaching, and the assumed connection between involvement in policy making and participation, further research on this topic is necessary.

Overview of the Qualitative Research Paradigm

Qualitative research began as the preferred paradigm for research within the fields of sociology, anthropology, history, and social psychology. The researchers in these fields focused more on understanding, experiences, and description and less on the issues of explanation, generalization, and control. Qualitative researchers prioritize interpretation of events over interpretation of data. Stake (1995) provides three major differences between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms including “1) the distinction between explanation and understanding as the purpose of inquiry; 2) the distinction between a personal and impersonal role for the researcher; and 3) a distinction between knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed” (p. 37).

What some may see as the negative aspects of qualitative research, others see as strengths. Qualitative research is seen as subjective by those who prefer the quantitative method; however, qualitative researchers see the subjectivity as a way to increase understanding and to include themselves in the research. Qualitative methods are also seen as time intensive; yet the time it takes to do a qualitative study provides more time to allow the researcher to increase his or her understanding of the experience under study as it evolves.
To ensure that qualitative research was the appropriate research paradigm for this policy study, the researcher sought to understand the characteristics and underlying assumptions of qualitative research. Merriam (2002) suggests that qualitative research seeks to understand how people make sense of their life experiences; to provide thick, rich details; to research in an inductive manner; and to collect and analyze data on one’s own. This study meets those criteria through the type of research methodology, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques used; these are discussed in greater length later in this chapter. Qualitative research is appropriate for looking at meaning, understanding or process. The researcher examined how faculty members make sense of the distance education policy development process; therefore, qualitative research was appropriate for this study.

Qualitative research has also been described as naturalist inquiry that doesn’t provide a hypothesis or a pre-determined answer to the research questions; rather, it is the type of research that looks at situations as they develop naturally and is open to whatever happens allowing the researcher to change paths as need be. In this policy study, flexibility for the researcher was essential to allow for this type of naturalist inquiry. Patton (2002) adds the themes of “empathic neutrality; sensitivity to dynamic processes and systems; appreciation of idiosyncrasies through unique case orientation; insight and understanding through inductive analysis, contextual sensitivity, and a holistic perspective; and authenticity and trustworthiness through ownership of voice and perspective” to the descriptors of qualitative research (p. 66). The importance of context in qualitative research holds true for this study, as the research questions could be answered differently if the context were dissimilar (i.e. if the research were to include a
wide range of higher education institutions instead of the public, four-year comprehensive universities within a state system of higher education).

Rist (1994) believes that qualitative research is relevant for studying the issue of policy development. Furthermore, due to the nature of qualitative research, which is known for providing detailed, thick descriptions, in-depth inquiry, and direct quotations that capture holistic and personal perspectives and experiences (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000), this is an appropriate match for this research. The research conducted was in-depth and resulted in interview transcripts and document analysis rich with descriptions and personal perspectives. While a quantitative study could capture the details of policy development as far as recommended steps, it would fail to capture the nature of the policy development process and it would not adequately represent the perspectives and feelings faculty have toward distance education and distance education policy.

Overview of the Research Methodology

Patton (2002) notes the importance of the systems perspective in qualitative research. The systems perspective attempts to answer the question of “how and why does this system as a whole function as it does” (p. 119). The systems perspective also notes that a “system cannot be split into separate parts and still be useful” (Gyford, 1999, ¶ 2). The various parts of a system are interrelated; thus, when a change is made to one part of the system, all of the other parts are affected. Patton (2002) states that “some approaches to systems research lead directly to and depend heavily on qualitative inquiry and a systems orientation can be very helpful in framing questions and, later, making sense out of qualitative data” (p. 120). In this policy study, distance education policy development
was reviewed from a systems perspective through the method of case study. This is appropriate as the systems perspective considers not only the object of study but the context of the object – the whole picture – and the case being studied is a bounded system, which is bounded by time and place and has interrelated parts that form a whole.

According to Creswell (1998), case study research “holds a long, distinguished history across many disciplines” (p. 62). The roots of case study can be found in the fields of anthropology and sociology. Hamel, et al. (1993) discuss the beginnings of case study and its three schools of thought – Malinowski, LePlay, and the Chicago School. Malinowski believed that case study was a form of participant observation, conducting his observations in the Trobriand Islands. The researcher’s goal was to slowly integrate him or herself into the life of the unit of analysis (i.e., a village or tribe) in order to thoroughly understand the culture and the “meanings actors assigned to their own patterns of behavior, beliefs, and rituals” (Hamel, et al. 1993, p. 3). LePlay’s observations narrowed a bit, moving from a larger unit of analysis like a village and focusing on the family – a social rather than physical unit.

Specifically LePlay, who was known for promoting case study research in France, studied the working class within the mining industry and its movement within society. He believed that by studying the family, he could obtain a greater understanding of larger society and since the family is considered an important element of society, by studying the family he could extrapolate findings to larger society. The third school of thought was promoted by the Chicago School, which produced case studies that influenced sociology in the United States. Primarily conducted by social workers and sociologists, the first case studies focused on local urban areas that were primarily populated by
immigrants – reflective of Chicago during the early 1900s. Those that worked at the Chicago School promoted field study, which included “on-site observations, open-ended interviews, and the collection of various documents” (Hamel, et al. 1993, p. 16).

In the 1930s, case studies as a methodology were deemed as less scientific by many researchers than studies with statistical methods (Hamel, et al. 1993). Statistical methods were done more quickly and provided validation while eliminating bias. Some researchers were “especially critical of case study” as a method and “in relation to generalizability and theory development” (Morgan, 1991, p. 23). Case studies were seen as lacking rigor due to their lack of generalizability and being subject to personal biases; this resulted in a decline of case studies and “in the requirement that sociological study be able to validate its theories” (Hamel, et al. 1993, p. 28). By the 1960s, the case study (and other forms of qualitative research methods) experienced a rebirth and a renewed interest in its merits. It has been and continues to be used in many fields such as medicine, education, sociology, and psychology. Many researchers, especially in the sciences, still have concerns about the method in its qualitative form and the unresolved issues around validity and generality. This concern exists in the area of political science while although the methodology is heavily used, many still view it with tremendous caution (Gerring, 2004). While the aspects of a case study—the problem, the context, the issues, and the lessons learned—are common among those who write about case study, the definition of case study is one that varies, lying somewhere in between a case being an object of a study or as a methodology (Creswell, 1998).

There are generic definitions of case study in the literature that refer to case study as no more than a type of qualitative research (Hamel, et al. 1993; Merriam, 1998).
Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) define a case study as “an in-depth investigation of an individual, group, or institution to determine the variables, and the relationship among variables, influencing the current behavior or status of the subject of the study” (p. 662). A case study, as defined by Creswell (1998) is “an exploration of a bounded system or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (p. 61). Yin (1989) goes a bit deeper into case study as a research design and defines case study as an “inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (p. 23). He points out that case study can be a research method and a research design. A case study research method must include the following: “designing an investigation, collecting the pertinent data, analyzing the data, and reporting the findings” whereas the case study research design is choosing the type of case study, selecting the case to study, designing the protocol for the study, and choosing appropriate data collection methods (p. 23).

In the public administration field, Gerring (2004) provides a description of case study as “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units” (p. 342). Gerring discusses the variety of case studies stating that qualitative case studies tend to look at variation across and within units in the same research design are considered to be comparative-historical studies. Comparative-historical studies have levels of analysis which “move up and down more or less simultaneously and where a small number of units are subjected to intensive study” (p. 343). Yin (1994) suggests that there are three types of case study – explanatory,
exploratory, and descriptive. Explanatory case studies “are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed” (p. 1). He posits that each case study should consist of five essential components for the research design – research questions, propositions – if any, unit(s) of analysis, logic linking data to propositions, and criteria for interpreting findings (Yin, 1994).

Stake (1994) defines case study a bit differently, claiming that “case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of object to be studied” (p. 236). Stake (1995) describes two types of case studies – instrumental and intrinsic. An instrumental case study is used to understand something. In instrumental case studies, the issues are most important, while in an intrinsic case study, the case is dominant. Stake (1994) describes an instrumental case study extending into several cases as a collective case study. A collective case study allows a researcher to study the particular issue or phenomenon across a number of cases. These cases are chosen in order to gain “a better understanding about a still larger collection of cases” (Stake, 1994, p. 237).

According to Pryzwansky and Noblit (1990), qualitative case studies have “a unique strength in providing a format to understand the dynamics of a situation, linking context, processes, and outcomes” (p. 297). This research focused on all three—context, processes, and outcomes—which is why a qualitative case study with a systems perspective was the chosen methodology for this research. According to Stake (1995), “the case is an integrated system” thus the systems perspective is essential to understanding the policy development process as a whole and this is done through the lens of the MS model. The case study methodology is appropriate for and valuable in research dealing with policy (Yin, 1989; Meehan, 1993; Stake, 1994; McLendon, 2000).
Case study is very suitable for understanding policy initiatives especially in areas where the policy research is lacking (Gerring, 2004; Polsby, 1984). Furthermore, according to Corcoran, Walker, and Wals (2004), case study research “contributes to practice by improving the reasoning of practitioners (technical, normative, or, preferably, both). This improvement may be confined to one institution that uses the case study as a means to improve their own practices, or more broadly, to other practitioners in other institutions who learn from this innovation” (p. 11).

Research Questions

The questions that guided this study include a) what are faculty perceptions of how distance education policy is created, who creates it, and who should create it? b) what are faculty perceptions as to the role and impact of policy in distance education? c) what is the nature of faculty involvement in the development of distance education policy? and d) why do faculty think it is important to be involved in the distance education policy making system as a whole? The research conducted answers these questions within the context of three universities that lie within a state system of higher education.

Background of Researcher

My experience with distance education began in the mid-1990s in a position where I assisted adults in learning more about taking courses via distance education. I became certified in the topic and chose to enroll in academic online courses. I am a believer in the benefits of distance education but do not believe that this way of learning
or teaching is for everyone or appropriate for every topic. As a student and as an administrator, I have witnessed the changes and heard the concerns that distance education has brought to various higher education institutions across the country. While I believe that this is an exciting time to be involved with the field of distance education, I believe it is also imperative that the various stakeholders within higher education look at the policies associated with distance education in order to provide quality learning opportunities for students and for faculty.

Due to the rapid growth of distance education programming within higher education institutions and its move into the mainstream of higher education, many universities are playing “catch-up” attempting to create distance education policies to augment their already established distance education courses/programs. As a former university administrator within a state system of higher education, I saw this phenomenon firsthand as one of my primary responsibilities was to manage a distance education program. Although the university where I worked had offered online courses for about seven years, it only recently began developing a comprehensive distance education policy. While the institution has been fortunate in that the few procedural policies in place have allowed for slow growth in the field, it is now moving to a place of significant growth and the building of online degree programs, which necessitate the development of a comprehensive, institution-wide distance education policy. This must be done within the governing structure of the state system of higher education and must be inclusive in its development.

Because of my previous position as an administrator for a university’s distance education program within the state system, my level of bias in regard to the topic is
important to note. As I noted previously, I believe in the benefit of distance education and am an advocate of this form of learning/teaching. I was also a member of a state system working group that discussed distance education issues. While my view is certainly colored due to my past involvement in this group or due to my previous role at an institution within the state system, I would point out that the benefit my position provided was primarily in the level of access to resources for this study. This research is therefore personally and professionally significant to me as I believe it will improve my ability to facilitate development of a comprehensive distance education policy in future positions and will benefit institutions within the a state system of higher education by promoting distance education policy development that is inclusive of faculty involvement and perspectives.

Participant Selection Procedures

This research required the use of a purposeful sample and not that of a random sample, as is more appropriate for quantitative research. Purposeful samples are those that are “selected purposefully to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in depth” (Patton, 2002, p. 46). A purposeful sample also provides the bounded system necessary for case study research. In addition to the purposeful sample, the population was varied not only by job level but also by experience.

Faculty who taught online at the three institutions received a short survey (see Appendix B) via email requesting basic information such as job level (e.g. adjunct, assistant or full professor) and experience in teaching online (e.g. some with little online teaching experience and some with great online teaching experience). This allowed for
use of criterion sampling which assured that each person met minimum requirements for experience with and knowledge of distance education. Not only did faculty have varying years of experience in distance teaching, they also came from a variety of academic disciplines and various levels of faculty rank (i.e. adjunct, instructor, full professor, etc.). From the responses received, four to five faculty from each campus were interviewed for the study.

Only the institutions that offered fully online degree programs—level and program type was not a factor—were considered for this case study. Seven of the fourteen institutions within the state system currently offer fully online undergraduate and/or graduate degree programs. Of those seven, three institutions were chosen for the collective case study as more than that can be too many in this type of case study (Creswell, 1998). The three institutions were also chosen due to their potential in online programming; all three have exhibited significant growth in the online market primarily due to the need for growth in enrollments. Their geographic locations are a factor in the number of enrollments they have currently.

The chosen institutions (referred to as Institution A, Institution B, and Institution C) are each considered rural institutions, defined as being geographically one or more hours away from any large city. Institution A, located in the southwestern area of the state, has a student body of over 7,700 and a faculty size of 350. This institution offers a total of eleven online degree programs – nine at the graduate level. Institution B has a student body of 7,579, a faculty size of 393, and is located in northwestern region of the state. This institution offers eight graduate online degree programs. Finally, Institution C is located in the north central area of the state. The institution has a student body of
3,360 and a faculty size of 213. This institution offers four online degree programs with two at the graduate level.

At many institutions, distance education programs are administratively placed in the campus’s continuing education unit. The University Continuing Education Association (UCEA) reports that in public institutions, 76% of continuing education units had responsibility for distance education programs and 61% of continuing education units in private institutions housed distance education programming (UCEA, 2006). At Institution A, the distance education program is housed in the graduate studies unit. Institution B’s distance education program is overseen by a director who reports to the Graduate Dean. Institution C includes distance education programming in its continuing education unit with a director who reports directly to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The larger unit that is the focus of this case study is a state system of higher education in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The system in this study is made up of a Chancellor’s office and fourteen state system institutions, which are located throughout the state in rural, suburban and small towns. The institutions are all four-year, public comprehensive universities (as defined by Carnegie’s classification). Together they serve a total of 107,000 students. The purpose of the state system is “to provide high quality education at the lowest possible cost to students” (PASSHE website, 2006, ¶ 2). The state system, along with its governance and polices, is an important part of the individual institutions’ context.

The state system is a system with a unionized faculty. The faculty union “guarantees bargaining unit participation in the hiring, tenure, and promotion processes,
in sabbatical leave determination, and in curricula decisions” (APSCUF, 2007, Our Role section, ¶ 1). In this system, faculty are developers of course content and are the sole instructors (graduate assistants are not permitted to teach courses). The majority of programs on the campuses within the system are traditional, face-to-face programs on-campus with some institutions offering off-campus programming as well as programming via distance education modalities including video-conference and online. Most faculty choose to participate in teaching online or via video, although some campuses have begun to include the teaching modality as a requirement in the certain faculty job descriptions.

The three institutions were contacted to learn more about the requirements of their institutional review boards (IRB); two IRBs required the researcher to complete campus specific paperwork, while one required a copy of the accepted IRB paperwork from the researcher’s degree granting institution. Once permission was received from the researcher’s degree granting institution and various institutional review boards, each institution’s distance education administrator was contacted in order to make them aware of the research project and to ask for assistance in obtaining documentation such as local agreements related to distance education policy for their campus and to request a list of all faculty from the campus who had experience teaching online.

While two of the administrators were helpful in sharing lists of all faculty who taught online, one administrator preferred to recruit volunteers on his own, sharing only the list of interested faculty. All three administrators were initially less than forthcoming with institutional documentation or local agreements as they pertained to their distance education programs. The administrators recommended searching their institutional
websites for information regarding their distance education programs. All three administrators willingly provided general information about their units’ reporting structure and details as to how online programming began at their institution. Their concern in providing local agreements or institutional documents may be due to the researcher’s previous position managing a competing distance education program.

Data Collection Procedures and Methods

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that “no single method can grasp all of the subtle variations in ongoing human experience” and therefore qualitative research uses “a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods, always seeking better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experience studied” (p. 19). Some qualitative research studies employ both qualitative and quantitative forms of data collection to inform their research. In this study, a small survey was sent via email to faculty who teach in online degree programs. The survey (see Appendix B) was very short with basic demographic questions asked of faculty (i.e. level of professor, years at the institution, years teaching online, etc.). Faculty were also asked if they would be willing to participate in interviews. On the qualitative side, this study employed the three main methods of data collection in qualitative research – observation, document analysis and interviews (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002). While these data collection methods are well-known in the qualitative field, they are also three of the six forms of data collection used in case study (Yin, 1994).

Creswell (1994) describes a researcher who observes without participating as a “complete observer” (p. 150). Unfortunately due to the role at my previous institution, I
was not able to be a complete unobtrusive observer. Observations on information related to distance education policy were conducted while attending distance education related meetings through the state system of higher education. Distance education administrators from the chosen institutions did not permit attendance at any distance education meetings nor did they share minutes from these meetings.

Document analysis is noted by Merriam as a source of information that “already exists in the situation” and can readily provide insight and information (p. 13). A variety of documents were analyzed including the faculty union’s collective bargaining agreement, the state system of higher education’s policies on distance education, and mission statements, vision statements, websites, and strategic plans as they pertain to distance education on each institution’s campus.

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions of a volunteer group of faculty were conducted. The interviews were focused interviews described by Yin (1994) as interviews that take a short period of time thus requiring a pre-set list of questions that are open-ended. The initial interviews, which took place via telephone, took anywhere from forty-five minutes to an hour and a quarter. Because the interviews were conducted via telephone, the researcher did not have the advantage of visual signs or clues from the participants which is central in face-to-face interviews (Shuy, 2002). While it is preferable in qualitative research to conduct face-to-face interviews due to the richness of the data (Meho, 2006; Shuy, 2002), the faculty contacted indicated overwhelmingly their preference in conducting the interviews via phone. This preference was typically due to lack of time which limited the researcher’s access to some faculty. There was also limited access to some research participants due to their geographic
location. Not all of the faculty interviewed were housed on-campus; in fact, many of the
adjuncts interviewed only visited the campus a few times a year; therefore, the researcher
would have had to have traveled to multiple locations within and out of the state in order
to talk to all faculty in a face-to-face format. This was not only an issue of time for both
the researcher and the participants, but also an issue of cost for the researcher. Meho
(2006) posits that face-to-face interviews can raise challenges such as “cost, time, and
limited access to research participants” (p. 1284). Shuy (2002) encourages a researcher
to make an informed decision in choosing face-to-face or telephone interviews looking
specifically at “the nature of the requirements of the task, the type and depth of the
responses desired, the relative need for standardization of questions, the need for cost-
efficiency, the complexity of the information required, and the overall identity and
makeup of the respondents” (p. 544).

Stake (1995) recommends that qualitative case study researchers come prepared
to the interview with a short list of questions and then let the conversation flow allowing
each interviewee to share their own unique story with the role of the researcher as
listener. A sample of interview questions posed to the interviewees included:

- Describe your level of involvement in distance education here at [insert name of
  University].

- How does distance education play a role in education here at [insert name of
  University] in relationship to the other forms of delivery?

- Describe the level of support from faculty, staff, and administration for distance
  education from your perspective.

- Tell me about the current guidelines, principles or regulations you have in place
  here at [insert name of University] for distance education.

- How would you describe the role of distance education policy here at [insert name
  of University]?
• How are and when were distance education guidelines, principles or regulations created here at [insert name of University]?

• Describe what you believe to be the essential components of distance education guidelines, principles or regulations.

• Describe your involvement as a faculty member in creating distance education guidelines, principles or regulations.

• Describe your influence on the creation of distance education guidelines, principles or regulations.

• If you had more influence or involvement in distance education guidelines, principles or regulations, how would you alter the process or guidelines?

• What other information about distance education at your institution would you like to share with me?

These questions, which ask “how” and probe for descriptions, are indicative of an explanatory case study. The interviews, with the permission of the faculty, were audio-taped, which allowed for note taking during the interview. The notes were then transcribed and shared with each faculty member to ensure that the person’s views were correctly represented. Follow-up interviews were conducted as necessary with a few of the participants.

Different from quantitative researchers, the role of the researcher in qualitative research is that of the primary instrument; the researcher conducts the research and collects and analyzes the data. Merriam (1998) agrees that qualitative research “requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data” (p. 1). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) posit that “qualitative researchers deploy a wide variety of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand” (pp. 3-4). Furthermore, a researcher’s personal insights and experiences are critical to the study; therefore, field notes or
journals provided insights as to contextual issues surrounding interviews. In order to
provide insight about faculty experience, influence and involvement in creation of
distance education policy, the study provides thick, descriptive information from
interviews and document analysis which cannot be obtained by using only quantitative
research techniques.

The role of the researcher utilizing a case study methodology is to ascertain and
depict the various views of the case; the “interview is the main road to multiple realities”
(Stake, 1995, p. 64). According to Yin (1994), there can be various levels of questions
within a case study including questions for the interviewees, questions for the individual
case, questions regarding the findings across multiple cases, questions regarding the
entire study, and questions about recommendations and conclusions. This method of
utilizing various levels of questions allows for single case analysis as well as cross-case
analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

In analyzing data, the researcher needs to be able to define categories and make
comparisons and contrasts. Creswell (1994) also believes that case study researchers
need to “be open to possibilities and see contrary or alternative explanations for the
findings” (p. 153). The case study researcher “must be able to interpret the information
as it is being collected and to know immediately if several sources of information
contradict one another and lead to the need for additional evidence” (Yin, 1989, p. 65).
Stake (1995) echoes the importance of interpreting data as it is collected and adds that the
researcher should record his or her interpretations immediately following the interview.

