

USING A STAKEHOLDERS' ANALYSIS TO PLAN FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

A CASE STUDY OF THE EXPANSION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES¹

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The paper examines the process by which quality is infused into the change process as The University of the West Indies expands its distance education offerings from a small project with a single main technology, core staff and a small number of students to a multi-media mode, main streamed across all faculties and several programmes, and aimed at reaching a wide cross section of students. This is done as the University seeks to widen access, increase its spread of offerings, and promote academic excellence and student friendliness while, at the same time, containing cost. A quality assurance approach, examining and catering for inputs, throughputs and outputs, rather than a post hoc quality audit approach examining accountability, is used. The issues are examined from the perspectives of various stakeholders: governments, students, executive management, day to day administrators, academic staff and the change agents. It is found that this process involves a delicate balancing act, since the interests of the several stakeholders, on a first analysis, frequently seem to be contradictory, yet all are legitimate if examined from each stakeholder's perspectives. The paper shows further that the drive for quality in the expansion of distance education is impacted by issues of structure--distance education requires economics of scale and, therefore, greater collaboration across campuses, but each campus has been given more autonomy; culture--academic organizational culture favours strong individual action and the relative isolation of units, while distance education calls for team work among individuals and a high level of collaboration among units; finance- the University is in a period of cost containment, when quality is expensive. The paper concludes that, despite these seeming contradictions and pressure points, the struggle for quality implies, and must consciously address, the attainment of a "win-win situation" if the University is to succeed in its developmental mandate for the region.

Introduction

This paper presents a case study of the expansion of distance education at The University of the West Indies (UWI). The paper describes and analyzes the extent to which quality, as an attribute of institutional effectiveness, has been injected into the programme planning process.

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Central to the analysis are the needs, expectations, roles and responsibilities of the key actors in planning this process of educational change.

The variety of responses to this educational innovation must be seen in the context of the University's attempt to transform its programme offerings and delivery system from face to face single mode, to dual and mixed modes. Dual mode refers to distance and face to face approaches existing as parallel programmes in the same university, while mixed mode allows for the same students to do some courses by distance and some by face to face. Both the parallel and mixed modes are to be implemented at the UWI--hence the concept of dual/mixed modes.

As will be seen, this change moves the University's distance offerings from a small project with voluntary staff, a single main technology, and a small number of students, to multimedia delivery using audio- and, perhaps, video-conferencing, print, audio- and video-tapes as well as computer-aided instruction. Mainstream core programmes and courses of all the Faculties will be delivered by distance, servicing students from all member countries of the University.

In outlining the case study, the paper treats with the issues from the perspectives of the internal actors in the change process. The paper focuses on the challenges to quality posed by the different, sometimes competing, interests of the various stakeholders, and the drive to implement a very complex innovation in short time and with very limited resources. Among the stakeholders are the key operational change agents, including representatives of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Distance Education Centre, who have been entrusted with the roles of managing the change to distance education and ensuring quality, more generally referred to as 'excellence' in the distance education offerings.

The institutional and wider social contexts are described in terms of the historical background and new competitive tertiary level education 'markets' in which the change is taking place. The paper also analyzes the planning challenges that have emerged as the change agents grapple with the use of a participatory process to: (a) ensure positive adoption by the various stakeholders of the new approach to

instructional delivery; and (b) assure quality in all facets of content and delivery.

The Institutional Context

The Early Days

The University of the West Indies is a regional/international institution, serving fourteen countries in the Commonwealth Caribbean, including the three main campus countries, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados, as well as the non-campus countries, St. Lucia, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, St. Kitts/Nevis, Antigua/Barbuda, Montserrat, Belize, the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands and the British Virgin Islands.

The University was founded in 1948 with a mandate to help develop the English-speaking Caribbean territories through a programme of human resource and management development. It sought to achieve these human capital objectives principally through a process of indigenizing its curriculum and its staff in keeping with a declared policy of West Indianization (Sherlock & Nettleford, 1990).

Over the four decades or so of its existence, the University has had to respond to the challenge to be a 'centre of academic excellence.' Its origin links it with the University of London from which its first set of degrees were issued. It has also had to respond to the demands of its multiple sponsors in the form of the various regional governments. As the major providers of funding, these governments have been the most powerful stakeholders in the development and change of the institution. The relationship over time has been, at best, cautiously reciprocal and, at worst, sometimes rocky and tempestuous. The change to a dual/mixed mode institution represents a further attempt by the University to grapple with the issues of responding to the needs of the governments to expand access, increase programme offerings, contain costs, and maintain standards of excellence.

The Challenge of Change in the Current Period

From the mid-1980s, and more so over the last five years, The University of the West Indies has been experiencing widespread, rapid changes in almost all spheres of its functioning, including governance, administration, curriculum and instruction. The impetus for change has been both internal and external, and this has called for intense adjustment on the part of all concerned.

The report of a Commission on Governance has been accepted and implementation of its recommendations took effect as of August 01, 1996. The University is mandated to play a greater role in helping the region improve its export competitiveness and, similarly, achieve the goals of human development. This is in the context of an ever challenging situation of tight budgetary constraints brought on by the stringent, and in some cases, deteriorating fiscal and monetary situation of all the governments in the region.

The University must increase its levels of access through a higher level and a better spread of enrollment. At the same time, in terms of educational outcome and impact, it must do all possible to produce the highest calibre of graduates as well as relevant, usable research and development. Outreach to the community and the region is also a vital part of this mandate. Distance education has been identified as one major strategy in realizing these objectives.

Achieving these objectives is also driven by the fact that the competitive environment of the University has changed dramatically within recent times. Offshore educational institutions and internal private providers have been aggressively penetrating the region's higher education market, and have been meeting with increasing success. These competitors exploit the tremendous potential of distance education as a revenue earner. The levels of success of the competing institutions have been due, in part, to their more flexible and accessible entry requirements and study arrangements. These arrangements attract students who perceive The University of the West Indies to be more intractable about admissions and programme completion requirements. Expansion of the UWI's range of distance education offerings is seen as one mechanism of increasing access and addressing the competition.

