The World Bank's LIL Project of Distance Education Capacity Building in Ethiopia

DERIBSSA A. FAYESSA

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Education and Lifelong Learning for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of East Anglia

Norwich, UK

July 2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was made possible through the assistance and support of many people and it is difficult to list them all. I am especially grateful to my primary and second supervisors (Dr. Barbara Ridley and Dr. Yann Lebeau respectively), in the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia, for their insightful guidance. Their patience in reading and re-reading the manuscript and inspiring comments enabled me to complete the research successfully. My sincere gratitude also goes to my examiners (Professor David Bridges and Dr Jane Cullen) for facilitating the viva in a wonderful setting and giving me the last opportunity to share my views. Their insight about the problem helped me to look deeper into the problem for further research and their intellectual discourse will remain in my memory forever.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the CARE and the University of East Anglia for awarding me an extremely rare studentship award, without which everything was impossible for me. I also thank all members of CARE for their cooperation and kind assistance during my stay in UEA. I also wish to express sincere appreciation to all persons involved in the study as informants from the Ethiopian Civil Service College, Institute of Distance Education and the regional and study centre of Arba-Minch in particular. The coordinators, and distance education tutors made invaluable contributions for the success of the study. My great appreciation also goes to the distance students who participated in the study by filling in the questionnaire and responding to interviews with deep concerns. Without the support of those individuals, I could never have succeeded in the study. However, any deficiencies in the report can be attributed to me alone.

Table of contents **Page**

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DL: Distance Learning

DLC: Distance Learning Centre. This is part of the Civil Service College within the network of the GDLN of the World Bank and sometimes also called Development Learning Centre

ECSC: Ethiopian Civil Service College

EGSLCE: Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination

ESLCE: Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination

FDRE: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

GDLN: Global Development Learning Network. It is an institution of the World Bank.

ICT: Information Communication Technology

IDA: International Development Association. It is an agency of the World Bank specialised for developing countries

IDE: Institute of Distance Education. This is a distance teaching wing of the Ethiopian Civil Service College

LIL: Learning and Innovation Loan

MoE: Ministry of Education

MoFED: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

SNNPR: Southern Nations, Nationalities and People Region. It is a region near the Kenyan border consisting mostly of the remotest communities in the country. About 70 different ethnic groups inhabit this region.

TGE: Transitional Government of Ethiopia

TVET: Technical, Vocational, Education and Training

UEA: University of East Anglia

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Adult: is a person who has reached an age of maturity as defined by law, usually the age of 18, and sometimes the age of 21; adults must accept full responsibility for their actions (Barnhart and Barnhart, 1993:30; and Good, 1973:16).

Correspondence education: First generation in the evolution of distance education; with the advent of postal delivery in the mid 1880s, interaction between learners and teachers at a distance was possible for the first time. In the United States, correspondence became known later as "independent study" and "home study" before becoming recognised as part of the expanding field of "distance education." Interaction by surface mail is still widely used, especially in less developed countries (Moore and Kearsley, 1996:20).

Distance education: Any formal approach to learning in which a majority of the instruction occurs while educator and learner are at a distance from one another (Murphy, 1992:132).

Distance educator: All the staff of the distance education institution concerned with facilitating distance learning in distance education, including instructors, tutors and administrators.

Feedback: In communication, feedback is the response of the receiver to the sender. In distance education, it includes the response of the tutor/instructor to the inquiry or written assignment of the distance student (Moore and Kearsley, 1996:119).

Lifelong learning: Learning throughout the lifetime with emphasis on independent study determined by contextual personal needs (Moore and Kearsley, 1996: 238-239).

Quality assurance: The totality of the arrangements by which an organisation discharges its responsibility for the quality of the teaching it offers, satisfying itself that the mechanisms for quality control are effective and promote improvement (Inglis et al, 1999:161; Moore and Kearsley, 1996:184).

ABSTRACT

Distance Learning (DL) has never been part of the national strategy in Ethiopia. The current government has been trying to expand higher education in the country and an attempt to develop distance learning at this level was in the Civil Service College. This was an innovative endeavour as part of the development package of the World Bank (1998-2006), known as Learning and Innovation Loan (LIL). The targets of the project were establishing the Global Development Learning Network (GDLN) centre in the college, and developing print based DL programme in the same. This study is aimed at the analysis of the project and its outcomes. Questionnaire, observation, document analysis, and interviews were applied to gather the data and qualitative techniques were employed for the investigation.

Broadly speaking, the study reflects that the DL LIL project has brought about some development into the system although it is poorly designed and missed most of its objectives. Technically, a complicated approach was applied for the technology development whilst the print aspect was handled by single consultant, the UK Open University. Due to the relative clarity of the task, the print aspect produced more result than the technology. The result reveals that a critical capacity was developed, especially, for the print based DL; and this development transformed the college from educating small elite to teaching thousands of civil servants at a time. However, the result has not been recognised as key resource in the system. Consequently, soon after the project was phased out June 2006 by developing diploma programme of DL, in 2007, the college suddenly decided to terminate the entire diploma programme and the teaching materials were left in the store. The DL programme has been continuously deteriorating thereafter till the end of this study.

The programme system was ill-suited in the conventional system of the college. In this regard, it is concluded that 'success of developing DL programme as an adjunct to a conventional system is a matter of chance'. Thus, to improve the situation, a certain level of administrative autonomy for the DL programme is among the suggestions. Despite the lack of awareness about the opportunities of DL in the country, the spreading other DL institutions, both national and international such as UNISA may draw the attention of policy makers to the neglected area.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is aimed at presenting the focus of the research. It describes the research topic and highlights the major approaches pursued in the investigation. The major points discussed are the topic, statement of the problem, purpose and objectives, the basic questions, the scope, and importance of the study. Here, the theoretical framework and the research design are presented briefly to link the discussions to the details in the other chapters.

1.1 The Topic

The topic of this research is, "*the World Bank's LIL project of distance education capacity building in Ethiopia*". It is about a development project of distance learning, implemented in Ethiopia as part of the World Bank's development package, funded as, Learning and Innovation Loan (LIL) from 1998 to 2006. Generally speaking, the LIL packages focus on developing countries with the aim of experimenting alternatives for possible developmental solutions prior to large-scale operations (World Bank, 2009-02-03). In Ethiopia, the package targeted development in the areas of education, health, and social security (World Bank, 2000). In education, the focus was a distance learning project which started with the installation of the Global Development Learning Network (GDLN) technology in the Ethiopian Civil Service College in 1998.

The GDLN is an interactive technology based education approach, designed for knowledge and information sharing between developed and developing world. The network is coordinated by the centre located in Washington's Headquarters of the World Bank operating through videoconferencing (VC) facility, multimedia and the internet. The technology is capable of connecting several centres all over the world at a time and enables people in developing countries to attend lectures delivered directly from Washington (ILO, 2008).

With the aim of capacity building for distance learning in the Civil Service College, the major phase of the DL project in Ethiopia is concerned with upgrading and extension of the GDLN technology in the college and developing print based distance

learning programme in the same institution. The specific target is organising the Institute of Distance Education (IDE) as the distance teaching wing of the college (PAD, 2001:1). Subsequently, the major outcomes are: (a) upgraded GDLN centre in the Civil Service College, and (b) print-based distance learning courses in three disciplines: Accounting, Management and Law. The research is concerned with the investigation of the development process and its outcomes from the project phase to the actual practice of distance teaching. The result of the project on the college's professional capacity and the practice of distance teaching itself focuses on a relatively remote area of the country, Arba-Minch.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The civil service system has been extremely underdeveloped in Ethiopia, with more than 80% of civil servants lacking post-secondary education in 2001. On top of this, since 1991, the country has been practising decentralised administration based on ethnic federalism (Aalen, 2002). This political reform by itself resulted in expansion of the civil service and deepened the scarcity of trained human power, especially in remote areas. To alleviate this problem, a national capacity building and civil service reform was initiated in 1998 with partnership of the World Bank (MoFED, 2002). The strategy of capacity building through the development of distance learning programme in the Ethiopian Civil Service College, as mentioned in the above section is part of this.

Distance learning has no policy guidelines in the country (TGE, 1994), and there is a lack of the minimum resource for this aspect of education. Therefore, the project was designed to pursue a comprehensive approach, targeting the development of both human and material resources for distance learning. To this end, the UK Open University offered professional consultancy in the print aspect by training hundreds of staff and tutors and mentoring the course development process. This enabled the college to teach at diploma level in Accounting, Management, and Law by distance as a product of the project.

The major aim of this study, therefore, is to learn from the history of the distance learning development project. To this effect, discussing the development process starting from the initiation phase up to the final outcomes is the major undertaking. In

line with this, the objectives are: (1) to analyse the design, and outcomes of the project as a development process; (2) to explain the impact of the project on the capacity of the Civil Service College and access of disadvantaged groups to the college's education programme; and (3) to investigate the DL programme in practice in Arba-Minch.

1.3 Research Questions

In connection to the aim and objectives, mentioned above, the following research questions are set to guide the study.

1. How can the project be explained in terms of overall design, objectives and outcomes?
2. What key features can be recognised from the socio-political environment of the project? And what were the effects of these on the outcome?
3. How can the project be understood in promoting students' access to the college and development of capacity of the college?
4. What does the Arba-Minch study centre show about the programme when considered in the light of internationally defined standards for distance learning practice?

1.4 The Context of DL in the Sub-Sahara Africa

The potential of distance education as a means of expanding education and providing trained manpower has been recognised in the region since 1950s. This could be seen from the establishment of the University of South Africa (UNISA). The largest demand for distance education in the sub-Sahara Africa was at secondary level, and particularly, the focus was for upgrading unqualified primary school teachers (UNESCO, 2002). In this regard, the Zambian National Correspondence College was set up in 1964 and the Malawi Correspondence College was opened in 1965. Since then, the major developments have been on supplementing the conventional education. Thus, the major direction followed was to support the conventional system rather than a full-fledged strategic approach for distance learning (Jenkins, 1989:41-42).

Recently, most countries of the region have organised public distance education institutions and they provide correspondence courses in a range of subjects. In the

1990s, hundreds of distance education programmes were opened and most of them were run by indigenous universities (Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education-TOJDE, 2007:137). Technically, they often used radio programmes to accompany the courses (UNESCO, 2002). Programmes of distance learning in the region are attached to the conventional systems. The obvious administrative impediments, as we discuss in the next chapter, are challenges for the programmes of distance learning as practised in the region.

The Republic of South Africa is the leading country in applying distance education in the region (UNESCO, 2002). In this regard, it owns one of the oldest distance education institutions in Africa. That is UNISA which began as early as the 1950's. UNISA became the world's first university dedicated to distance teaching in 1951. It is also one of the biggest 10 universities in the world (World Bank, 2000:31). This institution has been particularly important in providing education and training all over the region and the world. Being based in the Republic of South Africa with hundreds of centres in the country, in the year 2007, it had 31 centres in other African countries, including Ethiopia, and more than 60 others in other continents (UNISA, 2007:27-28). In its programme, UNISA offers a wide range of courses at all levels with more emphasis on print. From mid 1990s, besides UNISA, which is a single mode institution in the country, the University of Pretoria and the University of Port Elizabeth shifted to dual-mode and have been teaching 10s of thousands of distance students (UNESCO, 2002).

The African Virtual University (AVU) is another distance education programme to note in the region. It is a technology-based distance education network based in Nairobi, Kenya that operates through 55 learning centres, located in 27 African countries. Unlike most other programmes in Africa, the AVU primarily emphasises on satellite transmissions. This institution is characterised by video broadcasts through well-equipped learning centres. AVU began as a project by the World Bank in 1997, and since then, it developed into university (TOJDE, 2007:142). The institution offers courses from certificates to bachelor's degree level. The AVU doesn't offer highly diversified and higher degree programmes as UNISA, but its emphasis on technology makes it special. It focuses in partnership with other universities in the region and other continents. For instance, it works in collaboration

with universities in the US, Europe, and Asia and this allows sharing of resources and making courses available for the students. For instance, students at the AVU in Kenya take online classes at Massachusetts (TOJDE, 2007:138).

Other programmes in the public institutions of the region are in the university departments, and specialist institutions. In a few countries, Tanzania, Botswana and Zambia, nationwide radio studies have been used to provide distance education. The main media used in these programmes have been: print, broadcast, and face-to-face.

Many universities, in Nairobi, Botswana, Zambia and Nigeria have been providing correspondence degrees since 1960s and 1970s (UNESCO, 2002). Tanzania used distance education to train teachers for universal primary education. Malawi and Zambia used supervised study group system to provide alternative schooling to adolescents who cannot attend conventional secondary schools. These are the most important developments in distance education in the region (TOJDE, 2007:137).

From a systems point of view, success in distance education is linked to the existence of an articulated national policy on distance learning, support for distance learning by the nation's political leadership, and the recognition of distance learning degrees by the civil service. Other factors include the availability of professionally trained distance teaching staff to manage the programme, the complementary use of different kinds of media, and the existence of follow-up and support programmes for learners to reinforce teaching (Saint, 2001). In this regard, by April 1998, only three countries: Madagascar, Mauritius, and the Republic of South Africa had national distance learning policies in place (Saint, 1999:23). In spite of their long experience with distance learning and political emphasis in international conferences (UNESCO, 2002), other countries function without written policies for distance education (The available literature doesn’t indicate about any other countries having distance education policy in the region after 1998).

Despite the overall achievements discussed above, distance learning in the sub-Sahara Africa has remained underdeveloped and less valued (TOJDE, 2007:137). The main reason is shortage of funding. Governments intend their public distance learning institutions to be low cost. In this context, the greatest harm that commercial correspondence colleges in the region have brought about on the development of

distance education is in setting a cheap standard. Such a norm resulted in difficulty for distance education institutions to persuade their governments to finance their programmes to provide courses of high quality. This has worsened over the years; and generally governments have been giving less attention to their distance teaching institutions than seeing them as cost effective alternatives for expanding education (Jenkins, 1989:46).

In short, distance learning is generally underdeveloped in sub-Sahara Africa; and the lack of commitment from the decision makers and ministries of education to promote distance learning in the region could be seen as one of the major obstacles. Consequently, in most of the countries, distance learning has low status and remains on the periphery (TOJDE, 2007:137). The practices reflect the conventional system in both its good and bad features. Opportunities for innovative developments have been missing in the distance learning programmes and they are less supported (Jenkins, 1989:46). According to TOJDE, in sub-Saharan Africa, higher education has been expanding at a faster rate than lower level of education; however, distance education at the higher level has remained weak (TOJDE, 2007:138). The following section explains the situation in Ethiopia.

1.5 The Context of DL in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, government's distance learning in the form of correspondence has been practised since 1978. This programme was restricted to the secondary school level, and it was coordinated by the Ministry of Education's Media Agency (MoE, 1994:7). The major teaching material was print, but supported through radio and TV programmes that are intended for the regular programme have been accessible by the distance learners. The most discouraging feature of this programme, as I witnessed has been the process of learning assessment. The final exams have been managed by the centrally located body of the Agency that sends examination copies by mail to a government school closer to the student's residence. The student and the nearby school principal receive letters of instruction about how the exam is to be conducted. The school principal or his/her representative supervises the exams. Stamped envelope is enclosed with the exam package and the invigilator doesn't pay for returning the post but he/she is not paid for the service and has no formal responsibility to do the task either. I performed the job once when I was secondary

school principal in the year 1999 and noticed the high risk for the exam to be mismanaged and corrupted.

This is typically bad practice as applied by the government institution, and has degraded the value of distance education in general in the country. It was to offer the courses at low cost but at the expense of quality. Consequently, distance learning generally appears the least valued in Ethiopia. With such a poor background, the currently emerging, indigenous private distance learning providers are characterised by producing cheap courses for their distance learners. The lack of strategic innovations in the area of distance learning in the country could be explained as the outcome of bad experiences in the practice.

In early 2000, the Education Media Agency of the MoE launched a project to upgrade 17000, semi-professional teachers all over the country. The programme was organised in the form of consortium. The critical problem observed in this project was lack of ownership between the agency and the regional education bureaus (Getachew, 2008). As the education management has been decentralised from federal to regional and district levels, the agency has no mandate to supervise the practices in the regions. Therefore, in the structure, the coordination of the programme was complicated in that teaching materials and information were delivered to students through regional bureaus and then to districts. In the setting, the Education Media Agency controlled only the production of the materials (Deribssa, 2009). In the project, a lot of resource was invested and lessons were learned but the programme was terminated at the graduation of the project group in 2004.

As indicated earlier, Ethiopia has no clearly stated policy or legislation for distance learning; and there is no statement about distance education at all in the national education policy document (TGE 1994). However, private and public institutions are allowed to offer distance courses. In this regard, the development in the 1990s has been in the private sector, and the market has been commercially promising. Alpha University College, St. Mary University College, Unity University College, and Admass University College are the popular ones. Recently, these private institutions teach thousands of students through correspondence (MoE, 2007:115). This has resulted in devastating effects because the system is running without standards. Consequently, the design of materials the institutions produce and the structure of

their student support are quite underdeveloped. For example, as observed in practice, they use objective based assignments and use the same sheets for years.

Among international providers, the African Virtual University, UNISA, the UK Open University and the Indra Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) offer standard tertiary level distance learning programmes in Ethiopia. However, they are less popular than the indigenous institutions. UNISA has opened a fully operating centre in Addis Ababa in early 2007 which offers distance courses at all levels including PhD. IGNOU operates in collaboration with MoE and St. Mary University College offering courses up to masters level (Belay, 2007:21). This shows a trend of expansion of international distance teaching institutions in the country. This situation is expected to influence the policy environment of the nation.

Therefore, the nature of distance education programmes in Ethiopia shows the situation in the sub-Sahara African countries, as discussed above. In this regard, the country has to learn from good practices of distance education in other countries in the region and the world. To this effect, the distance learning LIL project in Ethiopia was in line with the development of world standard practice and is expected to excel in this area and we will see the latest development.

1.6 Importance of the Study

In Ethiopia, though traditional education has been in place for centuries, tertiary education in the western sense appeared in 1950 with the opening of the University College of Addis Ababa, currently called Addis Ababa University (Abebe, 1991:127). But since the 1980s, many national governments and international donors paid less attention to higher education (Amare, 2007). Consequently, higher education development in Ethiopia, like many other developing countries, has been affected and remained underdeveloped while facing escalating demands (World Bank's Task Force, 2003:2).

Higher education has direct contribution to the economy for training and developing human resources for strategic businesses. It is also essential for education and training of teachers. More critically, higher education is indispensable for producing informed leaders and citizens. Therefore, the key role of higher education is unquestionable and it is highly significant in the information age (World Bank, 2002:117). However, the

focus on higher education for national development started very late in Ethiopia. As we can see from the education policy document, higher education is less emphasised in the national policy of the 1994 (TGE, 1994) and appeared during the preparation of the second round action plan of Educational Sector Development Programme (ESDP) (MoE, 2002b). From the recent actions of the government, however, one can easily understand the emphasis on higher learning. Accordingly, the development project of the distance learning could be seen in line with this strategy.

Distance education is least known and less researched in the country because studies in education generally focus on the conventional system. A study conducted by Getachew (2008) for PhD in UEA, on 'The Nature and Practice of Teacher Education via Distance Learning in Ethiopia…' is an initial contribution to this untouched area. This is especially important in reflecting the practice of distance learning in general in the community. It also reflects the prejudice against distance learning and lack of good ground from a policy perspective. In that study, the need to learn from the experience of other countries is underlined as possible way to benefit from distance learning in the country. The study also reflected the area is barely investigated.

The same study by Getachew also reflected the lack of capacity to manage donor funded projects in the country, as revealed by the distance learning project 17000 that was funded by donor agencies, SIDA and BESO (Getachew, 2008). Therefore, as an additional contribution to the area, this research covers issues of development policy as well as distance education in practice, and the study is more likely to be among the first few studies in the area at this level.

As it involves issues from both development project and distance education, the research can have relevance for a wide variety of readers. The primary readers may be the research community, international and national. Besides, Ethiopian higher education academics, researchers, and project managers may benefit from the information.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is applying organisation theories to the process of development and practice of distance learning. From organisation theories, systems and contingency theories are focused; and these are elaborated in chapter 2

sections 2.1.7.1 and 2.1.7.2. To analyse the practice of distance learning, the three major theories: autonomy and independence, industrialisation, and interaction and communication are applied (Saba, 2003:3). It is an attempt to apply organisational theories to the study of distance learning. Therefore, how distance learning could effectively be instituted in the whole organisation system of the college and how the specific functions be setup as subsystems require the combination of the theories. The theories are discussed in more detail in chapter 2 section 2.1.4.

1.8 The Research Design

Adopting a certain research method depends on a range of factors. Some of these are the nature of the problem under study, the situation in which the research is conducted, availability of sources, and the background and inclination of the researcher. In this regard, the relationship between methodology and research objectives is the fundamental factor to determine the quality of the data (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:2).

As mentioned earlier, the major concern of the study is examining the design and outcomes of the project. The goal is comprehensive understanding of the ways in which the principles of organisation apply to the natural setting of project management and the distance learning system in Ethiopia. The empirical study, is essentially qualitative (Creswell, 1998:15), but supplemented by limited numerical data.

1.8.1 Combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches

With the multi-method approach, a style of writing in which analysis and reflection is interwoven with evidential reporting is applied in the research (Bridges, 2002:7). This is because of the difficulty to claim a single method for complex problems like this and the enquiry is multi-faceted to fit the situation (Rowbottom and Aiston, 2006:154). The study, largely qualitative, involves document analysis, observation, interviews, and survey. These are briefly defined below and the details come in the methodology chapter.

1.8.2 Document analysis

As the study is concerned with a development project and its outcomes, documents are the main sources for data. The major ones are the project appraisal document, project implementation manual, *Aide memoires* (project monitoring reports), and the statistical reports about student enrolments and graduations.

1.8.3 Observations

Two types of observations are applied to gather data for the study. These are participant observation and direct observation. The observation during the implementation of the project is participant observation because I was part of the implementation team. On the other hand, direct observation is applied to learn about the practice of distance learning after the project phase. For example, data about the management of tutorials, and tutor marked assignments are obtained through direct observation on site.

1.8.4 Interviews

The interviews involved officials at the management level in the project teams, coordinators of the course design and development, coordinators of the instruction process, and tutors facilitating the teaching learning. The students were also interviewed.

1.8.5 Survey

As mentioned earlier, the study centre selected for the investigation is Arba-Minch, a distant regional town. The aim is to explore students' experiences and understanding of the programme. One type of questionnaire is used for the survey, and the questionnaire includes both closed and open-ended questions.

The details of the methodology and approaches, the sources and instruments of data collection, the selection techniques and the methods and instruments of data analysis, etc. are elaborated in the methodology chapter (chapter 4).

1.9 Organisation of the Study

The study is organised into nine chapters. The first chapter deals with the "*Introduction*", which starts with the topic and statement of the problem and brief discussion of the approaches to the investigation.

The second chapter is the "*Literature Review*". The first part of this focuses on the discussion of the concepts and principles of distance education. Theories of distance learning and organisation theories are considered with emphasis on how to apply them to the practice of distance learning. The second part focuses on development policies and strategy. Here, concepts about development and management of development projects and donor funded projects and issues of planning development projects are briefly discussed.

The third chapter discusses the "*Context*" of the study. It describes the general features of the country, the current socioeconomic situation and development efforts in the past and present. Issues related to development strategies of the country are also discussed. The fourth chapter, *Methodology*, describes the overall structure of the investigation. The fifth chapter focuses on the development process starting from the planning stage to the implementation. The data about the distance learning project: the project design, objectives, and outcomes are the key aspects presented in the chapter. Towards the end, an attempt is made to apply systems and contingency approaches to understand the development process. Chapter Six presents the distance learning programme in practice in a regional town. Chapter Seven discusses issues related to institutional arrangement of the distance learning programme within the structure of the civil service college in order to explore management problems.

The eighth chapter is, "*Further Analysis and Interpretation of the Data*". As the study deals with a complex problem in two broad areas (both project and practice), there is a need to integrate the data to derive meanings across the entire data set. Thus, in this chapter, an attempt is made to put together the overall data by focusing on key issues. Then, towards the end, systems and contingency analyses are applied to reflect the overall situation.

The last chapter (chapter nine) summarises the findings to answer each research

question. Conclusions are drawn from the data and key recommendations are made on the most important ways in which the problems in the distance learning programme could be alleviated, and how the developers could integrate development efforts and derive lessons by looking at the impact. The aim is to improve achievements of development projects in the county. In the reflections of the researcher, further comments about the importance of the study and suggestions for future research are indicated.

With this much background about the overview of the study, the next chapter discusses the literature review.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the theories and concepts in two major areas: around distance learning in theory and practice and secondly, concerning distance learning in terms of systems theory. The final section of the chapter deals with the management of development projects.

2.1 Organising DL

This section begins with the definitions of distance learning (DL) and proceeds with the theories and principles of organisation. Identifying the standard of practice for organising distance learning from theoretical point of view is the key concern of this section. It is aimed at extracting good practice of distance learning from literature to compare the practice in Ethiopia to international standard.

2.1.1 What is DL?

The history of distance learning covers different cultural environments. Accordingly, definitions of distance learning reflect the perceptions about the concept at different times. In this perspective, attempt is made to show the dynamism in the area due to advancements in the technology. Older definitions are included here to reflect the changes in the concepts along time.

To begin with, Dohmen defines distance learning as a systematically organised form of self-study approach in which student counselling, presentation of learning materials, and securing and supervising of students success is carried out by educational institutions by means of media which can cover long distances (Dohmen, 1967:9). In this concept, all forms of education that take place without direct contact between teacher/lecturer and student are viewed as distance education. The central points are organisation of the programme to promote independent learning and the use of media. The flexibility and relative merit of the programme to overcome distance barrier are also implied.

To Peters, distance learning is a method of teaching/learning which applies division of

labour and organisational principles and use of technical media. This underlined, especially, the purpose of producing high quality teaching materials, which enables to instruct great numbers of students at a time wherever they live (Peters, 1973:206). It reflects that distance learning is an industrialised form of education. The central focus, here, is the possibility to produce teaching materials and the opportunity for massive enrolment of students to an institution. It further reveals that distance learning can be a tool for expanding access to education. It also implies relative flexibility and higher responsibility of the learners to manage their own learning.

Greenberg (1998:36) defines distance learning as a planned teaching/learning experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies to reach learners at distance and encourage learners' interaction and certify learning. Here, the key points are use of technology, facilitating interaction, and certification of learning. A more comprehensive definition of distance learning is given by Keegan in 1996. In this definition, distance learning is identified as a formal approach to education in which the majority of instruction occurs without direct contact of educator and learner (Keegan, 1996:50). Here, the possibility of face-to-face contacts between the teacher and student is implied. The practice of occasional face-to-face sessions or tutorials organised by the best practice of distance teaching institutions is the ground for this conception.

In describing the special characteristics of distance learning, Holmberg stated that 'distance learning is organised with the support of specialised teaching materials and staff (Holmberg, 2003:81-82). This implies the current practice of institutions in organising diversified supports along course design and development, student services, learning assessment, research, etc. These are aimed at facilitating interaction and communication to facilitate learning.

In the above definitions, common concepts are distance and separation from learning groups, formal organisation, and the specialisation of institutions. Interaction and communication, the use of technical media, flexibility, and possibility of face-to-face session are also underlined. Therefore, the application of blended mode of delivery that includes face-to-face sessions is well grounded as key feature of distance education.

This being the case, the term distance learning is often confused with the idea of home study, independent study, external study, and correspondence study. But distance learning is more comprehensive and includes all the rest. Keegan further described distance learning as a generic term that includes a range of teaching/learning strategies used by correspondence colleges or open universities and distance training units of corporate providers (Keegan, 2000:34). Keegan indicated that distance learning is a system that provides flexible alternatives for students who choose to study at home than attending formal schools, colleges and universities.

From the foregoing discussion, we can understand that the perceptions about distance learning have been evolving over time, basically, due to changes in the practice and culture. The advances in the technological environment are the major influences in the process. In this perspective, earlier concepts mostly focus on correspondence approaches and industrial ideas of massive enrolment in which the teacher and student may not meet face-to-face. The later concepts involve integration of distance and face-to-face contacts between students and instructors. The dynamism in the conception is from the fact that distance teaching institutions have been increasingly using varieties of teaching approaches as the conventional programmes have also been using more technology in recent times. This reveals some aspect of convergence between conventional and distance learning approaches in the later days.

In short, distance learning is a form of teaching and learning organised through available technological media to facilitate communication between teacher and learner in a flexible manner to deliver learning content to mass of audience. The focus is more on teaching the students how to learn independently than direct teaching. This is a new paradigm in teaching assisted by technological innovations. To this effect, distance learning is a complicated approach of educational development. This being the case, in discussing distance learning approaches, Nipper (1989) identified three generations of distance education providers. Accordingly, the first generations provide education mostly through paper-based instruction; the second through integrated multimedia such as delivering courses via television; the third is provision through two-way communications media such as videoconferencing.

Understanding the concepts and the practice of distance learning is essential to set up an effective programme. This is especially vital for developing countries that start the

practice from scratch. In this study, these concepts and models are used to explore the level of the Ethiopian distance learning programme in terms of international standard.

2.1.2 Unique features of DL

Distance learning is a form of education in that, generally, all the learners are adults. Most adult learning is of a practical nature; i.e., adding new knowledge and skills that apply to the normal living conditions. Adults possess unique needs, attitudes, beliefs, motives, and goals. These are reflected in the roles they play in their society and communities (Picciano, 2001:147-148).

From learners' perspective, motivations, learning styles and related situations are important issues to consider in facilitating distance learning. As indicated by Brookfield, (1986); and Peters, (2001:13), adults deeply realise the advantages and disadvantages of learning before they decide to take part. Hence, the primary task of the facilitator must be to help students understand why they need to know about a certain content of learning. This could be explained in terms of improving the effectiveness in job performance or improving quality of life. It also has critical implication in training staff and organising student support services for distance teaching because a teacher, trained for a conventional setting, cannot meet the specific purpose.

Therefore, in planning distance learning, the basic knowledge about adult learners must be taken into account. In this perspective, the need to establish a system of research and needs assessment together with training and retraining of the staff are inevitable. How these concepts are addressed in the distance learning programme is reflected in chapter 6, section 6.7.1 of this thesis.

2.1.3 Theories of DL

As mentioned in the earlier chapter, theories of distance learning can be presented in three broad categories: (1) autonomy and independence, (2) industrialisation, and (3) interaction and communication. Here, we look at these theories a little further.

(1) *Autonomy and independence*: This theory emphasises on the freedom of learner and also places the learner at the centre of distance learning process (Keegan, 1996). According to Saba (2003:4), one key feature of distance learning is that the student is central to the education process. It implies the emphasis on student centred approach; and this concept originates from the fact that distance learning provides learning opportunity to students through self-instructional materials and access educational resources, the use of which is largely determined by the student. It originates from the fact that distance learning allows students to choose the time, pace, place and circumstances of their own learning. In reality, however, distance learners are not free from the learning materials produced by the educational institution; and they are controlled by the institution running the programme in one way or another. In this perspective, learner autonomy refers to the distance learners' chance to make wider choice on how and when to study within the limits set by the educational institution.

Thus, distance learners enjoy higher level of flexibility in choosing the setting for their own learning and have relatively higher level of autonomy although not completely free from the institution. This concept is used as a framework of analysis of the student support system of the distance learning programme in chapter 6 of this thesis.

(2) *Industrialisation:* The main conception of this theory is on how distance learning institutions are organised. Structural concerns as industry is the main issue here with how the specific functions influence the teaching and learning process (Keegan, 1996; Saba, 2003).

As discussed earlier, distance learning has been evolving. The interpersonal face-to-face communication in the conventional setting is replaced by a personal mode of communication mediated by technology. This puts the educational institutions to act more as industries producing goods and services (Keegan, 1996; Greenberg, 1998:36). The explanation of the system as industry might be perceived as dehumanising the setting; however, it explains the situation properly. The use of intensive preparation of learning materials, which is expensive together with the assumption of possible return through efficiency in using the materials for mass of learners, reveals an industrial nature. The concept of industrialisation in distance

learning helps to see how the system has been operating in terms of production, distribution, instruction, assessment, etc. This concept is mainly used in chapter 7, sections 7.2 and 7.3 and chapter 8, section 8.4 for discussing the organisation system of the distance learning programme.

(3) *Interaction and communication*: Contemporary ideas and views highlight the constructs of interaction and communication as important factors for effecting distance learning (Keegan, 1996:50). Technological media that promote independent learning facilitate distance learning. In the conventional education system, usually face-to-face contact with the teacher is the standard for communicating the learning contents to the student. However, in distance learning, alternative media are utilised to facilitate learning instead of the teacher's oral support (Garrison and Shale, 1987:11). The interpersonal communication is, thus, replaced by some sort of technology, which could be in the form of: print, audio, video, telephone, teleconferencing, videoconferencing, broadcasting, and computers.

Therefore, it is possible to think that the development of technological media for interaction helps to bridge the communication gap in distance learning to replace the interpersonal communications between teacher and learner. However, this is possible when there is efficient use of those media with high professional dedication. This concept is used in analysing the student support system of the distance learning programme in chapter 6.

In conjunction with the above theories, we may look at some aspects of the standard of good practice for distance learning as presented below.

2.1.4 Standard of good practice for DL

As distance learning is one aspect of education concerned with provision of specialised services, looking into the principles of good practice may help to understand what standard of practice could be expected from distance learning programme. For example, Chickering and Gamson (1987) identified seven principles for good practice of undergraduate education. These are: (1) contacts between students and faculty, (2) reciprocity and cooperation among students, (3) use of active

learning techniques, (4) prompt feedback, (5) emphasis on time on task, (6) communicate high expectations, and (7) respect for diverse talents and ways of learning (Meyer, 2002:78).

All the above features are desirable in any system of education. For instance, as stressed by Sherry, the above principles equally work for distance education (Sherry, 2003:437-440). To this end, the contacts between student and tutor, cooperation among students, active learning, feedback, communication, and respect for talents are underlined as essential in all distance learning programmes.

Particularly, from organisational point of view, the characteristics of successful distance learning programmes reflect the following features (1) financial support and commitment from all key players of administration, (2) a strong rationale for utilising the delivery methods in the institution, (3) a clear analysis of the audience (who they are and what their needs are), (4) faculty and training support, (5) student support services that allow easy access to the instruction, and (6) relevant amount of staff and personnel to conduct the programme (Tulloch and Sneed, 2000; and Meyer, 2002:78).

The above concepts focus on the organisational characteristics of the institution, and they are useful to analyse the organisational environment of distance learning programmes. They are critical elements from policy perspectives at the institutional level. Therefore, they are considered as the key points of reference in analysing the organisational feature of the distance learning programme in chapter 6, sections 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7; and chapter 7, sections 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.

Furthermore, for the internal organisation of distance learning programme, a group of five categories are identified as standard of good practice. They are: (1) learning goals and content presentation, (2) interactions, (3) assessment/measurement, (4) tools and media, and (5) faculty support (Meyer, 2002:9). The points here are: clarification of goals through provision of appropriate orientation about the programme to students; interactions include interface and feedback between tutor and students. Applying appropriate learning assessment, employing the appropriate media for communicating the lesson, and organising effective support services are the other key requirements.

Therefore, the general consensus about good practice of distance learning programme constitutes: proper orientation to students, presentation of the content through appropriate media, organising relevant support system, encouraging feedback, and applying appropriate assessment procedures. These criteria are particularly applied for the analysis of the practice of distance learning programmes in terms of the student support system in chapter 6, section 6.7.

2.1.5 Management and policy issues in DL

Management as an authoritative function is a combined field of planning, organising and policymaking. Organising includes a process of decision making to facilitate the attainment of objectives. This is a function of higher authorities and involves the activities of planning and policy making, directing, and supervising the day-to-day operations (Hicks and Gullett, 1981). In distance learning, putting down the legal framework and determining the organisational model are the most important issues (Panda, 2003:32-33). This is because the legal framework helps to establish the foundation for the practice. The institutional model and legislative issues are discussed below.

2.1.5.1 Defining the institutional model

The most important development in distance learning in the last few decades has been at the tertiary level (Perraton, 2000:175). This began with the establishment of the UK Open University. The Open University established an integrated distance teaching system with several subsystems for course material development and provision of instruction and student support functions for the first time (Keegan, 2000:23; and Powar, et al, 2000:81-89). Following this initiative, open universities have been set up in various parts of the world. Netherlands, Germany, India, Thailand and China, are some of the examples. This reveals that governments in the industrialised and the developing countries alike have seen the establishment of distance teaching institutions, as a means of addressing national needs for education in their respective countries. Different types of organisation are possible for distance learning and four models are well known. These are: single mode institution model, dual mode institution model, mixed mode institution model and consortia (Rumble, 1986).

1) *Single-mode Institution Model (SMIM)*: This is the case in which, the sole responsibility of the management of an institution is designing for delivering courses only for distance learners. In such an organisation, all the managerial functions of the institution such as planning, raising funds, staffing and other services are devoted to the purpose of delivering distance learning as a sole duty.

   Historically, such forms of institutions started in the nineteenth century with the development of business schools and colleges of correspondence whilst the twentieth century has seen the development of distance teaching universities. The earliest of such institutions are those of the then Soviet Union and later in South Africa and from the 1970s on wards, more and more similar institutions have emerged following the establishment of the UK Open University (Enckevort et. al, 1986).

   The major point for the SMIM is that the administrative structures of the conventional educational systems are not the most suitable for developing and managing distance learning. As discussed earlier, distance learning systems is more complex than the conventional education as it engages in industrial processes. Such features make distance learning peculiar and strange in a conventional setting. For example, like industries, distance teaching institutions are highly concerned with the process of production, storage and distribution of teaching materials. The SMIM is often understood as the most suitable system for corporate culture (Daniel and Smith, 1979; Perry, 1976; and Rumble, 1986). In such type of organisational culture, the academics are subject to managerial controls and are accountable for their work in ways different from those in the conventional educational setting. Therefore, such a model promotes the provision of better service to the needs of learners in an institution because the institution will be fully dedicated to distance learning.

2) *Dual-mode Institution Model (DMIM)*: This model of institution provides distance learning courses together with conventional teaching, and special management unit administers the delivery of distance learning programme.

In the DMIM, there may be a separate distance teaching department with considerable autonomy and authority to decide on what is to be taught to whom and how it is to be done. In such situations, the distance teaching unit is only an administrative unit with little or no autonomy working closely with different faculties, departments or schools owning the courses.

Thus, the decision about what to teach, to whom to offer, and how to teach are joint decisions. Consequently, the influence of academics in the faculties or schools may dominate over those staff in the distance-teaching unit.

3) *Mixed-mode Institution Model (MMIM)*: In such an organisation, distance-teaching programme is designed, delivered, and administered by the same people who provide conventional programmes. Therefore, the MMIM involves a system of distance learning that teaches both conventional study (also termed internal) and distance learning (external) study. Such system normally takes the following two forms (Nyirenda, 1989).
    - A structure of an institution in which there is a single department teaching and administering courses for the distance programme on its own discretion without the involvement of the rest of the university or college.
    - A structure in which there are a number of departments offering distance learning courses whereby there is a central unit to administer the distance-learning programme.

    The only merit of the letter form of MMIM is that both external and internal students meet the same entry requirements and are taught by the same lecturers and go through the same assessment procedures. Hence, legitimacy and credibility of qualifications awarded to the distance learners would be obvious. It is assumed that the quality of teaching materials prepared and the support services provided to distance (external) students must be high enough to enable the external students to compete with the conventional or internal students. However, among the limitations of this model is that they are often complex and challenging to manage (Nyirenda, 1989).

4) *Consortia*: This model is a case in which a nation's distance teaching resources are organised under a single management unit, usually made up of representatives of the institutions providing the courses. The advantage of this model is that it enables effective use of scarce resources for distance education, but is again difficult to manage.

In short, from the above discussion, we can understand that distance learning could be organised with different models. Single modal institutions teach only at distance whilst other alternatives consider both distance and conventional. Dual mode institutions teach both conventional and distance programmes with different internal arrangements. This could involve autonomous or semiautonomous department to run the distance learning programme. Mixed mode arrangements use academic faculties and departments to teach both distance and conventional modes of delivery within the same standard. Institutions also need to make internal arrangements of decision making process when they incorporate distance learning programme because the latter involves different variety of students.

This concept is especially useful to discuss the administrative structure of the distance learning programme within the system of the civil service college. To this end, it is applied to inform the process of analysis of the organisational model and its effect on the practice of distance learning programme in chapter 7. The concept is also referred to in suggesting possible ways of re-organising the programme in chapter 9, section 9.4.

2.1.5.2 Legislative issues

Distance learning institutions operate in the broad context of the national or local governance and must view their operation within that of the jurisdiction. The policy needs to take into account the possible role of institutions to support distance learning and institutions have to demonstrate quality of their works. The statement of policy for distance learning, therefore, needs to include the quality-standards expected from the institutions (Panda, 2003:32-33).

To this effect, a pragmatic approach to quality assurance in distance learning would be to employ both external and internal personnel in policy formulation and implementation. For instance, external inputs are necessary in distance learning for

course planning, design and development. Furthermore, it is essential for student evaluation and programme auditing. External input can be obtained through membership of statutory bodies like board of management, academic council, and board of studies and through committees and audit teams. In the process, the areas that need careful monitoring are the course design & development, student support services, and learning assessment & evaluation. Especially, systems have to be formulated for obtaining regular feedback and self-appraisal. Therefore, organising the functions with the right resources is inevitable. Besides, training of staffs for teaching and research are the key ingredients for quality assurance in distance learning (Powar, et al., 2000:43).

In short, distance learning needs policy in order to be effective; and such a legislation needs to indicate how the quality standards in course development, student support, and learning assessment & evaluation be maintained. The establishment of quality assurance mechanisms involving external body is critical for a system of distance learning (Powar, et al., 2000:43). Therefore, in this study, the concept is used in chapters 6, section 6.7; chapter 7, sections 7.1 and 7.3; and chapter 8, section 8.4 to analyse the practice of quality assurance in the distance learning programme.

Distance learning programme is a form of organisation; and how organisation theories (systems and contingency approaches) can be applied to distance learning is presented in the following section.

2.1.6 Applying organisation theories to DL

In the 19th century, Hegel developed the theory of dialectics that explains social events in a dynamic process. Darwin and Karl Marx used this theory in their respective fields. Similarly, systems concept was developed by a biologist, Von Bertalanffy in 1936. This was the general systems theory as a multidisciplinary approach (Bertalanffy, 1968). Gradually, the concept evolved further to explain various aspects of society in everyday language. For example, nowadays, we speak of education system, information system, political system, banking system, and so on.

Systems theory is briefly mentioned in the earlier chapter to introduce the idea. Broadly speaking, systems are arrangements intended to accomplish a specified

purpose. According to Anthony and Govindarajan (2004:6), systems are repetitive ways of carrying out an activity or a set of activities. Systems are conceived as sets of interrelated components called subsystems that function together to achieve common goals. According to this source, subsystems may be physical or abstract or both (Daft, 2003:52). Systems theory helps to understand an organisation in its wholeness, and is useful for organisational analyses in broad perspectives. However, as all other concepts, systems theory has its own weaknesses, mainly due to its focus on universality. Therefore, the contemporary extension of management thinking is contingency view.

According to the contingency view, "structure and process depend or are contingent up on various external and internal factors" (Anthony and Govindarajan, 2004:635). Hence, in contrast to the systems view, which is based on universality, contingency theory stresses the existence of alternative ways (case view) in which unique features of each situation is emphasised. Contingency believes that there are no universal principles to be found, and events can be explained by experiencing a large number of cases. This concept underlines that certain contingencies always exist to understand a situation. In short, as per the contingency view, managers' responses have to focus on identifying key contingencies. Contingency view further tells us that what works in one situation might not work in another. For example, a managers' job is to search for unique factors to fix solutions. To this effect, the key contingencies that must be understood are industry, technology, environment, and international cultures (Daft, 2003:53-4). These being the overall idea behind the concepts, the following sections discuss how both systems and contingency views can apply to distance learning.

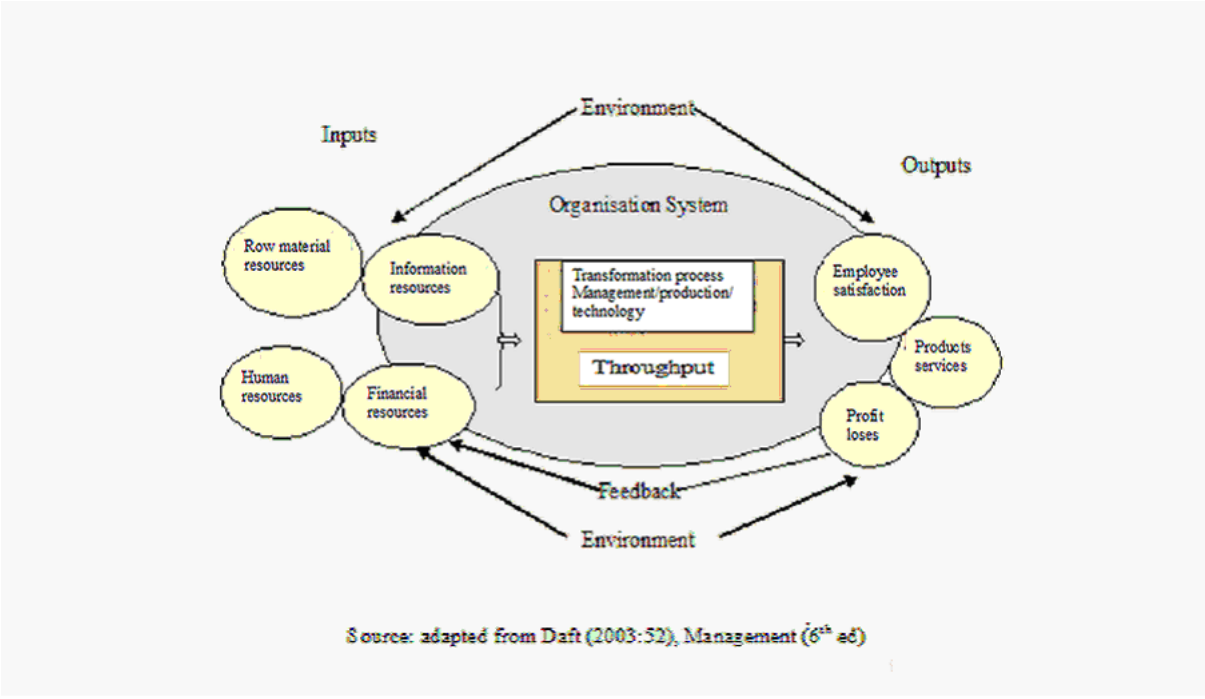
2.1.6.1 DL in the general open systems view

As mentioned earlier, systems theory is the result of a multidisciplinary analysis. Thus, the theory describes the principles common to all complex entities and models. Therefore, though widely used in the analysis of core features of organisations, its major weakness is that it is based on industrial models and less fit to reflect specific situation (Daft, 2003:53). Nevertheless, it can be applied to explain an organisation effectively from a broad perspective. For instance, Steiner (1988:107) applied this theory to explain the education system by focusing on four components or subsystems. She described the system with teacher, student, content, and context as

interrelated parts or subsystems of the whole. In this study, this model is used in chapter 7, section 7.4; and chapter 8, section 8.5, with certain modifications to analyse system of the distance learning programme. This is because of the critical pedagogical differences between the conventional and distance learning approaches.

Systems can be perceived as open or closed. Closed systems are ideal and do not exist in reality because any system exists with interaction with the broader environment. Hence, systems are generally known to be open; and open systems derive inputs from the environment and they transform the inputs into outputs and release the latter into the environment. In the figure below, the three main stages of an open system: inputs, throughput (processing), and outputs are presented as a general open systems model. In the figure, the core system is represented by the bigger oval shape in the middle within the surrounding environment.

Figure 2.1 General systems model



Source: adapted from Daft (2003:52), Management (6th ed)

Any open system is with a process of input, throughput, and output, with the throughput stage between the input and output. In such relation, the whole system operates well when all the components function in harmony (Daft, 2003:52-3). That is, the input from the environment must come in continuously and the throughput process must be effective to ensure quality of the output because the output can be absorbed into the environment if the quality is maintained.

Similarly, education as an open system operates in a cyclical process with input, throughput, and output as major stages. In this regard, it derives inputs as students and other human and material resources from the environment. In turn, it processes the inputs within the system in order to produce the outputs as graduates. As an open system, distance learning can be viable if students as inputs come into the system continuously. The throughput process is concerned with producing the right output that is compatible with the environment.

Openness promotes survival and prosperity of a system because inputs help to interrelate to the environment dynamically. On the other hand, closed systems do not interact with their environment and are subject to atrophy (Daft, 2003). Atrophy is a universal property of systems that refers to tendencies to run down and die. This implies that systems cease to exist if they do not receive fresh inputs and energy from the environment. If we relate this to distance learning system, we can understand that educational institution exists only if it receives inputs/students from the environment and produces the appropriate outputs as graduates.

Everything in the environment does not fit a system as input. Therefore, systems select their inputs to maintain internal stability or homeostasis (orderly internal condition) as opposed to the external stress. From this perspective, systems tend to select inputs and maintain standards in the throughput to ensure compatibility of outputs to the requirement of the environment (Anthony and Govindarajan, 2004). Accordingly, a distance learning system cannot maintain itself in the environment unless it practises filtering its inputs and maintains the standards of outputs. In this sense, the intake of students must be controlled by certain means of selection. Moreover, graduates are to be tested to meet certain standard as per the environmental requirement.

As discussed in the first part of this chapter, distance learning is relatively flexible and promotes access to more students than conventional approach. This makes its input more complex and the same thing implies more effort in the transformation process (throughput) within the system to maintain the standard of the output. Therefore, the internal process is expected to be more complicated in a system of distance learning. Failure of distance learning institutions can thus be explained as the consequence of

ineffective internal process (throughput). This is especially in student support which results in low quality output. The literature reveals that unsuccessful student support may easily result in student frustration in distance learning, thus causing high wastage in the system (Abrahamson, 1998:33-40).

The environment surrounding a system includes the social, political, and economic forces that influence the organisation from outside (Daft, 2003:52). Therefore, for an education system, the nature of the input and the quality of the output affects the environment and the survival of the system as a whole because it determines the harmony of the institution within its surrounding.

In the idea of systems, the integration of new element develops synergy of the whole (Daft, 2003:53). The idea of synergy is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. According to this concept, when an organisation is formed, something new comes into existence. Similarly, management, coordination, and production that didn't exist before emerge; and the additional aspect is assumed to increase the effectiveness of the system. In other words, organisational units working together can accomplish more than those same units working alone (Kazmi, 2002:313). For instance, when an entirely conventionally based education system adds distance learning, more functional elements come into the whole. Consequently, the additional element promotes the overall performance. However, maintaining the system is not easy because it requires reorganising to accommodate the newly introduced element or subsystem to function effectively.

Therefore, based on the above discussion, adding distance learning programme as a subsystem promotes synergy of the whole when the system recognises and operates in harmony through the new element. Based on this understanding, the concept is applied in analysing the organisational aspect of the institution in chapter 7, section 7.1.

2.1.6.2 DL in the contingency view

As mentioned above, contingency view focuses on the speciality of management for each situation. Historically, this concept facilitated the development of different fields of management such as business management, public management, education management, etc. To this effect, as also indicated earlier, contingency theory helps to

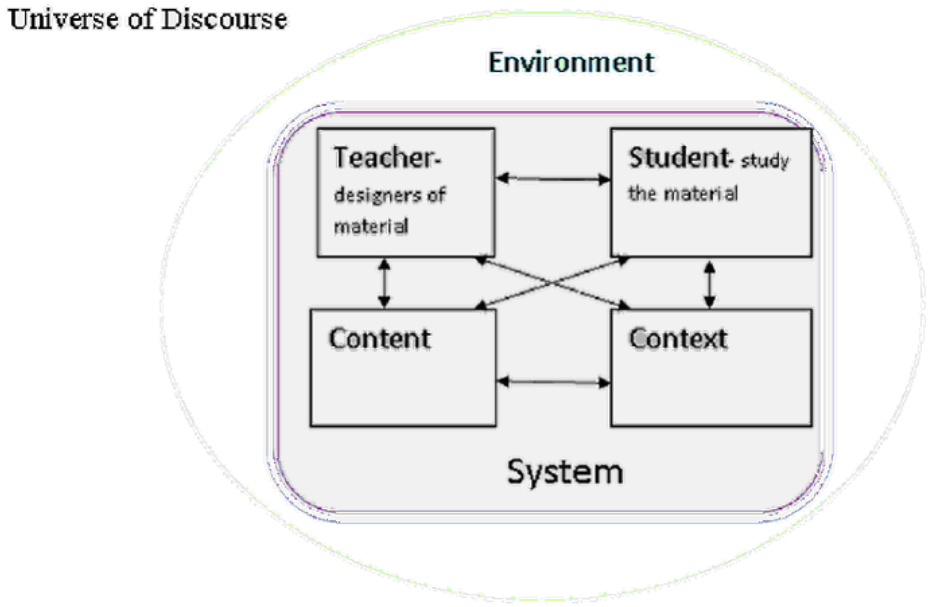
pay attention to unique features of systems. It is particularly helpful to examine educational organisations at the technical level to reflect specific environment and situation. The contingency approach views everything as different and advocates that all decisions have to depend on the situation (Daft, 2003:53). Of course, it may be difficult to identify universal principles that apply to all situations; however, it helps to pay attention to the specific environment. But operating on extreme contingency without any generalisation can be a disaster, and it rather helps to understand the existence of situations.