In this case study, data analysis was done in conjunction with data collection.

Data analysis was conducted, by hand, with both the context (of the universities and the state system) and the systems perspective (realizing that the various parts make up and affect the whole) kept in mind. Although this research focused on the faculty, faculty perspective about the entire policy development system was interpreted. Categorical aggregation and direct interpretation, the methods used in this study to analyze data, require interpretation of singular instances while aggregating repeating instances and looking for patterns. Each interview transcript, document, website, and notes from observations were also reviewed to reveal any underlying assumptions, patterns, or themes. Stake (1995) posits that “the search for meaning often is a search for patterns, for consistency, for consistency within certain conditions” which is also termed as correspondence (p. 78). Patterns found were compared with predicted patterns related to the theoretical framework used in this study. This method, called pattern-matching, is one that Yin (1989) notes as a dominant mode of data analysis in case study.

When utilizing a case study method, other forms of analysis can be used. Creswell (1998) describes the two common types of analysis used in collective case studies – within-case analysis and a cross-case analysis. Within-case analysis provides detailed descriptions of and themes within each case whereas a cross-case analysis looks at themes and assertions across cases. The cross-case analysis includes information about the structural aspects and various stages of the policy process as recommended by Snare in the policy development literature. Finally, the last phase, where interpretation takes place and where common or contrasting themes to all cases are noted, is where “lessons
learned” are reported (Creswell, 1998, p. 63). Both the within-case and cross-case analyses are used as data analysis procedures in this research.

Verification

In order to assure verification, certain strategies were employed to assess credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Yin (1994) uses different terms, but like methods, to assure verification. His terms include construct validity (i.e. credibility), reliability (i.e. transferability), internal validity (i.e. dependability), and external validity (i.e. confirmability).

Credibility

In case study research, credibility is also known as construct validity. Construct validity looks at whether or not the research does what it says it will do and this usually takes place in the data collection phase of the research. Techniques used to ensure construct validity or credibility include triangulation, peer review, and member checks. Triangulation refers to a process by which the researcher uses various procedures to clarify meaning and to reduce misinterpretation. An example of this is using other sources of information, like meeting records, to substantiate information received from an interview. Triangulation “reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 5). By using multiple sources of evidence (document analysis, interviews, observations), triangulation of sources is demonstrated.

Peer review is another strategy of credibility that allows for colleagues to provide feedback regarding the findings and related data. Feedback was obtained from the
researcher’s dissertation committee members and from a few peers within the researcher’s cohort. Finally, an important strategy that allows participants to provide clarification regarding their insights is that of member checks. Merriam (2002) defines member checks as asking the study’s participants for responses regarding how the data is presented. Sharing interview transcripts with the faculty that were interviewed is one step that was taken to employ member checks. One of the member checks resulted in an edited transcript as the faculty member preferred to change some of her initial comments for fear of retaliation. This forced the researcher to focus on unedited information from the original conversation.

Transferability

Transferability, like reliability, can refer to the possibility of replication of a study. Transferability can only be determined by the reader of the research. This study offers vivid details, maximized the variation of subjects within the purposeful sample, and presented in-depth descriptions of the context, all which should assist the reader in determining whether or not transferability to another situation exists. Yin (1994) suggests keeping the various notes in a case study data base during the data collection phase in order to promote reliability. In a case study, the use of multiple cases can add to the level of transferability as the reader can determine if certain themes or patterns have been replicated across the cases which have different settings/contexts. This is a strategy that Yin (1989) recommends to ensure transferability in case studies.

Dependability and Confirmability

To ensure dependability, or consistency of the study, an audit trail was completed, which is a record of all the occurrences during the research process – observations,
reactions, insights, and connections. Yin (1989) defines internal validity as “establishing a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships” (p. 40). He suggests other methods of establishing internal validity during the data analysis phase of the research including pattern-matching. Yin (1989) also recommends making “as many steps as possible as operational as possible, and to conduct research as if someone were always looking over your shoulder” (p.45). This leads to a level of trustworthiness that qualitative researchers attempt to reach in their research. Being able to verify or support the findings of the research refers to confirmability. This can be done by keeping an audit trail, keeping all versions of the dissertation, interview transcripts, and various documents that were used in the document analysis stage. Confirmability can also be improved by obtaining an external reviewer.

Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth discussion about the research’s purpose and provided an overview of the research paradigm and research methodology. The guiding questions of this study were outlined and the researcher’s background information was provided. Details about the participant selection process along with data collection methods were included in this chapter followed by procedures for data analysis and for verification.
CHAPTER 4
STATE SYSTEM AND INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

Chapter 4 of this dissertation provides a profile of the state system of higher education in which the three institutions chosen for this research reside. An overview of the state system’s context is provided in this section as is a description of the primary stakeholders within the state system concerning distance education policy. This is followed by an analysis of the state system documents obtained by the researcher’s participation in and observations of state-system-level distance education meetings including that of the Distance Education Advisory Committee. The chapter also provides a profile of the three institutions chosen for this research, focusing primarily on the historical, political, and cultural context of each institution with analysis from various documents obtained from institutional websites. Finally, the section includes a table of programmatic details about the three institutions and the state system as a whole.

State System

The state system of higher education used for this study consists of fourteen public higher education institutions. Although the state system was established in 1983, its member institutions each have rich histories with the “youngest” being 114 years old and the oldest, established in 1837, being 170 years old. Together, the member universities currently serve “a total of 109,088 undergraduate and graduate, part-time and full-time, students” (PASSHE, About PASSHE, 2006, ¶ 6). The state system institutions meet the needs of their learners through traditional, on-campus courses and programs,
programming at off-campus learning centers or extension campuses, and courses and programs via distance education modalities including video conference, blended, and online. Of the three types of learning opportunities, distance education is the newest having started at many institutions approximately ten years ago.

**Distance Education and the State System**

In the 1996-97 academic year, upon recommendation by its board of governors, the state system created a Distance Education Advisory Committee comprised of twelve members—three representatives from the state system executive offices, three school deans, two department chairs (from communication-related departments), one university Provost, and three faculty members (representing communications, technology, and psychology departments). This committee, charged by the Board of Governors to look into the growing trend of distance education, conducted internal and external research to learn more about distance education and to create guiding principles and recommendations for the member institutions to build or grow their distance education program. The primary recommendation from the committee was to create a Center for Distance Education at the state system level which would support distance education initiatives at each of the fourteen member institutions (PASSHE, 1997).

The findings of this committee’s work reflected that four of the institutions had written plans for utilizing distance education and ten of the institutions provided faculty with distance education training and professional development. The concerns of the committee regarding distance education programming included: maintaining academic quality and integrity, providing training, taking resources away from traditional teaching, undermining current traditional programming, competing with others who offered
distance education programming, providing student support, improving faculty attitudes, and balancing system office initiatives with institutional initiatives (PASSHE, 1997). The report also outlined eight guiding principles for distance education: maintain quality, serve constituents, be flexible, integrate other technology, decrease trepidation, increase access, promote diversity and creativity, and be student-centered. The recommendations of the committee fit into the key focus areas for the recommended Center for Distance Education: quality/integrity, technology, administration, student services, faculty, training and development, and partnerships and promotion. The specific recommendations in the category of faculty were to provide training to those interested in teaching via distance education, to put incentives and support structures into place for faculty, to ensure that student evaluations and course preparation were taken into account in tenure and promotion reviews, and to address copyright and ownership issues (PASSHE, 1997).

The Center for Distance Education went through many changes from its inception in 1997 through 2002 when it informally disbanded. Today, the state system continues to facilitate meetings of a Distance Education Advisory Committee and is a central resource and data center for the member institutions. The researcher obtained data regarding distance education programs and enrollments primarily from the state system office as they have tracked this information since the inception of distance education within the system institutions. When distance education became an area of focus for the state system (spring semester of 2006), the state system reported that six of the fourteen institutions offered a total of fourteen courses via distance education. Distance education, at that time, included programming via tele-courses (courses offered via one-way video
through public television or VHS) or interactive video courses (ITV) (two-way audio/video courses offered through a video conference system).

By the 1999-2000 academic year, one half of the courses offerings were offered via video conference and the other half were web-based, online courses (PASSHE, 2001). In 1999-2000, the number of courses offered via distance education formats totaled 223 and by the next academic year, 2000-01, the number increased to 302. Furthermore, in 2000-01, seven institutions offered full degree programs via video-conference at the associates, bachelors, and masters levels (PASSHE, 2001). Since that time, distance education has continued its steady growth and has moved from primarily video conference programming to primarily online programming. The past five years (from 2002-03 through 2006-07) have seen significant growth in distance education programming across the state system. In the academic year of 2002-03, the system’s institutions offered 13 online degree programs by 7 institutions. As of the 2007 fall semester, 49 online degree programs are offered by 9 institutions (K. Howley, personal communication, April 26, 2007). This growth has been supported and cultivated by many stakeholders within the state system.

*Primary State System Stakeholders*

This section provides a broad overview of the primary stakeholders within the system—the Board of Governors, the Chancellor and executive offices, and the faculty union—and their connections to distance education.

The state system is managed by a board of governors comprised of “four legislators, three students, the governor or a designee, the secretary of education or a designee and eleven citizens appointed by the governor”; this group sets general policy
and direction for the state system (PASSHE, About PASSHE, 2006, ¶ 3). The Board, whose members are approved by the state’s Senate, oversees the following areas: Chancellor and university president appointments, tuition rates, approval of system budgets, and endorsement of new academic programs. The mission of the state system that guides the Board in its endeavors is “to increase the intellectual wealth of [the state], to prepare students at all levels for personal and professional success in their lives, and to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural development” of the state’s communities, the state itself, and the nation (PASSHE, 2005, p. 1).

In relation to distance education, the Board primarily focuses on programming, approving all new programs offered via distance education modalities (blended, fully online, or video conference). The Board has expedited approval processes for those academic programs previously approved but now being taught via a distance education modality. The Board also approves recommended policy from various institutions regarding differentiated tuition for out-of-state distance education students.

The Chancellor and the executive offices at the system make recommendations and provide support to the board and to the leadership at the various institutions. The executive offices, which report to the Chancellor, are made up of six areas including administration and finance, academic and student affairs, chief counsel, system relations, information technology and system research, and human resources and labor relations (PASSHE, About PASSHE, 2006). At least four of the six offices have responsibility at some level for distance education and work together to ensure that quality education is accessible to students. The Administration and Finance office work closely with university finance offices regarding the potential of differentiated tuition for out-of-state
distance education students. The Information Technology and System Research office works closely with the academic and student affairs office to provide system-wide technical recommendations to member institutions. These offices work with technology vendors, like those who offer course management systems like Blackboard or eCollege, to negotiate system-wide rates for the institutions utilizing technology in their courses and programs.

The Academic and Student Affairs office oversees distance education initiatives for the system (PASSHE, About PASSHE, 2006). Their office works with distance education coordinators, faculty, and academic officers from the various member institutions to create strategic plans for distance education, to compile system-wide data on course/program offerings and enrollments, and to offer resources in the form of faculty training or grants. At one time, the office also provided some centralized marketing support in the form of an online portal. The online portal was a useful marketing tool which provided information to students seeking details about distance education offerings from the institutions within the state system. The portal was managed, with help of distance education coordinators at each institution, by the state system. A few of the faculty interviewed for this study mentioned the portal with one noting how the portal has been helpful in supporting the programs of his institution. Another talked about the benefits of the portal, calling it a type of “clearinghouse” of information. Others felt that the portal has “out of date” information listed but that it is helpful with marketing. In searching the website for this portal, the researcher was unable to locate the site.
The Academic and Student Affairs office also offers recommendations for distance education to the Chancellor for inclusion in the state system’s overall strategic plan. This plan, recommended by the Chancellor to the Board of Governors, will guide the various initiatives (academic, student service, financial efficiency, etc.) of the system for a period of five years (PASSHE, 2007). This plan is not only a guide for what the executive offices must accomplish in the five year period, but it is also a broad framework for each institution’s strategic plans and a guideline for meeting system goals and obtaining performance funding. The state system’s five year strategic plan (2004-2009) notes the need for distance education as one of the strategies in meeting the needs of the students that attend its universities. Of the goals in this plan, goal one—student achievement and success—offers a strategy of utilizing distance education to increase the availability of programs offered to students (PASSHE, Strategic Plan, 2007, p. 9) and goal three—commonwealth service—offers the strategy of keeping “pace with the demand for quality online graduate programs” (PASSHE, Strategic Plan, 2007, p. 14). Over the last five years alone, the system has experienced tremendous growth in distance education with the majority of its institutions offering some form of distance education programming (via online, blended, and ITV formats).

Finally, the state system’s Human Resources and Labor Relations office works closely with labor negotiators from seven separate unions that represent different factions of employees within the state system (PASSHE, About PASSHE, 2006). These unions work closely with the state system administration to recommend and develop policy and collective bargaining agreements. One of the employee unions is the faculty union, which is comprised of approximately 5,500 faculty members. The faculty union posits
that their role is to protect and advance the rights of faculty and that through the provisions of the collective bargaining agreement between the union and the state system that “faculty involvement in governance is assured and faculties have a major voice in what were formerly reserved as management prerogatives” (APSCUF, What is APSCUF, ¶ 2).

In relation to distance education, the faculty union’s collective bargaining agreement contains an article that outlines the union’s stance on the topic. The purpose of distance education, as outlined in the article, is “to enrich and to increase the availability of the curriculum offerings” (CBA, Article 42, 2003, ¶ 1). The article also refers to concerns about quality and faculty employment:

The parties agree that the method of classroom instruction with the faculty member and the traditional residential and commuter students in the same room provides the best opportunity for a quality educational experience. Distance education is not intended to diminish that experience. During the term of this agreement, the state system agrees not to retrench a faculty member teaching in a department where distance education is being used, when retrenchment is a direct result of distance education (p. 97).

In this case retrenchment would mean reducing the number of full-time faculty, which reflects the concerns of the faculty that distance education could take resources away from or affect the number of traditional programs. Finally, the article highlights the following information as to how distance education relates to faculty: definition of distance education, faculty participation, technical and instructional support, course approval, evaluation, and compensation.
This section provides details regarding the document analysis of and observations from various meeting notes and documents from Distance Education Advisory Committee (DEAC) meetings or reports from 1997 to 2007. In her previous role, the researcher acted as a member of the DEAC from 2005 to 2007; thus, the information provided here is from the researcher’s personal access and from documents obtained prior to 2005. The DEAC, as noted earlier, is facilitated by members of the Chancellor’s office primarily by those in the office of academic and student affairs and that office provided the researcher with some pertinent documentation as well.

As noted above, the DEAC offered its first report to the Board of Governor’s in 1997. The next distance education report—not submitted by the DEAC—did not surface until 2001. An external consulting company (which received data and information from state system representatives) provided a report to the Board of Governors offering suggestions for moving forward to make the recommendations of the 1997 DEAC report a reality. Areas of consideration and action recommended by the report included financial commitment to the Center for Distance Education, centralized contraction for courseware at the state system level, appropriate staffing for the Center for Distance Education, centralized support to faculty for research, and coordinated oversight in identifying and managing areas of growth for distance education programming (PASSHE, 2001).

The recommended centralized office resulted briefly in a Center for Distance Education which later transformed into an entity called the Educational Resources Group staffed by employees of the Chancellor’s office. The Educational Resources Group
(ERG) created the Keystone University Network (KUN) as the hub of the distance education activities of all state system member institutions, basically known as a virtual university. The ERG created a Virtual University Blue Ribbon Committee comprised of forty-one members, four of which were state system representatives and eight of which were faculty representatives. The remaining twenty-nine members were institutional administrators. The Virtual University Blue Ribbon Committee put forth a Virtual University Strategic Plan submitted to the Board of Governors and all institutional presidents in 2002. The strategic plan called for creation of “a single entity to support, market, and implement distance education programs” which would provide for “a more efficient and cost-effective model for the state system” (PASSHE, 2002, p. 8). For a membership fee, each institution would reap the benefits of a website for unified marketing efforts, a portal for student access and student services, access to high quality courseware, technical support for students, faculty training, coordination of funding for potential programs, and public relations and market research support. The strategic plan outlined competitors, the value proposition, the KUN products and services, proposed infrastructure, marketing plan, and the KUN management team which included a board of directors to be advised by an advisory committee (the DEAC).

By 2004, the ERG’s Keystone University Network initiative fell apart for various political reasons including institutions’ fear of the state system creating, through the ERG, a fifteenth institution or competing entity. Furthermore, and for many of the same reasons, the level of buy-in into the virtual university idea never took off and the ERG soon dismantled. Institutions continued to offer distance education programs on their own without strong centralized leadership from the state system office. In 2005, an
institutional administrator with experience in continuing and distance education joined
the Chancellor’s executive offices in order to renew relationships in distance education
among the system and its member institutions. The administrator knew of the political
issues surrounding the rise and fall of the ERG and decided to bring together distance
education coordinators from all member institutions and, in coordination with other
offices of the Chancellor, plan a distance education summit.

In the fall semester of 2005, the state system hosted a distance education summit
to which it invited distance education coordinators and representatives from the faculty
body and other administrators representing the library, technology units, finance offices,
and registrar offices. The summit participants discussed the history and growth of
distance education as well as the current status of distance education across member
institutions. Everyone provided feedback as to how to move forward with distance
education initiatives. The discussion at the summit focused on five main areas: faculty
development and support, student development and support, technical support,
assessment and evaluation, and approval process and enrollment policies. The system
summarized the feedback from the summit discussions, sent the feedback to all attendees
for review, and then sent the summary to the DEAC to inform creation of a strategic plan.
The summit also resulted in an increase of membership in the DEAC to be more inclusive
of other areas—not just academic affairs units—from the member institutions.

The DEAC did not formally meet again until the spring of 2006 and by that time
the membership composition had changed drastically. The membership of the DEAC
includes approximately twenty-three participants and includes five representatives from
the executive offices of the Chancellor, administrative representatives at various levels
and from various departments of the member institutions (including distance education coordinators, provosts, finance and administration officers, librarians, instructional technologists, etc.), and four faculty representatives—assigned by the faculty union—from the member institutions. The purpose of the DEAC is to “foster greater communication, collaboration, efficiency, and effectiveness in the development and delivery of distance education across the System” (DEAC, March 2006, p. 2). Since the distance education summit, the DEAC has offered feedback on the state system’s white paper outlining the system’s role in supporting institutional distance education initiatives.

This white paper outlines the following assumptions in the system’s support of the institutions including “build on work already done; provide increased direction and leadership for distance learning including the establishment of strategic distance learning priorities; provide system-wide support for distance learning infrastructure, academic support, and student services; and involve faculty, staff, administrators and students as much as possible” (PASSHE, White paper, 2006, p. 4). The white paper also notes that member institutions maintain authority over academic decisions. The DEAC continues to move forward on recommendations from the distance education summit and will soon begin work on a strategic plan for the system’s distance education initiatives.

Summary

Over the ten years in which the state system member institutions have offered distance education programs, the inclusion of faculty in the planning of system-wide distance education initiatives has been modest. This is reflected in the membership of first the Virtual University Blue Ribbon Committee and now the DEAC. The document
analysis also sheds light on faculty concerns surrounding distance education policy shared initially ten years ago which still remains areas of concern for faculty today. These concerns include maintaining academic quality and integrity, providing faculty training, taking resources away from and competing with traditionally offered programs, student support services, faculty perspectives of distance education, outside competitors, and system and institutional level control. These areas of faculty concern will be discussed in-depth in the following chapter.

The document analysis does not provide information to how distance education policy was developed whether that be at the larger unit of the state system or the faculty union. The state system may now be taking steps to be more inclusive of faculty through their summits, advisory committees and such, but there is also an assumption at the state system level that those from member institutions who are involved in these state system-level activities are communicating state system efforts and plans to those back on their home campuses.

Individual Institutions within the State System

In addition to the primary stakeholders with the state system noted above, another primary stakeholder is the collective fourteen institutions. As noted earlier, the institutions range from 114 to 170 years of age. Most of the institutions began as normal schools offering two-year programming for those who wanted to become educators, transitioned into four-year teachers’ colleges, became state colleges and then finally universities. All fourteen institutions offer a liberal arts education with opportunities to obtain bachelors and master’s degrees. Only one of the fourteen institutions confers
doctoral degrees. Each institution has a president appointed by the state system’s Board of Governors and each president reports to a council of trustees as well as to the state system. Each president also has his or her own leadership cabinet which includes a provost who is the academic affairs leader of the campus. The provost is the one who works closest with the faculty. The faculty at each institution has various areas of governance including faculty senate and other councils that review undergraduate curriculum, graduate curriculum, and tenure and promotion reviews. The institutions within the state system pride themselves on high level of doctorate-earned faculty, small class sizes, student success, and student diversity.

Many of these areas of pride are reflected as performance measures from the state system. “Degrees awarded” is a category that falls under the performance funding area of excellence. According to the state system website, the “average number of bachelor’s degrees awarded from 2000-01 to 2005-06 increased by 18.4% and the average number of master’s degrees rose 29.4%” (PASSHE, Degrees Awarded, 2006, ¶ 3). Enrollment is another factor of excellence. Enrollment at the fourteen institutions has steadily increased over the past nine years with total enrollment in 1997 at 94,237 students and 109,088 students in 2006 (EU, Factbook, 2006). Other areas of performance funding include student success (persistence and graduation rates) and institutional efficiency (institutional costs, faculty productivity). These areas of performance funding along with other areas of importance and potential growth are areas of focus encouraged by the state system. One area of growth is that of distance education.