The Distance Education Mandate

The decision to deliver undergraduate, graduate and professional programmes by face to face and by distance mode arose out of the strategic direction that the University set for itself in its Development Plan, 1990-2000 (The University of the West Indies, 1996a). The aim was to widen student access, raise the quality of programme and course offerings and, through these means, increase the responsiveness of the University to the ever pressing demands of the respective governments. Of the governments, those of the non-campus countries have been demanding greater equity in the contribution the University has been making to their social and economic development.

As proof of seriousness of intent, the University Development Plan, 1990-2000 (UWI, 1996a) included funding for distance education in the 1993-1996 budget and, in 1993, a Board for Distance Education was established to direct the process of educational planning and programme implementation. The establishment of the Board was preceded by what is now known as the Renwick Report (Renwick, Shale, & Rao, 1992), which explicitly provided the policy justification and guidelines for making distance education an integral part of the University's higher education thrust into the next century.

Since then a Distance Education Centre has been established. The Centre recently crafted its mission statement as follows:

The Distance Education Centre of the UWI is dedicated to becoming a centre of excellence in itself and a catalyst for excellence in distance education throughout the University; to developing and delivering quality programmes by distance, and in so doing, meeting the higher education learning needs of an ever widening population of students, in order to contribute to the University's mission of unlocking the potential of the peoples of the Region. (The University of the West Indies, 1996b, p. 3)

It must be noted that the Centre's mission has been conceived to fit into the strategic intent of the University to serve the region in more

inventive ways.

To fund the distance education initiative, a loan/grant from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) was secured in 1993, and this is now being used as 'seed' money to meet the cost of improving and expanding the existing physical infrastructure and teleconferencing facilities, by installing an upgraded technological capability. For example, there is to be network expansion in the areas of teleconferencing and computer/internet facilities, with the teleconference sites fairly equitably distributed throughout the various campus and non-campus countries. The goal is to enhance the capability of the University Centres and expand the University's presence, particularly in the non-campus territories, thereby improving the overall effectiveness of the University among its principal stakeholders, the contributing governments.

The Concept of Planning for Quality

The emphasis on maintaining standards at The University of the West Indies as the means of achieving its mission to date, has largely been associated with teaching, research and development. What this means is that consistently, the University's decision making on academic programming, accreditation and student assessment has been marked by a passionate commitment to ensuring that the comparative worth of the intellectual outputs of the institution is assured against 'international' standards. This interpretation of quality as being synonymous with academic standards has led to less emphasis on quality in other functions of the University, for example, human resource management and student support.

As is the tradition, in the introduction of distance education to the University, the issue of quality has been engaged through the drive to maintain academic standards. In this paper, however, the notion of quality is seen in the context of a much wider current international debate on the meanings that are being attributed to the term when used in the higher education university sector.

As universities seek to establish their relevance and responsiveness to the needs of society, the strategy for so doing is increasingly centred

around notions of efficiency, economy and cost effectiveness. Put simply, the mantra of the leadership has become: 'how can we do more with less and, at the same time, optimize the gains to the various stakeholders, particularly the power brokers in the system?' Even more starkly, 'how do we stay in 'business' in the higher education 'marketplace' in an era when universities and colleges are extending their offerings outside their national and regional borders, in the quest for what is now popularly being termed 'educational market share?'

A more multifaceted view of higher education as being as much an economic as well as a social 'good' involving learning for its own sake is gaining greater and greater currency in the drive for institutional strengthening (Burgess, 1991). This bent toward the entrepreneurial, market place view of what goes on in universities is being embraced by those who fund the institution and demand that it becomes better aligned to the economic survival and growth strategies of a trade competitive society.

But what is meant by quality apart from saying that it must allow for institutional relevance and responsiveness as well as cost effectiveness? Having surveyed the literature, Green and Harvey (1993) concluded that there are different approaches to viewing quality in the higher education sector. They summarized these in terms of:

1. Achievement and maintenance of exceptional intellectual and academic standards.
2. Ensuring that the education policy and strategy on the one hand, and programme offerings and instructional modes on the other, are sufficiently well aligned with each other and, therefore, meet the needs of the respective client groups.
3. Cost effectiveness as reflected in the drive 'to get it right the first time' and, therefore, ensure immediate client satisfaction and minimum wastage.
4. The degree to which the educational planning process ultimately transforms the higher education sector in ways that reflect a good balance between the entrepreneurial and traditional social 'good' perception of the role of universities.

What is clear from the approaches to quality advanced is that 'quality means different things to different people' depending on the 'angle of vision' of the constituent groups involved. There can really be no set and unambiguous definition of the concept, except to say that one has to tease out what it means in a given societal and higher education context. For example, at The University of the West Indies, as indicated earlier, the maintaining of academic standards drives whatever quest there is for quality.

Given the way in which this is done, one is forced to look even more closely at the concept and the connotations that have come to be associated with it. Definitions are influenced by systems thinking from the standpoint of *inputs*, or what is required to create the conditions of quality, *throughputs*, or the implementation processes, or *outputs* in relation to predetermined goals and contingencies, and the effects or impacts as determined by measurable indicators.

When there is an emphasis on inputs, the focus will be on the planning process in terms of the provision of the requisite material, financial and human resources needed for implementation. Those who favour this approach are mainly concerned with providing assurances that at every stage of planning and action--be it the determination of policy and strategy or at points of implementation and review--all the requisite conditions are met to ensure effectiveness. Essentially, adherents of this approach are seen as being part of the *quality assurance* movement.