Besides to the common features of distance and conventional education, the specialised features of distance learning, discussed earlier, makes the programme unique. To this effect, applying both views (systems and contingency) in analysing the operations of the distance learning programme may help to explain the situation better. Therefore, both systems and contingency views are used to analyse the distance learning programme in chapter 7 and 8; and the following sections show how the approaches apply to distance learning at different levels of organisation.

2.1.6.3 DL system at the managerial/institutional level

Steiner (1988) presents a comprehensive model of an education system with school at the centre of the system. The model explains education system with clearly interrelated components of: teacher, student, content, and context (Steiner, 1988:107). In the figure below, the central arrangement represents the system and the components. As presented in the following figure, the environment and the universe of discourse are arranged around the system. Originally, this model is based on the traditional education system. Thus, an attempt is made to link the presentation to the situation of distance learning to contextualise the discourse.

Figure 2.2 Distance education systems model at the managerial/institutional level



DE systems model at the institutional level, adapted from Steiner (1988:107)

In the above figure, the teacher component refers to all persons involved in the planning and implementing the course development process such as: curriculum designers, authors, editors, and layout designers. This shows the relative complexity of the component. The teacher component in turn affects the effectiveness of all the other components of the system. Once the material is designed, the learner may study on his/her own, but the teacher's work is always there in presenting the material in an understandable way as an input during the design phase (Hisham, 2004). This again explains relative speciality and complexity of a distance learning programme.

Traditional educational institutions have relatively limited place. Thus, student selection is generally based on rigid criteria to accept high scoring students. This makes it easier to maintain the quality of outputs. In contrast, in distance learning, students remain on job and study at home and do not need most of the school facilities, and the availability of place enables the system to accept mass of students with industrialisation of the process (Peters, 1973:206; and Greenberg, 1998:36). Besides, this characteristic enables the system to accept students with minimum pass grade. These features add to the variations in backgrounds of distance learners that are uncommon in the traditional setting. Therefore, the system of distance learning is more complicated and requires especial attention to meet the diversified needs of the

learners than the conventional approach (Van Niekerk, 2004:185-195).

In discussing the theories of distance learning, we have seen the focus on learner autonomy and independence (Saba, 2003:4). To this effect, learners are assumed to study on their own. Therefore, learning materials have to be well organised to accommodate diversified needs of the learners. With respect to study habits again, some learners study at home while others study at work place or in the library. In this regard, most of the learners are assumed to study alone (Greenberg, 1998:36). Geographically too, the learners may live near the school or far away even out of the country where the institution providing the course is located. This shows further complexity of the student component in distance learning. From this point of view, the need for organising specialised system of support is apparent to meet the highly diversified needs of the learners (Keegan, 2000:23).

Content is something to be learned (Steiner, 1988:107) and in distance learning, the content of the course is determined in advance. This in turn is affected by the teacher content as course designers and developers. The quality of learners as in put also affects the process and output of the system as the end product (Picciano, 2001:147-152). Students are required to know the object of learning to value them and develop positive feelings. Similarly, the quality of teachers can be explained with corresponding impact on the process and output.

Context is the setting in which guidance of learning occurs (Steiner, 1988:107). This is affected by the quality of the students, teachers, and the content, which are all more complicated in distance learning. This can be understood easily if we think about organising a course of study to be offered uniformly all over the world. In this regard, it is common to see distance learning programmes failing to meet the needs of students in other cultures when courses are offered by international providers (Belay, 2007).

Therefore, as a process of managing teacher, student, content, and context as main components, a system of distance learning reveals features that could be seen as universal with specialities in all the components. The complex interactions among components are special features of distance learning that add to the complexity. This concept is the basis for the analysis in chapter 7 and 8 to reflect the way in which the

distance learning programme is organised in the system of the college at the managerial level.

2.1.6.4 DL system at the technical level

Distance learning as special business varies from the traditional education system in many ways. In this perspective, at the technical level, four major components or subsystems can be identified. These are: *design* and *development, logistics and supplies, instruction/learner support,* and the *assessment/*evaluation (Moore and Kearsley, 1996:6-7; and Picciano, 2001:147-152). Below are more explanations about each of them.

1) *The course design and development*: This is a very important issue in distance learning because it affects the success of the content and delivery method. Teaching materials for distance learning should be designed as clear as possible using simple language. In developing the materials, therefore, the developers should keep in mind that the learner studies the material alone. The diversity in student needs due to cultural variation is also another issue to be taken into account. Moreover, as the course is produced in advance with future needs in mind, the ability to look into the future is critical (Perraton, 2000:118).

In a course design and development, therefore, only a certain quantity of courses can be developed and produced at a time. To this effect, systematic ways of selecting the right course and bringing together the relevant resources for the development are key ingredients. Here, the overall concern is to promote the system efficiency through coordination of the resources. This subsystem should be able to produce desirable output for the whole system with given input (Picciano, 2001:150). Therefore, distance learning material includes certain aspect of the teacher and the content in one that makes it complex and special.

2) *Logistics and supplies*: This component includes the production, storage, and distribution of materials; and these are again key issues in distance learning institutions. As mentioned above, teaching materials are more comprehensive in distance learning and they are prepared beforehand with insight about anticipated needs and have to be stored. This in turn affects the production process because the materials should be produced in good quality for storage

and needs special care (Rao, 1994:110-12). Moreover, the capacity of the logistics services determines the effectiveness because they are means for the contact between the material and the learner. Therefore, the logistics with functions of production, storage, and distribution in distance learning involves administrative complexity.

3) *Instruction and support*: provision of student support and effective communication between learners and tutors are important elements of instruction in distance learning. One-to-one communication and ensuring timely feedback by employing appropriate technology, such as: telephone, email, etc. should be encouraged to do this job effectively. Therefore, the instruction and support system of distance learning is more individual oriented through the use of media as compared to the traditional approach. This necessitates the use of available communication technology to facilitate learning and provide prompt feedback to learners (Garrison and Shale, 1987:11).

4) *Learning assessment/evaluation*: Appropriate learning assessment is very important in any education system and this is easier in the conventional teaching. In distance teaching, however, it is more complicated, and it is much worse for continuous assessment. Thus, specialised strategy must be designed to manage the process of assessment/evaluation in distance learning programme.

In short, from the above discussion, one can understand that distance learning needs careful monitoring in all its functions: course design & development, logistics, instruction & student support services, and assessment & evaluation. This is necessitated by the uniqueness of distance learning. Therefore, training of staff for teaching and research functions is a crucial to assure quality of distance learning (Powar, et al., 2000:43). These concepts are used in analysing the technical aspect of the distance learning programme in chapter 6, 7, and 8.

2.1.7 Challenges and opportunities of DL

Organising distance learning requires understanding of the advantages and disadvantages. In the overall argument about effectiveness of distance learning, educators in the field believe that the opportunities outweigh the obstacles. They

further comment that in distance learning, obstacles can be minimised through focused preparation. The latter is apparently possible when thorough research and needs assessment is established in the system. Here, the professional approach of organising the programme and high commitment of staff is the key ingredient and this is not easy to sort out (Ludlow, 1994).

The point of departure for good or bad practice of distance learning rests on the capacity to set up and manage an effective system (Perraton, 2000:118). Assuming that all the related challenges are managed well, distance learning can have the following advantages (Moore and Thompson, 1990).

- Accessing a wider range of learners' audience;
- Meeting the training needs of learners in the rural areas and reaching those who cannot attend conventional classes;
- Providing education, using quality resources, for example, and the possibility of involving guest speakers who would otherwise be inaccessible;
- Learners can have access to the expertise of the most qualified institution as provider of education;
- Linking the learners from different socio-cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds for sharing experiences;
- Learners can complete their course of study without suffering the opportunity cost of losing salary due to relocation.

From the above list of advantages, access to remote places, efficiency in the use of scarce resources, the ease to share experiences among cultures, and possibility to learn at home are the key points. These are especially important for developing countries due to high resource scarcity. However, organising distance learning is not easy. To mention some of the major obstacles, the process of learning is more complicated for distance learners for several reasons. Some of which are age, variation in background and motivation of the learners, and isolation and communication barriers in the learning situation (Knowles, 1980; and Nelson, 1994); and we may look at each of these one by one.

Age: as indicated earlier, many distance learners are adults and older. Hence, they usually have jobs and families and are responsible to manage such issues in addition to the learning activities. In this regard, all these factors are mutually interdependent. Particularly, managing problems related to family life, job, spare time, etc are additional challenges in distance learning (Nelson, 1994). Therefore, these features have implications in organising the programme.

Backgrounds and motivation: distance learners and their tutors/teachers have little similarities in their background and experiences. Thus, teacher-student rapport normally takes longer time to develop in distance-learning situation. Consequently, without face-to-face contact with facilitators, distance learners may easily develop anxiety in their learning (Stage, 1996).

The variation in the learners' interests further complicates the challenge to the programme. Distance learners have self-regulated motivations for taking courses (Abrahamson, 1998). Some may be interested in obtaining a diploma/degree to qualify for jobs. Some learn simply to broaden their knowledge and may not be interested in completing a degree or diploma. Thus, the motivations considerably vary among learners as one of the challenges to distance learning system as a whole.

Isolation and communication barriers: Isolated learning environment is the norm in distance learning in that learners have relatively less contact with other learners and teachers (Rahm and Reed, 1998). So that the motivational factors arising from the contact or competition with other fellow students is missing in distance learning systems. The learners also lack the immediate support of a teacher/tutor. This adds up on the general problem of distance learning.

Communication barriers exist in any form of information exchange. Particularly employing technological media of communication is a typical barrier in distance learning and adds more complication. Thus, until the teacher and students become familiar and comfortable with the system, communication will normally be hampered in the system. Therefore, initial orientation about the programme and use of variety of media helps to narrow the communication gaps (Romizowski and Mason, 1996:442).

To this end, proper orientation and applying blended mode of delivery: print, audio, radio, video, TV, telephone, etc. for student support are important solutions to minimise communication gaps in the process.

In short, as opposed to the advantages in promoting access and efficiency in the use of resources, distance learning has several disadvantages. Some of these are age, variations in backgrounds and motivation, and isolation and barriers in communication. Therefore, to mitigate these problems, distance teaching programmes have to be organised as special institutions and be able to assess student needs effectively and offer proper orientation about the programme and encourage communication between learner and instructor by using all possible media.

Therefore, distance education can be especially rewarding for developing countries as it could open the opportunity to expand education. To this effect, learning from the experience of the best practices in the world is necessary to organise the programme (Getachew, 2008). In this study, how the programme of distance learning manages the challenges of distance learning in organising student services centrally and at the study centre will be reflected in chapter 6 based on the above concept.

In order to look at the ways in which the distance learning project is implemented, we need to know about certain principles, procedures and standards of practice for development projects. Accordingly, the following section presents the major issues about development projects.

2.2 Managing Development Projects

A project is time bound activity that requires specific resources: capital and human. In this perspective, project may be defines as "…a set of activities intended to accomplish a specified end result of sufficient importance…" (Anthony and Govindrajan, 2002:809). To Bartle, a development project is an innovative activity involving unique scope of tasks to be delivered by new individuals or organisations. To this effect, development project carries considerable uncertainties and risks. Hence, successful completion of a project is a function of effective risk management (Bartle, 2007). Project management, therefore, aims at reducing risks by focusing on

thorough design and careful implementation. Therefore, the way a project is organised determines the success or failure of the project team to respond to deviations (GDG, 2007).

Writers in the field of project management understand the shortage of explicit theory to guide the practice in the specific field. As Kharbanda and Pinto argue, shortage of theories explains the problem of project management and frequent project failures (1996:368). A slow rate of methodological renewal have also been recognised as gaps in the area (Forsberg, et. al., 1996:298; and Morris, 1994:358). This being the case, project management is often understood within the theory of production or operations management. From this point of view, in all projects, three actions are clearly identified: design and making of the systems, control of the systems, and improvement of the systems. Moreover, all productions have three major goals. One is the goal of getting the intended product. Second is the goal of cost minimisation; and the third is meeting the needs of the beneficiary in terms of quality, dependability and flexibility (Koskela, 2000:408).

In this view again, projects are composed of two core processes: the production oriented process, and the management process. The production oriented process is concerned with specifying and creating the product and these are the project proper. The management processes is in turn further divided into planning, implementing, and monitoring/evaluation.

In the production oriented aspect, according to Turner (1993:540) the fundamental duty is the scope; and the scope of a project is defined by the work breakdown structure of the project. Thus, in this view, project management is about managing work within a given scope. The purpose of scope management of a project is to ensure the work done is adequate and no unnecessary work is done. The aim of this is realising the work done is directed to the objective. Work is managed by dividing the total work into smaller tasks. In this dimension, activities and tasks are the units of analyses. Scope management, time management, and cost management, and their control are central to this point. In this regard, Morris (1994:358) gives the following ways of dividing works into tasks.

- identifying what needs to be done;
- determining who is going to do what;

- deciding when the actions are to be performed; and
- determining the cost.

The central issue here is the sequence in the work and the transformation process. This then refers to the transformation theory of production with production viewed as an input-output system. A transformation process operates on this set and releases it in a modified form or outputs. Therefore, the transformation idea of the project is another way of referring to the throughput process discussed earlier in the systems theory (section 2.1.6). In this regard, the management of the transformation process is what we mean by production management. The transformation view, of production is, therefore, a system of changing inputs into outputs (Morris, 1994:358).

Production can be managed by dividing the total transformation hierarchically into smaller transformation tasks, and minimising the cost of each task independently (Koskela, 2000:296). Thus, the effectiveness of a project is a function of the internal process and the environment of the system that determines the flow. The major difference between the *transformation view* and the *flow view* is that the latter includes time as one attribute of production.

Time is affected by the uncertainty in the production process, as well as interdependencies between tasks. Therefore, the focus of the flow view is directed towards uncertainty and linkages, which are not acknowledged in the transformation view. Regarding the goals of project management, the flow view especially addresses the need to ensure that unnecessary work is not done. In the flow view, the basic thrust is to eliminate wastage from the processes. In the *value generation view*, the basic thrust is to reach the best possible value from the customer's point of view (Cook, 1997:411).

The major difference between the transformation view and the value generation view is that the customer is included in the conceptualisation of the latter. These three concepts of production are not alternative and competing theories of production, but rather complementary (Koskela 2000:296). Therefore, although there is no specific theory for project management, we could understand production through the three views: *transformation, flow* and *value* generation as the key aspects.

As mentioned above, the pure management aspect of development project may be identified as management through planning. Then, the core processes will be planning, implementing, and monitoring/evaluating within a closed loop. In this perspective, the last process results looking back or revising the first stage in the cycle (FAO, 2008). As to this concept, development will be a nonlinear process with planning and re-planning as key features (IDRC, 2007). Planning is deciding in advance on what is to be done in the future. Accordingly, planning a project begins with situation analysis and problem identification, and goes through definition of goals. Planning also involves formulating strategies, designing a work plan, and budgeting. Good planning is a fine start for implementing a project, which refers to mobilising, utilising and controlling the resources and project operations.

Therefore, in this process, great emphasis is put on planning because as a core process of a project; and the planning phase determines every aspect of the project (Turner, 1993:540). The planning stage includes: scope planning, scope definition, activity definition, resource planning, activity sequencing, estimating the cost, scheduling, budgeting, and planning the development. In this process, the output of the planning processes makes the input to the implementation process. Thus, the planning process dominates the scene in development projects. Fondahl (1980:442) points out that it is practically not possible or at least very difficult to maintain an up-to-date plan. That is, maintaining a complete, up-to-date plan at a time is difficult for a development project. Therefore, according to this view, planning and re-planning would be inevitable in development projects.

Therefore, to manage a development project efficiently, planners should be aware of what is going to happen at all the interrelated stages from the beginning to end. This makes the planning process of a project complex and seeking special attention. Consequently, the planning process involves several tasks ranging from situation analysis to planning the implementation and the monitoring process.

The standard of good practice in a donor-funded development projects is characterised by participatory approach and detailed planning and a well-established process of monitoring and evaluation as an integrated activity. In this regard, monitoring and evaluation is taken as a component and separately planned and takes place at all levels in the project cycle and executed by all stakeholders of the project

(Mbullu, 2007). This indicates the specialty of development projects and the need for special management to handle it. Thus, as a process bound by uncertainties, the management of a project must be flexible enough for proactive and fast decisions in response to situations or contingencies (Kerzner, 1984:2).

Projects may be highly politicised in its implementation that may promote dependency. The possession of personal values by strategists and executives in charge of an organisation influence decisions towards what they want to do. Consequently, the intention of individuals as decision-makers matters in project management. Corbett (1992) identifies two models of development, namely, developer-centred and liberation-centred. A liberation-centred approach targets improving the local capacity by upgrading knowledge, skills and consciousness so that the beneficiaries control their own future while developer centred approach promotes dependency. In extreme situation, the actors control and administer all key features outside the targeted beneficiaries and place technology which is uncommon to the situation (Kazmi, 2002:367).

In the above discussion, attempt is made to explain key concepts in managing development projects. According to the explanation, the development aspect of a project can be understood as a system of input, throughput, and output. In this process, we find three key issues: transformation, flow, and value generation. On the other hand, in the pure management aspect of a project, we can see: planning, implementation, monitoring/evaluation as core processes. In the latter process, planning is the most dominant and complex because it is done for all the core processes and requires looking into the future with understanding of uncertainties. Therefore, plan of a project should be open to revision and updating as the situation demands. These concepts are used for the analysis of the organisation of the development process in chapter 5 of this thesis; and how the LIL distance learning project is managed will be interpreted based on this concept.

2.3 Summary of Chapter two

Distance learning is highly linked to the use of technology and the concept has been evolving with the changes and advancements in the technological environment. Three generations of distance education have been identified. The earlier ones mostly focus on correspondence and industrialisation ideas of massive enrolment while the later concepts focus on issues of interaction and mixing of delivery methods, including

face-to-face contacts between students and instructors. The trend shows certain convergence between conventional and distance learning approaches in later days. This is a new paradigm in education as an opportunity brought about by technological advancement. Distance learners are adults and this makes the process more complex because adults' learning styles are complex. Particularly, motivations and related characteristics are the key ingredients to organise courses and set support services in distance learning. Therefore, institutions need to learn a lot about the nature of distance learning to organise the system effectively. This has clear implications in organising distance education institutions in developing countries like Ethiopia. In this perspective, the need for well-established systems of research and needs assessment and training and retraining of staff are the requirements. In this dimension, the reality in the institution will be reflected in chapter 6 and 7 in line with the concepts presented in this chapter.

Education is an open system with input, throughput and output; and thus, systems and contingency theories could be applied together with theories of distance learning to analyse the quality of organisation of distance learning programme. In the practical dimension, a good practice of distance learning could be seen in terms of a system's capacity to: clarify learning goals of the programme to students, use appropriate media for delivery of the content, promote interaction and provide prompt feedback, and employ sound learning assessment approach. Beyond these, a distance learning programme should be in a supportive environment. Here, the legal framework and organisational models are very important. At the national level, distance learning needs policy; and the legislation needs to clarify how the quality in: course development, student support, and learning assessment/evaluation be ensured. Four organisation models: single mode, dual mode, mixed mode, and consortium are well known in organising distance teaching institutions. Administratively, distance teaching institutions are most effective in a single-mode than other forms of organisations because of speciality of the system. Besides, an institution also needs to make decision about its internal organisation. This is especially essential when incorporating distance learning programme into an existing education system. In such a case, the corresponding administrative arrangement is needed because distance learning is unique business. In this regard, establishing regular auditing of the practice

by external body is among the quality assurance mechanisms. These concepts are used to support the arguments in the analysis of the data in chapter 6, 7 and 8.

From the technical point of view, a system of distance learning reveals four special components or subsystems. These are: design and development, logistics and supplies, instruction/learner support, and learning assessment/evaluation. Due to such specialities, distance learning needs careful monitoring to ensure qualities than conventional systems. This being the case, organising distance learning has several challenges. Among the advantages are: easier access, efficient use of resources, access to expertise, ease to share experiences among cultures, and the possibility to learn at home. Some of the drawbacks are: students' age, variation in background and motivations of the learners, and learner isolation and communication barriers in the learning environment. All these features require more attention than normally expected in the conventional education. These concepts largely relate to student support issues.

A development project is an investment that aims at solving particular problems within a given timeframe and target community. As an approach to shape future situation, a project needs special management to reduce risks and uncertainties. From broader perspective, a project is composed of two major aspects: production oriented and pure management. The production aspect refers to the transformation process of changing inputs into outputs with flow of activities that puts time as an attribute.

Development is a nonlinear process and the pure management aspect of a project may be explained as a system of planning, implementing, and monitoring/evaluation in a closed loop. Therefore, looking back and planning and re-planning is a central feature of project management. Situation analysis, problem identification, and defining the goal are the core phases in planning a project. Planning also involves formulating strategies, designing a work plan, and budgeting. To this effect, a standard of good practice in a donor funded development projects is detailed planning and a well-established process of monitoring/evaluation as an integrated activity.

As a process bound by uncertainties, management process of a project is expected to be flexible enough to respond to situations or contingencies. This being the case, in reality, project may be highly politicised in structure. Accordingly, two approaches of

development could be identified: developer-centred and liberation-centred. The latter approach targets improving local capacity by upgrading knowledge, skills and consciousness of the target beneficiary while the former encourages dependency. The concepts about development projects are used extensively in this thesis in chapter 5 and chapter 8. With the above conceptual background, the context is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THE CONTEXT

This chapter focuses on the context of the study with the aim of setting the scene. To this end, it reflects the situation in which development activities have been taking place in the country.

3.1 The Country

Ethiopia is located in northeast Africa with land area of a little over 1 million square kilo metres. Geographically, it is a tropical country with moderate climate in the highlands and hot in lowlands. With a population of over 82 million as of 2008 estimate, it is the second most populous country in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is a multi-ethnic country inhabited by over 80 different ethnic groups. This shows complexity of the socio-cultural environment of the country.

The culture is predominantly underdeveloped; and the consequence of this is poverty and vulnerability of the people. This is further reflected through inadequate supply of health, education and other basic social services (CIA: The World Fact book, 2008-12-01). The people of Ethiopia are generally rural, including nomadic and semi-nomadic areas. Therefore, the situation shows highly dispersed population and this in turn has implications on the strategies to be employed for expanding education and disseminating information to the majority. The economy is underdeveloped and agriculture accounts for half of GDP, and 60% of exports, and 80% of total employment (World Bank, 2003). With such features, Ethiopia has been one of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) in the world (Selamtanet, 2006; USAID, 2007).

From the above discussion, we can understand that the socioeconomic situation of the country is highly underdeveloped which implies efficient use of resources for faster development. Education is the backbone of development but the people are rural and far away from information. Therefore, distance learning has the potential to promote development in the country but within a situation that lacks well-developed infrastructure to access the majority in need.

3.2 The Development Challenges and on-going Efforts

Higher education is especially critical for training of qualified professionals for the modern sector. However, there were fewer tertiary educational institutions, compared to the size of the country. For example, until 1995, there were 2 public universities and 16 junior colleges in the country. By 1998, 4 more universities were opened and the total number of universities increased to 6 (MoE 1999).

Regarding enrolment for higher education in Ethiopia, the latest is that of the World Bank in 2003, and all the figures until 2003 show gross enrolment ratio of less than 1% at this level of education in the country (MoFED, 2002; World Bank, 2003; Teshome, 2005). This being the case, new strategy for higher education expansion was endorsed in 2003, following the government's decentralisation effort and plan to expand higher education system into regional states. As a result of this, the total number of universities reached 21 in 2008. Therefore, one can easily assume some increase in enrolment for higher learning in the later years because all the new universities started teaching in the year 2008.

The above discussion shows that Ethiopia has a dispersed population. However, the infrastructure for education is concentrated in and around major cities and towns, where about 15% of the population reside (FDRE Population Census, 2008). From the financial point of view, the country had been investing 8% of the public fund to the tertiary education in 1999 (Dernbach, 1999). This investment is increased to 23% after 2002 due to the higher education expansion programme (World Bank, 2003). More critically, the higher education expansion programme focused on the conventional programme.

Human resource crisis is another obstacle to the new strategy. For instance, the problem of brain drain is critical for universities in the country. The problem of brain drain is common all over Africa, but it is more acute in Ethiopia. The latest report in this regard is that of 2002, and it shows that Ethiopia has been first in Africa to lose highly trained professionals due to migration (Eskinder, 2002). Dejene reported the problem of migration by taking Addis Ababa University as a case. In his report, he mentioned that 35% of instructors of Addis Ababa University who were sent for

training to western countries refuse to return home. This being the case, the university had been forced to use part-time instructors extensively to about 40% (Dejene, 2002). Similarly, Tobias (2004) stated that there were more Ethiopian trained doctors working in Chicago than those remaining in the entire Ethiopia in 2004.

The above situation shows the challenge to maintain the system of higher learning in the country and in terms of human resource. In this crisis, the development of distance education could be seen as a possible alternative. But the whole effort in the recent development has been on building new universities whilst there is critical shortage of instructors in the existing higher institutions. This raises the question about the feasibility of the strategy. Therefore, in the new approach, the system is to rely heavily on expatriates. For instance, in 2008, the researcher observed a department running with about 90% expatriate instructors in the civil service college. Thus, without counting the cost of employing expatriates for the job with hard currency, the quality may be compromised seriously in the new universities opened in the less developed towns due to lack of qualified instructors.

In the above discussion, several development challenges were raised. Education is one of the key means of development and the country needs to coordinate its efforts in this regard. Thus, efficient use of available resources is especially important for this country (Perraton, 2000:118). Moreover, in the socio-cultural and socioeconomic reality of the country, distance education could be seen as a relevant solution to address the specific needs more efficiently.

3.3 The Core Development Strategy of Ethiopia in Action

This section discusses the development strategy of the country with focus on the national context of decentralisation and the strategic direction for development. The discussion particularly focuses on the practice of the civil service reform programme.

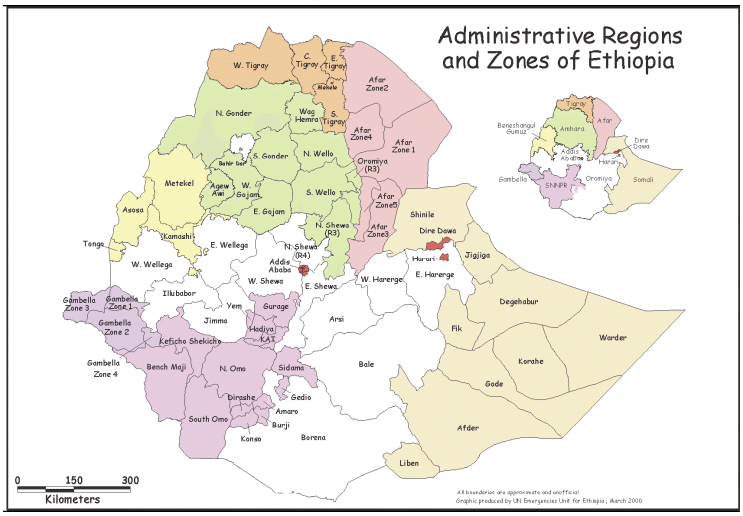
3.3.1 The national context of decentralisation and its impacts

In response to the occurrence of intense ethnic politics that led to the overthrow of the earlier government, since 1991, the country adopted a strange constitution that accepts self-determination of all people and adopted a government structure of ethnic-

federalism (Aalen, 2002; Watson, 2005). The political explanation of self-determination is that it solves all problems of ethnicity in the country by granting the right to separate for each nation and nationalities (FDRE, 1995). In the specific context, however, the strategy motivated ethnic politics than bringing about positive attitude towards development of the country. Thus, the reform led to a complex set of ethnically organised federal country with 9 regional states and 2 city administrations. The regions are in turn divided into 66 zones, which are further divided into 556 districts (*woredas).* The districts are considered to be the key local units of government. Below this level, communities are further subdivided into smaller electoral units known as *kebeles*.

The map below shows the structure of the ethnically structured federal country. In the map, regional states are represented in different colours; and the divisions within the same colour show zones of administrations within the same region. Some of the regions are very small and difficult to view on the map and are formed for simple political reasons (for example Harari).

Figure 3.1 Map of administrative regions and zones of Ethiopia



The fundamental challenge in the new situation is that when the change was endorsed, the emerging regions had no sufficient ruling elite, educated to the level of postsecondary. Furthermore, in the new social reality of the country, it was difficult to use the human resources from one region to another for a number of reasons. Firstly, the official languages of regions vary and someone from outside the culture may not

understand them. Secondly, ethnic politics, which favours the natives of a region, discourages others from applying. Thirdly, the relative shortage of wealth discourages the people from relatively better regions to go and work in the remote areas of the emerging regions. These factors have clear implications for governance and the implementation of government policies. To this effect, one of the recent development efforts to resolve the problem is capacity building through the civil service reform programme. This is in action since 1998 and has been aimed at developing the capacity of the civil service system at federal and regional levels (World Bank, 1998; MoFED, 2002).

The significance of distance learning is highly relevant as one can assume that on the job training responds better to the specific needs of the regional governments as well as keeping its participants in-post. Accordingly, distance learning, which was missed in the country's national education policy of 1994, appeared as a target of the capacity building programme, and rightly, the distance learning project under study was initiated as part of the development strategy. In line with this, how the development alternative is managed will be the concern as reflected in this study.

3.3.2 The development strategy

Development is a complex process that aims at sustainability. It has to pursue an integrated approach that focuses on both economic and social issues equally (ACE, 2007). Accordingly, development has multiple objectives and the most important one is improving quality of life of the people (Seya, 2007:19). To this effect, countries have to put a relevant policy in place to facilitate development. Moreover, development strategies are interdependent, and no single approach can bring about significant difference. In this regard, integrated policy package and institutional environments is necessary to promote development as it gives institutional basis for the effort (Seya, 2007:25; World Bank, 2000:2).

In contrast, Larbi (1999) believes that developing countries do not have their own strategy for development and they simply follow what donor agencies put forward. This is reflected when he states the following:

> In the case of most developing countries, reforms … have been driven more by external pressures

> and have taken place in the context of structural adjustment programmes (Larbi, 1999:2).

The above feature is clearly reflected in the development strategy of Ethiopia. In this country, civil service reform, judiciary reform, and decentralisation and empowerment are the major areas of development intervention for the capacity building programme (MoFED, 2002:41-42). With these targets, the strategy sounds well. It is also stated that the capacity building programme is to comprise the development of human resources, building and strengthening of institutions and shows the intention to integrate the development process as a desirable approach.

Moreover, education is underlined rightly as one of the key tools in the development strategy; and it is especially stressed as a target for increasing the stock of trained human power and upgrading the skills of working people in the civil service system (ibid:91). According to the strategy, the training needs of regional and district administrations also receive special attention for the capacity building programme. But in the context, education is perceived only in the conventional sense and it actually fails to recognize system efficiency and integration.

For instance, as mentioned earlier in chapter 1, the national education policy focuses only on the conventional approach. In the LIL package, a comprehensive distance learning programme is developed. However, whilst there is a possibility to strengthen the distance learning programme in the community, the whole issue of higher education development later targeted opening new universities for each regional state. This is especially reflected in the higher education expansion programme.

Subsequently, in the year 2008, even regions with no significant student population for higher learning had new conventional universities (EMIS, 2007:12). In its sector study report, the development partner, the World Bank, underlines problems of the higher education development strategy of the country. For example, the following is stated in the partner's document:

> Any national tertiary system would be hard pressed to substantially expand enrolments while maintaining levels of educational quality. Ethiopia faces a double challenge in that it seeks to accomplish this while also introducing major reforms in institutional governance, management and curriculum. If the bold vision contained in the new Higher

> Education Proclamation is to have any chance of success, the solution to this double challenge will have to be found in the financing strategy that underpins and supports these reforms (World Bank, 2003:18).

The document also stressed the challenge to find employment for new graduates of the system in the near future in the given economic situation (ibid: 8). However, the development plan is supported because it perfectly matches with the new policy of the Bank for expanding higher education in developing countries to promote knowledge society (World Bank, 2002:107).

Within that general context, when we look at the development strategy in the area of civil service reform, we find critical problems. A comprehensive reform programme has been underway since 1998 to restructure the civil service system. As per the plan, the civil service reform programme has been emphasising the breaking up of the public sector bureaucracy into more autonomous business oriented units or executive agencies. Accordingly, the following is stated in the policy document:

> …Deepen and strengthen the decentralization process to shift decision-making closer to the grass root population, to improve responsiveness and service delivery; …Improvements in governance to move forward in the transformation of society… (MoFED, 2002:2).

The change is assumed to give managers increased control over budgets for which they are accountable (MoFED, 2002:2). This is absolutely desirable if it really happens. Ideally, the change is possible but putting it into practice is not easy in Ethiopia because the implementation requires real talent of the system. Generally speaking, there is a widespread doubt about the success of this strategy and the country lacks critical capacity in the area of planning (Larbi, 1999:2; Massey, 1997:10). Among the first initiatives in this dimension is the development of the capacity of the civil service college to develop distance learning programme in order to upgrade the civil service system. This was to enable the college train as many civil servants as possible for the immediate needs of the country and we can see what happened to the result of this effort in the later chapters.

3.4 The Civil Service College and the Need for the DL Development

The Civil Service College is established in 1995 by the Council of Ministers with the mission to help building the capacity of the civil service system of the country

through education and training. The government seems to pay more attention to this college and expects it to be one of the major agents in the civil service capacity building programme. This could be seen from different perspectives. One, the government sends its officials to study in the college and pays them full salaries while studying. Two, the graduates of the college are appointed to high posts in the civil service.

The college started teaching in 1995 in several fields of study. Initially, it accepted students in Law, Economics, Accounting, Urban Planning, and Development Administration for degree study. These fields were assumed to be of high demands in the government system during the early years (ECSC, 1998:3).

Moreover, as a specialised institution in the country, the college focuses on training of civil servants. However, students join the institution from all government sectors, even the military, as long as they are interested in the courses offered by the college. As mentioned earlier in chapter 1, statistical reports in the early 2000 reveal that 83% of the civil servants in the country didn't attend any postsecondary education; and the result was much worse for the emerging regions (World Bank, 2001:2).

Originally, the college had been designed for teaching on conventional basis; and it operated for 5 years and its performance is reviewed and labelled unsatisfactory by the government. This was in the late 1998; and it was because it graduated only few hundred at that time whilst there has been huge need for graduates in the country (ECSC, 1998:3). (See also table 3.1 below). As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the distance learning programme is planned to teach Accounting, Management, and Law for diploma. These disciplines are derived directly from the courses being offered by the regular programme of the college, and they fits in with the need to upgrade the civil service system of the country.

The following table presents the number of graduates of the college during the early years when the idea of capacity building was being developed.

Table 3.1 Graduates of ECSC by: year, region, discipline and sex

Graduates of 1998-January										Graduates of 1998-May								
	Law		Econ.		Ur.En.		Total			Law		Econ.		Acct		Total		
REGION	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Tigray	21	4	22	2	10	0	53	6	59	13	0	10	4	17	1	40	5	45
Afar	2	1	3	2	0	0	5	3	8	5	0	3	0	6	0	14	0	14
Amhara	24	2	31	1	17	2	72	5	77	22	1	10	0	27	1	59	2	61
Oromia	24	0	15	3	9	3	48	6	54	18	1	13	0	23	0	54	1	55
Somali	7	2	6	1	0	0	13	3	16	22	0	10	1	19	0	51	1	52
Ben.Shang	5	0	5	0	0	0	10	0	10	10	0	4	0	9	1	23	1	24
SNNPR	39	0	40	1	12	0	91	1	92	32	0	11	0	27	2	70	2	72
Gambella	9	0	4	0	0	0	13	0	13	6	0	3	0	3	0	12	0	12
Harari	2	0	1	1	1	0	4	1	5	2	0	2	0	3	0	7	0	7
Fed. Gov.	3	3	5	0	0	0	8	3	11	3	0	7	2	5	1	15	3	18
Total	136	12	132	11	49	5	317	28	345	133	2	73	7	139	6	345	15	360

Source: ECSC Registrar, 2008.

As could be seen in the above table, the college was not able to produce thousands of graduates as soon as it was established. Besides, great disparities were seen among regions and gender; and the range was between 5 and 92 among regions. There were many reasons for these outcomes. One, the college was organised in a hurry to mitigate the immediate problem of human resources for the decentralisation process. Enough preparations were not made by building class rooms, dormitories, etc. during the early years. The college accepts only students sponsored by the federal and regional governments, and as also mentioned earlier, women are less educated in the culture and had little chance to fulfil the criteria to join the college (Deribssa, 2004). Student admission to the regular programmes is through entrance exams administered by the college. However, only those candidates who are sponsored by the states sit for the exams. The college also says it aims at making positive discriminations in favour of women and emerging regions in student admissions but the majority of students have been from better regions and mostly males (ECSC, 2004:12-15).

As per the data, in the above table, by the end of the year 1998, the college had graduated only 662 men and 43 women in both degree and diploma programmes. Therefore, massive production of graduates has not been possible in the conventional approach. The level of student attrition was also found out to be as high as 24% in the earlier times (ECSC, 1998:9). This added to the doubt about the possibility to produce enough graduates by the college in the near future and forced the system to rethinking the strategy. The focus on distance education emerges here, and the UK Open University had a role from this stage on to develop the programme (see also chapter 5).

This being the case, distance learning was added through reformulation of the original mission statement of the college in 1999. This was to fit in with the new developments strategy of capacity building and civil service reform programme of 1999 (ECSC, 2000). In this document, emphasis was put on the college to play a key role by using appropriate distance education programme and strengthen the capacity of Ethiopia's civil service system at the federal and regional levels. In other words, the new idea is thought to enable the college go to the students where they live rather than bringing them from regions to Addis Ababa (ECSC, 2000).

The reason for the DL development project is that the college lacks the capacity by itself in order to meet the needs of the civil service system. The institution actually needs capacity building in the area because the approach is not established in the culture and the skills are to be developed from scratch. So the distance learning project proposal was submitted to the World Bank country office July 2000 for Distance Education Capacity Building of the civil service college (credit no. 3501 ET). The aim here was upgrading the capacity of the college to develop and manage distance learning programme in the country (PAD, 2001). Subsequently, the distance learning programme was added in 2005.

Being strongly linked to ever changing strategy of the government, the college is extremely unstable in its academic programmes. For instance, the field of Accounting was phasing out in the regular programme when the preparation of the distance learning programme was underway in the same field in the early 2000s; and the justification at that time was that the change will not affect the distance learning programme. In the meantime, three of the academic programmes (Accounting, Economics, and Law) were closed in the year 2004 from the conventional teaching programme (ECSC, 2003:5). Among the official arguments during the preparation to terminate the above programmes was the following:

> …the government reorganizes its structure for provision of effective guidance and support to the challenges of rapid economic growth and poverty reduction. This is also underpinning by political commitment towards deepening of the devolution of process to Woredas and Kebeles facilitating the direct participation of the people in growth and poverty reduction endeavours. These policies and strategies have important implications for the work of the ECSC. It is thus quite in order to discuss here briefly the policies and strategies which have the most direct bearing to the need for readjusting the work of the college (ECSC, 2003:5).

In the above discussion, the promoters attempted to explain the role of the college in supporting the government in development strategies of decentralisation. They also mentioned changes in the direction of the government policies and strategies at the very moment. This was to justify the need to make readjustments in the academic programmes of the college.

The draft document for the reform was discussed in a forum in July 2003, and especially, the staff whose departments are closed argued against the new direction. Among the arguments raised are: "How can the college exist changing its disciplines continuously? Such a strategy makes the college cultureless; etc., etc."; but the discussion was not aimed at brainstorming for decision but rather to explain what was going to happen. The reaction of instructors about the closure of the programmes didn't alter the decision. Representatives of two regional states also participated to hear the change in the priority of the college in a forum in 2003 and they raised similar opposition to the decision. Their concern was mostly against closure of law faculty; and they argued that the college didn't produce enough number of lawyers for their respective regions. But in the formal document that argues for the closure of the programmes we find the following.

> …the initial major focus of the work of the civil service college was on diploma and degree programmes in some selected areas. This has gone to a considerable distance in meeting the trained human resource needs of the regional states. Some postgraduate programmes have also been launched in collaboration with foreign universities. However, ECSC needs to redefine its mission and tasks in the light of the major development policies, strategies and programmes adopted by the government and the future direction set for the college in the policy documents (ECSC, 2003:6).

In the above statements, the college is explained as having gone long enough in meeting the training needs of the regional states. However, when we look at the total number of graduates at that time, from 1998 to 2002, the figure was just 2695. If we consider the number of law graduates specifically, the figure shows 745 and for other disciplines, it is even less (ECSC graduate statistics, 1998-2002). This quantity is not enough even for one region of the country. However, although the arguments are not logical, the decision holds and the college changed its direction and closed the programmes before producing enough graduates in the area.

In 2007, the diploma programme of the distance learning was closed by the decision of the college's top management unilaterally without consulting even the director of the distance learning institute. This decision disappointed the distance teaching staff in general. For instance, in an interview, one of the informants said the following:

> The print based aspect of the project was developed well but the experience has not been used to the maximum due to administrative problems. The college shut down the diploma programmes without any condition or discussing the issue with the institute. The product of the print base work for the diploma programme has now become wastage; and a lot of printed materials are left in the store. IDE is developing new degree course. But there is critical shortage of budget in developing new courses… (Alemu, 25/08/07).

This initial information was obtained in 2007 while the course for new degree programme was being developed. The opinion shows dissatisfaction about the decision. All the staff complained about the closure of the diploma programme in the interviews. Similarly, all the student respondents, who participated in the interviews, disagree with the decision to close the diploma programme. For example, one of them said the following:

> The closure of the diploma programme was wrong. I think diploma programme can serve the region more because most of the working people have no any training on their job and they need background to join degree programme (Dereje, 01/07/08).

As indicated above, the distance programme, for diploma courses, was terminated within two years, in June 2007. This time, strategy change of the college is not documented; and this decision forced the system to go back to develop new courses for degree programme before fully using the materials already in the store (see chapter 7). High quality teaching materials produced with involvement of the UK Open University was wasted. When the data for this study was finally obtained, the college was teaching only one discipline in the distance teaching programme, that is, management.

The above discussion shows the rationale for the development of DL programme in the college. Besides, the problems in the academic programmes of the college are reflected. Moreover the turbulent nature of the academic activities of the college in dropping programmes before they fully develop is reflected. Therefore, the situation shows that the college is not likely to be in a position to achieve strategic objectives as

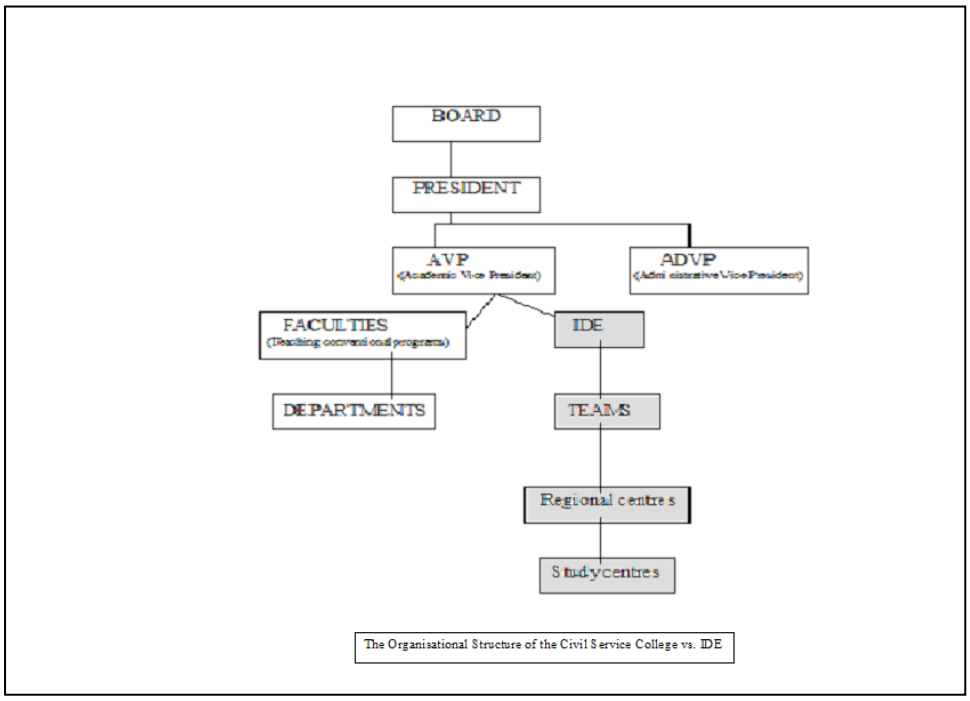
an institution in many ways. The organisational structure of the college gives further implications.

3.5 The Organisational Structure of the Civil Service College

As mentioned above, the college is organised for teaching on conventional basis. Consequently, the structure is shaped to fit this initial arrangement. As a result of the distance learning development project, the Institute of Distance Education (IDE) was added to the structure of the college in the form of a faculty that teaches courses of the college at distance. While incorporating the institute into the college structure, no structural change is made in the overall system of administration. Therefore, the volume of work and the quality of the services required from the distance learning programme was not considered. For instance, as discussed in chapter 2, section 2.1.6.1, adding a new element or subsystem necessitates reorganising the administrative structure to promote synergetic effect of a system.

The college is organised in the form of a university headed by a president but all the administrative tasks are controlled by the positions at the top: the president, 2 vice presidents, and administration procedures. Therefore, the organisational structure of the civil service college has clear implications in the day-to-day operations of the distance learning programme from the outset. See the organisational chart in the figure below.

Figure 3.2 Organisational structure of the Ethiopian Civil Service College



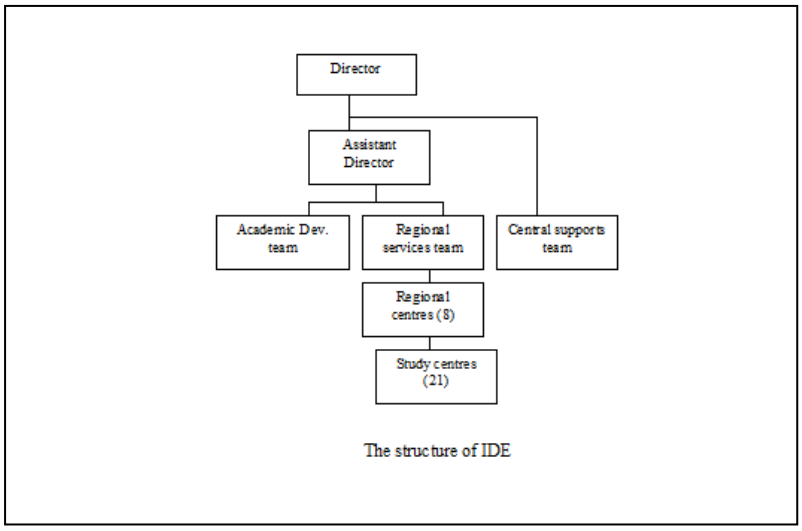
In the above structure, the president works with the board in deciding policy and strategic issues. The structure is quite traditional and lacks flexibility to empower lower levels. In this system, IDE is placed at the bottom of the chart parallel to faculties (PAD, 2001:41) that teach few hundred students in total on conventional bases. In the arrangement, all the administrative formalities concerning decisions have to go up the hierarchy for approval because IDE has no authority to make strategic decision. Therefore, as opposed to the theory discussed in chapter 2 section 2.1.7.2, the system of the college did not take the speciality of distance learning into account as contingency in organising the programme. The staff of the distance teaching institute were not able to determine what to do in the system and remained passive when decisions affecting their works have been passed by the top management.

3.6 The Institute of Distance Education

As presented above, the Institute of Distance Education is a form of faculty in the system of the college and it is originally headed by a dean. Recently, the head is director but the procedures and the practices are the same as before. The director reports to the Academic Vice President of the college with regard to academic matters and the same person reports to the Administrative Vice President for administrative

matters (ECSC/IDE, 2004). Within such overall institutional arrangement, the internal structure of IDE is as follows.

Figure 3.3 Organisational structure of the Institute of Distance Education (IDE)



As could be understood from the diagram, the system is organised hierarchically in a traditional arrangement similar to the main college. In the above chart, it is reflected that each team is coordinated by a team leader who in turn reports to the assistant director or the director. Two of the teams: academic development and regional services report to the assistant director, and central support team report directly to the director. This team is largely concerned with administrative duties. The academic development team is concerned with developing the courses starting from syllabi to writing and editing. The central supports team is concerned with printing and all logistics including transport to deliver course materials to regions. Regional services team focuses on student support and all academic issues in regions and works closely with staff in regions (ECSC/IDE, 2004).

However, the structure is nominal in this institute and jobs are done cooperatively in team spirit. Communication is relatively easier than the main college's system; and staff placed at any of the positions can contact the director to discuss issues. Thus, the processes are not very bureaucratic in the institute.

3.6.1 Central supports team

The team is largely concerned with Planning and facilitating procurement of equipment and supplies. Here, logistics is among the key tasks. Originally, in addition to the team leader, logistics officer, and marketing officer were members of this team.

But the position of marketing officer has never been occupied. The jobs of advertising student recruitment, printing teaching materials in house or in the printing press, sending salary and administrative information to regional centres, receiving information from regional centres, and distribution teaching materials to regions are the major duties of this team (ECSC/IDE, 2004).

3.6.2 Academic development team

In this team, we find the team leader and pedagogic editor, and course coordinators with expertise in different subject areas Accounting, Law and Management (IDE structure, 2004). The focuses of the team are tasks related to course development and quality assurance in the development process. The course coordinators are one for each subject area:

The members have their own offices, fairly furnished. They have computers and printers in their offices. What they lack is telephone and they share the assistant director's office or the director's office for this.

Out of the eight staff trained in UK by the OU in 2004, four had been working in this team when the print based distance learning was launched in 2005. One of those escaped to US during a visit in October 2006. One is promoted to the institute leadership, as assistant director, when the position was vacant in 2006. I was one of those before I left the position of deanship in the institute to join the UEA for PhD study in September 2006. Then, two others left the position for different reasons. One of the staff now working as a team leader was involved in the course development process, facilitated by the UKOU as a pedagogical editor, and was in the system during the mentoring service of OU and possesses sufficient experience. When the final data was obtained only one of the staff trained by the UK Open University remained in the team. The other trained staff are the director and the assistant director of the institute.

3.6.3 The development of courses in the DL project

For a better understanding of the process of development of distance learning in the Civil Service College (ECSC), an outline of the process is given below with an emphasis on the UKOU involvement.

1. In 1998 the idea of capacity building appeared in the government development agenda.
2. Early 1999, UKOU staff visited ECSC to advice the leaders for developing distance learning to teach the majority of civil servants at home.
3. Late 1999, ECSC came up with the revised mission statement that includes distance learning and organised IDE.(add in full the first time you use an abbreviation)
4. The draft plan for the print based distance learning programme is developed by IDE staff and submitted to the World Bank.
5. Mid 2000, the World Bank staff drafted the project appraisal document.
6. Late 2000, IDE conducted need assessment for print and GDLN courses.
7. February 2001, the DL project launch workshop is conducted at ECSC.
8. April 2001 the DL project was approved by officials of the Bank and the Ethiopian government.
9. Early 2002, terms of reference for the UKOU and e-learning are drafted by IDE for the consultancy services.
10. Early 2002, government proposed ICT infrastructure development programme to the World Bank.
11. May 2004, regional extension plan of the GDLN aspect was removed from the DL project.
12. June 2004, the project is officially restructured.
13. July 2004, agreement is signed with the UKOU for the print aspect of the project.
14. August 2004, OU staff trained course developers.
15. September 2004, OU staff started mentoring on course development activities.
16. December 2004, 4 IDE staff visited UKOU for two weeks short-term training on DL.
17. January 2004, two other OU staff conducted training on tutoring and student support issues in DL.
18. February 2005, 4 more IDE staff visited UKOU for two weeks short-term training on DL.
19. April 2005, an OU staff conducted training in Educational marketing.
20. June 2005, an OU staff conducted a survey on the structure of IDE within the Civil Service College and proposed a possible organisation arrangement for the future.
21. July 2005 regional centres and study centres (such as Arba-Minch) were organised.
22. August 2005, 2 OU staff provided mentoring service on student support issues and regional organisation of the DL programme.
23. May 2005, OU staff mentoring and consultancy on course development ended.

24. July 2005 IDE started teaching diploma programme in the fields of Accounting, management, and Law.

The following table shows the timeline of the overall development process.