Although encouraged by the state system to offer distance education programming, not all of the fourteen institutions have chosen to do so. The nine
institutions that currently offer distance education programs have done so out of faculty and student interest and some out of necessity to increase enrollments. The remaining five institutions within the state system offer either a menu of online courses not associated with a fully online degree program or choose not to participate in offering online courses. Distance education, if it is used, exists in the academic affairs area within each institution. While there is input from the leadership in the technology area of the institution, the responsibility for distance education at the institutional level lies with academic affairs and the faculty. As noted earlier, the units where distance education initiatives are typically housed in academic affairs as stand-alone offices or in units or schools such as graduate studies and/or continuing education.

All fourteen institutions use the definition of distance education as outlined in the faculty union’s collective bargaining agreement which states that distance education is “mediated communication/instruction between faculty member(s) and student(s) other than when faculty member(s) and student(s) are physically present in the same classroom. This linkage with technology allows real time or delayed interaction using voice, video, data, and/or text” (CBA, Article 42, 2003, ¶ 4). The primary forms of distance education used currently at institutions within the state system includes video conference, blended (a combination of face-to-face and online), and online programming. For the purpose of this study, distance education will refer to fully online programs.

The three institutions selected for this case study research offer at least one fully online degree program, have had significant growth in online programming, and are located in rural areas of the state. This section provides an overview of the three institutions, offers details about the background of distance education programming at
each institution, addresses the growth each institution has experienced in the area of
distance education, and reflects how distance education is portrayed via institutional
documents.

Institution A

Located in a rural area in the southwestern part of the state, Institution A is set in
a town with approximately 6,000 residents. The campus serves over 7,700 students, the
majority of which are in-state, full-time undergraduate students and employs
approximately 350 faculty (PASSHE, University Summaries, ¶ 2). The institution,
founded in 1852, now offers more than 95 degree programs. The mission of the
institution is to build character and careers through the three goals of “student
achievement and success, institutional excellence, and community service” (CU, Mission
Statement, ¶ 2).

Distance education initiatives at Institution A are known as “Global Online” and
are housed in a separate office for online programming (the Office of Web-Based
Programs) with a reporting line to the Office of Academic Affairs. The office is overseen
by a director who reports to the Dean of Graduate Studies. Overall enrollment at
Institution A has experienced significant growth in the past nine years from 5,783
students in 1997 to 7,720 students in 2006 (EU, Factbook, 2006). In 2002-03, the
percentage of students enrolled in distance education courses was 1.21%; in 2006-07 the
percentage is 20.48%. Total course enrollments in 2006-07 were 75,765; 15,514 of those
enrollments were distance education enrollments (K. Howley, personal communication,
September 4, 2007). Institution A began offering online programming in 2003 with three
online graduate degrees and one graduate-level certificate program (K. Howley, personal
The institution now offers eleven programs, at both the undergraduate and graduate level, in a completely online format. Faculty are hired specifically to teach online but the distance education administrators is unsure of the percentage of the institution’s faculty that teach in these fully online programs (T. Kinsey, personal communication, September 10, 2007).

The first three online programs at Institution A were each created differently from one another. When the state system started to build the KUN, the administrator in charge of distance education at Institution A discussed the potential of this new medium with his president. The President was convinced that this new medium would add significant enrollments to the institution and shared his vision of growth in online programming with his campus. The administrator in charge of distance education then discussed the possibility of online programming with a department chair who knew of someone who could develop an online program. This person was contracted to develop the program and then became a faculty member in the online program. The second online program was a traditional program converted into an online format to increase enrollments. The department chair of this program was persuaded by the distance education coordinator to attend the distance education faculty training, where she became interested in teaching online. The third program began at the request of the President who persuaded a former faculty member to develop and return to teach the online program. Since that time, all other programs have been created on a volunteer basis with academic department chairs stepping forward with an interest in converting or creating a distance education program (T. Kinsey, personal communication, September 10, 2007). The departments that offer online programming at Institution A include education, legal studies, wellness, and
tourism. The programs are various education certifications, bachelor degrees in legal studies or in wellness and fitness, and master’s degrees in tourism planning, secondary education, legal studies, and exercise science and health promotion. The exercise science and health promotion program and its various tracks became the first fully online degree program offered by Institution A.

Distance education is reflected as a priority for Institution A in its vision statement, strategic plan, website, and other institutional publications. The vision statement notes the importance of providing students with multiple ways to access education including using a variety of technologies (CU, Mission Statement, ¶ 3). Institution A’s strategic plan contains at least eight strategies involving distance education as approaches toward meeting various institutional goals. Furthermore, the institution’s home page has a prominent link to their distance education program’s website which includes a welcome message directly from the university president. The university president also speaks to the growth of online education in his Spring 2007 student convocation address (CU Journal, 2007). In fact, from January through July 2007, the institution’s journal—a weekly publication developed by the public relations office—contained articles in three separate editions focusing on the online program at Institution A. The site also contains resources for students, success stories, a program listing, an online orientation, a list of frequently asked questions, and other general information (CU, Global Online).

Institution B

Institution B is located in a small rural town of 6,900 residents in the north western area of the state. The campus serves 6,443 undergraduate students and 1,136
graduate students. The institution employs almost 400 faculty members. Founded in 1857, the institution offers almost 100 degree programs (PASSHE, University Summaries, 2007, ¶ 2). The institution’s mission is to “create and share knowledge by providing access to education and learning experiences for the academic, cultural and personal growth of the students and the larger community” (EU, Mission Statement, 2007, ¶ 1).

Distance education at Institution B is housed in the School of Graduate Studies; therefore the Director of Online Programs reports to the Dean of that school who, in turn, reports to the Provost. Overall enrollment at Institution B has grown from 7,083 students in 1997 to 7,579 students in 2006 (EU, Factbook, 2006). In 2002-03, the percentage of students enrolled in distance education courses was .39%; in 2006-07 the percentage is 2.11%. Total course enrollments in 2006-07 were 63,074 and 1,330 of those enrollments were distance education enrollments (K. Howley, personal communication, September 4, 2007). In 2002, Institution B offered four online programs – two graduate certificates and two graduate degree programs (K. Howley, personal communication, April 26, 2007). The institution currently offers eight online degree programs in the form of master’s degrees or certifications. Faculty members are not hired specifically to teach solely online, but some “are hired with the stipulation that they may be required to teach online at some point” (R. Wagonseller, personal communication, September 20, 2007). As of the fall semester of 2007, less than 1% of the institution’s faculty (32 faculty to be exact) teach in these fully online programs.

The online programs from Institution B almost all come from the education departments with only one coming from the nursing department and all programs are
only at the graduate level. The first online program—a master’s in special education—was encouraged by the school dean in cooperation with the academic department. The program was “created to address a need for highly accessible academic programming that led to certification in special education” (R. Wagon-seller, personal communication, September 20, 2007). Had the program not had the support of the academic department, the proposal to offer the program would have failed. This is true for all online programs at the institution. The academic departments at Institution B determine approval for offering courses via online. The department’s chairperson then “passes this information on to the appropriate Dean and the course(s) must then go through the curriculum review process” (R. Wagon-seller, personal communication, September 20, 2007).

As noted earlier, the online programs at Institution B are all at the graduate level. The goal to focus on programming at the graduate level is apparent in the institution’s strategic plan. While the institution does not refer to distance education in its vision statement, the five-year strategic plan put into place by Institution B for 2006-2011 outlines two references to distance education including the strategic initiative to expand online graduate programming and the strategic initiative to enhance technology needed “to address the growing needs for learning from a distance that is flexible in regards to location and time” (EU, Five Year Strategic Plan, 2006, ¶ 11-13). The institution does not currently have a faculty handbook or guidelines for online teaching, but they are creating one. They do offer a “Best Practices” course posted on their course management system which faculty use to “submit or access information relative to online course delivery” (R. Wagon-seller, personal communication, September 20, 2007).
A website promoting online programs at Institution B provides information to students regarding accessing courses, computer skills, list of programs, requirements, and other general information (EU, EU Online, 2007). The institution’s home page does not provide a prominent link to the online programs they offer but a scrolling information section does eventually provide the link. Publications like the President’s report also note the success of the institution in offering video-conference programming and the goal of increasing online programming at the graduate level. Furthermore, the report notes the efforts of the graduate faculty in developing a best practices guide to teaching online for the institution’s faculty (EU, President’s Report, 2007).

Institution C

Institution C is located in a very small rural town of 3,400 residents in the north central area of the state. The campus is home to 2,936 undergraduate students, 424 graduate students, and 213 faculty members. Founded in 1857, the institution offers a total of seventy degree programs (PASSHE, University Summaries, ¶ 2). The mission of Institution C is to provide “an environment that promotes academic and personal growth as well as intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic values” and to stimulate “continuous pursuit of knowledge and understanding by students, staff, and faculty” (MU, Mission Statement, ¶ 1).

At Institution C, distance education is housed within a continuing education unit which reports to Academic Affairs. The Director for the Center for Lifelong Learning oversees all continuing education and distance education initiatives. Overall enrollment at Institution C has grown from 2,907 students in 1997 to 3,360 students in 2006 (EU, Factbook, 2006). In 2002-03, the percentage of students enrolled in distance education
courses was 6.02%; in 2006-07 the percentage is 9.56%. Total course enrollments in 2006-07 were 33,955; 3,246 were distance education enrollments (K. Howley, personal communication, September 4, 2007). In 2002, Institution C offered only one online graduate program and now offers two online graduate programs and two online undergraduate degree completion programs (K. Howley, personal communication, April 26, 2007). Faculty are hired specifically to teach online and approximately 25% of the institution’s faculty teach in these fully online programs in the summer; this percentage decreases in the fall and spring semesters with approximately 16% teaching online (S. Sweet, personal communication, September 17, 2007).

The academic departments that offer these online programs are the nursing, art history and education (specifically that of school library and information technology) departments. These programs were initiated in a variety of ways. Some programs are recommended by external constituents who have a need and communicate that need to the continuing education unit. The director of that unit then initiates conversations with the appropriate academic department chair about the potential needs and interest of the external constituent(s). The department chair in turn takes the idea back to the faculty, discusses, and decides how to act—if at all—on the recommendation. Other programs may be initiated by academic departments who then work with the continuing education director to bring the program to fruition. The academic department chairs of the online programs work closely with the continuing education unit and support their faculty in terms of communicating professional development and training opportunities to them, encouraging them to work with the institution’s instructional designer, and attending
various in-service sessions for faculty each semester (S. Sweet, personal communication, September 17, 2007).

Although distance education enrollments make up almost half of the institution’s enrollments and a significant percentage of the faculty teach in the institution’s online programs, neither the university’s vision statement nor the strategic plan mention distance education (MU, 2003). The institution does not have a separate handbook or guidelines for faculty who teach online. The institution’s home page provides a link to online learning information which directs users to a website that provides general information about programs offered, how to get started, and other student resources (MU, Center for lifelong learning, 2007). Information about distance education could not be found in the President’s report or on the President’s website, nor could the researcher locate reference to distance education policy online in the posted minutes from Cabinet or Faculty Senate reports.

Summary

Table 1 provides information about the type and number of online programs within each of the three institutions and provides the total number offered through the state system of higher education.

Table One: Online Program Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Graduate Degree Programs</th>
<th>Certification/Post-Masters/Grad Certificate Programs</th>
<th>Undergraduate Degree Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State System</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The discussions with distance education coordinators and the institutional
document analysis shows some consistency across the institutions in level of participation
in distance education (e.g. number of programs offered and participation of students
reflected as enrollments) but lacks some consistency in how the institutions reflect the
level to which distance education plays a role in the growth or future of the institutions.
While Institution A and B both highlight the role that distance education plays in the
future of the institution, Institution C does not promote the use of distance education in
important institutional documents such as strategic plans or mission statements.
Institution A also exhibits strong support for distance education from the presidential
level and from a public relations standpoint, whereas information about distance
education at the other two institutions proved difficult to locate on websites such as the
president’s site and public relations sites, like university journals and student newspapers.
This is interesting because Institution C is the only out of the three institutions in this
study that report directly to the Provost; thus one would assume that online programming
would receive more attention or more marketing support (i.e. visible public relations,
direct information on the website, etc.).

In regard to faculty, Institution C has a large percentage of faculty teaching in
their online programs and like Institution A, will hire faculty to specifically teach online.
Institution B chooses to use faculty hired for face-to-face teaching to support their online
teaching efforts. Yet Institution C does not require training for faculty who teach online
nor do they have faculty guidelines or a handbook for online teaching while Institution A
does require training and Institution B is in the process of creating faculty guidelines for
online teaching. While the institutional document analysis did not offer information
about faculty involvement in policy development, distance learning coordinators did indicate that faculty involvement could be found largely in development and approval of online programs.
CHAPTER 5
FACULTY PROFILES AND CONVERSATIONS

Introduction

This study examines the distance education policymaking process and focuses on
the faculty stakeholders within the context of public, four-year institutions that are
members of a state system of higher education. Chapter 5 of this dissertation provides
brief faculty profiles which contain a description of each of the fourteen faculty members
interviewed for the study. Tables outlining faculty details along with a summary of the
faculty information is provided.

Faculty Profiles

The member institutions of the state system of higher education employ
approximately 5,500 faculty members. This includes a mix of full-time and adjunct
faculty. System-wide faculty hiring policies are outlined in the faculty union’s collective
bargaining agreement. The departmental faculty have the ultimate decision in hiring a
faculty candidate regardless of whether the candidate has been recommended by the
department chair or the administration of the institution (CBA, Article 11, 2003).
Furthermore, the contract limits the number of adjunct faculty hired limiting the number
to 7% of the full-time number of faculty (CBA, Article 11, 2003). Yet each institution
determines whether or not it prefers to hire faculty solely to teach online, solely face-to-
face, or a mix of face-to-face and online; the distinction appears in the faculty member’s
personal contract.
For this study, faculty who teach solely online at these institutions indicated their interest in participating in this research via a short online survey. The survey requested demographic information of faculty including faculty rank, years of teaching at the institution, and the range of years (less than one year, 1-4 years, or 5-9 years) each had been teaching online. Faculty also provided information as to what online program(s) they teach in and what level of courses they teach. The survey then provided faculty with an opportunity to be involved in the study, allowing them to indicate if they would be available for interviews. Faculty responses to challenges and motivations for teaching online discussed in interviews as well as a basic overview of each faculty member interviewed is provided in this section.

Doug

Doug has worked for Institution A for seven years. He is an associate professor who is a full-time faculty member. He has been teaching online for 5-9 years and teaches only part of his teaching load in an online format. The online courses Doug teaches have been at both the undergraduate and graduate level. The remainder of his teaching load is done in a face-to-face classroom. Doug became involved with teaching online due to his department chair’s encouragement and that of others in his academic department. The motivating factors that swayed Doug to teach online included the increased flexibility in teaching and with his time. He discovered that while teaching online does take time, he appreciated having the choice to come to campus. Doug also noted the benefit of receiving monetary stipends associated with teaching online. On the other hand, he believes that one of the negative aspects to teaching online is that students and instructors miss the “face to face contact.” He believes that online learning is no substitute for in-
class learning and that distance education can be convenient for some people but “has its place and it has its role.”

_Evelyn_

Evelyn has worked for Institution B for fifteen years. She has the highest rank of full professor and is a full-time faculty member. Evelyn has been teaching online for 1-4 years. Her teaching load is completely online and she teaches graduate-level courses. Evelyn got involved with distance education as a faculty member who worked on converting the graduate program into the online format and as one of the recruiters of faculty to teach the online courses. She currently teaches online and is a member of the online graduate committee on-campus.

Evelyn initially had concerns about the technology in that it can affect the amount of control a faculty member has in the class. If the technology goes awry, she believes that the instructor must have alternate ways of contacting the student and getting the content to the student. She also expressed concern that others on her campus were not supportive of distance education so she knew she would be taking a risk by getting involved. She took the risk and found the challenge of teaching online a motivating factor. She wanted to “find ways to enhance educational delivery and educational programs.” She also liked the creative aspect of designing online courses and appreciated that the program would be providing access to college for adult learners who may not traditionally have it. Evelyn found that the students were very bright and very motivated.

_Gloria_

Gloria has been at Institution A for one year. She is an assistant professor and a full-time faculty member. She has been teaching online 1-4 years and teaches part of her
teaching load in the online format. Gloria teaches online courses at the graduate level. Gloria uses the course management systems as a supplement to her face-to-face courses in addition to teaching fully online courses. She became familiar with online learning in her doctorate program, which encouraged her to participate in teaching online. Gloria admits to being “snobbish” at first in contemplating teaching online graduate courses because of the higher expectations of graduate-level work, but had no problems once she got started. She thinks that distance education can be very effective and sees it as becoming a more popular medium for teaching. Furthermore, she believes that the course management systems that Institution A employs is very simple to use making it easier for her to teach her classes.

Kim has worked at Institution C for six years and is currently an assistant professor. She is an adjunct faculty member who works for the institution in a part-time capacity and has taught online for 5-9 years. Her teaching load consists of fully online courses at the graduate level. Kim’s involvement in distance education at Institution C has included developing the courses, teaching the courses, and now managing the course as others teach it. In contemplating participation in distance education, Kim noted that a previous bad experience as an online student was an inhibiting factor. But she also believed that by providing the program as a fully online program, she could help provide access to those who needed the program. The issue of providing access to students motivated Kim. Furthermore, she notes that there are “so many rewards in online teaching” which keeps one motivated.
Marie

Marie has worked at Institution C for seven years and works at the instructor level in a part-time capacity. She has taught online 5-9 years and all of her teaching load is taught online. The courses she teaches are at the graduate level. Marie started as a course developer prior to teaching online. She began teaching because she felt passionate about the course topic and she believed it would be a “great professional opportunity.” Marie’s primary concern regarding participation in distance education was not being knowledgeable in the course management system used by the institution. A course management system (i.e. Blackboard, eCollege, ANGEL, etc.) is an online system that manages content, provides a place for discussion and document sharing, and is the online course “home.” Yet Marie believed that teaching with the course management system and technology was do-able and she knew she would just have to “jump in and learn it.” Furthermore, Marie knew that as an adjunct, she had the potential to be one of those in the workforce who could relate to the working adult learners in the program. She believes that distance education allows those in the workforce to share their knowledge and skills with students which can really prepare “the next generation of practitioners of all kinds.”

Mary

Mary has worked at Institution C for fourteen years and is a full professor. She is a full-time faculty member and has been teaching online for 1-4 years. Her teaching load consists of fully online graduate-level courses. Mary got involved with distance education through designing the online program, teaching for the program, and ultimately becoming department chair. Her primary concern in teaching online was that her
students would be able to learn what she wanted them to learn. She found that the tools in the course management system (like the discussion boards) allowed her to assess student learning through their discussions and to adjust her teaching style or content as needed. One aspect of distance education that surprised her initially and ended up motivating her was the impact that the experience of teaching online has on her teaching. Mary found that the experience affects everything from the amount of time and effort teaching an online course takes to how it changes the way one teaches a face-to-face course. Furthermore, she felt driven to be involved because of the access the program would provide to adult learners who didn’t live close to campus.

Paul

Paul has taught for fourteen years at Institution C and is an associate professor who is full-time. He has taught 5-9 years online. His teaching load consists of both face-to-face and online courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Paul initially got involved with distance education in a support capacity working to develop courses, administering the program, and providing support to faculty teaching online courses. He also experienced distance education directly as an online student; this experience motivated him to teach online. To Paul, there were no inhibiting factors when considering his participation in distance education; he knew he wanted to do it. Benefits he perceived to teaching online included providing access and convenience to students who would not normally be able to attend college. Paul also felt happy to continue to have various experiences with distance education including teaching online, developing courses, and continuing in his role of supporting his colleagues with the technical help that they require.
**Randy**

Randy has taught at Institution A for twenty-two years. He is a full professor who works at in a full-time capacity. He has taught online for 1-4 years and teaches his entire load online. He teaches online courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Randy’s involvement with distance education at Institution A has included designing online courses, supporting faculty, recruiting students, and now teaching online courses.

The only factor that caused pause in Randy’s consideration of participating in distance education was the amount of training the institution required prior to teaching online although he indicated on reflection that the training proved not as difficult as he thought it would be. His primary reasons for teaching online included a change in work load; Randy went from a program director position to teaching online full-time. He also believed that teaching online would provide greater flexibility of his time, not requiring him to be on-campus at certain times. Finally, Randy was motivated by the monetary stipends associated with teaching online which are outlined in the faculty collective bargaining agreement.

**Ruby**

Ruby has taught for Institution B for thirteen years. She is an associate professor who works at the institution full-time. She has been teaching online for 5-9 years and teaches part of her load in an online format. Ruby teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses. Her interest in distance education began through her involvement in helping to create the online graduate program for which she also teaches. She has also been involved in faculty training and has participated on a few committees that discuss faculty support for online teaching.
While initially she was intrigued by the technology, she did not believe that quality could be maintained or evaluation could be conducted in an online environment. Her love for the “bells and whistles” of technology overcame her doubts and she felt challenged by the administration which encouraged the development of an online graduate program. Ruby also was motivated by the access that the online program would provide to working adult learners who may live to far away or have family/work obligations keeping them from attending campus.

Scott

Scott has worked for Institution A for one year. He is a full-time assistant professor who began working with the institution as a part-time adjunct teaching one online course during the summer. Now, as a full-time faculty member, Scott has taught online for 1-4 years with a fully online teaching load. He teaches online graduate courses. Scott had experience teaching online in adjunct capacities and believes that the online environment provided an interactive way for students to learn. In discussing inhibiting factors to participating in distance education, Scott noted that his initial concern was whether or not the institution was committed to a “long-term use of online instruction.” He has since found that the institution is committed to distance education and his concern has been alleviated. He also believes that distance education provides an “enjoyable, intellectually stimulating opportunity” for him in teaching adult learners from all areas of the workforce in various areas of the world. Furthermore, he sees distance education as providing access to students who may not be able to attend college in a tradition way and meeting these students needs is a benefit to him. Scott thinks that the
“world is where we [Institution A] are at,” not just the state or region where the institution is located.