Throughput driven quality focuses on the delivery system and, therefore, the performance criteria and standards that are to be met in the key spheres of activities. Concerns with efficiency and cost effectiveness are of primary concern in this regard. For those concerned with outputs, attention is paid to how the educational and related outcomes meet assessed needs, and the impact on the achievement of stated goals.

The feedback to the system takes the form of what is now popularly referred to as the '*quality control*' and '*quality audit*' approach to quality assurance. This is a reactive mode of determining how well the system has worked, in whose interests, and with what effects

(Deshpande, Prakash, & Mugridge, 1994).

Very often, whether openly or otherwise, those involved in bringing quality into the higher education arena either find themselves taking the quality assurance or the quality control/quality audit route. How, then, the throughput or the follow through implementation activities take place depends on the choice made. This may be a very conscious or 'up front' process or one that is implicit in the move to take the institution into the distance learning mode.

In planning for the expansion of distance education at The University of the West Indies the writers, who fall within the stakeholders group of change agents, sought to adopt the quality assurance approach to planning. They accepted the mandate to do so, understanding that the quality assurance approach would mean that much of the efforts would be spent seeking to access the right kinds and amounts of resources, including goodwill, both to address the University's tradition of commitment to standards, and its new commitment to other areas, such as student friendliness, embodied in its strategic plan.

Interpreting and Implementing Quality Assurance

A 'Stakeholders' Approach

After much cogitation on how to interpret and apply the notion of quality assurance to the implementation of the University's mandate to introduce distance learning, a quality input-driven approach has been employed in terms of four basic criteria:

1. Ownership and motivation.
2. Active and sustained contribution through a process of empowerment.
3. Shared benefits based on the respective needs and interests of stakeholders.
4. Satisfaction in keeping with the principles of equity and fairness.

These criteria would allow an analysis from the perspectives of all those who directly and indirectly have a 'stake,' not only in what the

University does generally, but in its implementation of distance education as part of a mixed modality of delivery in higher education.

It is to be noted that this stakeholders' analysis is, in essence, a reflexive analysis in the tradition of participatory action research. This type of research is consistent with the quality assurance approach to the planning and implementation of innovations. Essentially, actors in a situation use data generated in the situation to reflect on their own involvement and the reactions of other participants, to continually review and modify change strategies to achieve best practice.

In doing this analysis, the writers reviewed the contents of strategic and operational planning documents of the wider University, the Distance Education Centre and the Faculties. Additionally, data were sourced from notes of meetings, workshops and other planning fora. The recurrent themes and issues emerging from these various data sources were distilled and used for 'making sense' of the experiences in the quest for quality planning in the expansion of distance education at The University of the West Indies.

The approach is recommended for use in bringing to the fore the 'voices' of contending actors who have a stake in the change situation and can significantly affect its outcome. The change agents/managers have used the insights gained through the process of distillation to inform the strategies and tactics used to effect positive change in keeping with the declared mission and strategic direction of the University. (See Babbie, 1975; Blackler & Brown 1988; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, Brunsson, 1982; Brutton, 1987; Bryman, 1988, Ferris, King et al. 1991; Merriam, 1988; Turner, 1983 for discussions on the relationship between change management and participatory action research)

To date, the key stakeholders in the introduction of this educational change in the University are:

1. The fourteen (14) contributing governments of the region representing the public at large.
2. Students, particularly those whose initial entry had been through the UWIDITE and Challenge programmes.

3. The Executive University Management, including the Vice- and Pro-Vice Chancellorships
4. The managerial and supervisory cadre of the registrarial, bursarial and information staff.
5. The academics at all levels.
6. Those persons from the categories listed above who are assuming direct responsibility for leading the process of programme implementation and managing the change to distance education. Of these, the staff members of the Distance Education Centre and the Deputy Deans of the Faculties are given particular focus.

In the section that follows, the interests and concerns of the stake holding groups are discussed, as they emerged at the stage of policy formulation and in the early stages of implementation of the expansion of distance education at the UWI. No doubt, other kinds of issues will arise as other situations come to the fore. One can anticipate, for example, that at the point of preparation of study materials, there may emerge differing, even conflicting, interests of academic writers, instructional designers and editors.

However, this paper focusses on issues of a more generic nature that emerged among stakeholders involved at the earlier stages of the expansion. The needs and interests of each stakeholding group are described in terms of ownership and motivation; empowerment; benefits and satisfaction. The planning initiatives undertaken by the operational change agents to address these needs are also described.

The Stakeholders' Analysis

The Governments

It can be argued that, by and large, the fourteen governments in the region do feel a sense of ownership of the University. They are the main contributors to its upkeep, and through Council, have a degree of control over the institution. In respect of the formal structures, therefore, government ownership of the University is taken as a given.

In more operational terms, however, what governments have required from the University over time relates to:

1. Increased access to university education by students of their respective countries.
2. Provision of graduates in areas that are economically and socially relevant to the countries.
3. Contributions of the University to national development through inputs into problem solving on national issues.
4. Direct economic and social benefits that can be derived from the presence of a University campus or site within their national boundaries.

It is in these areas that The University of the West Indies has been challenged for a number of years. Governments have been demanding greater relevance in programme offerings; greater access for students; and greater contribution from the University to national, economic and social wellbeing. In the last area, governments have frequently seen the University as an area of dissent rather than of contribution.

Evidence of the latter was most pronounced in the period of the 1970s when, in response to the anti-government leadership role the University was perceived to be playing in black consciousness movements, some Caribbean governments banned certain non-national lecturers from re-entering the campus countries in which they had been contracted to work. There has also been a differential response, with non-campus countries feeling disadvantaged because access for their students has been limited. Further some have argued that, with no university campus within their national boundaries, there were no direct benefits to be derived from the physical presence of the University.