Table 3.2: Timeline of the DL development process

No	Timescale	Activities
1	Jan. 1998	The World Bank president visited Ethiopia
2	Dec. 1998	The World Bank produced documents of capacity building
3	July 1998	The World Bank installed the basic videoconferencing technology in the ECSC
4	End of 1999	ECSC revised its mission statement to include DL in it programme
5	Early 2000	ECSC produced rough outline of the strategy to develop print based DL
6	Oct. 2000	Needs assessment is conducted to identify characteristics of potential distance learners
7	Dec. 2000	The Bank's staff started drafting the Project Appraisal Document
8	Feb. 2001	The project is officially launched in a conference at ECSC
9	April 2001	The project is signed by the officials of the Bank and Ethiopian government
10	July 2001	Terms of reference (TOR) was produced for the print based DL
11	Early 2002	The government proposed national ICT development programme to the Bank
12	Oct. 2002	ECSC produced tender document for GDLN centre upgrading based on original plan
13	May 2004	Bank and government decided restructuring of the project
14	June 2004	The project is restructured
15	August 2004	The UK OU started consultancy service for the print based DL
16	May 2006	GDLN centre upgrading is completed
17	June 2006	The DL project is closed and the programme shifted to the government financial system
18	August 2006	All the staff trained for student support system of the DL were moved to other jobs
19	Late 2006	Monitoring study centres is cancelled from the regular job of IDE
20	June 2007	ECSC management decided to terminate the diploma programme the teaching materials produced with high investment is wasted and IDE started developing degree course
21	Jan. 2008	Degree programme in the field of management is launched with newly developed teaching material

From the timeline presented in the above table, very slow development process is evident. This is especially clear during the early phase and the real implementation

was during the final 2 years. The timeline also shows the declining feature soon after the closing date of the project.

3.6.4 Regional services team

Another very important team is the regional services team. This team is headed by a team leader, who reports to the assistant director similar to the academic development team leader. In this team we find the team leader and different officials working as experts of specific duties (ECSC/IDE, 2004). These are: Learner Support and Tutorial Expert, Monitoring and Supervision Expert, Assessment and Evaluation Expert. Records and Statistics Officer was also originally in this team, but this is moved to the registrar in 2006 for coordinating similar jobs there.

This team has fairly furnished offices with computers and printers. The team leader's office has telephone access and others have to share the same. The major task of the team is managing the regional activities, starting from student recruitment to graduation through the regional centres.

All the experts and the team leader were trained by the UK Open University on the matters related to student support services of distance learning. However, in 2006, all the staff working in this team including the team leader are moved to the civil service reform of the national capacity building programme, by decision of the college's top management. The reform programme targets the sector's ministries in the country. The institute requested to keep some of them in the team to maintain the standard of practice. But the idea was not accepted and the reason forwarded by the management was that the national reform programme is more important than the work they do in IDE. This may be true but replacing them with a properly trained staff was necessary. But this is not made either. For instance, one of the new staff recruited after the original members are moved reported the following in the interview:

> The staff currently managing the duty of academic supports in the whole system, at the central headquarters of the distance learning programme, are not trained for the tasks. The original staff trained for this purpose are all moved to the civil service reform programme, and no one tried to train us for the purpose. We are simply learning from the practice (Tamene, 26/08/07).

Hence, the staff trained for student support system of the institute were replaced by newly recruited staff without training. Up to the end of this study, those staff moved to the reform programme didn't return to their earlier posts.

In short, the situation shows that this team was better organised originally, but it is gradually disabled by lack of attention from the top management of the institution. The decision of the management can be explained as lack of awareness about the importance of the job because replacing the original people with persons with similar training might have solved the problem fairly. Therefore, the situation reveals that the task of distance learning is highly marginalised in the system.

3.6.5 Regional centres

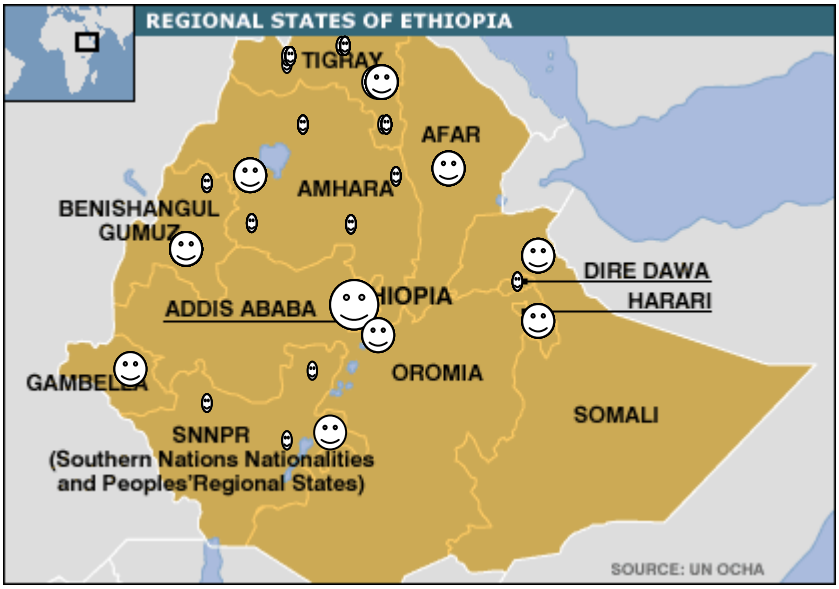
The regional centres are the extensions of the regional services team of the IDE headquarters along the regions of the country. They are directed to student support and located in the regional capitals, which again extend to sub-regions or zones. Those centres located at zones are called study centres or tutorial centres (IDE, 2004). Nine (9) regional centres and 21 study centres were organised for student support in the distance learning programme and they work closely with the regional services team.

The regional centres are staffed with two permanent members of staff: regional coordinator and a secretary who also serves as cashier. All the regional centres also serve as study centres. The study centres that are located out of the regional centres are staffed with part-time people staff contracted from the staff of the host institution. All regional centres are organised in collaboration with regional governments; especially, capacity building offices. The regional governments provide free accommodation for the offices; and accordingly, most of the centres are located in institutions related to education such as colleges, universities, and management institutes. In some regions, they are housed in the office of capacity building (ECSC/IDE, 2004).

The only region in the country without a regional centre for the distance learning programme is the central region, Oromia. This happened because the region developed its own courses parallel to the civil service college's programme and refused to cooperate. However, there are students coming from this region and they use mostly the study centre located at the IDE headquarters or any study centre closer to their residence. The following sketch map shows the location of the offices for the distance learning programme in the whole country. The biggest icon shows the IDE headquarters (i.e. in Addis); the medium sized ones indicate the regional centres (i.e.

9 including Addis); and the smallest icons show the study centres (i.e. 12 out of the 9 centres).

Figure 3.4 Locations of regional and study centres of the distance learning programme



Regional centres have relatively well organised offices with telephones and internet access. For example, in the Southern Nation and Nationality and Peoples' (SNNP) region, Awasa is the regional capital and the centre is located there. The regional office is located on the second floor of three storeys building in three rooms: office for the coordinator, office for the secretary/cashier, and a store. But this is not always the case. In some regional centres all are in one room, for example, the centres in Asosa and Harar.

As indicated above, all the regional centres also serve as study centres and tutorial centres. In Awasa, the students in the surrounding areas of the region as well as neighbouring region of Oromia are served. Therefore, students register, collect the teaching materials and attend tutorial in all regional centres as all the other study centres. The picture below is taken during student registration.

Figure 3.5 Picture of students' registration

3.6.6 Study centres

Next to the regional centres, we find study centres, also called tutorial centres. The 21 study centres are organised for the distance learning programme. This includes Addis Ababa, and the aim is to get closer to the students. Many of the regional centres have a few more study centres to manage in addition to the operations in the regional centre. Afar, Gambella, and Somali regions are exceptions to this, with only one centre, serving as both regional and study centres at the same time because they serve fewer students.

Four study centres, including Awasa centre, are located in the SNNP region; and the regional centre located in Awasa is responsible to manage the activities of these study centres. The other three are in Hosaina, Mizan-Teferi, and Arba-Minch. In this case, Hosaina and Arbaminch centres are managed by the Awasa regional centre whilst Mizan-Teferi is looked after by the regional centre located in Addis Ababa at the IDE headquarters. This is a special arrangement for better access for delivering the services because there has not been good road access from Awasa to Mizan-Teferi. Similar situation applies to a study centre located in Debre-Birhan, some 150 km north of Addis Ababa.

In short, from the organisation of the regional and study centres, we can understand both political and administrative relevancies; and the following section summarises this chapter.

3.7 Summary of Chapter three

The recent change in the socio-political environment of Ethiopia increased the need for expanding education faster than before. Particularly, the decentralisation policy of the new administration left the emerging regions in a critical shortage of ruling elites. In this perspective, education is understood as the most important tools for development, but it is difficult to expand education because of the unfavourable socioeconomic factors. Thus, efficient use of resources is the best way to improve the condition. In this regard, distance learning could be seen as promising alternative to provide the education to the civil servants whilst keeping them in-post. To this effect, the distance learning project under study has clear merit.

Being strongly linked to changing strategy of the government, the Ethiopian civil service college remained unstable in its academic programmes. It has been changing its academic programmes frequently. The goal of the distance learning project was in line with the need. But the context in which it is developed is complicated as evidenced by the timeline. With this much about the context, the methodology of the study is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the research design and methodology. It presents the methodological concepts in social sciences with the specific techniques as applied in the particular research.

4.1 Introduction

As indicated in the first section of chapter 1, the study is based on a project that focused on the development of distance learning programme in Ethiopia. The project idea started from 1998, but the real activity was from the year 2000 to 2006. As the problem is complex, a multi-method of investigation is employed (Yin, 2003:19). From the conceptual point of view, research method can be discussed in three broad categories: quantitative, qualitative, and case-studies. Quantitative method focuses on explaining events based on numerical measurements whilst qualitative research explains attributes without emphasis on quantity. Case study as a broad approach of research on the other hand, focuses on detail account of specific situation with a mixture of techniques (Creswell, 2003). As we see later, this study is a case; and therefore, the concept of case study approach is briefly elaborated in the following section.

4.2 Case Study Research

Case study is an intensive study of a specific individual or groups or context. Hence, a combination of techniques is applied in case study investigation (Creswell, 2003:15). According to Trochim (2006), a case study can be used to describe a unit of analysis of particular organisation. The same text reveals that case study may be considered as broad research method. Similarly, Yin (1994:23) explains that case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within the real-life situation. The same source underlines the significance of the approach, especially, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear.

Philosophically, case study methodology can be positivist, interpretive, or critical, depending upon the underlying assumption of the researcher (Yin, 2002; Benbasat, et al., 1987; and Walsham, 1993). According to Benbasat et al. (1987), a case study is

the most appropriate to use quantitative and qualitative data, and it is particularly well-suited to the study of organisations. In this research, therefore, case study is applied to the civil service college's distance learning LIL project. For the purpose of analysing details of the practice, Arba-Minch study centre is focused as an example of regional implementation.

4.3 The Research Techniques

Techniques are specific activities used within the methodology chosen. Research techniques are determined by the imaginations of the researcher, the nature of the problem and the objectives of the study (Soy, 1997). The study is informed by Yin's multiple method approach in order to provide insight for understanding the complex situation of distance learning in Ethiopia (Yin, 2003:19-55).

The data covers the information from: the project documents and the materials used for the practice of distance teaching by the institution. How the educators (officials and tutors) and students understand the programme of distance learning are also part of the investigation. The enquiry, therefore, necessarily demands a combination of techniques that employ qualitative and numerical information. Observation, document analysis, individual informants through interviews, and distance students' responses to questionnaire are among the major techniques for obtaining data. The technique encompasses a number of activities for selecting, evaluating and interpreting evidence and communicating the findings to reader (McDowell, 2002:11).

The data about the project design is obtained from the project documents and complemented by information from interviews. The data about the budgetary commitment of the project is also obtained from documents and enriched through interviews with relevant officials. Quantitative data about student enrolment is gathered to analyse the trend of enrolment before and after launching of distance teaching by the college. This is obtained from records of registrar of the college. Besides, the challenges to the institution in managing distance learning programme are discussed as matters arising as a result of the development.

The techniques of observation, document and archive analyses, interviews, and survey are described below to show how they are applied in the investigation.

4.3.1 Observations

The main aim of social research is to capture the nature of human behaviour, naturally occurring. Thus, observation is common method for collecting qualitative data. Two types of observation are understood in social science research. They are participant observation and direct observation (Hammersley, 1994:5).

Direct observation demands the investigator to remain external to the situation under study whilst participant observation requires the observer to be part of the culture under study. In other words, in the technique of direct observation, the observer watches rather than taking part. Technology can be a useful means of direct observation (Babbie, 1992; and Emerson, et al., 2001:355). Participant observation is one of the most demanding techniques of research in that it requires the researcher to become part and parcel of the culture or context being examined (Atkinson, 1992:5). In such a way, observations enable researchers to obtain in-depth information about the subject of the study. Therefore, this researcher involves information obtained through both participant observation and direct observation. I did participant observation during the whole project life when I was working as a project implementation team member. This is especially when I was working fulltime on the project from the year 2000-2006. The observation focused on 3 aspects: the project management process in general, the course development process as well as the practice of actual distance teaching during and after the project phased out.

The problem I faced in this approach is that I was able to learn about the details but I cannot write about some of them because of their political impact and my own personal responsibility to keep certain things secret. This is especially regarding the details about misallocation of material resources. I rather clearly reflected the facts about the misuse and wastage of human resources because they are more public and open to intellectual interpretation.

Direct observation of the situation is made on the technology development. In addition, the management of the logistic and support systems and storage of course materials are observed. The procedures of student registration and how students behave during registration and tutorial sessions are also observed through direct observation and the features are taped, analysed and presented. The observation is made in 2 rounds and more than 90 documents are collected and analysed. In this

attempt, the technology and tutorial classes are taped for closer observations. Moreover, I took field notes in writing when making all the observations.

4.3.2 Use of archival documents

Policies, procedures and annual reports of activities of government are often found in published form. Unpublished monographs, statistical abstracts and other reports are also rich sources of information on the intentions of managers and governors. Rich description of cases and contexts is possible with the use of such documents. The most important document in this study is the project plan, termed the project appraisal document. The other sources are aide memoire of the project supervision system, teaching materials (modules, and tutor marked assignments) and guiding documents of the practice of distance learning, sector policy documents, statistical reports, and management information systems of the ministry of education.

The project appraisal document is the major guiding paper for the project. This document determines everything about the project design from the development objectives and management system to final evaluation. It also includes the formal agreement signed by the two parties, the donor agency and the government. Situation analysis, the design, the objectives, the components, management and procedures, and supporting documents are all compiled in this material as overall guide of the project implementation.

The Aide Memoires are documents produced jointly by the project supervision mission of the donor and the project teams in the implementing agency or beneficiary. These documents are produced after every monitoring mission from the Bank and kept as a guide for follow up activities to be undertaken soon after the mission until the next supervision mission. In the process, the next mission begins with reviews of the outstanding tasks and goes on with new performances. The documents, thus, served as reminders for actions and kind of minor agreements for actions on both sides during the follow up of the implementation process.

The other documents relate to the practice of distance teaching. This includes strategic planning documents of the college, statistical reports, and the regulations of the distance learning programme and teaching materials. The teaching materials

are the course modules and tutor marked assignments. The course materials are also photographed for deeper observation and analyses.

Therefore, archival documents are extensively used in the study. In selecting the documents, the context of their production and the motives of the sources are considered (Merriam (1988:107) and they are used by checking their accuracy by counterchecking with related sources of information. The documents were found very useful for bridging information gaps and serving the purpose for triangulation of information as we see later in this chapter.

4.3.3 Interviews

Interviews are common techniques of research in social sciences and they are one of the major techniques used in this research. Interviews could be categorised into three broad categories: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interviews involve close-ended questions and are used in similar way as questionnaires that are used for obtaining quantitative data. Thus, data from structured interviews can be presented and interpreted numerically. Unstructured interviews employ open-ended questions and are particularly useful for exploring a topic broadly. However, there is cost for lack of structure in such interviews in that each interview tends to be unique. It is more difficult to analyse data from unstructured interviews and this is more challenging, especially, during interpretation (Rubin and Rubin, 1995:2). Semi-structured interviews were one of the major tools for gathering information in this study.

This technique involves identifying certain topics to guide the interview process. The questions are set to obtain information on project management and strategies and technical aspects of the distance learning programme. They generally focus on problems related to the practice and organisation of distance learning in the specific situation. Moreover, the interviews were aimed at supplementing and complementing the information obtained through other techniques. The selection procedure of interviewees is presented below.

4.3.3.1 Selecting interviewees

In qualitative research, the most important concern is not representation and generalizability to the universe and the process doesn't need following probabilistic procedures (Amare, 2007). Probability sampling will be appropriate when the

population is homogenous and numerous. However, the focus here is on those who have the information about the project. Thus, the selection of the interviewees is purposive and is a process of actively seeking informed persons that have relevant experiences in the area. Hence, it is aimed at those informants who might provide alternative perspectives, who could inform about the project management system and the implementation of the distance learning programme at different levels, staff and students.

Availability of informants is a key issue and so the actual number of respondents is based on availability; in any case, the targeted respondents are not too many. Therefore, in selecting the informants for interviews, especially, about the information on the project, two main criteria are considered (relevance-as viewed from knowledge and experience of the respondent and willingness to participate).

Relevance: For the investigation of the practice of the distance learning programme, therefore, Arba-Minch study centre is selected as a sub-case with the intention that it enables to include a variety of cultures because the centre serves people from diversified cultural background. Programme coordinators at all levels and tutors who have been working for the distance learning programme are involved. Initially, the plan was to interview 6-10 people. In the meantime, the flowing information and the need to crosscheck information pulled the investigator to include more informants and the number of official or staff interviewees reached 20 at the end, and the following table summarises the profile of the informants.

Table 4.1 Characteristics of the Interviewees

Type of informants	Quantity	Qualification	Experience	Basis of inclusion
Project team members	6	All MA holders	6-8 years	Availability
Central operations team	7	All MA holders	5-7 years	Availability
Regional practice team	7	5 MA and 2 BA holders	5-8 years	Availability
Tutors	5	BA holders	1-3 years	Availability
Students	10	Student	3-20 years	Volunteer

As presented in the above table, the official interviewees were of three groups. The first is a group of 6 informants including people with relevant knowledge and experience about the development project due to their past and present positions. The second group is consisting of 7 informants including the central team that

facilitate the programme of distance learning. This is the core team for the programme as it handles the managerial duties from course development to student support services. The third is a group of 7 informants that includes staff directly involved in student support services such as logistics and supplies as well as those who run the activities at study centres. The academic qualification of the official interviewees generally ranges from BA to MA (MA 18 and BA 2); and most of them were lecturers in academic ranks.

The other group of informants for the interviews are 5 tutors and 10 students. The tutors had experiences ranging from 1-3 years in tutoring distance students. Some also work for private providers of distance learning and they discussed issues by comparing the practices in other distance learning institutions. The experiences of the student respondents range from 3 to 20 years as civil servants. The qualification of all the tutors was BA degrees and they were with academic ranks of assistant lecturer.

Willingness to participate: I was benefited from the assistance of my former colleagues in the institute of distance education of the civil service college. In some cases, the staff helped me by arranging appointments with informants at the study site. This helped me to set the agenda before meeting. Fortunately, no participant refused to take part in the research. This may be because most of the participants had some relationship with me in the world of work and most of them worked with me in the past. This made it easy to communicate. This might have contributed to quality of data because they can't hide information. On the other hand they might have pressed their personal commitments to satisfy my request and this is beyond control.

4.3.3.2 Conducting the interviews

The project document is analysed before conducting the interviews for the primary data. This is because documents are good sources to understand the intended plans and perceive achievements of the project. This stage helped for focusing on key points during the interviews.

I conducted all the interviews myself face-to-face. This helped for better understanding of the situation during the interpretation. As the norm of qualitative research, the interviews are undertaken in the form of person-to-person encounters

using open-ended questions to direct the discussions. The interviews are generally limited to two hours; and most of the time is devoted to emerging issues, which the participants enjoyed discussing. Many of them commented, “The focus of the research is crucial for the country and may help in reflecting the problems as one step forward to solve them”.

The key issues that are considered in the questions for the interviews with the officials/staff are: their understanding about the distance learning development project, the role of distance teaching in expanding higher education in the country, teaching and learning at distance, and the impact of the distance learning development project on the institution and learners, as well as problems and challenges of the distance learning programme. For tutors and students, the questions mostly focused on their understanding about the practice of specific issues in the student support system, ranging from registration procedures to tutor support and record management. The outlines of the questions are included in the appendices.

In order to assure quality of the interview questions and to see how much they could focus on the objectives of the study, testing is conducted. As the interviews are repeatedly conducted for each informant, the first round interviews during June 2007 to September 2007 are used for both pilot and actual investigation. In the follow up interviews the insights from the earlier events helped to refocus the later interviews towards filling gaps.

In conducting the interviews, I tried to ensure convenience of the informants. In arranging appointments with the officials, firstly, I contacted the informants face-to-face or by telephone and explained the objectives, procedures and major areas of focus. Then appointments are made at the convenience of the informants. During the interviews, before going directly into the issues, I started with non-topical questions such as specific tasks they were performing in the regular work situation. Some of them also asked me about how the study was going. This is made to set the scene for the discussion and to help the informant start commenting on the issues of the research in a relaxed manner. Some of the informants were interviewed two/three times and the gathering of data through interviews went on until the information became redundant among informants. This is assumed to reflect the validity and reliability of the information (see also the section on standard of verification below).

In facilitating the interviews, questions are presented starting from the broadest to the specific; and in many of the cases, the respondents answered the specific questions while discussing broad issues. Follow up questions are raised after the interviewee finish answering the earlier question. The processes of all interviews are performed very effectively with little challenge. The minor problems were that few informants (four in this case) were occupied by unexpected meetings in which changes of schedules were made but this didn't affect the overall plan.

Informal data collection process continued up to the end even while finalising the report. I also provoke discussion with many of the concerned people during informal meetings at different occasions. At other times, data flows by itself when persons initiate discussions regarding issues of distance learning programmes, which indirectly contributed to this research, especially, in interpreting ideas. Therefore, a lot of data had been gathered in a natural setting without formal procedures. This makes the information rich as informants express their feelings with less reservation in such a situation. But nevertheless they were aware I was conducting research and gave their consent for me to use this material.

All interviews are conducted in Amharic, but I took short notes in English during and after the interviews. Detailed interview notes are organised for each informant who participated in the formal interviews, including the student interviewees (i.e. a total of 35 detailed interview notes were organised). Samples of the notes from each group of respondents are included in the appendices.

Some staff also collected some newspapers with topics on the practice of distance learning in the country by their own initiatives to support me. Such situation has been surprising me; and I think that they want to make the research more complete and deep. This may be because they think the result improves their own working condition. Some send me additional information by email when I am in the UK. Hence, new evidence was flowing even at a time when I felt I had finished the data gathering process. This made me to think what it could be if I just keep on working on with the study and I realised knowledge can never be complete.

4.3.3.3 Survey

Survey research helps collecting and analysing sample responses of a large population through questionnaire; and it may be designed to elicit opinions, attitudes, and sentiments. Surveys are the most common techniques of research and basic tools in quantitative research methods (Schuldt, and Totter, 1994:37-38). Social sciences use surveys for scholarly or scientific purposes in nearly all subfields of the discipline. The method allows researchers to secure uniform but superficial information about large portion of a population (Bare, 1994:80-81; and Creswell, 2004). Whether a survey is designed for longitudinal or cross-sectional study, the key characteristics are sampling; designing questionnaire and collecting data; and ensuring high response rate (Braverman, 1996:17-20; and Creswell, 2004).

Although surveys are important in social research, their fitness for many types of investigation has been criticised. This is largely because survey researches usually do not take the complexity of relations and interactions among individuals that shape their social behaviour into account (Giddens, 1993; and Guastello and Rieke, 1991:501-505). For instance, one of the criticisms against this method is that 'direct observation of social behaviour cannot be replaced by verbal answers to an interviewer's standard list of questions even if such answers lend themselves to statistical presentations and explanations'. However, survey may be helpful if used in conjunction with other techniques of investigation. In this study, survey is used to gather data about the background and understanding of the distance students about the programme of education. The survey technique is supported by qualitative techniques of observation and interviews of students so that the information is crosschecked for verification as much as possible.

4.3.3.4 The questionnaire

One type of questionnaire is used to gather the data about students' backgrounds. The questionnaire is designed with the main purpose of learning about the distribution of characteristics, attitudes, or beliefs (Marshal and Rossman, 1999:129) among the distance students. To collect comprehensive data from the students as much as possible, the questionnaire consisted of both open-ended and closed items to enable collecting objective and subjective information. Special attention is given to the key issues such as, problems the students have been facing in the programme and their

satisfaction with the support services. With regard to such issues, closed questions are followed by open-ended; and the latter helped to perceive the understanding of the students about the programme.

Effective data gathering through questionnaire depends on the honesty and accuracy of responses. To this end, special mechanisms are required to minimise the potential shortcomings in managing questionnaire. Therefore, in this research, pilot testing of the instrument is conducted in August 2007; and the main purpose of the pilot study was to realise effective design of the instrument (Barrett, et al, 2002).

For the pilot study, 40 copies of the draft questionnaire were distributed to distance students and 36 copies were collected back with full response. Three were lost before collecting and one was found incomplete. A rough analysis was made for the pilot data and the result was not very misleading but some issues of ambiguity are identified and the questions are reorganised to address the shortcomings during the final data gathering process. In this regard, the pilot study helped to refine the data gathering instrument as clear as possible so that the information obtained enable to answer the research questions.

For the main study, the guidelines for questionnaires are carefully set and the revised questionnaire gathered the data in February 2008. To control the observed problems of incompleteness and non-return, the final process was managed closely to collect back the completed copies. In the Arba-Minch study centre, the students who are targeted for the survey are 80 degree student. This is because as mentioned earlier, the diploma programme had phased out and the remaining students are leaving the programme after few months at that time. In selecting the student respondents to fill in the questionnaire, all of the students who attended the tutorial session were included (i.e. a total of 38). The questionnaire is administered in the tutorial class at the end of the session before lunch time on 24/02/08. The individual respondents are asked for voluntary participation and none of them refused. Even those who came in from outside the class for some reasons asked for copies of the questionnaire to fill in. Each copy of the questionnaire is checked when collecting the completed questionnaire back. With its own limitations, this technique ensured efficiency in the response rate and completeness of the responses. I administered the questionnaire in person and no problem was faced.

The sampling is basically judgment and availability based (Bowen and Starr, 1982:273) in that all degree students were targeted and all those who attended tutorial session participated. This is firstly because the target population is not very big and it is practically difficult to know how many students come to the tutorial session beforehand. Therefore, the best possible way was including all who attend the tutorial. Secondly, the study is largely concerned with qualitative enquiry and this sort of data is supplementary to the qualitative data obtained through other techniques.

4.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

As one of the major aspects of research, data analysis and interpretation involves the assertion about the research. This level requires the researcher to look for patterns for generalisation from multiple sources (Erickson, 1986). Writers stress variety of steps or procedures for analysis and interpretation of data. This being the case, they generally agree that the most important issue is choosing the technique that best addresses the research objective (McLean, 1995:56; Yin, 1994:135). In this perspective, qualitative data analysis involves series of steps to form categories. Three major steps could be identified for analysing and interpreting qualitative data. These are *coding*, *interpreting*, and making *claims* (Mason, 1996; and Stake, 1995).

Coding enables to organise, manage, and retrieve the most meaningful information. Coding links different segments of instances in the data to some topic or theme. Coding thus helps to link data fragments to a particular idea or concept (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:27). In other words, coding helps researchers to identify themes, patterns, events, and actions that are of interest and provide means for organising the data sets (ibid:32).

According to Altrichter, et al (1993:24), two ways of coding data are possible: deductive and inductive. In the deductive method, categories are chosen from theoretical knowledge and the data is searched. Therefore, the development of categories is independent of the data in such type of coding. On the other hand, in the inductive method, categories are chosen during and after examining the data. Thus, in inductive coding, patterns, themes and categories of analysis emerge out of the data (Patton, 1990:390).

In this study, the process of data analysis followed both deductive and inductive

coding because they correspond to the research objectives. This is followed by the process of identifying factors and looking for the evidence that helps to measure the factors. This is deductive coding in nature. For example, in looking at the development process of the DL project, factors are identified from theoretical principles to serve as points of comparison and evidence is looked for in the data. This refers to deductive coding. On the other hand, the process of making conclusions from the array of specific evidences is made by inductive coding. For instance, this is applied when identifying a number of characteristics from the student responses to generalise some features, which then helps to link to something else such as the need for special student support programme, etc.

Strauss and Corbin (1990:116) suggest similar and a little bit elaborate steps using three stages of coding procedure to analyse and interpret data. These are open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

- Open coding-this is breaking down, examining, comparing and categorising data;
- Axial coding- involves making connections between categories and thinking about consequences;
- Selective coding- this refers selecting a core category and assembling categories around the core issues.

In the open and axial coding, one takes a topic or phenomenon and attempts to identify dimensions, consequences and relationships (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Categories are made based on similarities of the data on certain characteristics. In this study, this model is applied in analysing the quantitative data from student questionnaire before combining it with the entire data. The process of making relationships between groups or categories of data corresponds to axial coding. This is making connections between major categories. For instance, making relations between project management process and the overall outcomes, etc. refer to axial coding.

Selective coding is the process of choosing key characteristics from a variety of evidence under several categories. This is aimed at putting together the data from different sources for evidencing characteristics (Altrichter et al, 1993:124 cited in Miles and Huberman, 1994). In this study, this is applied in the final analysis for making conclusions. This is necessitated due to the use a multitude of data that

require mixture of methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:5). Therefore, the above frameworks are deemed to be important to the research as it deals with data organised along theories and clusters that are determined by nature of the research.

In the analysis, the research notes compiled and refined from published and unpublished sources have helped a lot. The ethnographic data collected through interviews and observations have helped much to assess convergence of data and bridging the information gaps.

The unit of data analysis may be individual, group, geographical or social. In this connection, it is possible to have different units of analyses in the same study (Trochim, 2002). To this effect, aggregates are used for the analysis in this study. The aggregates here are: the project design as seen from documents and archives, perception of officials about the project design, perception of staff, tutors, and students about the distance learning programme.

In doing the analysis and interpretation, first, different sorts of data are presented separately in this study. For instance, for the data from documents and archives, the information is discussed and summarised under different topics. For the data from interviews, detailed notes of the reports are written down for each of the informants as summaries and referred to during the analysis and interpretation under appropriate topics. For the data from student questionnaire, as this data is largely numerical, first, the data is tallied, categorised, tabulated and presented under different categories. This sort of data is first separately coded, analysed and interpreted by using percentage, mean and median values. Then, it is brought to the entire group of data to fit it into the major theme of the research. The data from the interviews with students was discussed in integration with the data from questionnaire to link the ideas properly. For the final analysis, mostly, the Strauss and Corbin model was applied.

In short, the first step in the analysis was grouping the data into major categories based on their characteristics. This set corresponds to what Strauss and Corbin (1990:61) call open coding (breaking down, examining, comparing, and categorising data). As the second step, the data within the above groups or topics is organised by creating subcategories. Here, a mixture of deductive and inductive methods of coding data is employed. This stage corresponds to axial coding: making connections between categories and thinking about consequences (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:96).

In the third step, all data is put under categories and evidences are collected about the project and its results. Finally, the whole data is put in the order that corresponds to the research questions to be answered.

In interpreting the qualitative data, a combination of narrative description of events and comparative analysis is made. Thus, the story is written both as a theoretical analyst who makes comparisons and contrasts as well as a historian who describes and analyses the events with a perspective for identification of themes and relationships. When citing evidence from ethnographic data, direct report of the comments is made as first person. For the analysis of the data from students' questionnaire, the presentation and analysis is made using simple statistical techniques to make it easy for readers. The widely used technique of interpretation for the quantitative data is percentage because the analysis doesn't require complicated statistical approach (Bowen and Starr, 1982:20). Moreover, as the focus of the study is on policy issues, using simple method is deemed to be appropriate to make the report easily understandable. Therefore, mean and median values are used for showing differences in addition to percentage (Mutai, 2001:77-78).

To present research in a meaningful form, generalising, noting and questioning the relations between factors and conceptual backgrounds are the key issues. This helps to draw meaning and make conclusions from the reduced and displayed data (Miles and Huberman, 1994:23). This facilitates the interpretation to answer the research questions (Yin, 1994:135). Finally, organising the data chapter is a key issue to produce clear research report. The common way of organising the data is through discussion of the research questions one by one and summarising evidence and showing how they are answered (Robson, 2002:511). To this effect, the findings are summarised and conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made in the final chapter.

4.4.1 Standards of verification

For assertions to hold credibility, systematic evidence must be presented in the research report. In this regard, detailed categorisation of patterns along with evidence is necessary (Davis, 1995:447). This includes (1) using records to collect evidences about issues under investigation; (2) producing a holistic report about each category or explanation building (Yin, 1994:113); (3) producing a complete account of each

issue under investigation to show chain of evidence (Miles and Huberman, 1994:260); and (4) producing reports for each objective or research question.

The term standard and verification are used here to refer to validity, objectivity and reliability. Validity is the best possible approximation to the truth of a given proposition or conclusion. In terms of research technique, validity of observational research is generally strong because the findings involve close examinations. In this research, attempt is made to collect in-depth information about a particular situation (Emerson et al, 2001:357). The researcher strived for quality and verification in the research process when trying to understand the problem by personally engaging with the research participants and spending time in the research setting (Creswell, 1998:193). Involving the research participants for their feedback is one way of verification for qualitative research. To this effect, interviews are conducted with many individuals as possible. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the interviewing continued until the incoming information reveal redundancy, and this again assumed to reflect the validity and reliability of the information.

Reliability refers to the extent to which observations can be replicated; and the possibility to generalise, or external validity, is the extent to which the study's findings could be true for other groups of respondents, in other places, and at other times (Mutai, 2001). This research is assumed to have high validity in general because it is based on mixture of approaches. However, as it is based on a specific case, the details of the result are not expected to have external validity for other situations.

Furthermore, I spent much time with the informants by living in the area and able to grasp the beliefs, understanding, and ideas of the participants. This has helped to make well informed representation of views. This is to ensure that there is an evidential basis for the interpretation. To ensure this, I constantly referred the issue back to participants during follow up interviews. Besides, towards the end, the report was referred back to participants for their comments and corrections. Therefore, I believe that the information in this study is collected rigorously and the conclusions reached are based on a grounded interpretation of evidence.

4.4.2 Triangulation

Problems of researcher bias will always be there from the point that researchers may see only what they want. Bias, however, can be minimised by training and recording observations. Thus, triangulation is an important means to tackle the inevitable weaknesses. In this research, as briefly mentioned earlier, records of facts were made in the form of pictures, audios and videos as appropriate. The information for this study is obtained from documents and several groups of informants that allowed comparisons and cross-checking. Thus, triangulation is focused as the key strategy right from the beginning in designing the data gathering instruments and selecting sources.

The involvement of a variety of sources for the information (documents, interviews and records) is assumed to help in assessing convergence of information and bridging information gaps. Moreover, attempts are made to verify information during the data collection process and this helped in the analysis and writing up the report. The data from documents is triangulated with the data from interviews, and the data from interviews with the data from questionnaire. These are assumed to contribute to the validity and reliability of the result as well.

4.5 Research Ethics

Miles and Huberman remind us to consider the lives of those people involved in the study as measure of rightness and wrongness of one's actions in qualitative research (1994:288). In this regard, a number of principles are identified. Among them is the principle of *voluntary participation* that requires that people should not be coerced to participating in research. The requirement for *informed consent* focuses on that, research participants must be fully informed about the procedures and risks involved in research and give their consent. Accordingly, ethical standards require researchers not to put participants in a situation that might result *risk of harm*.

There are two standards that are applied in order to help protect the privacy of research participants: confidentiality and anonymity. In this regard, research must guarantee *confidentiality* to participants. They assure that identified information will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the study. The principle of *anonymity* essentially means that the participant will remain anonymous

throughout the study, even to the researcher. Clearly, the anonymity standard is a stronger guarantee of privacy. Research is also concerned with the issue of person's *right to service*.

This research involves interviews with individuals that have diverse experiences and varying degrees of responsibilities and accountabilities. To this effect, individuals differ in interests and may have senses of insecurity in taking part. Research informants may be important actors in a system; and thus, issues under study may be sensitive to them due to personal interests or responsibilities. Therefore, in the research, I tried to be sensitive to the views and perspectives of the informants in the procedures. To this effect, the identities of the individuals are kept absolutely anonymous. To ensure this, careful procedure is employed, and the attributes of particular opinions to any of the participants could not be identified from the report.

The security and integrity of information collected from the research participants is also a central issue which demanded careful handling. In this dimension, I have done my best to handle this information with care by protecting it from being accessed by possible intruders. To secure this, even in handling the electronic data, I saved each data with special code and abbreviated names to secure the information. Besides, consents are secured before starting the research. This was made in a meeting of the institute staff on 23/06/07 orally by the director, who told all the staff in the meeting to participate. In his comment, he noted that the aim is good for the whole institution. The staff appeared confused first because such a procedure is strange in the culture. The people have been participating in research whenever requested but they have never seen such in such a procedure. Therefore, I explained about the need to secure consent as one of the major requirements in the context of this particular research. After this, they had understood the situation and agreed to act accordingly. The consents are agreed and signed by the official participants at their respective first interviews. At regional level, written consents are obtained from the coordinators and tutors and students are selected based on their own oral consents.

Therefore, the most relevant ethical issues with regard to the participants of this research were voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, the need to avoid risk of harm, and respect for the right to services. Confidentiality

and anonymity also secure to avoid risk of harm to the participants. Thus, proper care was taken to protect the participants and to maintain the security of their views. Therefore, the information is used with full consents of the participants and instead of proper names, nick names are used in a way that the names cannot be guessed from the report. Moreover, the specific positions at work are not mentioned in the report for the staff respondents because individuals who occupy the positions are known by others. Moreover, the research did not affect the right to services of the participants anyway because the students participated during their spare time. Therefore, I believe that the information obtained from the participants is handled as per the major ethical procedures of research.

4.6 Researcher and Researched Biases

An important threat to the validity of qualitative conclusions is the selection of data that fit the researcher's existing preconceptions. In fact, it is impossible to deal with these problems by eliminating the researcher's theories, preconceptions or values. This reality is one aspect of what has been called the inherent reflexivity of qualitative research (Maxwell, 1996:87). In this regard, the recognition of the value-laden nature of inquiry (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:105-117) implies that the researcher risks the effect of preconceptions, prejudgments and subjectivities that may affect interpretations and observations (Schwandt, 2003:302). Therefore, the influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied is generally known as reactivity. This is a problem that is often raised about qualitative studies. In this regard, my interest to do research in the flexible education system goes back to 1998-1999, when I was in the school of graduate studies of Addis Ababa University doing MA in educational administration. In that programme, I studied evening education for MA thesis. During this time, I realised how this aspect of education is neglected. The evening education was found significantly suitable especially for women and working people in Ethiopia. Besides, after doing MA, I joined Civil Service College where I coordinated distance learning programme, which was at planning stage at that time. I was involved in planning and implementing the project. I worked as project team member while serving as coordinator of activities in the institute of distance education. This experience helped me to understand the significance of strengthening distance learning in the country to expand education.

In the later days, I have been involved in research in the areas of education and social sciences in the Ethiopian context. I have presented papers on flexible education in Ethiopia on several conferences. Most of my works are in the area of education policy and based on quantitative method of inquiry. Thus, this programme has helped me to learn much about qualitative research including its methodologies and philosophical bases. After reading the ontological and epistemological assumptions of qualitative research method, I felt very much compelled to apply this method in this thesis. The experience of the transition was, however, not easy as it required a lot of reading.

In the context of this research, my involvement in the practice of distance education in the country helped me to be an insider. I was working for the distance learning programme of the college since early 2000. This has implications for my deep understanding of the situation under investigation, as I am fully an insider to the activities and the institution.

In the administration of the institute, I have been the senate member of the college when I was the dean of the institute of distance education. This was during the final three years, before joining this programme of study in October 2006. I was also the coordinator of a unit and deputy dean during previous three years in the same institution. However, there have been two important checks on what might have been my unconscious biases in the research. My awareness of such risks has compelled me, first, to examine and re-examine the data and interpretations by using multiple sources and methods and, secondly, to subject them to reviews rigorously with triangulation (Stenhouse, 1980).

In this chapter, attempt is made to discuss the methodology and specific research techniques used in the research. Moreover, the types of data and how they are analysed, methods of verification and related issues are described as they apply in the particular investigation. With this much about the discussion of the methodology, the proceeding chapters reveal how the details of the research techniques are put in practice to manipulate the data.

CHAPTER 5

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DL PROJECT

This chapter describes the core issues in the development process. To this end, it discusses the project from the level of initiation to end. Finally, the overall development process is summarised by applying systems approach.

5.1 Overview of the Development Process

As mentioned in the first chapter, the distance learning project focused on two major aspects of development. One is upgrading and extension of the technology at the GDLN centre of the civil service college. The second is the development of print based distance learning in the college based on the formal curriculum. The outcomes, as we see the details later in this chapter, are technology with broadband internet and videoconferencing facilities, and a comprehensive print based distance learning programme.

The development process of the project was very lengthy. For instance, as presented in chapter 3, table 3.2 about the timeline of the DL development process, the overall development process took about 8 years, the end of 1998 to the end of 2006. The project design phase was also time taking and took about 3 years from the initiation level to the approval, and the following paragraphs present the formal goal and objectives of the project (Project Appraisal Document, 2001).

Goal and objectives

The goal and objectives of a project are the yardsticks upon which success or failure of the development process is measured. This being the case, the sources of development objectives are the problems they intend to solve (UNDP, 2002:6). This implies that goal and objectives of a project could be perceived in light of the question: "*What is the problem?"* In this regard, goal is a general statement of what should be done to solve a problem. It is defined broadly and explains what is expected from a project (IFUW, 2008-10-27).

As mentioned in chapter 2, identification of a project goal is based on the result of situation analysis. Situation analysis helps project planners and implementers to set up valid goals. Then, the objectives refine the goal into finite sets of specific,

measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) intents (Bartle, 2007). In the distance learning project, though the goal is not indicated, the objectives are fully stated, and from the objectives (see below), the goal can be guessed as: '*To establish capacity of the ECSC for developing and managing distance education courses in the country by using the GDLN facility and print medium'*.

To this end, on 4 April 2001, the major strategic decision makers of the project, in this case, the donor, and the government of Ethiopia through its Ministry of Finance, agreed and signed the project with the following development objectives (PAD, 2001:12).

1) Test the comparative achievement in the learning outcomes, the comparative demand, the comparative costs and cost effectiveness, and the sustainability of several distance learning approaches being implemented by the IDE.
2) Develop capacity of the IDE to manage:
   2.1. The Global Development Learning Network (GDLN) link, (both at the federal level and the five regional centres);
   2.2. The development and use of appropriate printed distance learning materials; and
   2.3. The establishment of seven regional distance learning outreach centres (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:1).

To understand the essence of the objectives, we may discuss each of them one by one. *Objective number (1) "Test the comparative achievement in the learning outcomes, the comparative demand, the comparative costs and cost effectiveness, and the sustainability of several distance learning approaches being implemented by the IDE.*

This objective seems very complex because it includes a lot of issues at the same time and unrealistic in many respects. For example, IDE is established in 1999 with 3 members of staff (2 academics and a secretary). This followed the installation of the GDLN technology in the college and commencing of the courses. Subsequently, the project plan, especially, the print aspect is drafted by those initial staff. Therefore, there were only the VC supported GDLN courses of the Bank at that time. In this regard, the print based courses are developed from scratch after this time and are put in place only in July 2005. From this point of view, there was no way to attain this objective right from the beginning because it assumes comparing different approaches of distance teaching while there was only one approach available. Realistically, any issue of comparing could be expected only after the project is implemented.

Develop the capacity of the IDE to manage:

The GDLN link both at federal level and the five regional centres

As mentioned above, the development process began with the installation of the GDLN technology in the college in 1998. Then, the planning of the development process started as an aspect of the LIL project package for upgrading and expanding the technology to five regions. With this expectation, the project is launched in 2001. The implementation of this objective was very difficult because the project overlapped with another national ICT development programme (see project timeline in table 3.2). As a result of this, the project is restructured in June 2004 and the expansion to regions is totally cancelled from the project. Consequently, the development activities were only about upgrading the GDLN centre and it is performed after restructuring the project in about 2 years' time. We look at the details of this in the later section of this chapter.

The technology was highly expected, especially, as a means of overcoming problems of distance. In fact, it could make a difference if effectively utilised. But learning about new technology definitely takes much time and needs developing the appropriate human resource in the area which has been a critical gap in the country. In reflecting this situation, one of the informants said the following:

> The initial assumption was that the technology would be a kind of breakthrough for the country's development. This is clear from the process of installing the basic videoconferencing technology" (Mamo, 29/08/07).

The informant further confirmed that even the college management was not aware of the plan when the facility for videoconferencing arrived at the college's main campus. In his expression, the informant reflected that he meant the high expectation about the technology was not real.

The GDLN centres are established with this assumption and, as mentioned earlier, the centre has been operational since the end of 1999. In this regard, the country is one of the first 10 centres in the world to join the GDLN network. As mentioned in chapter 1, the courses are facilitated through the World Bank Institute in Washington. The GDLN courses focus on policy issues with topics about poverty reduction, project management, microfinance, anti-corruption, etc. Structurally, these courses are mostly

seminars, and courses of few hours. The technology actually enables the centre in Ethiopia to connect to several centres all over the world at the same time for direct lectures from the Bank's headquarters and helps to share experiences. However, data about participation shows that just 3529 people attended the courses at the centre from the beginning i.e. end of 1999 to 2006. This is very low with utilisation rate of about 20% by the end of the project (ICR 2006:16-20).

Table 5.1: Number of VC course Participants by Sector

Year	Participants By Sector					
	Gov	NGO	Private	Other	Total	Hrs. used
1999	120	0	0	0	120	502
2000-2001	579	31	21	0	631	
2001-2002	446	60	43	45	594	
2002-2003	367	93	86	0	485	
2003-2004	627	93	86	0	806	
2005-May 9 2006	758	42	30	63	893	
TOTAL	2897	319	266	108	3529	

Source: Project Implementation Completion Report (ICR) 2006:4

The technology is undeniably interesting as it enables interactive communication between centres at enormous distance from each other. Of course, it was common to face interruptions within transmissions because of technical problems. The interruptions had been occurring at any point in the network except the main studio at the Bank's headquarters. But the system enables to catch up the missed parts through other means such as: multimedia and printed copies but doesn't really overcome distance factor. More critical matter after development in the college is that the upgrading didn't improve the utilisation of the technology at the GDLN centre. The utilisation rate even falls after the development to less than 10% and all the informants who participated in this study agree on this point. For instance, in one of the interviews, the informant said:

> The facility is highly underutilised. As I could roughly estimate, the utilisation rate is about 8% in 2007. The installation of the facilities in this condition is wastage. As I understand, one of the reasons for the failures is the result of giving low attention to human resource development during the LIL project. At the moment the technical staff lack the capacity to maintain the facility and the system is dependent on

> the World Bank technicians. For instance, you can see our failure to put on the switcher of the video in the communication room, which went off for some reason in mid-August 2007 (Dagim, 27/08/07).

Consequently, as the information from the centre confirms, by the end of 2007, the Bank itself is convinced that it can't manage the technology and decided to decentralise to regional institutions. In line with this, one of the informants reported the following:

> Recently, the Bank recognised the difficulty to manage the expanded structure of this GDLN organisation, and is trying to decentralise the system to regions; and the centres are currently on technology transition. That is, the Association for African Development Learning Centres (AADLC) is going to take over the task of GDLN for African countries. Similar system is being developed for all regions of the world (Abeje, 18/09/08).

This decision came soon after the upgrading is completed in Ethiopia, and the above discussion, in general, shows the failure of the technology development at least for the first couple of years. Training of staff of the Civil Service College in Addis Ababa and the regional centres is stressed in the project document (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:4). This is largely conceived in the sense of using technology for the training. But in reality, technology has not been utilised for this purpose.

Moreover, the capacity development plan for the GDLN doesn't reflect any concern about the requirement for developing the corresponding human resources. Consequently, the human aspect is especially poorly implemented and almost all tasks related to this development became installing the infrastructure and technology for videoconferencing and multimedia (see also section 5.2.2 below). Thus, this aspect of the project is ambiguously stated and missed one key ingredient of development, that is, training of technical staff for the purpose. The technology has not been effective and it is difficult to perceive its contributions at this level.

The objective 2.2, "the development and use of appropriate printed distance learning materials"

In capacity building through human resource development, one can recognise that capacity building is "a moving target" and as soon as a progress is made, new challenges emerge and require further capacity building (AfDB, UNECA and World Bank, 2005). From 1996 to 1998, the UKOU was involved in the government's

capacity development scheme, known as 'Management Development Programme' (Tumdolo, 2003:1-4). The presence of the OU has inspired the idea of using distance learning and influenced the civil service college, and the major project document of the distance learning clearly reflects this fact. For example, in the project design document produced by the World Bank, states:

> The British Open University has been advising the CSC on the start-up of the print media based distance learning, and might be recruited (possibly on a sole source basis) to advice during execution (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:9).

The college staff, who were working in the college since 1998, also confirm the same. For example, one of the staff interviewees stated the following comprehensive comments about the effect of the OU on the project idea:

> The Open University staff had been regularly visiting the college to discuss how distance learning could be organised in the college starting from the year 1998. Even, it was the OU staff who advised the college officials about how to obtain fund for distance learning programme. The OU people have learned about the system while working in the Management Development Programme. I can tell you the college officials had no idea about distance teaching at that time. I think OU had big influence on the Bank and that is why the Bank agreed their involvement without competition with other similar institutions around the world. This is against the Bank's own policy of open bidding but anyway the work is done well. The real interest of OU can be long term consultancy service to the distance learning programme. But you see the OU also didn't achieve its goal well at the end because the project was cut short (Getu, 23/09/08).

From the above comments, we can see that the presence of the OU in the capacity building programme of the country is the key factor for the emergence of the innovative idea into the system. As mentioned in chapter 3, after the idea of distance teaching, the civil service college stressed the need to teach the civil servants at the place where they live than bringing them to the central campus. Accordingly, this is legitimate origin of the idea for developing distance learning programme in the community. Subsequently, the strategy of teaching at distance appeared in the college's Five-Year Institutional Development plan of 1998/99-2002/03 for the first time (ECSC, September 1998). Thus, the distance teaching strategy evolved in the community from this background; and in 1999, the college stressed the need to focus on distance learning in its mission and vision statement. Therefore, the distance

learning project entered the national LIL project package through such a complicated process of influences and adapting mission of the civil service college.

Regarding the evolution of the project idea, it should be stressed here that the new idea is based on genuine perception of the real needs of the community. For example, as mentioned earlier, statistical reports show that the number of civil servants in Ethiopia is 300,000 in early 2000s and less than 20% of this has got formal training beyond secondary level (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:2). In support of this point, as discussed in chapter 6, section 6.6, after the distance learning project, the Civil Service College has enrolled many times more students in the print based distance learning programme than the regular programme (see also table 6.5 in chapter 6 section 6.6).

This further shows that the strategy for developing the print based distance learning programme was reasonable and well grounded. Moreover, as we see later in this chapter, it is the only aspect clearly understood by implementers and handled professionally and relatively well attained. Some of the reasons for the success might be: one, it is more related to teaching profession, which is clearer and more understandable by the implementing agency (the civil service college). Two, the college has organised sufficient human resources to manage this task more systematically for the implementation. As mentioned above, IDE was established in 1999 with few staff and strengthened in 2000 with 8 permanent staff, most of which were with MA degrees in education and curriculum. Three, the consultancy is contracted with the UKOU as sole consultant with rich experience in the area to develop and implement distance learning. In this regard, the OU met the tight schedule of the project plan and all the proposed course materials were fully developed, in 48 subjects in 3 disciplines for diploma programme (accounting, law, and management). These were done within one year and actual distance teaching started in July 2005 (see also the project timeline in table 3.2 in chapter 3).

The objective 2.3, "*the establishment of seven regional distance learning centres"* is specific and measurable structurally. This is achieved even over the plan in terms of quantity because 9 regional centres are opened at the end. This was one of the most easily attempted tasks, but qualitatively, the result is not at all related to the development idea intended at the beginning of the project. For instance, it doesn't

include any aspect of GDLN technology that was in mind at the designing phase. The centres are simple offices with furniture and normal office equipment (chairs, tables, telephone, computer, printer and copier). More critically, this aspect is with high potential danger to the distance learning programme because the student support system as a key function here is poorly organised from the headquarters to regional centres. This point is reflected further in relation to the challenges in staffing and logistics presented in the proceeding chapters.

From the above discussion, we can realise that the objectives of the project were complex. They are stated not only with poor understanding of the situation but also generally lack the criteria for specificity, measurability, attainability, and defining the time. These factors made it difficult to monitor the progress in line with the objectives; and from what actually happened in the development process, one can rather understand the following as the practical objectives of the project:

1. To establish and upgrade a Global Development Learning Network (GDLN) centre in the Ethiopian Civil Service College in two years.
2. To organise an institute of distance education (IDE) in the Ethiopian Civil Service College for teaching and training civil servants on print based distance learning approach in one year.

If these were the stated objectives, the project could have been easily managed and the performance be measured precisely than merging unrelated features of development that only added complications.