Shanna

Shanna has taught at Institution B for twelve years. She is an associate professor who teaches in a full-time capacity. She has taught online for 5-9 years and teaches part of her load online. The online courses she teaches are at the graduate level. Shanna’s involvement with distance education at Institution B has included designing an online program and teaching online courses. Although she was concerned about how students would learn in an online environment, she chose to give it a try and noted that if her students were not learning or if she was not comfortable with the format, she would not continue to teach online. She also noted with pleasure that online teaching presented her a challenge as a faculty member.

Sharon

Sharon has worked for Institution C for seven years. She is an instructor who teaches part-time. She has taught online for 5-9 years and her teaching load is completely online. Sharon is a full-time practitioner in the field and was one of the people who helped develop and design the online graduate program with others from her field and from Institution C. From there, Sharon used her experience as a student in a distance education course, her experience as an educator, and her research about online teaching to direct how she would teach online. Sharon could not pinpoint any inhibiting factors to teaching online, but indicated that she was motivated by the ability to provide adult learners with good material to learn the content and to provide access to the program for adult learners around the globe.
Steffy

Steffy has worked for Institution A for six years. She is an assistant professor who teaches full-time. She has taught online for 1-4 years with part of her load via face-to-face and part of her load online. Steffy’s teaching load consists of both undergraduate and graduate courses. Steffy was one of the first faculty members to go through the required training at Institution A. The training itself was an inhibiting factor in considering the move to teaching online. Steffy completed the eight week training session in less than three weeks in order to be certified to teach online prior to the start of the semester. While she found the training to be helpful, it took a great deal of time to complete the training. Steffy felt challenged by the institution to teach online which motivated her to go through the training. Steffy completed the training in her second year at the institution because she believed that online teaching would be “the wave of the future.” She also thought that online learning was going to become a part of the curriculum and that this was not a trend that would come and go.

Tim

Tim has worked for Institution B for three years. He is an assistant professor who works full-time at the institution. He has taught online for 1-4 years and teaches his full load in the online format. He got involved with distance education by developing and teaching a variety of online classes. Tim did not feel any inhibitions in teaching online and feels that online learning “has its place” in that it allows students from rural areas a chance to access programming that they normally would not be able to access. When Tim was asked to teach online, he thought it would be a great opportunity and was excited by the challenge.
Summary

Table 2 summarizes the profile of the participants including the institution of employment, number of years they have taught online, how much of their workload is online, faculty rank, and whether they teach full time or part time.

### Table Two: Participant Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Range of Years Teaching Online</th>
<th>Amount of Load Online</th>
<th>Faculty Rank</th>
<th>Full-Time (FT) or Part-Time (PT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doug</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>5-9 yrs</td>
<td>Partial load</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1-4 yrs</td>
<td>Full load</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-4 yrs</td>
<td>Partial load</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>5-9 yrs</td>
<td>Full load</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>PT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>5-9 yrs</td>
<td>Full load</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>PT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1-4 yrs</td>
<td>Full load</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>5-9 yrs</td>
<td>Partial load</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-4 yrs</td>
<td>Full load</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>5-9 yrs</td>
<td>Partial load</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-4 yrs</td>
<td>Full load</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanna</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>5-9 yrs</td>
<td>Partial load</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>5-9 yrs</td>
<td>Full load</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>PT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steffy</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-4 yrs</td>
<td>Partial load</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1-4 yrs</td>
<td>Full load</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>FT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While all of the faculty members interviewed have experience in teaching online, many had additional experience in areas such as online course development, online program design, faculty support, program administration, and recruiting students or faculty. A few also mentioned their participation in distance-education-related committees. Many faculty indicated similar motivating factors for their participation in distance education which included providing access and convenience to students, taking on the challenge or risk of teaching online, accepting the opportunity due to encouragement or pressure, and experiencing positive online learning as a student. In addition, other motivating factors included a belief that distance education was the future.
of teaching/learning, appreciation for the flexibility it provided them as teachers, and the receipt of monetary stipends associated with teaching online. The main factors that faculty initially had considered as inhibiting factors (prior to experiencing online teaching) included concerns about technology, belief that distance education has its role and its place, uncertainty that online learning would be successful, and need for training. All believe that once they experienced teaching online, their concerns were alleviated.

Conversation Findings

Findings from interview transcripts which address the study’s research questions provide faculty perceptions as to how they and others are involved with the creation of distance education policy (role and process). The impacts of policy on distance education according to faculty are also included. The findings from the data analysis portion of the study fall under four main categories of definition and description of distance education policy, development of distance education policy, impact of distance education policy on faculty, and dynamics of distance education policy.

Defining and Describing Distance Education Policy

For the purpose of this research, distance education policy is defined as “a written course of action adopted to facilitate program development and delivery in distance education” (King, Nugent, Russell, Eich, & Lacy, 2000, ¶ 3). This definition was not provided to interviewees in order to determine how faculty themselves defined distance education policy and what they believe to be the critical components of that policy. In these discussions about defining and describing distance education policy, faculty
provided information on current policies in place at their institutions and policies that
they believe are still needed for their distance education programs.

*Struggle to Define Distance Education Policy*

Many research participants struggled with their responses when asked how they
would define distance education policy. They asked for clarification as to what was
meant by the term ‘policy’. Continuing to probe, the researcher then asked the faculty
what essential components would be included if they were to develop distance education
policy and it was clear that many interchanged policy and procedure. Marie noted that
she couldn’t possibly begin to describe distance education policy for her institution
because “they are so bound with things like union contracts and other kinds of things.”
One participant provided a succinct definition of policy clearly separating it from
procedure. Kim offered:

> Policy I see as something that sets how…not how, but what you do, why you do
> it. Procedures tell you how to do it and when to do it. A policy tells you what you
do and why you do it.

Tim noted that distance education policy outlines “what we do” and “how do we
operate.” He said that distance education policy “talks about the systems” to operate a
distance education program. Randy said that good distance education policy “involves
the institutional framework and guidelines” for creating a strong distance education
policy. He believes that the components of distance education policy should include a tie
to the institution’s strategic plan, program and curriculum development, faculty training,
student support, and evaluation and assessment.
Awareness, Accessibility and Evolution of DE Policy

Faculty provided contextual information about policy prior to describing actual policy areas or topics. They discussed their general awareness of and access to distance education policy as well as their beliefs in the need for separate or supplemental policies for distance education programming. Furthermore, faculty discussed the evolution of distance education policy.

Awareness and Accessibility of Policy

When faculty discussed current distance education policies in place at their institution, they were asked if these policies were written and easily accessible or if they were unwritten and assumed. Responses reflected a wide range of inconsistency in policy awareness and policy availability. Some faculty, like Tim and Scott, were unaware of any distance education policy at their institution but assumed that it existed and was written down somewhere. Gloria noted that if policies on her campus were written, she “would not know where to go to find them” as she was not given any kind of “guideline or policy manual.” On the other hand, several faculty replied that their programs had very accessible policies with faculty and/or student handbooks. Few of the faculty, like Mary and Doug, said that their institutional policies were quite “transparent” for faculty who wanted to offer online programming. Mary stated that her institution had “an intranet for faculty only” which provided access to policies. Marie also noted that department meeting minutes are accessible to faculty only via a departmental website. She lamented the lack of communication about university-level policies and said that if university policies were not outlined in the contract then she would not be aware of them unless she was told that she had violated one of the policies.
Distance Education and Face-to-Face Policy

The conversation about awareness and accessibility moved toward a discussion about policies for traditional programs and for distance education programs and whether or not these policies should be the same or if supplemental policies should be in place. For example, Doug noted that at his institution most distance education policies are the same as those for face-to-face courses. Similarly, Evelyn noted that her institution is “trying really hard to make sure that they have policies that are global enough to fit all programs.” She is confused as to why separate policies for distance education would be developed. She said:

I think they have some things in place and in our case, those policies were already in place for face-to-face learning. Because online isn’t different. It’s the same education.

Marie posed the need not for separate policy, but for an addendum to current policy that serves all students, including those who take both face-to-face and online courses as neither the fully online or fully face-to-face policies address their situations.

Kim added that there is a need to develop specific distance education policies or at least “addendums” to the “usual ‘I’ve always done it this way’ policies.” She shared her concern that the face-to-face program policies attempt to have online programs “conform to the classroom model.” Sharon also noted the issues around “the way we’ve always done it” policies and how those policies don’t always work well for online programs. Kim described the policy situation on her campus as “fitting a square peg into a round hole, because all of the policies and so on that are set in universities are kind of focused on that particular environment” and “we don’t always fit the scenario.” Other
faculty, including Sharon and Paul also from Institution C, used the same terminology of the “square peg, round hole” as a description of policy on their campus. Paul believes that most policies won’t work because they are made for on-campus classroom based courses and programs and because distance education is taught differently, he asserts that it needs to be supported differently and administered differently.

According to Sharon, when an institution tries to make all the policies fit the same criteria there are going to be on-going problems. An example she provided is the course withdrawal and drop dates set by the institution; these dates do not fit with their program, yet the dates are published and confuse students. She has been told that the institution’s current policies “work well for the rest of the university”; therefore she believes that policy development is “historical” and that policy makers have a tendency to go back to policies written long ago. Sharon recommends that policies be revisited in order to consider new programs or new methodologies.

*Evolution of Policy*

The issue of revisiting policy was discussed by others as well. For example, Kim noted that policy should not be “stagnant” and “needs to be revisited often and re-evaluated and adjusted.” Many of the faculty suggested that policy is always in flux thus making it difficult to clearly define all of its components. Faculty shared that their distance education policies are still evolving and that there was room for improvement. Gloria said that policy is “never perfect.” She added:

Policies are just like anything that starts out. You have to do it and then you figure out okay, well we need to go back and fix that.
While Kim stated that her institution is “still feeling our way,” both Gloria and Steffy remarked that at their institutions policies were in early inception but “getting better” with “trial and error.” Steffy’s example of improvement was that now her institution requires faculty training when in the beginning, they did not. She thinks that when institutions are in the “early inception stages” they learn from the “professors who are doing a good job” teaching online and should have them discuss their successes with others.

Recurring Policy Topics

When faculty described policy in their interviews, certain policy topics were given as examples and were recurring issues in the conversations. These policy topics are organized in this section based on where the policy is perceived to reside (i.e. within the state system, the institution, or the department), as many times policies at different levels can conflict with one another. It is important to note that while the state system may have system-wide policies, institutions have freedom to develop “local agreements” for institutional policies and may even provide academic departments with flexibility to develop departmental policies. Therefore, some institutions within the same system may have different distance education policies.

State System Policies

Those faculty that were aware of distance education policies at the state system level discussed examples of such policies. For example, Ruby expressed gratitude for the system’s written polices regarding approving a new academic program as it provides a consistent policy for program development. She noted that in addition to the approval policy, “the only policy that is out there really has to do with pay,” which refers to the
incentive stipend policies. Other topics of discussion focused on unpopular policy decisions like the common calendar and the common course management system (CMS) tool along with policies established by the faculty union—both supporting and constraining.

Common Calendar and CMS. A few of the faculty, including Kim, mentioned their displeasure with the common calendar policy put into place by the state system which affects flexibility of and academic calendars for online programs and also affects the schedules of their students who tend to be working adults. Kim notes that the system lists details about calendar dates for summer sessions but “they still haven’t changed the model for the online program…which is tough for our students.” Sharon’s concern focused on another area of coordination from the state system which involved the course management system used at her institution. She noted that although the faculty within her department settled on a certain course management system for their online courses, the state system made a bargain with another vendor to provide the course management system to all of the institutions within the state system. She said, “I guess Blackboard offered them [the system] a deal they couldn’t refuse and they decided they were not going to support eCollege and they wanted everyone to go on it.” They made a policy decision affecting faculty from all institutions without consultation from faculty and although on-site staff development was provided to faculty on the campuses, Sharon argued that this type of training didn’t work for the majority of the faculty in her program who are “cyber” faculty and live in various geographic regions of the country.

Supportive Contract Policies. When the faculty interviewed discussed state system policies, they typically referred to the stipend policy which is outlined in the
faculty union contract and provides monetary stipends to faculty who teach online. The faculty union contract stipulates that all of the faculty receive some level of monetary stipends for teaching online in addition to their regular teaching salary. Many of the faculty discussed the distance education stipends as support provided by the state system. For example, Evelyn noted that “the state system as a whole gives remuneration for teaching online” although she admits that she didn’t know that these stipends were available to her when she began teaching online. Steffy added that the monetary stipends are incentives to teach online although she is not sure what the amounts of the stipends are. Tim offered more information on the stipends noting that one rate is provided for developing a course and another amount for the number of students in an online course. According to the faculty contract, faculty receive $2,000 to prepare a distance education course and the enrollment stipend is $40 per student enrolled over an enrollment of 10 (CBA, 2003). In addition, Shanna added that faculty member also receives a stipend for updating a course after a period of time. As noted in the faculty profile section, few of the faculty replied that their motivation to teach online stemmed from the receipt of these monetary stipends.

*Union Interference.* Overall attitudes about the faculty union contract policies were somewhat negative. These policies, as noted by Paul, cannot be controlled by or are not the “fault” of the institution’s administration as they must live within the contract regulations and are not allowed to “go around that contract.” One faculty member noted that he would not want to be involved with the “complex bargaining issues” and did not want to be “involved with that relationship between the union and faculty.” Sharon
added that the contract is very “difficult to understand.” Paul noted that the union doesn’t seem to take a solid stance on distance education. He said:

I do find it interesting that every time they renegotiate the contract, there’s very little said about distance ed. I find that significant that it’s almost as if they just want to keep sleeping dogs lying. They really don’t want to bring it up because I would imagine the administration would really try to push it. And I don’t think they really want to discuss it.

Tim believes that the faculty union will begin to put limits on distance education. He stated:

My concern is that they will try to get involved and they will control what it is we are allowed to teach, how we’re allowed to teach, and then they’ll start getting to the money side of this thing and I’m afraid that it’s just going to put a real damper on it.

Kim noted that the union isn’t exactly “in touch” with teaching online but that as more faculty get involved with distance education, the union may become more involved and their policies might change. Scott agreed that the faculty union would have some “influence on distance education policy” decisions. Few of the faculty noted the benefits of the union in relation to distance education. Doug mentioned the importance of the union in faculty involvement with distance education policy development stating that faculty help inform policy making in the form of the collective bargaining agreement with the state system.
Institutional Policies

State system policies were not the only types of policies discussed. Faculty also talked about various types of institutional policies including faculty training and development, program development and access, admissions and attendance, and student services.

Faculty Training and Development. The faculty at Institution A described their faculty training policy, noting that anyone who is interested in teaching online must first complete the required training program. Randy added that while his institution offered policies related to faculty training and course development and approval, no other policies were written as far as he was aware. Doug noted that Institution A has a faculty professional development center that offers “several different types of technology seminars during the spring and summers for faculty.” Gloria added that in addition to the training sessions, Institution A is “trying to make sure that all faculty get certified” to teach online and Steffy indicated that Institution A covers the cost of these training sessions.

Program Development and Access. Other institutional policies are found in the areas of distance education program development and student access. Scott said that his institution demonstrates a strong commitment to online program development. Doug said that policy directs “current and potential programs.” Kim also believes that policy should help a program “progress.” Scott said that “good policy would result in good programming.” Both Paul and Doug indicated that their institutions deliberately choose which programs will go online. Paul described how programs offered specifically fulfill a “niche.” Doug said the administration will:
Srutinize whether they think particularly the program will make or not make so you have to have something – a niche type program – they think will be the best. They don’t want to get out into an area where 100 other programs offered by other universities for students like the University of Phoenix or other kind of online universities. They don’t want to get involved. They want something unique so it doesn’t make it difficult and will be good from the get go.

In its mission statement, Institution A specifically notes the importance of strategically providing programs “to meet the unique needs of high demand areas” (CU, Strategic Plan, Goal One, 2007, ¶ 37).

Scott, who works for Institution A, said that by “choosing to find new niches in their program offerings, they have been able to develop a nationwide student base of online students.” Institution B also notes the importance of access and meeting the needs of students outside of the university’s physical reach (EU, Five Year Strategic Plan, 2006). Many of the faculty, including Tim, expressed the importance of extending and providing access to those who typically would not physically be able to come to campus. Kim believes that her institution does a great job in offering an increasing number of distance education courses to students giving them the option of taking courses either face-to-face or online.

Admissions and Attendance. When faculty referred to policies dealing with administration, they primarily mentioned policies which focused on operations like admissions and student attendance. For example, Tim said that policy can set the structure of an operation and that stronger admission policies provide “stronger operation procedures,” which “improves the system of education.” Similarly, Doug believes that
policy directs how institutions “deal with current and potential students” referring to admissions standard and how students are admitted into the program. Evelyn referred to an admissions policy that had been in place which kept students who lived within a fifty mile radius from being admitted into online programs. Ruby described this same policy as an “informal policy we stuck with for a long time.” Scott said that this policy was a barrier that added “nothing academically to a program” but was “used to provide the appearance of academic rigor.” Furthermore, he shared that these types of barriers are “artificial and useless.” According to Evelyn, although many of the faculty wanted the mileage policy to stay in place primarily due to concerns about the effect on the traditional on-campus program, the policy was found to be discriminatory and was discontinued.

Marie provided an administrative example dealing with student attendance. She explained that her department had to institute a policy regarding attendance because students assumed that with an online course, they could go on vacations and such and complete their work upon their return. While Marie noted that a student’s geographic whereabouts were not the concern of faculty, the requirement was that students must have access at all times throughout the course.

Student Services. Faculty also indicated that their institution possessed clear policies related to student services. The area of student services is outlined in the faculty contract as a responsibility of each institution stating that universities need to ensure that students are able to easily communicate with faculty at a distance, receive library access, and receive course materials and texts (CBA, 2003). Kim noted that she is concerned that some policies may work better for on-campus students and not for online students.
and believes that some policies need “to conform to the online environment, meaning you have to take into consideration that people are working at different times, at all different locations, and physically they may never be on your campus.” She noted that the institution should “have policies in place so they [the students] can get the same services even though they’re not there to walk in to the library or the book store or anything else; they never walk physically into your office.”

Both Mary and Marie indicated that their institution’s policies on student services reflect the necessity of online services like the book store, registration, the library, and financial aid. Marie added:

I think the fact that our program opened with this whole core of students who were not in any way affiliated with the university except as online learners really facilitated that. Because they had to adapt to these people. They were not ever going to show up on campus to sign anything or get an I.D. or any other kind of think. So I think that they [the various student service offices]…were outstanding in how rapidly they dealt with the needs and to deal in different ways with online students.

Institution A includes providing services to online students in its strategic plan (CU, Strategic Plan, Goal One, 2007). In its five-year strategic plan, Institution B also outlines the importance of online services such as library resources, student union, and revisiting the out-of-state tuition policy for students at a distance (EU, Five Year Strategic Plan, 2006).
Departmental Policies

Many times institutional policy discussion led to departmental or programmatic policies. Policies discussed in this section were noted by faculty in referring to their specific departmental policies. These policies may not be consistent across departments so the policies discussed below may be unique to the department and therefore to the institution. The examples faculty members provided included current distance education policies at the department level. These included program-related policies like communicating with students and grading.

Communication Policies. Kim offered an example of a departmental policy which requires faculty to respond to a student’s question or concern within 48 hours. She added that the faculty members in her department also “have a commitment to having a quick turnaround for feedback for assignments.” Sharon described how communication policies put in place for faculty can be difficult and are many times out of the hands of faculty and are governed by other institutional offices like Information Technology. She offered an example as to how certain technological requirements are in place for email, yet the online learners have had various problems with the email which affects the communication between the faculty and the students. Many of her students are working full-time and are unable to access email due to workplace spam filters. She said:

Teachers and working in K-12 buildings that have no service like you do in a university and they do not allow teachers to access hotmail accounts or personal email accounts...that’s how their network is set up. So these people can’t access any of our communication during the day.
Grading Policies. Another example of departmental policy provided was that of grading. Marie noted that her online program has various policies but that the grading policy for the program conflicts with the institution’s grading policy as it relates to granting an incomplete. She provides the following example:

The university’s policy…is that when a student in the graduate program has an incomplete or is granted an incomplete, they have until grades are due the following semester to turn in the work. Our personal department policy initially was that we would work with the students with in the school of education to assign a timeline by which they started turning in work. Because if they turn in an entire semester’s worth of work on the day grades are due, we are in serious trouble. Yet that is their right and we were told very firmly we could not deviate from that. So that is extremely inhibiting and what it has done is caused us great turmoil within our department over the issuing of completes. We’ve become exceptionally unwilling to consider it because of the potential for not being able to deal with the workload at the very end of the semester.

Steffy noted that she has noticed confusion about grading policies—how one assesses student learning online and what assessment tools are used. She states that:

A lot of the faculty were concerned and again they were faculty who weren’t necessarily familiar with assessment and evaluation online, as to cheating and how you would inhibit that. And again, you’re probably looking at more traditional views of education where it’s the test and multiple tests and that’s it. You know, and not basically understanding that there are multiple forms of
assessment that would be used and more applied knowledge rather than rote knowledge.

Steffy added that in order to provide clarity with course expectations such as response time and grading, she goes one step further than departmental policies by creating course policies—attendance, participation, language usage, plagiarism—which may not be as evident in the university or department policies.