The University has attempted to address these needs through a new focus on outreach. As part of this initiative, distance education can conceivably provide greater access to students at lower costs, and allow students to study at home and so continue to contribute to their country rather than 'desert' it for three or more years of study. Additionally, programmes in management, education, agribusiness and primary

health care are direct responses to articulated needs for a greater focus on a business and social development orientation in the countries. Also, governments are being included in the round of consultations on the core and outreach functions of the University.

While it is too early to assess the efficacy of the inputs in planning for quality, some measures have been taken to increase the participation of, and the benefits to, governments of both campus and non-campus countries.

The Students

Student needs could be put into two broad categories: those that pertain to learning outcomes and the economic and other opportunities afforded, and those that apply to the learning experience itself. The first is met through curriculum programming and is assessed externally for relevance and economic worth by stakeholders, such as employers, who compare the UWI graduates with those from other universities. If university offerings are appropriate, on graduation, students would be easily absorbed into self employment or gain entry into the job market. They are then able to begin or continue their contribution to national development.

With respect to the learning experience, the need centres on students' perceptions of the University's responsiveness to them during their period of study. The concerns are based on questions such as: 'To what extent are the University's administrative systems and procedures student friendly? To what extent do the instructional and learning processes assist students in gaining confidence, expanding vistas, acquiring the competitive edge that comes with learning beyond the academic content of programmes? To what extent are assessment and examination systems conducive to good student performance and reduction in stress? To what extent do all of the above result in a reasonable chance of success, in a predictable time and represent value for money?'

The learning by distance initiative seeks to treat with both sets of needs. The offering of market-driven programmes, such as the B.Sc.

Management undergraduate degree and certificates in education, is intended to satisfy the expectations of governments, employers and students. Through attempts to stay attuned to developments in the field, and peer review of course materials to ensure academic and labour market currency, the question of standards and qualifications of comparable worth is addressed.

It is in the area of student friendliness that the University change agents would need to plan extremely carefully since, to date, both face to face and distance learning students have complained, sometimes bitterly, of the institution's unfriendliness.

The distance education planners, as change agents, aim through the expansion of the distance offerings to increase student friendliness both in curricular and socio-psychological terms. In the curriculum, the focus is being placed on accessible learning materials, a tutorial system, fee per course rather than programmes, to allow for flexibility and phased assignment scheduling. With respect to examinations, in the old mode, there were frequent complaints by distance students about the late issuing of examination results. In part, this has stemmed from the fact that only a limited number of examiners would be available to mark and administer the examinations for both face to face and distance students. The distance planners are considering the possibility of increasing the number of examiners to reduce the overload problem. The rationalizing of the administrative systems and procedures to support the curriculum, instructional and evaluation process has also begun. All of these changes would increase student friendliness, bringing with them quality control via standardization of curricula and marking in a dual/mixed mode setting. Ultimately, the goal is to satisfy this core client group through the availability of a more accessible curriculum and meaningful learning system.

In the area of student socio-psychological support, the change agents' position is strengthened because, in its strategic plan, the University has set student friendliness as a specific goal. For the distance student, this is very much needed because of the anxieties generated by learning 'from a distance' and the accompanying risks of isolation and competing job, family and community demands.

While full-time students on a campus may be insulated by their location and peer group from much of the external pressures, the distance learner remains fully imbedded in the 'at home' situation and requires, from the University, even more support than would be traditionally expected and offered in the institution. With these concerns in mind, careful attention is being paid to training administrators to be more 'customer focused' or 'student centred.' Student counselling is to become integral to the support services offered by the administrators and, just as importantly, the programme coordinators, and course lecturers and tutors. Other types of curriculum and social support would include student manuals, faculty desk manuals, student orientation sessions and periodic review activities.

As the core stakeholding group in the University, it is critical that students' voices are heard in the assessment of the quality of distance learning, and that there is concrete evidence of University responsiveness in a timely and enduring manner. The highly visible nature of distance education, through the students, to the University's internal and external publics, such as the governments and the media, means that blunders in the conception, programme planning and delivery of distance programmes would be far more magnified than has been the case in face to face delivery. The challenge to quality is considerable especially given the scale of implementation now required.

University Executive Management

In the UWI context, this group would constitute the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellors, University and Campus Registrars, and Bursars. The distance education change agents found a variety of responses within this group.

On the one hand, its members sit at the interface of governments and university and, therefore, are usually quite keen to respond to external pressures and have the University meet the needs of its main client and sponsors--the fourteen contributing governments. In this sense, one can expect executive management to be active advocates for the entire university change process, including the expansion of distance education. In fact, distance education as educational policy and

strategy is presented as a mandate to academics and administrators that has come directly from this group, often referred to as the 'Administration.' In general, distance education is seen as 'their innovation.'

On the other hand, the group is differentiated within itself in at least two ways. Firstly, the members may be differentiated in terms of their own level of support for the change. Most of the current members have been socialized within the traditional university system marked by an individual approach to research, teaching and achievement, and with less focus on team work and responsiveness to student needs required by distance education. Moreover, they may implicitly believe that face to face approaches provide a better guarantee of quality and academic standing than distance education. Yet, they must be official change sponsors for a more student focused distance education, even as they may be the 'carriers' of the very culture that needs to be changed, if the expansion of distance is to be effected successfully.

One likely outcome is that implementation can be met with 'resistance' rationalized by old cultural norms and values and, ironically, unrecognized by the very sponsors who seek to mobilize the University to get distance education accepted. Indeed rank and file members often accuse this level of leadership of merely mouthing the change, or supporting it for economic or political reasons, but not believing in its intrinsic worth. Those within the group who have accepted the required new culture of curriculum innovation and student friendliness may be unwilling to seek to change their colleagues' vision, generally, are too few in number and, perhaps, do not see their role as one of convincing others to accept the required culture change.