The discussion in this section reflects that the origin of the project idea for distance learning in Ethiopia was the result of the influence of the UK Open University. This is because the country lacks national strategy to promote distance learning and there had not been relevant capacity in the culture. This being the case, the goal and objectives of the project are stated without sufficient understanding of the situation and missed the reality on the ground and didn't help for monitoring the implementation.

5.2 The Design

A design is a goal-oriented, purposeful activity of decision making and involves exploring and learning a situation before operation. In this sense, design depends on the perception of the designer and may constrain performance of a project (Gero,

2000:183-185). A project needs definition to get at the right start; and this helps all stakeholders to have a common perspective about it. A project originates from a definition, which is a formal description of a project usually done through workshops (Bartle, 2007). In this regard, definition helps to share the goal and objectives of a project and creates the opportunity for brainstorming among the stakeholders. It also enables to choose the best possible ways of managing the implementation.

In the distance learning LIL project, it is not documented whether the project definition workshop was held or not. The project staff on the beneficiary's side, however, have participated in a meeting on the project launching session on 2 February 2001, which preceded the signing of the project document and approval which is made two months later (i.e. 4 April 2001). The meeting was in the main auditorium of the college, and all the project design is already finalised at that time. Similarly, the informants about the project from the beneficiary's side report that every strategy related to the project are decided between the donor and the government and given to the implementers readymade. For example, a critical defect about participation is reflected in the following comment of one of the respondents.

> We are not consulted about the final objective documented in the Project Appraisal Document, which determines everything about the DL LIL project. As I recognise, the objectives were wrongly stated. The proposal by the college was not focused in the major document (Alemu, 25/08/07).

This shows that the identification of the project is made by the top decision makers (the donor and the government of the country) without involvement of the beneficiary. In this regard, the overall situation shows that the government and the donor might have decided the project when installing the VC facility in the college campus in July 1998 (see table 3.2 about project timeline in chapter 3). For example, in an interview, one informant, who was among the college management team during the event, said the following:

> I remember during the initiation of the whole LIL project, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) and the Bank signed an agreement on the amount of money to be invested in the project. This was in 1998, and following this, the VC satellite was sent to the ECSC by the Bank in July the same year and the history of the project begins here (Mamo, 29/08/07).

Similarly, in another interview, one of the respondents commented the following:

> The design and objectives of the project as it appears in the project appraisal document are set up by the Bank's team at the country office. The print aspect which we proposed was included in the design as subcomponent. We proposed only the print aspect of distance learning because it was what we understand well and can manage (Getu, 25/08/07, central staff).

This shows that the objectives of the development project were given to the implementing institution as readymade. Similarly, as commented below by an informant, the satellite dish for the DL is installed in the college campus in July 1998 (see also table 3.2 about project timeline in chapter 3). This was reported to be through verbal instruction from the prime minister's office. Similar view is reflected by another informant who had been working in the ECSC since establishment of the institution as follows:

> As I have noticed, the initiation of the DL project begins with the installation of the VC facility in the ECSC campus in July 1998. The college was even not aware of the plan when the facility is received. I remember, the facility was caught by customs authority when it arrived in Addis. The Bank may be unaware of the monopoly of the telecommunication Agency in the country at the moment in sending the satellite dish without clearing things. And the intervention of the prime minister's office was required to release the facility at that time (Abeje, 03/08/2007).

Therefore, it seems that the government and the World Bank had a de facto agreement to establish distance learning in the civil service college at the beginning of the LIL project idea. Therefore, at this level, the whole process reveals top-down approach of development with its all implications. From the points discussed above, the focus of the government on the college is sufficiently reflected. In the project document, issues about alternative are explained as follows:

> Initially, it was planned to go ahead with only upgrading the GDLN site in the CSC in Addis Ababa. However, as a central part of the mandate of the CSC is to serve the development of the civil services in the regional states, especially those in emerging regions, any system that only helps train people in Addis Ababa misses the large proportion of civil servants most needing training (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:6).

The above explanation is aimed at saying something about project alternatives because development projects, in principle, require such explanations. However, the planners chose to escape from the reality by talking about something else. This is because the project site was already decided by the strategic decision makers to be at the civil service college.

This being the case, during the first meeting, the only thing done was that the project team from the donor agency explained the project plan and strategy to the audience selected from the implementing agency. For example, the project appraisal document which is the leading document was fully developed by the donor agency; and only the signature was not put by the concerned officials of the development partners at the moment. This being the case, nothing was changed subsequently in the content of the project document as a result of the meeting. This further reflects the non-participatory approach of the development process. However, as discussed in the literature chapter, project plan should be participatory (see section 2.2 in chapter 2). Thus, we can understand that the development process of the distance learning misses the fundamental criteria for a development project.

Technology or print? Donor and beneficiary differences

As discussed in the literature, the most rudimentary issue at the start of designing a development project is situation analysis, which leads to definition and setting goal and objectives of the project. Situation analysis is very important procedure for development activities because it provides an opportunity to understand the dynamism of circumstances and helps to clarify social, economic, cultural and political conditions. This approach enables identification of the key characteristics and problems of the community (Mbullu, 2007). To this end, the common approaches are document reviews, surveys, discussions with individuals or groups and the community at large. Interviews, observations, brainstorming, informal conversations, etc. are also common techniques for this purpose (Bartle, 2007).

In this perspective, situation analysis provides a good ground for planning project (Anthony and Govindarajan, 2004:55). Therefore, it is through this process that project planners and implementers identify strengths and weaknesses (internal force), opportunities and threats (external force) before starting implementation. The strength and opportunities are positive forces that should be exploited. The weaknesses and threats are hindrances that can hamper project implementation and implementers should devise means of overcoming the difficulties (IFUW, 2008-10-27).

In the distance learning project, situation analysis was attempted but it involves only certain aspect of the whole. For example, explanation about the civil service system of

the country and the key role of the civil service college in the capacity building strategy of the country through distance teaching are some elements of situation analysis. This is discussed in the background of the project document; and the techniques used were referencing to document and secondary data about the profile of the country from reports. The need assessments conducted by the college is also referred to as a means for the analysis (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:1-3).

The broad aspect discussed in the situation analysis as it appears in the document focused mainly on justifying the position of the college and involvement of the UKOU. The document rather stresses the political commitment in directing the project to the college but didn't analyse anything about the background of the college. For example, the strength or weakness of the college to handle the responsibility is not discussed. The general trend of the situation in the country, such as the number of semi-professionals in the civil service system and related training needs are the only issues discussed (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:2).

The needs assessment conducted in October 2000 by the college through the institute of distance education focused on the potential learners. Both the print based distance learning programme and the GDLN/DLC courses are surveyed during the needs assessment (ECSC/IDE, 2001). This shows an attempt to deal with the development matter systematically. As per the result of the survey, the project document states the extreme shortage of trained human power in the country. For instance, as mentioned earlier, out of 300,000 civil servants in the country, 83% didn't attend postsecondary education at that time (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:2). This is why priority is given, for example, to lower levels of training (diploma) than degree level at the project stage and the decision was relevant in this regard.

Further result of the survey for the print aspect of development reveals that most of the potential students have passed the national exams, have families, can study at home, and have radios and tape recorders than TVs, video players, and computers. Therefore, the focus on print and audio materials for the courses begins from this data; and the distance learning materials are developed base as print and audiocassettes. In fact, the audio is for English language courses only. In short, the above situation was the ground for focusing on diploma courses and developing materials in limited media than blended approach at the moment.

Regarding the demand for the GDLN/DLC centre, the result of the need assessment shows that the courses are useful but expensive and individuals cannot afford to pay the course fees from their meagre salary. For instance, at that time, the fee for a short course to be complete in a week was about $100. But the average salary of potential participants per week was about $45. Moreover, the government institutions lack the culture of allocating budget for training to upgrade their human resource requirements in the country (needs assessment survey, ECSC/IDE, 2000). However, the planners didn't mention these findings about the GDLN courses at all in the project document. Perhaps this is because the result doesn't support the technology development. To the contrary, as we see later, the technology development had been dominating the whole process of the distance learning project although the plan is not based on solid ground.

Thus, the result of situation analysis as documented in the project design reflects only the print course development. In this regard, the print is the only development aspect planned with a sound basis and needs analysis. Furthermore, in the needs assessment survey, it was reported that the technology can be useful if it can be used for facilitating delivery of formal degree courses than seminars, meetings, and short courses. But the system did choose to go along this line. For instance, agreement is signed with University of South Africa (UNISA) in 2005 for partnership to offer high degree courses using this technology. But the college didn't take further action in this direction than signing the agreement (Memorandum of Agreement, 2005). In the meantime, UNISA organised its own regional centre in Addis Ababa, early 2007, and started teaching high degree courses including PhD through the new centre. It is not clear why the college doesn't use its resources to the maximum.

As mentioned in chapter 1, the GDLN technology is designed by the Bank with the purpose of facilitating knowledge sharing between developing countries and information sources all over the world. Moreover, the Bank dominates the development processes in its partnership and the situation of the distance learning project clearly reflected this trend. In the particular situation, as mentioned earlier, the most important plan (Project Appraisal Document), which determines the overall design of the project, is prepared by the Bank staff and the beneficiary had little chance to change anything about it. Thus, the document gears all strategic decisions in

the development process as the Bank's mandate and it grants the donor to check every activity (Project Appraisal Document, 2001).

This being the case, clear differences of interest is observed between the donor and the beneficiary. In this perspective, the college was more interested in the print aspect of distance learning as opposed to the Bank's interest in technology. This is reflected in the project plans as compiled in the annex of the project appraisal document produced by the World Bank. In the annex of this document, all the documents produced by the college reflected only the print aspect of the project. Therefore, due to the power disparity in the relations, the development of technology had been the overriding strategy and the print aspect is less focused in the whole process. In this perspective, one of the informants stated:

> …all the documents we produced focused on the print based aspect than technology. But when we submit our interests to the Bank's country office, they added the GDLN technological aspect by using their position. The design and objectives of the project as it appears in the project appraisal document are set up by the Bank's team at the country office. The print aspect which we proposed was included in the design as subcomponent (Getu, 25/08/07).

This clearly shows the difference in the interests between the two stakeholders and domination of the strategy by the donor agency. As a result of the supremacy of the donor side, the development strategies are designed from the Bank's perception of reality. However, the perception on that side was not accurate enough to understand the context. For example, right at the beginning of the strategy document, the following is stated: "The proposed operation directly contributes…through massive distance learning programs directed to civil service, NGO, and private sector personnel" (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:2). This is logical and perfect idea but not true in the situation. The statement rather reveals the wrong perception about the college by the Bank's staff in that it assumes the private sector and non-governmental organisations' (NGO) employees will also be targets of the college, when in reality they will not.

This idea can be seen in the proposed seminars, meetings and short courses facilitated through the GDLN technology. But, as mentioned above, individuals cannot pay the fees for those courses and whilst the organisations that sponsor the courses sometimes include participants from the private sector. The statistics, table 5.1above, reflect this.

However, in any of the formal approaches of education and training, the college doesn't share this value as it exclusively targets government employees (ECSC, 2004). With such misunderstanding and upper hand of one side, the primary focus of the project was on the GDLN technology development. This is precisely because the technology is expected to be the ground for realising the key development requirements of human resource in the country (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:2).

In short, the above discussion reveals that two areas of development are focused by the project (technology and print). But the project is planned based on top-down model without proper analysis of the key issues of development in the situation and so the implementing group is given the strategies without involving in the decision making process. Thus, the overall development strategy tends to favour technology as the major tendency of the donor agency.

5.2.1 Restructuring of the project

In the earlier discussions, it is stressed that the development process is generally dominated by the donor in making the strategic decisions. Consequently, when certain procedure gets stuck somewhere up in the hierarchy, the project staff in the implementing agency had no choice than passive waiting. This being the case, as stated earlier, the project which is initiated in 1998 is approved on 4 April 2001. At the time, its effective date was 31 January 2002, and closing date was 31 December 2004 (ICR, 4 October 2006:5).

After launching the project, the release of fund is delayed and some of the requests sent to the Bank took over a year for response. For instance, the request for developing the print based distance learning and e-learning courses is delivered to the Bank by mid-2002 and the response was in June 2004 during restructuring. The bidding documents for upgrading the existing GDLN centre in the college and establishing other five new regional Distance Learning Centres (DLC), was sent to the Bank on 9 October 2002 and the response was in June 2004. During restructuring of the project in June 2004, as mentioned above, it was reported that the cause for the delays was the government's proposal for another project for ICT infrastructure development. The new project, especially, clashed with the plan to extend the GDLN technology at the college to regions (Aide Memoire, 18 June 2004).

The new project of the government is a nationwide satellite-based network to provide videoconferencing and internet connectivity, called Woreda-net (ICR 4 October 2006). This is planned for about 600 districts in the whole country, to be installed at local governments, agricultural research centres, various regional and federal government agencies, and public colleges and universities across the country. The Woreda-net project was under the ministry of capacity building, and the Civil Service College has been under the same ministry.

Therefore the requests of the distance learning project were simply stopped by the Bank because the technology originally planned for the 5 outreach centres, which was planned by the Bank itself, was out-dated with one-way video whilst the new proposal for Woreda-net was two-way video. In this regard, the two technologies will end up incompatible later in the system if continued if implemented as per the original plan (ICR 4 October 2006). Identification of the problem is legitimate; but the decision makers who put the project on and off did not take any action to make the necessary change in time. So until the problem is solved after 3 year, everything about the distance learning project was put aside. The real reason for the delay in the procurement of goods and services for the upgrading of the GDLN facilities in the distance learning project was this factor. Consequently, there was very little disbursement of the project fund during this period, and by June 2004, six months before the original closing date of December 2004, less than 10% of the total project budget was disbursed.

The Bank's mission that first discussed the problem with the government produced the first Aide Memoire on 20 May 2003. This is more than two years after the project is approved. The change of plan for the five regional GDLN centres at this time was not treated as a restructuring of the project. This was not even communicated to the project implementing team in the Civil Service College before June 2004. This clearly shows problem of communication among the project teams and highly politicised structure of the system that resulted excessive wastage of time.

A supervision report about the distance learning project, in the Aide Memoire of May 2003 states that the government would file a request for one year extension of the closing date for the distance learning project (PSR no. 5, June 2003). The corresponding request was submitted on 16 December 2003, for extension until June

2006. This request was accompanied by a revised Project Implementation and Procurement Plans. But the project was already rated unsatisfactory by the Bank since early 2003 due to low credit disbursement and cannot benefit from extension as per the regulation of the donor agency. Thus, the Bank did not respond to the extension request. However, unofficial feedbacks from the agency stress the need to turn the project to satisfactory level before asking for extension. But the system cannot move because the technology aspect which gets more emphasis was stuck.

In April 2004, the donor assigned the third Team Leader to the project and this was the turning point for the real job. In May 2004, a supervision mission led by the responsible Sector Director of the Bank visited the project site. During this mission two fundamental decisions were made (ICR 4 October 2006):

1. Activities related to the establishment of the five regional centres were removed from the distance learning project and transferred to the ICT Department of the Ministry of Capacity Building for implementation.
2. The government decided to equip the 5 regional centres with two-way-video conferencing equipment as part of the Woreda-Net system.

In the process, the parties agreed that the distance learning project needs to be restructured and reduced in scope (ICR 4 October 2006). Then, activities which were assumed to be unachievable before the project's closing date, for example, extension of GDLN centre to regions were cancelled without subsequent updating of the corresponding objectives and indicators. Thus, it is not difficult to ask why these decisions were not made early enough when the problem is noticed early 2002; and this clearly reveals that the real focus of the project was technology and the implementers have no capacity to alter the bureaucratic structure of the decision making process.

Subsequently, in June 2004, a supervision mission of the donor visited the Civil Service College with the aim of bring the project to satisfactory status within three months' time by applying the restructuring strategy by reducing the scope of the remaining activities to a realistic level. This was to prepare the ground for extension of the closing date from the Bank if successful. During the restructuring, the mission understood the problem in the project design but cannot change the project objectives as it is the mandate of higher authorities in the Bank. During this time, the Bank, the

Ministry of Capacity Building and the Civil Service College formally agreed to cancel the extension of the GDLN to the five regional Distance Learning Centres. In this regard, an amended Credit Agreement was signed by the donor and the Government on 30 June 2004 (Aide Memoire, 18 June 2004).

During the restructuring, changes are made on the structure, design, scope, implementation arrangements and schedule, and funding allocations. Subsequently, most of the fund was cancelled from the distance learning project and moved to ICT project. Consequently, the initial fund was $7.1 million that is reduced to $2.954 million. Of this, the Bank's (IDA) share was reduced from $4.9 million to $2.55 million. The Counterpart (government) fund was also reduced from $2.2 million to $0.4 million in the restructuring process (Aide Memoire, 18 June 2004). The change led to the development of feasible plan of the project that is finally implemented. See also the tables 5.2 and 5.3 as well as section about performance after restructuring below.

The management structure

In chapter 2 section 2.2, we have discussed that project management should be flexible enough to respond to specific situation. The original management structure was agreed jointly by the Bank and the college, in a joint meeting at the ECSC; and it was agreed to manage the project through the normal administrative structure (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:9; Project Implementation Manual, 2001). This being the case, when the structure is developed for implementation, it became more complex than the normal bureaucracy. For example, within the college alone, four hierarchical committees were organised for the project management in addition to the formal administrative requirements involved. This is clearly defined and explained in the Project Implementation Manual (PIM, 2001:14-16). The original structure of management of the project was also slightly changed during the restructuring.

The original structure involves: steering committee, management committee, implementation team, and institute council as described below.

1. *The project steering committee*: This is the highest body for the implementation of the project and consists of highest management body of the college. The members of this committee were:

1) The President of the college-(Chair)
2) Academic Vice President of the college-(Secretary)
3) Vice President for Business and Institutional Development-(member)
4) Head of Administration and Finance Department- (member)
5) Dean of IDE- (member)
6) Deputy Dean of IDE-(member)

As we see in the above list, the group consists of the top officials in the system and many in number. The mandate of this committee is deciding on institutional policy issues related to the project in general and the following are the specific duties assigned to it:

- Approve the academic plan, programmes and budgets of the project.
- Decide and follow the implementation of infrastructure, IT systems, etc.
- Fulfil and check adequate resource allotment for the implementation and running of the project.
- Decide on staff development, training and check that training needs and polices are fine tuned to the national development programme.
- Ensure and monitor the distance learning project and achievements against quality standards.

Meetings: The committee was expected to meet four times a year to review and take remedial actions and facilitate the proper implementation of the project. However, in practice, this committee didn't meet at all.

2. *The project management committee*: This committee was formed in order to implement the policy direction and decisions set by the above committee (steering committee).

This committee was given responsibility for the effective operations of the project. It was assumed to be engaged in problem solving and issuing guidelines to facilitate the implementation of the project at the headquarters and regional centres. The members of the committee were:

1) The Academic Vice President (Chair);
2) Vice President for Business and Institutional Development-(member);

3) IDE Dean-(Secretary);
4) IDE Deputy Dean-(member);
5) Dean of the Faculty of Business and Economics-(member);
6) Head of Administration and Finance Department-(member);
7) Dean of the Faculty of Law-(member);
8) Project Procurement Officer-(member);
9) Project Finance Officer-(member).

This is again a very complicated group with many members and the position in the list also reflects the political dimension of the organisation. For instance, the placement of a member above the secretary on the list clearly reflects this although this is not necessary in the nature of a project. With this structure, this committee is organised for the following duties.

- Implement the resolutions of the steering committee.
- Review and submit an annual work plan and budget to the steering committee.
- Review the progress reports received from the project implementation group and IDE and take appropriate action.
- Oversee the financial management and procurement functions of the project.
- Ensure that a proper financial system is in place at regional centres.
- Advise the project implementation group, project implementation team and IDE.
- Follow up the performance of the project implementation group.
- Perform such other tasks given by the steering committee.

As we see in the above list, the mandates of this group are quite detailed and specific to be done by a committee like this.

Meetings: This committee is designed to meet every three weeks to implement the project tasks. But in practice, as the earlier one, this committee didn't meet during the whole project life. The problem with this committee is the same as that of the steering committee with a long list involving busy officials.

Regarding the dormancy of the higher committees designed for the project, one informant said the following in an interview.

> The project management system appeared hierarchical because of the nature of decision making in the traditional approach as practiced in the college. The DL project was structured without awareness about the real situation and was inappropriate with too many committees. There was no need of creating many hierarchical committees consisting of busy top officials (Mamo, 29/08/07).

The above comment reflects the unrealistic nature of the designed structure for the purpose of project management. The conception of the designers was based on simple institutional politics and power than the need for flexibility for efficiency to fit problem solving nature than formal requirement. This is one of the key ingredients missed in this particular project.

3. *Project implementation team:* This committee is organised to facilitate the operations of the project in academic and administrative dimensions on a day-to-day basis. The committee has the following structure:

    1) IDE Dean-(chair);
    2) Head of Administration and Finance Department-(member);
    3) Project Procurement Officer-(member); and
    4) Project Finance Officer-(member).

As we can understand from the above list, this committee is simpler with less number of officials involved; and it is organised to perform the following duties:

1) Coordinate and facilitate the day-to-day finance and procurement activities of the project.
2) Prepare an annual work program and procurement plan.
3) Prepare progress reports on financial and procurement matters.
4) Ensure that the World Bank procedures as specified in the project implementation manual are followed in all procurement matters.
5) Liaison with the World Bank (IDA) for all purchases requiring prior review.
6) Prepare as a team an annual procurement plan and implement it.
7) Coordinate training on procurement.

As shown in the above list, the job of this committee is clear and specific. Structurally, it is simpler than the higher committees. The frequency of meeting was not defined for this group in the Project Implementation Manual. However, it is the group that met regularly to implement the project. But as reflected in the list of responsibilities of this committee, it has little authority to make any decision than proposing issues to the higher committees or administration.

4. *IDE Institute Council*: This is a permanent body for the Institute of Distance Education's day to day operations.

The activities of the project get into the formal institutional bureaucracy at this stage and the business goes into official procedures. The members of this committee are the following and the members are those who operate in the permanent structure of the institute in those times:

1) Dean (chair);
2) Deputy Dean-(member); and
3) Unit/team Heads (3)-(member).

As the body of the institute management, this was the closest team to the day-to-day operations of the project and all the performance of the project was actually the result of this group.

As discussed in chapter 2, by its very nature, a project management requires flexibility for a proactive and fast decision making process. However, from the above description, it could be seen that the distance learning project followed hierarchical and bureaucratic orientation, which doesn't fit the nature of project management. The project was one of its kinds in the college in that such a development project was not implemented in the institution before the DL project. This being the case, the leadership politicised the situation and wanted to control everything even more tightly than the normal bureaucracy. This was due to misunderstanding of the principles of organising development projects and it adversely affected the actual performance.

From the above discussion, one can realise that persons at lower positions are more suitable for project management. The system gives no authority for project team. For instance, the project team was not able to apply the materials purchased for the

intended purpose unless authorised by the formal management of the college. This affected not only the performance in the activities but also misplacement of the materials. For example, all the vehicles purchased for the project were not used for the purpose. A lot of the equipment and facilities purchased for the project were allocated to other sections than IDE. For example, one of the interviewees stated the following:

> Half of the materials such as furniture and computers were allocated to other sections; and of course, all of the vehicles are not used for the purpose. But anyway they are not lost and are being used for some purpose (Alemu, 25/08/07).

The informant didn't want to reflect his distress about the system directly; however, his dissatisfaction was clearly revealed from his expression. Therefore, the design of the management structure of the distance learning project was not based on the principle of good practice of project management and was highly political.

As mentioned earlier, new structure was applied after the restructuring of the project. This time, a little administrative flexibility was tolerated and more attention was given to the project activities on both sides. Here, a management unit, comprising seven members was organised and the earlier committees, described above under the management structure were dropped. The new project management unit was overlooked by the Vice President for Business and Institutional Development of the college. This was designed to facilitate issues of finance in the short time available because all issues related to fund is in the hands of the Vice President in the management structure of the institution. To compensate for the wasted time, tight schedule is designed by the implementing team and the real action started mid June 2004 and the arrangement with the UKOU enable successful implementation of the plan (Aide Memoire, 18 June 2004). See also the project outline and table 3.2 in chapter 3.

The project was evaluated several times by the Bank. In this regard, as mentioned earlier, the project was marked 'unsatisfactory' before the restructuring. For instance, before the end of 2003, a significant procurement in the project was the purchase of 3 vehicles. Project evaluation technique of the Bank is simple. It is done by looking at the rate of disbursement than number and size of activities performed and the time they take (ICR, October 2006: 8). Subsequent to the restructuring, the Bank's team visited the project site in October 2004 to evaluate the performance over the 4 months

and the project was rated ‘unsatisfactory’ again because disbursement of the fund was still low (Aide Memoire, 15 April 2005).

After 6 months, the project was judged ‘satisfactory’. This time, it was not because the working objectives of the project were closer to being realised but most of the tasks cost enormous amount of money. For example, the consultancy service of the OU is $421,760.00 in amount and its 50% was paid. These payments significantly improved the disbursement rate. But the activities that take most of the time such as course development on day-to-day bases do not appear on the disbursement of the project as cost. This is again the reflection of the problem in the design as it fails to integrate time in the process. Therefore, the design fails to consider the workflow in the development process. This is underlined in the literature section 2.2 as one of the key features of good practices in project design.

Following the progress, the closing date of the project was extended by 1 year, i.e., to 31 December 2005 (Aide Memoire, 15 April 2005). The remaining tasks were smoothly performed except the procurement of the equipment for upgrading the GDLN centre, which took about one year even after contracting and advance payment. This required another extension for six months; and it is accomplished during the final days (Aide Memoire, 2 June 2006).

In short, the distance learning project was launched in April 2001; and due to low rate of disbursement, it was restructured in June 2004. The inefficiency was due to the delays in decision about contingencies in the technological aspect of development and highly politicised system of management.

5.2.2 Performance after restructuring

The cancellation of fund was helpful to the success of the project because it increased the proportion of the disbursement rate. As mentioned above, the project achieved satisfactory level six months after restructuring. During this period, the percentage of expenditure after each transaction grew on the smaller amount of fund (ICR 4 October 2006).

Moreover, activities were put on faster track after restructuring and performance of the revised task schedule became possible. As reflected in the above section, the development of technology was the most critical bottleneck in the development

process. The supply of the technology was contracted with an international firm called CIBER through the Bank's Information Solution Group (ISG) which adds additional procedures not noticed earlier. The procedure for contracting with the firm started in December 2004; but the installation of the technology was not complete by the closing date of December 2005 (the first extension). Consequently, as mentioned above, the project required another extension, i.e. to the end of June 2006.

This being the case, the outcome of the technology is a well updated GDLN centre with interactive videoconferencing (VC) facility installed in a redesigned building of the college. This involves a VC room with capacity up to 35 trainees at a time, a multimedia room, a communication room, 2 breakout rooms, 2 computer labs, an internet café, and five offices. However, as mentioned earlier, the upgrading didn't improve the utilisation of the technology. The computer labs are used only for two groups of trainees (about 2 months) from 2006 to 2008, and the internet café has not been used for the purpose at all (Begna, 17/09/08, Dagim, 27/08/07).

Therefore, although the whole problem during the project life was around facilitating the technological aspect of the project, this aspect remained unrealistic for the intended activities. The management of this aspect of the project had been less understood and less coordinated, both by the donor and the beneficiary. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the same is the cause for the delays in the project implementation process.

The print aspect was relatively straight forward, it started in October 2004 and it was fully done in a year. As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, out of all the components, this is better achieved in the development endeavour. It is also discussed that this aspect is the only component for which the result of needs assessment was considered and priorities identified. The significance of this aspect is also revealed by the high demand reflected through high enrolment of students in the fields of study for the diploma programme as we see later in chapter 7.

As mentioned earlier, one factor for the success of the project is the college's commitment in assembling the necessary human resources. For example, the college hired more than ten staff to facilitate this activity, and soon after initiation of the project it added many more until the end. This shows high commitment of the college management in promoting the development process. The other factor here is the involvement of the UK Open University as a reliable consultant with rich experience.

As briefly mentioned in chapter 1, training of the human resource and course development for the print aspect was facilitated by the UKOU staff. In August 2004, 103 subject area specialists were trained. This group served as course material developers (course authors/writers and editors). Eight (8) IDE staff visited the UK OU for short term training and sharing experiences. This is made in two rounds (December 2004 and February 2005). For 25 IDE staff, training was offered in designing and running the print based distance learning courses. Besides, training of trainers (TOT) was conducted for 35 tutor trainers by two other OU staff. Furthermore, 15 IDE staff participated on training about educational marketing by another staff of the OU. This input placed the institute in a relatively better position in the country. It enabled the college not only to develop course materials and manage the programme, but also facilitated its capacity to train its tutors and course developers on its own after the project.

To facilitate the teaching-learning process at the regions, 310 part-time tutors were selected, contracted and trained in the Regional Centres and Study Centres. The tutors were working in 21 study centres throughout the country when this study was conducted. In course development, 48 distance learning courses were designed, and developed in the 3 fields of study: accounting, law and management for diploma programme. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the college started distance teaching in diploma programme by July 2005. High quality teaching materials were produced in the process, printed, and stored in the college's store before the end of the project.

Therefore, the performance after the restructuring of the project was enormous and all that can be implemented is done within 2 years. In this regard, among the key factors that influenced the process are the following.

- The size of the fund is reduced to less than half and disbursement, which was below 10% at the time of restructuring (June 2004), went up quickly on the smaller amount;
- All actors recognised the consequence of the delay leads to termination of the project without result;
- The IDE staff were ready to work to the success of the project without remuneration;
- The administrative structure of the project was improved;

- The government fund was readily available all times;
- Purchase requisitions were executed faster because electronic messages were agreed to be used for actions;
- Monitoring and evaluation became regular through supervision missions from the Bank; and
- Activities were well recorded and all missions conclude with Aide Memoire.

All the above factors have implications on the achievement of the project. As a result of the development project, the college was able to enrol thousands of students, who could never access the college. The institution was also able to provide training to other distance learning institutions in the country in 2006 in the skills of course design and student support by using the experience gained through the development project.

The budgetary structure of the project, as we see below reflects some features that have implications about the decision making process of the project.

5.2.3 The budgetary structure

The distance learning project budget is based on the following five components. The components are described without timing and they only indicate the rough estimate of budgets as given in the table below (PAD, 2001:3-5).

Table 5.2 The original project budget

	Activity	Budget in USD Total
1	GDLN Upgrading	1.0 million
2	Satellite Rental	1.4 million
3	Development of Print Media	1.3 million
4	Training	0.8 million
5	Capacity Development and technical assistance	2.6 million
Total		7.1 million

(Adapted from, the project appraisal document, 2001:3)

As shown in the above table, the total project budget was originally $7.1 million, of which $4.9 million was the World Bank's (IDA) share and the remaining $2.2 million was Ethiopian government's contribution (PAD, 2001:19). This shows a ratio of about (70% to 30%) in the original budget but after restructuring, it is about (87% to 13%) (see the table below). Apparently, the contribution of the donor is much higher,

and the disparity of power in the decision making process, as mentioned earlier, somehow, correlates with the differences in resource allocation.

If we look at the figures, in the above table, the budgetary commitment among the components shows certain interesting feature. The item number 1 and 5 are focused on the development of technology. Item number 2 is not development; it is just the maintenance of the technology. The amount is changed during restructuring, as we see in the table below, but the trend is similar.

The budget after restructuring

After the restructuring process, the components and budget of the project had the characteristics presented in the following table.

Table 5.3 Project budget after restructuring

Project Components	Budget planned in (USD)		
	Gov.	IDA	Total
1. GDLN facilities upgrading and extension	19,864	641,209	661,073
2. Satellite rental, maintenance & other operation costs for GDLN centre	12,960	89,805	102,765
3. Development of printed media for distance learning	64,837	471,358	536,195
4. Training	204,670		204,670
5. Capacity development & Technical Assistance	100,319	1,238,592	1,338,911
Total baseline cost	402,650	2,440,964	2,843,614
6. Physical & price contingency (Unallocated)		110,000	110,000
Total project cost	402,650	2,550,964	2,953,614

Source: ECSC Project Finance Office, June, 2004

As mentioned above, the source of most of the budget had been the donor and mostly the budget is committed to technology. Besides, as presented earlier, most of the budget is cancelled and transferred to ICT infrastructure project during the restructuring because the latter is similar approach of technology development (see section on restructuring above). As shown in the above table, the maximum budgets are allocated to components 1 and 5, which are focused on upgrading the technology. Therefore, the project budget after restructuring is also focused on technology development than development of human resources. The amount of budget directed to the real development including print course development and human resource is about 25% of the total. Out of these, the amount allocated for training of staff is $64,837 under item 3 of the above table, which is about 2% of the total. This reveals that a negligible amount of fund is allocated to human resource development in the project.

Therefore, the contribution of fund is extremely dominated by the donor agency and this also corresponds to the dominance of the agency in the decision making process. Besides, the budgetary allocation extremely neglected human resource development and training. This is compounded by the situation of high staff turnover presented in section 3.6.2 of chapter 3.

5.2.4 Procedures of the Bank

The Bank's side was also unstable and bureaucratic as demonstrated in the distance learning project. The Bank had been changing team leaders of the project very frequently. For example, as mentioned earlier, the Bank assigned the third Team Leader in April 2004. This is a little before the restructuring and 8 months before the original closing date of the project. This factor is a challenge in that the complex project had been handled by new team leaders in the whole development process. This has implications on the performance.

Moreover, regarding the procedures, all terms of references (TOR) need Bank's clearance and needs to be submitted for 'no-objection' from the Bank's officials before taking action. This is normal procedure even if it is the beneficiary's area of expertise than the Bank's staff. Accordingly, all transactions exceeding ($50,000) need 'no-objection' of the Bank before proceeding (PAD, 2001:29). This complicated the project management process by adding unnecessary work in the implementation. In referring to the procedural arrangements, for example, one of the informants stated the following in an interview:

> As it appeared in the LIL project, the Bank is more bureaucratic than ECSC. It designed the detail procedures of the implementation to be reviewed by its staff. But its system cannot facilitate things fast enough. Take for example, TOR for assignment of a tutor needs to be reviewed and takes a month or so for feedback before taking action. The procedures sometimes focus on things that do not add value (Mamo, 29/08/07).

As we have seen earlier, in the implementing agency, the management process followed complex procedures and this is further complicated with the Bank's requirements. In short, the procedures set for the distance learning project is perceived as lacking flexibility and, thus, hindering the implementation process.

5.2.5 The work plan structure

A work plan of a project is a description of the necessary activities set out in stages, with rough indication of the timeframe. Work plan guides project implementation and gives the basis for the detail plan of activities by implementers and facilitates monitoring. In order to draw a good work plan, the implementers should list all the tasks involved in the project. This requires putting the tasks in the order in which they will be implemented and defining responsibilities of each actor. The work plan also involves allocating time and budget for each task (IDRC, 2007-8-14).

Work structuring also involves defining the group of actors involved and their roles as well as allocating costs and materials necessary to implement the project. Therefore, the work plan structure helps to complete the project in time and do the right things in the right order. In other words, the work plan helps to identify who will be responsible for what activity. It also determines when to start implementing the project (FAO, 2008).

In the distance learning project, the work plan structure was not defined in the design document to guide the activities. This compounded the development process together with resource scarcity. Besides, the development process is more complicated for the technology and electronic media. Thus, this should have been analysed and planned for seriously. But the planners expected to manage every technical aspects regarding technology through the Bank's headquarters in Washington. They also thought about the management of the connections between the centre in Addis Ababa and regional centres through a hub located at the Bank's headquarters (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:9).

In this regard, the plan failed to consider a number of key factors. It didn't put down the steps in which activities have to be performed and who makes what. Particularly, the project failed to clarify inputs to the system of technology and electronic media (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:4). One can easily think this as a critical capacity issue of development before looking anywhere in this direction. This key aspect of capacity building is missed by the planners and remained unsolved because of the weakness in the structure.

5.2.6 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring is an on-going process in project management. It targets gathering information about the implementation process continuously (IDRC, 2007-8-14). Monitoring involves activities designed to keep track of resources available and used. It refers to the quality and quantity of activities carried out during each phase of a project so that objectives could be met. Monitoring should continue throughout a project life and be organised so that it helps in alerting project staff to problems that may emerge.

Monitoring is planned with clearly stated indicators; and the implementers and planners have to discuss and agree on monitoring indicators. Monitoring indicators are qualitative and quantitative signs for measuring or assessing the achievement of the project activities in line with the objectives. The indicators will show the extent to which the objectives of every activity have been achieved. Accordingly, the indicators should be explicit, pertinent and verifiable. The following four major types of monitoring indicators are recognised as good practice in planning projects (IDRC, 2007-8-14).

- *Input indicators*: describe what goes on in the project on input side;
- *Output indicators*: describe the project outputs at different level;
- *Outcome indicators*: describe the end product of activities; and
- *Impact indicators*: measure change in the situation of the beneficiary.

In this perspective, putting down clear structures and strategies for project monitoring helps a lot because it specifies what will be expected in the implementation process. Thus, the project plan must indicate what should be monitored, who should monitor, and how monitoring should be undertaken. As a continuous process of a project, monitoring should be established before implementation starts. Besides, the task of monitoring should be participatory (Bartle, 2007; CES, 2008). As a standard of good practice of project management, therefore, monitoring activities should appear on the work plan (FAO, 2008). In this regard, the tasks of monitoring, planning and implementation are closely related in a development project as they mutually reinforce one another. In principle, monitoring has to be integrated into the design of a project (IDRC, 2007-8-14).

Evaluation is a process of judging value on what a project has achieved particularly in relation to activities planned and overall objectives. Hence, evaluation involves value judgement (Hanson et al, 1996:35). This is important to identify the constraints or bottlenecks to the process that hinder the achievement of objectives. So that solutions can then be identified. Evaluation also enables project planners and implementers to assess the benefits and costs that accumulate to the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project. In short, evaluation is essential for drawing lessons from the project implementation as experience for using the lessons in planning similar projects.

Finally, evaluation targets providing clear picture of the extent to which the intended objectives of the project have been realised (FAO, 2008). Therefore, evaluation can and should be done: (a) before, (b) during, and (c) after implementation. Before project implementation, evaluation is needed in order to assess the possible consequences of the planned project. This helps to make decisions on what the alternative for the project should be. It also helps to assist in making decisions on how the project will be implemented (UNDP, 2002).

In the distance learning project, monitoring and evaluation was not systematically planned. For example, the project appraisal was conducted in April 2000 for the purpose of developing the appraisal document. However, as indicated earlier, monitoring and evaluation of progress was not done for more than two years. In this regard, the first Aide Memoire as the only means of monitoring and evaluation was produced 20 May 2003 (ICR, 2 October 2006). This is a clear indication of neglecting the monitoring and evaluation aspect in this project.

Monitoring and evaluation should have been more intense than normal in LIL project because it helps to draw lessons from the process. In this regard, in addition to lack of proper indicators for monitoring, as mentioned above, the absence of monitoring and evaluation as an activity among the components in the design could be underlines as a reason for neglecting the activity. Therefore, the implementation of the distance learning project was full of challenges; and from what actually happened during planning, implementation, and the monitoring and evaluation of the progress, we can see that the activities are handled arbitrarily without relevant guiding principles. The design is made without sufficient understanding of the situation which in turn affected all the decisions about the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of the development process.

This being the case, the development project was closed by 30 June 2006 and the result is assessed by the Bank's evaluation department. As reflected in the DL project, the evaluation criteria of the Bank is basically on financial terms, which is clearly written in the project evaluation document (ICR 4 October 2006). In this regard, the performance of the DL project is rated moderately satisfactory with the disbursement rate of 93% of the project's funds. However, this is not real because if we refer to the objectives designed for the project, we can easily see that none of them are actually achieved.

For example, the first objective (see section 5.1 above) refers to: test the comparative achievement in the learning outcomes, which was proved impractical at the end. Moreover, the second objective, 'to develop capacity of the IDE to manage distance learning' has three components (the GDLN centre, the print based distance learning, and the expansion of the GDLN outreach centres to regions). We may ignore this third component because it is totally cancelled from the project during the restructuring although the objective is not modified. Then, the performance in each can then be measured as a half for this second objective as per the proportion. Based on this, we can make more logical evaluation as follows.

Firstly, the GDLN centre upgrading is implemented only in terms of physical facility development and ignored the human resource. Thus, if we assume the need for the human resource development as half of the development process, the real achievement will be 50% for this component. Consequently, its contribution to the overall achievement could be estimated to 25% as it is half of the first objectives. Secondly, the print based distance learning, which is best achieved in the development process, is again one of the two elements. If we assume 100% implementation for this aspect, the overall result can roughly be estimated to 50%. Thus, the result will be 75% for this second objective. Therefore, the contribution of this objective to the overall development will be half of the 75% that is 37.5%. This is the only possible way for the evaluation as long as the original project objective is not changed.

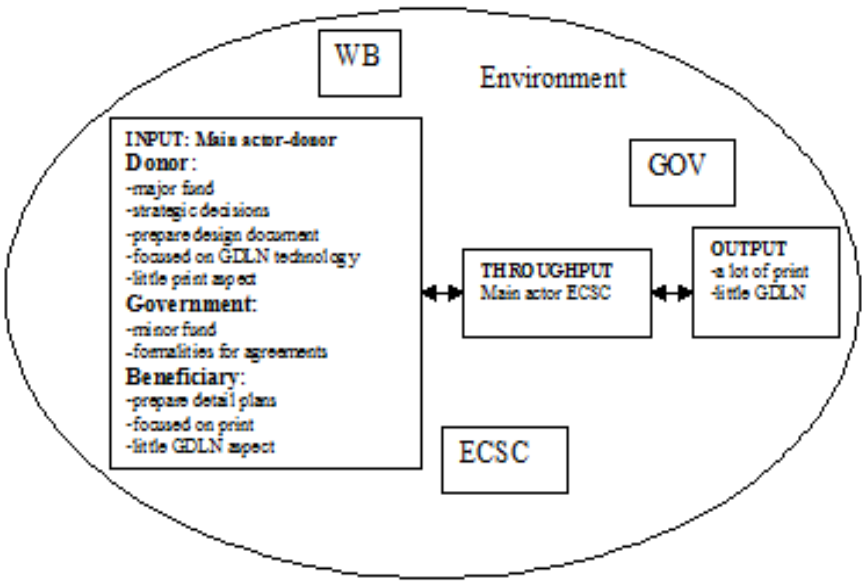
In short, the above discussion shows the problem in the design of the project. The problems are revealed in administrative procedures, budgetary structure, work plan structure, and monitoring/evaluation structure. Due to these, the actual performance of the project is not properly linked to the objectives formally defined for the purpose.

For further understanding, the entire development process can now be summarised as a system with input, throughput, and output as follows.

5.3 Systems Analysis of the Development Process

In the discussion of the literature, chapter 2 section 2.2, we have seen that the purely developmental aspect of a project is the transformation process of input-throughput-output system. In the system, throughput is the central element of the transformation process. To summarise the overall development, therefore, we may apply the concept of inputs, throughputs, and outputs as a systems model. To this end, the whole development process could be explored based on the patterns presented in the following figure. In the model, the oval figure represents the environment and the centrally arranged figures represent the system.

Figure 5.1 Systemic representation of the project



In chapter 2 section 2.2, output is explained as the product of input and throughput. As discussed in section 5.2 above, the data in this chapter shows that the inputs of the distance learning project were determined by the design of the project. In this regard, as presented in the above figure, on the input side, we find the donor as main actor primarily with the agenda of technology development. Besides, as discussed elsewhere, the Bank is the major contributor of fund and controls the strategic decisions about the design and objectives of the project. This being the case, in the

allocation of the fund, more attention was given to technology; and the activities related to print were treated as minor and got less attention from financial point of view (see section 5.2.3). Therefore, as determined by the design, the progress in the technological aspect is made to lead the pace of development. Besides, as discussed earlier, all the procedures require approval of the donor agency for implementation (see section 5.2.4). The government contributed counterpart fund (minor) and not involved in the implementation activities other than formal procedures such as signing agreements with the donor (see section 5.2.3). Thus, the input side was adversely affected by the administrative complexity defined by the project design.

The throughput as a process of implementation is largely determined by the situation in the beneficiary as counterpart at the technical level. In the throughput process, therefore, the main actor was the beneficiary that plans the details of implementation. This being the case, the implementing agency has more expertise about the print aspect of the distance learning; and it was able to develop clear plan for the print than the technology. To this end, it had organised human resource effectively for the print. But for the technology, no skilled human resource has been available, and the system relied on the donor agency to help develop the skills. The throughput process, thus, lacks technical capacity for developing the technological aspect and focused largely on the print which was clearer to the key actor at the implementation level. In this perspective, the throughput process was determined by the reality in the human resource capacity of the beneficiary. Hence, it is characterised by human resource crisis with respect to technology.

As discussed earlier in section 5.2, the beneficiary conducted needs assessments about the demands for print and GDLN courses. But only the result of the assessment concerning print was used for designing the project. Moreover, as noted in section 5.1, the actors of the project in the beneficiary agency didn't participate in identifying the formal objectives. However, as per the project design, the detail plan of the implementation was the responsibility of the beneficiary. To this effect, the beneficiary prepared detailed plan for the print, but failed to do so for the technological aspect. As presented earlier, the technology was planned by the donor; and the technical inputs in this regard were also expected from the same because the beneficiary has little expertise in the area (see section 5.2).

As a consequence of the input crisis to the technology development (human resource), on the output side, we find more of the print aspect and little of GDLN as far as the result of development is concerned. In other words, the situation reflects that the print aspect became more realistic than the technology in the overall development process. This in turn reveals that the trend in the throughput process, especially, the human aspect determined the quality of output as opposed to the financial input that favours the technology (see section 5.2.3 above). For instance, as mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, more emphasis is put on the technology from strategy point of view but the system failed to use the result after development. The emphasis on the technology is reflected through higher financial commitment, etc., whereas the print aspect which was minor in the development plan is applied better.

Therefore, from the above discussion, we can understand that human resource capacity at the implementation level is more critical to throughput process of development that subsequently determined the quality of output. The input crisis on the human aspect adversely affected the throughput process for the technology development. This in turn limited the transformation process and the flow of the whole development process because from the strategic perspective, the emphasis was on the technology development. The study reflects that value generation was more successful in the development of the print. This is reflected in observing the situation by the end of this study in that the outcome of the project in line with the development of technology was proved to be wastage of resources. For the print based distance learning as well, the outcome is also problematic as reflected in the actual practice of the distance learning programme, which are presented in the next chapters.

CHAPTER 6

THE ARBA-MINCH STUDY CENTRE: THE DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMME IN PRACTICE

This chapter deals with the practice of the distance learning programme in general and the realities of the Arba-Minch Centre in particular. The focus is largely on the activities in the specific study centre and the challenges thereof. Before going into the elaborate practices of the distance learning programme, I will discuss Arba-Minch and its surroundings as a background to the later stories.

6.1 Arba-Minch and its Surrounding

Arba-Minch is located about 500km south of Addis Ababa. It is the capital of the North Omo zone of the region called-Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR). It is a lowland town with altitude a little over 1000M above sea level. Therefore, it is characterized by relatively hot climate. The town is connected to Addis Ababa and Awasa (Capital of the SNNPR) by a roughly paved road, which was being upgraded during my last visit. It is also served by an airport and has a digital telephone line (Briggs, 2002:229). Arba-Minch is not very small town in the country's standard, and based on the figures from the Central Statistical Agency, in 2005, the town has an estimated total population of 72,507 (CSA, 2005). But as most of the other towns in the country, it is dusty. Internally, the town has one fairly paved main road crossing through to Jinka (a town located in the next administrative zone of South Omo of the SNNPR). The rest of the roads and streets of the town are very rough and dusty.

The name Arba-Minch is derived from Amharic term meaning *forty springs*. This is from the emphasis on the numerous springs flowing inside the dense forest at the bottom of the hills, to the south of the town. Arba-Minch is attractive by nature with two lakes: Abaya and Chamo located at the outskirt of the town, and it is well known for its fish farm and fruits. A Textile mill is one of the important establishments in the town, opened in 1992. There is also a crocodile farm in Arba-Minch, near the beach of the Abaya lake. This is well known in attracting tourists to the area (Briggs, 2002:229). The town is also the home of a university, Arba Minch University, which

was established in the form of college during the Derg and upgraded to university level in 2004 (AMU, 2007). This brings an opportunity for the distance learning programme because instructors from the university can serve as tutors.

The SNNP region is inhabited by more than 45 indigenous ethnic groups and tribes. Among the tribes around Arba-Minch area are Gamo, Mello, Goffa, Mursi, and Hamer. Mursi and Hamer are still in the most natural and underdeveloped cultures of mankind. The only modernisations they tasted are use of guns and razorblades, which they use to look after their cattle and make their hairstyles respectively (Local History in Ethiopia, June 2008). Therefore, distance learning is the most relevant opportunity to facilitate training of change agents for these communities in the area; and as we see later, members of those tribes are being served at the study centre; and this adds to the importance of the distance learning programme. To this end, in the proceeding sections, we see the practice of the distance learning programme in this specific environment.

6.2 The Arba-Minch DL Study Centre

Arba-Minch study centre of the distance learning programme is one of the centres where student registration, tutorial, and examinations are conducted. It is one of 21 centres in the country. At this centre, the programme is housed in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College of Arba-Minch. This college is a newly organised institution and was largely under construction when this study is conducted. The roads leading to this college and the paths in the campus are not paved and the compound is dusty but quite attractive with a lot of trees and good views of the hills nearby.

The TVET College was designed for training lower level technicians for industries with training programmes in commerce, hotel management, auto-mechanics, etc. The TVET College was chosen for the distance learning programme as a centre because it is located nearer the centre of the town than the university, which is located some 5 Km away. This is to minimise transportation problems to and from the town during registration, tutorials and examination.

Internally, the college is well equipped with machines, computer and other necessary facilities. But most of the buildings are temporary to be replaced by new constructions

that were underway in 2008. One of the newly finished buildings is located on the right side of the entrance. It accommodates classrooms and four computer labs, which are well equipped to the country's standard with about 20 PCs and shared printer in each room. Tutorial classes of the distance learning programme are also held in this building. All the computer labs are ready to be used by the distance learning programme, but the distance students never used them because Civil Service College was not able to allocate budget for the service. The TVET College charges small amount of fees to use the computer labs, not more than Birr 50 per student. As the informants from the centre reported, the Civil Service College can also negotiate to reduce the fee but did not go any further toward using the computer labs at the study centre. Therefore, distance learners studied computer courses without touching the machine. This is very serious challenge from the academic perspective.

Due to shortage of buildings, equipment for vocational training are stored in temporary buildings assembled out of corrugated iron sheets. The main store is also made up of corrugated iron sheets, and the same is shared by the distance learning programme. The store is used free of charge by the distance learning programme for the short duration required to receive and distribute the teaching materials to students. The problem here is that the process of material distribution has been inaccurate and excess materials have been filling up the small store. The centre coordinators reported that they asked the Civil Service College to remove the excess teaching materials but had not received a response at the time this study was conducted. The coordinator especially reported the problem with the materials left over when the diploma programme was closed (see chapter 7). The informant said the problem with overdue storage may force the TVET College to demand payment from the Civil Service College for the overdue storage (Kadir, 07/08/07).

The offices of the dean, assistant dean, registrar, and most of the academic departments of the TVET College are located straight in front of the main gate and they look attractive under the shade of trees that protect them from the blazing sun. A little further along the path is a multi-storey building which was originally intended as a student dormitory. However, as explained by an official, the plan was diverted due to the trend in political unrest of students in the country. The informant said students organise and create management problems when they gather up. He further noted that

the college management, decided not to have student dormitories at all. Consequently, students live in their own residences rented in the town and come to the college for class. Therefore, the informant said, the building was empty and has to be redesigned for staff residences and classrooms. More rooms could be available for the distance learning programme when this building is redesigned (Kadir, 07/08/07, regional staff).

As mentioned in chapter 3, there are no permanent staff for the distance learning programme at the level of study centres. In 2008, two staff of the TVET College were involved in the coordination of the distance learning programme at the Arba-Minch centre. One is the main coordinator and the other is an assistant and both work for the programme on a part-time basis. The contract of employment with the coordinators is signed between the regional centre coordinator and the study centre coordinators. This makes the regional centre coordinator at Awasa responsible to hire and supervise the staff.

The study centre coordinator and his assistant perform the following duties for the distance learning programme (IDE, 2004).

- Register students and distribute modules
- Recruit tutors
- Monitor tutorial sessions
- Take attendance for tutors and students
- Collect tutor marked assignments (TMA) from students and deliver to tutors for marking; and
- Request tutor payment by communicating with the regional centre.

Being located in North Omo zone, the Arba-Minch study centre serves all the neighbouring administrative zones of the SNNP region for the distance learning programme. These are: North Omo zone, South Omo zone, Walayta zone and Dawro zone. Therefore, the number of students is relatively high. However, the distance learning system has not taken this into account when allocating human and material resources to study centre.

This being the case, as per the information obtained from the centre, the most challenging administrative problems faced by the coordinators were organising registration and distributing modules at the beginning of each semester. During the first year, only one coordinator was facilitating the whole thing in Arba-Minch. As a result of this, the work was actually done as a campaign by all administrative staff of the host institution (Arba-Minch TVET College). After the first year, one assistant coordinator was hired from the same institution to support the programme. But still the two persons cannot do the job during the weekends' scheduled for registration and they have to involve other staff. The reality reflects the need to hire labourers for a few days to help in the loading and unloading of the materials and distributing modules to students during registration. But the system of the distance learning programme is not flexible enough to allocate a budget for such services.