_Missing Policies_

When faculty discussed current distance education policies, many also spoke about policies that should be in place. Some faculty, like Randy and Scott, noted that it was difficult to know what was missing when policies weren’t written and accessible. But the significant areas faculty discussed as necessary at the various levels (system, institutional, departmental) included policies on class size, flexibility in multiple forms, faculty training and current technology, and faculty evaluation.

_Class Size_

Class size at both the course and program level is an issue of concern for many faculty including Scott, Kim, Shanna, Gloria and Doug. For example, Kim’s concerns about class size dealt with the ability to respond to students in a timely fashion along with the students’ level of learning. Kim noted:

If you expect people to have a quick turnaround and respond to students, which I think is the way to go because that’s the true learning team, teacher-student team. So if you want that…it’s almost impossible to do that if you’re dealing with 40 different people.
Gloria echoed this concerns saying that “cutting down on the enrollment and class size would be very beneficial to the instructor and the class; there’s just not enough time to give feedback to all the students.” Doug added his concerns about enrollment in online degree programs:

Right now they’re pushing for a 30 student cohort for an online graduate program and to me, that’s an awfully high expectation to have. I really think that number should be smaller if you want good instructional quality of the program.

Kim also mentioned concerns about class size and quality saying that by having high enrollments “you’re setting up the system for failure…something has to go in that situation and I think the only thing that can go is the quality of the program.”

**Flexibility**

Flexibility is discussed in different forms including that of enrollment, program development, student situations, and budgets. In the examples that follow, faculty members express their desire for flexibility (i.e. making decisions, trying new things, etc.) from the administration in these various areas. Regarding the topic of enrollment, Doug believes that not all programs should be cohort-based and would appreciate the flexibility from his institution to offer a non-cohort open enrollment program. He believes that it can narrow what a program can do and it also can affect students who may not need to take all the courses a full cohort needs to take. Doug said:

As far as programs are concerned, I think there are some politics involved. Unfortunately, I do think they don’t give you a lot of wiggle room as far as how you’re going to run the program. Administration and the President in particular have a certain way that they envision a program to run. By that I mean they pretty
much want the master’s program to be cohort oriented. But I’m not necessarily in favor of that. I really think the cohort programs may work for some, but unfortunately the President likes the cohort so much that they didn’t really want or allow anyone to do anything other than a cohort online program. I love their involvement and love the encouragement of the administration but the policy of a cohort or nothing makes it problematic. There is no flexibility.

Randy, on the other hand, wishes the administration would provide some freedom in trying new programs online knowing that not all of them would work. He said that the institution should give the faculty “a free hand to try some [new online programs]. They’re not all going to work. But sometimes they got to let us throw one out there for a year or two and see what happens before we just pull the plug on it.”

Marie expressed how policy can reduce the flexibility of an online instructor because some policies have certain mandates for certain situations not allowing faculty to handle some situations independently with a student. The example Marie offered described the situation about the way her department would like to handle incompletes for students but institutional policy limits the manner in which she can do so (full example provided above).

Paul expressed a desire for flexibility in terms of budgeting – allowing for revenue sharing to departments who offer online programming for discretionary spending and for increased spending on technology enhancements like new software. Paul discusses the potential of revenue sharing: “Every so often they [the administration] say that they’re going to start one of these revenue sharing programs, where if you bring in a lot of extra money, you can keep some of it. But that never happened.” Similarly, Evelyn
described the pressure for teaching online she feels stating that it is due to the fact that the institution is “making all this money.” Yet she is frustrated because there is no flexibility with the income; the money isn’t coming back to the department, isn’t providing her with release time, and is not being used to upgrade technology.

Faculty Training and Current Technology

Policy concerning faculty training or requirements as to who can teach online was noted as needed from faculty in institutions B and C. For example, Kim reflected on the need for professional development noting that the institution needed to provide “funds that support traveling” for those “cyber” faculty to join the on-campus faculty or to support “software like Illuminate” that allows for virtual faculty meetings or training sessions. The importance of providing faculty with professional development is reflected in the list of online resources noted on Institution C’s website (MU, Center for Lifelong Learning, 2007). Others think that their institutions (B and C) may be trying to establish training opportunities but they still have a long way to go. Faculty noted that those new to online teaching need to have taught an online course or should have some training in how to teach online. For example, Mary said she would “want faculty to have documentation of skills to teach online.” Gloria echoed Mary’s sentiment stating that “not all the faculty are qualified” to teach online. Similarly, Steffy explains that faculty who teach online need to have more than just the desire to teach online; they should have some understanding of “instructional design components such as assessment and evaluation, the types of materials that can be posted, etc.” The faculty contract does speak to the issue of faculty preparedness for distance education. It refers to “appropriate
training” being available to faculty but it does not require faculty to receive this training (CBA, 2003).

Not only are qualifications and training important, but so is access to up-to-date technology and tools. For example, Evelyn wants to be sure that training teaches faculty to use the course management tools and creating the course to be “interactive and rich.” Furthermore, she recommends attending “workshops that are presented by people who have done it so that they have knowledge of how…so they don’t have to go through what we all went through trying to figure it out.” She also mentioned that a mentor program would be helpful. An important part of training, according to faculty, is ensuring that institutions provide the upgraded technology to support utilizing new technical tools and aspects of course management systems. For example, Evelyn lamented that her institution needs to “upgrade technology” because “there’s so much coming at us and our systems don’t support all the new things.” In addition, Shanna said she would like the university to offer more technical options like a “tech buffet.”

Some institutions are lacking the appropriate technology. For example, Scott added that the course management system his institution uses is missing tools that other course management systems have. Both Scott and Tim believe that as technology changes the faculty need to know how to adjust and use it to enhance learning experiences for students and teaching experiences for faculty. Faculty noted that the responsibility for this is not only that of the faculty but also that of the institution to provide venues for it. Mary noted that faculty “have to be committed” to attending training sessions if the institution provides them. Scott added that his campus has a “Faculty Professional Development Center on campus” which is “active in providing
information, sending notices of technology training, notices of seminars, professional organizational meeting dates, etc.” Furthermore, the union contract specifically states that each institution has responsibility to faculty regarding technical and instructional support stating that:

The University shall assure the availability of technical support personnel and materials appropriate to the principal technology and consistent with the faculty member’s prior training and experience (CBA, 2003, p. 99).

Yet, Sharon expressed concern that support from the institution’s instructional technology office can also be lacking because they are focusing on on-campus issues. Sharon shared:

We have done everything but stand on our heads trying to get them to understand that we need that kind of service and we just keep hearing ‘no, we’re not doing this’ and they have 100 reasons why that’s not going to work or they’re not able to do it.

Faculty Evaluation

Faculty also discussed the missing policies for faculty evaluation and how the issue is very tenuous. For example, Institution A faculty noted that a topic currently being discussed for which there is no formal policy is that of faculty evaluation. Gloria shared that there are still questions about the issue including:

How are you going to make evaluations for faculty? Can you make them complementary for distance education because it is a lot different than being in the classroom so making sure that policies or some sort of structure develops,
whether it’s a matrix or something where, you know, faculty are being evaluated properly and no bias and all that kind of stuff.

Faculty from other institutions, like Ruby, noted that “we’re very careful about faculty evaluations, which are overseen by the union.” Similarly, Marie expressed that while the union contact mentions evaluations in regards to distance education, their provisions aren’t appropriate for online teaching and learning. The contract discusses faculty evaluation in the following manner:

No probationary faculty member or any candidate for tenure or promotion shall be evaluated on his/her teaching of distance education courses during the term of this agreement. No tenured faculty member shall be evaluated on his/her teaching of distance education courses without his/her written permission, unless specifically hired to teach distance education. Additionally, no recorded lectures or courses may be used for the evaluation of any faculty member or for renewal, tenure, or promotion decisions without the express written consent of the faculty member (CBA, 2003, p. 100).

Ruby added that although the union is involved with evaluations, no one still has a clear picture as to how to conduct faculty evaluation of online teaching. Furthermore, Sharon offered that due to this lack of detail regarding evaluation in the contract, the faculty within her department have a policy in place where faculty observe one another in their online courses so that they can receive some type of feedback and evaluation from their peers.
Developing Distance Education Policy

This section offers information on faculty beliefs about how policy development happens and at what levels policy development takes place. In these discussions, it was apparent that there are various levels of policy where some of the faculty members have involvement and others do not. Faculty shared details about their experience with policy development and discussed the importance of faculty involvement in the development of policy. Finally, faculty discussed their views as to who should be involved with policy development.

Mixed Awareness of How Policy is Developed

Faculty described the process for developing policy in different ways. Some lacked awareness of the process, while others could speak to the process at the department level only. Others referred to the traditional policy of course/program approval. The distance education course approval process is a policy outlined in the faculty contract. The faculty contract requires that all distance education courses be approved via the “traditional academic process” and that in order for approval to be given, the following criteria must be met: “a qualified instructor, use of suitable technology as a substitute for the traditional classroom; suitable opportunity for interaction between instructor and student; suitable evaluation of student achievement by the instructor; and integrity of the evaluation methods used” (CBA, 2003, p. 99). The traditional process of course approval sometimes mirrors the process used for approval of many policies. The process typically begins at the department level where the faculty members vote on the topic. The vote and recommendation is then sent to the school’s curriculum committee and once approved, the recommendation is passed onto the
university’s curriculum committee. If approved, the information is shared with various groups on campus including the faculty senate and the deans’ council.

Depending on what is being recommended—a policy, a new course, or a new program—the recommendation may then need to go on to the state system and its Board of Governors (this level of approval is necessary for new academic programs and some policies). Some institutions may also have approval committees unique to their campus that are additional to those mentioned above. Ultimately, this process is used primarily for curricular issues (course and program development/approval) but it is not always used for policy development. Sometimes policy recommendations start at different places within the policy development system.

Many of the faculty were easily able to describe the policy process within their department or discuss aspects of policy components at the program level, but had difficulty doing so at the institutional or state system level. Some of the faculty were aware of aspects of the various levels of policy development and some were unsure of or not aware of how policy was created at all. Steffy indicated that policy development originates with faculty at the department level prior to go through all other levels of approval like the curriculum committee and the Provost. Evelyn noted that the “graduate online group recommends [policy] and then the curriculum committee and so forth would make it be a written policy.” Others, like Scott, were not sure how policies were developed on their campus. Kim was aware of how the process worked within her department but beyond that was not sure. Mary stated that the policy at the state system level was reflected in the union contract and mainly provided provisions for monetary stipends.
A few of the faculty specifically answered this question in relation to course/program approval policy. Ruby stated that this process of approval at various levels for a course that was just being converted into another format takes too much time. She shared:

If you’re going to be designing an online course that is the very same as one you teach face-to-face, you have to run that through all the steps to be approved and that can take months. And then it could be voted down.

Furthermore, she noted that if the program is a new program then it must also be approved at an additional level at the state system. Gloria noted that while she was not sure how the process worked, she did know that there were various levels of approval to get programs approved. In addition, she noted the need for more strategic decisions in approving online courses stating that “every course being offered should be looked at as a department, as a university, to make sure that it is more beneficial or the student is still getting the most out of that course by taking it online.”

*Where the Policy Development Process Takes Place*

The levels of policy development include the faculty meetings at the department level, various group or committee meetings at the institutional level including faculty senate, curriculum committees, Deans’ Council, and the Presidential Cabinet, and the Board of Governors meetings or system-wide meetings at the state system level. One of the places mentioned by many faculty members was the institution’s curriculum committee where it is believed policy is recommended or created. Both Mary and Kim believed that policy development takes place during faculty senate, department chair, and faculty union meetings. Sharon and Shanna noted that regardless of the level of policy—
system level, institutional level, school level and departmental level—“faculty must comply” with the policies of all levels which are sometimes in conflict.

Faculty Involvement in Policy Development

As conversations with the participants continued, some faculty shared details regarding their level of involvement with distance education policy development including both how and where they were involved—if at all. Experiences with policy development ranged from little to no involvement at one end of the continuum, to providing feedback in department meetings, to active participation in policy development committees at the other end of the continuum. Some faculty indicated that their level of involvement with policy was executing policy rather than creating it. Finally, many faculty noted the importance experience with online teaching of those who are developing distance education policy.

Institutional Committee Participation

One example of active participation in institutional committees was provided by Shanna who said she has been involved with the institution’s Graduate Council and the curriculum committee. Doug also stated his involvement in some meetings at his institution specifying that some faculty “have a say in Graduate Council, Global Online meetings, and other forums for faculty that allow for discussions between the faculty and the university and the state system of higher education.” He added that the meetings were not “50-50” rather more of “a give and take” with “recommending what we would like” or sharing issues or other matters for consideration.

Evelyn was another faculty member who noted her participation in an institutional group that recommended policy. She shared how the committee she sits on discusses
concerns and questions and then the institution’s online coordinator attempts “to make sure that they are all implemented across the programs.” Paul noted that he recommended the creation of and serves on his institution’s Distance Education Council. Although “the group has only met once,” the purpose of the group is to establish best practices for the institution and recommend policy to the Provost. Randy said that while he doesn’t take part in it, he is aware of an institutional working group consisting of administrators and faculty who recommend policy. If Scott were more involved, he would want to be part of an institutional committee to ensure that an institutional “strategic plan for distance education” were in place.

**Departmental Level Participation**

Overall, faculty believe that they have more opportunity for involvement in policy development at the department level or program level rather than at the university and state system level. This involvement at the departmental level varies for each person. For example, Sharon noted her involvement in writing accreditation reports for her department’s online program. Randy described his experience with the process at the departmental level stating that it as an “informal” process in which faculty meet and discuss issues a few times a semester. For example, Randy noted that department chairs will “truck some of that out for us to consider and we’ll kick it around.” Marie added that while she was not interested in the university level of policy, she was interested in and was actively involved in generating policy for her program and added that everyone in her department is involved at the departmental level. Similarly, Doug expressed the desire to be more involved at the departmental level where he could have more input in “the numbers, how the program is offered, etc.”
Some faculty, like Scott and Doug, acknowledged their involvement at the department level yet considered their role in influencing the development of institutional distance education policy as “minimal.” Paul added:

I’d say other than voting on a contract or having a say here or there on a committee or two. At the university level or state system level my influence would be minimal. At the department level, we vote on courses that will go online or appropriate to go online. So on that level, my influence is just as equal as any other person in the department.

Implementers Versus Developers

Only a couple faculty members indicated that they did not have any interest or involvement in policy development whatsoever. For example, Marie expressed her lack of interest in having any involvement—outside of the department level—with creating policy. Although Gloria did not indicate her level of interest, she did state that she didn’t have any experience or involvement with policy development. Tim, too, noted his lack of involvement in creating policy, but did say that he has been asked for input. Like many faculty, Randy considered himself to be more of an “implementer” of policy rather than a creator.

Online Teaching Experience Recommended

Many of those interviewed believe that when faculty members are involved with policy development, they should have experience with distance education regardless of whether they are full-time or adjunct. For example, Marie noted that at her institution the faculty who are involved with distance education policy development either within committees or with contract negotiations are “traditional university faculty” and they are
not contingent faculty. Sharon provided an example of a time an admissions policy was
created by administrators and faculty and that it was assumed that the policy would not
affect the online programs. The change did affect Sharon’s online program in that
required information about potential students was no longer provided and the information
was critical to determine acceptance into the online program. She stated:

We weren’t asked to be at the table when that decision was made because they
didn’t think it impacted us and a lot of times they don’t think of the impact on us
because they don’t know what in the world we’re doing. There’s not much
understanding of our program. So it’s tough.

Likewise, Paul noted that “the contract is always written from the point of view of full-
time tenured professors.” Yet Evelyn believes that it is sufficient if others make policy as
long as they consider recommendations from those who teach online; she believes that
“even if they later make it their idea, its okay. At least it gets done.”

Importance of Faculty Involvement

Regardless of their own personal experience, all of the faculty members
interviewed believe that experience or inclusion in the distance education policy
development process is important. For example, Paul explained that such faculty
involvement is really “shared governance” and it “applies to any program, whether it’s
online or not.” Likewise, Ruby shared that faculty participation is critical, though it is
“doubtful that faculty could come to consensus.” Reasons given for faculty involvement
included faculty being proactive instead of reactive, informing policy with their
experience and knowledge, being a student advocate, and obtaining a sense of ownership in and a level of support and excitement for the distance education programs.

_Proactive, Not Reactive_

A few of the faculty noted that they should be proactive in getting involved with developing policy to save themselves potential conflict or problems in the future. For example, Sharon referred to the various levels of policy development and approval noting that if faculty who have experience with distance education are not involved in policy development, it is possible that a policy will be approved that does not fit well within an online program making it very difficult to change. She believes in being proactive and being involved because “it seems like we’re always in reactive mode, like we find out about a policy after it’s already been” approved.

_Sharing Experience and Knowledge_

Faculty noted that being on the front lines of distance education provides them with a perspective that would inform policymaking. For example, Randy said that he would like to “have input into policy” that is being developed because he could provide necessary perspective. Similarly, Tim added that the faculty members who teach online know the strengths and weaknesses of the program. He said that they “are involved in the program” and “are there to work day-to-day.” Likewise, Evelyn notes that when faculty “get into the committees, we are able to express what it’s like” to teach online.

_Role of Student Advocate_

Another benefit of faculty involvement is that they can bring students’ perspectives to the table. For example, Tim said that faculty know their students and know that they are different ages and come with “different learning styles.” He believes
that it is not advisable to develop policy without having this knowledge or without having
input from faculty who work with a variety of students. He explained that “without
getting input from faculty who are working with the students, you can’t create a policy to
reach people at various levels. So it just makes sense, in my opinion, to bring that all into
play.” Likewise, Evelyn noted that “we can at least explain what it’s like in the trenches
and what the students concerns are.”

Sense of Ownership and Excitement

Another reason faculty involvement is essential is the importance of buy-in.
Faculty “have to understand why certain policies are in place” in order to fully participate
and participate well according to Kim. Kim provided an analogy that “If the speed limit
were 35 on the open highway, I don’t think people would buy into that. They could see it
holding back progress and not getting anyone to go.” Tim recommended faculty
involvement saying that:

One of the most important things to do is to involve the people that are involved
in the program to help develop policies, develop operations. Otherwise, you have
a top down structure, you have no input from the people that are really trying to
do the work. So I think it has to be combined benefit for both the higher up
administration or mid-level administration and faculty doing the work in order to
develop high quality policies.

Ruby noted her sense of ownership as she “co-established” the online program in which
she teaches. Tim agreed stating that participation also gives faculty a sense of ownership
which leads to “a better chance of success with the program.”
The sense of ownership also includes a feeling of excitement for teaching online. Many faculty shared their positive experiences with online teaching. For example, Evelyn admitted that she was initially skeptical saying that “I didn’t think it would work either, but I found that it does and it’s exciting.” Ruby described the online chats and discussion boards saying that “it just develops this community—I love it.” Likewise, Doug noted that he “likes the technology he teaches with.”

Others Involved in the Process

When asked who they believed to be involved in developing policy, some faculty, like Gloria, were unsure as to who was involved in the process. Other than faculty, those typically involved with policy development are administrators. The faculty union’s influence and involvement was also noted as was the recommendation of student involvement in the policy development process. Faculty interviewed did not mention other stakeholders or potential participants including potential employers or legislators.

Administration Involvement and Leadership

Some faculty believed that the administration alone is responsible for policy creation. For example, Paul believes that the Provost has the ultimate authority on anything academic. Doug noted that in the beginning, the administration—not the faculty—at his institution was “one of the first ones to have set policies. They probably got it wrong, but it certainly has been something that they haven’t ignored.” They have, now with faculty input, gone back to revisit some policies. Kim believes that this should be the other way around; the administration should have input but that faculty should be the ones to develop the policy. She added that currently faculty members have “some
input, but only through the department chair” at faculty meetings. Many faculty members discussed the importance of the role of the department chair in taking concerns and recommendations to the leadership.

Sharon talked about administrative involvement more from a leadership perspective. She discussed the high level of involvement of the administration and how a change in administration’s leadership can thus affect distance education programs in a variety of ways including student services, faculty support, and policy development. Each time there is a change in leadership (whether at the departmental, school, or institutional level), Sharon says the leadership has to be re-educated about distance education. “We have to explain what we are, how we do it, and why it’s important. And that takes time.” Similarly, Ruby noted problems with changes in leadership saying that she was part of an ad-hoc committee that recommended policy but that with a shift in leadership, the “recommendations were lost.”

**Union Influence**

The majority of faculty believed that a mix of faculty, administration, and the state system union together created policy. A few noted that faculty and administration equally created policy. For example, Tim noted that “faculty and administration have equal input.” Similarly, Doug believes that policies are “created by some kind of administrative team and faculty” and that the union was also involved. He thought that “a lot of the policies are negotiated between the state system and university and the union and the faculty.”

Sharon noted the variety of people involved with policy making and that they are all coming to the table with various perspectives. She added that if her institution
“weren’t a union shop, it might be a little clearer” and easier to establish policy. Yet Shanna noted that one benefit was faculty’s ability to have input via the union. Both Doug and Marie noted that faculty involvement was very important if it is possible in a union environment. Marie stated:

If everything is run by that very complex union contract, there’s very little room for any faculty member to be involved in developing policy, except department policies. And as long as those department policies don’t conflict with something in the contract, you’re free to make whatever policy you wish as a department.

The union contract encourages, but does not require faculty participation at the institution level but does require faculty representation on the systems’ distance education advisory group (CBA, 2003, p. 99).