The change agents, as the managers of the change, have to deal with the conflicting signals they get on the efficacy of the change, and as they treat with these they must, at the same time, generate enthusiasm and commitment for implementation down the line to the faculties and departments. The latter 'rank and file' exhibit keen vigilance as to how serious the change sponsors and agents/managers are, often accusing the 'Administration' of launching education change that they (the Administration) do not themselves understand, or sometimes do not seem to care to understand, especially in terms of the

operational details.

Change agents, as the systems and resource analysts of the change, are at particular risk when liaising with the executive managers and the related decision making committees. It may not be politic for such agents to openly identify to their employers and sponsors, that inconsistencies in their official roles and personal responses may be inimical to the change. Quality in planning will require skilful negotiation of these matters.

In addition to members of the executive management being differentiated, in terms of their professional socialization and orientation to change in higher education, as either proponents or unconscious resisters, there is also the differentiation in their official roles. Several within this executive management group hold campus positions that require them to make their campuses more viable and cost effective. With decentralization and, therefore, more campus-based autonomy as an outcome of the restructuring, there appears to be the sharpening of latent competition among the campuses.

The quest for resources and the equitable sharing of these have impacted in a problematic way on the university-wide, as opposed to campus-based, implementation of distance education. Distance education has emerged, perhaps unintentionally, as an area of competition among executive management. This competition has expressed itself in at least two ways. On the one hand there is competition for resources in terms of infrastructure like technology and space, financing and support, registrarial and bursarial services. Additionally, there is the real or potential issue of competition for clientele. If, for example, students can choose distance education--which, theoretically, has unlimited capacity-- they can opt **not** to choose a campus based programme. Distance education is, therefore, caught between needing the sponsorship of the individual campuses and representing a latent threat to each of them.

Executive managers who have responsibility for the management of a single campus, would find it particularly difficult to sponsor distance education if it seems that it would be at the expense of their campus. Indeed, the sheer magnitude of the task of managing a campus may

make it difficult for such managers to perceive their role to be sponsors of distance education. Yet, an appreciation of the role of distance education in creating greater relevance and responsiveness to external demands will show that it can enhance the role of the campuses. Moreover, the preparation necessary for teaching at a distance can enhance face to face instructional delivery. Astute leadership and a 'wide angled vision' of how to manage the multiplicity of expectations towards a common set of institutional goals, would produce the 'win-win' outcomes that successful implementation of distance education requires.

Day to Day Administrators

This group can be divided into three broad categories: the field administrators who are the Resident Tutors and Site Coordinators of the non- and off-campus sites; representatives of registries and bursaries who must process matters for distance education students; and representatives of the Distance Education Centre responsible for coordinating the development, delivery and marketing of the distance programmes.

Resident Tutors - Potential Role Strain/Role Conflict

Resident Tutors are the senior staff of the School of Continuing Studies (SOCS)--formerly Extra Mural Units--who traditionally have headed the main outreach function of the University to non-campus countries. In their role as senior staff of SOCS, Resident Tutors are academic staff expected to do research and teaching of continuing education courses. They also coordinate all aspects of the University's functions in the non-campus countries, and are often key contributors to the formulation of public policy in their respective countries. They previously spear-headed distance education in their role of co-ordinator of the University's functions and now do so in the expanded initiative. There are some Site Coordinators, not attached to the SOCS, whose sole function is the coordination of distance education activity at their site. Resident Tutors and Site Coordinators are responsible for the advertisement of courses, receipt of applications, liaising with the registry in the processing of applications, administering arrangements for course tutoring, administering examinations and providing support

services to distance education students.

By and large, the Resident Tutors and Site Coordinators have a keen interest in distance education because it facilitates the delivery of tertiary education to one of their primary client groups--the non-campus students. These field administrators are key players in the expansion of distance education. Change for them represents grappling with the new modes of delivery which will decrease student contact via teleconferencing to more independent learning modes. Conceivably, this will increase the demands that will be placed on the administrators to provide expanded and different student support services. The sheer volume of work will begin to tell as physical infrastructure including technology, multimedia assisted instruction and increased student numbers require even more hands-on administration.

Moreover, while additional distance education responsibilities are envisaged, there is at the same time a drive to rationalize the continuing education roles of the Resident Tutor within the continuing education outreach function of the University. The latter roles are expected to shape their core responsibilities, and the Resident Tutors may interpret this to mean that they would be required to place far less emphasis than they have been doing on servicing distance education. In effect, restructuring may inadvertently draw different sections of the University, in this case within the same outreach function, into a competitive rather than collaborative relationship with each other.

It is to be expected that the expressed need to rationalize inputs into distance education programmes would at best result in role strain and, possibly, role conflict for these officers. The latter could intensify if the governments of the non-campus countries whom the Resident Tutors serve, and who traditionally saw the role of the Tutors as increasing access to formal tertiary education programmes for their populations, reject what is redefined as the core functions of the Resident Tutors--to promote continuing lifelong, non-formal, offerings by way of distance learning. Should there be no meaningful agreement on programme balance, at worst, there would be a loss of momentum for distance education. This loss would be in terms of building collective ownership for the innovation, motivation and responsiveness to the expressed

needs of the non-campus countries and their governments and student stakeholders.

The mechanisms for negotiation and conflict resolution are not yet fully in place and, as a result, there is the real danger that energies can be re-channeled to nonproductive routines of carving out turf and territory, ultimately to the disadvantage of all the outreach programmes for which the respective units were established. If allowed to prevail, the traditional University culture, which tolerates stand alone units, can serve to undermine the change mission which requires collaborative relationships. This is clearly a situation in which executive management in the University needs to provide leadership in reconciling inter-unit interests, so as to ensure that the institution can, without distractions, contribute in single-minded fashion to the development of the respective non-campus countries.