The other challenge reported is concerning the delivery of teaching materials from Addis Ababa to Arba-Minch. Materials are sent to Arba-Minch from the headquarters by hiring private freight firms. The coordinators at the study centre report that the drivers who are hired to deliver the materials sometimes arrive at Arba-Minch at night and call the coordinators to receive the teaching materials. The other longstanding problem reported from the site is lack of accuracy in the logistics system; that is, excess and shortage of materials in the delivery is a chronic problem of the system. Some of the modules are delivered in excess and others fall short. The excess can be kept there for the following semester but the problem is shortage of storage space as mentioned above.

As one of the informants described, the most embarrassing problem is that the distance learning programme has not been providing supplies like stationery materials to the study centre. Moreover, he stressed that there is no budget allocated to the study centre for communication services such as telephone, fax, and postal services. Therefore, the respondent said, he is serving the distance learning programme with the resources of the host institution which he repeatedly stated as inappropriate (Kadir, 07/08/07, 08/04/08 and 30/06/08).

Many regional centres that serve much smaller number of students were staffed with two permanent staff in the distance learning programme for political reasons. For example, out of the 9 regional centres, 7 of them have less student population than

Arba-Minch study centre. As mentioned in chapter 3, some regional centres are very small, but staffed with permanent personnel simply because they are located in the regional capitals (see the table under the section on student recruitment trend in the proceeding section). Therefore, the resource allocation in the programme is not based on the student population and practical needs of centres. This puts the distance students at Arba-Minch study centre at a relatively disadvantaged position because the situation affects the services they obtain from the institution. The following section presents the situation in which typical distance students study their courses and what they feel about the programme.

6.3 A Day at Arba-Minch Tutorial Centre

In the Ethiopian context, civil service includes all sectors except justice and military. Accordingly, Civil Service College accepts any civil servant who is interested in taking business courses. Therefore, teachers who want to change their profession study with the college. In fact, most of the distance learners are actually teachers because teachers are relatively educated in the community and fulfil the academic criteria required for higher education. All the degree students that are focused in this investigation study management. Two narratives, based on the experience of female and male students are presented hereunder.

Almaz, management first year student

Almaz is a primary school teacher. She is in her early 30s but looks a little older. She is married and mother of 2 children, studying for a management degree and hopes to become a manager someday. She has been teaching languages (Amharic and English) in a Primary School, in a town located some 50 kilometres north of Arba-Minch. She is busy from Monday to Friday as she teaches two subjects and prepares two lesson plans every weekend. She also chairs the language department in the school which makes her busier.

She was awarded a diploma in accounting in 2007 that she studied with the same institution, but she is still in the teaching profession. She was studying for degree (year one) in management when this study was conducted. She reported that she would like to be an accountant but as the institution is not offering degree courses in accounting, she ended up studying management as the only alternative available at the

moment. Anyway, she wants to finish her courses as soon as possible. She thinks her teaching job is difficult for her as it requires a lot of preparation at home. Her course takes about 4 and half years according to the course schedule of the institution. She has limited time to read her modules at home because of household jobs but she managed to read it at her work place. She has a young servant at home who can only look after her baby. Therefore, she can hardly read anything at home because as she says, she does most of the cooking herself and she goes to bed usually after 11:00 PM at night.

Almaz was sitting under the flag pole and reading her module when I first met her. I greeted her and asked why she was sitting outside while tutorial programmes are running. While I was asking this question, the coordinator came by and said: “Almaz, I told you to take all the courses until your exemption request is processed and confirmed. You may be in trouble later if things go wrong and you cannot blame me”. She replies, “Why should I take courses which I took already?” She continued, “It is my right according to the regulation you yourself posted.” The coordinator replied, you know, I simply post what IDE sends to me but cannot guarantee its implementation. “Anyway if they fail to exempt you, don’t blame me.” This was what the coordinator said. Almaz added, “I will never waste my time in any of those courses.” The coordinator finally said, “Ask Ato Deribssa, standing beside you, he was the designer of the programme before he went to England”, and he went straight to the building where the tutorial classes were taking place.

Almaz was delighted to tell me about her problems and she opened her bag and took out a long list of courses. She collected the list of the courses during registration for possible exemption. Although I told her that I am not official at the moment, she continued telling me about her problems. As she explained, she deserves exemption in 11 courses that she took in the diploma programme and two of those courses are offered during the semester. Therefore she is taking only one course for the semester but not received feedback about the process of exemption. She has been waiting for one month already. Her only option is to contact the centre coordinators, but they have no authority to decide about the result and advise her simply to take all the courses again.

She further explained that she wanted to add one or more courses but the institution refused to offer her more courses because it didn't want to have few advancing students. Therefore, she has to wait until the junior students reach at her level. Hence, she was taking 3 credit hours course while others were taking 9 for the semester. She believes that the institution can offer her advanced courses so that she can finish the course 2 years earlier. She said she could manage it herself if she is provided with the study materials only. She further commented, she could also take the exams by travelling to Addis Ababa if necessary. Her request is reasonable because there are thousands of similar cases in the country and they could be supported at a central place.

I cannot say anything about it but listen. This event was on the 2nd of February 2008 and I did not know about this when I was in Addis Ababa. I took notes to ask more about it when I return to Addis. She didn't want to stop telling me about the challenges she was facing but I had to go to the tutorial rooms to make some observations and recording. So I arranged to meet her some time during the break and left. She went on reading her modules before joining her group. Each tutorial session is 2 hours and she was preparing to join the group after the first session. There is also a 30 minutes' break after the first period before her session begins.

After the class, dozens of students came to me outside the tutorial class to explain their problems. They tell different stories about themselves and their friends. Some tell me about the distance from their home to Arba-Minch, for example, one said he travels 280 kilometres and he said it takes him a full day by car because of poorly designed roads. Others tell me about the chaos during registration. For example, they say the registration never starts as per the official schedule because the modules are received at the centre so late. Therefore, many students travel twice to the centre for registration; and they report that they are incurring unnecessary cost.

They don't understand when I tell them I am student myself and have no authority to make any decisions to help them. In the meantime, one of the students brought me the name and details of 6 students including him. They said their grades are not computed correctly and asked me to help by forwarding their appeals to central staff of IDE. They say they have applied several times to the coordinators at the centre and never received any feedback. Even when I explain the fact that I am not an official, they all

said, “If you cannot, who else can help us? We are helpless here and no one understands our problems. The coordinators simply post notices on the board and do not like to help us.”

Before coming to Arba-Minch that morning, Almaz prepared food for her 12 months old son, and she left him with her servant but she calls to monitor the situation at home. In her telephone conversation, she asked whether the baby was awake and if he ate food and if he cried or not. She left home at 6:00 AM that morning. As her town is located on the main road to Arba-Minch, she can travel to the tutorial centre easily. It is about 50 kilometres but takes more than an hour by bus at that time because of rough and bumpy road. She has to leave home as early as possible because there is no schedule for the buses and there is high probability to miss them.

In her telephone conversation, she asked about her husband, what he ate and how he was feeling when he left for office. Her husband works in the Kebele administration office. He was also a teacher in the same school a few years ago. He was heavily drunk the previous night and she left for Arba-Minch that morning while he was asleep. He called her few minutes later from his office and asked about her trip to Arba-Minch and what time she will return home.

After the break, Almaz joined her group for the course ‘Introduction to management’. The tutor admitted me to the room to make observations. There were 38 students in the tutorial class, 24 males and 14 females. First the tutor discussed few points about the tutor marked assignments. Then, he asked if they have any problem to be discussed further. In the meantime, one of the students raised his hand and asked why he is given less points for question number 2. But the tutor said that is personal issue and they can discuss it outside the class. The tutor further stressed that as they have only that session for the first module, they have to hurry up to cover the whole module in less than 2 hours. The tutor went on raising some points and asking questions and reading the module.

Almaz is a teacher herself, but she behaves exactly like any other student at the tutorial session. She didn’t raise her hand to answer any of the questions or ask anything. In fact, none of the women asked questions during the session. There is no restriction on women talking in public, but women are generally shyer than men in

social settings. I saw Almaz underlining some words in her material when the tutor was facilitating the session. No group discussions were held during the tutorials and while the tutor was somewhere in the middle of the module, the bell rang and the tutorial session for the first module was over (the course has three modules and two more tutorials that run during the following months were remaining). The tutor left soon and the student who was promised to meet him outside after the session was unable to find him. That was because the tutor visited the toilet and left the campus through the rear gate while the student was waiting for him at the front gate. It is not clear if the tutor did this intentionally to avoid meeting the student or by chance but the student was disappointed.

In the afternoon, Almaz was free to go home as she takes only one course. But she came back to the campus to talk to me and we met in the Staff Lounge. She came with her friend Belaynesh. It is not the norm to talk to a man alone for a married woman even if she is a student because others may suspect something else. In the meantime, Balaynesh's husband (Demeke) also joined us while we were discussing several issues about the programme with Almaz and Belaynesh. Belaynesh is a second year diploma student in Law. She is also an elementary school teacher. Her school is in Arba-Minch, close to the Arba-Minch TVET College that hosts the distance learning programme. She feels lucky for that and is looking forward to be a lawyer someday. Learning is much easier for Belaynesh because she is a young lady in her 20s. She has been married for one year with no child at that time, but still she is busy doing all the household duties such as cooking, cleaning, etc. after school. Her husband is a guard in the textile factory and they live happily with each other. He was pleased to meet me there because he can express his feelings about the programme. He was not studying that year. He said, he applied to study management but he was not able to fulfil the criteria. As he noted, he failed because he didn't have a diploma which is among the academic requirements for admission to the degree programme. He suggested re-opening of the diploma programme to upgrade the status of the people like him. Then, I asked him why he didn't join private colleges; and he said he couldn't afford the tuition fees of private colleges. He also stressed that the quality of the course is better with the Civil Service College. In the course of the discussion, he repeatedly mentioned the need for re-opening of the diploma programme and asked me to influence the institute to do so. He believes that many of the untrained civil servants

in the community could have the opportunity if the diploma programme was re-opened. After about half an hour, he said goodbye to me and left for his job. His wife accompanied him for a while and then returned to the discussion.

Among the points discussed later were about their experience in the distance learning programme. Almaz said the first day she registered for the diploma programme in 2005, she was very excited and anxious because she was worried about the size of the teaching materials. She didn't expect that she could do the reading because she thought it was too much. But she underlined, in the meantime she did it. She realised her anxiety was because of lack of experience in distance learning and she didn't understand how much she could actually read. Belaynesh said she didn't sleep the first night because she was so excited and nervous that she could not read the modules as she thought it was too much. She says she tried to read immediately after she reached home, but she didn't manage to understand anything the first time. The modules are in English but the major problem was not the language but anxiety about the course and frustration. She explained that her fears were reduced after she met many students with similar feelings during the first tutorial. She further noted, if she missed the first tutorial, she might have been lost and stopped her study. After she realised her frustration is normal, she developed more energy and gradually adapted to the situation. She says she didn't feel any problems especially after the first semester. But she thinks the first tutorial should have been arranged earlier because students learn a lot about the programme during that one.

Almaz took over and said she was surprised by the programme not having advisors at the study centre. She added that the coordinators do not tell them anything except by posting messages on the notice board. She said no one tells the students about the requirements and how to study the materials and they learn things only the hard way through experience. She further stressed that there is no well organised handbook to tell them what to do either. She thinks the programme may be more effective if advisors are allocated at the study centre. Belaynesh said, "Some of the tutors do not prepare, and they come to the class and try to read the module from cover to cover and they stop when the time is over." The students could do the reading by themselves, but still having contact with fellow students is always helpful to distance learners. Tutors are expected to discuss assignments in class; and explain the theme of

the modules focusing on the most important points. They should ask the students about what points to discuss rather than reading the module in class or trying to cover everything.

Almaz had finished her tutorial in the morning and was ready to go home in the afternoon. The next tutorial is going to be after a month. It was about 3:00 PM and before she left, she repeatedly asked me to help in convincing the officials of the distance learning programme to change the policies about course offerings and improve the student support system.

Dawit, management first year student

Dawit was a first year management student at Arba-Minch distance learning study centre when the data was gathered. On the 3rd of February 2008 at about 5 Pm, I went to a café near the central square of the town to have a cup of coffee. After few minutes a tall slim gentleman greeted me politely and sat on my right side. I realised soon that I had seen him previously in the tutorial class. He told his story as follows.

He said he is 41 years old, but looks younger. He is married and a father of 3 children, living in a village 80 kilo metres south of Jinka, in South Omo zone. He was a member of the navy force during the former government; and currently he works as a staff of the human resource section in the district (woreda) finance office.

He stated that the most important problems for him are lack of time to study, lack of electricity at home. In addition, lack of someone to ask about the subject matter is another problem in remote places. Then, I asked him about village tutors; and he said, yes, they are people who help us a little because the formal tutorial services of the programme, once a month, is not enough. He said they pay the tutors by raising money in a group of 10 students. The distance students in the private colleges also join them to hire tutors in group. In describing the nature of the tutors, he said that some are teachers who have some knowledge in the specific subject matter. For example, when we were studying for the diploma, we hired a mathematics teacher in the nearby school in the district to support us in our Maths course. Similarly, for the English course, we hired an English teacher. I asked how he thinks about the effectiveness of the village tutors in facilitating their learning. He answered, you see,

any person who is a bit better in the area can help in the situation. He continued, even having someone around to talk about the subject is great in the remote places when there is no one around to help.

Dawit has got diploma in management in 2007 from the same institution, Civil Service College. He was in his first year studying for degree in management when this study was conducted. He reported that he wants to be a manager, and he thinks that he is lucky to study management in the diploma programme because the degree programme is only in this field. He takes only one course during the first semester, but unlike Almaz, who told the earlier story, he is not disappointed. He says the opportunity to learn by distance is a great deal by itself and he said, "Imagine, earning a degree at home, living with ones' own family and job. I think this is a great advantage no matter how long it may take".

Regarding how he is managing his study, he mentioned that he has time to read his modules after work because he has little things to do at home. One of the problems he raised is lack of electricity at home; and thus he says, he has to study daytime. He said his wife has no job and so looks after the children and manages household matters.

I asked him to comment on what he likes or hates about the programme and he said the following.
'What I like about the programme is that the teaching material is much better than the materials produced by other distance teaching institutions I know.'
I asked how he knew that and he said that the students who take courses with other institutions also know about it well and they borrow his materials to study. He further mentioned that their village tutors also state their appreciation about the materials. Anyway, this is a very clear matter and anybody can tell by looking at the modules. Furthermore, I asked what changes he has observed between the earlier modules for diploma and the new ones for the degree programme and he said that 'The modules for the diploma courses were more attractive in many respects. As I observed from the courses offered this semester, the modules for the degree courses are condensed and written in two modules, and they do not explain the contents sufficiently. But, still they are much better than those of other institutions teaching at distance.'

Regarding what he hates, the respondent said the following.

‘What I hate most is the misleading information about registration that rarely holds true. This is a chronic problem of the system from my experience through the diploma programme. For example, I have never seen registration schedule running as per the official schedule the institution announces through mass media. Besides, the lack of advisors at the study centre is very surprising. You see, we don’t have anyone to tell us about the distance learning programme. I think there is a need to have some staff to advice students at each study centre. Furthermore, the distance from the tutorial centre is challenging. On top of this, the cost of transportation is also increasing from time to time that adds up on the difficulty. In the worst cases, the rivers overflow during rainy seasons. This being the case, there are students who travel more than 300 kilo metres. Therefore, it is necessary to open some more study centres in the region.’

Dawit was happy to tell the above stories. At the end he begged me to allow him to pay the bills for our coffee, but I refused and paid myself for both. Our meeting took about an hour sitting at a corner of the café. I can see that he is delighted to tell me what he feels about the programme. Lastly, I expressed my good wishes to him and he said good bye as I leave for Shecha, the upper and cooler town of Arba-Minch, where I stay for the night.

6.4 Students’ Responses

The discussion of this section starts with the views of learners about the programme. In this regard, first, we look at the backgrounds of the distance learners at the study centre. What they feel about the distance learning programme and how they manage their affairs are the key concerns here. For the purpose, the information is organised around social backgrounds, educational background, learning motives and views about the overall programme. Learning about the background of the learners will help us to understand the deficiencies of the programme, especially, about student support services that are in principle based on the characteristics of the learners.

6.4.1 Social background

The social background of the students is discussed in terms of general characteristics; family background; and socioeconomic background. In this regard, the following table presents the characteristics of the student respondents concerning mother tongue, sex, age, marital status, religion, and residence. The interpretation is given

after the table by referring to each item.

Table 6.1 Students' general characteristics

Items	No	%
1.Mother tongue		
A. Amharic	16	42
B. Oromo	00	00
C. Sidama	02	05
D. Gurage	00	00
E. Walayta	02	05
F. Others	18	48
2. Sex:		
A. Male	24	63
B. Female	14	37
3. Years of age:*		
A. 19 or lower	00	00
B. 20- 25	07	19
C. 26-30	20	56
D. 31 or above	09	25
4. Marital status:		
A. Married	25	66
B. Single	08	21
C. Divorced	05	13
D. Widowed	00	00
5. Religion:		
A. Orthodox	21	55
B. Moslem	12	32
C. Protestant	05	13
D. Others, specify	00	00
6. Residence:		
A. Town	25	66
B. Suburb	03	08
C. Countryside	10	26

* Total response 36 with 2 none responses

In the above table, the first item presents the ethnic origin of the distance learners. In line with this, the figures show the majority of the respondents are from the most disadvantaged ethnic groups in the country. For instance, Gamo, Malle, Aree, etc, which are quite uncommon are the most abundant in the distance learning programme. This is additional evidence to support that the programme has opened opportunities to ethnic minorities who had otherwise little chance for higher learning. This is also confirmed in the interviews with informants at the level of study centres (Kadir, 08/04/08). Therefore, the significance of distance learning to expand higher education in the relatively disadvantaged communities could be underlined. This perfectly correlates with the concepts discussed in the literature chapter, section 2.1.7.

In the interviews, many students reported that they had already lost their hope to join higher learning when they were accepted by the distance learning programme. For example, one of the interviewees said the following:

> I feel that the programme opened a closed door for me. I almost stopped thinking about further education when I got the chance to study with the DL programme without quitting my job" (Sisay, 30/06/08, first year management student).

In item 2 of the above table, it is reported that the majority of the learners are men and the women constitute 14(37%) of the respondents. In the overall statistics discussed in section 6.6, women constitute 34% of the distance learning programme. Thus, the sample is more or less proportional with the overall features of the students in the distance learning programme. Therefore, the information can give some hints about the programme as a whole.

In item 3 of the above table, the majority of the respondents reported that their age ranges between 26 and 30 and the mean age is 28.6 and the median value for age is 28.5. Thus, the respondents are adults with rich experience. In item 4, the majority 25(66%) of the respondents reported that they were married. This reveals that the distance students generally have family responsibilities. As responsible adults, these students need special support from the educational institution. This could be seen in line with the concepts about special needs of adult learners as discussed in section 2.1.2 in chapter 2.

In item 5, the students reported that their religious background is largely Orthodox Christianity. This is from the fact that the students are mostly from towns as shown in item 6 of the same table and the people living in towns are mostly from Orthodox religious groups in the area. This again shows that the distance education programme is serving urban areas, where the minority of the people live. As the service is restricted to employed civil servants who live in towns, the service cannot reach rural areas as effectively as possible. This shows one of the critical deficiencies of the programme as opposed to its potential to promote more access. It fails to meet the concept about opportunities of distance learning discussed in chapter 2, section 2.1.7.

Hence, from the above discussion of the general characteristics of the distance learners, we can understand few things. One, the distance learning programme of the

college opened more opportunities to disadvantaged social groups such as women and ethnic minorities in particular. Two, the distance learners are matured persons with family responsibilities. This has implications on the type of support they need from the institution to facilitate their learning.

Family Background of the Students

In the table below, the family background of the distance learners is discussed based on features vis-à-vis fathers' education, mothers' education, parental family size, and current family size. The discussion follows the table.

Table 6.2 Family background of the students

Items	No	%	Median values
1. Father's education at time of leaving school:			
A. Illiterate	20	53	19.5th
B. Able to read and write	08	20	
C. Grade 6 – 8	06	16	
D. Grade 9 – 11	03	08	
E. Grade 12 complete	01	03	
F. Has had postsecondary education	00	00	
2. Mother's education at time of leaving school:			
A. Illiterate	29	76	19.5th
B. Able to read and write	04	10	
C. Grade 6 – 8	03	08	
D. Grade 9 – 11	02	05	
E. Grade 12 complete	00	00	
F. Has had postsecondary education	00	00	
3. Your parental family size:			
A. 4 or less	01	03	
B. 5-7	18	47	
C. More than 7	19	50	19.5th
4. Present family size:*			
A. 4 or less	14	56	12.5th
B. 5-7	10	40	
C. More than 7	01	04	

* Only those who have been married (25) responded to this question

In item number 1 of the above table, 20(53%) of the respondents reported that their fathers were illiterates when they left school whilst few of them have fathers with some education. The median value (19.5^{th}) also lies in this group of response (illiterate). Similarly, in item 2 of the same table, the majority 29(76%) of the respondents reported that they have illiterate mothers. This shows that the respondents were with illiterate parents.

In the third item, the majority of the respondents 19(50%) reported that their parental family size is more than 7 persons and the median value also shows the same group of response; and very few 1(03%) reported family size of 4 or less. This indicates that the students were from poor family background. Moreover, in item 4 of the same table, the present family size of the learners is reported, and the majority of the responses 14(56%) revealed that they were with family size of 4 or less. The median value (12.5^{th}) also lies in this group of response. This shows that the family structure of the distance students is changing towards having lesser family size.

In general, the information presented in the above table shows that the distance learners are from disadvantaged family backgrounds. This is not something special; as the culture is generally poor, an average person is from poor family background in the community. But one thing can be recognised from this. That is, the students are more likely to get satisfied with what they get from the services. Thus, they could do their best to achieve their objectives and finish the courses by putting in every possible effort. This is also reflected in the narratives of some students, presented in the first section of this chapter. Similarly, as we will see elsewhere in students' comments, the learners were very grateful of the opportunities they got by the distance learning programme. This is an advantage for the programme because the students are highly motivated for the course of study.

Socioeconomic Background

The socioeconomic backgrounds of the respondents, as explained in terms of employment, monthly earnings, work experience, and sponsorship are presented hereunder.

Table 6.3 Socioeconomic background of the respondents

Items	No	%	Median value
1. Employed:			
A. Yes	38	100	
B. No	00	00	
2. Earnings per month:			
A. Less than 500 Br*	00	00	
B. 501-700 Br	04	11	
C. 701-900 Br	06	16	
D. More than 900 Br	28	73	19.5th
3. Work experience:			
A. 1-3 years	00	00	
B. 4-6 years	11	29	
C. 7-9 years	03	08	
D. 10 years or more	24	63	19.5th
4. Sponsor for the course:			
A. Parent/family	00	00	
B. Employer	08	21	
C. Self	30	79	
D. Others, specify	00	00	

*Br is local currency with exchange rate of about 0.1 USD in 2008

In the first item of the above table, it is reported that all of the respondents were employed. This is because the college teaches only employed civil servants and could be seen in line with the discussion under table 6.1 regarding failure of the programme to access the majority. In item 2, the majority of the respondents reported that they earn more than Br 900 per month. Similarly, the mean is Br 926 and the median value shows the same range of salary. This shows that the students are not the poorest because there are people earning Br 300 per month in the country; and that is why most of them were able to pay the education fees by themselves. We see more about this below in the discussion of sponsorship.

In item 3 of the above table, the majority of the respondents reported that their work experience is more than 10 years. The mean year of experience here is 9 and the median value is also in the range of same group who served more than 10 years. This shows that the students are more likely to have a lot of experiences in their jobs. On the other hand, the same situation reflects that they have been out of school relatively for a long time. This relates to the discussion about general characteristics of the students under table 6.1 and reflects the implications about the support they need from the institution.

In the 4th item of the above table, the responses showed that the majority, 30(79%) of the distance students are self-sponsored whilst the employer pays for the rest (21%). This means the government sponsors fewer students for the distance learning programme. The sponsorship is actually by cost sharing rather than 100%. In this regard, the student pays 25% and government pays 75% of the total for them. In the interviews with the students, many of the respondents reflected their complaint about the standards of sponsorship by the government. For example, those who were sponsored for 75% demand 100% support; and those who joined the programme as self-sponsors also give similar complaints. They argue that they don't understand why the government fails to pay their education fees. They stress that it fully sponsors those students studying fulltime and pays them full salary on the course. For example, one of the respondents stated the following:

> The sponsorship by the capacity building is unfair. They pay full salary to those who study fulltime in the ECSC. But they sponsor few and that is only 75% of the fee. When the students study by distance, they keep on working for their organisation. In some offices, not less than 10 people study by distance with different institutions at a time. If all those join a conventional programme, the work cannot be done (Bekelu, 30/06/08, first year management student).

Tuition fees are relatively low for the ECSC about Br 300 on average for a semester; and many of the student respondents think that the government can pay this amount for each of them easily. In this regard, they feel that government is not giving attention to distance learning. This could be seen in line with the concept discussed in the chapter 1 about the context of distance education in Sub-Sahara Africa and Ethiopia.

In fact the number of distance learners is relatively large and this affects the amount of funding required to sponsor them. However, the students also raise issues of equity between distance learners and the regular students in the same institution. Therefore, the Government's support is relatively less to distance learning, and it is only the Government who can make the balance between the two. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, although the students have such complaints, they are happy with the opportunity to learn by distance.

6.4.2 Educational background and learning motives

This information helps to analyse the education programme from the academic standpoint and to understand the trends in terms of learners' motives and perceive what the students need in this dimension.

Table 6.4 Educational background and learning motives of the respondents

Items	No	%	Median value
1. Year of secondary school completion:			
A. Before 1980s.	16	42	
B. In 1980s	10	26	19.5th
C. In 1990s.	12	32	
D. In 2000s	00	00	
2. Program attended for secondary education:			
A. Day (regular)	35	92	
B. Evening	00	00	
C. Distance learning	03	08	
3. EGSEC/ESLCE Grade Point Average (GPA):*			
A. 1.0-2.0	00	00	
B. 2.1-3.0	36	97	19th
C. 3.1-4.0	01	03	
4. Study Place:			
A. At home	33	87	
B. At work place	04	10	
C. In a Library	00	00	
D. Others, specify	01	03	
5. Do the courses relate to your current job?			
A. yes	27	71	
B. No	11	29	
6. Learning goals:**			
A. To get a new job	04	10	
B. To get a better job	12	32	
C. To get promotion	18	47	
D. To improve knowledge or skills	32	84	
E. To pass the time/recreation	00	00	
F. To obtain a certificate	02	05	
G. Encouraged by parents	00	00	
H. Others	00	00	
7. Reason for choosing DE:**			
A. Lack of place in the regular program	05	13	
B. College is too far away	19	50	
C. Family commitments	03	08	
D. Lower grade for regular program	01	03	
E. To work full-time	28	74	
F. Others	00	00	

* Total response 37 with 1 none response

** The total response exceeds the maximum number because multiple responses are required

In the first item of the above table, the majority of the respondents 16(42%) reported that they completed secondary education before 1980s; and the median value for the group lies in the same response group.

The students reported that they generally like the course; and as a challenge, they reported difficulty in coping with independent learning, especially during the initial phase of their enrolment. In explaining the level of her frustrations at the beginning of the course, one of the respondents said the following:

> I have been out of school for quite a long time now. Thus, I faced a problem when I looked at a pile of modules in front of me. I was worried and I doubted even if I could really read them all. This was my first experience and I was not able to sleep the first night. I got up and tried to skim through. But I was not able to understand the idea then because I was a little bit nervous that time. Anyway, I gradually adapted and developed confidence and did well (Aster, 02/07/08, first year management student).

This respondent reported the general account of student frustration at the beginning of courses in distance learning. The narrative of the distance students presented in the first section also reflects such situation. Therefore, this again has clear implication on the support needed by the learners.

In item 2 of the same table, the majority 35(92%) reported that they attended regular programme for secondary education. Relatively few 3(08%) had experience in distance education in their earlier educational experience. This reveals that the students are generally less experienced about distance learning and are more likely to meet distance learning as strange. Moreover, in the interviews, the learners reflected their interest to attend more tutorial classes; and some of them also reported hiring their own tutors (Sisay, 30/06/08, first year management student). This also reveals the distance students' readiness to compensate for what the institution misses. The same point reflects the learners' lack of confidence on what is available for them institutionally.

In item 3 of the above table, the national exam results of the students shows that the majority, 36(97%) reported that their GPA ranges from 2.1-3.0. The mean and median values indicate the group of response at GPA of 2.5. This shows that the learners are those who fulfil the minimum national standard for joining higher institutions. This reveals that distance education and the conventional programmes operate in the same academic requirement for admission of students in the country. This is good for the institution to ensure standard at the entry level to the system but reflects lack of flexibility at the same time.

The 4th item refers to study place of the distance students. Here, as the figures show, the majority of the students 33(87%), study at home. This reveals the possibility of challenge for the learners while studying alone and also in a context with few facilities to study easily and without distraction. Besides, the students were asked to comment on the problems they face about study place. Among their responses are: lack of time to study, lack of electricity at home, and disturbance during study time. Thus, it is easy to think about their needs for support to adapt to the situation.

In the 5th item of the above table, the majority of the respondents 27(71%) reported that the courses relate to their current job whilst relatively less 11(29%) reported that their course is not related to their current job. Therefore, the majority of the distance students can apply the skills they learn in the programme directly in their day-to-day practice. This supports that their learning can have immediate value to contribute to their current employment. Therefore, the distance education programme has practical values for the employers.

The information in item 6 of the above table shows that the distance learners have generally three strong motives to attend the distance learning programme. They are to improve knowledge and skills (84%), to get promotion (47%), and to get a better job (32%). This shows that the distance learners are generally interested in gaining knowledge and skills and that they generally focus on pragmatic reasons.

In item 7 of the same table above, the three most important reasons for choosing distance education programme are: the need to work fulltime (74%), distance from conventional higher institutions (50%), and lack of place in the regular programme (13%). Therefore, the distance learners prefer the programme for personal reasons due to the nature of their family life.

The most important points in the above discussion reveal that the distance students were out of school for relatively long time, and they reflect feelings of frustration in their learning. With regard to their motives, pragmatic reasons were identified as the driving force in the course of study. The points correlate with the concepts discussed in the literature chapter, section 2.1.2 about the unique features of distance learning. To this end, it implies special attention in organising student support services to meet

the special needs. Issues discussed under table 6.1 above and table 6.5 below also link with this.

6.4.3 Students' views about the programme

Learners' views about quality of the support system are explained through their responses regarding: Administrative support, learning materials, tutorial services and assessment process. This information helps us to understand the quality of support services available in the system.

Table 6.5 Students views about the support system

Items	No	%	Median value
1. satisfaction with the administrative supports			
A. Very high	06	16	
B. High	21	55	19.5th
C. Average	10	26	
D. Low	01	03	
E. Very low	00	00	
2. satisfaction with the learning materials			
A. Very high	10	26	
B. High	16	42	19.5th
C. Average	11	29	
D. Low	01	03	
E. Very low	00	00	
3. satisfaction with the tutorial services			
A. Very high	05	13	
B. High	17	45	19.5th
C. Average	13	34	
D. Low	03	08	
E. Very low	00	00	
4. satisfaction with assessment process			
A. Very high	03	08	
B. High	17	45	19.5th
C. Average	18	47	
D. Low	00	00	
E. Very low	00	00	

In their responses about the administrative support, the majority of the respondents 21(55%) reported high satisfaction. The median value also shows the same group of response. In the same item 10(26%) reported an average satisfaction, and 6(16%) reported very high satisfaction. However, when subsequently, students are asked to write their comments about this matter, they contradicted the above views. For example, they reported the administrative support is very weak in distributing materials and information. They also reported problems in coordination of the study centre. Moreover, lack of orientation and advice in the academic activities of the programme were also reported by all groups of respondents including the

coordinators. Therefore, the satisfaction of the learners for the administrative supports is a relative term as it seems they normally expect poor quality.

Similarly, in the interviews, one respondent stressed the following problem in the course offering procedures.

> I have studied management in the diploma programme and now continued for a degree. I take only 1 course while the others take 4. I asked to add at least one but they refused me. I could have finished my study in 2 years but you see I have to study for 4 years again. This is really terrible and I have no choice (Aster, 02/07/08, first year management student).

In addition to this, I met an ex-student with similar feeling in Awasa, on my way back from Arba-Minch on 4/07/08. He said he is a record officer in a government office. The informant said that he shifted to private college for degree study after finishing diploma programme in management with Civil Service College. He seems very disappointed by the college's rigidity in course offering. He stated that: "*ECSC is a sealed grave and no one opens and looks inside.*" His feeling originates from the fact that he is not convinced about lack of flexibility in course offering and he thinks that they can offer higher courses while the beginners take introductory courses. However, he didn't hide appreciating the experience he gained in the diploma programme. This situation contrasts with the requirement for flexibility in course offering in distance learning as stressed in literature chapter, section 2.1.2.

In his comments, he clearly stressed that he does not want to join the private college but he doesn't want to lag behind his group by two years due to the policy of ECSC that he doesn't understand. I have known about this during the field work and didn't expect it to happen. In this regard, one of the central staff said the following:

> We decided to offer the courses uniformly based on the beginning students because we didn't want to complicate the system as much as possible. If we offer advanced courses we will be forced to give more tutorials and assignments that is getting more and more difficult for us in the current situation (Alemu, 05/07/08).

Further to the above comment, I asked the informant about what they can do in the meantime, because students normally will not move on in the same pace. Then, giving different levels of courses will be inevitable. Then, he continued, "We have to make things easier as much as we can because the system is not supportive to the

programme, you know". The above response focuses on the interest to ease the support system. In this regard, the opinion of the student respondent is not groundless. In fact it is the weakness of the system to fail to solve this problem because it is absolutely possible to offer advanced courses to the students while the beginners take introductory courses. As mentioned above, the situation could be explained in terms of rigidity and lack of flexibility of the programme. There again it could be pragmatic because the institution can barely manage to offer the necessary supports for the courses they have to add and leave the students more unsupported but the highly motivated students can compensate for the situation by hiring their own tutors as mentioned elsewhere in this chapter.

When asked about the learning materials, the majority of the responses reported high and very high satisfaction. For instance, in the above table, 26(68%) reported very high satisfaction and 11(29%) reported average satisfaction. But again, this is a relative view in that the respondents reversed their views in their open comments. Among the comments about the learning materials are lack of reference books; and substantially, shortage of examples in the distance teaching modules as weakness they observe. The shortage of sufficient examples could be explained as the consequence of budgetary problem, widely discussed in the next chapter (see section 7.2). In this regard, the critical challenge to the system is limiting the size of the course material in the recent course development process due to budget shortages.

But the students generally think that the distance learning programme opened great learning opportunity to them both in terms of access and opportunities to learn key life skills. In underlining this, one of the student respondents stated the following:

> Thanks to the distance learning programme. I have now the skills and confidence to read and learn by myself than waiting for a teacher who may be absent (Abraham, 02/07/08, first year management student).

This student seems to appreciate skills he learned through the distance learning programme through independent learning. This correlates with the principle of autonomy and independence and flexibility in distance learning that is discussed in the literature chapter (see section 2.1.3).

When asked about their satisfaction with the tutorial services, as presented in the above table, the majority of the respondents 17(45%) reported that they are highly satisfied and 5(13%) reported very high satisfaction with the tutorial services. Thirteen (34%) of the respondents showed average satisfaction with the services. The median value of the group also indicates high satisfaction. However, this view is again reversed in the responses to the open-ended questions. Here, the student respondents commented: the time of tutorials is not enough, tutorial centre is too far, tutorial services are not sufficient, tutors do not prepare for the lessons and do not support well.

In responding to the question about their satisfaction with the assessment, in the above table, the majority 18(47%) reported average satisfaction and 17(45%) reported high satisfaction with the way their assignments and exams were handled. The median value also indicates high satisfaction. This again is reversed in the open comments, the student respondents criticised the assessment process in that some of the assignments can be answered directly from the text. Some indicated shortage of time and short deadlines for assignment submission and lack of means of communication. Moreover, in an interview, a student respondent said the following:

> We receive feedback of assignments after the final exam and cannot learn from our mistakes. Moreover, the grade report is late and often with errors in the figures. Once I remember all of us received a grade report with different letter grades on each but the same cumulative average for the entire group (Yonas, 02/07/08, first year management student).

This reflects critical problems in the assessment process as revealed through weak delivery of feedback to the students. As mentioned in the literature chapter section 2.1.4, distance learning will be effective if the learners receive timely feedback. Therefore, this is an indication that the feedback process is highly hampered in the distance learning programme. The discussion about the student support system presented in the later section of this chapter also confirms this fact.

Besides, in the general comments, the student respondents mentioned that the programme of distance learning has helped them to access higher education. Some mentioned lack of communication facilities as major challenges. Some respondents indicated that the course takes too long. In this regard, as mentioned in the first

section of this chapter, the degree course takes four and a half years and the students think that is too long. The other comments lack of library and reference books.

These problems are clear but the institution has little capacity to solve them. The institution could really improve the problems about communication. For instance, it could employ telephone tutorials in addition to the face-to-face to avoid many of the problems the students have been facing. However, this has not been implemented. This deficiency could be seen in line with the standards of good practice of distance education discussed in the literature chapter (see section 2.1.4).

With regard to what they like or dislike, the learners generally revealed their appreciation for the learning materials and expressed their disappointment with the disorganised ways of doing things at the centre, especially, at registration time. They also complain about the coordinators. For example, one respondent said that "The coordinators do not explain anything to students. They simply post messages on the board and disappear while students need some explanations" (Aster, 02/07/08, first year management student).

Some also complain about the record system and receiving grade reports so late. However, they generally believe that the programme is successful because they say: "the graduates of the diploma programme are coping up well in their employment" (Behailu, 02/07/08, first year management student). They understand the distance learning programme is helping the capacity building programme in that it enables the employees to study at home and keep working at the same time (Marta, 30/06/08, first year management student).

One of the respondents said: "I didn't expect such a big institution to be so disorganised." (Aster, 02/07/08, first year management student). Furthermore, most of the students had problems about their academic records. They complain about some mistakes in their grade reports. I visited Arba-Minch study centre early 2006 for monitoring purpose with the same programme and some of the problems at those days remained unsolved for years. For instance, one of the cases reported in 2006 was about two students with the same ID number; and I again came across students with same problem in 2008. This is further elaborated in the later sections of this chapter in discussing issues about the record system (see section 6.7.3 below).

This being the case, during the gap between tutorial sessions, many of the students try to talk about their problems to the coordinators. As mentioned in the narratives of students in the first section of this chapter, many students complain that the coordinators do not help them. They say the coordinators always tell them that they have no information and they are there simply to post a notice on the board and go away. The students say that they have no one to ask for explanation (Aster, 02/07/08, first year management student).

In this regard, there is a considerable misunderstanding of the coordinators about the record system. In fact, the coordinators can help little about the problem of the record as the records are poorly managed at the headquarters. However, the students expect the coordinators to know everything as representatives of the institution. The reason for this misunderstanding is the lack of orientation for the students about how the whole system operates at the beginning as discussed earlier.

Therefore, the state of affairs in the institution as revealed through student responses does not correlate with the standards of good practice for distance learning, presented in the literature chapter. This idea will be built up further as the discussion proceeds. In the next sections, we will see further issues in the student support system from the point of views of the distance teaching staff at central and regional levels.

6.5 The Practice in Student Selection and Registration

Student selection and registration involves all levels of the distance learning system. The candidates apply at the level of study centre by submitting their documents. Documents are initially reviewed at the regional centre and sent to the headquarters of IDE for final review and decision. Final selection, thus, takes place at the headquarters and successful candidates get informed through their study centres before registration. Registration takes place at each study centre after fees are paid either at the Bank or in cash at the regional centre. The latter alternative is available only for study centres that are located in the regional capital but not applicable to the Arba-Minch case. Students immediately collect their teaching materials after completing the registration form.

6.5.1 Application

Students from any region or study centre join the distance learning programme based on criteria set by the civil service college; and the selection is made based on two major stages. First, the civil service college announces for new students to apply at nearby regional or study centres. The announcement is through the mass media and candidates can also apply through offices of Capacity Building in their area. The offices of Capacity Building are structured in the government down to district (Woreda) level. The announcement includes the criteria the candidates should fulfil. Candidates do not pay fees at this stage,

The distance learning programme admits candidates from government or para-government organisations only and each candidate has to fulfil the following criteria to be accepted: (1) Completion of secondary education; (2) A minimum GPA of 2.00 points in ESLCE/EGSECE, and (3) Has to submit recommendation letter from the employer (ECSC/IDE, 2005). The last criterion is to assure that the candidate is civil servant.

As mentioned earlier, in Ethiopian context, civil service includes all sectors with the exception of military and justice. Thus, that the system is not open to the people who are out of the civil service. This could be seen in line with the argument presented in section 6.4 above. If we consider the specific situation of Arba-Minch study centre, the office of capacity building collects the documents of the candidates that it wants to sponsor and sends them to the regional office of capacity building at Awasa. Those who are not sponsored by the government go directly to the study centre to submit their documents. In the meantime, all the documents go to the regional centre of the distance learning programme at Awasa for initial review and then sent to the headquarters of IDE for the final selection (ECSC/IDE, 2005).

The distance learning programme is a bit different in its procedures from the regular programme of the college. For example, applicants are not invited publicly in the regular programme of the college. In the latter, students are selected through circular sent by the college to the respective regional governments. The reason for recruiting students through circulars than mass media has never been explained officially. Thus,

all potential candidates do not have equal access to the college's programme. In this respect, one of the student interviewees reported the following:

> I believe that the DL programme brought me a golden opportunity. I had no way to study if this didn't happen. I cannot join the private institutions because they are very expensive for me; and I cannot join the regular programme of the college because I am not a party member and my ethnic origin is not from here (Genet, 01/07/08, first year management student).

The situation revealed by the informant has been common in the country since early 1990s with the policy of ethnic federalism (see chapter 3). Although detailed practices are not openly acknowledged, the reality confirms this. The recruitment of the students for the college is made through key government institutions like capacity building and government offices.

6.5.2 Result of the selection process

At the headquarters of IDE/ECSC, the documents of candidates will be examined for authenticity and final selection. The academic criterion for the distance learning is usually the minimum pass in national exam result as indicated in the above section. Evidence for being civil servant submitted by each candidate is also strictly checked at this level (IDE student handbook, 2004).

After final decision about the selection, the list of successful candidates with full names and ID numbers will be sent from IDE to the regional and study centres. This is done a few weeks before registration; candidates may also check if they are accepted or not by calling IDE headquarters if they have telephone access. Otherwise, they go to the study centre in person to search their names on the list posted by the coordinators. This is inconvenient but as mentioned earlier there are no permanent staff devoted to the job at the level of study centres to communicate information individually.

In contrast to the trend in the regular programme of the college, self-sponsored students get the opportunity to join the system through distance learning because this approach enabled the institution to accept students in thousands. This was the case when the study was conducted. But, recently, selection of all students is decided through the office of capacity building. This regulation applies from 2008/9; and it

implies that the system of distance learning is going back to the procedure of political scan as in the regular programme. As a new development, this is expected to adversely affect the number and quality of students joining the programme. This shows complicated procedures of admission that challenges access and flexibility as opposed to the principles presented in the literature chapter.

6.5.3 Registration and collecting teaching materials

As mentioned above, for the announcements of application and registration, the government media: newspaper, radio and TV are used by the system. The information about registration is delivered each semester a few weeks in advance. Information about exams, assignments, and urgent messages, telephone, fax, and email are used.

Staff and students have different views about the effectiveness of the information delivery system. As some of the students explained in the interviews, the distance students around Arba-Minch are responding uniquely to the unreliable information delivered to them through the mass media. For instance, one of the respondents said: "Now many students learned all about the situation and they come the other weekend for the real registration" (Genet, 01/07/08, first year management student).

As reported by one of the informants from the central staff, the information delivery system is said to be effective in using various media. He said: "I believe all students obtain the necessary information on time" (Tibebu, 26/08/07). In this regard, certain misunderstanding can be identified from this point. One, what the students need is not only to receive the information but also its accuracy. Moreover, the students need to know if their registration is fully documented and have to receive a letter of confirmation about their registration from the institution; the evidence from Arba-Minch shows that this does not happen in practice. What students actually receive personally from the institution as feedback has been only a grade report. This being the case, as we discuss later, even the grade report is available after several months, even semesters.

The lack of feedback to the students has been resulting in serious consequences in the system. For example, a group of students whose tuition fees were stolen after they registered at their study centre finished the semester before they knew what had happened to them. This could have been solved sooner if there had been timely

feedback to the students about their registration (see the section on staffing and human resource in chapter 7). As presented in chapter 2, feedback is one of the key elements in the standard of good practice for distance learning. Hence, this is one of the critical defects of the programme.

The delivery of the teaching materials to study centres is another challenge that adversely affects everything including the registration process. As indicated earlier, teaching materials are delivered to study centres by car; and as there is no store in the regions and study centres, IDE should not send the material very early (see logistics and supplies in chapter 7). After the materials reach the centre, sorting in the right order and checking takes at least a day or two which further delays the registration process.

This is a clear indication of system inefficiency of the programme. During my visit to Arba-Minch Study Centre in July 2008, I witnessed that the registration, which was announced for Saturday morning at 8:30 AM actually began at 2:00 PM on Wednesday the following week. Registration takes place at study centres within a period of two weeks at the beginning of the semester, mostly on weekends because the students have jobs on weekdays (ECSC/IDE, 2004). Those students who live in the town can register during week days. Those who travelled hundreds of kilometres already went back because they have jobs at home. Most of the students indicated similar problems in the interviews. For example, one of the student respondents said the following: “I travel 285 km to come here. You could imagine why I wait here for four days without my fault” (Marta, 30/06/08, first year management student). This time, she decided to stay and wait because she is a teacher and was on summer vacation.

The students appear in person to register. At the Arba-Minch study centre, fees are collected at the Branch of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia by depositing the full semester fee into the Civil Service College’s account. However, as mentioned earlier, in the study centres located in regional capitals, such as Awasa, the students pay in cash to the cashier of the regional centre when they appear for registration (Alemu, 19/09/08, central staff). At registration, the students in Arba-Minch show the Bank’s advice to an authorised person. After filling in the registration form they submit and collect their materials in person and go home. There is no orientation and guidance

except the information about dates of tutorials, assignment submission, and final exam dates for the semester. These are posted for the students on the notice board and they collect the printed copies of the schedules at registration. More of similar issues are discussed in the student support section below.

This correlates with the complaints of students discussed in section 6.1, and it shows that the system doesn't offer the minimum support (orientation about the programme). Orientation is necessary for distance learners to develop their awareness about the programme and manage their independent learning. Orientation could encourage the learners to start reading their course materials with some predisposition. This contrasts with the standard discussed in the literature, section 2.1.4 as there are no staff trained for this purpose at Arba-Minch centre and no such a service.

In general, the programme of distance learning reflects more formal approach, similar to a conventional system with less flexible procedures and limited scope of services. For example, as discussed above, the candidates have to be present in person at the centre to know if their application was accepted or not. This defect is largely because of underdeveloped culture and problem of resources. The resource status discussed elsewhere doesn't allow the system to offer more services. Thus, the system is not like distance learning in many respects.

In short, the above discussion reveals a poorly organised system of service at the study centre and the difficulties the distance learners have been facing. This reality contrasts with the standard of good practice of distance learning. However, the students adapted themselves as they know that there is no better practice of distance learning programme in the country.

6.6 Students' Enrolment Structure

As discussed earlier, the major academic criterion to accept distance students is pass grade in the national exam at completion of secondary schooling. The other criterion is evidence of being civil servant in government or para-government organisations. As discussed earlier, the mandate of the college is not wide enough to serve the mass. However, from what happened in the college after the development of the distance learning programme, it is possible to stress that the distance learning programme transformed the college to accept students in thousands and graduated in thousands

for the first time in its history as we see below., the data in the following table shows students' enrolment in the diploma programme of the distance learning from 2005-2007.

Table 6.6 ECSC/IDE student enrolment (2005- 2007)

Regional Centre	Tutorial Centre	2004/5 intake			2005/6 intake			2006/7 intake			Grand Total		
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Addis Ababa	A.A	153	46	199	154	45	199	108	33	141	415	124	539
	D.Berhan	19	15	34	82	34	116	33	16	49	134	65	199
	Mizan-T	125	20	145	46	20	66	95	40	135	266	80	346
Asossa	Asossa	73	39	112	18	11	29	18	32	50	109	82	191
Awassa	Awassa	72	8	80	213	52	265	137	40	177	422	100	522
	Arba-M	*85*	*39*	*124*	*94*	*44*	*138*	*195*	*75*	*270*	*374*	*158*	*532*
	Hosanna	53	10	63	45	17	62	163	51	214	261	78	339
Bahir Dar	B. Dar	70	71	141	193	243	436	104	77	181	367	391	758
	Gonder	36	25	61	108	111	219	64	70	134	208	206	414
	Debre-M	43	26	69	102	65	167	63	46	109	208	137	345
	Gilgel-B	29	7	36	36	40	76	37	24	61	102	71	173
Gambella	Gambella	64	24	88	37	5	42	10	2	12	111	31	142
Harar	Harar	3	14	17	39	10	49	27	9	36	69	33	102
	Dire-D	71	23	94	47	4	51	41	7	48	159	34	193
Jijiga	Jijiga	34	22	56	9	6	15	43	23	66	86	51	137
Mekelle	Mekele	57	28	85	117	52	169	97	35	132	271	115	386
	Shire	92	39	131	75	30	105	43	11	54	210	80	290
	Axum	128	38	166	126	71	197	29	18	47	283	127	410
	Maichew	55	38	93	121	128	249	62	30	92	238	196	434
Semera	Semera	41	27	68	37	31	68	22	9	31	100	67	167
	Dessie	81	53	134	96	51	147	40	16	56	217	120	337
TOTAL		1384	612	1996	1795	1070	2865	1431	664	2095	4610	2346	6956

Source: ECSC Registrar, 2008

As presented in section 6.4 above, the distance students are employed people and adults and mostly males. It is also mentioned that the number of females is relatively high in the distance learning programme. For instance, at the beginning of the regular programme, the participation of females was about 1% for the civil service college (Registrar's report of 1998 graduates).

Statistics for the regular programme of the college are produced within a regional framework. Thus, it is difficult to find separate data for the Arba-Minch area for perfect comparison. However, we can assume average for the SNNP region and make reference to the first graduates' statistics for the college. In this regard, on the 3rd of January1998, 91 men and 1(one) woman graduated from the college for this region on total. This reveals participation rate of about 1%. Recently, this has improved a little

in the regular programme. For instance, the graduates of 2007 for SNNP region were 21 total, and out of these 3 were women. This is 14% participation for women (ECSC registrar, statistical report, 2007).

Subsequently, at the beginning of the distance learning programme, the initial figure shows 34% (see the above table). When we refer to the enrolment statistics of the distance learners up to 2007 at Arba-Minch study centre, we see that out of the 532 distance learners, 374 were men and 158 were women. This reveals overall participation of females to about 30%. Therefore, as the number of women is generally less than 10% in the regular programme of the college, it is easy to see that the participation is significantly higher in the distance learning programme.

Table 6.7 Distance education graduate statistics

No	Regional Centre	Tutorial Centre	PSAF			PSA			LAW			Total		
			M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1	Addis Ababa	Addis A.	21	24	45	58	11	69	69	6	77	148	41	191
		Debre B	8	3	11	5	12	17	4	1	5	17	16	33
		Mizan	25	10	35	55	7	62	44	3	47	124	20	144
2	Assossa	Assosa	17	9	26	34	21	55	21	8	29	72	38	110
3	Awassa	Awassa	7	4	11	31	1	32	28	2	30	66	7	73
		Arba-M.	12	19	31	36	14	50	23	7	30	71	40	111
		Hossaena	14	3	17	21	3	24	15	5	20	50	11	61
4	Bahir Dar	Bahir Dar	8	16	24	33	38	71	19	17	36	60	71	131
		Gonder	10	5	15	16	10	26	8	10	18	34	25	59
		Debre M.	3	8	11	16	13	29	19	6	25	38	27	65
		Gilgel B.	10	3	13	18	4	22	0	0	0	28	7	35
5	Gambella	Gambella	12	9	21	30	13	43	10	0	10	52	22	74
6	Harar	Harar	1	0	1	7	1	8	2	6	8	10	7	17
		Dire D.	12	15	27	22	9	31	28	4	32	62	28	90
7	Jijiga	Jijiga	10	8	18	21	14	35	0	0	0	31	22	53
8	Mekelle	Mekelle	2	9	11	34	8	42	22	11	33	58	28	86
		Shire	8	11	19	61	24	85	29	4	33	98	39	137
		Axum	5	2	7	93	29	122	30	7	37	128	38	166
		Maichew	2	5	7	33	28	61	21	7	28	56	40	96
9	Semera	Semera	6	2	8	24	17	41	10	1	11	40	20	60
		Dessie	27	14	41	30	28	58	19	16	35	76	58	134
Total			220	179	399	678	305	983	421	121	544	1319	605	1926

Source: ECSC Registrar, 2008

When we look at the first graduate statistics for the distance learning programme of the same institution in 2007, a total of 1926 students graduated. Out of these, 605 were women. This shows female participation of 31%. At the end of August 2008, the college graduated 2634 more in the distance learning programme as second group. Out of these, 964 were women. This shown female participation of 37%.