*Student Involvement*

Only one faculty noted the importance of involvement or input of students in creating policy. Steffy noted that her institution holds an event once a year in which all students, staff, and faculty can participate and provide input on issues which have the potential to influence or become policy. When the event focused on distance education, the results included requiring faculty certification prior to teaching online and increased online course offerings. Furthermore, Steffy believes that both faculty and student involvement is essential as they “are the people who are working with the curriculum. So they know what needs to be changed, they know what needs to be adapted because they’re dealing with it firsthand.”
Impact of Distance Education Policy on Faculty

Faculty provided details regarding issues associated with distance education policy that have effects on how they feel about distance education as a whole and how it affects their participation in online teaching. The issues that affect faculty include program reputation and quality standards, financial benefits and associated support and pressure, benefits and conflicts associated with full-time versus contingent faculty participation, support of peers both within and outside of the academic department, and challenges and rewards associated with online teaching.

Program Reputation and Quality Standards

In discussing the impact of distance education policy, faculty noted the concerns that some have about the online format which causes close examination of online programs. For example, Steffy said that policy gives “more credibility to distance education.” Similarly, Evelyn noted that policy’s purpose is to ensure that a program is “viable” and “effective” while Mary stated that policy should “assure quality.” Doug echoed the comments about quality noting that policy is important “if you’re going to have respectability.” Shanna believes her institution works to ensure that the quality of online programming is “exceptional” and has the same rigor as face-to-face courses.

This pursuit for comparable rigor can many times lead to an overwhelming focus—more than for on-campus face-to-face programs—on credibility and quality standards. A few noted that the focus on credibility and quality can also lead to higher standards for distance education courses. For example, Ruby noted that the policy put in place results in “quality control” but noted that the same level of concern about quality is not in place for face-to-face teaching. Rather there seems to be a higher set of
expectations for online and faculty involved in teaching online are expected to prove themselves in ways that they do not have to do for face-to-face teaching. For example, although a course has already gone through the curriculum process, it must go through another approval process to be approved for online. According to Evelyn, the curriculum committee “requires you to come through and the program gets passed as an online [program].” She adds that on her campus the approval committee would then require the faculty seeking approval to come back in three years “and tell them how it went” but notes that the return visit is no longer required.

Another example of higher standards is requiring faculty who teach online to go through training. Ruby elaborated on this issue by saying that she believes there should not be higher standards for distance education and does not want other faculty telling her how to teach her online courses. She said:

The problem is we don’t have the same policies in our face-to-face program. And part of that is because of the union and I believe in most of that. I don’t want some Joe Schmoe from some other department coming over and telling me how to teach. You know, if you want to offer in-services and I choose to go to them, that’s fine. But you’re not going to tell me what to do.

Financial Impact and Distance Education

Distance education was discussed by faculty as having financial benefit for the institution. Faculty noted the increased revenues received from online programming as well as the potential for revenue sharing—investment of a portion of revenue funneled back to the departments who teach online programs. They also discussed the resulting pressure for faculty to participate in online teaching.
Increased Revenues

A few faculty believe that one of the benefits or even motivators for administration to promote distance education is in the income associated with online programming. For example, Marie stated that the online programs have “extremely low overhead” and they bring “in a significant amount of revenue.” Similarly, Paul noted that online students “bring tons of money in” and he believes that the institution has very little expenses associated with distance education, especially because most of the salaries are paid to adjuncts, and thus “it’s like pure profit.” He explained that it is ironic that faculty who are against distance education will allow it to grow due to the money that it makes for the institution. He stated that “they do not want to hear about revenue profit, but the funny thing is they always have a smile on their face when they cash our checks.”

Randy said that at his institution the purpose of online programming was “to grow our way out of our budgetary problems mainly through distance ed.” In fact, Randy’s institution notes in their strategic plan that the university plans to “generate an additional 2,000 to 4,000 students within the next five years” through online programs which will provide new sources of revenue for the institution (CU, Strategic Plan, 2005, ¶ 14). Doug noted that lack of population in his institution’s geographic region was a primary reason for going online and now that online programming brings in revenue for the institution, this has caught the attention of many.

Revenue Sharing and Reinvestment of Funds

Faculty stated that they would like to see the benefits of the increased revenue that the institution is experiencing whether that is in the form of revenue sharing or reinvestment in technology and training. For example, Ruby believes that the institution
needs to reinvest the income and support online programs but thinks that those in charge of the budgets aren’t “convinced of the viability of online programming.” Paul added that “administrators see distance ed only as a money maker, but not as a way to improve learning on their campus.” He noted that “every so often they say they’re going to start one of these revenue sharing programs, where if you bring in a lot of extra money, you can keep some of it. But that never happened.” Furthermore, he shared his frustration at the lack of funds in the program’s operating budget for new software and professional development. Similarly, Kim said “there needs to be a policy about funds and support”—a policy that reflects that some of the funds will support staff development.

Support and Pressure

Faculty noted the level of support they currently receive and the pressure to participate in teaching online. Evelyn noted the lack of release time stating that her “administration is supportive in words because they want this [online programming] to be done, they want us to do it, but there isn’t the support, like I don’t get any release time for all of this.” She added that her Dean of Education was “very much a pressure source for getting programs online” and that encouragement from the administration can cause problems with faculty.

I would say the administration is definitely saying you need to put these programs online because it is something that students want and it is …they’re really pressuring about it and there are many faculty who are digging their heels in against it. I don’t know how that will turn out.

Unlike other faculty who discussed this topic, Randy noted the support in the form of new faculty and additional funds that his department has received from the administration
due to increased online enrollments. Ruby also feels that her administration is supportive but that a lot of that support is driven by potential competition (others out there offering online programming) and potential income. She noted that “other institutions are beginning to offer online programs, and there’s a fear that... whoa, if we don’t do it, then we’re not going to even be in the game anymore.”

**Full-Time vs. Contingent Faculty**

The issue of regular full-time faculty versus contingent faculty (faculty who teach full-time or as part-time adjuncts) came up many times within the discussions with faculty and the impact distance education policy has on them. Contingent faculty may also be known as “cyber” faculty if they are hired to specifically teach online either in a part-time or full-time manner. Faculty in this study discussed issues such as support or lack thereof for the contingent faculty, benefits of having contingent faculty, and concerns of full-time faculty about contingent faculty. A few of the contingent faculty shared their experiences with connections to the campus as well. It is important to note that since the participants came from a range of faculty levels, the responses varied on this topic.

**Range of Support for Contingent Faculty**

Faculty noted some of the benefits that contingent faculty who teach online experience at their institutions. For example, Randy shared that at his institution, contingent faculty members who teach solely online are provided with a laptop and with a cell phone that has email access. This is due to the fact that they do not have offices with an office computer and phone like full-time faculty do. He believes that his institution attempts to treat contingent faculty like traditional, full-time faculty. Doug
noted that Institution A requires technology training is required because it adds to the level of credibility for all faculty. He states:

They try to bring credibility to the instructors and here at Institution A the faculty teaching courses in our programs are full-time faculty members, although there are some staff or part-time faculty. Even the part-timers have to be certified in Blackboard or eCollege. They’re trying to protect the credibility for their courses as well.

While a few indicated the positive support provided to contingent faculty, there were examples that reflected a lack of support or roadblocks for contingent faculty. For example, Randy noted some limitations that contingent faculty encounter including the maximum level to which they can be promoted. He explained that it would be difficult for a contingent faculty member to get promoted beyond a certain point because they are not on-campus providing university service which is an important component of promotion. In addition, Marie and Paul both mentioned that professionals in the field who adjunct for institutions have their skills and experience brushed aside because they have not earned a terminal degree. According to Paul,

Adjuncts are just not respected. They’re not one of the boys. They’re not the people that you’re going to go to parties with. And yet they don’t have the right degree either. They don’t have the right cultural upbringing. At least that’s the reality in my world.

He added that the lack of a doctorate affects the funding from the state system to the institutions with a significant percentage of that funding going to universities that have a
higher percentage of the faculty with an earned doctorate. Thus by hiring adjuncts, institutions can be penalized financially by the system.

Kim noted that the union fails to provide support through and lacks involvement with distance education policy to a great extent because the majority of faculty members teaching online are contingent faculty. Kim believes that until more full-time faculty are involved in teaching online, the union will not be involved at a significant level. Paul noted that the union is not “terribly sympathetic” when it comes to issues around distance education since the majority of those teaching online are part-time adjuncts. Paul stated:

The union is not going to be very sympathetic because traditionally unions really don’t like part-timers. If the union had it their way, they would probably get rid of our program altogether. They just don’t want to deal with part-timers. It’s not part of their…it’s not what they’re fighting for. They’re fighting for full-time, not part-time.

Additionally, Paul provided an example of how summer pay is less than academic year pay, which he believes works well for faculty who choose to teach or not to teach in the summer. Yet he asserted that this hurts the adjunct who only teaches in the summer—due to the audience of the online program—because they receive less pay for the same amount of work. This same example was also cited by Sharon who shared Paul’s frustrations on the issue.

Benefits of Having Contingent Faculty

Contingent faculty noted the benefits and strengths that they bring to the teaching table for their institutions. For example, Kim said that students appreciate that adjuncts are practitioners with “real world experience” and can “give students a lot more of the
nuts and bolts and ‘this is how to do the job’” information. Marie believes contingent faculty members who are “high quality professionals” have the ability, experience, and “an awful lot to offer.” She added:

The advent of online learning has opened up the possibility to skilled, recognized, qualified practitioners to influence the preparation of the next generation. As I look around the people in my program, there is not a one of them who would willingly get a Ph.D. and go to work in a university. Not a one of them. Because they are devoted to the work they are doing, but yet thrilled to have a professional opportunity to mentor the next generation of professionals.

Similarly, Paul said that students in his program “demand practitioners” as they “don’t want some professor who hasn’t seen a classroom in 20 years.” Yet with these strengths, they feel that they are being limited or given the short end of the stick in certain ways.

As noted by Paul, adjuncts are already paid less than full-time faculty members.

Concerns of Full-Time Faculty About Contingent Faculty

When an institution uses contingent faculty, some full-time faculty have concerns. Paul stated that traditional faculty at his institution felt threatened because his department hired a lot of contingent faculty to teach part-time. Similarly, Gloria feels that she has had to step in for contingent faculty members in advising sessions for those students who want to see and meet with professors in person. Evelyn pointed out that one of the strengths of her institution is that all of the faculty members are regular full-time faculty who typically teach both online and face-to-face courses. In describing the policy, she noted that “this is a good policy to hold and yet I’m not against adjuncts teaching
anything. It’s just that right now this is working pretty well.” Scott agreed that institutions should use more full-time faculty to teach online and not just adjuncts.

Paul stated that the faculty members by and large on his campus are traditional in their educational beliefs and thus have certain expectations of faculty. They believe that “people should come to campus to go to school.” He added that all but two of the faculty members in his program are geographically located all over the country (Paul is one of the on-campus faculty) and while the administration wants faculty to teach online, they have unrealistic expectations for them to be physically present on-campus. Paul believes this to be a “cultural barrier” and provides an example:

We used to have these crazy debates, you know, which the Provost would go on saying ‘well, it’s just, you know, it’s just the obligation of every faculty member to attend campus functions and have intellectual discussions’. And my response to him was ‘well, isn’t that a double standard? You expect that from our faculty, but yet look at all the faculty who do live hear campus…they don’t come to all the events, they don’t have intellectual discussions. You know, they find any excuse there is not to come to campus so why are we held to a higher standard than they are?’

Further, he adds that by the contingent faculty not being on campus that the institution is saving money:

You know, the funny thing is, they’re [the administration] always crying about how our faculty don’t have campus presence. The irony is if all of our faculty suddenly showed up…and said ‘I’m here, give me an office’ they would have no office to give them.
Contingent Faculty and Connections to Campus

The contingent faculty in this study shared their perspectives as to the issues of support from and connection to the campus. For example, Kim stated that as an adjunct faculty member who is not on-campus, she still feels as though she is up-to-date on what is happening with the institution. But Marie stated that because she is off-campus and teaching online, she has had “very little experience with any sort of politics within the university” compared to a full-time on-campus faculty member. Likewise, Sharon notes that because she teaches in “a virtual program,” she does not “know a whole lot of what goes on on-campus.” As a full-time faculty member, Gloria feels that it is important for all contingent faculty members to be involved with what was happening on-campus due to the future of incorporating technology into learning and the probability that even full-time on-campus faculty “might become a cyber faculty one day.”

Support of Peers

One issue that was noted as having a huge effect on faculty as it relates to distance education was the support or non-support of their peers (regardless of their experience with online teaching). This section organizes the various aspects of support as departmental support and faculty support outside of the department. The reasons for lacking faculty support include discomfort, fear of change, concerns about quality, and concerns about affecting enrollment in the traditional programs.

Departmental Support

Many of the faculty interviewed reflected on the positive support from their departmental peers. For example, Shanna depicted her experience with her peers as “great.” Randy noted that the faculty in his department “all get along pretty well.”
Likewise, Marie shared that her departmental support is “outstanding” and that there is a great “climate of positive working together.” Gloria feels that other faculty in her department were “very supportive and they do have your back if you have questions or concerns or if you’re having issues or problems.” Evelyn described that she and her peers “enjoy sharing about online delivery.” Kim echoed that in her department there was an “incredible network.” Similarly, Sharon described the strength of the relationships in her department and noted that it is due to the consistent communication, via conference calls or face-to-face meetings, which takes place amongst department faculty.

*Faculty Support Beyond the Department*

In looking beyond the department and thinking of faculty as a whole, most of the faculty noted a decrease in support from those who do not teach online. For example, Randy referred to an “us and them” environment. Evelyn described the situation as a dichotomy – “people who support and people who don’t.” Likewise, Tim described the situation as “you either love it or you don’t.” Ruby described the lack of support as resistance to change as saying “there are people in all walks of life who are happy where they are, who are comfortable doing what they do. And then there are those who want continually to change, to improve, to learn new things.”

Steffy noted there seems to be a line between more senior faculty and new faculty in that the senior faculty members are not interested in teaching online. Paul admitted that his administration is more supportive for distance education than the majority of the faculty. Marie added that initially the relationships with other departments had been more problematic because her program didn’t have an on-campus presence; that has since
changed and she hopes that this will improve relationships. Sharon said that she and others who teach online—regardless of their faculty level—are committed to doing so which is “what makes us strong and what makes us put up with the bullshit.”

Reasons for Lack of Support

Faculty recognized that some of the lack of support comes from those colleagues who are not comfortable with or fear distance education. Doug noted that people have become “or have been afraid of the idea of offering the course” online and Evelyn echoed that “it’s mostly about their personal fears. They have a fear of change.” Marie said that the result is to “have things get dragged on rather than pushed through in terms of changing the way things have been.”

Faculty’s reasons for not wanting to participate in or support those who do participate in distance education also stems from concerns about quality. Tim said that some on his campus believe that distance education is “destroying the higher education environment that we’ve known and loved for centuries.” Ruby said that some remain “unconvinced that rigor can be maintained in online courses.” Some faculty, like Randy, noted that whatever the role of distance education, it should not be offered “at the expense of” traditional on-campus learning. Scott, Ruby and Evelyn echoed that some faculty expressed worry that distance education would threaten the quality of their programs/courses and that where traditional and online programs were offered at the same time, the traditional program would “take a nosedive.”

Gloria, too, has known faculty who were concerned that traditional programming enrollment would decline. She also feels empathy for those faculty as she says she still has “mixed feelings” about distance education as she doesn’t believe it is appropriate for
all academic areas. Doug also said that online learning isn’t “quite the same as being there with a class.” Ruby stated that she also had concerns about whether or not the traditional program would be damaged by the online program but now she is a “big supporter” of the online program. Some of the traditional faculty on her campus shared concerns with Evelyn about the type of students that would be online; “everybody said ‘you know, you’re going to be getting people who want the easy way out and they’re lower students’ and there was all of that.” Scott, Steffy, and Shanna reflected on serious concerns that other faculty expressed regarding academic integrity and regarding students cheating online.

Challenges and Rewards of Teaching Online

The support of peers or lack thereof can affect the level of faculty participation in online teaching and in distance education policy development. While some faculty members are seeing an increase of interest in participation of their peers, they speculate about the reasons for the interest. In addition, the faculty shared some of the challenges associated with distance education teaching and policy development including additional workload, political risks, and obstruction of peers.

Increasing Interest of Peers

Scott noted that due to the success of current online programming, distance education is playing an increasingly larger role in his institution which is something new to many faculty members. Distance education is interesting to faculty members because it provides access to education that some students would otherwise not be able to attain. Doug went one step further to note that the role of distance education is to provide this
access and opportunities for education at the graduate level only and to use distance education at the undergraduate level for summer-only opportunities to again provide students with access during the times when they are home for the summer. He talked about the direction his institution was headed toward with distance education:

It hasn’t reached the level of a full undergraduate program and I don’t think that’s the direction that we’re supposed to go by and large at the undergraduate level…just to provide some opportunities. I can tell…and I haven’t talked to the administrators about this, so it’s my assumption here that I think they thought a strategic move would be to offer summer courses because before the students would go home and take a summer course at a community college rather than staying at Institution A. They can work at home, they can get a summer job, and take a summer course load. Summer web courses allow you to attract students who go home for the summer. As far as the graduate level, by and large they’re heading in that direction almost predominantly 100%, not completely, but at the time it is 75% of an online program now and I think we’re pushing in that direction.

Other faculty expressed that some peers are now becoming more interested in online teaching due to either the success of the programs at their institution or due to the monetary stipends provided to those who teach online. For example, Randy said that the majority of faculty are already utilizing some level of technology in their classrooms so it is a small step to move to teaching online. Furthermore, Scott stated that many faculty members at his institution have “fully embraced” distance education or “are
transitioning” to teaching online courses. Tim said that some faculty in the beginning were “skeptical” but that once “they get into it, they really dive right in.”

Shanna explained how once faculty experience teaching online, they discover that teaching online can affect, in a positive way, the manner in which one teaches their face-to-face courses. Mary noted that as with any type of teaching, you have some who do well and some who don’t but with distance education and the state system monetary stipends, she believes that “certain things are compromised.” Evelyn too is more skeptical of the increased interest noting that those who had not initially been in favor of distance education now want to teach online. “It’s interesting, because they want the benefits of teaching online, but a lot of them don’t want the work that goes with it.” She then added that “it isn’t easier. You have to want to do it.”

*Increased Workload with Online Teaching*

Almost every faculty member interviewed stressed that teaching online is not easy and that it requires much more effort and time than teaching face-to-face. For example, Kim said “I think we work harder doing it online.” Mary added that online teaching requires more work “up front.” Paul provided an example of how his non-distance education peers are annoyed that he does not have face-to-face office hours but he explained that he always has office hours via phone and via email. Kim described it as being “on-call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.” Steffy expressed how communication increases in an online environment by saying that “everyone has a chance to get involved because if you’re in a traditional classroom, not everyone is going to respond.”

This increased communication results in increased responses to students which take more time which is a concern not only for Steffy but for Gloria as well. Evelyn
echoed Steffy’s remarks saying that everyone participates so everyone learns more. Ruby added that in the “chat area” of the online class, students learn from one another and that this is “the kind of incidental learning” that takes place “in a limited fashion in the face-to-face classroom.” Shanna expressed that while teaching online requires more effort, it also has a positive impact on faculty in that they learn and grow as their students do. Kim added that “there are so many rewards in online teaching. People come back and thank you, thank you, thank you and that keeps you going.”

Risk Associated with Teaching Online

Despite the rewards in online teaching, a few faculty members felt that they were taking a risk by going against the majority and teaching online. For example, Evelyn shared that “it seemed as if everyone’s against it, so here I’m going to try something that, you know, everyone can say ‘ha ha, that failed’ you know. And I put myself at risk there.” Similarly, Paul noted that faculty members who teach online are taking a risk fighting the “culture war” by trying to persuade faculty that distance education faculty members need a different kind of support from peers and from administration than traditional on-campus faculty. Steffy noted the risk that new faculty take in getting involved with teaching online and how it can inhibit what a person is allowed to teach. She added that this is due to the fact they teach in a “union system.”

Obstruction to Teaching Online

A few examples were also shared in which faculty found their peers to be obstructionist in that they would not approve courses or programs to be converted into an online format. Ruby explained that some do this because “they were not part of the
vanguard of this revolution or simply out of respect for tradition.” Evelyn provided an example of taking a course through the approval process at her institution:

I presented…all of the factors that would influence the presentation, and I just basically said it’s a challenge, I’ve been asked to do it, it’s something that I’m willing to try and it’s up to you. If you don’t think that is should happen, then you vote against it. And after several meetings, there was only one person who ultimately ended up voting against it. So it went through. I guess, I don’t know, it’s hard it say because I just keep coming back with more information and just presenting it in a non-volatile way.

She continued to promote what she calls the “moccasin syndrome – until you walk in somebody’s shoes you don’t know what their life is like.” She said that faculty who haven’t taught online shouldn’t be fighting against it; “don’t talk against developing programs if you haven’t worked through developing programs.” Marie noted that some faculty who do not teach online could perceive online learning as a threat and therefore could be obstructionist when it comes to modifying the distance education policy in the faculty contract. She added:

If they perceive that their jobs could erode and their traditional department structure as it stands could erode because of that, they certainly have no incentive to use the contract provisions to make life easier for online learning. They have every incentive in many ways – economic and professional – to resist promoting online learning in any new sort of model.
Paul believes that he and others [the faculty who teach in the online program] are not “necessarily well liked on-campus” but adds that the traditional faculty members appreciate the revenue his online program provides to their departments.

Dynamics of Distance Education Policy

Through examples provided in faculty discussions, this section reflects the dynamics and the ambiguity of the distance education policy development process. Looking holistically at the policy development system, the faculty discussions offer examples of instances when policies at different levels (i.e. state system, institution, and department) interweave sometimes conflicting and sometimes converging.