The On-Campus Administrators

The second key group of operational managers are the on-campus staff in the registries, bursaries and the information specialist units who are responsible for registration, record keeping, information dissemination, and examination matters for distance students. In particular, these administrators and their supervisory staff see themselves targeted as the scapegoats for lack of student friendliness, especially in the distance education offerings. As the staff interfacing directly with students, they are perceived and may perceive themselves to be the unswerving 'gatekeepers' of the University' standards, regulations and procedures. This results in a seeming rigidity and passivity in a situation where distance students expect much more flexibility and responsiveness to needs, given the limited face to face contact to which they have access, and the part-time nature of registration and programming. What is often not seen are the stresses borne by the administrators, because they are at the interface of the various constituencies of the University, and because of the paucity of resources to service both the face to face and now the expanded distance offerings.

Since these on-campus administrators carry out their functions in direct interface with the academic staff and executive management, and their voices are often muted in the deliberations over programming and resources, the change agents/managers have sought to involve them directly in the planning and reorientation workshops and other such activities for distance education. Ongoing support is needed for, and from, the on-campus administrators, if they are to facilitate effective programme implementation and the institutionalizing of a student friendly culture in a dual/mixed mode setting.

Representatives of the Distance Education Centre

The members of the Distance Education Centre are pivotal to the change and, yet, even within this group, there is differentiation. In the words of group members themselves, there are the 'old pioneers' and the 'new pioneers.' The former came on board in the early eighties and championed the cause of distance learning through the introduction of the UWIDITE teleconferencing system. They faced all the upheavals of change that went with managing that innovation. Today, they are generally pleased to see their efforts recognized and a policy instituted to mainstream distance education in the University. Nonetheless, they do confess to feeling a sense of loss as the old order changes. Part of this loss has been the sometimes subtle, and at other times not so subtle, signals that new modes were required because something was wrong with the old delivery modes. The 'old pioneer' group would at such times feel blamed rather than truly recognized for their early efforts at distance education. To add to this, the expansion is felt to have resulted in some loss of 'specialness' that inhered in the role of being the early trail blazers.

On the other hand, the 'new pioneers' have had to accommodate to the internal difficulties that stem from the dynamics just described. They must do so while coming to terms with leading a major change effort that very early on was viewed with suspicion by the 'old pioneers,' and ignored or attacked in a generally non-accommodating University environment.

Both the old and the new groups have to cope with the change agent/managers' responsibility for implementing distance education in

a situation of great time pressure and without the requisite authority to command financial, academic or administrative resources. Both groups have only their own sense of urgency, as well as technical expertise and moral suasion to win support for their endeavours. This has placed them all in an extraordinarily difficult situation where their personal, professional credibility is on the line.

In the quest for quality, the need for internal cohesiveness within the Distance Education Centre has been addressed through a series of strategic planning and team building exercises intended to have both groups forge the same change mission, and develop implementation strategies that are consensually derived. While these exercises strengthen the strategy building capacity of the Centre, they also strengthen the group in its use of negotiation skills and mobilization for resources, goodwill and institutional commitment to the change effort. The quest is to have further clarification on the institutional mandate for distance education, and to demonstrate that the Centre can make optimal use of its resources. In this way, quality would be assured on an enduring basis.

Academic Staff

At the centre of all University endeavour is the academic staff. Any change in the delivery of the core service, the generation and dissemination of knowledge must, therefore, also have such staff at its centre. It is no wonder that some of the critical issues generated in the planning for delivery of programmes by distance modes relate to the responses of academic staff.

A primary concern is related to the preservation of academic standards. If intellectual property inheres in the individual academic and, over time, has been imparted by such a person in a special face to face relationship with students, how can intellectual property now be packaged and disseminated by almost 'industrial' mode without a loss of the quality that direct interface is seen to produce? This dilemma is captured in the following statements by academics:

I am involved in something (distance education materials development) that mechanizes knowledge, and student

learning. Distance education removes the very essence of academia: that is the contestation of ideas and engagement with different world views. Will distance education devalue a tradition that is an essential part of my tradition?

Three responses suggest themselves. Firstly, the inevitable expansion in student numbers had already diluted the unique student-academic staff relationship and, in many cases, rendered it far less effective than theoretically envisaged. Secondly, international trends in tertiary education illustrate that frequently, 'packaging,' by paying closer attention to student needs and other curricular issues, results in an improved way for imparting knowledge. In a period of large classes and the burgeoning knowledge industry, the preparation of distance materials has produced a tremendous opportunity to improve the interface between the academic, the student and the field of knowledge. Thirdly, the process of joint course planning and peer review of curriculum materials presents the opportunity to assure quality in the determination and maintenance of standards.

A second major issue also relates to intellectual property. Primary academic socialization locates ownership of intellectual property solely with the individual or, at most, a small group of collaborating academics. Indeed, it is this ownership that is pivotal to the construction of the reward and recognition systems that is the life force of academic pursuit. How then will a team approach to the development and production of distance materials affect this system of knowledge generation, productivity and its contingent modes of recognition and reward? The dilemma was poignantly captured below in the statement of one academic:

Are you saying that when I would have produced the distance education materials, anybody can use them? Am I giving away my intellectual property ?

While the distance change agents/managers are willing to concede that academic ownership would continue, it is clear that in systemic terms, as related to production and reward, the matter requires far more thought. The University needs to intensify its deliberations on collective work and intellectual property. It also needs to resolve the

issue of reward and recognition as a critical aspect of the terms and conditions of employment in the institution.

Such a resolution is urgently needed in light of the expressed concerns about career pathing and job security captured in the following quotations:

I have been an academic all my life, progressing fairly smoothly and moving up the career path of the University. Why should I get involved in Distance Education, designing and producing learning materials? I see no benefit in it.

What if it takes me a year to produce materials, would that be counted as research? Or should my time be spent more profitably on traditionally accepted research?