To compare the trend in the annual output of the college, in 2007, a total of 164 students graduated in the regular programme and 25 of them are women (ECSC

registrar, 2007). This shows 15% participation of women in the latter. Besides, this data shows that the graduate figure of the distance learning programme is about 10 times bigger than the regular programme.

For Arba-Minch centre alone, the figure was 71 men and 40 women in the first group of graduates for the distance learning programme in 2007. This indicates two things. One, it shows that Arba-Minch study centre alone is bigger than the whole SNNP regional participation on total in the regular programme. For example, as mentioned above, the figure for the regular programme is 14% participation for the region. However, the data about the distance programme reveals 36% of the graduates were females.

Thus, from the above discussion, one can clearly see that the distance learning programme had facilitated access in general and for women in particular much better than the regular programme.

This being the case for the initial phase, the future seems to change a little. As mentioned earlier, the diploma programme closed mid-2007. Hence, the recruitment of new students is restricted to degree level and one field of study, i.e., management. As discussed in chapter 3, accounting and law were stopped as they were no longer a focus of the college since 2004. Consequently, the last group of diploma students finished their course early 2009. Therefore, the degree programme in the field of management is going to be the only field of study for the distance learning programme. Thus, the number of students is more likely to decrease in the years to come; and this has been already noticed in Arba-Minch (see the table below). In the above table, the Arba-Minch Centre was the 3rd in enrolment for the diploma programme. In contrast, the table below shows that it is the 11th in the degree programme. This reveals a sharp decline of enrolment in the degree programme for the centre.

Table 6.8 Student enrolment for degree programme

Regional centre	Study centre	No of students	Field of study
1. Addis A.	1. Addis A.	167	Management
	2. Debre-Birhan	27	>>
	3. Mizan-Teferi	152	>>
2. Asosa	4. Asosa	99	>>
3. Awasa	5. Awasa	60	>>
	6. Arba-Minch	**80**	**>>**
	7. Hosains	144	>>
4. Bahirdar	8. Bahirdar	150	>>
	9. Gonder	32	>>
	10. Debre-Markos	17	>>
	11. Gilgel-Beles	85	>>
5. Gambella	12. Gambella	63	>>
6. Harar	13. Harar	74	>>
	14. Dire-Dawa	48	>>
7. Jijiga	15. Jijiga	84	>>
8. Mekele	16. Mekele	49	>>
	17. Shire	30	>>
	18. Axum	24	>>
	19. Maichew	104	>>
9. Semera	20. Semera	124	>>
	21. Dessie	87	>>
	22. Grand Total	1700	>>

Enrolment statistics, IDE, September 2008

In the interviews, the degree students were asked for their opinions about the termination of the diploma programme; and all of them opposed the decision. For instance, one of the student respondents said:

> I think the termination of the diploma programme is wrong. Diploma programme could have been very popular in the region because many people working in the offices have no formal training beyond secondary education (Marta, 30/06/08, first year management student).

Here, the decline of student enrolment for the degree programme in the centre correlates with the opinion of the student respondents. Officials in the Awasa regional centre and Arba-Minch also had similar reflections about the termination of the diploma programme during the first round interviews by the researcher in 2007.

In the above discussion, an attempt is made to reflect the trend in the student enrolment in the past and present with their implications. It is reflected that distance learning programme highly improved the enrolment trend in the civil service college particularly for women. However, the recent situation reveals that the whole development effort that brought about a significant change in access to the college is

getting reversed very soon due to lack of attention for the distance learning programme below degree level.

6.7 The Practice in Student Support

In designing strategies, distance learning institutions have to achieve sound teaching and learning goals and have to meet the needs of students (Olgren, 1998:87; and Birnbaum, 2001:1). The key issues for facilitating distance learning as a standard of good practice, discussed in the literature, is organising an effective student support system. This includes orienting new students, offering timely feedback, and managing assessment as key ingredients.

As described in the literature, distance students as adults possess unique needs, attitudes, beliefs, motives, self-concepts and goals. Their uniqueness lie in the roles they play in their society and community (Picciano, 2001:147-148). Therefore, an effective distance learning programme is when there is a specialised student support system corresponding to the needs of the learners.

In the distance learning programme under study, the student support system is structured from the headquarters down to the study centres. At the headquarters, the planning and scheduling of the academic programme, distribution of teaching materials to study centres, delivery of information about: student selection and registration, tutorial sessions, and assignment submission dates are determined. Scheduling and administering final exams and scoring and grading are also the duties of the student support staff from the headquarters.

At study centre, collection of fees, registration and distribution of teaching materials to students, and tutorial classes are conducted as per the centrally endorsed schedule. Collecting assignments from students and marking (by tutors) are done at study centres. Results of academic or administrative activities are also delivered to students through study centres. Final exams are held at study centres under supervision of staff appointed from the headquarters.

All the above issues are parts of student support; there is no universal way of classifying student support but the system may be grouped into two broad categories as: administrative and academic. The academic support includes issues related to

tutorials, tutor marked assignments, and final exams whilst all the rest could be grouped under administrative support (Nelson, 1994).

The distance learning programme under study had initially practiced some good beginnings in the student support system that was based on the experience of the UK Open University. For example, all the staff were initially trained for the job, and organised for regular monitoring of tutorials and general administrative support. This included collecting samples of tutor marked assignments from each study centres to provide feedbacks to tutors. Regular training and retraining of tutors was also part of the initial plan of the system (IDE structure 2004).

The major challenge of the system is that the college management is too far away from the service in practice and, after the initial set-up described above, doesn't follow through with appropriate student support mechanisms. As described in chapter 2, the success of a distance learning programme depends on the availability of supportive environment. However, if we see the reality in the programme under study, as also mentioned in chapter 3, the management removed all the staff trained for the purpose of student support to another job for the national reform programme, which could be done by others than those highly specialised personnel. The worst thing in this regard is the failure to replace them with appropriately trained persons. Thus, the staff currently managing the duty of academic supports were not trained for the job (Tamene, 26/08/07, central staff). This shows lack of supportive environment for the programme as a key matter of organisation.

The other problem here is lack of resources, which goes back to the decision making process of budget making. The commitment from the budget point of view has direct implications on the quality of learner support at the outreach centres. For example, the institute planned monitoring of regional and study centres; but when the plan reached the decision makers at the top, it was rejected. This happened for the first time at the end of 2006 and monitoring has not been done since. The reason forwarded at the time was lack of budget for such services (Teka, 26/08/07, central staff). In this regard, the budget constraint is adversely affecting the support system of the distance learning programme.

The practice of tutoring and marking assignments by tutors to appropriate standard is also affected by lack of commitment from the budgetary decision making as we see below. Tutors are expected to mark and comment assignments in addition to facilitating tutorials. However, it is reported that few tutors do their jobs to the standard by writing comments in the assignments they mark. As tutor training was also stopped because of budget constraints, there is no good environment to improve the situation of the tutors. Especially, the newly joining tutors have not got any training for the job (Abera, 14/06/07, tutor).

Tutorial attendance of students is high; this is because the students are largely accustomed to conventional teaching approaches and they feel confident when the teacher tells them something rather than reading independently. Moreover, students generally lack confidence in the support they obtain from the institution. For instance, they have hired their own village tutors who help them informally and they organise in groups to pay their informal tutors. This is known in all distance learning programmes in the country and one of the student interviewees also confirmed this (Sisay, 30/06/08, first year management student). The staff also know about this and they believe that village tutors help the students in doing assignments for them and corrupt the system (Aynalem, 14/08/08, central staff).

As the above points indicate, the regional system of the distance learning is weakening gradually due to lack of resources. Thus, things may continue to deteriorate in the future (Samuel, 26/06/08, central staff). The staff generally believe that the difficulties regarding the problems of managing student support is because the college gives priority to the regular programme.

With respect to marginalisation of the programme in the institution, one of the interviewees said the following.

> The problems in managing tutorials and other services for the DL programme are precisely because of the fact that the college gives priority to regular programmes in every aspect. All the other reasons they put forward, as to me, are pretext to reject genuine requests of the DP programme" (Alem, 03/08/07, central staff).

In the situation, the student support system of the distance learning programme is seriously challenged due to shortage of resources. The staff generally perceive the

situation as neglecting the distance learning programme by the college management which is not performing what it can easily do to improve the status of the distance learning programme. The above situation coincides with the points discussed earlier about the contrast in government's sponsorship between regular and distance programmes.

6.7.1 The practice of tutoring

In the distance learning programme, tutors are subject area specialists and they have at least a degree in the subject they tutor. In Arba-Minch study centre, there is no difficulty to find tutors in all fields of study because there is a university and a college in the town. In some places where there is no college or university, high school teachers are involved in tutoring for the distance learning programme.

The recruitment and selection of tutors is conducted at each study centre one month in advance before a semester begins. As per the original strategy of the distance learning programme, training of tutors takes place few weeks before the registration schedule. This is organised by the regional services team of IDE and the trainer is sent from the headquarters to all study centres (ECSC/IDE, 2004). Regional coordinators, who were originally trained during the project phase by the UK Open University, also participate in tutor training activities at study centres.

As mentioned above, development activities have been weakening recently due to lack of commitment from the resource side and tutor training has virtually stopped since 2006. Consequently, at Arba-Minch study centre, tutors who were not trained are offering tutorial services. To mention one of the cases, for example, one of the tutor respondents said the following: "I have been working as a tutor for 1 year now. I am not trained as a tutor because I started the job after tutor training is stopped" (Abiy, 07/04/07, tutor).

All the tutors are actually teachers; however, tutoring is more than teaching in a conventional schools setting (Keegan, 1996:50). It involves the skills of handling adults and treating them with respect and helping them to learn from their experiences by sharing than teaching them in an approach of formal lectures. The tutor has to facilitate the learners to read and understand the subject matter by themselves (Graham and Wedman, 1989:183-188). He/she has to explain the content only when

the content is difficult to understand by the learners individually. This is the core issue in tutoring and tutors actually need appropriate orientation and training to do the job accordingly (Holmberg, 2003:81-82; and Keegan, 1986:63). Therefore, tutors can't manage the job of tutoring only with the skills and experience they get from teaching conventional classes.

For example, tutors are not expected to simply put tick or cross and write marks on assignments. As the assignments are all subjective, the tutors are supposed to write comments to the student to tell how he/she arrived at giving the marks for each item. This has a lot of psychological considerations and possible situation of the learner and what he/she may feel in reading the comments all alone. Therefore, as to the principle, the tutor has to always begin his/her comments with positive statement to minimise frustration and go on telling the whole story about how he/she gets the particular mark. Tutor's comment must also include a sort of advice on how the student can improve (Holmberg, 1986:123; Inman and Kerwin, 1999:86; and Peters, 1988:109).

Therefore, the task of tutoring is not easy and it requires not only proper orientation and training, but also personal commitment and appropriate remuneration. Ultimately, untrained tutors can hardly meet the responsibility of facilitating distance learning effectively. In the interviews, some of the tutors indicated that they facilitate tutorials in the same way they teach conventional classes. Some mention lack of training for this whilst others say their students demand the traditional approach of lecture. Similarly, as observed in the study, the tutorial classes at Arba-Minch study centre look like regular classes in both orientation and number of students. The sitting arrangement of the students and the way they behave is similar to regular class and the situation is fully teacher centred. In the interviews too, most of the tutors confirmed that they teach in the traditional approach (Yosef, 06/04/08, tutor).

The way the tutors treat the assignments also reflect critical defects of the support system. In this regard, the tutors generally believe that commenting on assignments is a demanding task and they feel the payment is not sufficient to do the job thoroughly. For instance, one of the tutor respondents noted the following in an interview:

> Tutoring is in practice lecturing because students prefer lecture. The task of assignment marking is really tough because of the requirement for detail

> commenting. Besides, the payment rate per paper is not enough as I see it. Hence, I do the job only because I have time (Kebede, 14/04/08, tutor).

The staff also believe that the payment the distance learning programme is offering to tutors is too low to promote proper service. The payment rate is determined and explained to each tutor before contracting. During tutorials, the study centre coordinators take attendance and reports the number of sessions for each tutor for payment of salary by the regional centre. Then the regional centre requests the tutor salary for each of the centres under the region, at the end of the month from the headquarters.

Payment is often delayed and tutors complain about it. They said their salary is paid after two months for a reason they do not understand. Payment for study centre coordinator is rather fixed and known. Thus, it is sent to the study centres together with the salary of the permanent staff in the regional centre's office; without the problem of delay.

The above discussion reveals that the tutoring of the distance learning programme is poorly organised. This is largely due to the system's failure to commit the necessary resources for the task. Therefore, the programme has not been able to promote proper interaction and communication and feedback between the students and tutors as a key principle of good practice in distance learning. This correlates with the argument based on the students' responses regarding the support system in section 6.4 above.

6.7.2 The practice of learning assessment and evaluation

Assessment and evaluation are one of the key features that distinguish educational activities from informal learning. The term assessment is often used synonymously with evaluation, although there are important differences. Assessment refers to the measurement of learning gains, whereas evaluation implies judgment that may be made based on assessment information. Evaluation is judgmental to label something is 'excellent', 'good', 'fair', 'poor', 'bad', etc. Data from assessments are not considered good, bad, or ugly but are evidence to support an evaluative statement of significance or quality (Zvacek, 1999:39).

Therefore, the point of assessment is not simply to gather data and return results; it is a process that starts with questions of decision making that involves gathering and

interpreting data, to inform and help guide for improvement (Knight, 2002:15). The usual techniques of measuring learning are assignments, tests, and examinations. In distance learning, assessment and evaluation are usually through assignments for continuous assessment and final examination. Assessment of learning could be done effectively if the assignments and exams were applied and managed properly (Williams, 2000:325-330).

In distance learning, continuous assessments are usually made through assignments which are marked by tutors or computers. Computer marked assignments are applied in advanced programmes of distance learning such as UK Open University. The fundamental purpose of continuous assessment in distance learning is teaching through assignments; and continuous assessment can serve this purpose if timely feedback is delivered to the student. Therefore, institutions of distance learning must plan and implement effective strategy for assignments to ensure students' learning in the system of assessment.

The assessment strategy of the distance learning programme under study includes tutor marked assignment (TMA) and final exams. Each module of a subject contains one TMA. The TMAs are all subjective type questions and are revised and changed for each group of students. In the diploma programme, now closed, the number of assignments range from 2 to 4. The number of TMAs to be submitted is equal to the number of modules for the subject (ECSC/IDE, 2004).

The TMAs for one subject are marked out of 30% of the total assessment and evaluation of the semester whilst the final exams take the remaining 70%. Thus, less emphasis is given to assignments for assessment purpose. This is because the assignments were largely intended for teaching than for assessment. The staff also lack confidence about the effectiveness of the assessment strategy with TMA. For instance, a respondent from the central staff said the following:

> I realise that cheating on assignments is the most challenging problem in operations of a DL programme. There is no mechanism to control this. There is no standard of marking TMAs as well. Some students write 15 pages for an assignment and get good mark while other write few pages and get less (Tamene, 26/08/07, central staff).

Therefore, the staff believe that the task of assignment marking by tutors is not properly attempted in the system. Tutors think the job is especially demanding and needs more remuneration than the system is offering. For instance, a respondent stated the following in an interview:

> Some tutors simply mark the assignments without writing any comment for the student and we can't demand the service from them without any training. The payment we offer for student support services in general is low (Takele, 26/08/07, central staff).

In the earlier section, we have seen that the opinions of the tutors reflect the fact that the remuneration for the job of tutoring is not sufficient to commit them to the job. Here, we see that the staff also share this idea.

Students also lack confidence on their tutors' manner of marking assignments. For example, one of the student respondents said the following:

> I remember a case when two students submitted a copy of one of the question's answer word by word but got different marks. From this I understood they mark assignments carelessly. Therefore, I am not happy with the marks I get on assignments high or low (Abraham, 02/07/08, first year management student).

Tutors also have their concerns about the effectiveness of assignments for assessment purpose, and they are pessimistic about it. One of the informants stated that he received assignments of students "…who photocopy what their friends have done and simply write their names on it…" (Yosef, 06/04/08, tutor).

The tutors generally suggest assignments should be scored for less marks in the total assessment and evaluation. They believe that the practice of the distance learning programme is generally good in applying subjective based assignments (e.g. essays, case studies, etc). But they think, setting subjective questions alone cannot solve the problem. They contend that controlling student's independent work in assignments to be done at home is difficult. For example, one tutor informant said: "The challenge in assignments of distance learners is that I cannot be sure whether the students are really doing them by themselves or copying" (Abiy, 29/06/08, tutor).

Tutors' concern about the issues of cheating on assignments springs largely from their lack of orientation about distance learning and training because the main purpose of assignment is to facilitate reading rather than evaluation of learning. This is derived

from the educational culture of learners in that they think the purpose is giving the answers rather than reading while looking for the answers. Certainly, a student who copies work of others should not get credit but a lot of work and commitment is required from a tutor to accomplish this in a serious manner. This requires proper orientation and training.

Besides the remuneration, untrained tutors can hardly facilitate continuous assessment effectively. Ultimately, in the distance learning programme, as reflected in students' opinion in section 6.4 above and by opinion of staff in the section 6.7.3 below, the feedback on assignments are received by the students after final examinations and they do not serve the purpose of teaching.

Therefore, assessment and evaluation in the distance learning programme is largely based on final exams, which are fully managed centrally. The staff generally believe that the distance learning programme is neglected by the college management in its attempt to develop student services through tutors' support. This adversely affected the contributions of tutors to the student support system. In this regard, a respondent stated the following:

> Developmental activities like: tutor training and monitoring sample assignments collected from study centres are stopped because of strategic problem of the college when all the staff trained for the regional services are all together, moved to other duties assigned by the college's top management (Aynalem, 30/08/07, central staff).

Because of these difficulties, strengthening the process of continuous assessment has been a failure and final exams are the only reliable technique available for learning assessment and evaluation in the system of the distance learning programme. Therefore, the assessment and evaluation system of the distance learning programme is extremely underdeveloped.

6.7.3 The practice of record management

Besides the problems in the assessment and evaluation discussed above, the challenge of the student support system is compounded by the weakness in the record system. Record management is an important matter for maintaining learner support because feedback about student progress largely depends on the effectiveness of this service.

In the distance learning programme under study, records are managed centrally under the registrar. The record system is disorganised and students do not receive feedback about their earlier semester result before registering for the next. This also complicated the administrative system as a whole. Therefore, students who failed still register and the process of refunding the fees to the students adds unnecessary administrative activity to the already weak system.

As one of the central staff reported "…grade reports of students have never been released on time" (Tamene, 26/08/07, central staff). In explaining the severity of the situation, for example, another respondent said the following:

> I haven't seen students receiving their results on time. I also recognise the shortage of personnel working in the section. And there is no need to talk about shortage of personnel because it is everywhere. The college's management doesn't pay attention to the DL programme as a whole (Takele, 16/07/08, central staff).

The critical difficulty in this area is largely lack of sufficient staff to do the job. The college had more record personnel for the regular programme than the distance programme that teaches more students. For instance, in March 2008, observations show that 7 record staff work for the regular programme whilst one (1) work for the whole distance learning.

This can be explained only in terms of lack of attention for the programme. Such a tendency has been raising issues of equity among the staff and affects the morale of the staff working in the distance learning programme in general.

In this chapter, the practice of the distance learning programme has been focused. The opportunity the distance education programme offered to the disadvantaged learners is reflected. The problem in the student support system starting from the delivery of information and registration and the management of learning assessment as well as record system were considered. The problem in the student support system is largely reflected from the point of view of lack of appropriate guidance and support. Most of the difficulties are the consequence of lack of the necessary commitment from the management of the college to the distance learning programme in allocating the necessary resources. The shortage of resources constrained training and appropriate

remuneration for tutors and disabled the monitoring activities of the day-to-day operations of the study centres.

In short, the reality of the distance learning programme is far from the principles of good practice in distance education. Especially, critical weaknesses are reflected in the student support system of the programme which is critical element of distance learning. The system is not in a position to effectively promote interaction, feedback, and independent learning of the students.

Therefore the distance education programme, at Arba-Minch study centre is running with a lot of administrative hurdles and the programme is highly neglected. To focus on the impact of these on academic issues, for instance, students took computer courses without practising the skills. This is confirmed during the interviews with the staff respondents both at the IDE headquarters as well as regional and study centres. During the interviews, the central staff commented shortage of budget to rent facilities at study centres; and the regional staff commented they don't understand the reason. Still, many more challenges are presented in the proceeding chapter. To this end, the next chapter discusses the management of the distance learning programme in the Civil Service College for further investigation and analysis of the system.

CHAPTER 7

MANAGEMENT CRISIS OF THE DL PROGRAMME

As discussed in the literature chapter, management is defined as an authoritative function combining the process of planning, organising, policymaking, directing and supervising day-to-day operations. To this effect, in distance learning, putting down the organisational framework and determining the organisational model are the most important backgrounds to manage the activities effectively. This is because the structural framework is the foundation for the practice. In this perspective, the institutional model and legislative issues are critical elements of the organisation and management. As the literature tells us, distance learning as a specialised practice can be effective when it is placed in a supportive environment. To this effect, this chapter discusses the management of the distance learning programme in the context of the civil service college. The practice at Arba-Minch study centre is considered in dealing with the specific issues. The discussion begins with the overall environment of the institution and then proceeds with the specific situation of the programme down to the study centre at Arba-Minch.

7.1 Staffing and Human Resource

Staffing strategy is one of the most important ingredients in any organisation. Centrally, the IDE is staffed with persons with higher degrees in education and curriculum. When this study is conducted, among the academic staff, one person holds PhD and all the rest were with MA. As discussed in chapter 5, staffing of the distance learning programme was so smooth, especially, during the project phase. At that moment, the decision makers were more committed as the requirement was clearly written down in the project document as one of the basic conditions from the beneficiary's side (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:39-41).

As mentioned in the earlier chapter, in the distance learning programme, permanent staff are assigned to outreach centres only up to regional level. Thus, study centres like Arba-Minch do not have permanent staff (this is presented in section 3.6.4 of chapter 3). This being the case, initially, most of the vacancies at the headquarters and the regional centres were filled up by qualified staff during the DL project phase. For

instance, 2 of the regional coordinators were with MA degrees and 7 were with BA degrees. After few years, however, some of those staff with BA degrees wanted to study for MA, and some wanted transfer to the central headquarters of IDE when positions are vacant. For example, in discussing the recent challenges in staffing regional centres, one of the respondents noted the following.

> The major problem in staffing regional and study centres is the shortage of qualified persons in the regions. Professional staff do not wish to work at remote regions and we have high turnover of staff at regional level. This is because of lack of opportunities for further education and transfers to IDE headquarters; and it is difficult to replace them when they go (Tamene, 26/08/07, central staff).

The above comment refers to the challenges the distance learning programme has been facing. In this regard, the IDE has no authority to decide on such matters other than forwarding requests to the top management of the college, and all the demands of the regional staff were denied by the relevant incumbents.

Similarly, in explaining the difficulty in staffing, especially for the regional centres, another informant said the following.

> The policy of the college restricts the normal growth of staff in several ways, including the chance to study further and transfer to the IDE headquarters. Due to such complications, the college's management recently decided to fill the vacancies at regional centres by diploma holders than degree. The assumption in the decision is that diploma holders will not challenge the system for further learning (Takele, 26/08/07, central staff).

As implied in the above comments, the possibility of staff transfer to the central position is expected as normal when there is vacancy. But in 2006 the management rejected the request of regional coordinators to transfer from Jijiga, Harar, Semera, and Mekele to central IDE. This can be explained as an interest to keep expertise in the regions but the consequence is high turnover. Consequently, out of the originally hired and trained regional centre coordinators, only 2 were on the job when this study is conducted. The rest have left for other jobs.

It is difficult to understand the reason to refuse transfer of regional staff to central position when appropriate (see above). To manage this problem, the college management decided to fill vacancies at regions by diploma holders. Subsequently, I have observed recently that out of the 9 regional centre coordinators of the

programme, 4 are diploma holders. These are the ones at Gambella, Asosa, Jijiga and Semera. They took the posts by replacing the original coordinators at the respective centres. The original coordinators were degree holders and they left the posts when they were denied some of the right mentioned above.

The decision has several implications. For example, as mentioned earlier, recently, the college closed diploma programmes all together, and is teaching only for degree. So facilitating degree programme with diploma holders is certainly below standard. Besides, they may lack the knowledge and capacity to facilitate degree programme. Moreover, diploma holders are not relevant to train tutors for the programme at the regional level. In short, the decision reflects lack of esteem for the job.

The situation at study centres, for example Arba-Minch is different. In terms of qualification, the coordinators at this centre are first degree holders with sufficient experience and high posts in the host institution. However, as the staff at study centres are part-timers, they do not demand transfer to IDE headquarter or further educational opportunity from the institution. In this regard, among the obvious needs of these people are training to make appropriate orientation to distance learners, to orient and train tutors. There is also a need to allocate enough budgets to run the activities.

At this level, the shortage of personnel is more acute. The centres get very busy during registration of students and the most serious problems occur at this time. In this dimension, as presented in chapter 6, section 6.3, the study centre of Arba-Minch is disadvantaged in that the staff are not trained for the job and budget allocation is very meagre and does not consider student population at the centre (see section 6.6 in chapter 6). Consequently, the services they give to the distance students are limited. For example, as mentioned earlier, many tutors at the Arba-Minch centre are not trained.

To alleviate some of the problems, in his comment, one of the staff stressed the following.

> The system of distance learning should have organised training at the IDE headquarters for all staff including study centre coordinators. I thinks this could help not only to develop awareness about the programme, but also sense of belongingness to the programme among part-time staff (Kadir, 30/06/08, regional staff).

This is an important matter to motivate the regional staff because especially the part-time staff have no attachment to the programme, except the payments for their service; and developing commitment to the job requires more than this.

This being the case, in the system of distance learning, staff/tutor activities are administered centrally; and financial transactions are audited every year and serious problems did not occur in this area yet. This means, the system is reliable in financial management. All salaries, including that of tutors at study centres are managed by the headquarters; and the regional centres actually pay out the salaries to the tutors and study centres in the region. The challenge here is only delay of payment. Some tutors said they collect their salaries after two months. But they didn't complain much because they understand the long administrative procedure and they trust the institution will eventually pay them.

The distance learning staff generally believe, the system of the DL programme has been suffering from lack of attention from the management of the college. They think that the college rejects any development requests with a pretext of budget constraint. For instance as presented in the earlier chapter, shortage of budget was the reason to stop tutor training after 2006, which is a serious consequence in staffing distance learning and quality assurance in student services. For instance, one of the interviewees reported the following.

> The whole system of distance learning is suffering from policy problem of ECSC. The college gives priority to the regular programme, which serves fewer students and not ready to promote the activities of IDE and the institute is hopeless in the future (Fantahun, 04/08/07, central staff).

As mentioned in the earlier chapter, it is not only tutors' training that is stopped since 2006. Monitoring samples of assignments is also stopped and the official reason for all these is budget constraint. Consequently, the activity of monitoring and evaluation of regional centres and study centres is cancelled even from the IDE plan. This is clear indication that the support system of the distance learning is suffering a lot from budgeting component that is controlled by top management.

The budget constraint being an official response from the management's point of view, the respondents believe that the problem is not real shortage of financial

resource but rather lack of commitment from the authorities. For instance, one of the respondents has the following to say:

> The reason for terminating tutor training is said to be shortage of budget, but I don't understand that as the real reason. I rather believe lack of attention from the college management (Getahun, 05/08/07, central staff).

As we can see from the above discussion, lack of resources at regions for whatever reason is constraining the services offered to the students. For example, in 2007, the institute staff identified student who didn't pass through screening of the institute. This was committed by the coordinator of a study centre who was then fired by the management. This may be explained as a consequence of the involvement of sub-professionals into the job and reveals critical shortage of capacity at the outreach centres. Such facts require close follow up and monitoring and the system may be waiting for more crises to come. In this perspective, closer monitoring of centres could be one way of managing, but this has been weakening due to shortage of resources. In connection to this, one of the respondents said the following.

> We cannot be sure whether things are going well in the regional and study centres any time. The institute can't decide on the budget. Thus, the plan to monitor and evaluate regional centres was repeatedly rejected by the top managers and now we stopped planning this task at all (Aynalem, 14/08/08, central staff).

From the above opinion, it is possible to understand the complex problem faced by the staff and the implications on their feelings about their job. The staff think the programme is neglected and they are not contributing enough to the effectiveness of the distance learning programme.

Therefore, the above situation reveals that the distance learning programme of the civil service college is suffering from administrative impediments that have been causing critical shortage of resources. This in turn requires close monitoring of outreach centres; however, the financial constraint further disabled this function. The situation in the course development process also demonstrates similar trend as we see below.

7.2 Course Development

Course development is one of the most basic issues in distance learning. As mentioned in chapter 3, in the structure of the distance learning programme, the function of the academic development team is developing new courses, revising existing courses, and updating tutor marked assignments (TMA) every semester. As indicated earlier, after the termination of the diploma programme, the only field of study being offered by the institute is management. In practice, the pedagogic editor in the academic development team cannot review all the courses alone when many courses are being developed at a time. Hence, all the staff in other teams participate in pedagogic editing with the guidance of the pedagogic editor. All team leaders of the three teams also participate in the job. This shows high team spirit among the staff of the institute. For instance, the following is reflected in an interview with a staff that joined the team after the project phased out:

> I appreciate a lot about the motivation of the IDE staff in their readiness to do the job. But as I understand, the system of the college is not friendly to the DL programme. The top managers of the college focus on the conventional programme and do not pay attention to distance learning. I am personally satisfied to meet the colleagues in the IDE but not confident about the fate of the institute in the system. The college always raises issues of budgetary constraint to reject activities of the DL programme but I think the college can allocate budget if it likes. The management of the college has extremely undermined the IDE activities in course development. For example, you can see there is no distance learning institutions in the country that attempts to develop course material in such a small budget (Birr 6000 for a course) and this is embarrassing rather (Teka, 26/08/07, central staff).

The view of the above respondent goes with the quality of the staff in teamwork for the activity of course development and goes down when referring to the commitment of the college's management to the institute in general. His concern is mostly about the decision making process of budgeting, which is one of the key elements in course development process. This is a real concern in distance learning because budget determines the level of quality assurance in the development process.

If we refer to the history of course development in the institute itself, during the distance learning project (in the year 2004-5), the budget for developing a course was considerably higher. The amount in the local currency (Birr) is as follows *(1 Birr is*

about 0.1 USD in 2008). For a course author, it was roughly Birr 16000, and Birr 7000 for content editor, and Birr 5000 for language editor. In the later development in 2007, as mentioned by the informants and as I directly observed, the corresponding budgets were Birr 6000 for a course author, Birr 1500 for content editor, and Birr 1000 for language editor. This shows a sharp decline in the budgetary commitment to the course development process.

If we look again into the practice of similar institutions in the private sector in the same culture, the course development for a degree programme is roughly Birr 11,000 to 15,000 for course author, and is more than Birr 8000 for editor (content editor). The interviews with central staff: Geremu, Teka, Tamene, and Takele confirm this. However, the private institutions have not been involving language editors and they have not been training staff for the job of course development which makes their work less organised.

To reflect back to the programme under study, good quality teaching materials were produced for the distance learning programme during the project few years ago. This could be explained as an outcome of allocation of higher budget to the development process as well as the involvement of UK Open University with high experience and expertise in the area. We can look at what has happened in developing the degree courses by looking at the amount of resources allocated for the course authorship.

As mentioned above, this is Birr 6000 for the degree programme and that is 37.5% of the amount during the distance learning project. If we look at the practice of the private sector in the same culture, the budgetary commitment for the course development process, for the degree course in the ECSC fails roughly to about 50% of the former. I have concrete experience about this as I had been involved in the job of developing courses for the private sector in 2005 and 2006. From this situation, it is easy to understand the lack of attention and the impact of the extremely low budget for the development of the degree courses.

This reveals critical shortage of resources and deteriorating features in the course development process. From this fact, it is easy to understand low level of commitment of the management to the distance learning programme. High team spirit of the staff cannot do much when there is critical shortage of financial resource because the

institute staff do not develop all the courses by themselves. They hire course authors and editors for different subject areas and the system has to be able to offer optimum payment for the services obtained from the open market.

In the practice of the distance learning programme, course authors are subject specialists. They are contracted individually by announcing the job to the public. After signing contracts, the course authors and editors are trained and proceed with the job. Each author produces the outline and discusses it with the course coordinator in the academic development team. Once the outline is agreed, the author starts drafting the content. He/she discusses the drafts with the course coordinator and pedagogic editor chapter by chapter.

This being the general procedure, with the financial constraint facing the system during the development of the degree programme, content editor and pedagogic editors are involved at the end of the process only than chapter by chapter. As indicated by the staff informants, the minimum services in this aspect are accepted because the payment is not attractive enough to demand intensive services from the people involved. In contrast, during the distance learning project in 2004/2005, content editor, language editor, and two reviewers (one subject specialist and students) were also involved in the course development process. However, in the recent practice for the degree courses, in 2007, course review tasks were cancelled from the process because of the budgetary constraint.

Therefore, when we look at the types of inputs to the course development process, the budgetary constraint affected the quality by more than half in light of the previous standard. This could be perceived from the quantity of input through editing. In addition to this, reviews by specialist and students were cancelled and the content editor was not intensively used for a similar reason. The opinion of the following informant describes this crisis:

> I joined the system after the DL project and don't know how things were used to be. The produced print materials for the diploma programme are well organised. The availability of budget and the consultancy service from the Open University might have helped for good result then. The development of the courses for the newly endorsed degree programme is rather faced by shortage of resources in all dimensions, which may have adverse effect on the quality of the product. For example, the size and the number of modules are reduced for the degree programme. This appears to me a reverse

> conception while it should have been bigger for the degree courses. The official reason for limiting the size to 160-180 pages per course was problem of budget but I understand rather a problem of commitment from the college's leadership. The college has no real financial problem for this job. If it has, it could have raised the tuition fee for the degree programme but the same tuition fee has applied to diploma and degree programmes of the DL. This shows there is no shortage of money (Bekele, 04/08/07, central staff).

The key concern of this respondent was the impact of the budgetary constraint on the quality of the output. He understands the quality of input determines the output. He also believes the size of a degree course has to be bigger than diploma but this is reversed in the situation because of shortage of budget. He added an important point about the possibility of raising fees if the problem is really financial shortage. This is true because as per the observations of the researcher, the rate of fee for the distance learning programme of the institute is the lowest in the country. This is not bad but it shows the possibility to add to the amount if there is a critical problem affecting the quality. There is no other institution applying the same tuition fee for diploma and degree courses in the country. This reveals that the real problem does not have to be shortage of funds. It is rather a lack of close attention to the programme, its needs and potential solutions.

Further on the impact of budget on the quality of output, one of the respondents to interview stated the following as possible consequence:

> In the process of course development, the budgetary constraint is the critical matter and it affects the process in the following ways: One, the experience of course authors is lower than those involved during the diploma programme; two, the task of the course developers cannot be as tough as the process during the LIL project because the remuneration is less and we cannot demand more than what we pay for; three, the course evaluation by experts and students are not included in the course development process because of the same. Although we have the basic skills at the moment, thanks to … the UK Open University, the budgetary constraint is resulting unprecedented challenge in the course development process for the degree programme (Geremu, 25 August 2007, central staff).

This respondent was there when the diploma courses were developed with the consultancy of the UKOU. He understands that in the new course development process, the shortage of resources affected the whole system. For example, the size of the whole course modules per subject was bigger for the diploma programme. But it is reduced for the degree courses with the reason of budget constraint. He stressed the issue raised by the earlier respondent and added the reduction in the number of

modules too. For example, he underlined the limitation of writing the course in two modules. He meant, the number of modules determines the size of the course material for the subjects. But it is not only this. The number of modules also determines the number of tutorial sessions and the number of assignments, and thus, the corresponding supports available for the students at the end. This is because in the system of distance learning, one tutorial session and one assignment is organised for one module of a subject.

In this regard, if we refer to the case of the diploma courses developed during the project, the size of a course may exceed 200 pages, and the number of the modules ranges from 2 to 4 based on the credit hour of each course. Most of the courses were with 3 credit hours and, therefore, written in 3 modules or booklets at that time for each subject. Thus, how things are going down within few years could be seen. In a similar view, another respondent described the consequence in the following comment.

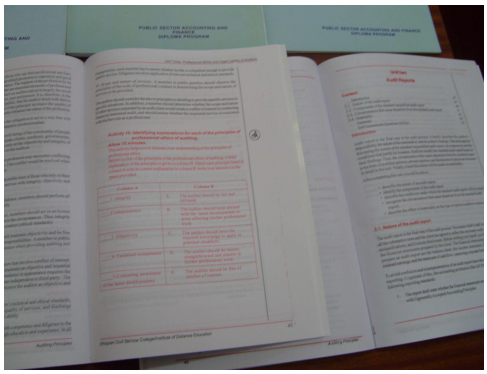
> As a result of the budget constraint, the size of the course materials is to be limited in size between 160-180 pages for the final printing. The system is not conducive for IDE anyway. We have no choice other than doing what we can with the amount at hand because they (*the college management*) can shut down the whole thing (*the institute*) if they want. Moreover, the scripts are no longer multi-coloured as in the past (Alemu, 25/08/07, central staff, emphasis added).

He also explained that IDE has reduced the number of modules purposely because the institute cannot decide on budgets; and the target is to try to maintain the programme within the institution with what is available before looking for quality. He looks unhappy with the situation that ignores issues of quality assurance. He also reflected his fear not to instigate termination of the entire programme. He believes the existence of the institute and thus his job could be in danger if the idea of the authorities in charge is threatened. This is of course inappropriate fear as a professional but could be acceptable from personal point of view.

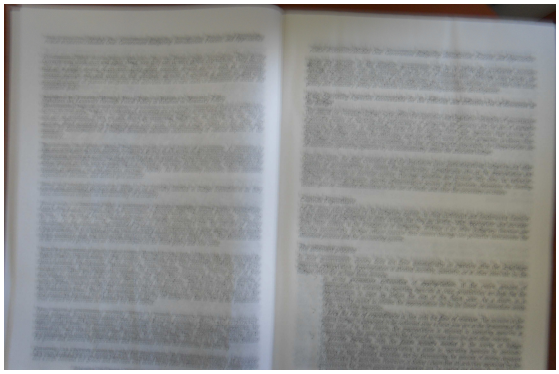
Thus, the above discussion shows that staff of IDE have been doing the job with understanding that the outcome of the work they were doing would be below standard. The development of the new courses was finished while this study was going on and the above challenges were proved to constrain the quality of the course materials.

If we compare the old courses for the diploma programme, we identify considerable differences. For example, in the old modules that were developed with the help from the UKOU, the pages are well formatted with wider margins for taking notes for the student while reading; and the scripts are multi-coloured and with icons giving hints to the student about what are expected from him/her. They also give short summaries on the sides and are, generally, more attractive to the reader. These qualities are missing in the new modules developed for the degree course and the materials are like ordinary books with no any special feature of distance learning material as demonstrated in the old modules. Therefore, this shows that the older modules are of better quality than the new. The sample pictures of pages from the old modules on the left and the new on the right are given below to reflect the differences.

Figure 7.1 Sample pictures of module pages



Sample pages of old modules



Sample pages of new modules

If we look at the change in capacity in the institution due to the distance learning project, during the distance learning project phase, the course development process started from nothing and took roughly one year from September 2004 to October 2005. In the new course development process, for the degree programme, the process took about 6 months (from June 2007 to December 2007). From the situation, we can see that a lot of activities that take time are cancelled in the new development process. However, the situation generally confirms the effectiveness of the distance learning project in developing capacity for the print aspect. This could be seen from the fact that the institution is able to develop courses on its own without involvement of a consulting firm. However, this capacity could have been developed further but is neglected and wasted in the system.

In the above discussion, one can see how the system of the distance learning programme has been deteriorating over time. The challenge comes from low

commitment for the programme from the mother institution. In this regard, the institute is put in an environment that doesn't recognise the difference between distance learning and conventional programmes. The situation could be contrasted with the concepts discussed in the literature chapter, section 2.1.5 that stresses the need for supportive environment for distance education programme.

Due to lack of understanding about the special nature of distance learning, the leadership has not been in a position to support the subsystem sufficiently. It doesn't seem to value the product of the distance learning programme either. For instance, a simple decision led to wastage of high quality course materials, produced with world class consultant of UKOU and printed for Birr 3 million, in the year 2007 while terminating the diploma programme. The material could have been used for a few more years simply by reprinting when necessary.

It is not only the course development process that is challenged in the distance learning programme. The logistics and supplies are also full of complex problems, which are adversely affecting the situation of the distance learners at the study centres as we see in the following section.

7.3 Logistics and Supplies

In the practice of the distance learning programme, logistics are complicated. Once the courses are fully developed to the agreed standard, they are printed and stock up in the central store of the college. As presented earlier in chapter 6, the course materials cannot be delivered to regional centres and study centres early enough before registration for new semester because there are limited storage facilities at study centres. Thus, logistics is among the greatest problem as it runs at the beginning of each semester. Communication about logistics is delivered to regional and study centres few weeks earlier so that staff at study centres get ready to receive the materials.

As mentioned in chapter 3, in the structure of the distance learning programme, the logistics issues are handled by the central support's staff by dealing with the college's management and the problem lies generally around coordination of the process. The possibility to deliver the course materials to each student through the post office has not been tried during the time this study was conducted. Initially, the delivery of the

materials had been planned to be conducted by the college's vehicles, and additional vehicles were purchased for this purpose during the DL project. But in the meantime, this was diverted by the college management and decided to be performed by hiring freight firms from the market. This needs advertising and a lot of administrative work for the bidding process (Zeleke, 19/08/07, central staff).

There is an additional critical problem due to the lack of experienced staff for sorting and packing modules and the job is always performed by temporary workers who are always new to the job. This being the case, among the challenges in the delivery of the teaching materials, therefore, are misplacement of modules and wrong labelling of packs that result delivering packs to the wrong study centre. Such incidences have been very commonly encountered in the system. Persons who worked in this area of service for years said that there are always mistakes. Therefore, redistribution of course materials to correct the mistakes is an additional job for the section. In my observation of Arba-Minch study centre, by the end of June and beginning of July 2008, I witnessed that there was shortage of 23 copies (for booklet-1) and excess of 47 copies (for booklet-2). This was observed in one of the courses, 'financial management' at the centre. Such things happen in most of the study centres and this is just to indicate how the task of logistics is being managed in Arba-Minch in particular.

The involvement of the private firms for the transportation purpose compounded the problem in the logistics system. Some of the problems reported reflect that the firms that win the bid treat the teaching materials as ordinary goods; and sometimes sub-contract with other deliverers after checking out the material from the college store (Zeleke, 19/08/07). In such a situation, problems such as loss of packs and late delivery to the destinations are said to be abundant. The drivers are also perceived as less responsible to read the labels and check the list of items correctly in delivering them to the destinations (Bekele, 04/08/07). This is also compounded by late endorsement of the duty from the headquarters. That is, administratively, the bidding process is endorsed late by the management due to highly centralised system. In describing the challenges, a respondent said the following:

> I see those staff directly concerned, always running around at the eleventh hour to deliver information to regions

> through TV and radio. You know the management never solves things in time and never delegates its authority to IDE (Fantahun, 04/08/07, central staff).

The above opinion reflects the complex nature of the problem in logistics, and this is largely created by the rigidity of the system. Surely, it was created by the college by using the vehicles bought for this purpose for other purpose. Similarly, in explaining this, one of the interviewees began with discussion about the weakly organised system of logistics and he stated: "One positive thing within the mess is that all students receive the modules for all courses in the end (Bekele, 04/08/07, central staff). This shows the difficulty as well as high commitment of the personnel involved in the programme and the commitment of the institution as a whole in trying to maintain qualities of the job as much as possible.

As mentioned above, one of the problems in logistics is the quality of personnel involved in the task. As the task is on and off type, it is not possible for the institution to hire permanent workers for the job, especially for sorting modules. Many people are needed during dispatch of materials at the beginning of the semester and there is almost no job in the middle of the semester. Thus, the task has not been handled as strictly as it should be. Thus, as stated earlier, the system failures result in a lot of work to be done to correct errors by sending more modules where there is shortage. Excess modules are kept at the study centres for the next semester (Tibebu, 26/08/07, central staff). Consequently, a lot of excess course materials were left over in the study centres when the diploma programme was terminated in 2007.

Some informants believe that the logistics strategy planned during the project phase was better than the one in action (Baye, 30/08/07, central staff). As mentioned above, this was using vehicles of the college to transport the materials. Informants working in the transportation department of the college explained that using college vehicles is better than hiring private freight firms. One of the interviewees described the situation as follows.

> Outsourcing is more costly for the college in bidding transport firms to deliver the teaching materials to regions. Even when the actual cost is less, the college has to consider the administrative cost of tendering, managing competitions, advertisement etc. that results incalculable cost. The difficulty to organise appropriate store for printed materials and shortage of staff working in this area also complicate the process of logistics (Baye, 30/08/07, central staff).

Another informant from the transport section said: “There is no shortage of vehicles in the college”. Subsequently, the informant was asked by the researcher to estimate the cost of using the college vehicles. In this respect, he included servicing for a car after one full round trip to a study centre and came up with a figure less than a third of the actual cost in the outsourcing alternative. More specifically, he did the calculation by taking a distance of 600 Km round trip and came up with a figure of Birr 1650 (*a Birr is about 0.1 USD in 2008*). The informant further noted that without counting the administrative challenges it is resulting, the cost for such a distance has never been less that Br 5000 by employing the firms from the private sector (Zeleke, 19/08/07).

Therefore, the information about the logistics arrangement for the distance learning programme reveals that the decision to go for the private sector has neither been economic nor administratively efficient. This puts a question about the problem of budget in nearly every aspect of operations when unnecessary expense is allowed in the system of logistics.

Additionally, the system doesn’t seem honest to talk about budget shortage anyway. Whilst the college collects fees from distance students, one of the top persons in the management revealed that the management lacks critical commitment for the distance learning programme. The informant said, “It is better to shut down distance learning programme all in all because it is full of problems and the tuition fee doesn’t cover the cost to run the programme”. This was in June 2007, during the first week of deciding to terminate the diploma programme. This again contrasts with the earlier comments (presented in section 7.2 above) about comparatively low fee levels for the programme that could have been raised.

But in August 2007, I met another top official, who is more aware of financial aspect of the programme, and he said “The tuition fee collected from DL programme is large enough to support the system and even profitable, but the college cannot use the fund because it goes directly into the government’s fund”. This is evidence of the politicised nature of the system and lack of attention on the DL by the ECSC itself. As he described, in the government financial system, the college needs to secure an annual budget to run the day-to-day operations of the distance learning programme. It seems that the system had no real shortage but rather an issue of tight control over the financial system.

If the system is really concerned, it is not difficult to explain the special situation of the distance learning programme to the ministry of finance to secure the budget. This is concrete evidence about the lack of attention for the distance learning programme. In such a way, the system of distance learning has been facing unnecessary shortage of resources. The lack of attention is demoralising the staff of the programme who generally reflect pessimistic views about the future of the programme.

> To me, plan of IDE can never be implemented within the college. You see the college terminated the diploma programme without any precondition; and even without discussing the issue with the director of the institute. This means the institute is at the mercy of the persons that lead the college from the top. I understand that the college is not interested in promoting DL (Bekele, 04/08/07, central staff).

In short, the discussion in this chapter contrasts with the standard of good practice for DL, presented in chapter 2, section 2.1.4. In the literature we have seen that supportive environment is the basis for the success of distance learning programme and this is completely missing in the system of distance learning under study. The system is in a serious resource crisis at all levels from human and material point of view. In addition, the staff have lost morale due to marginalisation of the programme. Thus, they perform the duties with less expectation of results and such a group can hardly do an effective job. The following section presents a systemic view of the administrative impediment on the practice at Arba-Minch centre.

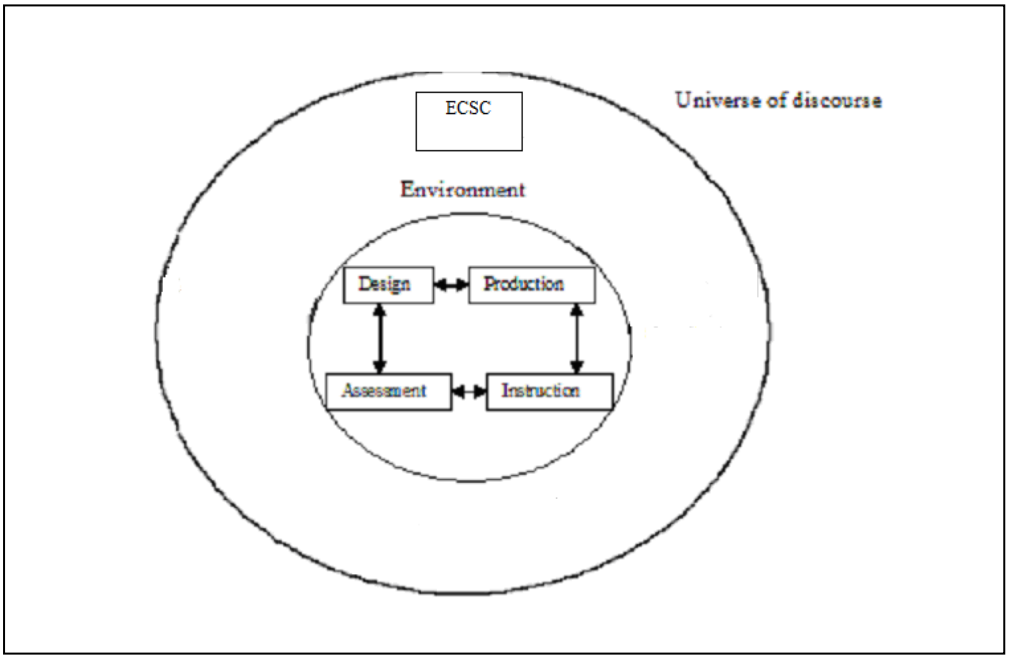
7.4 Systemic Review of the DL Practice at Arba-Minch Centre

The discussion in this chapter is devoted to the management and organisational crisis of the distance learning programme. It describes the system of organisation of the programme from the headquarters to the level of study centre. It also summarises the consequences of the administration on practice at the Arba-Minch study centre by applying systems approach.

In chapter 2, we have discussed how distance learning programme can be explained as an open system, operating in a cyclical process of input, throughput, and output. We have also seen how distance learning could be perceived in terms of contingency views as special practice of education. For the purpose of this section, the focus is the system at the technical level where the core issues of practice lie. In this perspective,

the system of the distance learning programme could be seen with four major components/subsystems: design, production, instruction, and assessment. This is derived from the concepts discussed in the literature (see the discussion on distance learning at the technical level in chapter 2). The other factors are treated as part of the environment and the figure below presents these features.

Figure 7.2 Systems model of the DL practice



In the above figure, the central circle represents the systems and the bigger circle represents the environment. The environment includes the situation in the Civil Service College; and the exterior is the universe of discourse (the whole space of the relations).

The design

In distance learning, the design includes the work of curriculum designers, authors, editors, reviewers, and layout designers. Courses are not designed at Arba-Minch study centre, but what is designed centrally will apply there.

The feedback in the instructional process should be the resource for future course design in particular. The quality of input in the form of human and material resource affects the practice at Arba-Minch centre. For instance, as presented in chapter 6 and in the above sections of chapter 7, after the DL project has phased out, the system fell

into financial crisis that diminished the content as well as services like tutorial and assignment to be done by each student. This is a critical impact of the design on practice that adversely affected the services to learners. In this regard, as discussed in chapter 6, better quality materials were produced for the diploma programme in 2005; but as presented in the above sections of this chapter, things have been reversed in the degree programme because of shortage of resources.

Production and Logistics

Logistics is very critical element because student registration cannot be processed before delivering course materials. Stores are not available in regions and materials are transported every semester a few days before registration. As the data from Arba-Minch centre shows, the system is highly inefficient and not cost effective.

This in turn affects the registration schedule and the students who travel hundreds of kilo metres (see chapter 6, section 6.5).

Instruction and support

Instruction in distance learning is through student support by tutors. The key issue here is establishing effective communication between learners and tutors. In this regard, tutors should not only know the subject matter, but also how to guide learning through the content. This makes it clear about the need for training tutors for distance learning. In the Arba-Minch centre, this is a critical challenge because all the development process regarding tutor training and monitoring activities were stopped due to the financial crisis. For the same reason, communication between tutors and learners is limited to classrooms during tutorial sessions. One-to-one support of tutors is not sponsored by the system and there is no resource for such services as: telephone, letters, email, etc. to do this job.