Policy Development—A Work in Progress

Ambiguous and dynamic are two terms that seem to reflect the policy development process. As mentioned in earlier sections, some faculty members are uncertain as to how policy is developed. Others note the variety of policies at different levels can lead to a level of ambiguity and confusion which can be difficult to keep pace with. For example, Sharon noted that with policies “there are so many pieces to the puzzle” she is not sure where to begin. Similarly, Doug noted that the process was “a bit fuzzy” in the beginning but the “kinks” are getting “worked out.” Policy development is also very dynamic and ever-changing. For example, Sharon described the policy process is “a changing landscape every day” and adds that she and her colleagues feel that they are “at times treading water around the policies.” Others indicated that policy development is really a work in progress and more of a trial and error experience. Ruby
noted that this is partially due to the fact that it is difficult for all of the stakeholders to come to a consensus so policies and processes are always in flux.

Another reason for this state of flux is the shifting composition of policy making committees. A few of the faculty noted the varying composition of curriculum committees as well as the changes in various levels of leadership and how this can have an affect on processes and policies. Ruby noted that the “composition of the policy recommending committee needs to be planned very carefully.” Sharon provided an example about the changes in leadership and how at her institution in the past few years they have had “four presidents, four provosts, and I don’t know how many deans and I can’t even keep track of names.” Furthermore, Kim believed that the ambiguity and dynamics of policies and policy development are reasons why policies must be continually evaluated and adjusted. Sharon agreed that the process is dynamic and not easy. She explained:

> Once a university has decided to sell the policy, which is not an easy process because I know they have a lot of input from a lot of people, they then have a couple of rewrites, they put it out there, they finally approve it and it goes through faculty senate with the faculty, it goes through this, it goes through that, the APSCUF finally approve it. Now it’s policy. Now we find out about it and we say, wait a second, that one part of your policy doesn’t work for us. And everybody looks at us like…now you want us to change it?”

*Interweaving Policies*

Many policies interweave with one another and a change in one policy can affect one or more different policies. This intermingling many times results in conflicting
policies. For example, Sharon said that one small change can “send the whole apple cart off.” Randy introduced an issue about the decision for Institution A to begin “starting all these distance ed programs and getting all these students” to increase enrollments “which has made the budget a lot better.” Yet Gloria noted that a result of the institution’s growth policy would be an increased load on faculty with increased class sizes which causes a conflict at the department and program level. She stated “right now it’s great because we’re growing. And the university really wants to grow” but she and other faculty have experienced difficulty in getting feedback to the thirty to forty-five students in a class.

This interweaving issue causing conflict or convergence can start anywhere in the policy development system, not necessarily from the state system level down to the faculty level to the staff level. For example, Doug noted that “the administration might have a process or procedure for online programs and courses, but because of the union collective bargaining agreement” the policy may not be approved. Another example of policy starting at various points in the system is a policy Marie explained was put in place by the admissions office which affected one of the online programs. Marie’s program requires students to be admitted already having a specific certification, yet the admission’s office sometimes admits students to the program that do not have the earned certification. According to Marie “our policy does not always get honored by the university. Sometimes people are admitted to our program who do not have teacher certification and that creates difficulties.”

In an earlier section, Marie offered another example regarding students being issued incompletes for their classes; this example reflects a conflict between an institutional policy and a departmental policy. She believes that “fitting within the
university’s policies are sometimes difficult” and the institutional policy always prevails. Finally, Doug provided an example related to the course management system used at his institution. He noted that the state system’s policy recommended and supported one course management tool. Yet the faculty at his institution overwhelmingly wanted a different tool; therefore the administration hired a technician to help with the course management tool preferred by faculty. The conflicting state system policy was alleviated by the institution hiring a technician to assist with the faculty’s preferred course management system.

Although converging policies occur less often, there are instances when the policies are in agreement. An example is given by faculty from Institution A who discussed the requirement for faculty training at their institution and how it is in agreement with departmental and state system policies. Randy said that requiring faculty training prior to online teaching is “a good thing.” Institution A also ensures that faculty training and development workshops are offered regularly and with a variety of topics. For example, Randy noted that his institution has “been willing to fund workshops for any faculty member on campus to learn more about it [distance education] and using technology in the classroom.” Steffy added that the institution offers a lot of workshops on topics such as “assessment and evaluation, how to set up a visually pleasing environment, those type of things.”

Summary

This chapter not only provided a profile of each faculty member interviewed for this study, but also portrayed the findings from interviews with the fourteen faculty
members. The findings were grouped into four major areas of defining and describing
distance education policy, developing distance education policy, impact of distance
education policy on faculty, and the dynamics of distance education policy.

The first major area of defining and describing policy addressed the question
“what is distance education policy.” Few faculty members provided solid definitions and
descriptions as to their perceptions of distance education policy. Faculty discussions led
to issues such as awareness of, accessibility to, and the evolution of distance education
policy. Additionally, faculty talked about recurring policy topics at the state system,
institutional and departmental levels. Finally, faculty provided examples of missing
policies they thought necessary to have in place which included areas such as limiting
class size, providing more flexibility in programming and in revenue sharing, requiring
faculty training, and formulating some type of faculty evaluation.

The second major topic of discussion was developing policy. Faculty described
the process they perceived to be in place for how and where policy was developed.
Faculty explained who they believe participated in policy development indicating that
other than faculty, administrators and students were or should be involved. The majority
of those interviewed believed that faculty were involved in policy making at some level
and each participant described his or her personal level of involvement or lack thereof in
policy creation. Furthermore, faculty discussed the importance of their involvement in
policy development focusing on being proactive in the process, sharing their experiences,
acting as an advocate for students, and obtaining a sense of ownership and excitement for
online teaching.
The third area of discussion looked at the various areas of impact distance education policy has on faculty. Areas of impact included program reputation and quality standards, financial benefits and associated pressures, the benefits and concerns about contingent faculty, and support of peers. Faculty also discussed challenges and rewards to teaching online. Faculty overwhelmingly believed that policy affected quality issues and many also noted that those teaching online are held to higher standards than when they taught only face-to-face. Many agreed with their traditional faculty counterparts in that quality would not be comprised for the modality of online learning. Faculty also discussed their perceptions of how distance education is tied to revenues and how institutions should be sharing those revenues with or using those revenues to support departmental and faculty needs. This is an area of contention that institutions will need to deal with in order to make their faculty in online programs feel valued or motivated to continue to offer online programming.

Another area of controversy that appeared throughout the interviews was the difference between traditional full-time faculty who are on-campus versus the contingent faculty who are part-time adjuncts or who may even be full-time but online. The tension between these two factions is very real and could be a potential problem for administration as online programming grows within these institutions. The issue of peer support was charged with many faculty members feeling defensive or upset at the lack of support from faculty outside of their departments. All faculty noted overwhelmingly the strong support provided by colleagues within their departments, but shared the perceptions of negative attitudes and examples of obstruction of other non-distance education faculty. The discussion of peer support also included how the tide may be
turning for some faculty who are slowly gaining interest and how teaching online, while more work for those involved, has been something that those interviewed do enjoy.

Overall this section illuminated faculty concern with the lack of involvement on their part in distance education policy making and at the same time expressed strongly the importance of faculty involvement in that process. Their involvement is also tied to their willingness to participate in online teaching as indicated by the various aspects of impact and motivation including the support of their peers. Politically, the context of the state system and the faculty union along with their home institution definitely affects how faculty feel about distance education as a whole and their feelings about involvement not only in online teaching but also in distance education policy development. Finally, the various aspects of policy—areas of current policy, areas of missing policy, and areas that impact faculty—are very interconnected and all a part of the distance education policy making system. Many times these interweaving policies will conflict with another as reflected above and few times will these policies converge. These issues are discussed in the final chapter through the lens of the Multiple Streams theory.
CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The five relevant findings of this research are discussed in this section and connected to the reviewed literature. Implications for practice and recommendations for future research are outlined. Finally a chapter summary along with the researcher’s reflections completes this final chapter.

Relevant Findings

The first relevant finding of the research is that faculty members are excited about teaching online. The second finding reveals faculty interest in increased involvement with distance education policy development. The third relevant finding highlights the importance of context and its affect on faculty participation in policy development. Finally the fourth and fifth findings discuss the fit of the Multiple Streams model with distance education policy development and the recommendations for further development of the model.

Finding One: Faculty Members are Enthusiastic about Teaching Online

In this case study, faculty overwhelmingly expressed their excitement for teaching online. Many of the faculty in this study also teach face-to-face courses and are not required to teach online; therefore, the faculty in this study, whether initially hired to teach online or not, all had the interest in doing so. This enthusiasm or excitement due to online teaching was not reflected in earlier research reviewed in Chapter 2.
Connected to this finding is faculty’s initial apprehension with online teaching. Faculty members noted that their interest in teaching online did not come without initial apprehension, skepticism and concerns. These concerns are reflected in the distance education faculty participation literature typically listed as barriers to teaching online (Maguire, 2005). Bower (2001) explains that resistance to teaching online is typical and that when faculty do resist, they “resist individually or as a whole, often seeking the guidance of union representatives” (¶ 3). The faculty interviewed did not resist teaching online, but many felt as if they were taking a risk both politically and educationally by attempting to teach via the online format. Others indicated concerns for student learning and conveying the information appropriately within the medium. Regardless of faculty rank, years teaching at the collegiate level, online load, or academic discipline, the faculty all confirmed their interest in online teaching.

Faculty enthusiasm likely stems from the ability to provide students with access to programs or educational opportunities they would not typically have, share pedagogical and technological strategies with peers, offer new ways of learning to students, and reach students in different ways. These aspects of enthusiasm are reflected in the distance education participation literature as incentives to faculty’s participation. Increasing student access is one of the most prominent factors of motivation for faculty (Betts, 1998; Dooley & Murphrey, 2000; Jones & Moller, 2002; Schifter, 2000). Collaboration with and support from peers is also noted in the literature (Dooley & Murphrey, 2000) as is the importance of utilizing technology in an innovative way to improve learning (Betts, 1998; Bonk, 2001; Dooley & Murphrey, 2001; McKenzie, et al. 2000; Rockwell, et al. 1999; Schifter, 2000).
The faculty members were generally excited about the new challenge that distance teaching offered. In Brooks’ (1999) research on successful factors to online teaching, he noted the importance of faculty enthusiasm in distance education. Faculty also noted their ability to communicate with students more efficiently and in ways that allows for participation of all students more consistently. They shared how they believe they know their online students “better” and that peer-to-peer learning also increases in an online classroom. The faculty participation literature reflects the issue of increased communication and participation of students as a barrier instead of an incentive due to the amount of increased time required of faculty when there is increased level of communication. In relationship to the purpose of this study, the findings support the assertion that faculty’s level of enthusiasm positively affects their interest level not only in online teaching and new ways of student learning but also in the various aspects of distance education including involvement in policy development. The implications for such enthusiasm could include an increased number of courses created for the online environment, an improvement in online teaching techniques, and increased encouragement among peers to get involved with online teaching.

**Finding Two: Faculty can Impact Distance Education Policy by Sharing Their Experiences and Having Greater Involvement in Distance Education Policy Development**

The faculty interviewed indicated an interest in greater involvement in distance education policy development. This is a new finding because actual research studies in the literature of distance education policy did not reflect the need for or interest in involvement of faculty. The closest empirical study to reflect faculty’s interest in involvement was Rice and Miller’s (2001) study on faculty interest in planning activities
related to instructional technology. General recommendation for including faculty in policy development (ACUPA, 2005; Compora, 2003; Fish, 2007; Haché, 1998; Hearn, 1998; Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Lapworth, 2004; Mumper, 1983; Schifter, 2000b) and for faculty leadership in the process (ACE, 2003; Feenberg, 1999; Rockwell, et al., 1999; Zeller, 1995) was found in the prescriptive literature in the areas of both distance education policy and higher education governance. Mumper (1983) notes his concern that “the faculty viewpoint is conspicuously absent in the new arenas of higher education policymaking” (p. 295).

Although some of the faculty interviewed preferred various levels of involvement (i.e. departmental level versus institutional level), others indicated an aspiration to be heard and to have an effect on distance education policy as a whole. Beyond a general concern for involvement, face-to-face faculty who also teach online as well as those who teach solely online shared a concern regarding the lack of involvement by faculty with online teaching experience in policy development. This issue was supported in the literature. Kezar and Eckel (2004) believe that inclusion of those with experience not only improves decision making but also makes the policy development process more efficient. Hearn (1998) echoes this sentiment by stating that increased involvement of those with experience may result in “improved constancy in attention to policy issues” (p. 5). Fish (2007) believes that faculty involvement is not defined as being involved in every stage of developing policy, but rather to be communicated with about what is taking place. He states that it is “the withholding of information, not of responsibility, that leaves faculty members feeling left out, taken for granted, and generally disrespected” (p. 13).
The findings indicate that faculty members do not necessarily want to be the only stakeholders involved in policy development; rather, they would like to play a greater role in the process. This role ranges from active participation in policy development committees to a venue for providing recommendations for policy. Furthermore, faculty would like to see student involvement in the process or be able to represent students’ interests in the process. The benefit of faculty involvement in support of the student is noted in the distance education literature as well (Pacey & Keough, 2003). The findings also reveal that greater faculty involvement in distance education policy development will lead to clarification of current and/or conflicting policies and addition of potential policies that faculty note are missing and needed. Another result of faculty involvement is a sense of ownership in online programming and a sense of enthusiasm for online teaching. Thus this finding and the first finding are intertwined in a cycle that begins with involving faculty in initial policy development and supporting faculty as they teach online, and results in enthusiastic faculty who are committed to online programming.

Finding Three: Contextual Factors of Policy Development and the Effect on Faculty Involvement in the Process

The distance education policy development literature, as noted earlier, is primarily prescriptive or descriptive in nature. Yet the literature fails to discuss contextual details surrounding policy development in the distance education arena. This case study research found that the political, structural, and historical context must be considered when policy is developed as it affects faculty participation in the process of distance education policy development. In Kezar and Eckel’s (2004) governance research, they found that certain aspects of context—“people, interpersonal dynamics, and culture”—
affect not only efficiency and responsiveness, but also faculty participation (p. 381). The faculty discussed the variety of people involved in policy making noting the dynamics and politics surrounding faculty type—full-time versus contingent faculty. Politics and power were also discussed in reference to navigating the various levels of decision making within a state system of higher education. Furthermore the contextual issues of structure (department, institution, state system) and history were also noted as having an affect on faculty. These aspects of context are referred to by the faculty in this study when discussing their level of involvement in distance education policy development on their campuses.

**Faculty Type**

In this study, the faculty type included three designations—traditional full-time face-to-face faculty, full-time faculty who teach a mix of face-to-face and online, and contingent faculty. Contingent faculty members are part-time adjuncts or full-time non-tenure track faculty who may also be hired specifically to teach online. The findings reflected a tension between the full-time faculty and the contingent faculty as those typically involved in distance education policy are the traditional on-campus face-to-face faculty. The tension between these two factions is more pronounced due to the growth in contingent faculty. According to the American Association for University Professors (AAUP) (2007), “both part- and full-time non-tenure-track appointments are continuing to increase” with “48 percent of all faculty serve in part-time appointments, and non-tenure-track positions of all types account for 68 percent of all faculty appointments in American higher education” (¶ 1). Although general higher education literature recognizes the tensions surrounding the growth of contingent faculty (AAUP, 2007;
NEA, 2002b), the topic was not found in the review of the faculty participation distance education literature (Betts, 1998; Chizmar, 2001; Jones, 2003; McKenzie, 2000; O’Quinn, 2002; Rockwell, 1999; Schifter, 2000) nor the shared governance literature (Alfred, 1998; Fish, 2007; Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Lapworth, 2004).

One area of concern of the full-time faculty in this study was the fear of compromising quality when online courses were being taught solely by online faculty. Some faculty or some of the faculty’s peers believe that a level of quality is associated with the on-campus, full-time status. The concerns about quality are found as barriers for participation in the distance education participation literature (Bower, 2001; Dirr, 2003; Husmann & Miller, 2001; McCoy & Sorensen, 2003), but do not reflect the issue noted here of quality relating to the type of faculty (e.g. part-time or full-time). Some of the faculty interviewed for this study explained that the real tension is not that of compromising quality but of job security for contingent versus full-time faculty. The concern of compromising the “traditional” on-campus program for the online program and job security concerns of face-to-face faculty were referred to in the faculty discussions and is also found in the distance education participation literature as a barrier (Dooley & Murphrey, 2000).

As noted earlier, faculty want greater involvement in the policy development process, but the inclusion of those with experience teaching online can be affected by whether or not the faculty are on-campus or if they are contingent faculty and therefore not participating in the face-to-face governance meetings such as Faculty Senate. There are assumptions in talking with the faculty that these meetings or policy discussions must take place in the on-campus arena and in a face-to-face format which results in contingent
online faculty being left out of the discussions. Kezar and Eckel (2004) recommend that institutions consider how to capitalize on the expertise of contingent faculty and how to include them in the policy process and list this as a topic for future research. Sachs (2004) posits that including the full-time faculty in decision making is “critical to success” (p. 27). Similarly, the AAUP (2007) “shared governance responsibilities should be shared among all faculty, including those appointed to part-time positions” (¶ 13). This contentious issue about contingent faculty—especially those contingent faculty who teach completely online—inclusion is one where further research is warranted.

*Power and Politics*

The findings indicate that most faculty members do not believe that they have power to make changes and that this is due to the political nature of the state system and the faculty union. Although the faculty members in this study are unionized, many indicated a lack of authority (power) to make changes to policies except perhaps at the departmental level. The findings indicate the presence of a political policy making process in that there is a lack of input from faculty and student stakeholders and a lack of communication as to what policies are developed. Faculty alluded to being reactive to already established policies or finding out that a policy exists only once they have made a misstep or mistake. They believe that policy decisions generally take place at levels (system and institutional) of which they had limited access or awareness. Hearn (1998) alluded to this sentiment in higher education by broadly noting the power of high level administrators and external political constituents. He described this power by stating that “dominant political personalities can shape the agenda, discussion, and action in higher education” (p. 5). Similarly, Cervero and Wilson (2006) echoed how policy makers can
use their power “to keep items off the agenda” or “to educate others about their interests” (p. 96). Other areas of higher education governance literature noted the benefit of involving faculty in policy making is a “sense of empowerment” they feel when participating in policy development (Alfred, 1998, p. 4). The issues of politics and power are important because they help determine which players will be involved, which voices will be heard and which interests will prevail (Cervero & Wilson, 2006).

Structure and History

When discussing context and environment, the issues of structure and history were discussed. The findings reflected descriptions of structure as the various levels of policy development including policy set by the state system, the faculty union, the institutions, and the academic departments. Furthermore, findings reflected current distance education policies as “the way things have always been done” and faculty attitudes as apprehensive of change. Although fear of change is found in the distance education participation literature as a barrier, little to no discussion about the historical context around policy or the structural context around policy was found in the distance education policy literature. However, in discussions about distance education providers like the University of Phoenix, Hearn (1998) writes about changes in higher education and notes the importance of paying attention to context saying, “to sit back without being involved in assessing what this context means for institutions and systems, when higher education is not only our area of expertise but also our area of livelihood and an enduring and significant social institution, would be naïve and unwise” (p. 6).

The findings of this research support the need for awareness of various contextual aspects such as faculty type, power and politics, and structure and history as they relate to
faculty involvement in the policy development process. While an aspect of this finding (specifically that of politics and power) confirms previous research, this study sheds light on the necessary consideration of structural and historical factors impacting faculty involvement in the distance education policy process along with the focus on contingent faculty inclusion in the process.

Finding Four: The Multiple Streams Model is Useful in Studying Distance Education Policy Development and is a Necessary Supplement to Current Distance Education Policy Models

This study illustrates that current distance education policy models, while descriptive, are incomplete in providing details as to how policy is developed. The distance education policy literature offers frameworks of policy particularly focusing on strategic management decision (SMD) zones or policy areas (i.e. academic, fiscal, geographic service area, governance, faculty, administration, legal, and student support services) that are recommended for inclusion in distance education policy (Compora, King, et al., 2000; McCoy & Sorenson, 2003; SREB, 2001) or on properties of distance education delivery systems (Zeller, 1995). The distance education literature provides one study which recommends the development of a distance education policy development model and recommends that the model include faculty involvement (Irele, 2002). Yet the literature does not include models for the actual process of distance education policy development.

The findings of this study demonstrates that the Multiple Streams model, a public administration policy development model, proves to be useful in studying distance education policy development and may provide the necessary supplement to current
distance education policy models. The main parts of the Multiple Streams model—the three streams of problems, policies, and politics—are found in the development of distance education policy. In fact, the findings of this study reflected faculty’s concerns with current distance learning policy (problems), their recommended solutions to those concerns (policies), and the lack of focus on contextual issues like faculty type, power, and politics that impact them (politics). Neither the distance education policy literature nor the public administration policy literature reflects the use of the Multiple Streams model in studying the development of distance education policy. Higher education governance literature does mention the Multiple Streams model (also known as the Revised Garbage Can model, an adaptation of Cohen and March’s Garbage Can Model) as a potential model to consider in studying governance (Kezar & Eckel, 2004).