If you can have curriculum writers who can write materials, then maybe you would need fewer academics, because the teaching function is being divested to tutors, curriculum specialists and other such persons.

Am I disempowering myself by 'giving into' the new collectivist, mechanistic culture?

These statements suggest a deep concern by academics about the changing nature of curriculum and instruction in higher education, brought centre stage worldwide by the rapid expansion of distance education provisions. The concerns are compounded by the previous policy position that academics would not be rewarded with additional financial benefits for involvement in the preparation of distance education materials

As discerned so far, the reluctance to pay academics separately for work in distance education stems from a variety of motivations that include the following:

1. The resource constraints, that is, the unavailability of funds to meet the costs.

2. The notion that to pay for distance course writing and delivery would be contrary to the goals of the strategic plan to contain cost and use existing resources more optimally.
3. Initial survey findings suggest that several members of faculty already carry too few contact hours and the notion that preparation of materials would be in lieu of contact hours.
4. The reluctance/fear that academics would be paid twice for doing what is seen essentially as one of their core tasks, that is, the preparation for and delivery of instruction.
5. The fear that by rewarding work in distance education separately, it will be contributing to the notion of a fourth and different 'campus' (three campuses on location--Cave Hill, Mona and St. Augustine and an additional one by distance).

All these issues were addressed in the discussions that informed the development of the strategic plan for the University. However, the discussion of the plan was not generally perceived to have had the full-scale inputs of all staff. As a consequence, there has been a 'we' versus 'them' ethos (academics versus executive management--'the University') attending the resolution of this key issue. It has, therefore, been difficult so far to bridge the gap between these two groups, and create a basis for deriving some kind of consensus on the way forward. Moreover, a document on career pathing which sought to address these very issues is still under discussion at various levels of the University.

In the absence of the determination of such a critical issue, the change agents/managers note that there is a direct clash between the immediacy of the needs of the market driven distance education initiative and the deliberative, oft perceived, slow pace of university decision making. As it now stands, the exigency of time has impacted on decision making, and a short term decision has been taken to pay faculty members extra for the materials produced outside their agreed contact hours. Additionally, growing acceptance of the distance programme by more and more academics has also contributed to a decrease in tension. However, from time to time, this tension surrounding recognition and reward resurfaces.

Factors in the Growing Acceptance of Distance Education

A number of factors account for the growing support for the expansion of distance education at The University of the West Indies. Some academics are convinced that the University has to change, if it is to cope adequately with the increasingly competitive higher education environment. They are therefore willing to see the change as an investment in their own future. As one of them recently stated:

I came to this University. My children have to come to this University. It must survive and it must compete to survive. I have to help it change.

A second persuasive element is a commitment by some faculty to invest in their own retooling. If academia is changing, then, despite all hallowed traditions, there would be need to keep up with the changes in the environment.

The consultative planning and training opportunities provided in the distance education initiative are seen as leading to job enlargement and professional renewal, thereby enhancing the quality of academic worklife. As one academic was heard to say:

In my almost thirty years at the University, this is the first time I have sat down to plan something with a registry officer. This is exciting!

The third persuasive factor in the acceptance of distance education has been the deliberate, painstaking activities of the change agents/managers to build organizational development strategies into the change process. These include: consultative planning as described earlier; professionally facilitated team building activities; training of various stakeholders, for example, academics in programme planning and curriculum development; and the production of procedural manuals and other supportive documentation.

Although not yet enough to address all the issues posed, several factors contribute to the concerted effort to assure quality in the implementation of the expanded distance education programme. The

articulated policy position in favour of distance; the positive response by the top executive management to some of the issues and concerns raised by the various stakeholders, particularly the academics; the on-going negotiations among all parties; and the organizational development strategies are together managing to keep the innovation alive and moving forward. The process at times can be cumbersome and even painful, especially when new adherents see the need to restart the deliberations to take account of the phases of their personal cogitations. **The frequent revisiting of 'first principles' along the bumpy road to implementation is proving to be one of the more important mechanisms in planning for quality.**

Summary of the Key Issues

The stakeholders' assessment presented in this paper illustrates several issues which impact on infusing quality into the planning for a major innovation in higher education at The University of the West Indies. The issues are summarized in the sections that follow.

Issues of Structure

One issue is the fit between the University's decision to become a dual/mixed mode or bimodal institution at the same time that it decentralizes its governance structure. In keeping with 'best practice,' distance education in relatively small internal tertiary education markets, such as found in the Caribbean, requires economies of scale in respect of the degree of critical mass of social support and student enrolment, scope of management and administration, and financial and other resources. After the governance change, however, each campus has a large degree of discretionary power to support cross campus educational policy and strategy changes such as distance education. Campuses are not required to strategize to meet the economies of scale for successful implementation of a distance education programme.

The challenge for quality planning therefore is how, in a situation of administrative decentralization, to have sufficient centralization for collective action in a resource sensitive environment. The change agents/managers have been attempting to initiate and/or intensify the collaboration within and across campuses to counter those aspects of

decentralization that inhibit quality in the planning and implementation of distance education programmes.

Individualism and Academic Culture

Academic culture in universities is mostly shaped by the high value placed on personal, intellectual initiative and achievement, energized by a very high level of individual creativity and drive. This translates into a largely private transaction in facilitating student learning within the bounded environment of the classroom. This transaction is not formally scripted for public consumption or evaluation, beyond that of students concerned.

For distance purposes, however, faculty must commit that which is to be learnt, to paper or other media, thus making former classroom transactions public. Additionally, the learning and teaching script, that is, the study units, course guides, and other media support become the property of the University and can be used for instructional purposes by faculty other than the writer. This requires faculty to reconceptualize what it means to be involved in University teaching. This need to reconceptualize is further confounded by the fact that the rewards for this change in job function are unclear, given the primacy of traditional research in making it up the University career ladder to the highest echelons of the institution.

Here again the change agents/managers are continuing to negotiate for a clarification of the reward structure to allow for the support of distance education. Further, through training and joint planning activities, the benefits of team approaches in a competitive educational market are being explicated.

Administrative Culture: From Isolation to Collaboration

Another major issue for further exploration is the administrative culture of the University. This has been marked in large measure by the isolation not only of individual but of administrative units. For example, while the registries, bursaries, faculties, the library and other units and agencies of the University recognize their dependence on one another, they have operated as relatively separate entities

with different mandates and rhythms. However, they all have been attuned to a known cycle of delivery and patterns of behaviour.

The process of expanding distance education is changing the traditional relationships, thereby altering the cycle of planning and delivery and known patterns of behaviour. Distance students cannot be told, for example, to access the special reserve section of the library, the materials must be provided before hand. A student cannot 'run' between lecturer, head of department and registry to change a course, minutes before a registration deadline. All arrangements must be made from afar, both in time and space. Consequently, a new cycle of delivery and new patterns of relationships must be successfully negotiated and institutionalized.

It is in view of these factors that participatory planning, joint ownership and shared motivation become very important. The change agents/managers addressed these issues by inviting the various stakeholders to engage in collaborative planning to work out new ways of transacting with one another, and to evolve a culture that would better support student friendly, high visibility distance education programmes.

For very many academics and administrators in the University, the demand for a culture shift is involving them in 'strange' activities. At best, it is seen as an opportunity for a constructive engagement with change in the academy. At worst, it is viewed as an affront to the tried and tested traditional culture that has ensured the standards of 'academic excellence' on which The University of the West Indies built its reputation. As a consequence, the response to distance education ranges from the excitement of the academic who worked with the registry officer for the first time ever, to the disbelief of the senior executive who commented:

You are having another team building meeting? Haven't you met often enough to be a team?

Investing in Quality in a Period of Cost Containment

Addressing the quality issues raised so far inevitably requires financial outlay. But the University is living through a period of cost containment in which it has been decided that core government funding will only be boosted to match inflation. In effect, the implication is that more must be done with less. In the long term, offering programmes at a distance should increase enrolment and, therefore, generate fee income.

This could only happen, however, if there is the initial upfront investment in, for example, course production, training, the establishment of new systems for student support, or expansion of old in, for example, the registry, or the training and standardization of marking of course coordinators and tutors.

This creates real tension, for what may be interpreted as resistance or reluctance on the one hand may, in fact, simply be a lack of resources. Under the financially strained circumstances, necessary measures to infuse quality may be seen as expensive luxuries, especially if they are new and being done only, or largely, for distance programmes.

Scope, Intensity and Pace

Used to the idea of working in fairly predictable and well streamlined task environments, usually cut off from the direct gaze of the multiple 'publics' who are impacted on and impact on the work done, both academic and administrative staff have found themselves particularly challenged by the scope and pace of change in the University as a whole, and by distance education specifically. They must handle the day to day drama of living with cost containment, expanded student enrolment, both in terms of numbers and type of student, as well as insufficiency of infrastructural facilities, and still show enthusiasm for new programmes of study, new modes of delivery (including distance), new structures and systems of governance, administration and finance, as well as changing cadres of leadership at the top and middle management levels in the University. For the change agents/managers, culture change delimited to distance education, must be seen as occurring in wider cycles of culture and structural change in the institution. Each

cycle depends on the other to evolve meaningfully.

The changes are all-encompassing in scope, fast paced and sequence driven, starved of resources and, in cultural terms, requiring a complete reorientation that would necessarily require some time to take hold. Yet, if the distance education innovation does not thrive, all stakeholders would have suffered a tremendous loss in their economic, professional and psychological investments. Such is the challenge that the University has assumed in embarking on its strategic plan in general, and on distance education in particular.

It may very well take compelling external forces, extraordinary commitment on the part of the University's executive managers, sensitive strategy, persistence on the part of all change agents/managers and early demonstrable successes, if distance education as an innovation is to be successfully nurtured and made to thrive in such circumstances.

Struggling for a 'Win Win' Outcome

Emerging from the foregoing analysis is a realization that is stunning in its implications. **It is that no matter how diametrically opposed the stakeholders views may seem to be, all or most of them are legitimate and, from the standpoint of interest, eminently defensible.**

No one can contend the right of governments and students to demand value for money. In a situation of decentralization, campuses are required to maximize their use of resources; the School of Continuing Studies is duty bound to watch the interest of its continuing studies programmes; academics' *raison d'être* resides in their capacity to generate and disseminate knowledge that can stand up to international assessment, while administrators must ensure a properly functioning set of systems and procedures, if efficiency and equity needs are to be met. This is the stakeholding context in which distance education provisions are being expanded.

The challenge is to meet the particularistic needs of all these various constituencies of interests, as a means of committing them to playing their part consistently in infusing quality into the planning and

implementation of distance education. The hope lies in all the stakeholders recognizing the need to restructure the entire curriculum, instructional, administrative and business planning orientation of the University to meet the needs of the twenty first century. Only by seeing distance education as one part of the total strategic thrust of the University will the initiative succeed. In so doing, the legitimacy of different stakeholder perspectives can be recognized and the need to negotiate them seen, not as negative competition but, as part of strategizing for success.

Such strategizing, deliberate attempts to involve all parties and recognition of all contributions can lead to a sense of empowerment. In essence, this process represents a quality assurance approach to planning for distance education, as against a more evaluative quality audit or quality control approach. These latter assess quality after the fact and can lead to negative blame placing, as against maximizing all contributions and recognizing potential stress points and treating with them a priori. It is the latter upfront quality assurance approach that leads to a win-win situation for all stakeholders. If such a situation is achieved, then the transforming capacity of distance education would have been realized.

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