As presented in chapter 6, section 6.4, at Arba-Minch centre of the distance learning programme, the students have diverse backgrounds and learning habits. Whilst some study at the work place or in the library, the data shows that most of the learners study alone at home. Besides, they are geographically from a range of distance up to 300 kilometres from the study centre. Thus, the lack of communication facility means lack of support to the students. To worsen the situation, there is no professional staff at the

tutorial centre to advice the learners. Therefore, the facts at Arba-Minch centre shows that the instruction and support component of the distance learning programme is characterised by an overall crisis.

Assessment and evaluation

Learning assessment is one of the key aspects in any education system. This task is more complicated in distance learning, especially, in managing continuous assessment through assignments. As presented in chapter 6, continuous assessments by the tutors and final exams are the modes used. But as the data from Arba-Minch reveals, many of the tutors are not trained to do the job. Thus, the services of the tutors especially in managing the continuous assessment are inefficient and very limited in scope. This shows the overwhelming crisis in the continuous assessment process of the programme.

Final exams are centrally managed and the problem in this dimension is the delay of results both in scoring and recording. This is largely affected by shortage of human resource in the central record system. Therefore, as the data from Arba-Minch study centre shows, the assessment and evaluation process through both the assignments and final exams is characterised by crisis. Further challenges of the system are reflected through the environmental factor discussed below.

The environment

When we look at the system at Arba-Minch study centre, the environment is the situation in the civil service college. The environmental factor is particularly reflected through the complex bureaucratic procedure that marginalised the distance learning programme. This is reflected through the process of budgeting that failed to respond to the needs of the distance learning programme. As the Arba-Minch data reveals, the college management is not able to allocate sufficient budget for staffing and offering different services to strengthen practice. With this much about the administrative failure of the system, the next chapter makes the analysis and interpretation of the main points across the data sets.

CHAPTER 8

FURTHER ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

For the analysis and interpretation of main points across the data sets, this chapter begins with the analysis of the project design by referring to the formal performance indicators stated in the formal project document. Then, it proceeds with the discussion of the most important development problems reflected in the process. Towards the end, it gives a condensed explanation of the development process and the practice by applying systems analysis.

8.1 Problems with the Performance Indicators

Based on the formal procedures of the development project, the planners of the distance learning project stated the performance indicators. The indicators are stated at the beginning of the design document; and they read as follows (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:1).

1. *Demand for the different types and topics of distance learning courses in Addis Ababa and the regions;*
2. *Percentage of available time the Central and Regional GDLN interactive video facilities are actually used (available time is Monday through Friday 9 AM to 9 PM);*
3. *Percentage of GDLN central and regional link costs met from other revenue sources such as:*
    - *renting video link services to other government agencies, the private sector and donors;*
    - *selling internet access to the general public especially at regional centres;*
    - *subscription from private individuals participating in internet based courses;*
    - *revenues from computer literacy training; and*
    - *donor funding of specific courses;*
    - *Learning achievement by course, delivery mode, and tutoring support;*
    - *Learner satisfaction by course, delivery mode, and tutoring support;*
    - *Time to complete by course, delivery mode, and tutoring support; and*
    - *Cost-effectiveness of learner achievement by delivery mode.*

These performance indicators are relatively specific and clear; however, they do not relate to the situation on the ground. Particularly, they all focus on the GDLN courses, which remained less realistic in the project phase as indicated in chapter 5. Moreover,

structurally, the indicators appear as if they aim at measuring impacts rather than the intended new development.

If we discuss these indicators one by one, the first indicator is confusing as it tries to compare the incomparable. For example, the GDLN facility is located only in Addis Ababa and could be compared to nothing elsewhere in the country. The courses were only policy courses offered by the World Bank's GDLN. These courses have been supply based not by demand and so it doesn't seem to make sense to measure demand from the supply side. As stated elsewhere, the other distance teaching courses in the print aspect were developed as new and became available only towards the end of the project. Hence, this performance indicator is irrelevant for measuring performance of the project.

The second indicator precisely refers to the utilisation of the GDLN facility by distance learners. Structurally, this is very clear and less ambiguous, but during the project phase, the whole business was about how to upgrade the centre to world standard and it didn't operate in this sense until the end of the project. As a result of this, it remained to be one of the most difficult indicators for measurement.

The third indicator focuses on generating revenue through the GDLN centre, which is based on the cost recovery basis. Again, the issue of supply and demand matters and all the courses are supply driven. In this regard, the centre invites participants when the Bank announces certain course. As discussed in chapter 5 section 5.1, the facility remained underutilised even in a deteriorating trend after the project phase.

Moreover, the regional aspect of the GDLN outreach centres was totally irrelevant as an indicator because this didn't exist after the restructuring. Besides, this indicator fails to recognise a critical law of the country. For instance, selling internet services to the public, centrally and at regions is focused by the indicator. However, this is the mandate of the Telecommunication Agency which has a monopoly in the country. So one needs to question how practical this indicator could be given the overall situation. Still another factor, as also mentioned in the first section of chapter 5, is that the college is very conservative and limits its services to its specific mandate; it doesn't promote services to the private sector. Therefore, this indicator is irrelevant in the realities of the political legal environment of the land.

Therefore, the performance indicators of the distance learning project are all not designed in a way that helps monitoring and measuring the objectives; and they fail to recognise the situation all in all.

8.2 Problems in the Development Approach

In the literature chapter, it is stressed that a development activities normally bear certain level of risk. This necessitates specialised design to manage projects in contrast to normal process of administration. Besides, in principle, a thorough situation analysis is required to establish the background for a development project (Gido, 1999:1). However, as discussed in chapter 5 section 5.2, in the distance learning project, a situation analysis was attempted but focused only on a few aspects of development. For instance, as discussed in the project document, it is only the print aspect that is analysed apart from the description of the political commitment.

For example, under the topic, "Institutional and Implementation Arrangements", the project document states the following as a kind of situation analysis.

> IDE is an integral part of the CSC. It will be responsible for all distance education activities including the GDLN center, the printed media distance education, and the video and internet links with regional centers…The need assessment, which was carried out in October, 2000, was designed to find out what were the priority learning needs as expressed by learners and their employers, what they would be prepared to pay, how much time they could spend a week in following the courses, where the regional centers could be established, from where the necessary tutors could be drawn, and how much they would expect to be paid (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:5).

This refers to the organisational setting of the distance learning programme within the institution. It also indicates what is expected from the newly organised institute of distance education (IDE). Here, the data from the needs assessment conducted in the year 2000 to identify potential problems and issues was considered (see chapter 5, section 5.2). Moreover, issues about learners and tutors as critical elements in organising learner support are reflected. However, any technical issue about the capacity of the college and IDE to manage GDLN technology was not discussed in any part of the document. Needs assessment for the GDLN aspect was conducted parallel to the print but it was not mentioned and not used at all for the designing of

the project. As presented in section 5.2 of chapter 5, however, the development process focused on technology.

The following is one more issue discussed in the project document:

> The main target audience of the civil service college are the 300,000 federal and regional civil servants, especially the 83% who do not even have diploma, and those working in the regions (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:15).

Regarding the target audience, the situation is not real because the college focuses on nothing more than the public sector. However, the analysis, helped to determine the level of the education and training to diploma level for the print based distance learning. This was a legitimate decision as far as the reality is concerned. Therefore, as indicated in chapter 5 section 5.1, the materials were produced in print and audio because other media are not expected to be sustainable in the newly developing technology culture in the country.

The data was especially relevant to determine the composition of the course materials and level of training (diploma) for the development. However, as indicated while discussing the project objectives in chapter 5 section 5.1, this aspect is not treated as core issue for the development process because it is stated as subcomponent of the overall development plan. For instance, concerning the technological aspect, the following is stated in the document:

> The basic equipment for the Ethiopia GDLN center is already in place, has been used, has now been well protected against power surges and failures and is working well. It merely needs to be upgraded. The technology for a modified GDLN link at the regional centers has been designed jointly by ISG and a satellite vendor, has been specially developed for the Ethiopian situation, and if successful will be a model that can be copied elsewhere. The regional centers will receive their programs through the GDLN hub in Washington, (and later from other hubs too), in the same way as the Addis GDLN center, and will connect with the Addis center through this hub (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:9).

The above statement clearly reflects the direction of the plan about technology development and maintenance. From this comment, it is clear that the technical aspect is intended to be managed through the donor's technicians located in Washington. Even the connection between the regional centres and Addis is planned to operate

through the Washington based centre. This again shows that the planners of the project did not aim at developing the human aspect for the technology because the design is made by staff who do not notice the technical gap in the implementing agency. Thus, as mentioned in section 5.3 in chapter 5, whilst the print aspect focus on filling the technical gaps through staff training with the UKOU, the technological aspect failed to do so.

As briefly mentioned in chapter 5 section 5.2, the overall development followed top-down approach and this is clearly reflected in the project document in the following statement:

> In September 1998 a high level capacity development committee was established, chaired by the prime minister, and made up with a number of key ministers. In December 1998 the committee issued its first draft capacity building strategy document, in which Civil Service College occupied a central role. Six sub-committee were then established which reported to a national capacity building seminar in early June 1999, again chaired by the prime minister. The key role of the civil service college was discussed, and it was agreed that the existing five year plan of the college would need to be re-examined, taking account of the overall civil service reform program. At that time there was no discussion of distance learning options (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:2).

The above points reflect several issues. It shows how the project concept came into being from the higher body of the government. It also reflects the need to re-examine the existing strategy of the civil service college and is similar to giving an order to the college to find and fit itself into the new government's strategy. This again shows high attention to the college from the political structure for the capacity development programme of the country. This is not pure advantage to the college as it seems. It is rather more challenging to the institution because it affects its operations adversely. For instance, as discussed in chapter 3, the college remained extremely unstable in its programmes due to such tendencies.

So the college has to be responsive to the strategic needs identified by the government and in response to this, it revised its mission and vision in 1999. In this regard, the following is stated in the project document as a consequence of the government's policy influence.

> In 1998 the ECSC held a "visioning conference" with the college stakeholders, which forged agreement on a more up to date and precise mission statement of the college…It emphasised on the key role the college will play in using appropriate distance education media, and in running appropriate programs to strengthen the capacity of Ethiopia's civil service, both at the federal levels… (Project Appraisal Document, 2001:2).

From the above information, we can understand that the college has its strategy focusing on the conventional programme. But due to the change in the government's intention, it revised its plan to incorporate distance teaching in 1999. Besides, the need for the revision of strategy by the college was not from within the institution. In doing this, the UK Open University helped the college on the possibility of using distance education to access more civil servants. This is clearly mentioned in the project document as explained in chapter 5.

The discussion in the project document, therefore, shows how the idea grew up and got ripe and then rotten right at the beginning. The attempt was to justify the need to develop distance learning programme in the civil service college because the government is interested in this area of development at the moment. However, it doesn't justify why the college is technically appropriate for the development or its internal capacity. Indirectly, the point focused on describing the conduciveness of the political environment for the development of distance learning as a new innovation in the college. Then, the forging of the college to fit the new situation is where the development process failed from strategic point of view because as discussed elsewhere in chapter 7, the college has been less flexible in its management to assimilate the new function into its system.

At this stage, what the design critically missed is the administrative element and technical capacity in line with the innovation. As discussed in chapter 3 section 3.4.1, the Civil Service College assumes distance learning to be simply fitted into a conventional system of education so easily. Moreover, the key decision makers in the designing process defined the project without understanding the background of the Civil Service College and speciality of distance learning programme.

As the discussion in this section indicates, the development project seems misplaced by the decision makers and planners. This is caused by low level of understanding of the situation and insufficient analysis of the context. Consequently, unrealistic plan

and performance indicators were set in many respects and didn't help for assessment of the development process. Similarly, as discussed in chapter 5, section 5.2, similar defects were identified in the objectives of the project.

8.3 The Management Structure, Power disparity and Lack of Flexibility

In the design of the decision making structure of the project, one can see clear disparity of power. In this regard, the power disparity correlates with the amount of resource each actor contributed to the development process (see section 5.2.3 in chapter 5). For example, the contribution of the donor was 87%; and accordingly, the power was also concentrated in the donor's hands to put the system on or off. As described earlier, the implementing agency had no any decision making power than doing what is instructed. Accordingly, in reflecting the power disparity, one of the informants stated the following.

> The installation of the GDLN facility was not the interest of the college and the interest of the DL programme after all because no one can use the technology. But the focus of the Bank was on this aspect and you can see most of the budget was allocated to technology, which we see now being wasted. We were not given the chance to negotiate on this matter. You know, nothing would happen to the Bank if the project was cancelled. Negotiations could ever be effective when it is between equals. The Bank owns the resource and the recipient has to agree to obtain the marginal benefits (Getu, 25/08/07).

This comment is right. As mentioned elsewhere in chapter 5, the focus of the donor as major decision maker was rather on the development of technology. But it has limited knowledge about the situation on the ground in the civil service college. The planners are especially less aware of the administrative impact of the project on the Civil Service College. Even developing the technical capacity in the beneficiary institution was not targeted as described in the project design (see also chapter 5 section 5.2.2).

With the incidence of power disparity in the decision making process, discussed elsewhere, the donor agency was on the top of the process and the government sector ministry was involved only for formalities. The college as the beneficiary of the project was at the bottom of the process (see chapter 5 section 5.3). This may not necessarily result difficulty, but as discussed earlier, the focuses of the two agencies

varied considerably and the status of the donor dominated the whole process of development.

In the above discussion, the major defects of the distance learning project concerning the performance indicators and objectives, power disparities among stakeholders, and lack of flexibility. These are the key determinants for the success of development project and they contrast with the theory discussed in the literature chapter section 2.2.

8.4 The Results of Development and Growth of Administrative Difficulties

Most of the resources of the project were directed toward the upgrading of technology but not to upgrading the operations of the centre. Thus, the centre remained dependent up on the World Bank's courses as before. This is one of the primary causes of low performance of the centre even after upgrading.

On the other hand, the college was able to develop a fairly organised distance learning programme in the print aspect and enrolled thousands of students and produced 4560 graduates in two rounds (Graduate statistics of 2007 and 2008). This exceeds the total number of graduates the college produced through the regular programme since its establishment. Moreover, the development improved the participation of disadvantaged groups as well and enabled the college to accept many more students, who could never access the college under normal condition (see section 6.6 in chapter 6).

Good quality teaching materials (print and audio) were produced, published in presses, and placed in the college's store before the end of the project. Training of the human resource to manage the distance learning was facilitated effectively with the support of the UK Open University. This enabled the college to manage the distance teaching programme independently by training course developers and tutors by its own staff. Capacity building alone can do little if there is no enabling environment to engage the new development in action and this is the fact we see in the situation (see the discussion in chapter 7, section 7.2).

As the staff respondents of IDE explained, they reduced the number of modules for the fear of future challenges in allocation of the budget for the services. This reveals that the staff were focusing on ensuring the survival of the programme in the college with what is permissible by the system. In this regard, some staff are more concerned

about the possibility of shutting down the institute as they believe that the management of the college management may decide to close the institute is not easy enough to handle. Therefore, the lack of confidence in the staff has resulted retreat from quality of output.

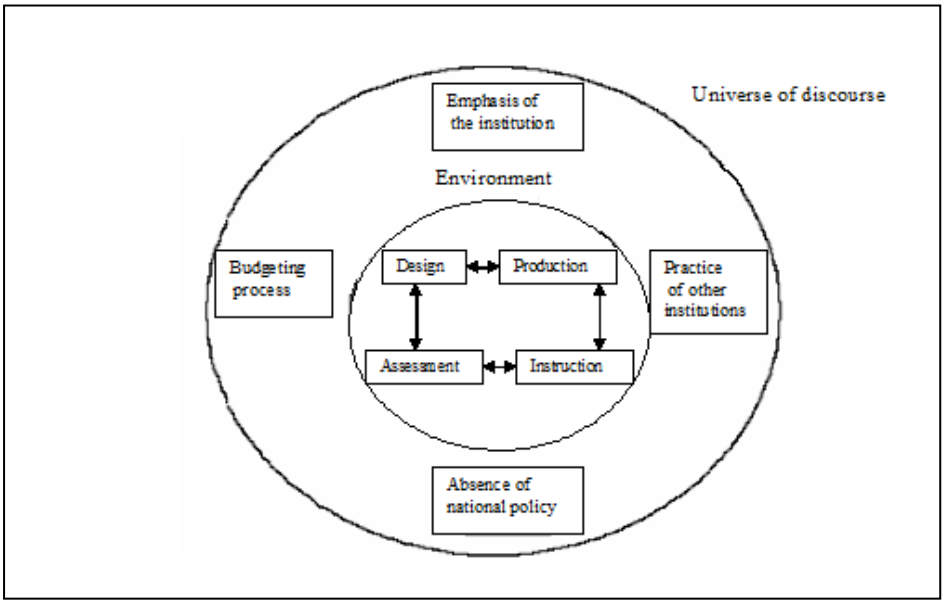
So, in the above discussion, it is reflected that the system of the distance learning programme has been challenged in the system after the capacity is developed. Therefore, the situation clearly reveals that the distance learning programme is put in an environment that doesn't support the new development and related resources and opportunity. As discussed in chapter 6, section 6.7 and chapter 7, section 7.2, the shortage of budget did not affect only the course development process. It also disabled student support system of the programme.

In short, the distance learning programme has been facing unnecessary shortage of resources in the system. Therefore, the situation generally reveals that the development process failed in both the technology and the print because of administrative challenge that emerged soon after development. The most critical issue in this matter is that the institution failed to use the results of development for the better.

8.5 Systems Analysis of the DL Programme and Impact on the Practice

As presented in the literature chapter and section 7.4 of the above chapter, at the technical level, a system of distance learning programme could be described based on four major components/subsystems as presented in the following figure.

Figure 8.1 Systemic representation of DL programme at the technical level



In the above figure, the central circle represents the systems and the bigger circle represents the environment. The discussion begins with the factors in the central systems and then proceeds with the environmental factors and their impacts.

8.5.1 The systems

As presented in the above figure, the distance learning systems is represented as systems of four components or subsystems. They are design, production, instruction, and assessment and each of them is briefly explained below.

The design

The design as component or subsystem includes the teacher and the content as per the Steiner's model of education system discussed in chapter 2. However, I modified the approach because the situation in distance learning is different in that the design includes considerable features of teaching. The teacher component in distance learning refers to all persons involved in the planning and implementing the course development process such as: curriculum designers, authors, editors, reviewers, and layout designers.

As widely discussed in the earlier chapter, in the distance learning programme, the fundamental challenge affecting the design is the shortage of human and financial

resources, to assure quality in developing course materials. In this regard, the quality of human resource as input to the course development process through author and editors are adversely affected by this factor. The same factor affected the course content in the recent development (diminishing the size). This reveals one major aspect of the crisis in the design component of the system with strong link to the financial crisis.

Production and logistics

This component is very important in a system of distance learning because teaching materials must be ready before the programme starts. Moreover, production should be made in good quality with relevant layouts; and the storage and distribution of materials should be effective. However, the distance learning programme is in a serious problem. In this perspective, the evidence shows that the quality of production of the teaching materials has been deteriorating with time.

As discussed in section 7.4 of chapter 7, in the distance learning programme, the logistics process is complicated. In short, the evidence shows that the programme is characterised by serious crisis in the production, storage and distribution of materials to study centres. This in turn affects the registration schedule, and the students who travel hundreds of kilo metres suffer more (see chapter 7, section 7.4).

Instruction and support

As presented in chapter 7, section 7.4, instruction in distance learning is through student support by tutors. In this perspective, establishing effective communication between learners and tutors is the key issue. Here, the need for training tutors is underlined. However, this is a critical challenge in the distance learning programme because all the development activities like tutor training and monitoring have been stopped soon after launching the programme due to financial crisis of the system. Besides, as presented in chapter 7, section 7.4, communication between tutors and learners is limited to classrooms during tutorial sessions, and this shows the crisis in the instruction function of the system.

As presented in chapter 6, section 6.4, student component is complex in distance learning due to variations in backgrounds. As presented in chapter 7, section 7.4, in

the distance learning programme, the students are with diverse experiences and they have different learning habits. Thus, according to the implied students' needs, the institution should have designed some individual supports to the students. For instance, the use of telephone for follow up of students is possible but such services are not established in the system. Besides, as the fact at Arba-Minch shows, there is no advisor at the level of study centre to support the learners. This shows the challenge in the instruction process from the learners' perspective.

As reflected in the discussion of the design, we have seen that, content of distance learning course is determined in the design during course development in the form of print or any other medium. This in turn is affected by the teacher/tutor as mediator of the content and the student as end users. Student quality determines the content to be learned and also determines the quality of output as graduates. The quality of student again affects relations to be created and the supports needed. In this perspective, the students have not been receiving appropriate support from the programme. Therefore, the instruction and support component of the distance learning programme is characterised by an overall crisis in terms of teacher, student and the delivery of content.

Assessment and evaluation

Learning assessment is one of the key aspects in any education system. This task is more complicated in distance learning, especially, in managing continuous assessment through assignments. As presented in chapter 6, in the distance learning programme under study, continuous assessments and final exams are assumed for assessment purpose. Tutor marked assignments are applied for continuous assessment. The assignments are all subjective to address the purpose and the tutors are not only supposed to mark and score the assignments but also to comment for the students to learn from the process. But as confirmed in this study, the services of the tutors especially in managing continuous assessment are inefficient and very limited in scope.

As discussed in chapter 7, section 7.4, in the distance learning programme, final exams are centrally managed and the problem in this dimension is the delay of result, which is largely affected by shortage of human resource in the record system. Therefore, in the distance learning programme, the assessment and evaluation process is characterised by crisis.

The above discussion confirms that the programme of distance learning is characterised by an overall system crisis. More challenges of the system are reflected below through the environmental factors as contingencies.

8.5.2 The environmental challenges

Environment influences systems by determining the nature of the input and the quality of the outputs. To discuss the environmental factors of the distance learning programme, four key issues are identified to focus the analysis. These are: the emphasis of the institution, budgeting procedures, practice of other institutions, and absence of national policy.

The emphasis of the institution

Distance learning is less common in Ethiopia and the civil service college is originally organised as a conventional institution. Accordingly, the academic and administrative structures of the college are designed for the conventional programme. To this end, the college had defined mission before 1998 but the need to include distance learning in the academic programme forced the institution to forge its mission in 1999. This was due to the pressure from the environment, particularly, government strategy. This is clearly reflected in the presentation of chapter 5.

From the evidence in this study, we can understand that the college used the distance learning programme as a means to secure benefits like the up-to-date technology and other facilities. This is implied because all the development processes were stopped soon after the project. Subsequently, all strategic decisions by the college are proven to be contrary to the development of distance learning. Furthermore, a lot of resource is invested in developing the diploma programme and in two years' time, the programme is terminated unilaterally by the management.

As explained in chapter 5, all the required staff were recruited fast enough during the project phase; and all were trained by the UK OU for course development and provision of student support. Then, as discussed elsewhere soon after the teaching began, all staff trained for the student support tasks were removed for other task in the college and not replaced by trained staff and the support system fall into human

resource crisis. After closing the diploma programme, the institute of distance educations tried to develop degree programme but as mentioned elsewhere in chapter 7, the college failed to allocate enough budget. Consequently, the system is not able to develop good quality teaching material for the degree programme. Therefore, the emphasis of the college on the regular programme left the distance learning programme without attention whilst it is ten times bigger in size.

The college has not been unsteady only with regard to its distance learning programme. It has been unstable in its academic programmes in the conventional teaching as well. The institution is quite notorious in changing its areas of focus from time to time depending on the situation in the government's intent. Even it has been closing programmes in which it was the most successful in the country, for example, economics. This feature is discussed in chapter 3, section 3.4. In the distance learning programme, it closed down a programme overnight before using the available teaching materials.

Budgeting process

Distance learning programme is a unique system of education and its budgeting is also different. In this regard, it requires initial investment in the course development process as an industry to ensure return through student fees when teaching begins. The financial administration system of the country doesn't allow the institution to use the money collected through student fees. This creates certain problem to the college in managing the programme but not really very difficult because the college has the power to influence and convince the budget making body.

Structurally, the distance learning programme is organised in the college as a form of faculty but as mentioned elsewhere, the size of the work is many times bigger than the entire conventional programme. However, in allocating and negotiating budget for the functions with the government's ministry of finance, the college management misses to consider the unique nature of the distance learning programme to negotiate budget. Therefore, one major factor in the financial crisis is the organisational structure of the institution with respect to the distance learning programme. If distance learning is considered as one of the core functions of the college, there will not be a failure to draw enough funds from the government.

Practice of other institutions

There are relatively few distance teaching institutions in the country and they are mostly private (MoE, 2007:15). These institutions apply distance teaching through print based approach by correspondence. Therefore, good practice of distance learning is not known in the culture to standardise the services.

However, the private distance learning institutions are sharp in responding to market situation which could be used for good by promoting good practice in the applications. For example, before 2005, all of them teach only in pure correspondence. When the civil service college started a relatively organised distance teaching programme in 2005, with tutorial services, all of them started tutorial service. But they do not train tutors or course developers, and the design of their teaching materials is also like ordinary books. This reflects the discussion of the context of distance learning in sub-Sahara Africa and Ethiopia, presented in chapter 1, section 1.4 and 1.5. In other words, the situation reflects that distance teaching institutions in the country are characterised by underdeveloped features.

As perceived in the recent development in the programme of the civil service college, that is, crisis in all services reflects that the college is going back to the norm of the culture. Therefore, the situation in the culture of distance teaching in the country is pulling the programme of the civil service college toward the norm or the popular practice in the country.

Absence of national policy

The country has developed a national education policy in 1994 and this policy ignores distance learning programme (TGE, 1994). After developing the new policy, the ministry of education used distance learning programme as a remedy to solve a problem in the conventional teaching. This was to facilitate training of 17000 primary school teachers in the form of project and it was in response to teacher crisis. Actually the programme enabled the system to train about 20000 teachers (Getachew, 2008); but it stopped at graduation of the project group in 2004 because distance learning is not recognised as strategy of education in the country.

In this regard, the environmental situation reveals that the absence of policy for distance education in the country complicated the state of affairs in which distance learning programmes are managed. As a consequence, the job has no standard to define quality of materials and student support. If there was policy defining the criteria for the practice, the institutions could have made effort to fulfil the requirement. In short, the distance learning programme is in a system of overall crisis in its major components and the environmental factors as contingencies.

As an open system, education programme can be viable if students as inputs come into the system continuously and if graduates are effectively absorbed by the environment. *Inputs* as students and other human and material resources are drawn from the environment. The inputs are processed within the system's *throughput* in order to produce *outputs* as graduates. As reflected in the discussion of the earlier chapters, the distance learning programme, under study, selects it students from the civil service of the country and trains and produces graduates for the consumption of the civil service system.

The civil service system is, therefore, the specific environment from which the distance learning programme receives its inputs and releases its outputs back. The problem here is the input is narrowly defined and restricts the system to the public sector. Therefore, it was not appropriate decision to plan the development of the distance learning programme in the civil service college because it is an institution with narrow mandate and highly volatile in its programmes.

As presented in the literature, section 2.1.6, everything in the environment is not suitable for a system as inputs. Therefore, systems select inputs to maintain internal stability or homeostasis (orderly internal condition). This is made through filtering process in any open system. Selection of inputs helps to maintain standards and ensure compatibility of outputs to the requirement. As presentation in chapter 7, the system of the distance learning programme has been applying the national standard for admission to higher education based on the national exam results. This is the practice of filtering inputs to the system and it is an acceptable approach as one possible way of ensuring quality of inputs although it doesn't match with the requirement of flexibility as a major feature of distance education.

For a system to be effective, the throughput process has to be viable to produce the right quality of output with compatibility with the needs of the market or the environment. After the students join a programme of distance learning, the most important issue is provision of appropriate student support. This is the core issue in the throughput process (see also section 2.1.6.1 in the literature chapter). As reflected in this study, the throughput process which is largely determined through student support of the distance learning programme, however, is extremely weak.

As per the principle discussed in the literature, distance learning gives more emphasis to learner centred approach by organising student support to accommodate flexibility and lifelong learning. Therefore, more attention is given to the transformation process (throughput) in a system of distance learning to ensure the required standards of outputs. However, such an approach is impractical in the case under study because the student support system has been very fragile. To maintain the standard on the output side, a system of distance learning focus on output control through assignments and exams. The system of distance learning under study also applies these techniques; but the data reveal that both procedures have been defective. The consequence of the gap in the throughput process is also obvious to adversely affect the output of the distance learning programme, but this is not to be covered in the scope of this study as it requires comparative analysis.

In relation to systems efficiency, the theory says the integration of new element develops synergy (see section 2.1.6.1 in the literature chapter). According to this, the additional element, then, promotes the overall performance as a synergetic effect. To this end, systems must be able to reorganise to accommodate the newly introduced element or subsystem. In the distance learning programme, the data presented in chapter 6 and 7 shows that the introduction of distance learning enabled the institution to produce relatively enormous number of graduates within few years better than the regular programme in terms of access. However, the institution is poorly adapted to the change.

On the other hand, looking at the impact of the problem on the throughput process on the output side is not visible in the system of distance learning at the moment because students are already on the job. The graduates do not need to get into the market and compete for jobs immediately as they are already employed by the system. Therefore,

although all the implications tend to affect the quality, it is not easy to see the impact of the poorly organised student support on the quality of training at the moment.

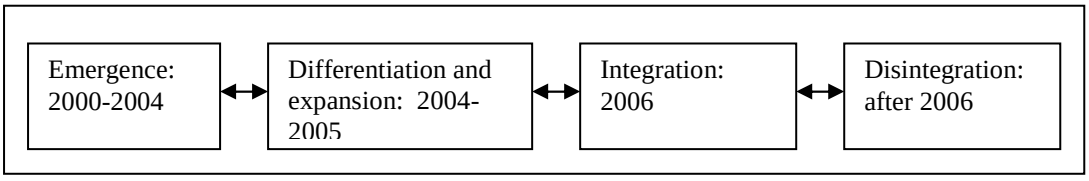
If we look at the education system under study from the industrial, technological and cultural, and environmental point of view, we may recognise the following patterns.

From the industrial point of view, almost all the activities of distance learning in the country focus on the tertiary level and from the organisational perspective, the jobs are left off to the private sector (MoE, 2007). Moreover, the cultural and technological aspect involves undeveloped feature of print-based approach as core technique of delivery. Besides, there is no established benchmark for the practice; and distance learning is unusual approach in the country because of lack of strategy and defined standard.

In the specific environment, there is acute shortage of human resources to promote the practice technically. On the other hand, there is high demand from the market in the environment (World Bank, 2003:x) in that there is conducive situation for the expansion of distance learning due to low accessibility of the conventional system. This shows the uniqueness of the situation in the specific culture. The pressure from high demand affects the quality of the product unless there is strategy to maintain the balance between available resource and the inflated market. In this specific situation, the role of national policy is crucial to set the standard of practice because distance learning cannot be managed in the conventional sense.

In general, the development of the distance learning programme of the civil service college shows four distinct phases within few years before reaching reasonable level of progress. The following figure presents the summary of this feature.

Figure 8.2 Figurative representation of the DL programme from emergence to decline



Emergence-this phase refers to the initiation of the distance learning programme in the college. It begins with the assembling and organisation of the necessary human and material resources in the preparation for the distance learning project.

Differentiation and expansion - this phase refers to the strengthening of the institute of distance education. It includes the hiring and training of staff and organising the institute into functional units from the central headquarters to regions. It also involves the development of print and audio materials during the project phase. Enrolment of thousands of distance learners to the programme at the study centres is also part of this stage.

Integration- this phase includes the situation immediately after the distance learning project phased out. It involves incorporating the distance learning programme into the government financial system in the college. This brought about series of challenges because the system is less understood and mishandled by the conventional based institution.

Disintegration- this phase begins in the late 2006, when staff both central and regional centres started leaving the system mainly because of lack of vision about future directions and opportunities in the programme. Especially, failure of the college to sponsor staff for further learning and prohibiting transfers of employees from regions to central headquarters are the major features here. Removal of all the support staff to another job in the college is also part of this situation. This is followed by termination of the diploma programme and failure to allocate sufficient budget for developing new degree courses. This may lead to the total collapse of the distance learning system unless a kind of breakthrough appears to rescue the programme.

This chapter tried to focus on the most important points for the analysis and interpretation of the development process. Based on the results, systems analysis is applied for presenting the overall development and the practice of DL. The next chapter concludes the study.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the thesis. To this end, it begins with the list of basic questions of the research. Then, it summarises the data by focusing on the questions to show how they are answered. Conclusions are made from the data organised under each question and in the concluding remark, broader perspectives are stated more philosophically.

9.1 The Basic Questions

The concern of this study is complex, as it deals with a development process with a focus on results and outcomes of a project. This is dictated by the situation because looking at one phase of the development would enable to present only half of the story. In this regard, the work demands sequencing and presenting events to give clear picture of the phenomenon as much as possible. The overall attempt is to reflect what happened as a result of the development process; and to guide the study, the following basic questions were set.

1. How can the project be explained in terms of overall design, objectives and outcomes?
2. What key features can be recognised from the socio-political environment of the project? And what were the effects of these on the outcome?
3. How can the project be understood in promoting students' access to the college and development of capacity of the college?
4. What does the Arba-Minch study centre show about the programme when considered in the light of internationally defined standards for distance learning practice?

9.2 Summarisation of the Data

The summary of the data is presented below in the sequence of the above basic questions.

9.2.1 How can the project be explained in terms of overall design, objectives and outcomes?

As discussed in chapter 5, the distance learning project was aimed at two developmental needs: the upgrading and extension of the GDLN technology in the Civil Service College, and the development of print based distance learning programme in the same institution.

When we look at the design, the fundamental shortcoming is the domination by the donor agency. In this regard, the data reveals the decisions about the design were made without enough involvement of the beneficiary. Thus, in the state of affairs, the beneficiary was virtually not in a position to alter what is sorted out by the planners of the donor agency.

As presented in chapter 5 and 8, one of the key procedures in designing development projects is situation analysis. This is partially attempted in the project with focus on fewer issues. Firstly, it focused on justifying the project from the point of view of commitment of the government to develop capacity of the Civil Service College. Secondly, the needs assessment conducted by the college's institute of distance education. Moreover, it mentioned the involvement of the UK Open University in advising the college to promote distance learning. Furthermore, the project document clearly reveals that the college revised its original mission and added distance education to its mandate to benefit from the LIL project.

In fact, it was necessary to analyse the feasibility of the technology in the context of the college and the institution's capacity to manage the innovation. However, this was not considered; and there has been a large gap here and the weaknesses might have been seen and got attention if the analysis was made about these matter. This is a critical design problem and fundamental reason for ignoring human resource development for the technology. Therefore, the development of technology was planned in a way that prolongs dependency on the donor agency.

As elaborated in chapter 5, all strategic decisions are controlled by the donor which was putting the process on and off with focus on technology development. Besides, the plan lacks appropriate work plan structure for sequencing activities. Thus,

activities with the potential problems were not identified for better planning of the implementation. Therefore, the detail plans were made haphazardly by the people working in the implementing agency. Besides, this group lacks experience in implementing development project in general.

As discussed in the literature chapter the management and plan of a development project are supposed to be flexible and subject to revision and re-planning when situation demands. However, as presented in chapter 5 of this thesis, in the project, the plan was made once for all. For instance, any change to the structure needs approval of the board of directors of the Bank. Consequently, even when the scope of the project is significantly changed and the budget is cut to less than half, it was not possible to amend.

Another key aspect of design in development project is monitoring and evaluation of progress. In principle, this needs to be scheduled as one of the core tasks in a project design document. However, monitoring is not defined in the document, and as a result, the activity is highly neglected during the implementation phase. Hence, the progress of the project is left unattended for years; and this is again one of the serious defects of the design.

The objective is the other element of design; and in order to be effective, a project has to be designed with well-defined objectives. But, as discussed in chapter 5, the objectives of the project are generally vague and complex. Besides, as chapter 5 presents, the procedure neglected participatory approach in setting the objectives.

The design document also stated performance indicators for assessing the objectives; but as presented in chapter 8, all the performance indicators are not related to the outcomes. They even fail to recognise the law of the country. Therefore, the indicators didn't help in measuring performance as they lack critical factors of the reality.

As described in chapter 5, the biggest problem during implementation was caused by the initiation of a parallel development project by the government of the country, which was also financed by the Bank. In the meantime, the technology proposed for the two projects were found out to be incompatible. In this perspective, it is not clear why the problem was not solved as soon as it emerged by making the necessary adjustment. But the system was simply halted for 3 years; and the minor activities like

developing print aspect and capacity building through human resource development or training missed attention of the major development partner and resulted excessive delay.

As mentioned elsewhere in chapter 5, in the overall process, the focus was around facilitating the technology development. The same was the cause for the delays in the implementation of the project. The procedures of this aspect had been less understood and less coordinated in the whole system. In the college, there is no sufficiently skilled human resource in this area and no effort is made to fill the gap. With all the difficulties, the development achieved the following results.

Regarding the GDLN centre upgrading, the outcome is a well updated centre with interactive technology for videoconferencing, multimedia, etc. This is of course just physical achievement but the functional aspects inside are not upgraded at all. Thus, the operation of the centre remained dependent up on the Bank's courses as it had been the trend before the upgrading. As discussed in chapter 5, the performance has even deteriorated after upgrading the technology.

The print based distance learning which is less focused in the design, is proved to be more effective and comprehensive in the development process. In this dimension, the major achievements are development of 48 courses in 3 fields of study, for diploma programme, and training of hundreds of human resource by the support of the UK Open University. To facilitate the teaching-learning process at the regions, 9 regional centres and 21 study centres were organised and more than 300 part-time tutors were selected, contracted, and trained to work at the Regional Centres and Study Centres. But these achievements have been continuously deteriorating since the end of the project.

The final assessment of the project by the Bank's evaluation department reveals that with the disbursement rate of 93% of the project's fund, the performance is moderately satisfactory (ICR 4 October 2006). However, none of the original objectives are achieved; and, thus, the evaluation is not real. Therefore, from the foregoing discussion, we can conclude the following.

- The design is poor in that the plan is made without sufficient analysis of the situation and donor dominated. The design also missed critical elements like monitoring and evaluation.

- The objectives and the performance indicators were not related to the reality and the system failed to revise these tools even after restructuring the project. Moreover, the development process of the GDLN centre focused on technology and lost human aspect and promoted dependency.
- Although the resources for the development process largely focused on the technology, at the end of the project, the print aspect is proved to be more successful and comprehensive but even the innovation has been dying before expanding.

9.2.2 What key features can be recognised from the socio-political environment of the project? And what were the effects of these on the outcome?

As discussed in chapter 5, the overall development followed top-down approach. For example, the project concept was originated from the highest structure of the government. The government's focus on the college helped the institution to benefit from the LIL project without competing with other institutions in the country. This situation is not pure advantage to the institution as it requires the college to change its strategies whenever there is slight turn in the government's priorities. Besides, as presented in chapter 5, an important issue here is that the college was not ready to focus on distance learning, but forced by the tendency in the environment. In this regard, the advice of the UK Open University convinced the college to add distance learning to its strategy. This advice was genuine and the related tasks are effectively performed as per the project plan.

The management of the project was, generally, rigid with combination of formalities of the Bank's procedures as well as the normal administrative procedures of the college in one and doesn't match with the requirements of a project management. As explained in chapter 5, specific issues were required for checking by the Bank even when the checking doesn't add value. This could be explained in terms of the level of the resources each actor contributed for the development process. However, as the fund is a loan than a grant, the requirement is unfair.

Besides, within the beneficiary alone, the organisation involves complex hierarchy of committees and administrative structures. In the meantime, when the project fall into risk, the formal structure was abolished but the members of the project team were

forced to work overtime without remuneration. This is because the alternatives for resource management were not considered. More critically, the system of management in the institution doesn't allow the use of the equipment and materials purchased for the intended purpose. The beneficiary institution pays less attention to the formal purpose and used the project for other ends. In this regard, misallocations of materials and equipment and facilities can be sited as the consequence of this.

In short, the most important points to conclude from the above discussion are the following.

- The decision about the development project was characterised by top-down process and the college was selected by political will of the government, and the targeted institution added distance learning to its strategies to fit in the new move.
- The management of the development process lacks flexibility; consequently, it encouraged unnecessary works to be done and caused inefficiency in the use of resources.
- The project didn't define how to manage resources; consequently, the results of development are largely misplaced and used for other aims than the intended purpose.

9.2.3 How can the project be understood in promoting students' access to the college and development of capacity of the college?

As presented in chapter 6, among the key outcomes of the project, the college was able to develop a fairly organised distance learning programme in the print based aspect and enrolled thousands of students. In this dimension, as further explained in chapter 7, good quality teaching materials (print and audio) were produced and the necessary human resource trained. Accordingly, the development enabled the college to manage the distance teaching programme independently by training course developers and tutors by its own staff. However, the college management suddenly decided to terminate teaching diploma courses in mid-2007, and the teaching materials were left in the store.

As discussed in chapter 6 and 7, the distance learning staff reflected their deep dissatisfaction with the administrative environment that adversely affected the distance learning programme. In this regard, most of the trained staff have already left the college for other jobs. In such an environment, Institute of Distance Learning (IDE) has been struggling to survive. When the data for this study was finally gathered, the institute was able to develop new distance courses for a degree programme in the field of management. However, as presented in chapter 7, the new process of course development was challenged by shortage of financial resource because the college failed to allocate sufficient budget.

If we refer to the history of course development in the institution itself the budget for the diploma programme was many times higher for the diploma courses than for the recently developed degree courses. For example, if we refer just to the budget for course author, the recent practice is about 37.5% as compared to the amount during the development of the diploma programme. During the project, the institution allocated the highest budget in the country; however, recently, the budget falls to less than half of the private institutions. Therefore, the reality reflects clear lack of attention to the distance learning programme than real shortage of fund. Subsequently, the result is low quality material as compared to the materials produced for the diploma programme by the same institution few years ago.

This being the case, the staff think the problem originates in lack of good will than real shortage. The management on the other hand says that the shortage of budget is rather caused by the fact that the money collected from students in the programme goes to government fund and cannot be used to run the programme of distance learning. However, in reality, the college has the capacity to secure budget it needs from the government and the reason is rather lack of commitment to support the programme.

From the above discussion, we can conclude that:

- The development of the distance learning programme has brought about remarkable change in the capacity of the college. However, the programme is soon challenged by low commitment of the system.
- The programme is placed in an environment that fails to recognise the opportunity. The management system even doesn’t seem to value the product

of the distance learning programme as it shut down a programme before using readily available resources.

9.2.4 What does the Arba-Minch study centre show about the programme when considered in the light of internationally defined standards for distance learning practice?

The discussion in chapter 6 about the background of the distance students at Arba-Minch centre shows that the learners are matured people with a lot of experience. This again shows that they are out of school for a while. The same discussion also shows that the students come from the conventional education. It is also indicated that most of the learners study at home; and their courses of study relate to the jobs they were doing. Furthermore, as per the information, the students choose the distance learning programme for personal reasons in their family life such as the intention to work fulltime.

Subsequently, the above characteristics have implications on the type of supports the students need from the institution. For instance, as presented in chapter 6, many of the learners reported they have been facing difficulties, especially, at the beginning of the course to cope up with independent study. As the literature in chapter 2 reflects, such students need more individualised support. The characteristics also show that the learners are motivated to do the courses, and this is an opportunity for the programme because the students are more likely to compensate for defects in the institutional support.

The distance learning programme admits candidates from government or para-government organisations based on criteria set by the college. The selection process, involves offices of capacity building at the local and regional levels as well as the regional structure of the distance learning programme. Accordingly, the process is complicated; and consequently, the feedback about the result is affected in that there are no personnel at study centres to communicate with students. Thus, information is solely delivered to the students through the notice board of the host institution. This is contrary to the standard of good practice for distance learning discussed in chapter 2.

As the data further indicates in chapter 6, the registration schedule is highly affected by the delays in the delivery of teaching materials from the headquarters to the study centres. More critical issue here is that there is no orientation about the programme to new students. In fact, this is a feature of all the study centres located outside the regional centres like Arba-Minch. This is because coordinators of study centres are not trained for the job and they simply facilitate administrative duties. This is again a critical defect in the academic support of the distance learning programme and contrasts with good practice for distance teaching.

In the discussion of chapter 6, the students generally reflected their views that the distance learning programme opened great learning opportunity for them both in terms of access and developing key life skills. Especially, they stress that the programme helped them to access higher education. However, they have mixed feelings about the programme in that they are happy about the opportunity on one hand; and on the other hand they express the challenges they face due to lack of relevant support. Thus, it seems that they lack standard to judge the programme more accurately.

The data reveals rigidity of the system in accepting students and managing the academic process. However, with relative flexibility in offering courses the programme enabled the college to accept thousands of students who could not access the institution through the regular programme. Among the benefited are the women and ethnic minorities. In this perspective, as stressed in the discussion of chapter 6, the total number of students in the programme is about 10 times bigger than the regular programme. Besides, the number of minorities and women is much higher in the distance learning programme than the regular. Therefore, it is safe to say the distance learning programme facilitated better opportunities to disadvantaged groups. As indicated in the discussion of chapter 6, the above situation is based on the observations of the diploma programme, and in relative terms, a decline of total enrolment has happened in Arba-Minch study centre for the degree courses. This proves that the original plan for diploma programme during the project phase was right whilst the termination of the diploma programme has no concrete ground (see chapter 7).

Logistics is one of the key issues in distance learning. In this perspective, the discussion in chapter 7 reveals that the system of logistics and supplies of the

programme is poorly organised and creating unnecessary challenges to the whole system. Particularly, the system is not able to deliver materials in time as the principle of distance learning demands (Rao, 1994:107). Accordingly, as discussed in chapter 7, the logistics strategy in action is inefficient and costly while there are better alternatives available. Therefore, to relate to the concepts discussed in the literature, the programme fails to fit one major principle of distance learning (principle of industrialisation) regarding the logistics and supplies.

As discussed in chapter 2, under the standard of good practice for distance learning, student support is underlined as one of the serious services. In this regard, as discussed in chapter 6 and 7, there were some good beginnings in student support aspects of the distance learning programme at the initial phase. For example, all the staff were trained for the job by the UK Open University and the system was organised for regular training and monitoring of tutorials and tutor marked assignments and related issues of administration were planned as routines and performed well until 2006. But, as discussed in chapter 3 and 6, by the end of 2006, all the staff trained for the aim of student support were moved to another job without replacement. Similarly, all the initial regional coordinators were also trained by the UK Open University. But most of them left the job for reasons such as the college failing to give them educational opportunity; and they are even prohibited their right to transfer to the headquarters within the same system. This reveals crisis from the human aspect at all levels; and it is the student support that has suffered much by the system failure.

One of the fundamental characteristics of successful distance learning programmes is the function of financial support and commitment from all key players of administration (Meyer, 2002:78). In this dimension, the financial crisis is proved to be the most challenging in the distance learning programme. Course development process, student support system, tutor training, and monitoring of outreach centres, etc. were adversely affected by this. Even computer courses were delivered without practicing the skills due to financial problem.

As discussed in the literature, another key function of distance learning is effective assessment strategy. In this perspective, there is no universally prescribed approach for this, but from the practice of international universities like UK Open University,

we can see that the relevant techniques of assessing distance learning are tutor marked assignments (TMA), computer marked assignments (CMA) and exams. In the practice of the distance learning programme under study, assessment is designed to be through TMA (as a form of continuous assessment) and final exams. This is based on the reality of the culture in that CMA is less applicable in the situation.

Therefore, assignment management is one of the key issues in student support, and providing prompt feedback is the key ingredient of good practice (Sherry, 2003:437-440). However, as discussed in chapter 6, in the system under study, there is lack of standard in marking the assignments by tutors, and the tutors lack training and proper remuneration. Besides, feedbacks on assignments reach the students so late after the final exams and they cannot learn from their mistakes. Thus, the practice misses a fundamental goal of TMA. More critical matter in the later development is that the number of assignments is reduced for the degree programme to minimise the cost. This again reflects even a deteriorating quality of the continuous assessment process.

As elaborated in chapter 6, final exams are uniformly administered centrally by the headquarters, and it counts out of 70% for assessment of learning. This alternative helps the system to maintain the standard of assessment in relative terms, but reflects much high focus on end exams. Moreover, the result is delivered so late to the students and the students do not receive their grade reports before they register for the next semester. Hence, there are problems in both aspects of learning assessment in the system, and the most critical challenge is failure to give timely feedback to students.

Distance learning needs appropriate amount of staff and personnel to conduct the programme (Meyer, 2002:78); and the weakness about the assessment process relates to the critical deficiency in the human resource. This is specially linked with problems in the record system. In this respect, as presented in chapter 6 and 7, the ECSC has much more number of record personnel for the regular programme than for the distance learning.

In short, from the above discussions, we can conclude the following:

- The distance learning programme does not promote independent learning as it is not student centred. It doesn’t facilitate interaction and communication among students and tutors either. Besides, it fails to fulfil industrial quality.

- The programme fails all the criteria for good practice and principles of distance learning.
- The system has the capacity to provide many of the critical supports, but the failures are the consequence of lack of attention. For instance, using letters, telephone, fax to facilitate interaction are possible in the culture.
- This being the case, the students are happy for the opportunities to study with the distance learning programme whatever the quality may be because it is rare opportunity for them to access higher learning.

9.3 Concluding Remark

> If anything threatens the potential success of distance education more than the rejection and neglect it has received in the past, it is the danger of over-enthusiasm about technology lending to under-funded, under-manned, poorly designed, and poorly managed programs…the costs involved and of the need for substantial investment, training, reorganizing of administrations, monitoring and evaluation of learning, and support of learners – of the need, that is to say for careful long-term planning and development of new and different delivery systems (Moore, 2003:xxiii).

By linking the findings to the systems analysis of both the project and the practice of distance learning to the above idea, the following conclusion can be drawn to reflect on the whole process of development.

As the evidence of this study reveal, the distance learning project was designed with high focus on the development of technology, which is later proved to be less feasible in the situation. Moreover, the project was poorly designed in all respects from its plan to the arrangements for implementation and missed critical aspect of flexibility in its management and dominated by one party. Subsequently, it failed to attain the intended objectives. Furthermore, the institution has forged its original strategy in order to benefit from the distance learning project without real interest. This is reflected later in the mismanagement of the development result. Closing up of relatively effective programmes of high demand and leaving ready materials in the store are sufficient evidence for this. The institution failed to maintain the human resource and unable to allocate the appropriate resource for further development whilst it has the capability to do better.

The real agenda was not clear during the project phase because the system appeared very committed in fulfilling the requirements of the project by hiring the necessary

human resources even better than the project plan. At that stage, it seemed as if the real interest was developing the capacity for distance learning. However, the reality was revealed later when misallocation of the resources both human and materials began. This reminds me of the saying on the kingdom of heaven that reads as follows. "*I have given Jerusalem my whole life. First, I thought we were fighting for God. Then I realized we were fighting for wealth and land. I was ashamed."* (Scott, 2005). What happened in the distance learning project resembles this. The system appeared to be highly committed to the development initially but it neglected the programme after the project phase and the programme fall into crisis very soon. Consequently, when this study was conducted, the whole processes: in course design, logistics, instruction and student support, and learning assessment and evaluation were in critical circumstances.

Distance learning has high demand in the community because of low access to conventional programmes but there is no policy to guide the practice. Hence, it could have been possible for the distance learning programme to grow and develop viably in the specific community with a relatively structured approach as per the original plan. However, due to the misunderstanding and misplacement of the development process, the systems of distance learning fall into crisis before it grew up. Shakespeare said "*… from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe, And then from hour to hour, we rot and rot: And thereby hangs a tale*" (William Shakespeare, Act 2 Scene 7).

The above fact reflects the normal dialectics of nature. But the system of the DL is rotten very early before it is ripe. In this perspective, the system showed all levels of development: emergence, differentiation and expansion, integration, and disintegration within few years and at the time of the study, the system was highly dominated by the latter feature (disintegration). From the situation, one can conclude that 'success of developing DL programme as an adjunct to a conventional system is a matter of chance'. The critical challenge was that the system was unable to respond to the change. Therefore, the DL programme can only be saved in the system under study if there is a kind of breakthrough comes in the way of thinking about the programme. Otherwise, the DL will cease to exist very soon.

Even though a lot of unnecessary works were done in the distance learning project, the process brought about some development in the institution. Then, the whole

development result was chipped away because the system didn't attach the real value to it. This reflects the true development dilemma in the community. Lastly, I am convinced that the development should not have been directed to the particular institution. It should have rather been directed to developing a new institution for distance learning independently or to an institution with a wider mandate to teach all the people. This is because distance learning can teach many more people than the civil servants in the public sector alone.

But generally speaking, development is a function of policy of the main actors at the global or national levels. At the implementation stage, human resource is the key factor for success of development activities but the result could be maintained if formal authorities attach value to the result. The development process brought about certain positive input to the system of education of the country but lacks sustainability due to lack of awareness.

9.4 Recommendations

I wish to put forward few recommendations for the institution, and the major development partners (government and the donor agency).

The institution

The Ethiopian civil service college can apply some strategies to rescue the developed capacity for distance learning programme in its system. To this effect, the following three possibilities are deemed to be helpful.

- The institution can allow the distance learning programme to enjoy certain level of autonomy to administer budgets on its own as a core unit of the college.
- The institution (college) can be organised along two major lines of management (conventional and distance) so that the distance learning wing would be headed by an executive vice president. This could automatically enable the institution to focus on the distance learning function.
- The institution can decentralise the distance learning programme into different departments teaching on the conventional programme to run the distance learning programme in their subject areas. In this case, a Limited number of technical team may be maintained in IDE to help in facilitating training and

staff development for the distance programme. This third recommended is not new for the institution. A similar idea was suggested by Professor Rumble from the UK Open University during the consultancy service (Rumble, 2004). Although this option may be a little complicated, it enables the institution to focus equally on the task of distance teaching and regular programme.

The government and the donor agency

The government and the donor agency should not look only forward at running new programmes and projects. They also need to look back at what they have made. They surely perceive the reality and can make corrections if they do so. What happened as a result of the development project in the civil service college could have been a good feedback for them if they go and look at what happened after the project phase. Such information could help them to review their development policy. To this effect, impact assessment must be planned as part and parcel of all development projects. Otherwise, as the trend in the practice shows, they simply make the substance and go without looking at what happen later.

9.5 Reflections on the Research

This research has extended itself to cover a complex set of issues. In that sense, it is ambitious, and may as a result lack tightness of focus to some extent. The current situation in the country provides rare opportunity to explore the issue of development and distance learning in general because there are few backgrounds and resource for such a study. The areas are untouched by research especially in the country. Therefore, I wanted to take this opportunity to contribute a little to this new area. Those who have participated in these events are able to tell their stories because of this initiative.

Inevitably, there are gaps in this study, which I would like to fill in with subsequent research and also invite other researchers to fill in. The issues of development and distance learning still remain barely explored and discussed only as bypassing. This is because the focus of the study is on the programme of development of distance learning and the practice to tell the story about the whole process for comprehensive understanding and possible policy direction. The community, the learners and the organisation in general have much more issues for investigation. For instance, the practical bases of the pessimistic views about distance learning can be studied by referring to the specific culture of Ethiopia.

The issues in the organisation are focused only to understand outcomes of the development. The influence on the quality of learning in relative terms with other programmes of education is an area of investigation for future research. People in the conventional system of education also have knowledge and opinion about distance learning. This could again be the area of focus to study this area further. If I have to do more research again, I will focus on these issues because I think this is the only way for further understanding of the situation. Therefore, I leave this gap to be filled by further research.

This study has a methodological merit in that I employed a unique methodology in applying specific techniques of qualitative analyses by applying both organisation theories and system theories for the investigation of the situation in the development process and practice. I also tried to represent a case of substantive value to reflect the understanding of development strategies in the country and focused on the most important approach of distance learning in the community. No detailed study is conducted yet on development projects of distance learning in the community at this level. Therefore, this research may encourage other researchers to involve in further investigation in both development projects and distance education. It could also be good source of information for academics and decision makers.

Lastly, I want to underline one point. Bryson and de Castell (1998) urge that we need to pay attention to failure of educational innovation because they tell us why success stories are arbitrary. Besides, Unsworth (1997) also argues that many things that we take to be trivial, embarrassing, or simply wrong, will be of interest to our future as we learn from errors and failures; and thus recording errors is necessary to make progress. In line with this, this study might have disclosed a disturbing anomaly in the development planning of the country but it is done just for the sake of knowledge.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aalen, Lovise (2002). Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party State: The Ethiopian Experience 1991-2000. Chr. Michelson Institute.

Alavi, M. (1994) "Computer-Mediated Collaborative Learning: An Empirical Evaluation," *MIS Quarterly* (18:2), 1994, pp. 159 - 174.

Abebe Ghedai (1991) 'AAU and its Decision-making and Implementing Structures,' Ayele Meshesha and Azeb Desta (eds.), *Proceedings on Professional Staff Development***.** Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Printing Press. PP. 119-155

Abrahamson, C. E. (1998). "Issues in interactive communication in distance education," *College Student Journal*, volume 32, number 1, pp. 33-43.

ACE (2007). Atmosphere, Climate & Environment Information Programme, accessed March 2007-03-27. www.ace.mmu.ac.uk/esd/Principles/Carrying_Capacity.html)

Aide Memoire of May (2003), DL LIL project Aide Memoire, March 2003.

Aide Memoire, 18 June (2004), DL LIL project Aide Memoire, June 2004.

Aide Memoire, 15 April (2005), DL LIL project Aide Memoire, April 2005.

Aide Memoire, 2 June (2006), DL LIL project Aide Memoire, June 2006.

Amare Asgedom (2007). Academic Freedom and the Development of Higher Education in Ethiopia: The Case of Addis Ababa University 1950-2005. A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Education and Life Long Learning, University of East Anglia, May, 2007.

Anthony, R. N. & V. Govindarajan (2004). *Management Control System* (11th ed). New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited.

Arbaminch University (2007). Arbaminch University, August 2007. available at WWW.arbaminch-univ.com. (accessed 27/09/2008).

Atkinson P. (1992). *Understanding Ethnographic Texts*. Sage, Newbury Park, CA.

Babbie, E. (1992). *The practice of social research.* (6th ed.). Chapter 11. California: Wadsworth.

Bare, J. (1994). Truth about daily fluctuations in 1992 pre-election polls. *Newspaper Research Journal, 15*.

Barnhart, C.L.; and R.K. Barnhart (ed). (1993). *The World Book Dictionary*. Chicago: World Book Inc.

Barrett, J. ; M. Mayan; M. Olson; and J. Spiers (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity and validity in qualitative research'. International Journal of Qualitative Methods (2).

Bartle, Phil (2007) Introduction to Community Project Design. www.projectdesign.co.uk, accessed 26 March 2007.

Belay GM. (2007). An Assessment of the Provision of Tertiary level Distance Education Programs in Tigrai Regional State. AAU School of Graduate Studies. Unpublished MA Thesis.

Bertalanffy, V. L. (1968). General systems theory. New York: Braziller.

Baltes, P. B., Reese, H. W., & Nesselroade, J. R. (1988). Introduction to research methods, life-span developmental psychology. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Bensbasat, I. et. al. (1987). The Case Research Strategy in Studies of Information Systems. MIS Quarterly, September.

Birnbaum, B.W. (2001*).* Foundations and practices in the use of distance education. *Mellen Studies in Education* (Vol. 66). Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press.

Briggs, P.(2002). *Ethiopia: The Bradt Travel Guide*, 3rd edition (Chalfont St Peters: Bradt, 2002), p. 229.

Brookfield, S (1986). Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning. Sanfrancisco: Jessey-Bass Publisher.

Bowen, E. K and M. K Starr (1982). Basic Statistics for Business and Economics. International student edition. London: McGraw-hill Book Company.

Braverman, M. (1996). *Sources of Survey Error: Implications for Evaluation Studies*. New Directions for Evaluation: Advances in Survey Research,*70.*

Bridges, D. (2002) 'Six Stories in Search of a Character? The Philosopher in an Educational Research Group,' A Paper Presented to the *International Symposium on Philosophy and History of the Disciplines of Education* at Catholic University of Leuven 6th-8th November 2002.

Bryson, M and S. de Castell (1998). "Telling tales out of school: Modernist, critical, and postmodern "true stories" about educational computing," In" H. Bromley and M.W. Apple (editors). *Education/Technology/Power: Educational computing as a social practice.* Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, pp. 65-84.

CIA WORLD FACTBOOK (2008) Ethiopia Economy – 2006, http://www.theodora.com/wfbcurrent/ethiopia/Ethiopia: History, Geography,

Government, and Culture — Infoplease.com The world factbook-Ethiopia December 2006

CES (2008). Charities Evaluation Service, helping you do better what you do better. (accessed 2008-11-11, available at google.com)

Chickering, A.W. & Gamson, Z.F. (1987). Development and adaptations of the seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 4,* 75-81.

Coffey, A. and P. Atkinson (1996). 'Concepts and Coding.' In A. Cffey and P. Atkinson, Making sense of qualitative data. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cook, H.E. (1997). *Product Management - Value, quality, cost, price, profit and organization*. Chapman & Hall, London. 411 p.

Corbett, B. (1992). People Development as the Primary aim of Development work. Webster University, October, 1992. unpublished.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and research design, choosing among five traditions. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). Research Design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches (2nd ed). London: Sage publications Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2004). Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research, (2nd ed). Prentice Hall.

Central Statistical Authority (1997). The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Results at Country Level, Addis Ababa, CSA.

Daft, R.L (2003). Management (6th ed). Mason: Thomson.

Daniel, J. S. & Smith W.A.S. (1979) Opening open universities: The Canadian experience. Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 9, (2), 63-74.

Davies, R.B. (1994) 'From Cross-Sectional to Longitudinal Analysis', in Dale, A. and Davies, R.B. (Eds.) *Analysing Social and Political Change. A Casebook of Methods*, London: Sage Publications.

Dejene A. (2002). Staff Reporter Addis Ababa May 2002.

_____ (2002). The Brain Drain from Africa: An Overview, a Paper Presented on the Third Annual Workshop of OSSREA, Theme: The Ethiopian Education and Training Policy and its Impacts; Opportunities and Challenges, Summaries of Papers, April 2002.

Denzin, N.K. and Y.S. Lincoln (1994) 'Introduction: Entering the Field of Qualitative Research,' Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE Publications pp. 1-18.

_____ (2005). The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 1-32). Thousand Oaks: Sage.Deribssa A. F. (2004). *Factors Affecting Female Enrolment and Participation in the Ethiopian Civil Service College.* A research conducted in support of Center for Women in Development (CERTWD), November 2004, Addis Ababa.

Deribssa A. F. (2002). Policy and Practice of Distance Education in Ethiopia. Institute of Distance Education, Ethiopian Civil Service College, Research and Publications Office, July 2002, unpublished.

---------- (2004). *Factors Affecting Female Enrolment and Participation in the Ethiopian Civil Service College.* A research conducted in support of Center for Women in Development (CERTWD), November 2004, unpublished.

---------- (2009). Distance Learning at the Tertiary Level in Ethiopia as a Strategy for Human Resource Development. University of South Africa. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis.

Dernbach, A. (1999). Cost-sharing in the Tertiary Sector in Ethiopia-Study Report-Draft Outline, EU Higher Education Support Project (ACT ET), Unpublished.

Dohmen, G. (1967). "Das Fernstadium" in D. Keegan (1996). Foundation of Distance Education, (3rd ed). London: Routledge.

ECSC (1998). Ethiopian Civil Service College Five-Year Institutional Development Plan (1998/99-2002/03).

_____ (1998-2002). Ethiopian Civil Service College graduate statistics, 1998-2002

_____ (2000). DL Needs assessment survey, ECSC/IDE, 2000.

_____(2003). Ethiopia Civil Service College Strategic Plan (draft proposal presented for sicussion). July 2002.

_____ (2004). Five Year Strategic Plan (2004-2008). January 2004.

_____ (2005). ECSC/IDE Tutors Guide, 2005.

_____ (2007). ECSC registrar, 2007

_____ (2008). ECSC Registrar, 2008.

EMIS (2007). *Education Statistics Annual Abstract 1998EC/2005-06*. February 2007. Addis Ababa.

Emerson R.M., Fretz R.I. & Shaw L.L. (2001) Participant observation and fieldnotes. In *Handbook of Ethnography*.-unpublished.

Enckevort, K.H., Morin P. and Schutze H.G. (eds) (1986) *Distance higher education and the adult learner*. Heerlen, Netherlands: Dutch Open University.

Erickson, F. (1986). 'Qualitative method in Research on Teaching'. In M. C. Wittrock (ed). Handbook of Research on Teaching: New York: Collier-Macmillan.

Eskinder, M. (2002). The Daily Monitor Addis Ababa, 8th November 2002.

FAO. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN. FAO Corporate Document Repository. The community toolbox: The idea, methods and tools for participatory monitoring. (accessed 2008-11-11, available at google.com).

FDRE (1995), Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Proclamation No.1, 1995.

_____ (2008). Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007-Population and Housing Census. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission. Addis Ababa: UNFPA, December 2008.

Fondahl, John. 1980. Network Techniques for *Project* Planning, Scheduling, and Control. In: *Handbook of Construction Management and Organization*. Frein, Joseph P. (ed.). Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York. Pp. 442 – 471.

Garrison, D. & D. Shale (1987). "Mapping the Boundaries of Distance Education: Problems in Defining the Field" The American Journal of Distance Education, 1(1): 4-13.

GDG (2007). Project & Construction Management Oxfordshire - GDG Management. www.gdgmanagement.co.uk/project-management.htm (Accessed 25 March 2007.

Gero, J. (2000) Computational Models of Innovative and Creative Design Processes, Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 64, p 183-196, Elsevier Science Inc.

Getachew A. (2008). The Nature and Practice of Teacher Education via Distance Learning in Ethiopia… PhD thesis at the Centre for applied research in education, school of education and professional development, university of East Anglia.

Giddens, A. (1993). *New Rules of Sociological Method*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Good, C. (1973). *Dictionary of Education*. New York: McGraw Hill Book

Graham, S. W., & J. F. Wedman (1989). Enhancing the Appeal of Tele-training. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*. 16(4).

Greenberg, G. (1998). Distance education technologies: Best practices for K-12 settings. *IEEE Technology and Society Magazine*, (Winter) 36-40.

Guastello, S. & M. Rieke. (1991). A review and critique of honesty test research. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law, 9.*

Guba, G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigm in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (eds). Handbook of qualitative research (pp.105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Farmer Press.

Hammersley, M. (1994). 'Introducing ethnography' in D. Gradol, J. Maybin and B. Stierer (eds). Researching Language and Literacy in Social Context. Multilingual Matters Ltd. Clevedon Hall.

Hanson, D, N. J. Maushak, C. A, Schelosser, M. L. Anderson, C. Sorenson, M. Simonson. (1997). *Distance Education: Review of the Literature* (2nd ed). Washington DC: Association for educational communication and technology. Ames, Iowa: Research Institute for Studies in Education.

Hicks, H.G. and C.R. Gullett. (1981). Management. New York: McGraw Hill, Inc.

Hisham, K. (2004). The Teacher is Always There, What about Learners: A Case of University Utara Distance Learning Program, PhD thesis at the Centre for applied research in education, school of education and professional development, university of East Anglia.

Holmberg, B. (1986). Growth and structure of distance education. London: Croom Helm.

Holmberg, B. (1989). *The concept, basic character, and development potentials of distance education. Distance Education, 10 (1).*

_____ (2003). A Theory of distance education based on empathy. In M. Moore and W. G. Anderson (eds). *Handbook of distance education*. Mahwah: NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Association.

IDRC. (2007). Plan for Project Administration, Monitoring and Utilization of Results, IDRC (International Development Research Centre) Books free online Document(s)-Module 17: Steps in the development of a health systems research proposal, Accessed August 14, 2007-http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev.

IFUW (2008) International Federation of University Women. Geneva, Switzerland. www.ifuw.org (accessed, 2008-10-27).

IGNOU (1997). Indra Gandhi National Open University: A Profile. New delhi: Maidan Garhi.

_____ (2002). Indra *Gandhi National Open University: A Profile*. New delhi: Maidan Garhi.

ILO (2008). Development Learning Network – Ethiopia-ILO Human resource development recommendation 1996-2008.

Implementation Completion and Result Report (2006). Report No: ICR0000202 on a credit in the amount of US$ 2.55 million to the Government of Ethiopia for a distance learning LIL project, October 04, 2006. The World Bank, Africa Region.

Inglis, A., P. Ling, and V. Joosten. (1999). Delivering digitally. *Managing the transition to the knowledge media*. London: Kogan Page.

Inman, E., & M. Kerwin. (1999). Instructor and student attitudes toward distance learning. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice, 23:*6.

Institute of Distance Education (2004). Information handbook for students. (Unpublished).

Jenkins, Janet. 1989. "Some Trends in Distance Education in Africa: An Examination of the Past and Future Role of Distance Education as a Tool for National Development." *Distance Education* 10(1): 41-48.

John**,** J. K. and R. T. Nakamura (1999). A Concept Paper on Legislatures and Good Governance. UNDP July 1999.

Kazmi, A. (2002). Business Policy and Strategic Management (2nd ed). New Delhi: Tata McGraw-hill Publishing Company Limited.

Keegan, D. (1986). *The foundations of distance education*. London: Croom Helm.

_____ (1996). Foundations of Distance education, 3rd ed. London: Routledge.

_____(2000). Foundation of Distance Education (3rd ed). London: Routledge.

Kerzner, H. (1984). Project management- a systems approach to planning, scheduling and controlling (2nd ed). New Delhi: CBS Publishers & Distributors.

Kharbanda, O.P. & J. K. Pinto (1996). *What Made Gertie Gallop: Learning from Project Failures?* Van Nostrand Reinhold. 368 p.

Knight, L. A. (2002). The role of assessment in library user education. *Reference Services Review, 30*(1).

Knowles, M. (1980). The Modern Practice Of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy. New York: Association Press.

Koskela, L. and Howell, G., (2002), The Underlying Theory of Project Management is Obsolote. Proceedings of the PMI Research Conference, 2002. Pg. 293-302.

Larbi, G. A. (1999), *The new public management approach and crisis state*. Discussion Paper, no. 112. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Local History in Ethiopia (2008). The Nordic Africa Institute website (accessed 6 June 2008).

Ludlow, B.L. (1994). A comparison of traditional and distance education models. Proceedings of the Annual National Conference of the American Council on Rural Special Education, Austin, TX. (ED 369 599).

Marshal, C. and G. Rossman (1999). Designing Qualitative Research (3nd ed). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Massey, A. (1997). In search of the state: Market, myths and paradigms. In *Globalization and marketization of government services: Comparing contemporary public-sector developments*, edited by A. Massey, 1-15. London: Macmillan.

Mason, J. (1996). Qualitative Researching. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Maxwell, J. A (1996) *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach.* London: Sage Publications.

Mbullu, P. (2007). Community-based worker systems: guidelines for practitioners. Making the most of community based worker systems for effective service delivery. (accessed 2008-11-11, available at www.google.com).

McDowell, W.H. (2002) *Historical Research: A Guide***.** London: Pearson Education.

McLean, J. E. (1995). Improving Education Through Action Reseach. Corwin: Sage.

Merriam, S. (1988). Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.Mehrotra, C. M., C. D. Hollister, and L Mcgahey (2001). *Distance Learning: Principles for effective design, delivery, and evaluation.* Thousans Oaks, CA. Sage publications, Inc.

Meyer, K. A. (2002). Quality in Distance Education: Focus on On-line Learning. In A.J. Kezar (Ed.), *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report* (Vol. 29, pp. 1-134). Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M.; and A. Huberman (1994). Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook (2nd ed). London: Sage.

MoE (1999). FDRE Office of Government Spokesperson, *Report Eth-MoE* , Provided by *newafrica.com*, 14 September 1999, accessed 27 December 2006.

_____ (2002b). Education *Sector Development Programme II (ESDP-II) Programme Action Plan (PAP).* Unpublished. Addis Ababa University.

_____ (2007). Education *Statistics Annual Abstract 1998EC/2005-06*. February 2007. Addis Ababa.

MoFED (2002) Ethiopia: Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program. Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED), July, 2002, Addis Ababa.

Moore, M.G & Anderson, W.G. (Eds.) (2003). *Handbook of distance education*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Moore, M. G., & Kearsley, G. (1996). *Distance education*. Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Moore, M. G. & M. M. Thompson (1990). The Effects of Distance Learning. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, American Center for the Study of Distance Education.

Morris, Peter. 1994. *The Management of Projects*. Thomas Telford, London. 358 p.

Murphy, K. (1992). *How to create environments for active rather than passive learning*. Proceedings of the JTCA Teleconferencing Yearbook 1992. Washington, DC: International Teleconferencing Association.

Mutai, B. K. (2001). How to Write Standard Dissertation: A Systematic and Simplified Approach. Nakuru: Thelley Publication.

Nelson, R. (1994). Exploring Learning and teaching: Tutoring with the Open Business School. London: The Open University.

Nipper, S. (1989). "Third generation distance learning and computer conferencing," In: R. Mason and A. Kaye (editors). *Mindweave: Communication, computers and distance education.* Oxford: Pergamon, pp. 53-73.

Nyirenda, J. (1989). "Organization of Distance Education at the University of Zambia: An Analysis of the Practice." Distance Education 10(1): 148-56.

Olgren, C.H. (1998). Improving learning outcomes: The effects of learning strategies and motivation. In C. Campbell (Ed.), *Distance learners in higher education: Institutional responses for quality outcomes*. Madison, Wisconsin: Atwood.

Oluskoshi, A. and Zeleza, P. T. (2004) 'The African University in the twenty-first Century: Future Challenges and a Research Agenda' Zeleza, P.T. and Olukoshi, A. (eds.), *African Universities in the twenty-first century: Knowledge and society.* (Volume II)**.** Dakar: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa. Pp. 595-618.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2003). Effect sizes in qualitative research: A prolegomenon. *Quality & Quantity: International Journal of Methodology, 37:* 393-409.

Panda, S. (ed). (2003). *Planning and Management of Distance Education.* London: Kogan Page.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods, (*2nd Ed). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Perraton, H. (2000). *Open and Distance Learning in the Developing World*. London: Routledge.

Perry, W. (1976). *Open University: A personal account by the first Vice Chancellor*. Milton Keynes: The Open University Press.

Peters, O. (1973). *Die Didaktische Struktur des Fernunterrichts,* Weinheim: Beltz.

_____ (1988). Distance teaching and industrial production: A comparative interpretation in outline. In D. Sewart, D. Keegan, & B. Holmberg (Eds.), *Distance education: International perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

_____(2001). *Learning and Teaching in Distance Education*. London: Kogan Page.

Picciano, A. G. (2001). *Distance Learning: Making Connections Across Virtual Space and Time*. New Jersey: Printice Hall.

PIM (2001). DL LIL Project Implementation Manual, June 2001, pp14-16.

Powar, K. B., et al, (2000). *Performance Indicators in Distance Higher Education*. New Delhi: Aravali Books International pvt Ltd.

Rahm, D. & B.J. Reed, (1998). "Tangled webs in public administration: Organizational issues in distance learning," *Public Administration and Management,* volume 3, number 1.

Rao, K. Koteswara. (1994). "Course Material Distribution: Dr B. R. Ambedkar Open

University's Experience." In Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University, *Distance Education: An Interface—JA Commemorative Volume of Research Articles to Mark the Inauguration of the New Campus of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University.* Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad, pp. 106-12.

Robson, C. (2002). Real World Research (2nd ed). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Romiszowski, A. and R. Mason, (1996). "Computer-mediated communication," In: D. Johnassen (editor). *Handbook of research for educational communications and technology.* New York: Macmillan, pp. 438-456.Raudenbush, S (2005). Learning from Attempts to Improve Schooling: The Contribution of Methodological Diversity. Educational Researcher, 2005, 34(5), 25–31.

Rowbottom, D. P. and Aiston, S.J. (2006) 'The Myth of Scientific Method in Contemporary Educational Research,' *Journal of Philosophy of Education* (special issue) 40(2):137-156.

Rubin, H. & I. Rubin. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing*: The art of hearing data. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rumble, G. (1986). *The planning and Management of Distance Education*. London: Croom Helm.

_____ (2004). A Response to Comments on the report on Management and Decision-Making, Ethiopian Civil Service College, June 2004.

Saba, F. (2003). Distance education theory, methodology, and epistemology: A pragmatic paradigm. In M.G. Moore & W.G. Anderson (Eds.), *Handbook of distance education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Saint, W. (2001). Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa; What Role for the World Bank? William Saint, Principal Education Specialist, Africa Region, World Bank, March 2001.

Scott, R. (2005). Kingdom of Heaven: The Making of the Ridley Scott Epic. New York: Newmarket Press.

Schuldt, B. A., & J. W. Totter. (1994). 'Electronic Mail vs. Mail Survey Response Rates'. *Marketing Research, 6.Winter.*

Schwandt, T.A. (2003) 'Three Epistemological Stances for Qualitative Enquiry: Interpretism, Hermeneutics and Social Constructionism' Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues***.** London: Sage Publications.

Selamtanet (2006). Ethiopian Economy. www.selamta.net.

Seya, P. T. (2007). Adult education and African development in the context of globalisation-in Adult Education and Development- Bernd Sandhaas edition, November 2007, Addis Ababa: Institute for International cooperation of the German Adult Education Association, dvv International Regional Office East Africa.

Shakespeare, W. (1564 – 1616). William shakespeare, Act 2 Scene 7. As You Like It Quotations, accessed 10/12/2008, available at google.com.

Sherry, A.C. (2003). Quality and its measurement in distance education. In M.G. Moore & W.G. Anderson (Eds.), *Handbook of distance education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Soy, S. K. (1997). The case study as a research method. Unpublished paper, University of Texas at Austin.The Case Study as a Research Method Uses and Users of Information -- LIS 391D.1 -Spring 1997.

Stage, F. K (1996). "Setting the context: Psychological theories of learning," *Journal of College Student Development,* volume 37, number 2, pp. 227-235.

Stake, R. E. 1995. *The Art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Steiner, E. (1988). *Methodology of theory building.* Sydney: Educology Research Associates.

Stenhouse, I. (1980). 'Curriculum and the art of the teacher' curriculum I/I 40-44.

Straus, A. L. and J. Corbin. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* Newbury Park: Sage.

Task Force (2003) *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise***.** Washington D.C.: World Bank; and http://overview.htm.

Teshome Y. (2005), *Policy Development in Higher Education in Ethiopia and the Role of Donors and Development Partners.* Paper presented at the International Expert Meeting-"Formulas that work: Making Higher education Support More effective; The Hague, The Netherlands, 23-24, May, 2005.-unpublished.

TGE (1994). *Basic Education Statistics*, Education Management Information System (EMIS), Addis Ababa, July 1994.

_____(1994). *Ethiopian Education and Training Policy*. Addia Ababa: EMPDA.

Tobias, R. L. (2004). Ambassador Tobias Addresses, 72nd Annual Conference of Mayors on U.S. Global HIV/AIDS Efforts, June 27, 2004, *U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator,* Opening remarks, Boston, Massachusetts.

TOJDE (2007). Successful Distance Education Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa. Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education- April 2007 ISSN 1302–6488, Volume: 8 Number: 2 Article: 12

Trochim, M. K. (2002). Research Methods Knowledge Base. Available at (http//trochim.human.corneil.edu/kb/index.htm).

Trochim, M. William (2006). The Research Methods Knowledge Base, 2nd Edition. Internet WWW page, at URL: http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/ (accessed 07/12/2006).

Tulloch, J. B. & Sneed, J. R. (2000). Quality enhancing practices in distance education: Teaching and learning. Washington, DC: Instructional Telecommunications Council.

Tumdolo, W. W. (2003). Open University Distance Education in Ethiopia. paper presented on British Council Seminar, 01/04/2003, pp 1-4.

Turner, J. Rodney. (1993). *The handbook of project-based management*. McGraw-Hill, London. 540 p.

UNDP (2002). Outcome Monitoring. *UNDP New York, January 2002.*

UNESCO (2002). Open and Distance Learning Trends, Policy and Strategy Considerations. The Open University, UK.

UNISA (2007). Information Brochure 2007. University of South Africa.

Unsworth, J. (1997). "The Importance of failure," *Journal of Electronic Publishing,* volume 3, number 2, at http://www.press.umich.edu/jep/03-02/unsworth.html

Van Niekerk, L. J. (2004). Distance education as a function of African community. South African Journal for Higher Education. 18(3):185-195.

Walsham, G. (1993). *Interpreting information systems in organizations*. Chichester: Wiley.

Watson, D. (2005). Capacity building for decentralised education service delivery in Ethiopia. (ECDPM Discussion Paper 57H).

Williams, J. L. (2000). Creativity in assessment of library instruction. *Reference Services Review, 28*(4).

World Bank (1998). Ethiopia: Anticorruption Report. World Bank Poverty Reduction and Socila Development Unit, Africa Region, December 1998.

_____ (2000). Entering the 21st Century. World Development Report 1999/2000. The World Bank, Washington DC.

_____(2000). The World Bank Knowledge and Resources for Change. The World Bank, Washington DC.

_____ (2001). World Development Report 2000/2001. Attacking Poverty Overview. The World Bank, Washington DC.

_____(2001). Lending Instruments, Resources for Development Impact, Operations Policy and Country Services, July 2001.

_____(2001). World Bank Project Appraisal Document, July 2000.

_____(2003), Higher Education Development for Ethiopia: Pursuing the Vision, World Bank Sector Study, January 2003.

_____(2009). Learning and Innovation Loan. Mobilizing the African Diaspora for development. available at : http://go.worldbank.org.

Yin, R. K. (1994). Case Study Research: Design and Methods (2nd ed). London:

Sage.

_____ (2002). *Case Study Research, Design and Methods,* 3rd ed. Newbury Park, Sage Publications, 2002.

_____(2003). *Case Study Research: design and methods (3rd ed).* Blackwell: Sage Publications.

Zvacek, S. M. (1999). What's my grade? Assessing learner progress. *Tech Trends, 43*(5).

Date: _____

Participants Information Sheet (version 1)

Title of research: *The intended and unintended outcomes of the World Bank's LIL project of distance education capacity building in Ethiopia*

The research is about the development project funded by the World Bank's Learning and Innovation Loan (LIL) to develop capacity of the Ethiopian Civil Service College (ECSC) in organising and managing Distance learning. The study is planned to be conducted in Ethiopia at ECSC during the period 2007 to 2009.

The purpose of the study is twofold. One, it is to learn important lesson from the LIL project for future actions by evaluating the project plan and implementation; and two, to describe and explain the impact on the current practice of ECSC in distance teaching.

You are invited to take part in this research because you are one of the appropriate persons for the study as you were involved as *official/project team* during planning and implementation. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please, take time to read the information carefully. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. It is up to you to decide whether or not to participate.

If you take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You will be asked to cooperate giving time for interviews. Interviews may take 1-2 hours and you will choose the convenient time for you. You may also be contacted by phone or email after the interview.

As a professional, you may learn something in the process of the research. You will receive a copy of the draft report on the specific issues you participated in so that you can have the opportunity to get informed and make remark. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving reason.

It is the responsibility of the researcher to use the information you provide appropriately. All information which is collected from you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not appear in any of the reports so that you shall not be recognised by others. The draft report will be presented in ECSC in cooperation with the research and publications office and you will have the opportunity to attend. Any complaint about the research could be addressed in writing to the following address:

The University of East Anglia,
Norwich NR4 7TJ, England, UK.

Date: _____

Participants Information Sheet (version 2)

Title of research: *The intended and unintended outcomes of the World Bank's LIL project of distance education capacity building in Ethiopia*

The research is about the development project funded by the World Bank's Learning and Innovation Loan (LIL) to develop capacity of the Ethiopian Civil Service College (ECSC) in organising and managing Distance learning. The study is to be conducted in Ethiopia at ECSC during the period 2007 to 2009.

The purpose of the study is twofold. One, it is to learn important lesson from the LIL project for future actions by evaluating the project plan and implementation; and two, to describe and explain the impact on the current practice of ECSC in distance teaching.

You are invited to take part in this research because you are one of the appropriate persons for the study as *coordinator of study centre*. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please, take time to read the information carefully. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. It is up to you to decide whether or not to participate.

If you take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You will be asked to cooperate giving time for interviews and identifying tutors and students for the study and allow the researcher to observe documents of the centre. Interviews may take 1-2 hours and you will choose the convenient time for you. You may also be contacted by phone or email after the interview.

As a professional, you may learn something in the process of the research. You will receive a copy of the draft report on the specific issues you participated in so that you can have the opportunity to get informed and make remark. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving reason.

It is the responsibility of the researcher to use the information you provide appropriately. All information which is collected from you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not appear in any of the reports so that you shall not be recognised by others. The draft report will be presented in ECSC in cooperation with the research and publications office and you will have the opportunity to attend. Any complaint about the research could be addressed in writing to the following address:

The University of East Anglia,
Norwich NR4 7TJ, England, UK.

Date: _____

Participants Information Sheet (version 3)

Title of research: *The intended and unintended outcomes of the World Bank's LIL project of distance education capacity building in Ethiopia*

The research is about the development project funded by the World Bank's Learning and Innovation Loan (LIL) to develop capacity of the Ethiopian Civil Service College (ECSC) in organising and managing Distance learning. The study is to be conducted in Ethiopia at ECSC during the period 2007 to 2009.

The purpose of the study is twofold. One, it is to learn important lesson from the LIL project for future actions by evaluating the project plan and implementation; and two, to describe and explain the impact on the current practice of ECSC in distance teaching.

You are invited to take part in this research because you are one of the appropriate persons for the study as *tutor* in the distance teaching program. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please, take time to read the information carefully. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. It is up to you to decide whether or not to participate.

If you take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You will be asked to cooperate giving time for interview. Interviews may take 1-2 hours and you will choose the convenient time for you. You may also be contacted by phone or email after the interview.

As a professional, you may learn something in the process of the research. You will receive a copy of the draft report on the specific issues you participated in, so that you can have the opportunity to get informed and make remark. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving reason.

It is the responsibility of the researcher to use the information you provide appropriately. All information which is collected from you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not appear in any of the reports so that you shall not be recognised by others. The draft report will be presented in ECSC in cooperation with the research and publications office and you will have the opportunity to attend and make your remark. Any complaint about the research could be addressed in writing to the following address:

The University of East Anglia,
Norwich NR4 7TJ, England, UK.

Participant's Consent Form

Title of project: *The intended and unintended outcomes of the World Bank's LIL project of distance education capacity building in Ethiopia*

Name of researcher: Deribssa A. Fayessa

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated _____/version___ for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. _____

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected. _____

3. I agree to take part in the above study. _____

_____	_____	_____
Participant's name/nickname	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of person taking consent	Signature	Date
Deribssa A. Fayessa	_____	_____
Name of researcher	Signature	Date

Data gathering instrument-A: Checklist for Interviews with project team members

Research Topic: The World Bank's LIL Project of Distance Education Capacity Building in Ethiopia

This tool is designed to obtain first hand information about the distance learning capacity building project. The objective is to enrich the secondary data from documents.

1. Please comment about how the project objectives have been identified? And who were involved?

2. Among the project management teams, why do you think the highest teams remained inactive during the project?

3. What are the positive outcomes you could identify from the project?

4. What do you think is the reason for the DL project to be identified for ECSC than other institutions in the country such as AAU?

5. Could you identify any outcome as unnecessary as the project outcome?

6. What are the major problems and challenges as outcomes of the DL project in coordinating the tasks in practice? And which of the problems were unnoticed before launching the DL program?

7. What would you recommend if you were in a position to make decision?

Data gathering instrument-B: Checklist for interviews with IDE staff and officials

Research Topic: The World Bank's LIL Project of Distance Education Capacity Building in Ethiopia

This tool is designed to obtain first hand information about the distance learning capacity building project. The objective is to enrich the secondary data from documents.

1. Your views about the process of course material development.

2. Your experiences with the information delivery system to regional and study centres.

3. Your experience about the delivery of course materials.

4. How is the management of outreach centres regarding the following issues?

    - Administration of office supplies
    - Management of financial matters for staff/tutors
    - Management of assignments and exams
    - Management of academic records
    - Supervision and monitoring services

5. What problems do you see in staffing outreach centres?
6. What would you recommend if you were in a position to make decision?

Data gathering Instrument-C: Questionnaire for Distance Student

Research Topic: The World Bank's LIL Project of Distance Education Capacity Building in Ethiopia

General direction

1. The purpose of this study is to explore the situation of distance education in your institution; and the objective of this questionnaire is to elicit pertinent responses from distance students about their backgrounds and perception of the distance learning program.
2. Please answer the questions by putting tick (√) mark against the answer you choose, or write your answers briefly for the open-ended questions.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Institution: _____ Region: _____

1. Your mother tongue
   - □A. Amharic □B. Oromo
   - □C. Gurage □D. Sidama
   - □E. Walayta □F. Others: _____
2. Sex:
   - □A. Male □B. Female
3. Your age:
   - □A. 19 or lower □B. 20 – 25
   - □C. 26-30 □D. 31 or above
4. Marital status:
   - □A. Married □B. Single
   - □C. Divorced □D. Widowed
5. If married, your current family size:
   - □A. 4 or less □B.5-7 □C. More than 7
6. Your religion:
   - □A. Orthodox □B. Moslem
   - □C. Protestant □D. Others: _____
7. Where do you live?
   - □A. Town □B. Suburb □C. Countryside
8. Are you employed?
   - □A. Yes □B. No
9. Your earnings per month in Birr?
   - □A. Less than 500 □B. 501-700
   - □C. 701-900 □D. More than 900

10. Work experience in years (if you are employed):

□A. 1-3 □B. 4-6

□C. 7-9 □D. 10 or more

11. Who pays the fee for your education?

□A. Parent/family □B. Employer

□C. Self □D. Others, specify: _____

12. Study place:

□A. At home □B. At work place

□C. In a Library □D. Others, specify: _____

Any problem you face in your study place:

_____

13. When did you complete secondary school?

□A. Before 1980s □B. In 1980s

□C. In 1990s □D. In 2000s

14. Program attended for secondary education:

□A. Day (regular) □B. Evening □C. Distance learning

Any special problem you face in learning by distance: _____

15. GSLCE/ESLCE Grade Point Average:

□A. Less than 2.0 □B. 2.1-3.0 □C. More than 3.0

16. Father's education level when you left school:

□A. Illiterate □B. Able to read and write

□C. Grade 6 – 8 □D. Grade 9–11

□E. Grade 12 complete □F. Had postsecondary education

17. Mother's education level when you left school:

□A. Illiterate □B. Able to read and write

□C. Grade 6 – 8 □D. Grade 9-11

□E. Grade 12 complete □F. Had postsecondary education

18. Your parental family size (when you were with your parents):

□A. 4 or les □B. 5-7 □C. More than 7

19. Why do you take the course? (You can give more than one answer):

□A. To get a job/get new job □B. To get a better job

□C. To get promotion □D To improve knowledge or skills

□E. To pass the time/recreation □F. To obtain a certificate

□G. Encouraged by parents □H. Others, specify: _____

20. Do the courses relate to your current job?

□A. Yes □B. No

21. Reason for choosing distance program (You can give more than one answer):

□A. Lack of place in the regular program □B. College is too far away.

□C. Family commitments □D. Lower grade for regular program

□E. To work fulltime □F. Others, specify: _____

22. Your satisfaction with the quality of the learning materials:

□A. Very high □B. High □C. Average

□D. Low □E. Very low

Any comment about the learning materials: _____

23. Your satisfaction with administrative supports of you college:

□A. Very high □B. High □C. Average

□D. Low □E. Very low

Any comment about the administrative support: _____

24. Your satisfaction with the tutorial services:

□A. Very high □B. High □C. Average

□D. Low □E. Very low

Any comment about tutorials: _____

25. Your satisfaction with how your assignments and exams are handled:

□A. Very high □B. High □C. Average

□D. Low □E. Very low

Any comment about assessment issues: _____

26. Any other comment: _____

_____

_____

Please, write your first name and telephone number here, if you want to give further information through interview.

Name: _____ Tel: _____

Thank you very much

Data gathering Instrument-D: Interview guide for distance students

<u>Research Topic</u>: The World Bank's LIL Project of Distance Education Capacity Building in Ethiopia

1) How long have you been in service as civil servant? _____
2) When did you finish secondary education? _____
3) How do you feel about the opportunities brought about by the distance education program?
4) Did you have other chances to join college if distance education was not opened? And how?
5) What do you think about the impact of the distance education program to capacity building of the civil service system in the area?
6) What did you like and dislike about the program?
7) What things were beyond your expectation?
8) Do you think the program has been successful? How?
9) What do you think about the closure of the diploma program?

Data gathering instrument-E: Checklist of interviews for regional staff

<u>Research Topic</u>: The World Bank's LIL Project of Distance Education Capacity Building in Ethiopia

The focus of this tool is on matters related to the management of DL at the regional level. The objective is to discuss the problem at regional level in the system and to triangulate the points with the information from other sources.

1. Please comment on your experience about the delivery of information in the system of DL.
2. What do you feel about the delivery of course materials?
3. What is the quality of library service?
4. Availability of face-to-face sessions and level of attendance.
5. Any problem with assignment management: turnaround time, tutor comment, etc?
6. Any problem in tutor management: training, assigning, paying, etc?
7. What do you feel about the payment rate for regional staff/tutors?
8. What would you recommend if you were in a position to make decision?

Data Gathering Instrument-F: Checklist of interviews for tutors

<u>Research Topic</u>: The World Bank's LIL Project of Distance Education Capacity Building in Ethiopia

The focus of this tool is on matters related to tutor management. The objective is to touch the problem of tutors in the system and to triangulate the points with the information from other sources.

1. Please comment on the quality of the course materials in the distance education program.
   - Learning objectives
   - Clarity of language
   - Use of diagrams and illustrations where applicable
   - Exercises for practice
2. Library service and quality of materials used other than print.
3. Availability of face-to-face sessions.
4. Students' chance to attend face-to-face sessions.
5. Your experience about: correspondence tuition, assignment turnaround time, commenting on assignments.
6. What do you feel about the payment rate for tutors?
7. What would you recommend if you were in a position to make decision?

Interview note (sample-A)

Interview code: PT-02
Informant: Mr Getu
Interviewer: Deribssa
Date: 25/08/07 and 23/09/08

1) What do you understand about the DL LIL project and the way it was designed?

As I understand, the whole process of the project was donor driven. If you remember, all the documents we produced focused on the print based aspect than technology. But when we submit our interests to the Bank's country office, they added the GDLN technological aspect by using their position. The design and objectives of the project as it appears in the project appraisal document are set up by the Bank's team at the country office at the time. The print aspect which we proposed was included in the design as subcomponent. We proposed only the print aspect of distance learning because it was what we understand well and can manage as well. As you can also see now that has became more practical in the situation.

2) What is your understand about the interest of the key actors in the DL LIL project?

As I mentioned, the installation of the GDLN facility was not the interest of the college and the interest of the DL program after all because no one can use the technology. But the focus of the Bank was on this aspect and you can see most of the budget was allocated to technology, which we see now being wasted. The beneficiary was not given chance to negotiate on this matter. You know, nothing would happen to the donor if the project was cancelled. Negotiations could ever be effective when it is between equals. The Bank owns the resource and the recipient has to agree to get the marginal benefit.

The Open University staff had been regularly visiting the college to discuss how distance learning could be organised in the college starting from the year 1998, before the project was officially initiated. OU was not interest in providing the small piece of consultancy it provided to the print aspect of the DL project. Its real interest was long term consultancy service to the distance learning program. Even it was the Open University staff who advised the college officials about how to obtain fund for distance learning program. The OU people have learned about the system while working in the Management Development Program in which the government officials studied for their degrees. I can tell you the college officials had no idea about distance teaching at that time. I guess OU had big influence on the Bank and that is why the Bank agreed their involvement without competition with other similar institutions around the world. This is against the Bank's own policy of open bidding but anyway the work is done well in this regard. But you see the Open University also didn't achieve its goal at the end because the project was cut short.

3) Which actor do you think achieved its goal?

I am not really sure who did. But I see the Bank achieved when I refer to it as a normal Bank in lending the money. But its purpose of establishing the GDLN centre around the world with the expense of poor countries seems ineffective as I see now. However, it doesn't incur cost because the whole is debt of the country unless it cancels some day as usual.

4) Among the project management teams, why do you think the highest teams remained inactive during the project time?

This is obvious in our situation. Power is accumulated on the top and work is down there. I think the leaders on the top think their position is threatened when they give more responsibility to the lower positions. I was much concerned about the structure. If you remember, during the project negotiation meeting, to discuss on the accountability of the financial manager and procurement officer within the college, the college management proposed to control everything within the normal bureaucracy. The Bank team appeared weaker that day. They simply accepted the proposed structure, which shows critical impediments; or they didn't know how tight the procedures really are.

You know, the management wanted to control everything as usual but has no time to meet to discuss the project or make follow up. In practice, they even do not respond to the administrative issues arising in the project seriously. This was the point where I got fed up and you know what.

5) What positive outcomes could you identify from the project?

I can see some positive outcomes. (1) On the print based aspect of the project, many members of IDE staff have got training, which is not normally accessible otherwise. The shared experience with international institutions is also very important. It shows where you are and where you have to go. (2) The training provided for course developers and tutors is very essential and the institute is able to use those skills to date to produce teaching material than any others similar institutions around here.

Even the installation of the GDLN facility may be useful if the system can design ways to use it in the future. For example, if partnership with foreign universities could be established, using the facility may be effective. But it was not the time for that technology to be installed because it is not visible at the moment.

6) What do you think is the reason for the DL project to be designed for ECSC than other institutions in the country, such as AAU? And how do you think about the outcome if other institutions could have implemented the DL project?

It is difficult to know exactly. I can see many reasons for implementing the project in ECSC. The college is especially concerned with the capacity building duties in the country in line with the government strategy. Therefore, when the issue of capacity building comes, it is this college that comes into the mind. So, it is not surprising to me to see this. Moreover, as the purpose was raising the capacity of civil servants, the focus on this college is training civil servants and who else can be closer to this matter?

It could be a disaster if the project was tried in other institutions, such as AAU. This is because whoever implements it, the delay is obviously to happen due to the inherent problems in the system, we discussed earlier. Then, the project may be easily cancelled because the government has never been in good mood politically with them. Therefore, I believe that implementing the project in the ECSC has led the project to a relatively better success what so ever, even if the benefit is marginal to the country.

7) Could you identify any outcome as unnecessary as the project result?

As I said earlier, the first thing unnecessary in the situation is installing expensive technology, that is, the GDLN facility, which is not applicable in the country. The problem with technology is that it runs out of date quickly. May be by the time when Ethiopia is ready to use it, the facility will be out of date and incompatible with the other world. This is the risk not understood in rushing into installing technology.

Besides to the war with Eritrea, I recognise the advance in technology as the cause for the whole delay in the LIL project process. The technology that was planned for the regional centre during the initial project idea was one-way video and two-way voice. But by the time when the project was ready to take off and the government proposed the national ICT project, the planned technology was already out of date and interactive technology was possible. Thus, the Bank didn't want to proceed with the earlier proposal. But the procedure of the LIL project is not flexible to change the original plan. You know ECSC was ready to start preparing the print based DL program from 1999 but until this problem had been solved the whole thing had to wait. Generally, what I can say is that the benefit from the technology doesn't match with the cost.

Second, the purchase of vehicles, which have not been used for the purpose of the project, could be seen as unnecessary to me. If you see the draft proposal to the Bank, we proposed six, double cabin pickup vehicles. But the top management of the ECSC changed two of them into station-wagon, which were secretly implied to be used by the top management of the college than the project. And even the pickup cars were not used and you know what happened. This clearly shows the interest of the management was to satisfy the immediate material satisfaction than long term productivity. I sometimes feel that the whole thing is useless to talk about. As I understand the leadership is not concerned about the debt accumulating on the country without producing something positive.

Interview note (sample-B)

Interview code: CT-01
Informant: Mr Geremu
Interviewer: Deribssa
Date: 25/08/07 and 15/09/08

i. What do you understand about the process of course material development for the DL program in the past and present?

Although we have the basic skills at the moment, thanks to UK Open University, the budgetary constraint is resulting unprecedented challenge in the course development process for the degree program. The budget is Br. 6000 for authors of new courses and 3000 for upgrading the diploma courses to degree level. They mentioned that the budget for each course as requested by IDE was Br 10,000 for new courses and 6,000 for reviewing and upgrading a course. But the decision makers cut out and approved about half of the budget needed. He further noted that the IDE tried to explain the need for the budget but failed to convince. As we can't curve the decision of the management, what we do is trying to do what we can.

2) What do you think as the most critical factor in the system of DL program?

In the process of course development, the budgetary constraint is the critical matter and it affects the process in the following ways: One, the experience of course authors is lower than those involved during the diploma program; two, the task of the course developers cannot be as tough as the process during the LIL project because the remuneration is less and we cannot demand more than what we pay for; three, the course evaluation by experts and students are not included in the course development process because of the same.

IDE officials are now already fade up with the bureaucracy and started accepting everything the top management decides passively. As the college doesn't pay attention to DL, it is futile to challenge them. For example, the management decided the closing up of the diploma program unilaterally; and one day it may close up all the programs and no one can question why. The institute lacks the slightest autonomy to decide on financial matters.

Interview note (sample-C)

Interview code: RC-01
Informant: Mr Aynalem
Interviewer: Deribssa
Date: 30/08/07 and 14/08/08

1) What strength or weakness do you recognise from the practice of the DL program at the regions?

The strength I can mention is that the activity is running on schedule and not stopped in the presence of great administrative challenges. The administrative problems of regional and study centres were mostly the result of Banks' refusal to collect money from the distance students. You know, all fees from students including the registration and other receipts were initially planned to be collected through the Banks. But the Banks refused to collect any money for the DL program and demanded commission to do the job program per student. You know it is impossible to decide on such issues in the system. Because of this, the coordinators of study centres were involved in collecting the money from students and at times they used their assistants to collect. Store keepers of the school, serving as tutorial centres, have been assigned as assistants during registration because there is no store in the area for the DL program. In the meantime, in one case, the money was not deposited in the Bank. The students didn't know what has happened to their money and continued studying their courses. At the end, exam results of the students were rejected as if they were not registered. Then, they accused the man who collected their money. It is only after this crisis had happened that the problem with the Bank was recognised and solved by the college's decision makers.

Another problem is students who didn't pass screening, by the headquarters, were found registered by the coordinator of a study centre who is then fired. Thus, there is critical shortage of capacity at regional centres that require close follow up; and we can not be sure whether things were going well in the regional and study centres any time. The institute can't decide on the budget. Thus, the plan to monitor and evaluate regional centres was repeatedly rejected by the top mangers and now we stopped planning this task at all.

2) What do you think about the contribution of the DL program to the capacity building program of the country?

The DL program is training the civil servants for the capacity building program of the country at affordable cost and relatively good quality material is used. It could have been possible to contribute more if the program is open to the public. The program appears efficient; for instance, the wastage as we see at graduation is about 4% (including death or any type of dropout or academic dismissal) in the system of the DL program.

3) What critical issues can you perceive in the management of learning assessment and evaluation?

The procedures are running as original planned. Final exams are administered centrally by the headquarters. The most important challenge here is the management of assignments because there was no way to realise whether the students have been working on their assignments individually. Moreover, as the questions are all subjective, lack of standards among the assignment markers is an inherent problem. With the management issues of the academic business, the salary of tutors and regional staff are sent every month from the headquarters. Developmental activities like: tutor training and monitoring sample assignments collected from study centres are virtually stopped because of strategic problem of the college when all the staff trained for the regional services are all together moved to other duties assigned by the college's to management.

Interview note (sample-D)

Interview code: TU-01
Informant: Mr. Yosef
Interviewer: Deribssa
Date: 06/04/08

1) How long have you been serving as a tutor and have you got training? And what do you feel about the rate of payment for your services?

I have been working for 3 years now and I was trained in the year 2005. The basis of the decision on the rate of payment is not clear to me. I think they look at the marker around and decide the rate. I feel it is not enough, but I work because I have to do what is available. The payment is higher in ECSC but the job is more difficult and much more demanding.

2) What supports do you offer in tutoring?

Tutoring is not actually very different from normal lectures because the students want lectures. Marking and writing comments is the major difference, which is very demanding in the ECSC program.

3) What do you think about the practice of continuous assessment in the DL programs?

In the ECSC, all the items for continuous assessment are subjective and I appreciate that because it encourages individual work of the students and helps to control cheating. But it is difficult to mark and comment. Besides, there is no enough remuneration for the job. i am very pessimistic about quality of the continuous assessment through assignments anyway. I see students who photocopy what their friends have done and write their name on it and submit for marking. What I feel is that assignments should be given less weight for assessment. Setting subjective questions alone cannot solve the problem.

Interview note (sample-E)

Appendix Interview code: ST-01

Informant: Mr Abraham
Interviewer: Deribssa
Date: 02/07/08

1) What do you understand from your experience of distance learning?

I understand the course materials of the DL program are well organised, which is unknown in any of the distance teaching institutions in the country. The program helped me to develop the skills in how to study and learning without a teacher. I learned a very important skill in my life from the DL program.

Thanks to the distance learning program. I have now the skills and confidence to read and learn by myself than waiting for a teacher who may be absent.

2) What new experience and challenges did you face in the DL program?

I was a little bit frustrated at the beginning but soon developed the confidence after about two months. As I have now good reading skills as a result of the DL program, at the moment I think I can read and learn by myself continuously.

3) What did you like or dislike about the DL program?

As I said earlier, I like the teaching material. I dislike some of the tutor's approach in tutoring and marking assignments. They seem as if they don't care. Some of them come without preparing and come to the session to read to us, which we can do at home. In assignment marking, I remember a case when two students submitted a copy of one of the question's answer word by word but got different marks. From this I understood they mark assignments carelessly. Therefore, I am not happy with the marks I get on assignments high or low.

4) What do you think about the effectiveness of the program?

I think the program is effective. Although there are problems of facilitating in tutorials, the materials are well written and a student can read and understand the information. For example, I studied management in the diploma program and now studying for degree in the same field. I can say about the concept of management now with confidence. The graduates of the program as we see are also doing well in different offices. To me this shows that the program is successful.

5) What do you feel about the closing of the diploma program?

I think the program could contribute better if it runs both diploma and degree courses at the same time.