Furthermore, the findings revealed faculty’s challenges associated with distance education including confusion about distance education policies, risks associated with teaching online, and the varying levels of support and obstruction from peers. These findings are characteristic of the fluidity, randomness, and complexity found in the Multiple Streams model (Kingdon, 2003). The public administration policy literature promotes the Multiple Streams model for its fluidity describing it as non-linear and applauding the balance it finds between structure and randomness (Henry, 2000; Sabatier, 1999). According to Hearn (1998), the policy arena is very fluid and has “no necessary order to the subjects for discussion, the players in the discussions, the solutions considered, or the outcomes of the discussions” (p. 5). Similarly, Kezar and Eckel (2004) note that participation is also fluid and “actors flow in and out of decision-making opportunities as they have a limited attention span and can only attend to a narrow
number of tasks at any point in time” (p. 378). A faculty member in this study provided an example of this fluidity in describing inconsistent attendance at faculty senate meetings; one week, many may attend and participate and the next week, a different few may attend and the stream of discussion is broken.

The Multiple Streams model also has the ability to deal with continual change, randomness, and complexity. The resulting ambiguity is noted as a benefit of the model as it is reflective of reality (Kingdon, 2003). The randomness is reflected not only in the faculty representation in policy discussions but also in the interest of academic departments in the offering distance learning programming. The complexity of the model is reflected in its independent streams and the various policy entrepreneurs yet also speaks to the dynamics between the system and the individuals within the system (Mucciaroni, 1992). The findings of this study outline the dynamics of distance education policy and note that policy making is a “work in progress” with interweaving policies at the various levels of policy development.

The commonality of the model’s characteristics with the findings of the study illustrates that the Multiple Streams model can offer a framework for how distance education policy is developed. While the model provides a fitting framework for the agenda setting stage of the distance education policy process, the findings of this study indicate further development of the model to explain the entire policy development system.

**Finding Five: The Multiple Streams Model, While Exceptional, Requires Further Development for Utilization in Distance Education Policy Development**
As noted earlier, the Multiple Streams model is the most appropriate and most practical policy development for studying distance education policy development. Yet the findings of this research demonstrate that the model requires further development in three main areas: focus on other areas of context, faculty as entrepreneurs, and expanding the model into a distance education policy development system.

**Focus on Other Areas of Context**

The findings indicate the need to focus on various areas of context (i.e. faculty type, power and politics, and structure and history) due to their affect on faculty. Faculty noted a variety of contextual issues, including the tension between type of faculty, the power and politics associated with the various levels of governance and policy making (i.e. department, institution, and the state system), and the structures put in place due to, in many cases, historical precedence. Many of the critics of the Multiple Streams model note the lack of focus on structural and historical areas of context (Blankenau, 2001; Mucciaroni, 1992; Sabatier, 1996, Schlager, 1999; Weir, 1992). These areas also affect the policy development system as a whole and must be considered to strengthen the model. As noted by Weir (1992), policies “from an earlier period can affect each of these streams at a later time” thus paying attention to historical context is essential (p. 191). Furthermore, the context of each academic department, institution and, the larger state system of higher education must each be considered. Mucciaroni (1992) notes that the structural context within institutions “consist of decision-making rules and procedures, roles, authority structures, norms, and routines which are largely resilient to the turnover of individuals and that have impacts independent of the personal attributes of those who occupy particular positions” (p. 466).
Focus on Faculty as a Policy Entrepreneur

While the Multiple Streams model allows for anyone to be a policy entrepreneur, this study finds that in the distance education policy development model, faculty members are policy entrepreneurs and policy entrepreneurs have various roles. “Policy entrepreneurs may be thought of as individuals who are advocates or champions for various solutions or policy” (LaBrie, 2004, p. 44). The findings reveal that faculty members possess many of the factors that policy entrepreneurs need to be successful, such as enthusiasm for what they are doing, concern for current policies or policies still needed, and interest in representing the student perspective. They are often advocates not only for themselves but for their peers and for their students as confirmed by the faculty in this study.

Furthermore the faculty interviewed noted that those who have taught online possess the experience and expertise with distance education and are on the “front lines” of the medium; therefore they should be active in the policy development process due to the unique perspective they bring to the table. The function of the expert policy entrepreneur is to “provide information and guidance, generate options, and consider consequences” (Snare, 1995, p. 411). Faculty members in this study discussed that they are also implementers and troubleshooters of policy, which is a factor that the Multiple Streams model does not consider as a role of the policy entrepreneur but one that critics recommend (Sabatier, 1996). The findings reflect that the implementer/troubleshooter role is one in which faculty must learn and implement the various types of technology, act as the initial tech support person for students, and navigate levels of bureaucracy. In addition, the findings reveal that there are various SMD zones within policy that directly
relate to and affect faculty such as faculty training and faculty evaluation and assessment. Faculty as policy entrepreneurs have the opportunity to participate in an array of interrelated roles (see Figure 1); thus creating a richer impact on the distance education policy development system.

Specific identification of faculty as policy entrepreneurs is not found in any of the literature reviewed. While Kingdon (2003) broadly asserts that the role of the policy entrepreneur is to gather the three streams and push the converged streams to gain agenda status, his examples do not specify who the policy entrepreneur is. Furthermore, critics note the need for more focus on the roles, personalities, and impact of the policy entrepreneur (Sabatier, 1996; Snare, 1995) and success factors of policy entrepreneurs (Henry, 2000).

*Multiple Streams Expanded*

This research recommends further development of the Multiple Streams model to include recognition of the decision making process, implementation process and looking at the distance education policy development process as a whole system made up of parts. The policy literature includes recommendations for expanding the Multiple Streams model beyond the agenda setting and pre-decision stage to include how the resulting policy is developed (Blakenau, 2001; Sabatier, 1996; Zahariadis, 1996). This recommendation and the study’s findings are used to expand the Multiple Streams model into the Distance Education Policy Development System (see Figure 2). In this section, the various parts of the Distance Education Policy Development System—agenda building stage, policy development stage, and implementation and impact stage—are discussed.
The Distance Education Policy Development System is made up of four main parts. The first part of the system reflects the purpose of Kingdon’s (2003) Multiple Streams model which is to converge its three streams of problems, policies, and politics in the pre-decision making or agenda building stage of the policy development process. The findings reflect the existence of these three streams within the distance education policy development process. Further, the findings of this study agree with the policy literature in recommending that the politics stream in the Distance Education Policy Development System consist of a broader sense of context including not only political
aspects of context but also incorporating interpersonal dynamics and the structural and historical aspects of context (Blankenau, 2001; Mucciaroni, 1992; Sabatier, 1996, Schlager, 1999; Weir, 1992).

The agenda building stage also focuses on the role of the policy entrepreneur. In the Distance Education Policy Development System, the policy entrepreneur can be a variety of stakeholders or “players” including faculty who have the opportunity to be involved in an assortment of roles. One of those roles is coupling the streams in a window of opportunity to allow the proposed policy to gain agenda status as is common to the Multiple Streams model (Kingdon, 2003). It is important to note that the Distance Education Policy Development System does not expect that faculty will be the only players involved in the system; rather, the findings assert that faculty are the only players with a variety of roles throughout the entire system and must be included in various parts of the system.

Assuming agenda status is obtained, the second stage of the Distance Education Policy Development System is policy development. This step of policy development is missing from the Multiple Streams model (Blakenau, 2001; Sabatier, 1996; Zahariadis, 1996). The policy development step consists of the policy makers (including faculty as recommended by the findings) involved in the decision-making and their consideration of the coupled streams (problem, policy, and politics). This extension of the coupling of streams to inform decision-making is the same as using the coupling to inform agenda-building. The findings indicate that such an extension does inform decision-making. The extension was recommended by Zahariadis (1996) who extended the Multiple Streams model and its three streams “to cover the entire process of policy formation, agenda
setting, and decision making” (p. 403). Consistent with the Multiple Streams model, the policy’s ability to reach agenda status does not ensure the formation of the recommended policy (Kingdon, 2003). Yet, if the recommended policy comes to fruition, the result is a policy.

The third stage of the Distance Education Policy Development System is the implementation process, along with the impact of the policy on the faculty and on the entire policy system. Once distance education policy is developed, the resulting policy consists of various SMD zones (i.e. academic, fiscal, geographic service area, governance, faculty, administration, legal, and student support services) common to King, et al.’s (2000) distance education policy model. The findings suggest that faculty members also play the role of policy implementer; therefore they may experience how the newly formed policy affects or conflicts with already existing policy. Furthermore, King, et al.’s (2000) distance education policy model notes that faculty members as a group are one of the SMD zones of policy, meaning policies directly related to faculty exist. Thus the findings of this study assert that depending on the type of policy developed, faculty may be directly affected by the implementation of the policy.

Finally, critics of the Multiple Streams model call for the model to reflect the holistic characteristics of the process including the interdependence and interweaving—not just independence—of the three streams (Bendor, et al., 2001; Mucciaroni, 1992; Weir, 1992). The Distance Education Policy Development System looks at the policy development process as a whole acknowledging that each part affects the whole. As is common to the systems perspective, one part of the entire system (the newly formed policy) impacts the whole system, whether that is the players in the system, the politics of
the system, and/or current policies already in place. As noted in the findings, conflicting policies could result in confusion or annoyance and could force revisiting the newly developed policy or requiring new policy, consequently beginning the policy process all over again.
Players: Impact of Policy Entrepreneurs

Politics: Importance of Context

Policy Developed? Players Consider Coupled Streams

Window of Opportunity
Streams are coupled – agenda status gained

Problem: Issues or Areas of Concern

Recommended Solutions

Resulting DE Policy: Consists of Various SMD Zones

As characteristic of the systems perspective, once policy is implemented, it may affect other policies.
Implications for Practice

This research offers a variety of implications for practice in the area of distance education. Implications for practice are also provided for the area of adult education and for the area of policy in public administration.

Distance Education

The findings are significant to the field of distance education in that they give voice to a group of stakeholders not typically heard from when examining distance education policy. The findings of this research reflect faculty’s interest in developing distance education policy. This provides implications for those institutions which are building a distance education program or that already have one in existence. Administrators should invite experienced faculty to the planning table as early in the process as possible. If the distance learning program is already in place and faculty were not included in policy development, then developing a program review or creating an advisory group with the inclusion of faculty would be appropriate. Faculty inclusion or contribution will result in student advocacy, support and sense of responsibility for the program, improved communication, increased understanding, and increased levels of participation in distance teaching.

Faculty and administrators should also encourage the representation of other stakeholders in the policy development process. Students are one of those stakeholder groups and just as policy affects faculty, it also affects students. Thus the shared experience of students will inform the policy making process. By having the student voice present at the policy making table, administrators and faculty may find that improved teaching, increased learning, and increased enrollments result.
Policy developers must also consider the role of context in policy development. Consideration of campus culture, structural and historical context, as well as issues of politics and power affect the process and also affect those involved in the process. For example, faculty governance that takes place in typical on-campus face-to-face activities like Faculty Senate meetings not only speaks to the culture and history of the institution and its faculty, but is also a reflection of power and politics as it limits participation of the contingent faculty members—specifically those who are hired to teach solely online—who have vast experience and rich perspectives to share. Administrators and faculty need to examine ways to provide contingent faculty with a venue for participation in various policy development activities.

Finally, the findings of this study highlight the level of enthusiasm faculty have for online teaching. The following implications affect not only the three institutions in this case study but are applicable for all institutions that offer distance education programming. Administrators must provide faculty with the necessary support to foster that excitement and faculty’s level of participation. This support includes offering faculty training and professional development, recommending guidelines for teaching online, providing release time recognizing increased workload and design time required, and ensuring that faculty members have access to up-to-date technology. Other areas of support include monitoring class size to ensure that the number of students remains manageable for faculty, presenting revenue sharing options to departments that offer distance education programs, and actively promoting distance education programming to both internal and external audiences, reflecting administration’s support for the faculty and students in online programs.
Adult Education

This research adds to the literature in adult education by focusing on the participation of a group of adults—faculty—and their perspectives about involvement in policy development. The descriptions of how faculty members navigate the political waters of their institutions, their state system, and their union speak to the importance of context, which is also an essential focus in qualitative case study research. Examples include faculty learning from and finding support among departmental peers, experiencing risk associated with online teaching, facing obstacles presented by non-distance education peers, and attempting to access policies associated with distance learning at the various levels within the state system. The findings of this study inform not only institutional and state system administrators, but also faculty as to the perspectives of peers regarding their interest in developing distance education policy. Faculty should seek opportunities for their involvement in the development of distance education policy in order to provide the necessary perspectives of their online teaching experience and to play the role of student advocate. Results of faculty involvement typically result in greater faculty participation in faculty professional development, teaching and learning, and overall program development—all of which are significant to the field of adult education.

Policy and Public Administration

The findings of this research are significant to the field of policy and public administration in two ways: 1) the expanded Multiple Streams model offers the public administration field another model for studying policy development and 2) the potential for utilizing public administration policy development models in higher education and
specifically in distance education is illustrated. The findings challenge those in the public administration field to look more closely at the expanded model and determine if the pre-decision process of Multiple Streams is sufficient for replication in the stage of policy development or if there is another public administration policy model that best informs the distance education policy process piece. This research also encourages policy makers in various higher education arenas, including distance education, to explore the public administration literature and various models of policy development and determine if one or more would be valuable. The potential for future research connecting the two fields is immense. The findings also support the capabilities and benefits of the Multiple Streams model along with recommendations for strengthening and expanding the model to fit the distance education policy arena.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study offers many opportunities for future research. This section outlines five recommendations for future research. First, it would be helpful to explore the voices of other stakeholders in the policy development process, including senior level administrators, mid-level managers, students, faculty who do not teach online courses, board of trustee members, and external constituents like community members, business/industry leaders, and political representatives. What are their current roles if any? Obtaining these multiple perspectives would provide a clearer picture as to how policy is currently developed and the role that each play or do not play in that process. Furthermore, the faculty members in this study were all from public, four-year institutions within a state system of higher education. Additional research could focus on
stakeholders from a variety of institutions including private liberal arts institutions, research institutions, community colleges, or those public institutions not part of a state system of higher education. Does the perspective of the stakeholders change due to the context of their institution?

A second recommendation for additional research is to further examine the dynamics of faculty type. As noted in this research, the tension between contingent faculty and full-time faculty is an area where more research is warranted. As online education grows, the number of contingent faculty hired specifically to teach online will increase; thus future research should explore the perspectives of those who teach solely face-to-face, those that teach solely online, and those that have a foot in both worlds. Do the institutions that have a mix of these types of faculty members include them all in policy development? If so, how do they do so? And what are the results of doing so?

A third recommendation for future research is to conduct this study utilizing the program planning literature and models as the conceptual framework. Although briefly mentioned in this research, the underlying issue of power affecting participation was recognized; thus future research could investigate these issues in depth through a critical lens. Cervero and Wilson’s (2006) model on program planning speaks to issues of participation and power as to the writings of Forester, Foucault, Brookfield, and others.

A fourth suggestion for future higher education and distance education policy research is to use the policy development models provided by the public administration field. One study to date in higher education compares three of those models but future research could determine if the Multiple Streams model is the best fit depending on the context of the institution(s) studied. This research found that the Multiple Streams
model—not the Rational Comprehensive or Incremental models—was appropriate for distance education policy development in the context of a state system of higher education. Research using policy development models in both a decentralized and centralized distance education environment would also be insightful. It would also be beneficial to use the Distance Education Policy Development System in studying institutions that are at the beginning stages of building distance education programming or developing distance education policies. Does this version of the expanded Multiple Streams model system assist policy makers in the process and does the process work systemically as illustrated in the model? Could this version of the expanded Multiple Streams model system be useful to policy makers in other areas of public administration and higher education? The Distance Education Policy Development System model promotes the marriage of the two fields of public administration and higher education and this could lead to future research collaborations.

A final recommendation for additional research is to study institutions that have involved faculty in the distance education policy development process. Have faculty taken advantage of the opportunity to be involved and if so, how has that affected the policy development process? Observing the results of that involvement could also support the suppositions of those who posit that the involvement would result in increased participation, improved communication, and shared responsibility for programming.
Summary

This chapter outlined the five relevant findings of this research which included the level of enthusiasm of faculty in teaching online, the interest of faculty in developing distance education policy, the effect that context has on faculty participation in the policy process, and the benefits of the Multiple Streams model in studying distance education policy development. The findings also resulted in the development of an expanded Multiple Streams model—the Distance Education Policy Development System.

Furthermore, the chapter included implications for practice in the areas of adult education, distance education, and public administration as well as recommendations for future research.

In closing, it is the researcher’s hope that this information will be helpful to those who are developing distance education policy within their institutions or within a broader level of a state system of higher education. Of course, this will depend on “what the readers distill from the case and the way they infuse their own learning into their own institutional context” (Corcoran, et al. 2004, p. 19). It is the researcher’s belief that if institutions choose to include faculty in the early stages of building distance education programs, they will find that faculty involvement leads to multiple benefits including improved communication, increased collaboration, shared responsibility for success, and greater interest in training/professional development and in online teaching.
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APPENDIX A – INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project:  How Distance Learning Policy is Created within a State System of Higher Education: the Faculty Perspective

Principal Investigator:  Loréal Lea Maguire, 738 Skywalk Lane, Lancaster, PA 17601; llr138@psu.edu; 717-560-0593

Advisor: Dr. Daniele Flannery, Penn State Harrisburg, 777 W. Harrisburg Pike, Middletown, PA 17057; ddf3@psu.edu; 717-948-6219

1. Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research is to examine the distance learning policymaking process and focus on the faculty stakeholders. Due to the growth of distance learning, the need for faculty acceptance and participation in distance learning, and the resulting development of distance learning policy, further research on this topic is necessary. This study will explore faculty perceptions (15-21 faculty) as to how they and others are involved with the creation of distance learning policy, how they should be involved with the process, and how their role in this policymaking impacts distance education.

2. Procedures to be followed:

You will be asked to participate in semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The initial interview is expected to take approximately 60 minutes while the follow up interview may take up to 30 minutes. These interviews will be recorded by an audio recorder, will be transcribed, and will be given to you for review.

The audio tapes will be stored in the secure files in the residence of the primary researcher. The primary researcher and the thesis advisor will be the only people with access to the tapes. The tapes of audio recording will be destroyed (tape removed from cassette and shredded) five years after the study is concluded.

3. Benefits:

By participating in this study, you may benefit through the discussions about distance learning policy.

Potential benefits are an increased knowledge about distance learning policy which potentially affects other faculty and distance learning students

4. Duration/Time:
The first interview is expected to take approximately 60 minutes and a possible follow-up interview will take no longer than 30 minutes. The entire duration of your involvement in the study will be an estimated 2-3 months.

5. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. Only the primary researcher will know your identity. The data will be stored and secured at the researcher’s home office in a password protected file. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

6. **Right to Ask Questions:** You can ask questions about this research. Contact Loréal Lea Maguire at (717) 560-0593 or at llr138@psu.edu with questions.

7. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form for your records.

__________________________________________  _____________________
Participant Signature       Date

__________________________________________  _____________________
Person Obtaining Consent      Date
Dear Faculty:

I am conducting a research study on the topic of distance learning policy in fulfillment for the D.Ed. in Adult Education. The purpose of my research is to examine the distance learning policymaking process and focus on the faculty stakeholders. Because I want to explore distance learning policy from a faculty perspective, I have asked your distance learning coordinator, [insert name], for a list of faculty who currently teach in online programming at [insert institution name]. I hope you can take a few minutes to assist me in my research by answering the following survey questions.

Your answers will be kept confidential and you will only be contacted if you are interested in participating in the study through interviews to be conducted in late January-mid February of 2007. I encourage you to contact me if you have any questions and I thank you, in advance, for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Loréal Maguire
Doctoral candidate
Penn State University, Harrisburg

### Questions

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<th>Institution:</th>
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<td>Years I’ve taught for this institution:</td>
<td>Faculty rank/step:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online program(s) in which I teach:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Years I’ve taught online:</td>
<td>☐ less than 1 year ☐ 1-4 years ☐ 5-9 years ☐ 10+ years</td>
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**I would be interested in participating in an interview:** ☐ Yes ☐ No  
*(the initial interview will take approximately 60 minutes; follow-up interviews, if necessary, will take no more than 30 minutes)*

*If yes, please provide the following information:*

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<th>Name:</th>
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<td>Email address:</td>
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**Spring teaching/office hours schedule:**
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

- Describe your level of involvement in distance learning here at [insert name of University].

- How does distance learning play a role in education here at [insert name of University] in relationship to the other forms of delivery?

- Describe the level of support from faculty, staff, and administration for distance learning from your perspective.

- Tell me about the current guidelines, principles or regulations you have in place here at [insert name of University] for distance learning.

- How would you describe the role of distance learning policy here at [insert name of University]?

- How are and when were distance learning guidelines, principles or regulations created here at [insert name of University]?

- Describe what you believe to be the essential components of distance learning guidelines, principles or regulations.

- Describe your involvement as a faculty member in creating distance learning guidelines, principles or regulations.

- Describe your influence on the creation of distance learning guidelines, principles or regulations.

- If you had more influence or involvement in distance learning guidelines, principles or regulations, how would you alter the process or guidelines?

- What other information about distance learning at your institution would you like to share with me?
VITA

Loréal Lea Maguire

Education:
Indiana University, M.S., Higher Education, 2001
Indiana University, B.S., English Education, 1997
Indiana University, Certificate, Distance Education, 1997

Professional Experience:
Millersville University – Interim Director of Professional Studies (current), Assistant Director of Professional Training & Education (2/03-7/07), Program Coordinator (8/01-2/03)

Indiana College Network – Director, Student Services Center (11/98-12/00), Assistant Director for Marketing (5/97-11/98)

Presentations:
Creating Distance Education Policy: A Faculty Perspective, First Annual Adult Education Student Research Conference, Penn State Harrisburg (2005)

Building Signature Programs for Summer: Models for Success, Panelist, National UCEA Conference, Boston, MA (2005)


Publications:

